

The 2/4 Association



Sea Horse

Second Quarter, 2003

The Newsletter of the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines Association

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President's message

Dear Friends, Members, Marines and Corpsmen,

The war in Iraq is winding down and we are in the process of welcoming home our troops. So many great opportunities for Master Card to make several of their "Priceless" TV commercials. You know: "A pair of combat boots...\$99, an M16 rifle...\$276, kickin' back, enjoying a cigarette while sitting in Saddam's favorite chair in his biggest palace...PRICELESS." When that young Marine from Mike Company 3/4 placed the flag of the United States atop the head of Saddam's statue, just before it was pulled to the ground by a US tank, I think that was outstanding. The comments out of DC were out of line in my estimation though...not for an instant do I think our troops were there strictly for the Iraqi people but rather for those that perished on September 11 and every other day that a terrorist took the life of an American. Sort of reminds me of a 2/4 Battal-

ion Commander who was flying the Stars & Stripes at the CP in Chu Lai SVN, 1965. He was told by a certain general to take it down and replace it with the flag of SVN. He complied with the general's order...that is until the general flew off in the helicopter.

When the news broke about those hundreds of millions of dollars in cash being found in Iraq I immediately had images of Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas and Donald Sutherland running through my head.

The internet has been flooded with "jokes" about France since they've declined to back the coalition. Come on guys, give them a break; after all, it's not like Saddam was standing next to the Eiffel Tower like Hitler was.

Our men and women did a fine job; let's just hope the people don't forget that fact like they have done with all past veterans in years gone by.

Semper Fi...Jim Mazy

Second Battalion, 4th Marines—the Best in the Corps
"America should always remember—Vietnam was a War...Not a Movie"

In memoriam

- * *Robert "Doc" W. Cooper, H&S 1966 (USN), 12 April 2003.*
- * *Edward C. Purcell, Fox 1968, 19 January 2003.*
- * *Col. Robert "Rip" Kirby, Bn CO 5/72–6/73, 9 January 2003.*
- * *Ray F. Macdouall, China Marine 1936, 26 December 2000.*
- * *Norman G. Meakim, China Marine 1930's, 11 August 2001.*

✦ ✦ ✦

SgtMaj Otto recuperating

As many of you may know, Charlie Otto had double bypass surgery at Tri-Cities hospital in San Diego in late April. Becky Valdez has let us know that he is doing much better but healing slowly. You can send a get well card to:

Charles Otto
1419 San Simeon
Oceanside, Ca. 92054
Better yet, give him a call at (760) 757-3750.
Best wishes, Charlie!

And so is PX Manager Jack Petrowsky

His wife Peggy has let us know that Jack just had bypass surgery and is doing well! If anyone would like to send a card our address is:

Jack Petrowsky
P.O. Box 7214
Las Cruces, NM 88006

2002 Malnar and Doc Gorsage Award winners

2/4 SgtMaj Robert Howard has notified us that Sergeant Ismael G. Bamba of Golf Company has received the 2002 Malnar Award. The winner of the newly-named 2002 Doc Gorsage Award is HM2 Kevin G. Weatherspoon of H&S Company.

Congratulations gentlemen...the members of the 2/4 Association salute you!

Forward-deployed Marine chosen as 15th Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps

Submitted by: Headquarters Marine Corps. Story Identification Number: 200342885347. Story by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

KUWAIT (aPR. 25, 2003) -- During an all-hands staff noncommissioned officer meeting at a Kuwait air base April 22, Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing commanding general, announced that the Com-

mandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Michael W. Hagee, has selected the 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps - Sgt Maj John L. Estrada, 3rd MAW sergeant major.

"I've never met anybody that's moved into that job," Maj. Gen. Amos said to the crowd. "And to think, you're one of us. What we're going to get here is a Marines' Marine, a sergeant major that understands what being a sergeant major is all about."

To a standing ovation from the SNCOs in the room, Estrada took the microphone with a smile.

"I did not sleep at all last night," he said. "This is a very momentous event. There are many Marines and Sailors I have to thank. I know I wouldn't be in this position if it were not for them. This is as much a part of you as it is of me."

