"LISTEN UP"

NEWSLETTER OF THE LCPL SQUIRE "SKIP" WELLS DETACHMENT 647

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VOLUME III NUMBER IV | ONE NATION, UNDER GOD | APRIL 2025

SCOOP FROM THE CP

Our April meeting was, in part, a celebration – Jerry Foulis has escaped from his medically imposed quarantine and returned to active involvement in our Detachment. He had been in medical quarantine since November. We had been holding the Jr Vice Commandant position open pending his return so our meeting included his election and induction as Jr Vice. Welcome back Jerry! Congratulations! OORAH!

We also presented Certificates of Recognition to Doug Tasse for his service as Commandant, and to Bud Krueger for his service as Judge Advocate. We have one more to present, to Christian Roberts, for his 28+ years of service (in lots of different positions) to the MCL Thank you.

Another reason to celebrate is the Dept of GA's online portal for making payments and sending documents to the Department. The recent new member application and dues submittal Paymaster Thomas submitted took about 3 weeks from submission to final processing at National. By check and mail, it generally took at least twice as long.

Part of our MCL mission is to "serve Marines, FMF Corpsman, and FMF Chaplains". Here is one way the Dept of GA is responding to that mission.

MAY MEETING
Sat. 10th
at 1100
DAVE POE'S BBQ
660 Whitlock Ave NW, Marietta
33° 57' 10.30"N - 84° 34' 16.91"W

Over the past few years several detachments have had members experiencing damage from severe weather and requiring assistance. Hurricane Helene in late September 2024 caused damage in the Augusta and Savannah areas – several MCL members needed assistance. As a result of these events the Department of Georgia has disaster assistance for MCL members. This includes a Disaster Relief Fund. You can make a personal donation to this fund through the Department website.

However, before relief can be provided, we need to know who needs assistance. Let me know if you are in need. Don't wait for me to contact you.

We had a severe storm pass through the area during March. Thankfully, Detachment members were spared from the bad effects of the storm other than a fallen tree (with no additional damage) and several reports of minor water intrusion.

March was not without some sorrow. During the month we lost:

- Al Yates – Past Commandant of the MCL Dept of GA
- Gene Hackman – Actor who served in the Marines 1947 - 1952
- Jean Whitten – Wife of deceased Detachment member Gene Whitten

Keep them and their loved ones in your thoughts and prayers.
The death of Gene Hackman and his wife was tragic. After she died his dementia prevented him from taking care of himself and seeking help. And no one intervened. Who is your "guardian angel"? Who checks on you? What have you planned with them – their response if they haven't had contact over a set period of time? And do they know to contact us, if necessary.

Our next Detachment meeting is May 10 due to the Dept of GA convention in Columbus. As a result, we postpone our normal 1st Saturday of the month meeting to the 2nd Saturday. See you there.

Semper Fi,

Tony

Detachment Officers

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Web Sgt(s).....	Getzie Lamar *Getzie.lamar@gmail.com* Susan Caolo *susan@scaolo.com*

Detachment Yellow Pages

Detachment Commandant……..	1-(678)-270-8002	Military Records, DD-214's. . . .	1-(314) 592-1150
Detachment Adjutant……..	1-(770)-895-4441	Social Security.	1-(800) 772 1213
HQMC Records Correspondence	1-(314) 801-0800	VA Benefits and Assistance	1-(800) 827 1000
TRICARE South.	1-(888)-777-8343	Georgia Dept. of Veterans Service	1-(404)-656-2300

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MarCor, MCL and Veterans News

Treat Junior Marines Better

By First Lieutenant Grant Boyes, USMC
February 2025
U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings
Vol. 151/2/1,464

Many leaders believe junior enlisted Marines make foolish decisions and therefore deserve to be treated like children. Within the first couple of weeks at the Basic School—the course that trains and educates newly commissioned Marine Corps officers in professional knowledge, esprit de corps, and leadership—this imprudent message comes through loud and clear. This patronizing attitude seems to infect much of the service. Not only does it underestimate the intellectual and technical depth of junior enlisted Marines, but it also affects the ways inexperienced platoon commanders shape and cultivate their junior subordinates. The next generation of officers must recognize and treat junior and inexperienced enlisted service members for who they truly are—highly capable, valuable team members.

Don't Confuse Inexperience and Inadequacy

"Do you really think a private first class or lance corporal would be able to understand this?" has become a common refrain among officers. To emphasize the need to simplify key areas of an operations order, junior officers often ask what junior enlisted members will be able to understand. Instead of explaining how straightforward and uncomplicated tasking statements and coordinating instructions are the most effective way to communicate, Marine Corps leaders imply those who receive their orders need everything to be dumbed down. This can quickly inculcate an arro-

(Junior Marines; continued on page 3)

Marines at the School of Infantry handling M4 recoilless rifles during their training. ***Junior Marines take on some of the service's most dangerous jobs—jobs that require extensive critical thinking—and should be treated as smart and capable individuals.*** *U.S. Marine Corps (Bryan Nygarrd)*

(Junior Marines; continued from page 2)

gant and smug outlook for young officers, and it does not stop at orders. They can begin to view junior enlisted Marines as not just inexperienced but also incapable of understanding the key technical details of their field.

This approach confuses inexperience with inadequacy. It can lead to an insidious conclusion that junior Marines are incapable of taking care of themselves. Young officers anxiously worry about behavior issues from newly minted Marines they have yet to actually meet. We almost expect junior enlisted Marines to perform foolish, delinquent actions worthy of punishment. Viewing leadership as discipline and correction fuels a pessimistic attitude toward junior Marines.

