

"LISTEN UP"

NEWSLETTER OF THE LCPL SQUIRE "SKIP" WELLS DETACHMENT 647



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SCOOP FROM THE CP

Yes Dear readers, the gavel has been passed, in this case to the Marine who recruited me to join MCL, in particular our detachment. Who knew that I would so much enjoy being back with my Corps family & friends. And thanks to "Listen Up" editor Sir Bernie. he asked that I write a note about relinquishing command. This is only the second time I've been given a subject to write about; last month it would was about the future and now this month my change of command (well that's better then don't let the door catch ya in the....!).

I don't even think about how many years it's been. I only think about what we're doing and how to keep us together and encourage others to join. I had an agenda for every meeting and ad-libbed quite a lot. I'm still sad to write that my computer skills are very limited, I'm a hunter & pecker and depend on others to publish what I write. Well that's what Marines do, work a whole lot alone but really depend on each other. I greatly mourned the passing of Raymond Frazier, he always had such a friendly attitude and pushed himself to the limit in our parade. Also, miss Art Dunlea as he was the spark in our fund raising & even introduced credit card usage. Then there was the sudden passing of Commandant Richard Wakefield whom I followed, he was a steady hand and supporter of our detachment. And of course we'll all never forget Harry Kone. He was a loyal detachment member and even at his young age of almost 103 still came for talk and a brew. We gave him some great birthday parties.

Hey, one of Harry's parties was via conference call. Had about 50 on the line. That pandemic time was tough. I feared "darn I'm sure going to loose this detachment"; people, we didn't loose a single member. And still were in the detachment membership plus column.

I enjoy that the community knows we exist. We pass the word at our meeting places, Toys 4 Tots, parades and when ever we wear our detachment shirt or simply say hello to an active service member or Vet.

Ok I'm getting off track. But that's what I do and I'll be hanging around as Jr Past Commandant. Maybe I'll learn some new things but I'll do what I can.

Commandant Gasper has my congratulations and support on assuming command.

Semper Fi,

Marine Corps League Mission Statement

The mission of the Marine Corps League is to promote the interest and preserve traditions of the United States Marine Corps; strengthen the fraternity of Marines and their families; serve Marines, FMF Navy Personnel who wear or have worn the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor; and foster the ideals of Americanism and patriotic volunteerism.

To all to whom these presents shall come, greeting.... You may recall these words – they appear on each of your promotion warrants. It is a formalized way of saying "to whom it may concern". Or in Marine Corps tradition: "Shut up and listen".

Our MCL mission statement is the reason we exist as an organization – our purpose and what we say we will do. I have thinking about it a lot over the past several months – as I came closer to becoming Commandant.

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One of my conclusions is that it is missing something that is unique to Detachment 647. It is missing: To promote the memory of LCpl Squire "Skip" Wells. We will not forget him. We should never miss the opportunity to tell people about Skip and why our Detachment is named for him. Semper Fi Brother, R.I.P.

This year we celebrate our Corps 250th birthday. Celebrating our birthday every year is one the unique traditions of the Corps. And our MCL mission statement calls on us to help preserve that tradition. Thinking forward – what are we going to do this year to help preserve that tradition. For myself, I would like to celebrate this birthday surrounded by Marines in dress blue uniforms. I hope to be able to join my grandson at his unit's birthday ball. He is at Cherry Point. (Can't wear my blues – don't have them anymore and besides they wouldn't fit.)

This year we also celebrate the short life of Skip Wells. This year is the 10th anniversary of his death. We must not let this anniversary go by without doing something special to honor him and his service to our country and Corps. Suggestions are appreciated. Volunteers to help make it happen are appreciated even more.

My thoughts for this year are forward looking. In the words of Omar Khayyam:

"The moving finger writes; and, having writ, moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit

(Scoop; continued on page 12)



**DETACHMENT YELLOW PAGES**

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MarCor, MCL and Veterans News

The Marine Corps and Army Must Integrate Armor in Amphibious Ops

When the Marine Corps needs armor, it will call on the Army. Will either service be ready?

(Or the “legacy” of General David Berger) Remark by editor

By Major Austin T. Schwartz, U.S. Army
 November 2024
 U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings
 Vol. 150/11/1,461

Marine Corps Essay Contest—Third Prize
 Sponsored by the U.S. Naval Institute

As the Department of Defense (DoD) turns its attention to countering and deterring China's People's Liberation Army (PLA), mastering amphibious assault seems paramount. Yet, the services are losing their expertise in integrating mobile protected

firepower (MPF) into amphibious assaults, and the joint force will be weaker for it. Having divested itself of its armored forces, the Marine Corps can no longer integrate organic MPF into its amphibious training and operations. If the service needs armor, then—Marine Corps Commandant General David H. Berger said it should look to the Army. But the Army is decades out of practice and does not train its armored crewmen for amphibious operations. Its doctrine lacks details on armor integration with amphibious forces, and the Army

has no units designated as “amphibious” to test new tactics and equipment. The Marine Corps and Army's training priorities, doctrine, and equipment are not aligned with the capabilities DoD expects of them, and ***this mismatch will prevent the joint force from successfully integrating armor into its amphibious operations.*** The joint force must remedy this misalignment.