He told the SNCOs when he made a permanent change of station move to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Dec. 7, 2001, he had intended to retire fol-

2002 - 2004 2/4 Association Officers

President	Jim Mazy, 6122 Shasta Street, Englewood, FL 34224-8161. Phone: 941 474-9431. E-mail: <President@2ndbn4thmarine.com>.
Vice President	Yahya A.A. Kariem, 7717 Reed Street, Jacksonville, FL 32208. Phone: 904 764-2241. E-mail: <ykariem50@aol.com>.
Secretary	Jack Petrowsky, P.O. Box 7214, Las Cruces, NM 88006-7214. Phone: 505 382-0759. E-mail: <jackny@webtv.net>.
Treasurer	John "Pete" Townley, Jr., 1522 Bent Trail CT, Sugarland, TX 77479-6943. Phone: 281 937-9692. E-mail: <petetownley@msn.com>.
Board of Directors	Logan Walton, P.O. Box 342, Unadilla, GA 31091. Phone: 912 627-3363. Tim Doble, 9395 Birch Lane, Lakeville, MN 55044. Phone: 952 461-2996. E-mail: <tjdoble@spacestar.com>.
Chaplain	Frank Valdez, 8221 East Birch Tree Lane, Anaheim Hills, CA 92808. Phone: 714 821-2846. E-mail: <valcone@hotmail.com>.
Historian	Col J.W. Hammond, Jr., USMC (Ret), 330 East Riverview Circle, Reno, NV 89509-1118. Phone: 702 322-3237.
Membership	Robert Bliss, 43 Meads Mountain Road, Woodstock, NY 12498. Phone: 845 679-5909. E-mail: <Membership@2ndbn4thmarine.com>.
Newsletter Editor	Ken Sympson, 303 Willowen Drive, Rochester, NY 14609-3235. Phone: 716 482-0717. E-Mail: <Editor@2ndbn4thmarine.com>. Web page: <http://home.rochester.rr.com/kensympson/>.
PX Sales Manager	Jack Petrowsky, P.O. Box 7214, Las Cruces, NM 88006-7214. Phone: 505 382-0759. E-mail: <jackny@webtv.net>.
Roster Manager	Jim Mazy, 6122 Shasta Street, Englewood, FL 34224-8161. Phone: 941 474-9431. E-mail: <Marine-2-4@comcast.net>.
Webmaster	Jim Mazy, 6122 Shasta Street, Englewood, FL 34224-8161. Phone: 941 474-9431. E-mail: <Webmaster@2ndbn4thmarine.com>.
Health & Welfare Officer	Steven O'Shields, 3151 Lake Forest Drive, Apt #86, Augusta, GA 30909. Phone: 706 729-0043. E-mail: <chesty84@usmc.net>. Web page: <http://www.geocities.com.chesty84>.

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lowing his tour and settle in California with his family. Less than two years later, he deployed to Kuwait to serve in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I was very fortunate to get slated to be the 3rd MAW sergeant major," he said. "I did not realize when I put my name in for that job that it would be such a huge responsibility. I wanted to get back out West because I was approaching retirement time and I was looking at retiring. Since I came up through the wing it was like a homecoming of some sorts and I could not think of a better way to end my career - to be fortunate enough to come back and end it in the wing. It was just a tremendous billet for me."

Earlier this year, while serving in Operation Enduring Freedom, Estrada received a phone call from the 14th Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps, Sgt Maj Alford L. McMichael, informing him he was one of the final four candidates for the 15th Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps.

"I was in disbelief and at the time I thought maybe he called the wrong person," said Estrada. "I never thought of myself as ever having a chance of being one of them. I was in shock because I thought I was getting called to get my butt chewed over their visit. A few days prior to that phone call, the Commandant and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps were visiting us; visiting their Marines here in Kuwait. I was a little concerned getting a call from the sergeant major right after their visit, because I was thinking 'what could we have done, what didn't they like?' to get that phone call."

Every few years a board looks at the top approximately 150 sergeants major on the linear list and selects five candidates. They present this list to the Commandant of the Marine Corps for review. If he likes none of the candidates' qualifications, he can go back to the board and order them to try again.

The decision for the next Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps is solely the Commandant's and once the four were selected they were interviewed at different times.