Uncommon Valor Starts with Trust

Such attitudes fly in the face of the reality of U.S. military service. The Marine Corps talks a great deal about decentralization and empowering subordinates. All services allow junior members to carry out some of the most difficult, deadly, and vital jobs. It is junior Marines who clear rooms during urban combat, operate and fire machine guns, and keep mortars and artillery firing to support those maneuvers. They shoulder Stinger missiles to defend the most critical assets in team positions distant from their section leaders and platoon commanders. These tasks require extensive critical thinking and an unrelenting, deep conviction. Outside the realm of combat arms, junior service members are responsible for maintaining service vehicles, aircraft, and naval vessels. Often in exceptionally technical jobs, junior service members must understand intricate mechanical details.

After the Battle of Iwo Jima, Admiral Chester Nimitz famously said "Uncommon valor was a common virtue." Amid this service-wide heroism, 27 Medals of Honor were awarded for extraordinary courage and valor. Marine Corps Private Jack Lucas received one. When attacked by a Japanese patrol, Private Lucas jumped on two hand grenades to save his comrades. Seriously wounded, he somehow survived the bodily injuries. In 1945, Lucas was 17 years old; he had lied about his age and forged his mother's signature to enlist. Before Iwo Jima, he deserted his assigned unit to seek combat. While his decisions may not have always been the right ones, Lucas's story demonstrates how leaders should lead junior enlisted Marines. They cannot condone and cultivate disorderly conduct, but they can choose to treat enlisted Marines like the functioning, intuitive, able human beings they are. Marine Corps leaders can trust them to get the job done when they have given them the right tools to succeed. Jack Lucas's story demonstrates the bravery and potential of the most junior enlisted service members.

Instead of assuming Private Lucas was "just another" incapable junior Marine, key leaders showed trust and confidence in him. Leaders must be

(Junior Marines; continued on page 4)

(Junior Marines; continued from page 3)
able to plan and carry out unit and individual training to grow their subordinates into professionals. In some fields, privates and lance corporals will quickly become noncommissioned officers and mentor the next group of Marines. Not stopping at military occupational specialty or billet proficiency, however, good leaders must seek to cultivate their young, enlisted subordinates into better citizens, better Marines, and—most important—better people. At some point, every service member will take off their uniform, end their service, and return to the civilian world.

Although most officers understand this, too often junior leaders can neglect this difficult and stressful task. Seemingly burdensome, junior enlisted Marines make mistakes that require strict discipline and sometimes tough punitive measures. Leaders should, however, avoid confusing inexperience—or sometimes immature, unruly behavior—with an inability to perform their duties or develop into better Marines. Instilling trust and confidence in their abilities will remind junior enlisted Marines that their leaders care and are also willing to train and empower them to build their own decision-making skills and character. Junior officers should make this their goal.

Leaders Must Ignite Inherent Potential

Although only a dramatization, the HBO series Band of Brothers includes a powerful example of inspiring leadership. The third episode, "Carentan," focuses on a young Army private named Albert Blithe. Fearful of the ferocious German defense of Normandy, Private Blithe hides in a ditch during the initial days of the invasion. In the devastating urban attack on the French town Carentan, he suddenly loses his vision. His blindness is seemingly unexplainable, and he awaits treatment in the hastily improvised medical area.

Lieutenant Dick Winters—wounded from a wayward ricochet to the foot—realizes the magnitude of the moment. Instead of seeking immediate treatment, Winters stops and talks to the scared junior soldier. When Blithe sheepishly says he does not want to let anyone down, Winters confidently responds that he will not. At this moment, Private Blithe suddenly regains his sight and gains the courage to return to the fight.

This moment is instructive for junior officers. Throughout the episode, no one expects much from Blithe; internally, he feels great shame for missing out on the brutal initial jump into Normandy. Without humiliating him or making him feel low, Lieutenant Winters relieves the fragile soldier's battlefield stress with tenderness and compassion. Even with his facial expressions and subtle body language, the junior officer gives the young private confidence that he can add something to the team and help complete the mission.

Later in the episode, the audience sees Lieutenant Winters encouraging Blithe to lay down fire on retreating Germans to exploit the Americans' armored advantage. Because Private Blithe receives encouragement from a good leader, he begins to fulfill his capacity as a paratrooper. Instead of lambasting a subordinate or discarding him as inadequate, Winters displays compassionate leadership by expressing his belief in a junior soldier, which contributes to that soldier's eventual success on the battlefield.

A great responsibility is placed in the hands of young, inexperienced service members: to fight and win America's wars. Although they are given this responsibility, junior service members are often infantilized because of their relatively short time in the service. They don't know what they don't know, but this does not revoke their agency as human beings or their dedication to faithfully serve the nation. New Marines are more than capable of becoming technically proficient and morally sound. They need good leaders—especially at the tactical level—to plan and conduct the proper training and education for those virtuous ends. Overall, junior officers must treat junior enlisted members as capable professionals so they can reach their full potential.

Following by SrVice Commandant Getzie R. Daniel-Lamar:

When I served in the military, life was in the hands of black-, brown-, red-, yellow- and white-toned people. We were friends, we were combatants, and we had each other's backs when the hammer slammed the anvil. We trained, we sweated, and we bled together. We came together from all parts of the country. We came together from all religions. We were a society unto ourselves.

We worked as a team—a well-oiled machine. We fought for our brothers and sisters through thick and thin. We protected each other, that was what we did. The only color we saw was green.

Would my fellow military veterans be willing to copy and repost this simple reminder? Just two. Any two.

In One of the Marines' Most Iconic Jobs, a Stunning Pattern of Suicide

Marine Corps drill instructors are a national symbol of discipline. But for some, their imposing persona belies a dark reality.

By Kelsey Baker and Drew F. Lawrence
Military.com
February 11, 2025

BEAUFORT, S.C. — Tatiana Sowell held her youngest child as she stood amid the rows of white headstones and stately mossy oaks. Her late husband, Logan, was buried in this national cemetery nearly four years ago after taking his life and ending what his widow describes as a ruinous tenure in one of the U.S. military's most iconic jobs: Marine drill instructor. He was 33.

