

# TEXAS

**Amado Trevino  
Commandant**



# MARINE

**Department of TEXAS  
Marine Corps League**



**Edition**



**May  
2015**



The "Texas Marine" is a quarterly newsletter published by the Department of Texas Marine Corps League and posted to website [www.texasmcl.org](http://www.texasmcl.org).

**Editor/Publisher - BERNIE & JUANITA O'DELL**  
515 Hall Street ~ Graham, TX 76450 ~ (940) 549-3944 ~ [juanita.odell@texasmcl.org](mailto:juanita.odell@texasmcl.org)

## Commandant's Corner

Amado Trevino, Department of Texas Commandant  
(361) 960-0143 (H) • [amado.trevino@texasmcl.org](mailto:amado.trevino@texasmcl.org)

### I HAVE BEEN BUSY

not so much with Marine Corps League business, but with my mother. As most of you know, she has been in poor health ever since she fell in February. She now has Alzheimer's/Dementia and requires 24/7 care. I was also blessed with my first granddaughter, Sophie. Therefore, I will **NOT** be pursuing a second term of office as Department Commandant in June. I just don't have the time to commit myself totally to the Marine Corps League. I thank you all for your support throughout the past year.



At the Mid-Winter Conference there were a few complaints about the way National Headquarters has been handling Marine Corps League business. Most Department Commandants were again complaining about Transmittal Reports and not getting members their membership cards, but again Headquarters redirected that to the Department and the Detachment



#### Commandant

Amado Trevino  
[amado.trevino@texasmcl.org](mailto:amado.trevino@texasmcl.org)

#### Sr. Vice Commandant

Charles Ynman  
[charles.ynman@texasmcl.org](mailto:charles.ynman@texasmcl.org)

#### Jr. Vice Commandant

Dennis Bradford  
[dennis.bradford@texasmcl.org](mailto:dennis.bradford@texasmcl.org)

#### Judge Advocate

Alex Azar  
[alex.azar@texasmcl.org](mailto:alex.azar@texasmcl.org)

#### Adjutant/Paymaster

Polly Weidenkopf  
[polly.weidenkopf@texasmcl.org](mailto:polly.weidenkopf@texasmcl.org)

#### Sergeant-At-Arms

Chris Borel  
[chris.borel@texasmcl.org](mailto:chris.borel@texasmcl.org)

#### Chaplain

Joe Vickery  
[joe.vickery@texasmcl.org](mailto:joe.vickery@texasmcl.org)

#### Jr. Past Commandant

Robert "Bob" Ogg  
[robert.ogg@texasmcl.org](mailto:robert.ogg@texasmcl.org)

Paymasters. Most of the delegates who were there were worried about their flight out of Washington because of the snow.

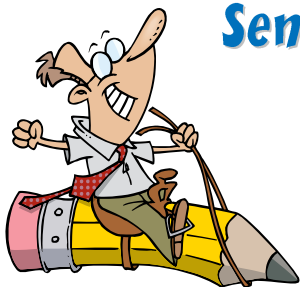
At the Southern Division Conference our Southern Division Vice, Marine Randy Rigg, held a meeting with the Department Commandants and Paymasters and asked us to write a letter to the National Commandant and present any Department complaints we had. The letter should be signed by the Department Commandant and Paymaster.

I also had a chance to meet Marine Edgar Ermis and see firsthand what he is doing to our web page. Also, we had a chance to look at the new logo that he and Marine Bones have been working on.

On the way back from Southern Division Conference I stopped and visited with Commandant Orlando Garza of the Alamo Detachment to discuss the upcoming Department Convention. He stated that he wanted me to ask the Detachments to *please* submit their ads for the convention program ASAP. He stated that they had everything ready; they were going to hold a meeting with their Auxiliary to finalize their plans.

Hope to see you in San Antonio in June.

**PLEASE!**



## Senior's Segment

Charles Ynman  
Department of Texas  
Sr. Vice Commandant  
(281) 496-7424 (H)  
(713) 496-7424 (C)  
charles.ynman@  
texasmcl.org

## WE ARE NOW APPROACHING

our Department of Texas State Convention in San Antonio. A year ago, we started with goals and it is time to review how much has been accomplished. Last year I stated that our successes of the League depended on each Detachment and individual member. I thank you for all the work which has been accomplished.

I thank you for your confidence and allowing

me to work with all of you to make the goals become a reality.

We have been able to establish effective and immediate communications with our Department Officers and District Vices. With the help of our Department Officers we were able to establish a more direct communications to our Detachment Commandants. We wanted to improve the compliance of the following administrative matters such as: 1) Valid EIN numbers, 2) Completed 990 forms, 3) Correct Officer Installation Reports, 4) Current Life Member Audits and 5) Submission of Activity Reports.

We have also changed the position of District Vice from a ceremonial office to an intricate part of the chain of command. I give the credit for our advances to the hard work of these fine officers. We are far from satisfied with our progress and will continue our efforts to improve. I request each of our Detachments to continue to cooperate with your District Vices. We are a team and they cannot do their job without your help.



We also have been able to accomplish two additional items. First is the creation of a new web site. Edgar Ermis assumed the responsibilities of Department Web Master in late December and has contributed thousands of hours to make sure the Department web site has the information you require. I encourage each of you to "Sign Up" on the site so that you can benefit completely in the future.

You will also notice the Department of Texas now has a proper logo which is in the upper left corner of the web site home page. The Board of Trustees and several other members contributed to the unique design which carries not only our Eagle Globe and Anchor but also symbols of our beloved State. We hope to use the logo for not only the web site but also on our Department letterhead, tribute coins, patches, etc.

It has been my pleasure to serve you in many capacities in the Department of Texas and **I wish to announce I will be a candidate for Commandant for the Department of Texas at our June Convention.** I offer my complete

dedication to each individual member and their respective Detachments. I am fortunate to have the endorsement of the Board of Trustees and the District Vices. I will not take their endorsements lightly and ask all our members to entrust me with the same confidence. I will plan to exceed your expectations.

I look forward to seeing each of you in San Antonio.



## Junior's Journal

Dennis Bradford  
 Department of  
 Texas Jr. Vice Cmdt.  
 (936) 569-8789 (H)  
[dennis.bradford@texasmcl.org](mailto:dennis.bradford@texasmcl.org)

## HELLO AGAIN!

Once more it is my honor and pleasure to address all of you as the Department of Texas Jr. Vice Commandant.

While the National By-Laws state that the Jr. Vice Commandant shall “create and promulgate such incentives and programs as will produce enthusiastic response resulting in continuous membership growth” at the Department level, it is more accurate to recognize that the real key to continued membership growth is the effort contributed by the individual members in the local Detachments.

I wrote when I first posted following last summer’s Department Convention, that I cannot do it alone... that I needed your help. After nearly a year in office, I have to say that those words are as true now as they were then.

To paraphrase the National By-Laws, the supreme authority of the Marine Corps League is its red hat members. It is you, and me, that have the collective responsibility for the ultimate success or failure of our beloved organization. If new members are recruited, it is we who must



make the effort. We must interest Marines we meet in the programs supported by the League. If we are to grow and prosper, it is each of us who must make the effort to find new members. In that regard, I believe that the most important element in gaining the interest of prospective members is to point out the simple fact that we in the League speak fluent “Marine.”

In talking with people, often we are told that the Marine Corps is different from the other service branches. You and I both know that it is true. We have our own culture. One thing that indicates that we have a culture all our own is that we have our own language. You know that. Whenever we talk to other Marines, it is the single most comfortable aspect of the conversation. Whether still on active duty, or returned to civilian life, the idioms unique to the Marine Corps identify and isolate us from all other branches. Once away from the Corps, I have had many Marines express that the one thing they miss is the language we all share.

My suggestion to you is to use our unique language as a powerful recruiting tool. As such, when you meet another Marine, just be yourself. Speak “Marine” and you might find that prospective members will respond to hearing someone who is a kindred spirit. Once you have their interest, then you can expand the conversation to include a discussion of the Marine Corps League.