2/4 Association PX Merchandise	
General Items	Price
Polo shirt. Maroon with "2/4 Magnificent Bastards" embroidered on the front.	\$25.00
Polo shirt. Red, white or blue with "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines" embroidered on the front.	\$25.00
T-shirt. Gray with 11" full-color 2/4 logo decal on the front.	\$12.50
T-shirt. Honoring the 20 th anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. (Available soon. Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	
Cap. White with black bill. Embroidered with "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines, Magnificent Bastards."	\$12.00
Cap. Navy blue or Marine Corps red. "USMC" embroidered on the front; "2 nd Bn, 4 th Marines" embroidered on the back.	\$17.00
Golf towel. White with red 2/4 logo.	\$6.50
Logo. Stitched patch, 3 1/2" x 4", multicolored. (Currently out of stock - on order. Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	
Logo pin. For lapel or cap. (Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	\$5.00
Word pins. "Sniper," "Chu Lai," "Point Man," "Doc," "Life Member," "Marble Mountain," "Corpsman," "Da Nang," "Dong Ha," "I Corps," "Vietnam Veteran," "Quang Tri," "Rock Pile," "Chaplain," "Grunt," "Combat Vet," "Vietnam," and "Korea." (Call or e-mail for price and availability.)	\$3.50 Each
Mouse pads. Red and white 2/4 logo.	\$6.50
Aprons. With pocket, for home and shop use - red and white 2/4 logo.	\$8.00
Thermal travel mug. Champagne with black "USMC" emblem and 2/4 logo.	\$5.50
Coffee mug. Black with white 2/4 logo and Marine Corps emblem.	\$5.00
Videos	Price
Dai Do. Documentary.	\$25.00
2001 Reunion. Includes visits to The Wall, Iwo Jima Memorial, etc.	\$10.00
Books	Price
The Magnificent Bastards. Keith Nolan (hard cover, only).	\$25.00
The Proud Bastards. Mike Helms.	\$12.00
One Last Mission. LtCol Oliver North, USMC (Ret)	\$5.00
Ordering Instructions: Please add \$1.25 per item for shipping and handling. Make checks payable to "2/4 Association." Some items may be out of stock and, therefore, will not be shipped immediately. Call or e-mail Jack Petrowsky first for information. Send your order to: 2/4 Association PX c/o Jack Petrowsky PO Box 7214 Las Cruces, NM 88006-7214	

Estrada said he prepared for his interview by coming up with a list of eight questions he thought Gen. Hagee would ask.

"When I went into the interview I felt I had as good a chance as the other three," he said. "I went in and gave it my best shot. I finally decided to just go and be myself, be who I have always been."

Of those eight questions Estrada had prepared, the Commandant only asked one - "Why do you think you should be the next Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps?"



Sgt Maj John L. Estrada

The 33d Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Michael W. Hagee, announced that Marine Corps Sgt Maj John L. Estrada will be the 15th Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps. Estrada is currently serving as sergeant major for the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Based at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., and is forward deployed with 3rd MAF forward in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Photo by Sgt W.A. Napper, Jr.

"What are three things you would change in the Marine Corps?" and "If I did not select you as the next Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, whom would you recommend?" were other questions asked by the Commandant. "I thought that was the best question of all because it really shows the character of the individual," he said.

Estrada received a phone call April 21 from Gen. Hagee informing him of the final decision. In a small twist, the phone call didn't come directly to his office. Instead, Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron's Staff Judge Advocate Marines received it.

"There were people scrambling to get me because the Commandant of the Marine Corps was on the phone," he said. "So I made the walk over to the SJA, which is not that far away, but to me it felt like I was walking on a plank and was getting ready to go overboard. I was wondering, trying to figure if this was going to be good news or bad. The question going through my mind was 'is he was going to tell me that I am the guy or is he going to tell me sorry, I'm not the guy?'"

When he reached the phone he was told to stand by for the Commandant. Then the Corps' top Marine picked up the phone.

"The Commandant came on the phone and said 'Sergeant Major Estrada, how are you doing today? I'm calling you to offer a position to be the next Sergeant Major of our Corps. Do you still want the job?'"

Even though he'd had some time to brace himself for either decision, Estrada said he was taken aback by the question.