Nearby, her other children spotted a coin, regarded within the armed forces as a symbol of respect, resting atop his grave. Perhaps, she thought, it was left there by someone who worked with him molding new Marines at Parris Island, just south of here.

Sowell, her gaze wistful, reflected on the times she had driven Logan to work. "It was just quiet," she recalled. "Peaceful."

Logan Sowell's suicide in July 2021 is one of at least seven in the past five years involving the Marine Corps' stable of drill instructors, according to military casualty reports obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests. In 2023, three occurred at Parris Island within less than three months.

A study completed by the Marine Corps in 2019 found that during the previous decade, 29 drill instructors either ended their lives or openly acknowledged they had contemplated doing so — an aberration the study's authors characterized as startlingly high compared with the occurrence of suicidal ideation among Marines who had never held that job. Rates of addiction and divorce among drill instructors also were higher, researchers found.

Critics and relatives of those who died accuse the Marine Corps of fostering an environment that contributed to their deaths. They describe routine 90-hour-plus workweeks, sleep deprivation and an always-on culture that frequently caused the job's requisite intensity to seep into their personal lives, igniting disputes with loved ones. Others detailed bouts of depression or alcohol dependency.

While the adrenaline-fueled assignment has always been high-stress, the 2016 death of 20-year-old Raheel Siddiqui, a Muslim recruit who was found by investigators to have suffered vicious abuse while at Parris Island, led the institution to sharpen its oversight of the men and women who indoctrinate newcomers. There is uncompromising accountability now, which has made the hardships long associated with being a drill instructor dangerously unbearable for some, observers say. They note, too, that the Marine Corps lacks adequate services for those who are struggling and need help, and tacitly condones a culture that stigmatizes those who seek it.

Siddiqui's death generated acute scrutiny of the Marines' approach to entry-level training, and the service responded with a heavy hand — prosecuting some drill instructors and making clear that all infractions, real or perceived, would be subject to a commanding general's review with the possibility of severe disciplinary action.

"We put a drastic expectation on them to act perfect," said a Marine officer who has supervised dozens of drill instructors. This top-down pressure can render them "terrified of their careers ending," he explained. "It causes this stress that trickles into their home life."

An independent investigation conducted by the Inspector General of the Marine Corps supports that assessment. Concluded in November 2023, the inquiry found "a climate that fosters 'surviving' vice 'thriving' " and a perception among staff that drill instructors' welfare "is of low priority" to leadership. Investigators reported hearing from several people involved with recruit training who observed personnel " 'walking on eggshells,' 'on pins and needles,' and generally 'afraid for their careers.' "

One former drill instructor said the experience left him and his family shattered, adding, "I experienced a really, really dark side of myself."

This account of the mental health crisis afflicting Marine Corps drill instructors is based on more than 30 interviews with service members, their families and their superiors. Several spoke on the condition of anonymity to be candid about their struggles or to avoid retribution for criticizing the service.

In response to questions from The Washington Post and Military.com, the Marine Corps acknowledged that its drill instructors have "one of the most demanding roles" within the service and portrayed the findings of this investigation as part of an enduring epidemic affecting the entire Defense Department.

"Suicide rates are shaped by various factors and we as a service are constantly looking for strategies … that could have the most impact at reducing suicide in the military," said ***Maj. Hector Infante***, a spokesman for the Marines. He pointed to "a myriad of mental, physical, psychological, and spiritual wellness resources" available to all drill instructors, along with their families, and said that "leaders at all levels encourage them to utilize these resources."

Infante did not address the institutional impact of Siddiqui's death or how changes implemented as a result have affected drill instructors; nor did he comment on the circumstances surrounding the suicides addressed in this report.

The Marine Corps operates two recruit training depots, or boot camps. Most recruits who enlist west of the Mississippi River complete the 13-week program in San Diego. Those who join in the eastern United States filter through Parris Is-

(Suicides; continued on page 6)

Suicide continued from page 5)
land. In the past year, the Marines have brought in more than 30,000 enlistees, most not long out of high school.

The task of turning them into warfighters falls to roughly 1,300 drill instructors, who over a three-month cycle might work 120 hours some weeks, former personnel say. In teams of three or four, they supervise platoons of 60 to 80 recruits around-the-clock, typically waking for work at 2:30 a.m. and rotating overnight responsibility. In a standard two- or three-year tour, drill instructors might do as many as nine cycles.

They are a national symbol of discipline, intimidating and seemingly indefatigable, and many who spoke with The Post and Military.com characterized the assignment as the most rewarding of their careers. But for some, the drill instructor's imposing persona belies a far darker reality, one marred by debilitating stress, exhaustion and, in the most dire circumstances, a hopelessness difficult to overcome.

One evening in May 2021, Tatiana Sowell, then 36, recorded an angry encounter with her husband after hiding his car keys to keep him from driving drunk. Logan had been drinking more than ever, she said, recalling her fear that he might hurt her or someone else.

As their baby cries on the recording, Logan is heard yelling, his voice hoarse. "I don't give a f---," he says, challenging his wife to report him to a superior at the depot. " … All I'm gonna do after that is blow my goddamned brains out."

She never made the call. Weeks later, Logan was dead. In recounting her husband's downward spiral, she said he became overwhelmed by the pressure to be perfect at work and the guilt he felt being apart from their family. "That's not the person he wanted to be," she said.

'Unrealistic expectations'

The Marine Corps, Infante said, invests "a great deal of effort" to ensure that drill instructors are "not only physically but also psychologically prepared for the rigors" of their assignment. He cited a screening that all prospective drill instructors do before they are cleared to attend the service's 11-week preparatory school, where a formal psychiatric evaluation is performed. Personnel are "continuously supervised by their command leadership teams and peer group for possible warning signs … and, if issues arise, are given the opportunity to seek assistance," he said.

