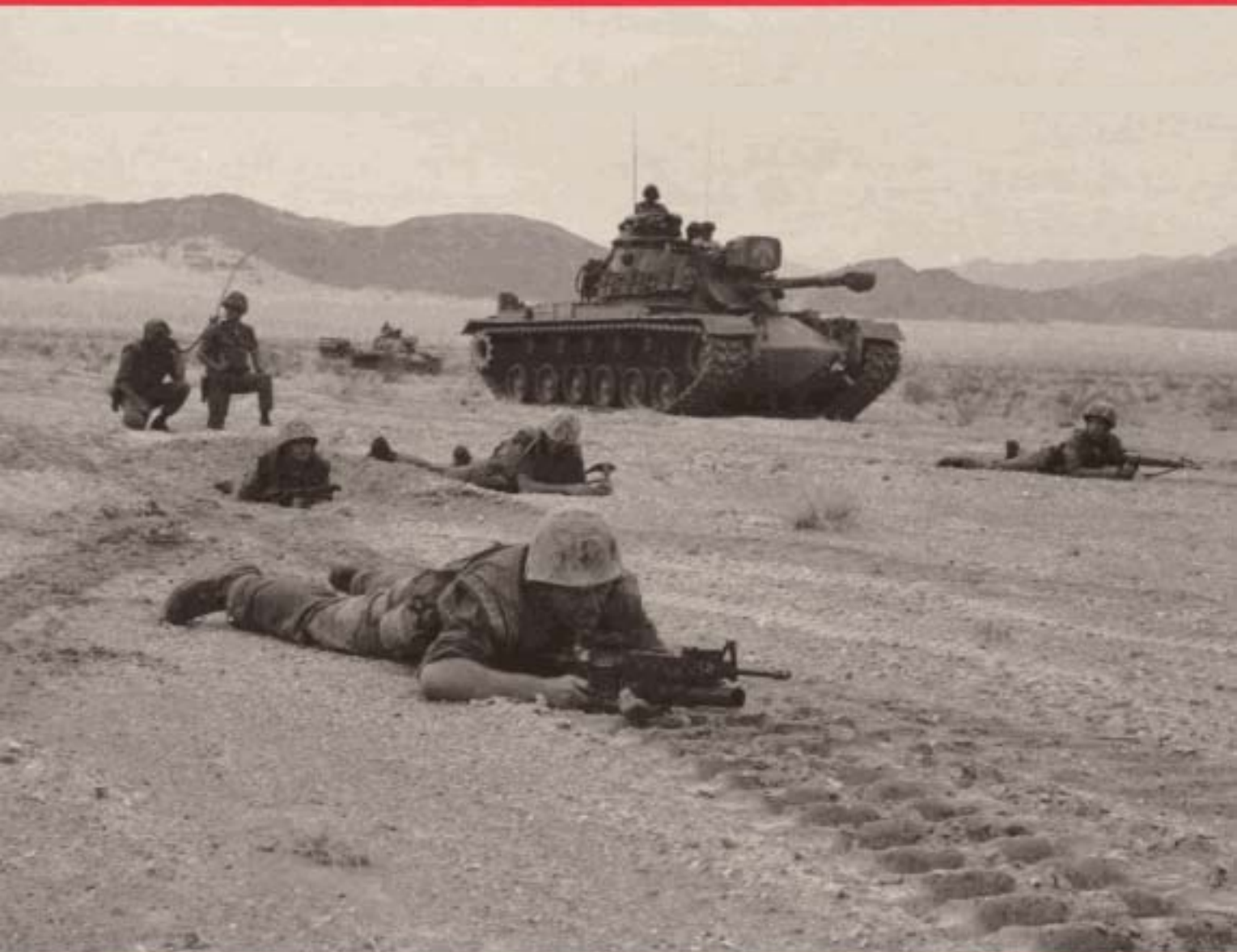


U.S. MARINES AT TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIFORNIA



HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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by

Colonel Verle E. Ludwig
U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)



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Foreword

The mention of the Marine Corps Base at Twentynine Palms once evoked an image of a tent city alongside a dry lake bed in the middle of the oppressive Mojave Desert of Southern California. Such an image might have been true of the first facilities established in 1952, when the Marines moved up to the high desert from Camp Pendleton. Today, however, the close to 1,000-square-mile Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms ranks as one of the Corps' most modern training facilities.

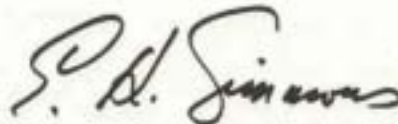
This volume is the second in the series of histories covering major Marine Corps bases and training centers. The highly-personalized narrative not only provides a general history of the base, but covers the growth of the surrounding community.

The author of this monograph, Colonel Verle E. Ludwig, USMC (Retired), is well qualified to write a history of Twentynine Palms. Colonel Ludwig, a graduate of the University of Indiana with a degree in journalism and of George Washington University with a master's degree in international affairs, was commissioned a second lieutenant in September 1944. During World War II, he joined the 1st Marine Division in the Russell Islands, and then as a rifle platoon leader, participated in the Okinawa Campaign and North China occupation duty. His key assignments after rejoining the Corps during the Korean War were: Historical Writer, Headquarters U. S. Marine Corps; Commanding Officer, Marine Barracks, Hunters Point; Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines in Vietnam; Deputy Information Officer, MACV, Saigon; Marine chair in Amphibious Warfare, Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island; and, in 1973, Chief of Staff and then Deputy Commander, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms.

Colonel Ludwig has been a prolific writer for many years. He co-authored the first volume of the history of U. S. Marine Corps operations in World War II, *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, has written numerous articles for both the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck*, and has authored several short stories.

The author retired from active duty in 1975 and now resides in Twentynine Palms, where he teaches a course in writing at several local colleges. His history of Twentynine Palms was supported in part by a grant from the Marine Corps Historical Foundation.

In the pursuit of accuracy and objectivity, the History and Museums Division welcomes comments on the history from key participants, Marine Corps activities, and interested individuals.



E. H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Preface

Twentynine Palms, community and military base, is something of its own sort because of its desert, and because most residents—into at least the mid-1980s—sought to adjust to the desert rather than to conquer it. I hope this book conveys something of the human qualities of this uniqueness.

My association with the U.S. Marine Corps base goes back to 1952, “the moment of creation,” when the desert training center as an outpost of Camp Joseph H. Pendleton was in the scuttlebutt stage around the base down by Oceanside; and as a young captain commanding a rifle company, I came up to the new training center in the two weeks prior to Christmas of 1952 to take part in the first big exercise with the 3d Marine Division, then newly re-formed at Pendleton.

In 1954 at Headquarters Marine Corps, after I had been to wartime duty in Korea, I did some staff papers about Twentynine Palms, for budget officers to take up to hearings on Capitol Hill. These papers of mine turned up in a stack of material the Marine Corps History and Museums Division sent to me when I began research for this book, in 1983.