"I was stunned because that's very big news - very big news," he said. "I said 'Sir, yes of course I still want the job.' Then I told him I was honored that he had confidence in me and afforded me the opportunity to be the 15th Sergeant Major of our Corps."

"I've always known that if I got to the position where I could make a difference, I'd like to try to make a difference," said Estrada. "So I thought about it, and thought if I could get to this position I could really help make a difference in impacting the Marine Corps as a whole and in a very positive way. That's all I've ever tried to do."

"I've always known that if I got to the position where I could make a difference, I'd like to try to make a difference," said Estrada. "So I thought about it, and thought if I could get to this position I could really help make a difference in impacting the Marine Corps as a whole and in a very positive way. That's all I've ever tried to do."

Estrada has been known as a Marine's Marine, and is often found talking with junior enlisted and junior officers to make sure everything is running smoothly for them. He said he believes one of his strong points is his ability to communicate up and down the chain of command. "That has always been my style," he said. "I feel very, very good knowing that I can go out and connect with the lowest-ranking Marines and talk to them. All my commanders have always allowed me the latitude to do just that. That's the only way that I can get the true pulse of what's going on in the unit. You can't do that

from behind a desk. I look forward to going out and talking to the Marines and I love doing that.

"I don't feel I'm the sergeant major of just the enlisted Marines. I'm not, I'm the sergeant major for the command. I spend a lot of time with junior officers and commanders to see if they need anything or if there's something we can be doing better to support them."

He said he would continue to get out and meet with as many Marines as possible to listen to them.

"I will continue to take every opportunity that I have to get out and connect with the Marines," he said. "I plan on being a very visible Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, like those who have preceded me. You can't lead from behind the desk and this way I can tell the Commandant 'these are the concerns of your Marines.'"

Estrada said he believes the Marine Corps is running smoothly, and has no immediate plans to recommend any changes - yet. He said a good leader learns his new job before recommending any changes. Often he is asked if today's Marines are as tough as Leathernecks of old and Estrada said based on what he saw during Operation Iraqi Freedom he could answer that question with a resounding "yes!"

"We have a very professional atmosphere," he said. "During the time here, the performance of all of our Marines - not just the air wing, (has made me) extremely proud - especially our Marines in the division that met very fierce resistance. They (overcame) it all very courageously. I was so proud that those Marines fought just as well as any Marine who had fought battles in the past."

"For a lot of those young Marines, I'm sure I was their Recruit Training Regimental Sergeant Major back on Parris Island. We would get questions about whether they would have the mettle enough to fight and win and I think they have proven just that."

Estrada said he knows he's the next chapter in the history of the Marine Corps and he won't let his Marines down. However, he will require one thing from all Marines during his time as Sgt Maj of the Marine Corps.

"I expect all of our Marines to represent our Corps in the eyes of the American people and the world in a very professional way. The American people think a lot and expect a lot from the Marine Corps, and I charge our Marines to continue to give them just that. These are very big shoes I'm about to fill and I have not taken this appointment lightly in any way."

"I will always work hard to better our Corps," he said. "I will always have the Marines' best interests at heart."

Estrada enlisted in the Marine Corps Sept. 5, 1973, and attended recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. In March 1974, he was assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 451 at MCAS Beaufort, S.C. In December 1974, he transferred

to 1st MAW, MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, to serve with VMFA-232.

In February 1976, he transferred to VMFA-101 at MCAS Yuma, Arizona. One year later he moved to MCAS El Toro, Calif., to serve with VMFA-314. In December 1978, he was reassigned to VMFA-323. In November 1979, he deployed aboard USS Coral Sea to the Western Pacific and Arabian Sea for seven months. In June 1980, Estrada transferred to Andrews Air Force Base, Md., to serve with Marine Reserve Fighter Attack Squadron 321, Marine Aircraft Group 41.

In August 1982, he received orders to drill instructor duty at MCRD San Diego, Calif., where he served with 3rd Recruit Training Battalion. In October 1984, he was ordered back to MCAS Beaufort, this time for duty with VMFA-251 as the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the airframes division. In November 1985, he was reassigned to VMFA-451 and then deployed to the Western Pacific in January 1986. He returned in July.