Recruits with Echo Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, are introduced to their drill instructors, including Staff. Sgt. Courtland Bates Wind, at Parris Island on March 13, 2023 (Lance Cpl. Bradley Williams/Marine Corp Recruit Depot, Parris Island)

While the Pentagon has worked to expand mental health services throughout the military, it has run headlong into a nationwide shortage of qualified providers. There are eight for boot camp personnel in San Diego and 15 at Parris Island, Infante said. Former drill instructors acknowledged the screening they received before starting to work with recruits, but said that such help is needed most after the job begins — and that too often it's difficult to obtain a timely appointment without declaring a full-blown crisis.

The job's unspoken expectations also can have a chilling effect on any impulse to seek care, they said, describing a prevailing reluctance to be away from work — for mental health reasons or even a family event — for fear of leaving teammates shorthanded.

And then there is the sense of having an image to uphold.

Marine Corps tradition discourages drill instructors from showing emotion, other than intense acuity or anger, while around recruits. They are meant to be models of peak physical fitness — and always in character. Most recruits, in turn, revere their drill instructors, seeing them as "perfect, just immaculate, like gods or goddesses," said one Marine who spent three years at Parris Island. But there are "a lot of unrealistic expectations" from leaders and peers alike, she added.

Another former drill instructor recalled struggling while going through a divorce, and feeling shunned and ashamed by colleagues after he vocalized that he might need help. "Nobody wanted to talk to me," he said. " … It's like you're the plague."

By his third boot camp cycle, the slightest aggravation could trigger an eruption — and that intense anger was hard to turn off at home, he said. An unwashed dish left in the sink or a child's candy wrapper on the floor could send him into a rage, he ex-

(Sucide; continued on page 7)

(Suicide; continued from page 6)
plained. He turned to alcohol to cope, he said, telling himself, "Let me just have a drink, just to calm myself down so that I don't overreact when I might talk to my children."

It was in his fifth cycle that he began to experience suicidal thoughts, he said. At the same time he sought mental health care, however, he was mistrustful of the personnel in charge of scheduling appointments and declined to disclose the extent of his distress. They told him to come back in two weeks, he said, because so many recruits were ahead of him awaiting care.

Days later, he confided in a superior, who placed a call on behalf of the drill instructor, an intervention he now considers lifesaving. That got him on a priority list for treatment, which continued regularly through the end of his assignment more than a year later, he said.

Reflecting on the experience, he said that he's unsure what would have happened if he hadn't gotten help, and that the process of seeking and obtaining care must be improved if the Marine Corps is serious about ensuring that those who need help can access it. If a drill instructor visits mental health services, he contends, it's almost certainly no trivial matter. "They've got family stuff, serious depression," he said. "It's something serious."

Former staffers at the recruit depots say the job's unique stress can be traced in part to the fallout from Siddiqui's death, a criminal case that exposed the propensity among some drill instructors to physically abuse recruits. Siddiqui, a Pakistani American from Michigan, died at Parris Island on March 18, 2016, after trying to escape his drill instructor by jumping 40 feet off a stairwell.

In pursuing accountability, the Marine Corps accused 15 drill instructors of violating military criminal codes. One, Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Felix, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. During his trial, former recruits testified that they were singled out by their drill instructors because of their Muslim faith, alleging instances of being hog-tied and verbally abused — and, in one case, of being ordered into a clothes dryer that instructors then turned on.

Demands for institutional change quickly followed, and the ensuing crackdown has endured. In 2019, The Post reported on a raft of additional hazing cases that resulted in drill instructors facing disciplinary action. Last year, another was sentenced to six months for mistreating subordinates.

Three suicides in three months

At Blackstone's Cafe in downtown Beaufort, there is a memorial to Angel Acosta III, who was 25 when he died by suicide. He was the kind of person who would help a friend move furniture day or night, and check in on people going through tough times, said Alison Senna, a manager at the restaurant who hired Acosta part time after leaders at Parris Island removed him from the drill field for disciplinary reasons. "These billets … it's a lot of stress," Senna said.

Savannah Giesler, Acosta's fiancée, said he was sidelined for failing to report a "fight club" among recruits. His command investigated him, demoted him and cut his pay, paralyzing him with anxiety about whether he would be able to cover his bills and provide for a baby the couple had on the way, she said.

The year before he died, local authorities responded to a domestic dispute at the couple's apartment and notified officials at Parris Island that Acosta was struggling with alcohol, according to a copy of the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office investigation into his death. Acosta told law enforcement then that he would get help, the report says. The investigation does not indicate whether base officials intervened after they were made aware of the situation.

By the time their baby was born in August 2023, Acosta was owed a $15,000 reenlistment bonus that, for reasons that remain unclear, hadn't been processed, the sheriff's investigators learned. On Sept. 19, 2023, Acosta contacted his unit to ask about the money, according to the sheriff's report, which includes transcriptions of numerous text exchanges found on his phone.

In one, sent hours before he died, Acosta alluded to his struggles since he was removed from drill instructor duty, telling a friend: "I'm f------ close to just ending s--- man. Ever since I f----- up my career I done just hit rock bottom."

The baby, Acosta's only child, and was just a month old when Acosta died after a night of heavy drinking and what an account in the sheriff's report indicates was a heated argument with Giesler.

Last fall, after The Post and Military.com made inquiries with the Marine Corps seeking clarity on the status of Acosta's reenlistment bonus, Giesler said she received an unexpected deposit of $15,000 from the federal government.