I returned to Twentynine Palms, for an official visit, in the early 1960s, when I then (“seconded” there by the 1st Marine Division) commanded Automatic Supply Distribution Battalion, Force Service Regiment, at Pendleton. Ammunition Company was in that battalion, and technically we therefore “owned” the Nuclear Ordnance Platoon (NOP) then at the NOP site at Twentynine Palms. During this trip I discovered the NOP building some distance out in the desert from mainside was “plagued” by crickets which apparently liked the building’s air conditioning, and the Marines there had requisitioned some chickens to devour the crickets.

In 1973, I returned for permanent duty, first as base chief of staff when the commanding general was Brigadier General William G. Joslyn, then as the assistant commander of the combined base-Force Troops command after the late Brigadier General Clarence H. “Bud” Schmid replaced Bill Joslyn. As this historical narrative relates, Bud Schmid had been at Twentynine Palms as a young supply officer captain in the very early days. He and his wife, Margaretta, introduced the Ludwigs to many of the Twentynine Palms oldtimers the Schmidts had known back in the early years. From the Schmidts, and from our many new friends among the oldtimers, I heard the human stories of the founding of the town, the glider base, and later the Marine Corps facility. To these friends I owe much of my understanding of the community and the desert.

Many of these friends have made family archives available, and have talked with me about those early days. These include Helen Bagley, Ted and Mary Hayes, Ada Hatch, Sally Ince, Chet and Blance Ellis, and Vinton Harz and his late wife, Lois. I gained much valuable guidance and assistance, also, from those well-known historians of this and other nearby deserts, Harold and Lucile Weight; and also from that newer practitioner of local history, Art Kidwell.

Marines who have been especially helpful in guiding me to an understanding of particularly the early days of the base are: first and foremost, Dr. Frederick H. Scantling (Lieutenant Colonel, USMC [Ret.]), the first commanding officer for Marines in the desert, and Brigadier General John S. “Barney” Oldfield, USMC (Ret.), who commanded non-FMF Marines as the desert facility became a base in its own right.

Those Marines who contributed significantly to my understanding of the transition to the New Mission include: Colonel Billy D. "Bill" Bouldin; former base commanders Major Generals Edward J. Megarr and Harold G. Glasgow; and Major General Robert E. Haebel.

A special notice of appreciation must go to General Louis H. Wilson, the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps. The New Mission was his idea, originating when he was commanding general of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, just before he became Commandant. He sent particularly valuable comments about this phase of the history of Twentynine Palms to the Director of Marine Corps History and Museums, Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret.).

For other help, I am indebted to Colonel Francis I. Fenton, Jr., USMC (Ret.), and to his wife, Eloise Rowan Fenton, for reasons which will be apparent in the text of this history, and in Appendix A. Also special thanks must go to Colonel Richard O. "Owen" Gillick, USMC (Ret.), who served here as a young artillery officer, back in the early years, at other times later, and had saved a useful "cruise book" and other material. Also helpful was retired Colonel Ralph K. Culver, an early legal officer at the desert base, and retired Air Force Major Steven Zvonar, who as an Army engineer in the days just before World War II, surveyed the desert for the establishment of Condor Field. Also helpful have been those loyal retired Marines, Gunnery Sergeant Charlie Miller and the late Gunnery Sergeant Doug Culbertson.

Base commanding generals who served at Twentynine Palms while I was writing this history also have been particularly helpful and supportive. They were Brigadier Generals Joseph B. Knotts, William R. Etnyre, and John P. Monahan.

Another "local" Marine of significant helpfulness was Colonel James E. Stanton, who served early in the New Mission days, and then returned in the 1980s to serve as the base's chief of staff. He provided much insight and immediate support when required. Also particularly helpful have been Mrs. Carol Robinson, secretary to the commanding general, and Sergeant R. W. Allen, a particularly efficient and cheerful Marine assigned to the protocol office.

And last but not least among those on the base, I owe a debt of gratitude to my old friend and the "dean" of desert public information officers, the late CWO4 Ronald R. Fraizer. Thanks to his efforts, the command's public affairs office has bound files of *The Observation Post*, the award-winning base newspaper which began publication when the base separated from Camp Pendleton.

The San Bernardino branch library in Twentynine Palms, under the able charge of its efficient and helpful chief librarian, Cheryl Erickson, has an excellent collection of primary and secondary sources about town and base, going back to the early days of the community. This includes files of the community newspaper, *The Desert Trail*; early settler oral histories; photographs; and unpublished manuscripts, including that of early base commander, the late Colonel (later Brigadier General, retired) Francis H. "Monte" Brink.

In addition, I have consulted official command diaries and other papers forwarded to me by the Marine Corps Historical Center. There Danny J. Crawford, who heads the Reference Section, and his assistant, Robert V. Aquilina, have been unfailing in digging up special requests for me. Also from "Historical," my editors have been, first old friend Henry I. "Bud" Shaw, the chief historian, and then Charles R. Smith. Shortcomings and failures, I must confess, are solely mine.

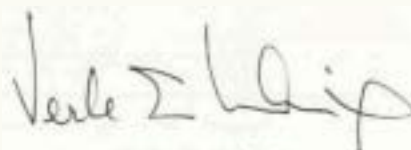
My wife and I love this desert, as we did and do love the Marine Corps. Our hillside retirement home overlooks the base, some 10 miles to our northeast. Years ago, at the then-Historical Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps, I was a co-author (with Bud Shaw and one other) of the first volume of the Marine Corps' history of World War II. But I had no thought of writing the history of this base until, one day in February 1983,

old friend Ed Simmons, the "historical brigadier," sat in our dining room over breakfast and, "out of nowhere" said, "Verle, why don't you do the history of the base here?"

The company was excellent. The coffee outstanding. The evening before, we had enjoyed a fine Chinese dinner which my wife had prepared for Ed Simmons and a number of Marines and their wives, as well as some other friends from town. During that evening, we had a few drinks—a bit of excellent California wine. The morning, at breakfast, was a moment of pleasant weakness. I said, "Okay."

It was of course more work than I anticipated. Often the project interfered with the creative procrastinations of my retirement. So since that morning in 1983, I have told Ed Simmons and a lot of other people who would listen (their tolerance eroded over time) that I have decided the only thing which would have been worse than his asking me to do this history would have been if he had bypassed me and asked somebody else.

I dedicate this volume to GeneCarolyn Huffman Ludwig and our sons Kurt and Eric, all of whom in their own times picked up the step in my march of 30 years with the U. S. Marine Corps. And to the desert: "Remember that the yield of a hard country is a love deeper than a fat and easy land inspires, that throughout the arid West the Americans have found a secret treasure."—Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision: 1846*.



Verle E. Ludwig

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CHAPTER 1

The Desert

Twentynine Palms and its surrounding high desert in the eastern portion of California's Morongo Basin would seem an unlikely location for a major base of an amphibious and air-ground military force. Perhaps it also seems an unlikely location for anything, including the oasis which watered the palms which gave the place its name.

"Off the beaten track" has been an apt description of the area throughout all of its history. Apparently early man and later the American Indian tribes, known to history after the arrival of Europeans, largely bypassed this seemingly inhospitable region by using trails either to the north or to the south. Early routes of empire also went far to the north or to the south of this region.¹ The nearest—still some distance to the south—was the on-to-westward extension of the Santa Fe Trail.