From January to March 1987, Estrada attended aircraft maintenance schools, retraining as an F/A-18 hydraulic/structural mechanic. In October, he was once again ordered to DI duty, this time as the 3rd Recruit Training Battalion's Series Chief Drill Instructor at MCRD Parris Island. He was later reassigned to Drill Instructor School as the Standard Operating Procedures Instructor and Drill Master until his promotion to first sergeant in October 1990.

In December 1990, and until March 1995, he served as the first sergeant for Intelligence Company, 3rd Surveillance Reconnaissance and Intelligence Group, Okinawa, Japan; Marine Security Force Company, Naval Air Station Norfolk, Va.; Electronic Maintenance Company, 1st Maintenance Battalion, 1st Force Service Support Group, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.; and Alpha Company, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, MCB Camp Pendleton.

From March 1995 to May 1998, Estrada, now a sergeant major, served as sergeant major for 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, MCB Camp Pendleton, and deployed with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and the 15th MEU (SOC) to the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf.

In May 1998, he assumed the billet as sergeant major for Recruiting Station Sacramento, Calif., 12th Marine Corps District. From April 2000 to October 2001, he served as the sergeant major for the Recruit Training Regiment at MCRD Parris Island. He assumed the post as the 3rd MAW sergeant major, Dec. 7, 2001.

His personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal with two gold stars, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal and Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

* * *

This above article is reprinted from the Marine Corps web
<<http://www.usmc.mil/marinelink/mcn2000.nsf/main5/85EFFF78B28AAC8C85256D160046D7BF?opendocument>>, February 27, 2003.

3d Marine Division Association 2003 annual reunion

The 3d Marine Division Association will hold its 2003 reunion in Nashville, Tennessee, from Wednesday, August 13, through Sunday, August 17, 2003. All Marines who served with or were attached to the 3d Marine Division are encouraged to attend. This is a family affair, so bring the entire family. The January–February 2003 issue of the association newsletter, *CALTRAP*, contained registration and hotel reservation forms, and the schedule of events. For more information, check the CALTRAP web site at <<http://www.caltrap.com>> or contact:

SgtMaj Bill Krueger USMC (ret.)
7622 Highland Street
Springfield, VA 22150-3931
(703) 451-3844

1st Battalion, 3d Marines annual reunion

The 1st Battalion, 3d Marines will be holding its annual reunion in conjunction with the 3d Marine Division Association in Nashville, Tennessee. The 1/3 gathering will be held on Friday evening, August 15th, starting at 7:30 PM. For information, check the 1/3 web at <<http://www.onethreemarines.com/>> or contact:

Bill Ervin
2855 Iliff
Boulder, CO 80305
(303) 494-7752
E-mail: <Hatch101@aol.com>

31st MEU (SOC) soars during Foal Eagle

By Sgt. S. K. D'Alessio

POHANG, Republic of Korea -- Marines and Sailors of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) combined their capabilities with US Forces Korea, March 19 through 23, in a multilateral

training exercise that focused on live-fire and maneuvering.

The exercise increased interoperability with Korean forces and increase the overall combat readiness of the unit, according to Captain Neil Peterson, public affairs officer of the 31st MEU. The two countries formed a combined landing force at Tok Sok Ri, launched from both US Navy and Republic of Korea ships. To improve capabilities, MEU Marines were integrated within the Republic of Korea Marine Corps (ROKMC) in every aspect of the job, from coordinating amphibious operations to eating chow together.

Battalion Landing Team, 2d Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Golf Company in particular, the MEU's amphibious attack vehicle asset, joined the ROKMC's Regimental Landing Team 2 (RLT 2) throughout the duration of the exercise aboard their ROK vessel, the Ko Jun Bong. This cross attachment of forces afforded both Marine units the opportunity to interact and train together on ship, thereby enhancing US/ROKMC interoperability. This was both to better understand both forces' tactical capabilities and have a better understanding of how to work in close coordination in case of actual contingencies.

"It's been a rally good experience," said SSgt Michael J. Collelo, a section leader for BLT 2/4 Golf Company "Definitely as far as the amphibious side goes, to know their mission is to know ours.

"The way we work together is very similar. We can definitely complete our missions on the same timeline," he added.

The MEU is known for its land, sea and air nature – and the aviation combat element proved that when conducting early warning exercises and close air support for ground troops at several locations to include the Pilsung range.