(Amphibious; continued on page 4)



(Amphibious; continued from page 3)

History Of The Modern Amphibious

Assault

After the Allied failure at Gallipoli, many believed amphibious assault was obsolete. They concluded attempting to take a beachhead against modernized weapons was suicide. This did not deter the U.S. Marine Corps, which analyzed what would be necessary to conduct amphibious operations if the United States went to war with Japan. By 1938, the service had codified its findings in Fleet Training Publication Manual 167: Landing Operations Doctrine, and in 1943, it stood up the Troop Training Unit, Amphibious Training Command, Pacific Fleet, at Camp Elliott. There, Marine Corps and Army divisions trained in earnest. Throughout World War II, more amphibious training centers opened, evidence of the critical role amphibious operations played in the conflict.

Fortified machine-gun nests and bunkers overwatching beachheads led Army and Marine Corps leaders to deem MPF support necessary for infantry to storm beaches. However, the MPF was limited to 37-mm main-gun-equipped light tanks, which lacked the firepower to destroy enemy pillboxes. In addition, because the tanks were not amphibious, they were relegated to later waves of the assault. The development of heavier, armed amphibious tanks that could support the initial waves and use their firepower to destroy fortified enemy positions allowed commanders to defend beaches from counterattacks and exploit breakthroughs.

The combined arms team of infantry and armor, supported by naval fires and aerial bombings, became the linchpin of the United States' island-hopping campaign in the Pacific. Unfortunately, as time passed, the Army closed all its amphibious schoolhouses and focused on the Russian threat in Central Europe during the Cold War. The Marine Corps maintained expertise in amphibious assault but divested its MPF, which brought the joint force to where it stands today.

Doctrine, Training, And Education

DoD Directive 5100.01 tasks the Army and Marine Corps with conducting amphibious operations and gives the Marine Corps "primary responsibility for the development of amphibious doctrine, tactics, techniques, and equipment." Both services

have doctrine that describes amphibious operations and the integration of MPF. However, none provides much detail. *Joint Publication 3-02: Amphibious Operations* says tanks can be used in the first waves of an amphibious assault, add combat power and mobility for the landing force, and require special considerations for embarkation. While true, this also lacks detail. Army doctrine should provide it, but its manuals for armored formations do not discuss planning considerations for amphibious assaults. In addition, the Army is not currently training its armored crew members in amphibious operations, and it has failed to capitalize on opportunities to do so in exercises with the joint force and multinational partners.

Recently, the Army deployed forces to the Indo-Pacific during Talisman Sabre 23 and Balikatan 2024. In the former, the Army deployed a company of M1A2 Abrams tanks to train with Australian partners. Yet, the training was land-based and did not include amphibious operations. Balikatan 2024 saw Army and Marine Corps forces working jointly with the Philippine military to seize islands. During the exercise, the joint force showcased an assortment of capabilities, which included the Marine Corps' new amphibious combat vehicle (ACV) and littoral reconnaissance teams and the Army's Multi-Domain Task Force and amphibious assaults. Unfortunately, MPF was missing from this exercise, and, thus, integration techniques could not be practiced.

Balikatan 2024 showcased the Marine Corps' amphibious combat vehicle, but as currently armed, it could not neutralize reinforced bunkers and armored vehicles. *U.S. Marine Corps (Aidan Hekker)* This leaves the schoolhouses to prepare the joint force to integrate MPF into amphibious assault. The obvious incubators are the Marine Corps' Assault Amphibian School at Camp Pendleton and the Army's Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) at Fort Moore. The former runs five courses that educate and train Marines on amphibious assault—from instructing crews on operating mechanized vehicles in littoral environments to educating officers on planning considerations. Unfortunately, the course does not incorporate MPF or admit Army armor crews.

While the MCoE educates service members on the principles of MPF integration, it does not teach amphibious assault. Its Captains Career Course, for example, teaches MPF integration from the company to the brigade level. Recently, the course has turned its attention to the Indo-Pacific, including the employment of MPF in the region. However, its scenarios exclude amphibious assault. They center on the Korean Peninsula, with units already established there.

These shortcomings do not bode well if the joint force suddenly requires armored units to participate in amphibious assaults, as planners will not have been educated on the principles of these operations. When combined with the shortfalls in training and doctrine, the lack of preparedness is evident.

Equipment Shortfalls

The lack of proper equipment is another issue. To conduct MPF-integrated amphibious assaults, the joint force needs a fleet of connectors or landing ships capable of providing ship-to-shore mobility and logistical support. It also needs a properly amphibious MPF capable of being deployed in the first wave to support infantry units against an enemy's fortified positions.

The Marine Corps' move to become a leaner force has meant smaller connectors, which would be unable to support MPF logistically in an amphibious operation. Current connectors do not have the same capacity or capabilities as the military's legacy tank landing ships (LSTs). While the Army's logistical support vessel (LSV) can transport up to 15 M1A2 Abrams tanks, its maximum speed of 12.5 knots fully loaded is short of that required for survivability. Consequently, combatant commanders may be denied MPF integration or have to risk their combat power being destroyed before it can land.

The next hurdle is the lack of amphibious MPF. During Balikatan 2024, the Marine Corps' ACV demonstrated its ability to conduct an amphibious assault. However, although the ACV is armored, it does not meet the definition of MPF. The ACV can be mounted with a remote-operated heavy machine gun or 40-mm automatic grenade launcher, neither of which can neutralize reinforced bunkers and armored vehicles.