Several former drill instructors, backed up by the Marine officers who supervise them, described similar struggles with alcohol and significant problems sleeping, even after they had completed their assignment and moved on to other jobs. There are well-established links between an extreme lack of sleep and the risk of suicide, said Matthew Nock, a Harvard psychology professor who has studied such patterns in the military.

"If you're really stressed, and you're not able to really address the stress, and from [lack of] sleep you're feeling really disinhibited — that can be a problematic combination," Nock said. "And if this is happening for an extended period of time, I can see one wanting to escape from that kind of situation, if there's not an end in sight to it."

The Marine Corps, Infante said, has instituted rules aimed at promoting "sustainable sleep health." An internal memorandum obtained by The Post and Military.com indicates that in the summer of 2023, leaders at Parris Island and San Diego prohibited drill instructors from working more than 90 hours a week without a waiver from their command. It's unclear how the policy is being enforced and whether it is benefiting personnel. In some cases, survivors said, their loved ones entered the assignment with existing challenges that steadily worsened as they navigated the job's unique pressures and stressors.

Katelyn Kleffman, whose husband, Courtland Bates Wind, died by suicide in July 2023, said he had a history of depression

(Suicide; continued on page 8)

(Suicide; continued from page 7)
and over time came to live in fear of being kicked out of the Corps — whether for misconduct, allowing a recruit to die, or seeking time off for mental health and receiving a bad prognosis.

His challenges were compounded by the death of a recruit, 19-year-old Dalton Beals, and the attempted suicide of at least one other, Kleffman said. Initially, Beals's death was blamed on hyperthermia arising from the arduous final test recruits must complete. A second autopsy said it was related to a preexisting heart condition. One of Bates Wind's colleagues, Staff Sgt. Steven Smiley, was tried on charges including negligent homicide. Smiley, who had maintained his innocence, was acquitted in June 2023. Bates Wind died weeks later at the age of 27.

"People, in general, have problems in their personal lives," Kleffman said. "But when you have the drill instructor job, it amplifies those problems because of how long you're away from home, how tired you are."

Kleffman has retained an attorney, Shiraz Khan, to explore the possibility of litigation against the federal government. In an interview, Khan faulted what he said is a culture that stigmatizes drill instructors who seek mental health care, effectively discouraging them from doing so. "A lot of these … families," he added, "could have avoided the pain that they're dealing with now."

Khan also represents the family of Yliana Hernandez, whose parents, Leon and Raquel, described her as a rising star with all the traits of a stellar Marine. Hernandez had been meritoriously promoted and was eager for the challenge of training recruits, they said, though she soon found herself disagreeing with the way her platoon operated. She seemed particularly distraught by some of her colleagues' view that boot camp could serve as a funnel rather than a sieve to remove poor performers, her parents recalled.

Hernandez's parents encouraged her to ask for help amid the growing stress and exhaustion they saw in their daughter. "And she would say, 'No, that's not how it works. We can't say nothing,'" her mother recalled. " … People don't listen."

She served two cycles as a drill instructor before being temporarily reassigned as a recruit swim instructor, said a colleague still on active duty. The job was intended to be a break, but it isolated Hernandez from her closest co-workers amid a difficult divorce, her colleague said. Her family and friends saw a swift change in the vibrant young woman the Marine Corps itself once spotlighted in a video on resilience. "That spark," the colleague said, "was gone."

Hernandez knew she needed help but refused to seek mental health care on base, her parents said, because she was loath to visit a facility where recruits she had trained would see her. She worried that exhibiting such vulnerability would burst the veneer of toughness she had shown them on the drill field. Her phone calls to other providers advertised on base went unreturned, they said.

Acosta's death on Sept. 20, 2023, may have been a breaking point. The two were friends, and she was shocked by his death, her parents said.

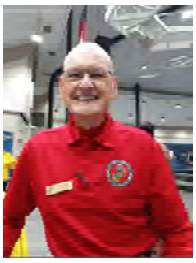
Hernandez was found dead in her apartment two days later. She was 25.

"She was the best of the best," her father said, recalling his daughter's drive to succeed. "But you still gonna have issues no matter what. And they didn't provide the help that she needed."

Veterans and service members experiencing a mental health emergency can call the Veterans Crisis Line, 988 and press 1. Help also is available by text, 838255, and via chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net.

This article was produced in partnership with the Washington Post.

Jim Bligh,
2025 Sergeant-at-Arms



I was born and raised in Long Island, NY on February 19, 1946. My father served In the U S Army during WW II and was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge. I attended mostly catholic schools growing up.

During my senior year of college in 1967 at NY State University at Albany I enlisted in the Marine Corps OCS program. Later, after completing OCS at MCB, Quantico, VA in April I was commissioned a 2ndLt. In October 1968 after completing the Marine Corps Basic School in Quantico I was assigned an 0302 MOS, Infantry Platoon Commander. I left for Vietnam a few weeks later and arrived there November 9, 1968, after a short stay at Camp Hanson in Okinawa Japan.

I was assigned as the 1st Platoon Commander in Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment. I led my platoon on two major operations, Meade River and Bold Mariner. On February 1, 1969, I was wounded by a mine and as a result of my wounds was retired from the Marine Corps in 1970 with the rank of lstLt.

After the Marine Corps I worked for 35 years at United Parcel Service starting as a clerk in the Industrial Engineering Department and rising to Corporate Purchasing Manager in Atlanta Georgia. I have been married to my wife Mary for 44 years. We have 4 children and 8 grandchildren.

Richard O. Thomas
2025 Paymaster

Richard Thomas is a native of Florida, born on November 1, 1972. He enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps on February 22, 1994 and subsequently assigned an MOS of combat engineer. He served in several engineer roles ranging from company to fleet level command; including assignments as:

- Engineer Chief, MWSS 274, 2ndMAW, (2013-2015)
- Engineer Chief, 2ndMEF, (2015-2018)
- Engineer Chief, MARFORPAC, (2018-2021)

During his career he served two tours of duty in Fallujah, Iraq and 3 tours of duty in Sangin, Afghanistan, along with a stint as an 0352 Antitank Missile Gunner and one as an 8411 Recruiter.