At Suseong Ri range, Marines of Fox Company, Weapons Company's 81mm mortar platoon and the engineer platoon called in for fire support while conducting fire team rushes and engaging tanks. Within minutes, AH-1W Super Cobras and UH-1N Hueys circled in on the hillsides near the Marines to support with rockets and machine gun fire.

In all, the MEU performed to its fullest capabilities by employing all of its assets in the grand finale event, the amphibious landing. As US/ROKMC officers and distinguished guests viewed the operation from atop VIP Hill, the MEU engaged into "Strike from the sea" mode. Amphibious assault vehicles were launched from U.S. and ROK Navy ships for the combined amphibious assault at Tok Sok Ri Beach. Hueys patrolled the skies and suppressed simulated enemy resistance with air strikes while the MEU Service Support Group established a beach landing site to assist the Landing Craft

Air Cushions (LCAC) in going ashore. The LCACs scenario was to simulate the surface introduction of follow-on troops and equipment ashore – much like what would happen in actual operations.

The MEU's Explosive Ordnance Disposal team heated the scenario up as they detonated explosives in the surf zone, along the shoreline and in the mountains. It was a powerful ending to an exercise that proves the MEU's special operations capabilities and its dominant role in the Asia/Pacific theater.

"The exercise was one of the highlights of this deployment for the BLT," said LtCol Andrew R. MacMannis, BLT 2/4 commanding officer. "Using training areas unseen by most Marines and just getting to experience some foreign culture was rewarding. With the beautiful weather and hospitable host nation support, participating in training was an experience that will be remembered for a lifetime."

* * *

This article is reprinted from the Marine Corps web <<http://www.31meu.usmc.mil/news%20release/20th%20Cycle/FoalEagle.html>>, 27 May 2003.

2/4 participates in Quick Reaction Force exercise



1st Lieutenant Daniel Crawford, Echo 2/4 Platoon Commander

1st Lieutenant Daniel Crawford, a 26-year-old Idaho Falls, Ind. native and platoon commander for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Echo Company, 3rd platoon, paints his face before leading his Marines out to a helicopter to perform a Quick Reaction Force exercise, March 21. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. S. K. D'Alessio) (This photo and caption are reprinted from the 31st MEU web <<http://www.31meu.usmc.mil/>> 21 May 2003.)

Association writing competition

Submitted by Jim Mazy, President

This idea came about when the anonymous donor of the \$500 prize purse tried to figure out a way of recording some first hand history of 2/4 throughout the years. What better way to gather that history than by staging a competition?

The rules are very basic and simple:

1. The donor of the prize purse will remain anonymous; the identity will be known only to me.
2. 1,000 words or less (unless in the judges opinion more verbiage is needed to depict accurately the story). Your submission may be subject to editing.
3. Prefer typewritten, double-spaced but will accept any form as long as it is legible. Handwritten submissions must be printed—no cursive handwriting.
4. No vulgarity unless it is **very** pertinent to the story. Try changing the words to eliminate any cursing.
5. Must be factual—**no** fiction.
6. Author must be an Association member.
7. Writing may be serious or comedic in nature. It may cover wartime, peacetime or even liberty, as long as it involves an incident while serving with 2/4.
8. Submissions are being accepted from now through June 10, 2003. The judges' decisions are due by August 1, 2003.
9. **The first prize is \$300, second prize is \$150, and third prize is \$50. Judges' decisions are final.**

Each piece will be assigned an alphanumeric code; the identity of the writer will not be made known to the judges until after the selection process has been completed. Two of the judges were hand picked by the donor, and I am the only person (other than the judges) to know the identity of all three.

The stories will be published on the 2/4 website and also in the *Sea Horse* as space permits. All writings will be scanned to a CD-ROM and preserved by the Historian. Submissions will become the joint property of the Association and the writer, with the Association having sole discretion on future use.

All writings must be mailed to me:

Jim Mazy
6122 Shasta Street
Englewood FL 34224-8161

It is strongly suggested that you make and keep copies of your submission prior to mailing.