The discoverer of Pike's Peak, Zebulon Montgomery Pike, in 1806 began adventures and misadventures which later, as historian Neal Harlow noted:

precipitated in the establishment of the trail from St. Louis to Santa Fe; and this terminus proved to be the beginning of the southwestern routes to the Pacific. From that ancient New Mexican town, the Gila trail followed down the Rio Grande to the Gila River, along that stream to the Colorado, and across southern California and Warner's Pass to San Diego. The Spanish Trail led from Taos northwestward, over the Green and Sevier Rivers to the Virgin and Colorado, and by way of the Mohave Desert to the Cajon Pass and Los Angeles.²

These routes skirted those regions around Twentynine Palms and its Morongo Basin.*

Earlier routes around the area were much the same. Those following Pike from the old Spanish settlements of the Santa Fe region and on to the Pacific at San Diego or Los Angeles merely moved along the easiest and more prominent routes of the Native Americans. Researchers agree that the present Twentynine Palms oasis likely was settled for centuries prior to the arrival of Western Europeans; evidence also indicates that the location was "the hub of several well-traveled In-

dian trails."^{3**} However, the oasis settlement was small, and we do not have enough evidence to judge the significance of its "wheel" among the region's original cultures.

Even in those American Indian days, one had to be in Twentynine Palms "on purpose" so remote was its location, as some Marines would say. Only they, say these Marines, can be here by accident. It takes only a surprise set of orders from headquarters. The implication is that all orders to Twentynine Palms come as a surprise to the individual. And, of course, for early man and for explorers, mountain men, and cattle pushers, a desert is a place to be avoided.

The late Major General Clarence H. "Bud" Schmid, who in 1952-53 was the first base supply officer at Twentynine Palms, and later (1974-75) its 14th commanding general, used to say in his orientation talks with new arrivals that no one except the Marine Corps ever came to the desert to get organized. Dwellers in the area, he would say, are much like the vegetation here: they seek and require distance, one from the other; they have a serene beauty of their own; they are great and helpful neighbors; but they have sharp thorns or other defensive measures if crowded or bothered thoughtlessly.

Then he would say the roadside desert flowers—patches and spots of great beauty to the true aficionado of the desert—were watered by the tears of Marine wives riding into the desert for the first time with their husbands and sets of those "surprise" orders. But after the howls of laughter and the applause would die down, General Schmid would add: "but think about *this* as you begin your duty here: there are flowers on both sides of the road."

The desert does not, in truth, grow on everyone who serves here—fortunately, most early and some later settlers say. But it happens often enough that by the mid-1980s both town and Marine base were growing at a rate considered alarming to some of the earlier

*A look at a map reveals, of course, that there is a bit of an overland gap between the Rio Grande and Gila in what is now southwest New Mexico; this still was known as the Gila Trail, however.

**Mara or Marah is a name which early explorers believed some of the American Indians called the oasis which became known as Twentynine Palms. As with many other fine points about how "Mara" and "Twentynine Palms" originated as names for the location, there are many uncertainties.



National Park Service Photo 275-412

The high desert of southern California presents rugged mountains, vast expanses of flat parched earth, sparse but picturesque vegetation, and a varied animal population.

settlers who never wanted to see that much organization crowd around them.

First "owners" of the oasis, later called Twentynine Palms, arrived after the place came into pretty much its present geological configuration. They probably were clans of the ancestors of those California and Southwest Desert Indians called generically by early Spanish explorers (much south of Twentynine Palms), the *Serrano*. This Spanish term, meaning merely that Indians so-called were from the mountains or highlands, apparently found its way into general use in Spanish America through the field notes of (among others) Padre Pedro Font, who was with a Spanish expedition in Alta California in 1775. As has been pointed out, the padre was not close to what has become Twentynine Palms, but his description apparently was not unsuited to the Indians which frequented this oasis. Font said the Indians he saw in the Alta California highlands were small but strong, and "friendly, gentle and of good heart."⁴

Later tribes and clans which visited and lived at the oasis for various periods of time included Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Paiute, Mojave, and probably others. Some of these endured at the oasis into the period of the Federal Indian Reservations programs.

After the United States' war with Mexico ended with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded

Alta California, along with Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona, as well as portions of New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming to the United States, the westward push of "Manifest Destiny" settlers began to pick up speed. As we shall see, "real civilization" did not come to the oasis of Twentynine Palms until after World War I, but the American flag, followed shortly by the Gold Rush (which started in 1849), soon began to touch even this desert region. Non-Indians began to arrive—on purpose.

At about the mid-point of the 19th Century—give or take a few years on either side of 1850—a San Geronio Pass cattleman named Paulino Weaver apparently established a route eastward from the Pass through the Morongo Basin and Twentynine Palms. There is uncertainty on the date because Weaver kept his route a secret, since it was a business advantage for him to do so. His route got cattle to markets in Arizona quicker than did competitive routes along the lowlands to and through the present Indio, California. Indications are that friendly Indians had shown Weaver how to manage this route for his advantage, when desert rains of fall and winter would have provided brief grazing periods across the way.*

*Amidst early gold mining and settlements in the area, parts of the present Joshua Tree National Monument were used for cattle ranching. This was later than the Weaver route period.

Weaver had been in the Southwest for years. During the war with Mexico, he had been a scout for the Mormon Battalion which opened "a wagon road by the Gila Route to the Pacific," and which later garrisoned and operated from the Cajon Pass.^{5*}

Earlier, while some elements of the Mormon Battalion garrisoned the Cajon Pass, the U.S. military established several forts along the Mojave Trail from the pass and the San Bernardino area to Fort Mojave on the Colorado (near the present town of Needles, California.) With increased travel, this route became known as the Government Road. From Fort Mojave, it crossed Arizona to Fort Defiance, and on to Santa Fe. Thus, the Mormon Battalion, along with other U.S. Army forces, contributed to keeping well beaten tracks away from that out-of-the-way region of Twentynine Palms and the Morongo Basin.

Growing responses by U.S. citizens to the lure of gold and to the new regions won from Mexico required more than wagon, cattle, and stage routes, however. Some time after Weaver's road went through the Mojave Desert past Twentynine Palms, the Federal General Land Office began to hire private surveyors to establish bench marks and other reference points throughout the Southwest. This was in preparation for more complete surveys for railroad routes, an activity begun in 1853 when Congress authorized funds for the Army Corps of Engineers to begin those surveys. One of these private surveyors, a Colonel Henry Washington, in 1852 fixed the San Bernardino base line from a point atop Mt. San Bernardino east and west across California. Such lines provided the base for the establishment of other points and lines which divided land into townships, sections, and other political divisions.