(Amphibious; continued on page 5)



(Amphibious; continued from page 4)

The ACV's armor rating is classified, but if it is similar to that of the Army's Stryker, it can protect against only up to 14.5-mm armor-piercing ammunition. A variant with a 30-mm cannon is in development, but one of the lessons of World War II amphibious assaults is that even 37-mm ammunition is not sufficient to defeat bunkers.

If the ACV cannot provide enough MPF, the Marine Corps must use the Army's tanks to fill the role. Marines have used the M1A2 in the past, so it seems the obvious choice. However, the Abrams' more than 74-ton weight limits its ability to be deployed en masse and the locations for deployment. In addition, the Abrams is not amphibious. It can be fitted with deep-water wading kits that allow it to ford water up to six feet, but it would not be able to launch as far out as the ACV. This means it could not lead the lighter armored vehicles on the initial wave and perform its intended purpose as MPF.

This leaves the Army's M10 Booker. Designed to support infantry, the Booker is half the weight of the Abrams. The Army identified a requirement for MPF support for its airborne units when seizing airfields as part of a joint forcible entry (JFE). The joint force defines seizing a beachhead as JFE, so it stands to reason that if the Army provides MPF for an amphibious assault, it will look to the M10 to fill that role. Unfortunately, the M10 also is not amphibious and lacks a deep-water wading kit. It must be delivered directly onto the beach. This lack of MPF designed for amphibious assault will handicap these operations.

Can The Postmodern Amphibious Assault Defeat The PLA?

Not all in the joint force see MPF as a requirement for amphibious operations. The units sent to Balikpapan 2024 suggest the joint force's priorities for the Indo-Pacific theater. The Army sent the 25th Infantry Division, which focused on conducting air assault operations with partners. The Army's contribution to taking islands was its Multi-Domain Task Force equipped with the high-mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS), not its armored forces. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps focused on

its littoral reconnaissance team concept to provide sensing for the Army's task force and the Marines' organic fire capabilities. This aligns with how then-Lieutenant General Eric Smith described the Marine Corps' new vision in which Marines use long-range precision fires for "killing armor at ranges . . . about 15, 20 times the range that a main battle tank can kill another main battle tank."

A Chinese Type 05 amphibious tank in a live-fire exercise in the South China Sea. While the U.S. joint force has moved toward smaller, distributed teams and lightly armored infantry, China has worked to integrate MPF into its amphibious assaults. China Military The joint force's priorities indicate it has moved past the modern amphibious assault to the postmodern, in which small, distributed teams will conduct exquisite targeting to destroy enemy positions and armor to enable lightly armored infantry to seize the beachhead. While this method of amphibious assault is the cutting-edge type of fighting the United States prefers, it is not sustainable. China has invested in its Marine Corps (PLANMC) to integrate MPF into its amphibious assaults. It also maintains amphibious combined arms brigades in its army (PLAGF). These amphibious combined arms battalions could be used to seize beachheads in Taiwan, with ZTD-05 amphibious tanks and their 105-mm cannons in the first wave to neutralize beach defenses. As of 2022, the PLAGF had six amphibious brigades, each with an estimated 5,000 soldiers and 400 vehicles. This does not include the PLANMC's eight brigades or the PLAGF's nonamphibious brigades that could be moved in to defend seized islands. The sheer volume of these forces makes targeting them all with indirect fires impossible.

In addition, precision munitions are not cheap, and the joint force's stockpiles are limited. Through war-gaming, the Center for Strategic and International Studies concluded a war with China would outpace the defense industrial base's ability to resupply the stockpiles. PLA blockades and long-range fires also could deny the joint force and its partners the ability to bring additional weapon systems and munitions into the theater. To put it into perspective, a

HIMARS battery carries 36 rockets, while an armor company carries 588 rounds. HIMARS should be used against high-priority targets such as enemy ships and airfields, and armor and infantry units should target the more numerous bunkers and enemy tanks.

Recommendations

The joint force lacks the foundational pillars of doctrine, training, education, and equipment to integrate MPF into potential amphibious assaults. Meanwhile, the PLA has positioned itself to become the dominant force in the littoral by investing in its amphibious forces. These issues seem daunting, but the joint force can remedy them if it takes quick action. First, the Army and Marine Corps must close the doctrinal, training, and education gaps. The Assault Amphibian School should be opened to Army soldiers, and the Army's MCoE should update its training scenarios and armor doctrine to include amphibious assault. Once the Army has been trained to use MPF in an amphibious assault, the two services should prioritize joint training events that attach Army MPF to Marine amphibious units. Next, the joint force should acquire the equipment necessary to conduct amphibious assaults. The Army should focus on producing an amphibious tank, perhaps a new model of the M10 Booker. Once the amphibious tank has been finalized, its specifications should be used to create a new LST capable of supporting an integrated amphibious force.

Finally, the joint force must merge the modern and postmodern amphibious assault concepts. The Army's Multi-Domain Task Force and Marine Corps' stand-in force cannot seize and hold land independently. They will play a critical role in obtaining sea control, protecting sea lines of communication, and setting conditions for amphibious assaults through preparatory fires and effects, but if used in a vacuum, they will not provide the capability to seize and defend land that will be critical to the joint force in the Indo-Pacific. Prioritizing these concepts at the cost of preparing to conduct MPF-integrated amphibious assaults will lead the joint force to cede island after island to the PLA until it learns the lessons of history.