Electronic and website submissions will be accepted. E-mail me first at either:

<President@2ndbn4thmarine.com>

<Marine-2-4@2ndbn4thmarine.com>

If this bid to preserve the history of 2/4 is successful, it will be offered again the following year. If in the opinion of the judges there are insufficient winning entries for the year, the purse will be carried over to the following year.

Good luck!

Iraqi Freedom - the compassion of a Marine toward his enemy



Shoeless enemy

Marine Lance Corporal Marcco Ware carries an Iraqi soldier who was shot three times while trying to ambush a convoy of the 3rd Battalion, Fifth Regiment, in central Iraq. The attack left one Marine and about 40 Iraqis dead. (This photo and caption are reprinted from the San Francisco Chronicle online website, SFGate.com, <<http://www.sfgate.com/>> 26 Mar 2003.)

Folding the American flag: the deeper meaning

(Editors note: SgtMaj Charles Otto sent this column to me and suggested publishing it in the Sea Horse. I thought that was a great idea. And thanks a lot for the input Sergeant Major; I greatly appreciate it!)

Have you ever noticed the honor guard pays meticulous attention to correctly folding the American flag 13 times? You probably thought it was to symbolize the

original 13 colonies, but we learn something new every day!

The 1st fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The 2nd fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

The 3rd fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The 4th fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in time of war for His divine guidance.

The 5th fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our Country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong.

The 6th fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that We pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States Of America, and the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

The 7th fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

The 8th fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day.

The 9th fold is a tribute to womanhood, and Mothers. For it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

The 10th fold is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.

The 11th fold represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies in the Hebrews' eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The 12th fold represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in the Christians' eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

The 13th fold, or when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost reminding us of our nation's motto, "In God We Trust."

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington, and the Sailors and Marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones, who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges

and freedoms we enjoy today. There are some traditions and ways of doing things that have deep meaning. In the future, you'll see flags folded and now you will know why.

Once a Marine, always remembered

Submitted by: I Marine Expeditionary Force. Story Identification Number: 200352785640. Story by Sgt L.A. Salinas

BABYLON, Iraq (May 26, 2003) -- When Marines honor one of their fallen brethren there are speeches, memorial services with the families and, at times, the media. But, knowing the personalities of our fallen Marines and understanding what happened to them could only be told by the warriors that served with him.

To tell the story of Pfc. Juan G. Garza, killed by enemy fire near Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom, three Marines offer their thoughts on the events of that fateful morning of April 8, and the void Garza left.

The father figure in the Marine infantry squad is usually the squad leader. He is known for giving guidance to his Marines, whether it is about the Marine Corps or life.

Sgt. Zachary D. Lott, squad leader with 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, played that role for Garza.

"From day one I was Garza's squad leader," said the 21-year-old. "He was one of the most motivated and loyal Marines I ever met."

Marines might have a reputation for being the toughest and strongest, but according to Lott what was strongest about Garza was inside him. "He had a huge heart," said the Salt Lake City native. "He wasn't the biggest kid, he had skinny arms, but he would put up a fight with the biggest guy."

"When you were around him, you could call his name and he would be ready to do anything."

From the seat of a Humvee, Lott explains what he saw on the morning of April 8.

"The mission was to secure the near side of the bridge near Hassan Al Haza so forces with 5th Marines could safely move across the bridge," said Lott. "We were shooting at people 180 degrees around us. Garza was in a fighting hole near us. He lifted himself up to see where the rest of the squad was firing from and a sniper shot him from the back."

There was no scream from Garza, there was no panic.

"When he got shot he grabbed his chest and quietly said, 'I'm hit,'" said Lott.

According to Lott, the squad was still faced with the uncertainty that there were enemy in the area and the squad wasn't about to let its guard down.

"For the first couple of days everybody was in the fighting mindset," said Lott. "Then [his death] hit us real hard."

"We had a memorial service for him and that brought some closure," said Lott.



1/4 at Camp Babylon, Iraq

Members of 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, rest before going on post at Camp Babylon, Iraq, May 24. Some of the unit's members recounted stories about Pfc. Juan G. Garza who served with them until death by enemy fire in Baghdad, early last month. Photo by: Sgt. L.A. Salinas

What he remembers most about Garza is that he was always talking about his wife. Always the father figure, Lott, who has been married for two years, gave Garza pointers on his own marriage.