Later, in 1855, Colonel Washington arrived at the oasis at Twentynine Palms, and provided the first recorded official report about this spot. His notes of 26 May 1855 say: "From this corner, an Indian Wigwam (near a spring of good water, supposed to be per-

*Of Weaver, Ronald Dean Miller, in his *Mines of the High Desert*, p. 8, says: "Weaver, scout for the Mormon Battalion, San Gotgonio cattleman and discoverer of the La Paz and Hassayampa placer strikes, trapped and hunted over much of the Southwest. He was known all over the region. Prescott, Arizona claims him as its first citizen, as does Wickenburg, for it was in Arizona that he spent the last years of his life, employed as a scout for the Army." His route through the Morongo Basin and past the oasis at Twentynine Palms "had long been used by the Indians, and perhaps Weaver found it by the simple method of being taken over it by his Chemehuevi or Serrano friends. Weaver's Road followed what is now the San Bernardino Base Line through the Greater Morongo Basin to the Colorado River."

manent) bears N 51 degrees W, and a small cluster of Cabbage Palmettos bears N 27 degrees W."⁶

Just when somebody counted and found 29 California fan palms at the oasis is not clear. "Palm City" or "Palm Springs" apparently was used for some time. Palm Springs, of course, was a name which later slipped downhill, to the southwest, and across the San Andreas fault. The name Mara, or Marah, often is attributed to the Indians whom European and American explorers found at the oasis, but apparently it did not find its way into any official status as a name for the place in post-Indian settlements. The names of "Palm Springs" or "Palm City" are sometimes credited to a surveyor who came through a year after Washington, but local historian Lucile Weight finds no evidence for his use of such a name.

This 1856 surveyor was Alex P. Green, working for the U.S. to add to the Washington survey. At the time of his survey, Green noted:

Near the springs the land has the appearance of having been cultivated by the Indians . . . The Indians use the leaf of the palm trees for making baskets, hats, etc. Around the springs there is a growth of cane of which the Indians make arrows for their bows.⁶

Linda W. Greene in her Historic Resource Study for the National Park Service notes references to the name, "Palm Springs," into the 1880s, but also finds the number "29" used with "Palms" or "Palm Springs" as early as the 1870s. And Miller, in his *Mines of the High Desert*, says "the name Twentynine Palms was in common use by 1872, being used on the description of a mining claim by McKenzie and Germain" in that year.

Observations of Green, the surveyor, that Indians at the oasis had part of the plot under cultivation may be an indication that the oasis had become a more permanent settlement than it might have been in days when subsistence depended more on hunting. Although the cultivation of maize, beans, and squash was practiced in the New World, beginning in the Mexican highlands at least by 1500 BC, by the time of U.S. surveys in the West, Indians certainly had picked up additional crops and skills from the Spanish, their missions, and later explorers and settlers. However, it seemed that because of its remote location, the oasis at Twentynine Palms supported only small Indian settlements; and in any event most desert Indians seemed to have remained wanderers, follow-

⁶Some writers have said 29 May. But Lucile Weight shows that his field notes before and after would seem to indicate the correct date to be the 26th.



National Park Service Photo 275-408

Cottonwood Springs Oasis in Joshua Tree National Monument, with its native California fan palms is typical of the high-desert oases from which Twentynine Palms got its name.

ing game, moisture, weather, and materials for their crafts of living. Into modern times, some reservation Indians in the arid Southwest have two or three homes—hogans or other accommodations—and they move to and from these with the seasons.

It had perhaps always been such, even in earlier times. As with other life in the Southwest, local Indians were nomads, but territorial, because they had to live off the land, its waters, and sky. Petroglyphs attributed to "early man" remain on the Marine base and in the Joshua Tree National Monument. On the base, the petroglyphs are found near what is thought to have been an early inland lake when most of the Morongo Basin may have been "a fertile, lush area, rich in vegetation and animal life."⁷ The site now appears to have been a bathing area, an easy entry onto the lake, or an access to a shallow crossing. Nearby are the petroglyphs, along a bank of lava. A bulletin board? Prehistoric graffiti? A local "Rosetta Stone" has never been found.

Reservations for Indians in the desert Southwest were sought by federal authorities as early as 1856, but ownership of the land was contested by the railroads

and others. President Ulysses S. Grant (1869-77) reorganized the Department of Indian Affairs, and ordered the establishment of a number of small reservations in southern California. One result of this was the opening in San Bernardino in 1877 of an office for supervising some of these reservations. This Mission Agency assumed control over the reservation at Twentynine Palms, among others.

Disputes, incorrect surveys, confusion, and encroachment by non-Indians continued, however, as railroads and settlers pushed into the Southwest. In March 1873, Joseph Voshay filed homestead claims on Twentynine Palms land which included the Indians' oasis camp, and a year later a Mr. Hoff claimed 160 acres adjacent to Voshay.⁸ There were others, plus filings for five-acre mill sites in a broad area mostly north, east, and southeast of the oasis. These were gold hunters, who in those days filed claims first and let others think of questions later.

Water from the oasis, and from other low spots, made it possible for these early prospectors to live and work in the area. In some cases water was used for washing out the ore in a variety of trough-like con-

trivances, large and small, which separated the dirt, rock, and gravel, and allowed the heavier gold to work its way to the bottom along with other minerals and black sand. From this the gold then would be extracted by panning or other methods. However, most of the dry country gold mills of this early period which dealt with quartz veins—as was the case around Twentynine Palms—used the *arrastra* method, which used less water per ton of dirt.*

A yield of \$100 worth of gold per ton of tailings was considered a good return from an *arrastra* in the Twentynine Palms region.⁹ This estimate probably did not hold true for many of the mines, say modern-day local amateur miners and students of the craft. The price of gold in those days ran around \$20 to \$25 per ounce. The work to get that ounce was prodigious. Observers in that early day said that about 500 pounds of tailings went into each batch for an *arrastra* some 10 feet in diameter. Grinding then took from three to four hours. Mercury was added in amounts based on estimates of the richness of the quartz. By weight, miners used about 25 percent more mercury than expected gold. Near the end of the grinding, about a dozen or so buckets of water would be poured into the *arrastra*, and grinding continued until a beige “paste” was achieved. Water and sludge were then bailed out, or run off quickly, and the whole process

**Arrastra*, from the Spanish verb, *arrastrar*—to drag. This method apparently originated in quartz-vein mining in dry areas of Mexico where the masculine spelling, *arrastre*, is more common. (And in the early U.S. mining in the Southwest, the *arrastra* frequently was called a “raster.”) As a contemporary observer described it: “These are the most primitive kind of contrivance for grinding quartz. They are circular plates, ten or twelve feet in diameter, flagged with flat stones, and in these the quartz is crushed by two large heavy stones dragged round and round by a mule harnessed to a horizontal beam, to which they are also attached.”

Enough water was used in the *arrastra* “pit” to turn the ground dirt into a rich beige mud. Gold then worked its way down into the grooves between the flagstones in the “floor,” and after rocks, dirt and sludge were disposed of, the gold could be extracted by introducing mercury into the grooves. When these grooves were emptied of the mixture of mercury and gold, this amalgam was put into a retort and distilled. The mercury could then be used again.