Using our common language can bridge most differences between individuals, make prospective members feel more comfortable, and open the door to interest in joining our group. Language is the key, After all, once a Marine, always a Marine!

Until next time, Semper Fi!



## Adjutant/Paymaster Postings



Polly Weidenkopf  
Department of Texas  
Adjutant/Paymaster  
(972) 480-0309 (H)  
[polly.weidenkopf@texasmcl.org](mailto:polly.weidenkopf@texasmcl.org)

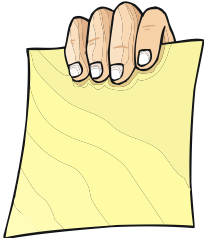
### IT IS THE TIME OF YEAR

when many Detachments are installing new officers who will serve during the coming year. There are several points that the new Paymasters need to be aware of. I would appreciate it if all Commandants would pass this info on to your Paymasters.

1. Make sure you sign your transmittal before sending it to me.
2. Make sure that you are numbering your transmittal correctly. We are now in the 15-XX series. On 1 July, we will begin the 16-XX series.
3. If you are sending a transmittal with new members on it, you **MUST** send the original membership application with the transmittal.



4.



If you are making copies of the transmittals you are sending me, please sign all the copies and send the correct number of copies - total of four copies.

5. It is no longer necessary to send the new member's DD214. The Detachment Commandant should review the DD214 and give it back to the applicant. No DD214s should be kept by the Detachment.

If each paymaster confirms that they have done these things prior to sending the transmittal to me, it would make the process go much smoother and faster.

On another note, it is once again time to file your 990. Detachments with less than \$55,000 in income can file the online Post Card 990. This only takes a few minutes and is **required** by the IRS. Those of you who have in excess of \$55,000 in income are required to file the long-form 990.

# \$55,000

No matter which form you file, the bylaws require you to **email** me a copy of the acceptance email for the online 990 and a copy of the long-form 990. **Please do not send the copy to me in the mail.** I am required to send the filing information to National in an email and, when I don't receive an email from you, your Detachment may not get on the list.

As always, I am available to answer your questions. My home email address is [pollyw247@att.net](mailto:pollyw247@att.net).



## Chaplain's Comments

Joe Vickery  
Department of Texas Chaplain  
(409) 948-0129 (H)  
[joe.vickery@texasmcl.org](mailto:joe.vickery@texasmcl.org)

Submitted by Juanita O'Dell, Editor  
(940) 549-3944  
[juanita.odell@texasmcl.org](mailto:juanita.odell@texasmcl.org)



### DOES GOD STILL SPEAK TO US?

<http://www.christianstories.com>

Author Unknown

A young man had been to Wednesday night Bible Study. The Pastor shared about listening to God and obeying the Lord's voice. The young man couldn't help but wonder, "Does God still speak to people?" After service he went out with some friends for coffee and



pie and discussed the message. Several different ones talked about how God had led them in different ways.

It was about ten o'clock when the young man started driving home. Sitting in his car, he just began to pray, "God... If you still speak to people, speak to me. I will listen. I will do my best to obey."

As he drove down the main street of his town, he had the strangest thought, to stop and buy a gallon of milk.

He shook his head and said "God, is that you?" He didn't get a reply and started on home. But again, the thought, buy a gallon of milk. The young man thought about Samuel and how he didn't recognize the voice of God, and how little Samuel ran to Eli.

"Okay, God, in case that is you, I will buy the milk." It didn't seem like too hard a test of obedience. He could always use the milk. He stopped and purchased the gallon of milk and started off toward home. As he passed Seventh Street, he again felt the urge, turn down that street. "This is crazy," he thought and drove on past the intersection. Again, he felt that he should turn down Seventh Street.

At the next intersection, he turned back and headed down Seventh. Half jokingly, he said out loud, "Okay, God, I will." He drove several blocks, when suddenly, he felt like he should stop. He pulled over to the curb and looked around. He was in a semi-commercial area of town. It wasn't the best, but it wasn't the worst either.

The businesses were closed and most of the houses looked dark like the people were already in bed. Again, he sensed something. "Go and give the milk to the people in the house across the street."

The young man looked at the house. It was dark and it looked like the people were either gone or they were already asleep. He started to open the door and then sat back in the car seat. "Lord, this is insane. Those people are asleep and if I wake them up, they are going to be mad and I will look stupid." Again he felt like he should go and give the milk.

Finally, he opened the door, "Okay God, if this is you, I will go to the door and I will give them the milk. If you want me to look like a crazy



person, okay. I want to be obedient. I guess that will count for something but if they don't answer right away, I am out of here." He walked across the street and rang the bell. He could hear some noise inside.

A man's voice yelled out, "Who is it? What do you want?" Then the door opened before the young man could get away. The man was standing there in his jeans and T-shirt.

He looked like he just got out of bed. He had a strange look on his face and he didn't seem too happy to have some stranger standing on his doorstep. "What is it?" The young man thrust out the gallon of milk, "Here, I brought this to you."

The man took the milk and rushed down a hallway speaking loudly in Spanish. Then from down the hall came a woman carrying the milk toward the kitchen.



The man was following her holding a baby. The baby was crying. The man had tears streaming down his face. The man began speaking half crying, "We were just praying. We had some big bills this month and we ran out of money. We didn't have any milk for our baby. I was just praying and asking God to show me how to get some milk."

His wife in the kitchen yelled out, "I asked him to send an Angel with some. Are you an Angel?" The young man reached into his wallet and pulled out all the money he had on him and put it in the man's hand.

He turned and walked back toward his car and the tears were streaming down his face. He knew that God still answers prayers.





# Veteran's Voice

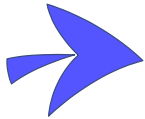
Texas Veterans Newsletter is available to any MCL member or any Veteran. It pertains to the Veterans of the State of Texas and is available at [www.tvc.state.tx.us](http://www.tvc.state.tx.us).



Submitted by Juanita O'Dell, *Editor*  
(940) 549-3944 (H) • [juanita.odell@texasmcl.org](mailto:juanita.odell@texasmcl.org)

## SOME OF THE

highlights since publication of the February 2015 newsletter are:



### Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$169 Billion VA Budget

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs  
February 2, 2015...

WASHINGTON - The President has proposed a \$168.8 billion budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in fiscal year 2016. The proposed budget will support VA goals to expand access to timely, high quality health care and benefits, continue the transformation of VA into a Veteran-centric department and end homelessness among Veterans.



The President's 2016 Budget is designed to bring middle class economics into the 21st century. This budget shows what we can do if we invest in America's future and commit to an economy that rewards hard work, generates rising incomes, and allows everyone to share in the prosperity of a growing America. It lays out a strategy to strengthen our middle class and help America's hard-working families get ahead in a time of relentless economic and technological change. And it makes the critical investments needed to accelerate and sustain economic growth in the long run, including research, education, training, and infrastructure.

These proposals will help working families feel more secure with paychecks that go further, help compete for higher-paying jobs, and help create the conditions for our businesses to keep generating good new jobs for our workers to fill, while also fulfilling our most basic responsibility to keep Americans safe. We will make these investments, and end the harmful spending cuts known as sequestration, by cutting inefficient spending and reforming our broken tax code to make sure everyone pays their fair share. We can do all this while also putting our Nation on a more sustainable fiscal path. The budget achieves about \$1.8 trillion in deficit reduction, primarily from reforms to health programs, our tax code, and immigration.



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has before it one of the greatest opportunities in its history to enhance care for veterans and build a more efficient and effective system. The Department is listening to what veterans, Congress, employees, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and other stakeholders are telling us. We aspire to make VA a model agency that is held up as an example for other government agencies to follow with respect to customer experience, efficient and effective operations, and taxpayer stewardship.



VA is charged with fulfilling President Lincoln's promise to care for those "who shall have borne the battle, and for" their families and their survivors. To support this mission, the 2016 budget provides \$70.2 billion in discretionary funding for VA, a 7.9% increase above the 2015 enacted level. In addition, the budget includes \$3.2 billion in estimated medical care collections, for a total discretionary budget authority of \$73.5 billion (which includes \$3.2 billion in Medical Care Collections), and \$95.3 billion for VA's mandatory



benefit programs.