"The Man Who Rode the Thunder..."

The Skies over Virginia and North Carolina

July 26, 1959

From *Check-Six.com*
Aviation History & Adventure First-Hand!
 November 11, 2024

LtCol William H. Rankin, USMC On a quiet Sunday afternoon in 1959, Marine Corps aviator William Rankin awoke, intending to fly a routine training flight in nearly perfect weather back to his home base. But nothing in his previous 39 years of life could have fully prepared him – mentally or physically – for what would happen to him next and, at the same time, put him in the history books.

Every Marine's a Rifleman...

Born in 1920 - oldest of three children and a native of Pittsburgh's West End in Pennsylvania - William Henry Rankin graduated from Langley High School, where he was offered several football scholarships to several colleges. But, after a series of odd jobs, and having been inspired by a neighbor - in April of 1940 - he enlisted in the Marine Corp and went to Parris Island for basic training. When the United States entered the second World War, he was sent to the Pacific theatre, defending the atoll of Funafuti and earning himself a field commission as an officer, all the while focused on rigorous physical training while dodging the frequent Japanese bombing raids.

Looking to get into combat after Funafuti, he applied to fleet gunnery school and hoped to lead troops in the then-upcoming Marianas campaign. Instead, he was ordered back stateside to instruct machine gun tactics. Disheartened and still seeking action, he applied to flight training – even though he was older and – as a Captain - was higher ranked than typical candidates, he was accepted to start in June of 1945 in Dallas, Texas. Although the war ended prior to his graduation, he still earned his Naval Aviator wings, at Pensacola in September of 1946, and remained in the Marines, flying F4U Corsairs.

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 took Rankin – now a Major – initially to a desk job in North Carolina. However, in July of 1951, he was ordered into the heart of the conflict, flying more than fifty intensive close air support missions without a scratch with Marine Attack Squadron 212 (VMA-212 – the "Devil Cats") from K-3 on the embattled peninsula's eastern coast.

He saw intense skirmishes and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his leadership and bravery during an attack on an artil-

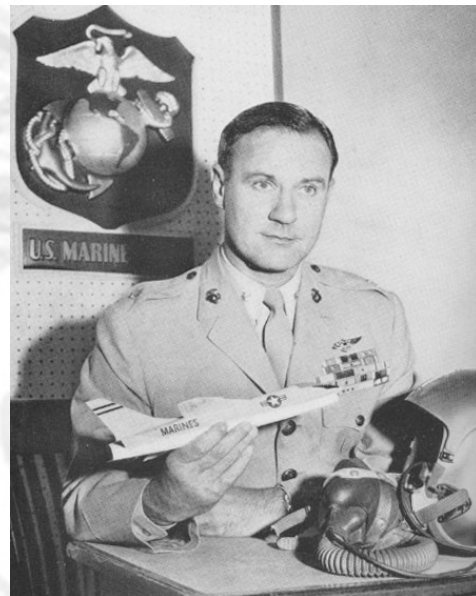
lery position near the famed "Bloody Ridge" on September 5th, 1951 – despite his aircraft received intense damage, and being forced to bail-out. Luckily, he wasn't seriously injured, evaded capture, and was rescued by a South Korean patrol.

Back in Action...

Rankin's plane back on deck - 132 holes later A month later – Rankin's squadron was transferred aboard the escort carrier USS Rendova (CVE-114) off the Korean coastline, where he quickly earned another DFC for an impromptu attack on a supply convoy in Haeju. But, on a December bombing raid on the heavily defended bridge complex at Toko-Ri, several anti-aircraft artillery charges tore through Rankin's cockpit, wounding his legs. He struggled to control the damaged craft and managed to successfully land on the carrier's deck. Afterwards, the deck crew counted 132 holes in his Corsair.

But the wounds to Rankin were too severe and would require surgery. The war – for him – was over. He returned stateside to San Diego for hospitalization and recuperation. After recovering from his injuries, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and transitioned into jet aircraft – the first being the Grumman F9F "Panther". Being a quick learner and outstanding manager, in June 1955, he was assigned to take command of the Marine Attack Squadron 121 (VMA-121 – the "Wolf Raiders"). Flying piston-powered Douglas AD-1 and AD-2 Skyraiders from Pyeongtaek Airfield (K-6) to enforce the Korean Armistice, the unit - under his leadership - received numerous commendations, including the Marine Corps aviation safety award for 1955.

In May of 1957, Rankin took command of Marine Fighter Squadron 122 (VMF-122, nicknamed "Candystrippers") which flew jet-powered North American FJ Furies - a naval version of the supersonic F-86 Sabre. Several months later, in January of 1958, the squadron was ordered to convert to the new Chance-Vought F8U Crusader – becoming the first Marine unit to do so - and that prompted Rankin to change the unit's nickname to "Crusaders". Successful in developing the policies, procedures, and practices that the entire Corps would utilize in converting to the Crusader, he was reassigned as the standardization / evaluation inspector of Marine Air Group 32, becoming responsible for enforcing his doctrines.



A Routine Mission...