Ronald Miller states that in the absence of a retort, many old time miners would squeeze the amalgam through an old sock. The mercury would pass through the fabric, but the gold would not. This practice, Miller speculated, was the reason for many old mining claims being named the “Dirty Sock.” From Miller, *Marz*, and from the contemporary observer, J. D. Borthwick, quoted in a *Centennial Supplement to the California Journal of Mines and Geology* for October 1949. This supplement, entitled *The Elephant as They Saw It*, was assembled by Elisabeth L. Egenhoff, for the California Division of Mines. The little booklet, with many historic illustrations, has gone through a few reissues of two to three thousand copies.

started again with another quarter-ton of tailings. Depending on the richness of the batches, this process was kept up for quite a number of days before the amalgam of mercury and gold was dug out of the crevices and separated. Gold usually was melted into bars or ingots, the mercury collected for use again.¹⁰

Modern estimates doubt that even strong men and strong burros could maintain a ton-a-day pace of operations in those early days, before steam engines and larger *arrastras* appeared on the scene. And if \$100 per ton was a good return in the Twentynine Palms region, a yield considered “bad” had to be a judgment call. William Germain, who had filed on a claim in 1872, sold out in 1876 to a John Dore for “25 dollars cash and one white-faced horse valued at 20 dollars.”¹¹

This early mining flurry in the Twentynine Palms region subsided by 1883, and the oasis region was comparatively quiet and inactive again.¹² Dreams of gold hunters spring eternal, though, and mining continued at Dale, east of Twentynine Palms, and in other regions a day or two away by freight wagon. Marginal mining in the area continued, off and on, into modern times. In the 1970s and 80s, after gold ownership again became legal for U.S. citizens and gold prices for a time topped \$800 an ounce, major milling operations returned to the region, using methods more sophisticated than the *arrastra*.

Despite all of these visits of the white man, some Indians remained around the oasis on into the first decade or so of the 1900s, but most drifted closer to the growing population centers of the San Geronimo Pass region where some work was available—mostly on farms, ranches, and in orchards. There Clara True, superintendent of the Banning Indian Agency, ran apparently efficient and compassionate reservation programs. She served in that role from 1908 to 1910, and may have been the first Indian Service employee to visit Twentynine Palms.¹³ She is credited with beginning official records and reports of Indian life and occupation of the oasis, and she tried to sort out the claims and counter-claims on the surrounding lands. Although the Indian Commissioner had reserved the oasis tract for the Indians on 16 September 1891, Southern Pacific Railroad claims, and those of others, appeared to encroach.

Clara True and one of her associates at the Agency in Banning, William E. Johnson, in July of 1908 filed claims on land in the area, to ensure that the Indians were not edged out of their homesite. These probably were mining claims, which included water rights, and the superintendent obviously was trying to help the Indians protect their rights to their traditional



Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms

A number of primitive Indian petroglyphs, as these, are found throughout the Fox Trot and Basalt Flow training areas of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

land. She and Johnson signed over their claims to the Indians, as had been their intent from the beginning. But it was to no avail. Such efforts got Clara True fired. The surge of Manifest Destiny was not to be denied. This drive of the white man, plus the infamous Willie Boy episode of 1909, hastened the exodus of the California Indians from the oasis at Twentynine Palms.

The manhunt for murderer Willie Boy, a Paiute Indian from southwest desert regions, has been much glamorized by Harry Lawton in his fictional account, *Willie Boy: A Desert Manhunt* (Balboa Island, California: Paisano Press, 1960), and by the Robert Redford-Robert Blake movie, *Tell Them Willie Boy is Here* (Universal, 1969), based on the Lawton book.* Actually, the episode was a sordid and grimy affair. Apparently drunk, Willie Boy murdered the leader of the Twentynine Palms Indians at a ranch near Banning, and then ran off with this leader's daughter, fleeing into the rugged desert terrain of the northern rim of the Morongo Basin.¹⁴

Posses from both San Bernardino and Riverside

*Redford played the part of manhunt leader "Cooper," Blake, the part of Willie Boy. Katherine Ross played the kidnapped girl, and Susan Clark, the reservation superintendent, Clara True.

counties, supervised by Riverside County Sheriff Frank Wilson, finally found Willie Boy after he had killed the girl and, a short time later, himself. In all, the chase lasted 11 days and covered some 500 to 600 miles in, around, and across the Morongo Basin, passing through the Twentynine Palms oasis region once. Newspapers in San Bernardino and Riverside gave the whole affair rather lurid coverage. Accounts of the day invented notions of an Indian uprising, to be led by Willie Boy from bases in Arizona Territory, and stories even tried to imply that President William Howard Taft, then touring California, was somehow endangered by this trouble.** Lawton, and later, the movie, turned the episode into "the last great manhunt of the Old West."

**Erickson's account relied upon contemporary newspaper accounts, official "after action" reports, and interviews with at least one member of the posse. The account is perhaps the most even-handed and straightforward telling of the tale, an episode which apparently cries out for over-dramatic analysis as more and more years wash over the poor Indian's trail. Erickson, a former Marine Corps officer who once served at Twentynine Palms, manages the San Bernardino County Branch Library in Yucca Valley. He and his wife and son have lived in Twentynine Palms for a number of years. Mrs. Erickson manages the library branch in Twentynine Palms.

But the only things endangered were the reservation lands in Twentynine Palms, and the even-handed policies of Clara True. She was forced to resign. Area settlers, miners, and railroad officials believed she was too strict in her interpretation of the rights of the Indians and of the boundaries assigned to their lands.

Most of the remaining Indians began to drift away from the oasis at Twentynine Palms. A warranty deed dated 31 July 1911 shifted title to the Twentynine Palms Reservation from the Southern Pacific Railroad to the United States. The following year, only five

small families remained at the oasis, and in 1913, the last of these probably left, because the federal government in that year revoked Indian water rights because of non-residency.¹⁶

Still distant, still well off the beaten path, Twentynine Palms nonetheless was on the map. A new breed of adventurer and prospector had arrived on the scene. Pioneer cattlemen began to scratch up "tanks" of adobe and rocks to catch precious rain along Paulino Weaver's old road. In Twentynine Palms more and more people were showing up—on purpose.

CHAPTER 2

The Community

Although the early gold milling activity near the Twentynine Palms oasis had moved away by 1883, prospectors still scouted the countryside, and some important new finds were made a few miles east of the oasis. By that time, a prospector named Lou Curtis had found placer gold in erosion cuts some 15 to 20 miles east of the old Indian camps. Others made additional finds, and soon a well was put down at a dry lake site for an arrastra which began to mill for miners who arrived on the scene. The community of Dale, and later another called New Dale, grew up in these areas near the present Twentynine Palms highway. Although apparently quite small, these communities passed for boom towns of the "gold rush" in the early days in this region. A sketch map of New Dale in Ronald Dean Miller's book shows two saloons and a red light district.¹ A California State Mine Bureau report of 1896 lists several gold mines in the region.