His military education includes:

- Noncommissioned Officer Academy, 1997
- Staff Noncommissioned Officer Advanced course, 2007
- Staff Noncommissioned Officer Senior Enlisted Academy, 2010

Thomas retired in September 19, 2021 after attaining the rank of Master Gunnery Sergeant.

His top three personal awards incudes the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal along various other service and unit awards.

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technologies from Southern New Hampshire University; and currently is employed by Truist Financial as a software engineer.

A few of his hobbies include saltwater fishing, hiking, and computer systems engineering.

He and his spouse, Suzanne, are the proud parents of a daughter, Jordan, 30 and a son, Jayden, 19.

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

May Meeting
05/10/25
1100

May Happenings

Det meeting	**10**	**Cpl. Mackie 1st MC MOH recipient**	**15 (1862)**
V-22 Osprey debuts	**23 (1988)**		

Heaven's Unit Diary

Marine	Tour of Duty	Date of Last Transfer
Raymond G. Davis, CMOH	1915–2003	3 Sept. 2003
Joseph O'Connor	1934–2009	14 Oct. 2009
Squire K. P. Wells	1994–2015	16 July 2015
Al Meade	1937–2016	30 Apr. 2016
Dorothy Pollock	1920–2016	13 Aug. 2016
Robert Kitchen	1949–2017	21 Feb. 2017
John W. Delion	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

Air Force Tactical Hand Signals for Deployments

Editor's Ramblings

At ease Marines. Fallout! Drop your packs, gather round and listen up. Smoke 'em if you got 'em.

I have been putting out a MCL newsletter for the last 26 years; and this issue contains the most depressing news I have ever relayed. I'm referring to the eye-opening news beginning on page 5, regarding the rate of suicide among DIs.

That news came to me as a complete surprise, as I spent 2 years on the drill field ('61-'64) and don't recall ever learning of anything so troubling. Why is this occurring?

1st./ Overworked is a lame excuse, I was, once, a member of a ***TWO (2)*** man team where we were ***picking up*** a herd and ***out posting*** one with a 2 day overlap. Guess who didn't get to go home for 3 days. However, neither of us had a desire to commit suicide.

2nd./ I'm going to be severely chastised by many of you for my stance, but, I think the ***"inner"*** Marine of my time on the field, compared to today's performers, was made out of sturdier stuff.

Our greatest fear was that of getting caught mistreating or thumping a maggot (recruit). During my tour there was probably 3 or 4 DIs shot down every year; even though the brass understood the necessity of thumping as an aid to instilling the discipline necessary to ***successfully*** leave Parris Island. Those who know me will agree with my self-assessment that I wouldn't last 3 days on the drill field with today's atmosphere at Parris Island or San Diego.