This funding level will provide the resources to fulfill VA's mission to provide timely, quality health care and services to veterans. It will allow VA to operate one of the largest integrated healthcare systems in the country, serving approximately 9.4 million veterans enrolled to receive care; a compensation benefits program for about 4.3 million veterans and 400,000 survivors, and a pension benefits program for 306,000 veterans and 216,000 survivors; the tenth largest life insurance provider, covering both active duty service members and veterans; an education assistance program serving 1.2 million students; a home mortgage program with a portfolio of over 2 million active loans, guaranteed by VA; and a national cemetery system that leads the Nation as a high-performing organization projected to inter 129,200 veterans and their family members in 2016. Additionally, VA will be developing a legislative proposal to reallocate funding in order to ensure the continued improvements of VA operations and the timely access to care for veterans.

The Veterans Choice Act provided \$5 billion in mandatory funding to increase

**\$5 Billion**

veterans' access to health care by hiring more physicians and staff and improving the VA's physical infrastructure. It also

**\$10 Billion**

provided \$10 billion in mandatory funding through 2017 to establish a temporary program (the Veterans Choice Program) improving veterans' access to health care by allowing eligible veterans who meet certain wait-time or distance standards to use health care providers outside of the VA system. The Veterans Choice Program may provide a measure of short-term relief from the pressure of escalating health care needs as current patients in the VA system elect to receive their care through the program. These investments, together with the 2016 budget, will provide the authorities, funding, and other tools to enhance services to veterans in the short-term while strengthening the underlying VA system to better serve veterans in the future.

However more resources in certain areas will be required to ensure that the VA system can

provide timely, high-quality health care into the future. In the coming months, the Administration will submit legislation to allow the VA Secretary to best meet veteran needs. This will allow the Secretary to make essential investments in VA system priorities in a fiscally-responsible, budget-neutral manner.

#### **Funding Highlights:**

The President's 2016 Budget requests \$70.2 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide needed care and other benefits to eligible veterans, their families, and survivors. VA also received \$15 billion in the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.

The FY 2016 Budget invests in VA by:

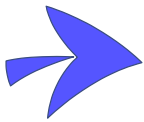
- Improving veterans' access to medical care by providing \$60.0 billion, in addition to requesting \$63.3 billion in 2017 advance appropriations;
- Supporting improvements in veterans mental health care, telehealth care, lifesaving treatment for Hepatitis C, specialized care for women veterans, long-term care, and benefits for veterans' caregivers;
- Providing \$1.4 billion for programs that will continue VA's gains toward ending veteran homelessness in 2016;
- Strengthening veterans benefits programs by improving the timeliness of non-rating claims, reducing the inventory of veterans appeals, strengthening the fiduciary program, and further enhancing disability claims processing accuracy and efficiency through centralized mail and the national work queue.
- Increasing burial access for veterans and eligible family members with the opening of new national cemeteries and a rural burial ground.

#### **Reforms:**

Continues the largest Department-wide transformation in VA's history through MyVA, an effort to reorient the Department around the needs of veterans.

***Sustains and Strengthens Services for Veterans and Their Families***

- Improves Veteran Access to Medical Care
- Protects Critical Funding for VA Medical Care
- Ends Veteran Homelessness
- Advances Medical and Prosthetic Research
- Strengthens Veterans Benefits Programs
- Provides Lasting Memorial Services and Increases Burial Access
- Transforms VA through MyVA



***Whistleblowers: Veterans Cheated Out of Benefits***

CBS News  
February 25, 2015...

The Veterans Benefits Administration provides \$95 billion of entitlements each year to veterans, including disability money, pensions to vets and their surviving spouses and death benefits – even American flags at veterans’ funerals.

But a CBS News investigation has found widespread mismanagement of claims, resulting in veterans being denied the benefits they earned, and many even dying before they get an answer from the VA, reports CBS News correspondent Wyatt Andrews.



The problems at the Veterans Benefit Administration have been uncovered in the wake of last summer’s scandal at a Phoenix VA hospital that rocked the

Department of Veterans Affairs.

Dorris Stafford said a letter, obtained by CBS News, shows how badly the VA claims system is broken.

It’s dated July 29, 2014, and thanks Dorrie’s husband Wayne - an Army veteran - for the disability claim he filed in July of 2004. The decade-long delay is just one problem; the other is that Wayne died in an accident seven years ago, without hearing a word from the VA.

“It upsets me,” Dorrie said. “Why would you suddenly, after all these years, send a letter to a dead man?”

Five whistleblowers at the Oakland, CA, Veterans Benefits office told CBS News that Stafford’s claim is one of more than 18,000 informal claims filed between 1996 and 2009 that ended up stashed in a file cabinet and ignored until 2012. (Informal claims are letters from veterans expressing a desire to apply for benefits, and by law, the VA must respond with an application.)



“We were getting letters from elderly veterans and from widows who were literally at the end of their life, begging for help,” Rustyann Brown said.

She was part of a team finally assigned to process those claims two years ago and the job began, she said, with a disturbing discovery.

“Half of the veterans were dead that I screened. So almost every other piece of paper that I touched was a veteran who had already passed away,” Brown said.

She said that means they died waiting for their first answer from the VA.

But whether the veteran was dead or still alive, Brown said VA supervisors in Oakland ordered her team to mark the claims “no action necessary” and to toss them aside. Whistleblowers said that was illegal.

“The VA didn’t help them. The VA didn’t care about them. They took them, they put them in a file, and they stuffed them away,” Brown said.



There were 13,184 veterans who were, Brown said, “begging for help.”

When she raised her concerns, she said she was taken off the project. Then, this past summer, Brown and former VA employee Tony Silviero found a cart full of these same claims, ignored, yet again.



“We pulled 15 indiscriminately to look at; just 15,” Brown said. Eight of them were owed money. One was owed \$36,000.”

She said that was just a few months ago.

Last week, the VA Inspector General confirmed that because of “poor record keeping” in Oakland, “veterans did not receive... benefits to which they may have been entitled.” How many veterans is not known, because thousands of records were missing when inspectors arrived.

Lost claims and missing records are a problem nationwide. In the last year, the Inspector General has found serious issues in at least six VA benefits offices, including unprocessed claims documents in Philadelphia, 9,500 records sitting on employees’ desks in Baltimore and computer manipulation in Houston to make claims look completed when they were not.

Dorrie Stafford now lives with friends in the mountains of Northern California, in a home with no electricity.

“They owed him an answer,” she said.

“It’s an example of what happens when the VA conceals a file. It doesn’t just harm the veteran; it could also hurt the family. Typically a surviving spouse is offered an American flag, help with burial expenses or even a modest pension. But none of that happens if there’s no file.

“I wasn’t even aware there was widow benefits; I really wasn’t,” Dorrie said.

Even if it was a modest pension of \$400 a month, she said it would help.

To the whistleblowers, the lost files also raise serious questions about whether the VA is accurately reporting the true number of disability claims it receives.

Brown said many of the claims she discovered never even made it into the official backlog, and that was a deliberate attempt to hide them – to make sure they never even appeared in the system.

The VA declined CBS News’ repeated interview requests. It did admit to widespread problems in the handling of claims, but blamed that on the transition from a mail based system to a new electronic system. The VA said in a statement, “...electronic claims processing [has] transformed mail management for compensation claims ... greatly minimizing any risk of delays due to lost or misplaced mail.”

As for the backlog, the VA promised to fix any problem that comes to its attention. “For any deficiencies identified, steps are taken to appropriately process the documents and correct any deficiencies.”

Veterans service organization Veteran Warriors, which advocates for veterans who are having difficulty with their claims, said in a statement: “Too many cases have come to light, wherein the VA leaders have destroyed, deleted, hidden and manipulated veterans claims – their very access to benefits and services – and *not one of them* has been criminally charged. It is time for our nations’ leaders to stop listening to the endless “lip service” of accountability and demand answers. If they do not get them, it is time for repercussions to be felt by those who obviously believe they are above the law and insulated from prosecution.”