As gold mining operations in the late 1800s and the early 1900s became more ambitious and sophisticated, so the dreams and failures became larger. Hazel M. Spell, who came to Twentynine Palms in the 1920s and later married a former miner, says in her book, *The Twentynine Palms Story*, that her observations in this region and her research never turned up "authentic records of anyone having made substantial fortunes from these early ventures."² She adds that later, unscrupulous promoters probably made much more money selling worthless gold mine stock than did any of the mining operations. A miner from the 1911-16 period told her, "well, we didn't make much—maybe fifteen or twenty thousand dollars all told"; and this from a rather efficient operation for this later period.³

Later maps of the mining districts around Twentynine Palms indicate, to the east, southeast, and south of Dale, districts with such names as Monte Negras, Eagle Mountain, and Cottonwood. Closer to Twentynine Palms was the old mining district around the oasis, called the Twentynine Palms District. South of that, into what is now the Joshua Tree National Monument lands near the border between San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, were the Washington Mining District and the Gold Park District. South and a bit west of the Gold Park was the Pinon District, and then

northwest of that some mines with such colorful names as the Lost Horse, the Desert Queen, and the Gypsy Queen. North of the sprawling acres of the present Marine Corps base, and south of the small town of Ludlow, where old Route 66 formerly went by in days before and after World War II, gold and copper mines of Camp Rochester reportedly produced some of the best returns of this desert region. Other smaller mines, now long forgotten, dotted areas of what is now the Marine base.

While these mining districts spread considerable difficult miles from Twentynine Palms, the little community beside the oasis continued to grow only very slowly. Wagons with freight for the mines came from Banning in the San Gorgonio Pass eastward up the Morongo grade into the high basin, past Warren Well (site of the present village of Yucca Valley), and through Twentynine Palms to the Dale district. Another route came down from the north, generally along what is now the Amboy Road; and still another route, serving the mining districts south of Dale, came up from Mecca (in the Coachella Valley near the Salton Sea). And while Dale and some of the other mining camps were livelier than Twentynine Palms, the latter's oasis remained a major magnet for the entire area.

At the turn of the century, most California cities near the coast still were quite small, but from the start dwellers in this new state, so recently won from Mexico, and so quickly thereafter inspired and dazzled by a gold rush, were incurable explorers and lookers. The mines, and even just the desert, attracted dreamers after gold, prospective settlers, sightseers, and latter-day frontiersmen dreaming who knows how many varieties of the "what if" dreams which spread Americans from sea to shining sea.

A latter-day frontier—that's what Twentynine Palms became. This small basin of remote desert, off the beaten track, became a throwback to a period long since gone elsewhere in the United States. For gold, for adventure, for health, for curiosity, for privacy, the settlers began to dribble in. It was a wonder of desolation, this land—scorched by a relentless sun glaring through air so pure it could not stop the day's heat



National Park Service Photo

Mining equipment of this kind can be found at abandoned gold claims scattered throughout both the Air Ground Combat Center and nearby Joshua Tree National Monument.

and could not stop the heat's escape at night. Then the limitless sky shone with stars which seemed to arch all the way back home to eastern cities, and yet on again westward to those growing places by the Pacific. One could imagine both poles of the earth encompassed by that canopy of sparkling wonder. There were winds, now and then, which put dust in lungs and grit in cooking gear and kitchen larders. There were cold winds in winter, and frosts, and now and then snow. There were flash floods capable of carrying away a camp site, a feeble desert road, or even the foundation of an ambitious home. But for many persons who stayed, or kept coming back, a strange and wondrous thing happened. Good health happened. One could feel better in the desert. Healthy persons noticed it. And, often, those with ill health noted marked improvement in their well-being. These were the years of tuberculosis, asthma, all sorts of problems of lung congestion brought out of the places of the industrial revolution in Europe and the eastern United States. Then, people sought out deserts to find new health for themselves or members of their families. Evidence indicated—slowly at first, and then with growing assurance—that here in this basin around the old Oasis of Mara existed one of the better health-giving deserts of America.

One of the early health seekers in Twentynine Palms was Bill Campbell, husband of Elizabeth W. Crozer Campbell who left excellent accounts of early desert life in her book, *The Desert Was Home*. Bill and Betty Campbell arrived at the oasis in December of 1924. Bill's lungs had been damaged by mustard gas in France during World War I, and doctors in the east had sent him to southern California—first, to the Pasadena area. But he did not thrive there, and Betty was told by a doctor that "I had better take him to the desert if I hoped to save him."⁴ Mrs. Campbell does not say who this doctor was, and she gives the impression that the reference to the desert was general.*

They wandered from place to place, she wrote, apparently for some time, with a tent and light camping gear in "an old second-hand Franklin car, and with

*There seems little doubt that the doctor was James B. Luckie, whom we shall meet just a bit later in this chapter, and that he specified Twentynine Palms. Betty Campbell fell out with almost everyone at one time or several—including her father who put her on notice that she gave up her inheritance when she married Bill. By the time she wrote her book, Betty had fallen out with Dr. Luckie, and he is not mentioned in the work at all. Helen Bagley agrees that there is little doubt that the Campbells had been directed to Twentynine Palms, and by Dr. Luckie.



National Park Service Photo 273-411
The dry climate brought many early settlers to the region dominated by numerous species of colorful cacti, yuccas, mesquite, spidery ocotillo, and picturesque Joshua trees.

a small sum of money in cash." Then, probably somewhere near Palms Springs:

Finally on an old man's recommendation we followed a dim wagon track, which, twisting through mountains and valleys, brought us to a line of springs in a deep valley, where we found shelter from the wind. Weary and discouraged after driving the almost abandoned road, we camped under the cottonwoods when it was too dark to see our surroundings clearly, set up our tent, and spent our first night at the place marked on old maps as 'Twenty-nine Palms.'

Although some mining activity picked up after World War I (during which military duties or higher

remained sparsely settled.

Only about eight or nine shacks existed in the valley at that time, [yet] it was surprising how many people came to the spring for water. Cow men passing through, miners going and coming from distant claims, prospectors with their burros, and occasionally a stray tourist stopped. Once a long caravan of Indians passed, going east.

It seems impossible to establish when the more-organized settlement of the community began

with the "lungers"—those with lung problems from World War I gas, or from tuberculosis of the period. But it seems clear that Bill Campbell was one of the early ones. Local historian Lucile Weight states:

We usually think of the founding of modern Twentynine Palms as taking place in 1926 or 1927 when the first noticeable influx of veterans took place here. However, the germ probably was there in 1919. And one of the veterans has spoken of 1922-23 as being the genesis. One record states that Pasadena Post 15, American Legion, "wanted to start" the outpost in the desert in May 1924; this appears in the summary prepared for the cornerstone in San Bernardino County Building in the [Twentynine Palms] Civic Center.**

"During the 1920s" and "In the early 1920s" are phrases used by early settler Hazel Spell in her excellent little book, *The Twentynine Palms Story*, to establish the earliest days of settlement for the sake of homes. Hazel arrived in 1929, "burdened with ill health and the responsibility of caring for my two small children." In those "early 1920s," Spell noted:

A few daring homesteaders braved the winding sandy roads into the valley in search of new home sites. This took real courage, as, aside from the few miners and prospectors hanging on, there apparently was nothing to appeal to the homesteader.***

And when Frank and Helen Bagley arrived to stay, in the fall of 1927 with their three small sons, Helen Bagley wrote:

There was not even a mile of straight road. More important, there was no school, post office, or store. The Gold Park Hotel, then east of the Oasis of Mara, sold groceries from its stock, when they could be spared, and gasoline, to homesteaders who had "run out." No group of buildings could be called a village. A population of from fifty to one hundred persons was scattered from Yucca Valley to the Dale mining district, and from the dry lake [present Marine base main side] to the Oasis. There was a cattle ranch near Yucca Valley and a few prospectors in the hills. Most of the settlers were homesteaders, and many of them were veterans of World War I. It was a frontier community.¹⁶

Lucile Weight notes that although she has no quarrel with Helen Bagley's description of the town when the Bagleys arrived, it might be well to point out that the Gold Park Hotel served as post office from about that time in the fall of 1927, and that a school was then a-building. The Gold Park took on a branch library in the following spring, also.