In July of 1959, the 38-year-old Rankin was asked to give Navy Lieutenant Herbert Nolan a high-altitude navigation checkout in the single-seat F8U Crusader. The plan was to fly in separate orange and silver Crusaders northwards from Beaufort, South Carolina, to Weymouth Naval Air Station, Massachusetts, and back.

The north-bound portion of the formation flight that Saturday - July 25th - was in beautiful weather, making for an uneventful journey. However, upon arrival to Weymouth, Nolan felt that his plane's radio was giving him trouble. A line mechanic checked the set and assessed that it was not going to be a simple fix, so the pair remained overnight as the technician repaired the vexsome comm setup.

The following afternoon, on Sunday, July 26th, 1959, Rankin and Nolan consulted with the base meteorologist about the weather expectations for their return flight. The briefer warned the duo of the possibility of thunderstorms and cumulonimbus clouds between 30,000 and 40,000 feet in tops in southern Virginia, but, otherwise, an ordinary flight was to be anticipated.

Rankin asked, "Well, since I can go to 50,000 feet if necessary, that won't bother me. I can get over this weather with ease. Any frontal conditions?"

(Thunder; continued on page 7)



(Thunder; continued from page 6)

"Negative, colonel," replied the briefer. "The weather is strictly of the isolated thunderstorm variety."

Figuring that – if any storms were encountered – they could just climb over them, they filed VFR flight plans for 44,000 feet, at an airspeed of 540 mph. They figured they would be back in South Carolina some 70 minutes after takeoff.

A Flight of Two...

After a series of preflight system and instrument checks, the pair took off. Rankin's Crusader, naval bureau number 143696, was assigned to the Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 32 (H&MS-32) but he used his old squadron call sign, "Tiger One," and Nolan used "Tiger Two." Leaving New England, the flight proceeded as predicted – a perfect flight in perfect weather. That was, until they approached Norfolk, Virginia.

There, Rankin noticed the "dark, massive rolling clouds of a thunderstorm" looming on the horizon. Opting to climb over the 45,000-foot-tall mass, he and Nolan leveled off at 48,000-foot mark, and turned past the Norfolk radio beacon. He checked the time – a few minutes to 6 – and started to relax, while quietly rehearsing the familiar arrival into Beaufort in his head. A glance to his instrument panel showed that his engine was showing a slight power loss and, having lost some altitude, he proceeded to climb back to his previous flight level. But as the plane passed through 47,000 feet at an airspeed of Mach 0.82, Rankin heard a loud thump, and a rumbling sound began to growl from his only engine.

At nine miles above the earth's surface, the red 'FIRE' warning light illuminated. Instinctively, he quickly retarded the engine throttle. There was a problem with his only engine! He quickly radioed Nolan, "Tiger Two, this is Tiger One. I am having engine trouble – stand by. I might have to eject."

Nolan responded: "Roger, Tiger One. If you have to go, let me know," as Rankin's warning light dimmed. The power reduction seemed to be working. But then, the needle of the tachometer rapidly tumbled to zero in the sunlit silence. This wasn't a simple jet flame-out – the engine must have seized!

Rankin pulled a lever in his cockpit to deploy an auxiliary power turbine – which would maintain the plane's electrical & hydraulic control systems – but the lever broke off in his hands. "I had no power, radio, instruments or control over the plane," Rankin later recalled. "I

had to get out fast. Otherwise, speed would build up and I'd never survive ejection from the craft."

As the Crusader continued to climb, but slow, above the clouds, Rankin quickly weighed his options: he could try to let the plane descend, but as it would accelerate, it risked entering into a spin which, with no control of the plane, would be unrecoverable and make ejection near-suicidal. Only wearing his helmet and his blue, lightweight, flight suit, and despite an outside temperature of -70° , at 6:00pm, Rankin squared his shoulders, tighten his straps, and muttered to himself, "This is going to be a pretty high one." He had made his decision – to eject!

In accordance with his training, he pulled the two overhead handles on his seat, triggering the ejection sequence. Instantly, a canvas wind-screen came down over his face, and an explosive charge propelled the plane's seat, with Rankin strapped aboard, through the plastic canopy, and away from the crippled Crusader.

Into the Atmosphere...

Then, a cable from the plane yanked the metal seat off Rankin's posterior, leaving him with nothing more than his helmet, oxygen mask assembly, and parachute, which was preset to open automatically at 10,000 feet. The sudden rush of air stripped Rankin's left glove from his hand.

But that was merely the beginning of his long, lonely, fall to earth...

"I had a terrible feeling like my abdomen was bloated twice its size. My nose seemed to explode. For 30 seconds – I thought the decompression had me," recounted Rankin in his memoirs. "It was a shocking cold all over. My ankles and wrists began to burn as though somebody had put Dry Ice on my skin. My left hand went numb." Within seconds, his extremities became frostbit, and the sudden decompression caused him to bleed from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, causing, "my eyes felt as though they were being ripped from their sockets, my head as if it were splitting into several parts, my ears bursting inside."

Despite the merciless assault on his tumbling body, he was conscious, even as the pain permeated every inch of his stocky frame in the bitter cold. Owing to his training, he managed to quickly find his oxygen mask and its five-minute supply of air, but allowed himself to continue to free fall. "It seemed like I free-fell an eternity," Rankin recalled. "All this time I had this keen desire to pull the ripcord. I had to keep telling myself, 'If you do, you'll slow down and freeze to death or die from lack of oxygen.'