### ***Feds: Female Veterans Battling to Get PTSD Treatment***

KRGY.com  
Rio Grande Valley, TX  
April 8, 2015...

**WESLACO** - Female veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder may not be getting the help they need, according to federal investigators.

Investigators looked at the Veterans Benefits Administration, which is within the Department of Veterans Affairs.



One of the administration’s jobs is to help female vets who suffered sexual trauma while in the military and who may now suffer from PTSD as a result.

Investigators found that there’s much more work to be done.

Serving in the military is one of the toughest, most dangerous jobs in the world. Still, the real war sometimes is at home.

It's estimated that 20% of female veterans returning home after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD. That's about 56,000 women.

The PTSD is often the result of sexual trauma.

Jessica Villarreal heads a support group for female veterans in the Rio Grande Valley. She's seen the problem firsthand.

"It's very difficult. The topic is just difficult to deal with. Some people are afraid. They don't trust men any more. They won't go see doctors who are men," Villarreal said.

"They can't function normally anymore in society because of what happened to them," she said.

The problem often doesn't emerge until they are home.

"You're trained to numb your emotions, to keep moving forward, to never think about what's going on at that time so that when you get here, on the civilian side, transitioning is probably the most difficult part of getting out of the military," Villarreal said.

Although the VA is trying to catch up to the problem, investigators say the agency has a ways to go.

Regional offices aren't consistently evaluating veteran's claims. While some offices approve 88% of claims, others approve only 14%.

Investigators also say the VA's national outreach is lacking. In one case, it was just two group meetings with veterans' service organizations.

The VA told investigators that "competing priorities" are to blame.

Villarreal says most veterans learn about support groups through word of mouth.

## MARINES!!!

This is going to be a short message because most of you should have seen my report to the Southern Division on the web site.

One of the biggest problems that we are currently facing in the Marine Corps League is that of unpaid membership and it is hurting our organization's 2015 budget. I want to ask all of you to check with your Paymaster and determine if you have missed your dues renewal. It happens all too often that we get busy, misplace the notice, and miss a membership meeting and pretty soon our membership has expired. I want everyone to double their efforts in keeping our memberships up to date and work at bringing back some of those past members who have slipped away from us over the past years.

The Southern Division has been coming back in membership and growing but it is a continuing battle that we wage every day. I know that with everyone's help it is a battle we can win.

I look forward to seeing you all in San Antonio for the Department of Texas convention in June.



**DISTRICT 3 | DEANE HAWKINS  
DETACHMENT  
EL PASO**

Robert Way, *Commandant*  
(915) 593-9370 (H) • [robert.way@texasmcl.org](mailto:robert.way@texasmcl.org)

## THE DEANE HAWKINS

Detachment has continued to be active this first three months of 2015.

Connie Pena continues to volunteer at the El Paso Child Crisis Center three to four days out of the week as well as many other veteran and community activities. Both she and Chon Pena received their 500 hour pins from the VA for their volunteer hours at the annual VA Volunteers luncheon held in March.

## Division/District/Detachment Digest

**SOUTHERN DIVISION**

Randy Rigg  
*Southern Division Nat'l. Vice Commandant*  
(903) 525-9521 (H) • (419) 345-8342 (C)  
[randy.rigg@southernmcl.org](mailto:randy.rigg@southernmcl.org)

Three Eagle Scout presentations were made by Bob Way and Pete Gomez during the past three months.



*Eagle Scout Certificate presented to Kenneth Flores*



*Eagle Scout Certificate presented to Kendal Murray*

Pete Gomez and Bob Way were also asked to help judge the Deane Hawkins Elementary School 1<sup>st</sup> annual book fair. This fair was designed to encourage students to read more. They had to read a book, make up a book report folder, and then make a presentation to various judges. Awards were given to students with the best folders and reports. Students could also put on a costume to go along with their book report.



*Judges for Book Fair*

Geronimo Polanco and Bob Way have been selected to be members of the new Ft. Bliss National Cemetery Advisory Committee. They will meet monthly with the Director to discuss problem areas or ways to improve the cemetery or any upcoming changes at the cemetery.

Bob Way was a member of the Friends of NRA West Texas Grant Board and was instrumental in helping to get over \$24,000 in grant money for various JROTC and Boy Scout marksmanship training programs in the El Paso area.

The Marine Honor Detail conducted three funeral firing details this period.



*Honor Detail Ft. Bliss National Cemetery*

The Detachment has continued to provide coffee and snacks each month at the VA clinic.

The Detachment will be doing the MCL Rose program the first part of May and will also be preparing for Memorial Day activities at the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery. They are also starting to make arrangements for the VA homeless Veterans Stand Down to be held in September.

The El Paso Young Marines recently completed their marksmanship training and firearm safety classes. They will also be forming an air rifle team and will hopefully be able to compete in some of the local JROTC air rifle matches.



*Young Marines being promoted*



*Air Rifle Range for Young Marine  
Air Rifle Team*

The Young Marines also cleaned their section of Adopt a Highway this quarter. They are now in the planning stages for upcoming summer activities.



*Young Marines Adopt a Highway*



*Trash collected*

## District 7

Con Shuck, *District Vice Commandant*  
972-880-1611 (H) • [con.shuck@texasmcl.org](mailto:con.shuck@texasmcl.org)

## TARRANT COUNTY HAS NEW

officers and a new meeting day, time, and location. Their meetings are now held on the first Saturday of each month at 1100 (sea stories start at 1000) in the Fellowship Hall at Calvary Cathedral International at 1701 Oakhurst Dr., Ft. Worth, TX 76111.

The new Officers I installed on 4 April are:

- Commandant: Lara Olsen
- Sr. Vice Commandant: Mark Jones
- Jr. Vice Commandant: Actrid Arroyo-Bradley  
(Active duty WM Sgt.)
- Judge Advocate: Jason McManus
- Jr. Past Commandant: Ted Achuff
- Adjutant: Verne Bell
- Paymaster: Walter Barber
- Chaplain: Mark Jones
- Sergeant-At-Arms: L. Manuel Naal

The new officers are very optimistic that Tarrant County can rebound and once again be a great Detachment of the Marine Corps League. The new location is much closer to NAS JRB Ft. Worth and they think they can attract some of the active duty Marines to join them. Time will tell but they are off to a good start.



## LONGHORN DETACHMENT...

is having their annual charity golf tournament on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Southern Oaks Golf Course in Burleson. They are expecting a large turnout but could always use a few more.

Bill Carver tells me this is a good charity fundraiser for the Detachment.

They are also making plans to host the Fall Staff Conference. They are really



taking this seriously and working hard to make it a big success, which they will. Their own computer expert, Edgar Ermis, is the Department webmaster and he is doing an outstanding job.

However, next on their agenda is the Pound 268 Growl on the 18th of April there at the Detachment home in Crowley.

So you can see they have an active Detachment.

**ALAMO DETACHMENT  
SAN ANTONIO**

Orlando Garza, *Commandant*  
**(210) 551-8855 (H)**  
*alamodet315mcl@gmail.com*

Our Young Marines have a program that builds wheelchair access ramps for veterans. They volunteered and built a ramp for a Vietnam veteran on January 31, 2015.



If you would like to volunteer contact Albert Salas. They also have a Young Marine Boot Camp that is coming up and need adult volunteers.

USAA  
*February 3, 2015...*

**YOUNG MARINES :  
FROM GOOD TO BETTER**

Andrew Halpin is looking forward to spring break - but not because he'll be relaxing, vacationing or just sleeping in like many 15-year-olds.



This spring, Halpin is returning to his second boot camp at Camp Bullis Military Training

Reservation in San Antonio with the San Antonio Young Marines – a week of 5 a.m. wake-up calls and rigorous mental and physical exercises.

“I wanted something hard and challenging, especially the physical activity,” Andrew says.

And he got what he wanted. “There were 10- and 12-year-olds yelling at me to line up and get into formation,” Andrew says. “I was thinking, ‘I’m older than you. Why are you telling me what to do?’”