*It might also be noted here that in the early 1980s, a new county building was built some miles east of Twentynine Palms, a sign that metropolitan ways are creeping slowly into the Morongo Basin.

**She might have added to her "nothing to appeal" the words "except a chance for better health." This search for health was, after all, what brought Hazel up here with her children.

Why was the community so spread out? In addition to General Bud Schmid's later observation that desert dwellers sought plenty of space, like the creosote bush, and that nobody save the Marine Corps ever came to the desert to get organized, there was the main fact of homesteading—a homestead in those days had to be a quarter-section of land—160 acres. The five-acre homestead did not come until much later. "Jack-rabbit" homesteads they were called by "real" homesteaders, and they were to some extent things of the Great Depression. To old timers, who had to serve total residency requirements on their quarter sections as opposed to weekending which the "jackrabbits" could get by with, these newcomers looked a bit like hothouse plants brought out from the big cities, from the "inside."****

And why was there a Gold Park Hotel if, as Helen Bagley reports, there were maybe only 50 to 100 settlers in all of the Morongo Basin to the Dale Mining District, and "no group of buildings could be called a village"? In 1985 Helen said: mainly for the miners and the freighters, plus some tourists exploring the desert—and some of them were health-seekers, too. Helen recalled that back in 1927 her mother, then living in Oregon, sent some money to brighten their first Christmas in Twentynine Palms. "It was a five dollar bill," Helen said. She and Frank used the money to treat themselves and their three sons to Christmas dinner at the Gold Park Hotel. She said she did not remember the entire menu, but it stayed in her mind that the table was bright with red candles, and that they had red Jello.

Local historian Lucile Weight reports that E. E. Chapman started building the Gold Park in 1925. It was east of the oasis, across from the present visitors' center of the National Monument. It was a one-story frame structure, flanked by some cabins where guests could stay. The larger building housed the restaurant, and a "common" space which could pass as a lobby or lounge room. Later, the Gold Park migrated west-

***In the early days, settlers in Twentynine Palms used the term "going inside" for making the journey back to "civilization" along the coast. Much later, Marines on the base would speak of "getting the browns" (as opposed to "getting the blues") and needing to "go down below" to bright spots of supermarkets, department stores, and other liberty attractions. Bud Schmid said that in 1952 and 1953, much of Twentynine Palms still was on the barter system, and that he and his family often needed to drive to farm markets in Hemet to replenish their larders in those early days before an adequate commissary was established. Still later, "going down below" became described by a Marine-invented verb, "to swoop." This was mostly a vernacular of the liberty-bound Marine, as in: "I'm swooping this weekend," or, "If you're going to swoop, can I bum a ride?"

ward and became the present Twentynine Palms Inn, a complex which remains, friendly and quaint, to remind all comers that the pioneer period of this niche of desert was not so very long ago.

On the Fourth of July 1965, when population on the Marine Base was beginning to thin down because of units heading for that new war in Vietnam, an old veteran of World War I looked at the Twentynine Palms folks assembled to dedicate the community's Luckie Park, and claimed for himself and others of his peers, the B.A. degree, because "we existed here Before Anything." That was William J. Underhill, who a few years after his "BA" days brought the first linotype machine into the high desert to found *The Desert Trail*, the community's first legal newspaper.

Bill Underhill had been among those many veterans, "back in the 20s," who—as they joked grimly to each other later—came out to Twentynine Palms to die, and then spent some 50 or more mostly very pleasant years getting around to it. The desert gave them those years, they believed. And the man they

credited with finding them their desert and its new lease on life for them was Dr. James B. Luckie.

Before World War I, Dr. Luckie served as a resident physician at La Vina Sanitarium in Pasadena. Persons with consumption, asthma, and other lung problems, had been sent into the Southwest for a number of years. A dry, hot climate with clear air benefited most of them. Treatment for such patients, in then smog-free Pasadena, was the specialty of La Vina. During World War I, Dr. Luckie served as an Army medical officer. He knew what many of these men had suffered in France during gas attacks; and he was well aware that tuberculosis of the lungs—consumption—had spread considerably among servicemen billeted in close quarters during their military service. Many such afflicted veterans began turning up in Pasadena after the war, and Dr. Luckie, along with an American Legion post in that city, attacked their problems with vigor and compassion.

As has been noted, the precise dates of early settlers encouraged by Dr. Luckie and American Legion Post 13 are not at hand, but it is clear that a very wide

William E. Keys, one of the early settlers of the high desert country, poses at his Desert Queen Ranch House, now part of the 577,000-acre Joshua Tree National Monument.

National Park Service Photo 275-324



area of the Mojave and California deserts were explored for such a settlement site by Dr. Luckie and the commander of Post 13, Joe Davis, who himself suffered from tuberculosis. Finally, near the border between those two desert regions:

One night they camped under the Twentynine Palms of the Oasis of Mara. In the morning Dr. Luckie walked out into the sunshine. The air sparkled. The elevation was right. Summer heat would be bearable, the winters mild. The long basin, surrounded by bare mountains, would not seem desolate to anyone who had eyes for beauty of color and form And in this valley, a man could homestead a quarter-section of land and make a home—and perhaps find values to heal the spirit while health returned. Dr. Luckie began to tell patients, "Go out to Twentynine Palms and file on a homestead."¹¹

Joe Davis (for whom there is a street named in Twentynine Palms) did file on a homestead, and came to Twentynine Palms with a small caravan of cars loaded with the material to start his cabin. A short time later, his exposure to a desert rain contributed to his getting pneumonia, and he died only a few months after he had filed on the homestead. But in the meantime, his American Legion post had started a veterans' rest home in the area, and by the fall of 1928, there were enough veterans to create a Legion post of their own, Out Post 334.

Another Legionnaire, Frank Mathys, took over the homestead filing of Joe Davis, and improved on it. In 1930, Mathys deeded 100 acres to the Legion post. Earlier, Bill Campbell had given 40 acres of his homestead to Dr. Luckie—either because he was the doctor who had sent him to Twentynine Palms in 1924, or for later services—and Dr. Luckie, who made it a rule not to charge disabled veterans for his services, gave this land to the Legion post. All of this later became the Legion rest home, post headquarters and later temporary school, community hall, and—a portion of it—the park which took Dr. Luckie's name to commemorate what he had done for the community.