Just as I was considering pulling the cord, I felt a shock."

While still in the upper regions of the thunderstorm, with near-zero visibility, the parachute opened. "I looked up to see the chute. All I could see was clouds. But I could tell from pulling on the risers that I had a good chute." He quickly calculated that, assuming a reasonable descent rate of a thousand feet per minute, he would be on the ground in ten minutes.

However, the bellowing storm clouds had something else in mind for the planeness pilot.

His parachute was gradually forced upwards by warm, rising winds. "I saw that I was in an angry ocean of boiling clouds, blacks and grays and whites, spilling over each other, into each other, digesting each other. I became a veritable molecule trapped in the thermal pattern of nature's heat engine. I was buffeted in all directions—up, down, sideways, clockwise, counter-clockwise, over and over; I tumbled, spun, and zoomed straight up, straight down, and I was rattled violently, as though a monstrous cat had caught me by the neck... Before long, I found out the storm had allies with whom I had to do battle, physically and mentally: thunder, lightning, hail, and rain. I was afraid I wouldn't make it. It seemed like an eternity."

"I'd see lightning. Boy, do I remember that lightning. I never exactly heard the thunder; I felt it. I remember falling through hail, and that worried me; I was afraid the hail would tear the chute. Sometimes I was falling through heavy water—I'd take a breath and breathe in a mouthful of water. Sometimes I had the sensation I was looping the chute. I was blown up and down as much as 6,000 feet at a time. It went on for a long time, like being on a very fast elevator, with strong blasts of compressed air hitting you." At one point, a lightning bolt lit up his parachute canopy, making Rankin believe that he had died.

"At one point I got seasick and heaved. I went up and joined the chute. It draped over me like a sheet, and I was afraid that when I blossomed again, I'd be tangled in the shrouds and risers. But I wasn't, thank God."

A Literal Landfall!

And he began the approach the ground, more pleasant changes occurred in his environment. "At last, I realized I was getting warmer. The air was smooth. And rain was falling on me. I figured I was down to 300 or 500 feet. I told myself, 'All I have to do now is make a good landing.'" Suddenly, he emerged from the overcast, about 300 feet above the ground, and spotted evergreen trees – it was the first time he had seen the ground since he ejected from the plane.

(Thunder; continued on page 8)



(Thunder; continued from page 7)

Swept by stiff ground winds, and in the darkness of the storm, Rankin's chute fouled in the branches of a tall pine tree, and he slammed headfirst into the conifer's trunk. He disconnected himself from the parachute, as he recalled it, "and the next thing I knew I was on the deck." He embraced the wet loamy soil and felt the cool wind blow over his battered physique. But the pains of his body compelled him to seek help – the ordeal was not over, yet. Groggily, he rose to his feet – stiff, cold and numb – with his crash helmet knocked askew. Almost hysterical, he stumbled into the surrounding wooden thicket and then, said to himself: You've come this far down for this? Let's get organized.

He checked his wristwatch, which read 6:40 pm, figured he had landed at a logging camp, armed himself with his issued survival knife, and he began walking, or as Rankin put it, "having lost a great deal of blood, stumbled more than walked" a procedural square search through the woods. After walking out two ninety-degree turns, he found himself on a dirt country road that took him through a cornfield, and onto a nearby highway. A dozen or so cars passed him as he stood on the road – wet, bloody, stained, and exhausted – waving weakly. He laid down in the road, in an effort to force a motorist to stop, but several just drove around the distressed aeronaut.

Good Samaritans...

Finally, a small boy, riding with his family's car on North Carolina State Highway 305, saw Rankin and cried, "Dad! That's a jet pilot. He's in trouble. Stop. Help him!" The boy's father,

Judson Dunning, slowed the car and stopped for Rankin.

Forcefully, Rankin barked to the driver, "Help me. I'm a pilot. I've just ejected from an airplane. Take me to a hospital." Dunning directed him to the front seat of the car. After introductions, the pilot gifted his helmet to the Dunning boys – Charles, Earl, and Jerry – in gratitude for spotting him. Later, the family would retrace Rankin's mile-long path on the ground and recover his parachute & survival gear.

Unable to drive Rankin to a hospital since they were low on gas, the Dunnings took the disheveled aviator to a country store in Rich Square, North Carolina, where he collapsed on the floor while waiting for an ambulance to carry him to Roanoke-Chowan Hospital in nearby Ahoskie. Once under medical care, he was treated for internal bleeding, broken bones, and frostbite.

Rankin's pilotless Crusader, however, descended low over several homes shortly after 6 pm, and exploded in a pea field, near Coleman's sawmill on State Highway 258, about a half mile from the town of Scotland Neck – some 20 miles to the south of where he came down. Luckily, no one on the ground was hurt as the disabled jet plowed a 20-foot-deep crater as it nearly vaporized in a ball of flame.

Sifting the Wreckage...

An hour after the crash, rescue crews from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base were at the crash site of #696. Search crews were guided by locals to the wreckage in the darkness – unaware the pilot had been successfully rescued. While little debris was recovered, a key piece of

evidence to the mishap's source – a part of an engine-driven fuel pump – proved the jet's turbines had seized, and later confirmed Rankin's decision to eject when he did was the best course of action.