Semper Fi,

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

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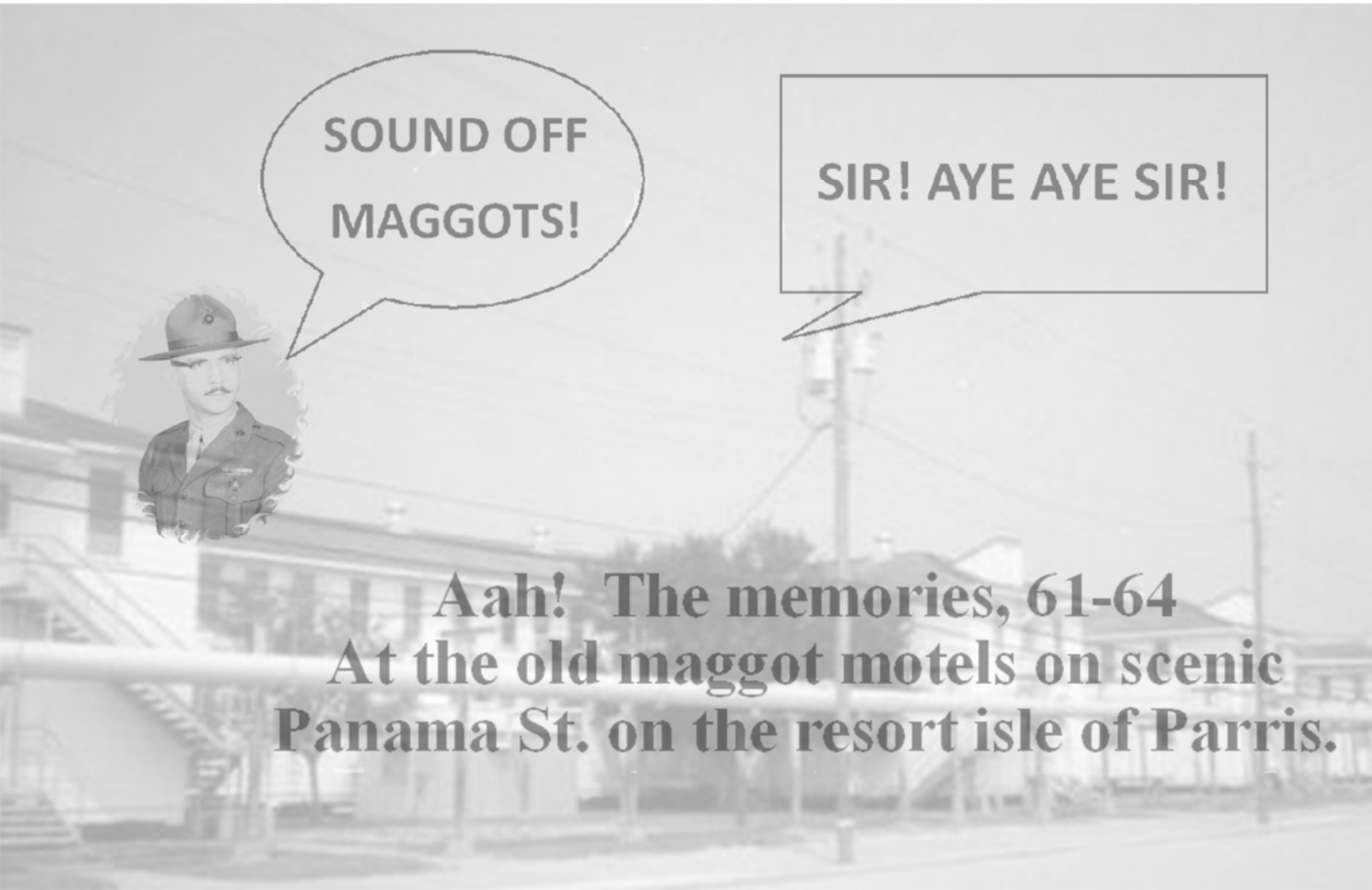
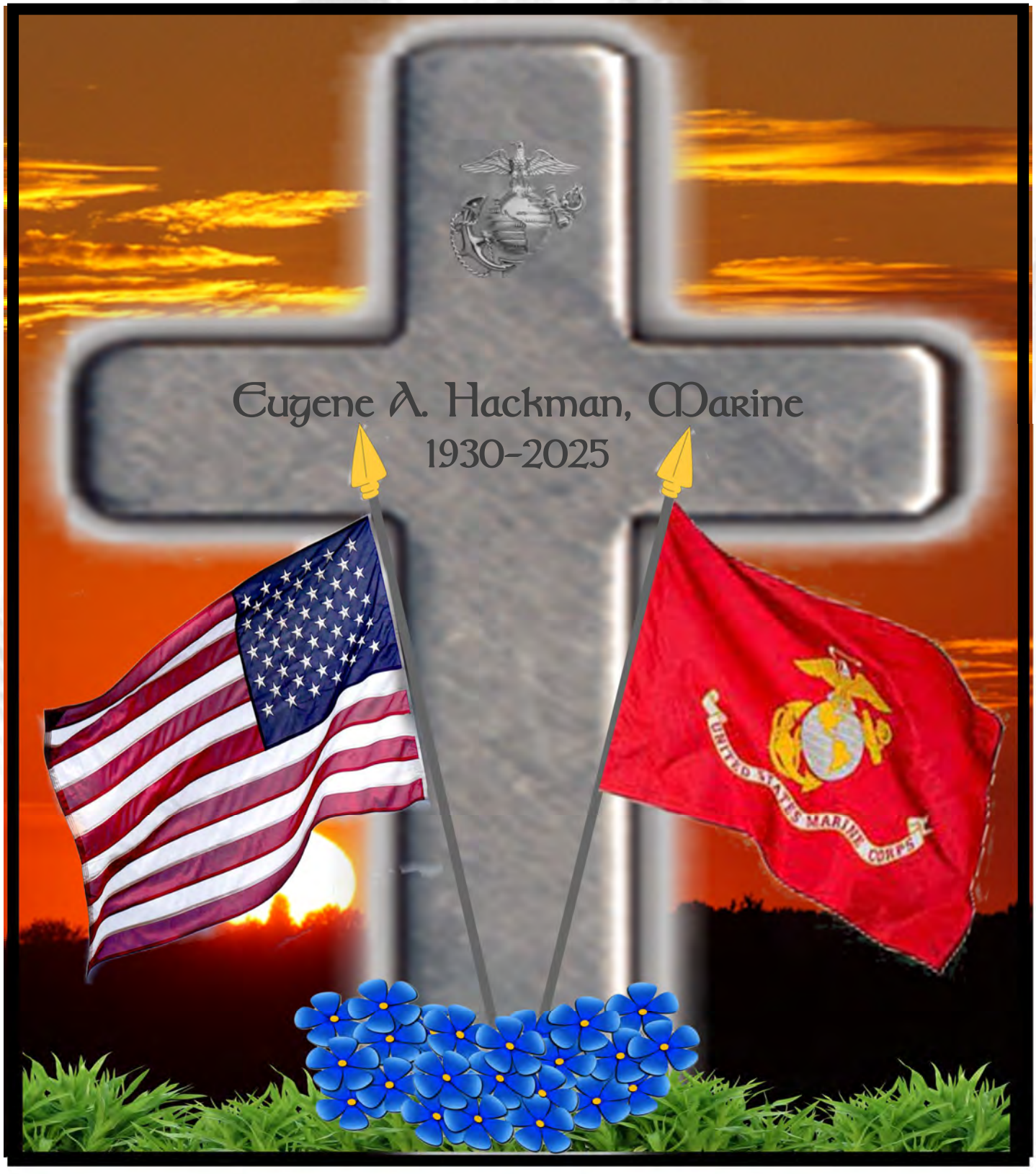
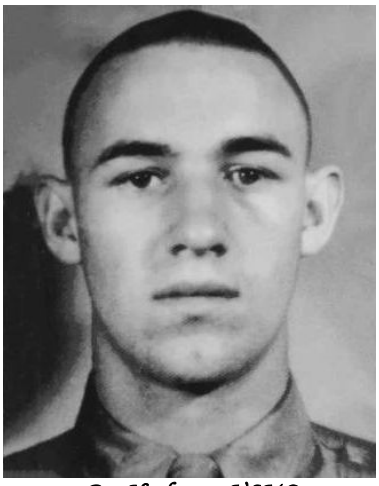


"LISTEN UP"
April '25 Addendum

Suggested by Commandant Gasper





Pvt Hackman, USMC
1947

Gene Hackman,
2023 or 2024

Pfc Eugene Allen Hackman, USMC was born Jan. 30, 1930, in San Bernardino, California. His family moved to Danville, Illinois, to ride out the Great Depression when he was still a young child. After seeing his first movie at age 10, he knew he wanted to be an actor, but he took an unconventional career path to get his start in Hollywood and joined the Marine Corps. He was only 16 years old and had to lie about his age, which even the Department of Defense admits was a pretty common practice at the time.