The young private and adopted son of USAA members John and Shana Halpin not only followed orders, he excelled at them. He was one of three cadets promoted to private first class by the end of his first camp experience. He has since been promoted to lance corporal and hopes to return to camp as a drill instructor.

An added bonus would be watching his younger brother, Abraham, also adopted by the Halpins, follow in his footsteps at boot camp this March. “I think he’ll do well. His determination is the same as mine,” he says. “I want to be there to help... and kinda laugh at him.”

The San Antonio Young Marines chapter was established in 2011. Since then, 130 kids have participated in the annual boot camp. The group also meets monthly for an overnight drill practice.

“We try to give kids the most authentic version of the Marine Corps experience,” says USAA

member Albert Salas, a former sergeant in the Marines and now unit commander for the San Antonio Young Marines.

“We’re not a recruiting entity pushing the kids to join the Marine Corps. The main purpose of the program is to make good kids better.”

The Halpins say that’s just what the program has done for Andrew.

“It’s given him a focus,” Shana says. “A lot of kids talk about what they want to be when they grow up, and he’s already working on it now.”

John adds: “He’s matured a lot. The day he got home, he was taking out the trash without being asked. They teach them that they always need to be doing something.”

Andrew is now eligible to attend Young Marines programs such as survival training, scuba school and others across the country.

“We didn’t want camp to be s’mores and campfire songs,” Shana says. “We were hoping it would be a serious camp that reflected what the Marines do.”

For an aspiring Navy SEAL like Andrew, it’s just the ticket.

#### **Review dated 9/27/12...**

*This unit is stellar. My daughter is involved and I currently serve as the Executive Officer and this gives an opportunity for the two of us to spend quality time together. They are not a scared-straight organization; they take good kids and enhance what values already exist inside. The Drills are normally exciting and always encourage the kids to be physically, morally, and spiritually fit. My daughter always comes back home very mentally energetic, though physically worn out, and it’s amazing to see her interact with the rest of the family. They are not a recruiting tool; one of their main goals is to keep kids off drugs and instill the moral courage to stand up for what is right.*

*There are obviously military aspects to the program. They all have to graduate a boot camp to become a Young Marine. There are current and former Marines serving as Registered Adult Leaders. The kids march and perform physical activities one might see in the military. But most of those items are a ton of fun for the kids and the Drills present opportunities to the kids to do things they might never do before. I’ve witnessed quiet kids blossom into leaders. Kids are positively encouraged to succeed*

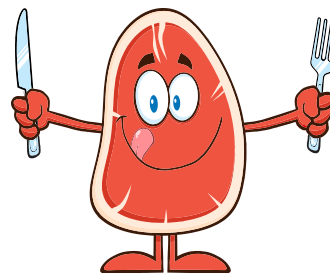
*within the program and in life. Drug awareness is present throughout, as is CPR training. Assistance with school is encouraged, particularly with those older kids mentoring the younger ones. Trips to locations to build cohesion are prevalent as well. This past weekend, the kids completed the obstacle course as teams. There is an upcoming trip to visit the Lexington. If you have the ability to get involved in this program, I’ll recommend it!*

## **BIG D DETACHMENT DALLAS**

Melody Bronson, Commandant  
(972) 216-7879 (H)  
[mbronson@stevenstransport.com](mailto:mbronson@stevenstransport.com)

**HELLO FROM** the Big “D”  
Detachment!

So glad we are getting some nice weather around here. We sort of started off with a lot of inclement weather and had to cancel and reschedule the GROWL back in January that we were hosting. Then February’s ice and snow hit us and we had to cancel our monthly meeting and our



Steak Night fundraiser plus missed a few more activities that we should have attended! But that’s all behind us now and we are ready to get active!! Our March

meeting and other activities went off as planned and we should not have anything else causing cancellations or delays!

The 2015 Dallas Military Ball was hosted by the Marines and our very own Polly Weidenkopf was the 2015 Chairperson. She put in a lot of hard work, sweat and tears to make the ball a success... the Military Ball was on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully by the next newsletter I can show off some pictures!

Hope everyone had a great Easter. Happy Mother’s Day



to all of the mothers from the Big “D”!! I know we are all looking forward to celebrating the upcoming Memorial Day and remembering our Veterans. And we certainly cannot wait for the State Convention coming up in June in the great city of San Antonio!! I know we all will have a great time and a successful convention. A big Texas “Thank You” to the Alamo Detachment #315!!

**COMANCHE PEAK DETACHMENT  
GRANBURY**

Con Shuck, *Chaplain*  
(817) 326-6132 (H) • [con.shuck@texasmcl.org](mailto:con.shuck@texasmcl.org)

**WHERE HAS THE** past month gone?

Seems like just yesterday we were installing officers. George Simpson and Dorcas came up from Waco to do the honors. A good evening was had by all.

In the area I lost a very good friend and Marine the last part of March. He did not join the MCL as he has been wheelchair bound for the last 20 years and did not want to be a burden on anyone. He was a UDT diver during the Korean War. (I did not know we had UDT.) He started to open up and tell of some of the exploits in his later days but never fully. He went to the hospital and they were treating him for pneumonia but it was discovered that he had a heart attack and by the time they started treating that it was too late. Olen J. Click, lifetime Texan, was 83. A memorial service was held on 6 April at Wiley’s here in Granbury.

I went to see Ken and Louise Henry the other day. Ken is not doing too well. He still has considerable trouble getting around, plus he has to take care of Louise who is not doing well at all. Please add them to your prayer list along with Alex Azar who still does not have a reliable answer on what his balance and coordination problems are caused by.

Lon Simpson was named Marine of the Year



for the Detachment. Lon is the man who spends many hours selling raffle tickets to make sure we come out in the black. He has a few dedicated helpers and they are someplace almost every weekend.



As all are aware, one of our Charter members, Ed Wibbenmeyer, passed away about a year ago and had donated his body to medical research and then cremation. His funeral services were held at DFW National on Friday, 17 April, 2015.

David Wells’ brother passed away in March. David said he had been sick for some time. Bill Fey’s wife Joan passed away in March. She, too, had been ill for quite a while and was in an assisted living center.

If anyone knows where Gene Bowyer is please let me know. I would like to go by and see him and see how he is doing.

Comanche Peak has already started selling tickets for this year’s Rifle Raffle. This year they are offering a J.J. Henry 30-30 made right here in the USA.

What a beautiful weapon. Make sure you buy some chances on this one. A donation of \$5 gets you one ticket, a \$20 bill gets you 5. This is a great opportunity to take a chance on a beautiful weapon and support the Detachment by doing so.

As always the drawing will be held during the birthday cake cutting ceremony on 10 November. We all know what day that is and best of all you don’t have to be present to win. Within minutes of the drawing we will make contact and give someone the good news.

I don’t know how the rest of you are doing but the allergy season is upon us. Mine have really been tearing me up - from the time I get up in the morning until I go to bed at night.



**HEART OF TEXAS DETACHMENT  
WACO**

George Simpson, *Commandant*  
(254) 666-4081 (H)  
george.simpson@texasmcl.org

**A SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE**

has been appointed to explore a scholarship program for the Detachment. It is planned to give two (2) \$500 scholarships to deserving students in the Waco area.



Appointed to that committee is Dorcas Simpson and Johnnie Lopez who will be serving as the Adjutant Paymaster. Currently they are checking with other organizations that give scholarships to see how they run their program, how they select the students, and how they present the scholarship.

Sounds like a very promising program and we wish them much success.

**Auxiliary  
Announcements**

Viola Trevino  
*Marine Corps League Auxiliary  
Department President &  
Southern Division Vice President*  
(361) 960-0142 (H)  
viola.trevino@auxiliary.texasmcl.org



**GREETINGS LADIES,  
MARINES, MODD, AND MODDF:**

Since my last communication with you I have to say I have been quite busy. On February 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> I attended Mid-Winter Conference in Falls Church, VA. We saw snow, among other bad weather, but had a good trip and attended all meetings.