Rankin in the Hospital The next day, around noon, Rankin was moved by ambulance to Cherry Point Marine Base in North Carolina, and was later transferred to Beaufort Naval Hospital, where he told reporters that "I'll be back in the air in a month" although he did spend several weeks in the hospital recovering. He was discharged from the hospital in mid-August into a program of outpatient physical rehabilitation.

Returning to Duty...

As a result of the rapid decompression, doctors tested Rankin in a hypobaric chamber to ensure no lasting ill effects from his airborne ordeal. With nothing found, he returned to flight duties and was later sent to Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk. While there, Rankin wrote a book about the experience, as well as his career to that point, entitled "The Man Who Rode the Thunder" which was published by Prentice Hall in 1961. His experiences have also been recounted in numerous books on aviation and weather phenomenon.

According to the Naval Aviation Safety Center, Rankin holds the distinction of having survived the longest parachute descent in history – over 40 minutes.

He retired from the Marine Corps in 1964, appeared once on "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson" in March of 1971, and continued to live a quiet life until he passed away on July 6, 2009, at the age of 89.

Recruit to Gunny:

1st Marine graduates from talent acquisition program

By Hope Hodge Seck
Military Times
Dec 20, 2024

When **Justin Kelley** left the Air Force in 2015, he was an E-5 – a staff sergeant in the service's rank structure. But when he graduated Marine Corps boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, on Friday, he became a **gunnery sergeant** – a two-rank promotion that will propel him directly into the Corps' seasoned noncommissioned officer ranks.

This unconventional promotion, particularly for the Marine Corps, which often requires service transfers to start from the beginning of the rank structure, is thanks to the **Marine Corps Talent Acquisition Program**, or MCTAP, an initiative announced earlier this year designed to attract high demand cyberspace warfare and signals intelligence talent into the service with the added incentive of seniority.

(Ready made Gunny; continued on page 9)



Recruit Justin Kelley sets security during the Crucible on MCRD Parris Island, Dec. 5, 2024. (Staff Sgt Brendan Custer/Marine Corps)



Ready-made Gunny; continued from page 8)

From that group, three were selected in an intensive application and interview process to participate in the program. Kelley, the only selectee who was not a prior Marine, was the first to enter the pipeline, checking into boot camp in September alongside all the other young recruits.

In an interview with Marine Corps Times shortly after completing the final Crucible exercise and receiving his Eagle, Globe and Anchor emblem, Kelley, 38, acknowledged he'd had some misgivings about attending boot camp as a mid-career dad with 20 years more experience than most of his fellow recruits.

"What I thought was going to be the most challenging was what I ended up loving the most about this entire process," Kelley said. "As an older man, I was not looking forward to a squad bay with 17, 18-year-olds. ... What I found, though, is that I loved being with the young Marines. I loved being a part of their journey of becoming Marines."

"They looked at me as an older individual that had expertise to give, and from teaching them how to share to going through 'Dear John' letters with some of them, it was a rewarding experience for me that I didn't expect to have."

If the other recruits saw Kelley as a boot camp "dad," Kelley said he made sure that the drill instructors knew he respected them. In a high-pressure panel interview before senior officers and NCOs as part of the MCTAP selection process, he said he was asked about that dynamic in particular.

"The answer I gave them was, absolutely all those Marines and drill instructors know infinitely more about being a Marine than I do," Kelley said. "We can't think about it in terms of age."

For their part, he said, the DIs treated him no differently than any other recruit. Appointed a "guide" for his platoon, Kelley was even on the receiving end of extra incentive training when recruits in his unit fell short of expectations.

"Honestly, that ended up being kind of a blessing," Kelley said, explaining that the

experiences gave him a chance to mentor the younger recruits and encourage them in their growth.

Kelley's drive to return to service after a decade in the Air Force and a civilian career as an entrepreneur, software developer and contractor training troops stemmed from a desire to put the skills he'd acquired to the most effective use possible in preparing for future conflicts.

With his cyber skills, that made him exactly the sort of candidate the Marines were seeking for the MCTAP.

"By wearing the uniform again, you're putting skin into the game and saying, 'I'm committed to making this a better process,' and you're also able to make those decisions, effect that policy change in a way that you would never be able to [out of uniform]," Kelley said.

Boot camp, an immutable requirement for all MCTAP participants except for prior Marines, did come with intense physical challenges, but Kelley said he actually found these easier in his late 30s than he had in entry-level Air Force training as a younger man, crediting "a different type of mental fortitude" he'd acquired over the years.

His most memorable experiences, he said, were the extreme physical tests that forced the recruits to work together.

"The bond that you felt with that was so strong," Kelley said. "It's a very special feeling to have such a bond with young men that you never knew before, and in normal circumstances, you never would talk to."

After Kelley graduates boot camp Dec. 20, he's headed to **Marine Corps Cyber Command**, his destination unit, to begin putting his expertise to work as a member of the Marine Corps Reserves.

He knows that his presence may be viewed with suspicion by some Marines in a service that places a heavy emphasis on earning rank and status.

"Even in my short time here, you know, there have been some individuals who

have been ... concerned that this is going to be tarnishing the respect that is due to staff NCOs and NCOs in the Marine Corps," Kelley said.