After joining the Corps in 1947, he first served as a radio operator before making a move into broadcast journalism, becoming an announcer on Armed Forces Radio. But the Marines of Hackman's era weren't just reporting the news. He was sent first to ***Qingdao***, then ***Shanghai*** in the middle of the Chinese Civil War with the mission of destroying Japanese military equipment to keep it out of the hands of the communists.
Hackman participated in Operation Beleaguer, the Marine Corps' occupation of China's ***Hebei*** and ***Shandong*** provinces that sought to repatriate displaced Korean and Japanese people after World War II. In Shandong, where he was stationed, the communists were far stronger than other areas of China and controlled most of the countryside outside of Qingdao. The operation was not without incident: Thirteen Marines were killed and 43 were wounded in ambushes and skirmishes with the Chinese communists.

The United States withdrew from China after the Nationalist government lost control of the continent and escaped to ***Taiwan***. Hackman would spend the rest of his career in Japan and Hawaii. He was discharged from the Corps in 1951 after a motorcycle accident, briefly moved to New York City and began using his GI Bill to study journalism and television production at the University of Illinois. When that didn't work out, he moved to California and joined the Pasadena Playhouse in 1957 to pursue acting.

From there, Hackman's life became a lesson in persistence. Along with fellow Playhouse alum ***Dustin Hoffman***, Hackman was voted "The Least Likely to Succeed." The two moved to New York, working odd jobs amid acting gigs with their pal ***Robert Duvall.*** One time, an officer Hackman knew from the Marine Corps saw him working as a doorman and called him a "sorry son of a bitch." Comments like that only steeled his resolve. "It was more psychological warfare," Hackman told Vanity Fair in 2013. "Because I wasn't going to let those fuckers get me down. I insisted with myself that I would continue to do whatever it took to get a job. It was like me against them, and in some way, unfortunately, I still feel that way. But I think if you're really interested in acting, there is a part of you that relishes the struggle."

Hackman got some work, starring in off-Broadway roles and television parts in the early 1960s. His first film was the ***Warren Beatty*** feature "Lillith." It would lead to his casting as Buck Barrow opposite Beatty's Clyde Barrow in 1967's "Bonnie and Clyde," with his performance earning him an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor. He would get another nomination in that category for 1970's "I Never Sang for My Father," which just goes to show how much officers know.

(Hackman; continued on addendum 3)

(Hackman; continued from addendum 2)
Hackman's breakout role was that of detective Jimmy "Popeye" Doyle in 1971's "The French Connection," for which he won the Best Actor Oscar that year. He followed that success with a string of films in the 1970s, including "The Poseidon Adventure," "The Conversation," "Scarecrow," "Young Frankenstein" and his turn as the definitive silver screen Lex Luthor in "Superman."

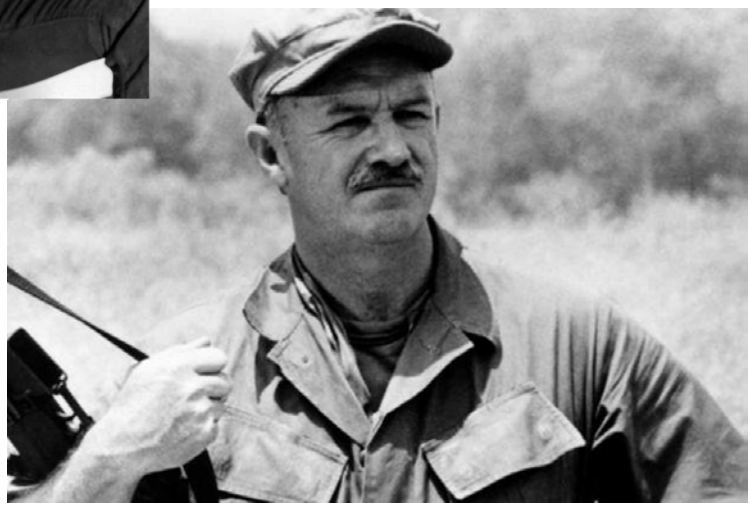
Over his career, he revisited the U.S. military a few times, appearing in "A Bridge Too Far," "Uncommon Valor," "Bat*21," "Crimson Tide" and "Behind Enemy Lines." His most memorable and acclaimed films in his later career include "Hoosiers," "Mississippi Burning," "Unforgiven," "Get Shorty," "The Birdcage" and "The Royal Tenenbaums." His performances garnered ***five Academy Award nominations and two wins***, along with ***eight Golden Globe nominations and three wins***, among others.

Hackman retired from making movies after his 2004 film "Welcome to Mooseport" in favor of writing books, citing stress-related health issues. He briefly came out of retirement to narrate two documentaries related to the Marine Corps, "The Unknown Flag Raiser of Iwo Jima" in 2016 and "We, the Marines" in 2017 -- a fitting end to the long and storied career of one of the U.S. military's greatest alumni.

Max Millan & "Lion" Delouchi
SCARECROW

Popeye Doyle
THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Rankin Fitch
THE RUNAWAY JURY



Col Jason Rhodes
UNCOMMON VALOR

NOTES:

Written and published in Acworth, GA
using MSPublisher
on a Lenovo IdeaCentre AIO 3i
Windows 11 desktop computer