I attended the Iwo Jima Ceremonies in Harlingen, TX, at the Marine Corps Academy on

the 19<sup>th</sup> and the Iwo Jima ceremonies at Sherrill Park in Corpus Christi where we served cookies, coffee, and water to the attendees on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February.

On the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> I also attended the Coastal Bend Detachment Installation of Officers and the Laredo Installation of Officers on Tuesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February where I spoke to the wives of the League members about starting an Auxiliary Unit. On the 28<sup>th</sup> I installed the Coastal Bend Unit Officers.



March was not as busy but I attended the Southern Division Conference in Ft. Smith, AR, on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. The Conference was hosted by the River Valley Detachment of Ft. Smith. My thanks to them for their great hospitality and accommodations.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> I held the Department of Texas meeting assisted by Dorcas Simpson, Acting Secretary, Antonia Hurtado, Department Chaplain, and Brenda Tomonelli, Department Captain of the Guard. Members of the Claude Rodgers River Valley Unit of Ft. Smith were our guests. We had a productive meeting and great attendance. After our Department meeting I had the honor of installing the members of the Claude Rogers River Valley Unit.



On the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> the ladies attended MODDF Scratch with a great turn out and beautiful costumes with 1<sup>st</sup> Place going to Brenda Tomonelli (Saloon Girl), 2<sup>nd</sup> Place to Linda Blair (Saloon Girl), and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place to Barbara Hixson (Little House on the Prairie costume).

On the 21<sup>st</sup> I held the Southern Division Meeting assisted by Assistant Southern Division Vice Brenda Tomonelli, Acting Secretary Dorcas Simpson, and Acting Chaplain Antonia Hurtado.

At Unit level I held a Spring Scholarship Fundraiser Garage Sale with the help of Irene Benavides and Esmeralda





Vera. It turned out very well and I encourage the other Units to hold your fundraisers during Spring and Fall as that is the best time and you get good results.

Ladies, the Activity Reports are due by the **15<sup>th</sup> of May**. Activities are from May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, to April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

Activity Reports Committee Chairpersons:

- **Americanism**  
Brenda Tomonelli, 110 Mac Lane,  
Pottsboro, TX 75076
- **Child Welfare**  
Karren Ogg, 840 FM 1503, Deport, TX  
75435
- **Civics**  
Dorcas Simpson, 11474 Chapel Rd.,  
Lorena, TX 76655-3007
- **Rehabilitation**  
Johnnie Lopez, 1001 Hamilton St.,  
Waco, TX 76705-3809
- **VAVS**  
Connie Chambers, 1136 Omar Street,  
Dallas, TX 75232-5816

Thank you all. I look forward to seeing everyone at Department Convention in San Antonio.

## Flea Fiddlings

Brenda Tomonelli  
DOT MODDF Hide  
Scratchy Flea  
(903) 786-8243 (H)  
brenda.tomonelli@  
auxiliary.texasmc.org  
and



Dorcas Simpson • DOT MODDF Hide Big Flea  
(254) 666-4081 (H)  
dorcas.simpson@auxiliary.texasmc.org

**THE DOT MODDF** Hide trekked across the Arkansas River for the Southern Division Scratch on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

The Ft. Smith, Arkansas, M.O.D.D.F. Crawlers decked out the Southern Division Scratch Room with frontier/saloon décor and welcomed the Hide with root beer and pie. The Hide Fleas were dressed for flea frivolity and dog devilment in their

best representation of bordello madam, saloon gal, and frontier/pioneer ladies. There was a great turnout with nine Texas Fleas, two Arkansas Fleas, four Arkansas Crawlers, two Texas guests (prospective Fleas), and three Arkansas Crawler initiates. The Fleas were presented with two MODD pups for flea pesterin' and proceeded with paradin' and scratchin' them in full flea flashing fashion.



Big Flea Dorcas Simpson indoctrinated and initiated the three new Crawlers who proceeded to "hound" the MODD Growl for "bowls of bones." Their dog pesterin' resulted in the Hide presenting donations of dog bones and flea fines to the Leatherneck Foundation and to Ft. Smith women's children charity Heart to Heart.



The costumed Fleas paraded for contest judges Viola Trevino, Dorcas Simpson, Toni Hurtado, and Gail Azar. The contest winners were:





The Hosting Crawlers from Arkansas presented National Big Flea Colleen English with gifts consisting of her favorite - Elvis collectibles - and Texas Big Flea Dorcas presented certificates to Madame Big Flea Colleen, Scratchy Flea Brenda Tomonelli and Arkansas Crawler Linda Blair.

The Texas Hide Fleas are back in our homes preparing for the State Convention in San Antonio in June. Big Flea Dorcas and the Decoration Committee has deemed the theme for the State Scratch to be "Fiesta Fleas!" So all MODD Fleas prepare your most colorful, fanciful, Fiesta finery and join us for "dog pesterin' flea frivolity" at the Holiday Inn in San Antonio.

The Hide would like to ask all Fleas and Auxiliary members to visit the newly reconstructed web site and register at [www.texasmcl.org](http://www.texasmcl.org).

See you in San Antonio!!

## National News

Commandant  
John Kovalcik  
Communications

[JKovalcik@MCLeague.org](mailto:JKovalcik@MCLeague.org)  
Semper Fi article  
Mar/April 2015...



## COMMUNICATE TO WIN

Good morning. It is a very warm 2 March 2015 here in South Carolina as I write this column. Judy and I kicked off the New Year by traveling to Marine West at the end of January. Our return trip allowed us just enough time to attend the Midwinter Staff Conference in Virginia.

As many of you know, 2014 was a very bumpy ride in our League. We lost several members due to illness and some through unexplained events. There are things we have no control over, but life goes on.

This past year I received a number of letters and emails – far too many bypassing the chain of command. This is not the way to go. I will not answer any communication that leaves the proper officers out of the loop.



Another sore point is when a new member comes in the Detachment and he or she is virtually ignored, so the new member decides to leave and never returns. Who sponsored the new member? Why was he or she left alone in a fend-for-yourself atmosphere? This person might have been a future worker to build a better Detachment.

I look forward to any comments and suggestions that will make us better. Communicating is always better *when done properly*. As we start the New Year we cannot control the winds; however, we can adjust the sails for a smoother year.



## From the Front

### Georgians, U.S. Deploy to Afghanistan to Support NATO

By Sgt. Tatum Vayavananda, Defense Media Activity  
March 31, 2015...



**Brig. Gen. Norman L. Cooling, Deputy Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa, addresses a Georgian battalion on March 24 who will deploy with U.S. Marine advisors to NATO's Resolute Support in Afghanistan. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Light Infantry Battalion has worked with U.S. Marines from the Georgia Deployment Program to prepare for their contribution to the NATO-led mission.**

**TBILISI, Georgia** - Georgian soldiers, alongside U.S. Marines, will deploy together as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan after a ceremonial departure ceremony last Tuesday at Vaziani Training Area, approximately 180 kilometers south of Russia's border.

"You are better trained, more experienced and better prepared for the task at hand than we ever had before," said Maj. Gen. Vakhtang Kapanadze, Chief of Defense of Georgian Armed Forces.

Despite sustained tension in Eastern Europe between the West and Russia, Georgia's contribution to NATO's Resolute Support Mission is the largest, in terms of troop size, since the beginning of their participation in the Middle East.

"We don't [get] the chance to choose our country, to choose our neighbors, or to choose when we serve... but by supporting international security, you guarantee the safety and security of your own country," said Kapanadze.

Georgia's commitment to operations in Afghanistan is great; Georgia has annually deployed entire battalions to support the former ISAF mission since 2010. NATO's Resolute Support in Afghanistan launched January 1 of this year and includes 14 NATO allies and partner nations contributing more than 12,000 personnel to provide further training, advice, and assistance for the Afghan security forces.

Distinguished visitors attending the ceremony also included Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S.

Embassy in Tbilisi Nicholas Berliner, and Brig. Gen. Norman L. Cooling, Deputy Commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa.

"It is truly impressive how far we have come together as a team in our ability to prosecute a mission on behalf of NATO and the international coalition," said Cooling.