"I have no illusions about the fact that I know more about anyone else, about learning constantly from all the way from a staff sergeant to a lance corporal. Once I've had that conversation with them, every one of them to a T has said, 'Well, okay, you know, maybe this program will work.' Are there going to be those that are still naysayers? Absolutely, and the only way to prove them wrong is to do the job and do it well."

The two MCTAP applicants in the final stages of selection, Goyda said, are both prior Marines who left the service as junior NCOs. They would not have to attend boot camp but may have required follow-on training before being able to report to their unit.

MCTAP, currently a pilot program set to expire in 2026, is still accepting applications, Goyda said at talentmanagement@usmc.mil. He emphasized that MCTAP is not intended to be a shortcut to rank and seniority, but a recognition of expertise.

"They're not being fast-tracked," Goyda said, "They're just earning their experience and education outside of the military."

As for Kelley, he hopes that MCTAP will eventually work its way out of a job as the Corps' ranks of cyber and signals intelligence experts become more robust.

"The point of the talent acquisition pilot is to find those skillsets that are desperately needed in the community and bring them to the Corps," he said. "If I'm not doing my job, that means that a replacement for me in industry needs to be brought in."

"My aspirations are that this is no longer necessary and that we're able to transpose our knowledge and build a core cadre of individuals that know what needs to be done, how to do it, and thus make this unnecessary. That's my big picture."



DETACHMENT BULLETIN BOARD

HAVE YOU MOVED?

Is Your Address Wrong?

Please send change of address
to:

Adjutant, Det 647
3279 Holly Mill Ct.
Marietta, GA 30062

email: mcldet647@gmail.com

ATTENTION TO ORDERS

...NOTICE...



Don't be a ring-a-dingy during our meeting. Turn off your dadgum phone **BEFORE** you receive that unimportant call.

CHAPLAIN'S INFORMATION

Chaplain Griffen would appreciate being notified of members or relatives in ill health or distress.

Call him at:

678-612-2345 or
email at: winwithgod@bellsouth.net

UPCOMING EVENTS

March Meeting
03/01/25
1100



March Happenings



| | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 9th MEB @ DaNang | 08 1965 | <i>W. Hughes BD</i> | 17 |
| <i>M. Giulianelli BD</i> | 23 | Iwo Jima Secured | 26 1945 |
| MB @ 8th&I Located | 31 1801 | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |



Heaven's Unit Diary



Editor's Ramblings



Annette & Frankie, (Evelers) Morocco 1959

The Winner at Iwo

Lieutenant General
Holland M. Smith, USMC

The Loser at Iwo

Lieutenant General
Tadamichi Kuribayashi

Semper Fi,
Bernie



19 FEB.. - 26 MARCH, 1945

| <u>Marine</u> | <u>Tour of Duty</u> | <u>Date of Last Transfer</u> |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Raymond G. Davis, COOH | 1915-2003 | 3 Sept. 2003 |
| Joseph O'Connor | 1934-2009 | 14 Oct. 2009 |
| Squire K. P. Wells | 1994-2015 | 16 July 2015 |
| Al Oeade | 1937-2016 | 30 Apr. 2016 |
| Dorothy Pollock | 1920-2016 | 13 Aug. 2016 |
| Robert Kitchen | 1949-2017 | 21 Feb. 2017 |
| John W. Delton | Unk-2017 | 23 Oct. 2017 |
| Gene W. Whitten | 1933-2017 | 12 Nov. 2017 |
| George W. Lewis | 1936-2020 | 28 Feb. 2020 |
| George Bailey | 1933-2020 | 18 June 2020 |
| Raymond Frazier | 1953-2021 | 1 Feb. 2021 |
| Charlie B. Stephenson | 1923-2021 | 21 Aug. 2021 |
| Arthur Dunlea | 1944-2021 | 1 Dec. 2021 |
| Richard Wakefield | 1943-2022 | 27 Oct. 2022 |
| Harry Kone | 1920-2022 | 30 Dec. 2022 |
| Neal Lawrence | 1938-2023 | 17 Oct. 2023 |



BEEN THERE, DONE THAT





Listen Up
c/o Editor
4460 Celebration Blvd.
Apt: 2001
Acworth, Ga 30101



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(Scoop; continued from page 2)

shall lure it back to cancel half a line, nor all thy ^{years} wash out a word of it."

At the same time, we mustn't forget our past – especially the people who have helped us to get here. I can't list everyone, but I want to give a shout out for these members of the detachment:

Doug Tasse – You joined the MCL in January 2018 and jumped right in and got involved. Adjutant in May that same year, SrVice in 2019, and then Commandant in 2020. You led us through the COVID challenges. Thank you for your efforts, especially for your years as our commandant.

Christian Roberts – I think I heard you say that for the first time in 20 years you are not in a MCL officer position. Among the positions you have held are: Detachment Commandant, Department of GA Commandant, Judge Advocate, Paymaster, and others. Thank you – you have quite a track record.

Bud Krueger – We finally have bylaws. It was a long time coming. Thank you.

And all of the others (I don't have space to name all of you) who have contributed to the successes in our mission – thank you

And in another tradition of the Corps – the assumption of command that is issued upon taking command of a unit:

Effective February 1, 2025 I have assumed all duties as the Commandant of the LCpl Squire "Skip" Wells Detachment 647 of the Marine Corps League. All effective orders and directives issued by my predecessors remain in effect.

Or more simply: Continue to March

Semper Fi,

Tony