Within the family of a Marine infantry squad, team members rely on each other as brothers. Lance Cpl. Charles W. King, saw-gunner with 1st Bn., 4th Marines, played that role in the fighting hole where the shooting happened.

"We volunteered to be in the fighting hole for security for everything behind us," said the 19-year-old from

Greensboro, N.C. "We just volunteered, we never knew why at the time."

As the shooting around the Marines started, and before Garza made the fateful gesture of looking over the fighting hole, the rush of being in battle began to take over the squad. Looking back on that day, King knows why they raised their hands.

"We volunteered because our adrenaline was pumping. If staff sergeant says he needs two volunteers and you are the two closest, you volunteer whether you like it or not."

When the bullets started flying, Garza inspired the other Marines.

"As soon as his adrenaline pumped in, he was wired," said King. "He was a scrapper. When we were in that sand-bagged bunker, we never really felt threatened," he said. "He was always looking out for me."

King remembers Garza talking about his relationship with his mother, and how he'd been trying to contact her over the years. "He moved out of his house and moved to Michigan with his aunt and uncle," said King. "He lost contact with his mom, and would always talk about how his wife found her."

While in Iraq, he learned that his wife had made contact with his mother. It was apparent to those around him that, in his heart, he was reunited with her, however he would not get the chance to see her again.

Perhaps the most important person in Garza's military family is Pfc. Cesar Gonzalez, rifleman with 1st Bn. 4th Marines.

Marines are well known for their camaraderie, and the friendship between Garza and Gonzalez was a close one.

Neither would know the impact of each other's friendship when they met at the School of Infantry in Camp Pendleton, Calif. According to Gonzalez, they slept in bunks next to each other and pretty much kept to themselves, until Garza introduced himself one day.

"We didn't have anyone to talk to," said Gonzalez. "He would call his wife and I would listen to music."

Garza would tell his friend about his childhood - how his mom left him at the age of 13, and how he lived on the streets. He talked about how his aunt and uncle put him through military school. He spoke to him about how he missed his mother and he vowed to see her again. His promises exemplified his values.

"He said if he ever had kids he would never leave them," said Gonzalez.

This partnership would follow them through to their first duty assignment, known in the Marine Corps as "the fleet."

"Once we got to the fleet, we had to stick with whom we knew," said the 19-year-old from New Braunfels,

Texas. "If there was a working party, we would both be on it."

According to Gonzalez, the two would meet everyday after their final unit formation and on the weekends. They would prove inseparable, confiding in each other their failings and accomplishments.

When the orders to head for Iraq came, it caught them both off guard.

"We both thought, 'we are really going to do this,'" said Gonzalez. When we got in [the fleet] we thought, 'maybe in a couple of years, but not after five months.'

The unit would embark on a journey that would liberate a country, but at a heavy price.

Gonzalez remembers how close he was to being next to his best friend during Garza's last day alive.

"When I saw him in the fighting hole, I asked if I could go over there and be with him," said Gonzalez. "Sergeant Lott told me, 'yeah go ahead.'"

As it turned out, fate intervened and left Gonzalez to watch it unfold. "I started to get up and go and then Sergeant Lott said, 'no you would be safer here'." Said Gonzalez.

"Ten minutes later, Garza got shot," he said.

"How can I go home and not bring my friend home with me," Gonzalez asked. "How is his wife going to feel?"

Remembering Garza, his best friend summed up his thoughts on him. "He was actually like my brother," said Gonzalez. "My other brothers are in college and I don't get to see them much. He was like another brother."

Even more, Gonzalez looked for a higher power to explain the impact that Garza would have on him.

"It was more like God made Garza my best friend in the whole world."

Seventy-six Marines have made the ultimate sacrifice during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Pfc Juan G. Gonzalez is one of them. Their names will be forever remembered.

✦ ✦ ✦

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Capt. J.Y. Aubin, 36, Kennebel, Maine.

Lance Cpl. A.J. Aviles, 18, Palm Beach, Fla.

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Sgt. M. Bitz, 31, Ventura, Calif.

Lance Cpl. T.A. Blair, 24, Wagoner, Okla.

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Lance Cpl. C.E. Bruns, 22, Vancouver, Wash.

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* * *

Semper Fidelis

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