Officially known as The Georgia Deployment Program – Resolute Support Mission, formerly GDP-ISAF, the Marine Forces Europe and Africa program attaches Marine liaisons from a variety of military occupations, experience and backgrounds to Georgian infantry companies; they have been together since October preparing for their mission.

"This Georgian battalion training has evolved and is among the most sophisticated of any force that will be fielded to Afghanistan or any global-security environment," said Cooling.

**US Marines Begin Arriving in Darwin in Fourth Rotation as Part of US 'Pivot' to the Asia-Pacific**

By Steven Schubert and James Purtill, ABC News April 13, 2015...



**The fourth rotation of US Marines arrive at Darwin Airport from bases in Hawaii and California (ABC News: Steven Schubert)**

About 1,150 U. S. Marines have begun arriving in Darwin as part of the United States military's broader long-term "pivot" to the Asia-Pacific region.

The influx comes amid concern the growing U.S. military presence could cause tensions with China.

The Marines will be stationed in Darwin for



training for the six months of the Top End's dry season.

They are the fourth rotation since former Prime Minister Julia Gillard and U.S. President Barack Obama struck a deal in 2011 to gradually increase the number of U.S. Marines rotating through Darwin to 2,500 troops by 2017.

A small ceremony was held at Darwin Airport as America Galaxy C5 aircraft from Guam carrying CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters from Hawaii touched down.



*A Galaxy C-5 aircraft carrying a CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter touches down in Darwin as part of the fourth US Marine rotation. (ABC News: Steven Schubert)*

“We’re coming from all over the globe,” Lt. Col. Eric Dougherty of the U.S. Marine Corps said.

He described the rotation in which U.S. Marines will live and train at the Australian Defence Force’s Robertson Barracks as “unique.”

“Most places we go to a different country and have our own base there. We’re operating inside the base,” he said.

“But here we’re going to be living inside the barracks.”

“You guys have opened up your homes to us. We’re living in your guest house.”

Lt. Col. Dougherty said the training opportunities in the Northern Territory were a big drawcard.

“You have some world-class training facilities here,” he said.

“Bradshaw training area (southwest of Darwin) is three times the size of anything we have in the States.

“The outback truly is out back, with vast wide open spaces.

“There’s things we can do here we cannot do back in the States.”

“[In the U.S.] it’s very restricted; you have to worry about safety considerations like not shooting other units as you train.

“Here you don’t have those issues. It’s a blank slate.”



*“Bradshaw training area (southwest of Darwin) is three times the size of anything we have in the States,” Lt. Col. Eric Dougherty says about the rotation. (ABC News: Steven Schubert)*

### Marines ‘not too sure’ about rugby

The rotation follows speculation the growing U.S. military presence in Darwin could cause tensions with China - an important trading partner for Australia.

“When you are dealing with such a powerful ally and an ally that is so much more powerful than Australia, you are not in total control of the situation,” Associate Professor at the U.S. Study Centre at University of Sydney, Brendan O’Connor, told the ABC on Saturday.

“The Chinese are pretty sensitive to the fact that American troops are coming in and out of Australia through these rotations in what is peace time.”

Lt. Col. Dougherty would not comment on what impact another rotation of U.S. Marines would have on relations with China.

Last year for the first time Chinese soldiers trained on Australian soil with the Australian Army and U.S. Marines, but Lt. Col. Dougherty said no training was planned with China on this rotation.

He said the Marines were keen to start sporting teams, including trying their hand at rugby union.

“The rugby team I’m not too sure about; it’s our first



time going at it, so we'll try," he said.

"We're pretty physically fit. We'll see though."

Lt. Col. Doherty said he welcomed a visit by NT Attorney General John Elferink to the Marine Corps Camp Pendleton in California earlier this year.

Mr. Elferink made the visit as part of a \$45,000 taxpayer-funded study tour.

"It was a great visit," Lt. Col. Dougherty said.

"It was well worth him to come visit. We look forward to hopefully meeting him when we're out here."

### Peace group condemns arrival

The Darwin-based Independent Peaceful Australia Network condemned the arrival of the U.S. troops and said there were no threats to Australian security that justified spending money on a foreign force.

"We would be better off having more money for better education or

infrastructure, rather than housing an expensive foreign military power," the group's Justin Tutty said in a statement.

The group said the Australian Government needed to be upfront on who the U.S. Marines were providing protection against.



## Marine Corps History

### CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS



### THE MARINE CORPS FLAG



Little information is available on the flags carried by early U.S. Marines. Initially

Marines may have carried the Continental Colors,

also known as the Grand Union Flag. In 1776 it was considered the official flag of the American naval forces by the Maritime Committee of the Continental Congress. Although not officially recognized, this flag is considered to be the first American flag, influencing the design of the 13-star Betsy Ross flag.

In the 1830s and 1840s, Marines carried a white flag with gold fringe. It contained a depiction of an anchor and an eagle and the words "To the Shores of Tripoli." After the Mexican-American War, "To the Shores of Tripoli" was expanded to "From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli."

In battles during the Mexican-American War and Civil War, field Marines carried a flag with alternating red and white stripes. An eagle perching on a shield of the United States was superimposed in the canton. A half-wreath was positioned below the shield, and 29 stars encircled the entire design. By 1876 Marines were carrying a version of the American flag, which included the words "U.S. Marine Corps" embroidered in yellow thread through a red stripe in the middle of the field. In 1921 orders issued stopped the manufacture of American flags with the words "United States Marine Corps" or with yellow fringe. The next year all American flags with yellow fringe or wording on them were retired. Since the 1940s the United States Flag Code has prohibited the addition of words, symbols or marks of any kind on the American Flag.

In 1914 a blue flag was carried by Marines. The flag featured the Marine Corps emblem (eagle, globe and anchor) encircled by a laurel wreath. A scarlet ribbon above the emblem carries the title "U.S. Marine Corps," and a second scarlet ribbon beneath the emblem included the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fidelis" (Latin for "Always Faithful").

Four years later scarlet and gold were officially designated as the colors of the U.S. Marine Corps. A flag incorporating the new colors was not adopted until 1939. This flag, which is essentially



the same design as our current U.S. Marine flag, includes a scarlet field and gold fringe. The Marine Corps emblem is in the center of the flag with a small banner held in the eagle's beak that says "Semper Fidelis." A larger banner below the emblem says "United States Marine Corps."

*A flag similar to the 1914 flag was used by the United States Marine Corps 4th Regiment. This flag, deemed "Old Blue," contained the Marine Corps emblem in the center of the blue field. A scarlet ribbon above the emblems reads "Fourth Regiment," and a scarlet ribbon below the emblem reads "U.S. Marine Corps." As the regiment's colors were changed to scarlet and gold, Marines were ordered to burn the old flag. One Marine was unable to do so and hid a flag in his sea bag. He died in the line of duty in China, but the flag survived for many years, eventually making its way to the Command Museum, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California, in 1991. There it was fully restored. It's the only known flag of its kind to have survived.*

## THE MARINE CORPS MOTTO

"Semper Fidelis" ("Always Faithful") is the motto of the Corps. That Marines have lived up to this motto is proved by the fact that there has never been a mutiny, or even the thought of one, among U.S. Marines.

Semper Fidelis was adopted about 1883 as the motto of the Corps. Before that, there had been three mottoes, all traditional rather than official. The first, antedating the War of 1812, was "Fortitudine" ("With Fortitude"). The second, "By Sea and by Land," was obviously a translation of the Royal Marine's "Per Mare, Per Terram." Until 1848, the third motto was "To the Shores of Tripoli," in commemoration of O'Bannon's capture of Derna in 1805. In 1848, after the return to Washington of the Marine battalion that took part in the capture of Mexico City, this motto was revised to: "From the Halls of the Montezumas to the Shores of Tripoli" – a line now familiar to all Americans. This revision of the Corps motto in Mexico has encouraged speculation that the first stanza of "The Marines' Hymn" was composed by members of the Marine battalion who stormed Chapultepec Castle.



*The Battle of Chapultepec*

It may be added that the Marine Corps shares its motto with England's Devonshire Regiment, the 11th Foot, one of the senior infantry regiments of the British Army, whose nickname is "the Bloody Eleventh" and whose motto is also Semper Fidelis.

## U.S. Marine Corps News

### Navy Christens Ship Named for Marine Legend Chesty Puller

By Joshua Stewart, Staff Writer  
Marine Corps Times  
February 10, 2015...

One of the most decorated Marines in the history of the Corps has received another honor. On Saturday, the Navy christened the mobile landing platform afloat forward staging base Lewis B. Puller.



**The mobile landing platform Lewis B. Puller successfully completed launch and float-off at the General Dynamics National Steel and Shipbuilding Company shipyard. Lewis B. Puller is the first afloat forward staging base variant of the MLP. (Photo: Navy)**

Lt. Gen. Puller, well known as “Chesty,” had one of the most distinguished careers in the Corps. He served both as an enlisted Marine and officer and spent all but 10 years of his 37 years in the service overseas, according to his official biography.

Puller had 14 personal decorations in combat, plus many campaign medals and unit commendations. He’s the only Marine to earn the Navy Cross five times.

“This ceremony not only honors a true Marine hero and legend, but also the men and women who have worked so diligently to bring this first-of-its-kind ship from concept to reality,” Navy Secretary Ray Mabus said in a statement.

The ship is the Navy’s third mobile landing platform, but the first afloat forward staging base variant. Compared to its predecessors, the Puller has a flight deck, berthing for 250 personnel, fuel and equipment storage, and maintenance spaces. It’s designed for helicopter operations, but Marine Corps planning documents show that officials are determining whether the MV-22 Osprey tilt rotor aircraft can operate from the ship as well.

The Navy Department plans to build one more afloat forward staging base. The amphibious transport dock ship Ponce was used as an interim AFSB before the Puller.

Its crew includes both uniformed sailors as well as civilian mariners that work under the Navy’s Military Sealift Command.

Martha Puller Downs, Puller’s daughter, is the ship’s sponsor, according to the release. The vessel was built by the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company, a subsidiary of General Dynamics. The christening ceremony was held at NASSCO’s San Diego shipyard.



Ms. Martha Puller Downs, daughter of Lt. Gen. Lewis “Chesty” Puller, christens the Navy’s new ship named for her father. (Photo: NASSCO)

The Puller was christened as the Corps plans to make greater use of its mobile landing platforms and maritime prepositioning force ships. The vessels are floating warehouses loaded with gear and fuel can be offloaded to support Marines ashore. The Puller and other AFSB variants are expected to support counter-piracy operations, maritime security operations, humanitarian and disaster relief missions, and crisis response missions, Navy officials have said.

Facing a gap between the number of amphibious ships in the fleet and demands for Marines deployed on amphibious ships, the Corps is looking to other vessels, including MLPs like the Puller, as alternative ways to launch missions from the sea.

“Born from a long-standing request from U.S. Central Command, the AFSB is an effective option to deploy forces for low-intensity operations without reducing the availability of amphibious warships required for other missions,” Marine Corps planning documents say.

## Upcoming Events



### Department of Texas State Convention

Holiday Inn Downtown-Market Square  
318 Cesar E. Chavez Blvd. • San Antonio, TX 78204  
(210) 225-3211 • **June 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015**



**National Convention**

Scottsdale Plaza Resort

7200 N. Scottsdale Rd. • Scottsdale, AZ 85253

**(SOLD OUT)**

**Alternate:** Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center  
(800) 540-0727

**August 8<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015**



**Modern Day Marine**

Marine Corps Base • Quantico, VA

**September 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015**



**Department of Texas**

**Fall Staff Meeting**

Crowley / Ft. Worth

**October 2015**

*Details To Be Determined*

# DEADLINE

for  
**Texas Marine  
Summer  
Edition  
will be  
July 15th**



Please submit articles/  
photos to  
Bernie & Juanita O'Dell  
@ 515 Hall St.,  
Graham, TX 76450 OR  
[juanita.odell@texasmcl.org](mailto:juanita.odell@texasmcl.org)

## The Military Spouse

When the good Lord was creating military spouses, He was into His sixth day of overtime.

An Angel appeared and said, "You're having a lot of trouble on this one."

What's wrong with the standard model?"

The Lord replied, "Have you ever seen the regulations?"

It has to be completely independent, must be

sponsored to get on base, have

the qualities of both mother and father during deployments, be a perfect hostess to four or 40, handle emergencies without military orders, cope with the flu and move around the world, have a kiss that cures anything from a child's torn valentine to a soldier's weary day, have the patience of a saint when waiting for the unit to return stateside, and have six pairs of soft hands."

The Angel shook her head slowly and said, "Six pair of hands? No way!"

And the Lord answered, "Don't worry. We'll make other military spouses to help. Besides, it's not the hands that are causing the problem – it's the heart. It must swell with pride, sustain the ache of separation, beat soundly when it's too tired to do so, be large enough to say 'I understand' when it doesn't, and say 'I love you,' regardless."

"Lord," said the Angel, touching his sleeve gently, "go to bed. You can finish that tomorrow."

"I can't," said the Lord. "I'm too close to creating something unique. Already I have one who can heal itself when sick, feed unexpected guests who are stuck in the area due to bad weather, and wave goodbye to its spouse from a pier or runway and understand it's important to the country that the spouse leave."

The Angel circled the model of the military spouse very slowly. "It's too soft," she sighed.

"But tough," the Lord said excitedly. "You cannot imagine what this being can do or endure!"

"Can it think?" the Angel asked.

"Can it think? It can convert 1400 to 2 p.m.!" the Lord said.

Finally, the Angel bent over and ran her finger across the cheek. "There's a leak," she pronounced. "I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model."

"It's not a leak," said the Lord. "It's a tear."

"What's it for?" asked the Angel.

"It's for joy, sadness, pain, loneliness and pride," the Lord said.

"You're a genius," said the Angel.

The Lord looked somber and said, "I didn't put it there."

~Author Unknown





# 2015 Department of Texas Marine Corps League State Convention

SAN ANTONIO, TX - JUNE 25TH – 28TH, 2015

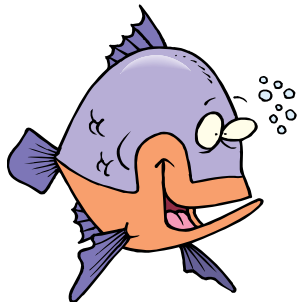


**HOTEL:** Holiday Inn Downtown – Market Square  
318 Cesar E. Chavez Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78204  
(210) 225-3211



**RATES:** \$99 per night (includes full hot breakfast buffet)

**DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS: JUNE 5, 2015**



**REGISTRATION:** MCL Member .. \$5  
MCL Auxiliary Member .. \$5

**SATURDAY NIGHT BANQUET:** \$35 per person  
(Choice of steak, chicken or fish)

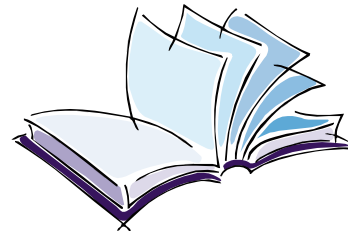
**DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION & BANQUET:  
JUNE 5, 2015**

**Make checks payable to "Alamo Detachment #315"  
and mail to: PO Box 831641, San Antonio, TX 78283-1641**



### PROGRAM ADS:

Back/Inside Back/Inside Front Covers .....	\$150
Full page .....	100
Half page .....	50
Quarter page .....	25
Business card .....	15
Name/Single Line .....	10



**DEADLINE FOR ADS: MAY 25, 2015**

**Make checks for ads payable to "Alamo Detachment #315."  
Mail check, along with ad, to: Bob Otto, PO Box 831641, San Antonio, TX 78283-1641  
(If you want to email ads, send to: [orlando@bestratamedia.net](mailto:orlando@bestratamedia.net))**

**Please secure forms for Registration & Program Ads from the  
Department Web Site: [www.texasmcl.org](http://www.texasmcl.org).**