There were earlier settlers in Twentynine Palms than Dr. Luckie's veterans. In 1910, Bill Keys arrived to mine and to found a ranch, a family, and a legend of pioneering which still is talked about in Twentynine Palms and at the crumbling site of his ranch house in what is now the National Monument.*

*Helen Bagley tells of Bill Keys in her *Sand In My Shoe*. Art Kidwell, a former National Park Ranger at the Monument and now a filmmaker, relates in *Ambush: The Story of Bill Keys* (Fresno: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1979) an excellent account of a dramatic episode in Keys' later years, and his tenacious efforts which ultimately cleared his name and freed him from a sentence for manslaughter. *Ambush* can be found in the Twentynine Palms library.

The Donnels, Norman and Betnice, arrived in 1922, as did George and Mildred Michels. Donnell Hill, at the west edge of "downtown" Twentynine Palms, is named for Norm Donnell; and Robert Michels, a brother of George, has lived with his wife Beulah on the Michels' homestead in Twentynine Palms into the mid-1980s. In 1923, William Q. Smith and his younger brother, Harry, homesteaded; later, Bill Smith developed the Smith's Ranch complex on Adobe Road. A large building there, first a roller-skating rink, later was used by Marines in the early 1950s as a gymnasium for physical training, and for Special Services events. A drive-in theater—open air—remained an active part of the complex into modern times. Also in 1923, David and Anna Poste arrived to attempt a revival of the Virginia Dale mine, had money and legal problems, left, but came back later to become important persons in the community. Dave Poste became justice of the peace, for many terms in that role, and both "manned" the first telephone exchange in their home in Twentynine Palms.^{12**}

On the fifth of July 1965, Frank and Helen Bagley took Dr. Luckie and his daughter, Susan Moore, "for a picnic in the desert mountains where yuccas were blooming gloriously."¹³ Helen reports that the doctor was then "an old man with a bad heart." He was to die a short time later. But on that day Dr. Luckie said, "if they should ever want to put a monument to me in the park, I hope it will be a simple boulder with these lines: 'Here far from noise and turmoil may brotherly love prevail.'¹⁴ Then Helen closes that chapter with these words:

Noise and turmoil? From the days of the first town meetings when people parked their cars in a circle and sat on running boards, there has been noise and turmoil. But there has been love too. And I think this has prevailed.¹⁵

So it took the disabled veterans of World War I—the "lungers"—to follow Dr. Luckie's star into the desert and found a center to the community. Perhaps they did not come to the desert to get organized, either, but cooperation became a necessity for those weakened men, most of whom had incomes of less than \$100 a month. Thus, in a remote desert where one could scarcely arrive by accident, "community" really arrived that way.

**Helen Bagley, in *Sand In My Shoe*, provides a touching account of these early days in Twentynine Palms, in her chapter devoted to Dave and Anna Poste.

CHAPTER 3

Condor Field

If organization and “government” for the community of Twentynine Palms began with the formation of the American Legion post at Dr. Luckie’s “health camp” in the fall of 1928, most of the refinements of modern civilization still were a long way off. As one old settler has said, the Wall Street crash a year later, and the Great Depression which followed in the 1930s hardly changed anything in Twentynine Palms. If the entire nation got badly down at the heel in the Depression, most dwellers in Twentynine Palms just started practicing a bit earlier for this sort of life. Population did increase slowly, however, as the Depression drove some from the cities into the desert where they hoped to live more economically on a jackrabbit homestead, or by trying their luck with a small gold-mining operation.

To report on the slow arrival of the niceties of civilization, William J. Underhill, who had been an early homesteader (in 1928) with friend Les Eatenfight, brought his linotype machine into Twentynine Palms and in April of 1935 founded *The Desert Trail*, first local newspaper authorized to accept legal advertising. Bill Underhill, who later was to claim for himself and his Legion friends the “B.A. degree” because they were in Twentynine Palms “Before Anything,” was for years a familiar sight in the town, taking notes on envelopes and other scraps of paper, and transposing them later into news stories and features directly into hot type at his linotype.*

Until 1936, the way in remained desert roads—rutted tracks in the decomposed granite “sand,” with numerous rocks and an intermixed natural content of adobe providing what firmness there was. That year, San Bernardino County road department workers oiled the first 20 miles of Twentynine Palms “highway” from Whitewater eastward. Not yet the later “desert mix” which created almost an asphalt or “blacktop” road, this oil merely helped lay the dust, and assisted the natural adobe in holding the surface together a bit

*Underhill, a veteran of World War I, sold his newspaper in 1951, and thereafter there were other changes before the paper came under its present ownership as part of a nationwide chain. Oldtimers say the paper never was as much fun after Bill Underhill sold it. Underhill remained a loved and respected resident of Twentynine Palms until his death in January 1984, at the age of 84.

better. Twenty miles got the road up the Morongo Grade, and to the first plateau of the high desert of the Morongo Basin. Still ahead to the east was the next long grade, up to what is now Yucca Valley. Oil on this surface, and then the firmer desert mix did not come along until a few years later. In 1952, when Marines first came to open the base, the blacktop road still was but two lanes, and it stopped at Twentynine Palms. It was not until 1959 that hard surface moved eastward beyond Twentynine Palms and the old Dale mining community to the Colorado River. Now four-laned all the way from I-10 at Whitewater to Twentynine Palms, the blacktop remains only two lanes on east to the river. But this does not keep it from being a weekend and holiday racecourse for recreational vehicles (RVs) and boat pullers streaking to and from the river.

Improved roads always are a mixed blessing for pioneers since roads often bring an unwanted rush of “civilization,” and such was the case for Twentynine Palms. Yet some of the “problems” caused by the improved roads also brought the community a new neighbor, the quiet giant of the Joshua Tree National Monument which sprawls along most of the south edge of the Morongo Basin. This is the National Park Service’s huge “island” of conservation in a desert which always looked a bit worthless and lacking in claims for its own life and survival to rather a lot of thoughtless and unscrupulous sightseers and other exploiters. For a time, as better roads and automobiles allowed more and more people to explore what in their view was the land nobody owned, it appeared most desert plants, including exotic cacti, might be uprooted and taken to desert gardens then becoming all the rage in the growing cities and suburbs down toward the Pacific.

Primary champion for the formation of the National Park Service conservation area which became the Joshua Tree National Monument was Mrs. Albert Sherman Hoyt—for whom there is a street named in Twentynine Palms. After genteel upbringing in the midst of her plantation family in Mississippi in the days of the Civil War and later, she married a “wealthy New York surgeon and moved to California in the late 1890s.”¹

After World War I, during which she lost an infant son and later her husband, Minerva Hoyt explored and became interested in the California desert. To publicize the plight of the desert at the hands of thoughtless collectors, she staged desert plant exhibits in New York and England, as well as in the American west. In 1930, she formed the International Deserts Conservation League, and through it began to put focus to her plan to have the National Park Service create a desert park in southern California. The New Deal and conservation work projects of President Franklin D. Roosevelt brought about conditions which caused the creation of the Joshua Tree National Monument on 10 August 1936, by Presidential proclamation.

The area contained approximately 825,000 acres; Twentynine Palms donated land around the old oasis for park headquarters; and in the fall of 1940, James E. Cole came down from the National Park at Yosemite to become first superintendent of the sprawling desert acres of Joshua Tree.^{2*} The region, with just a few campgrounds and picnic areas, remains essentially an unspoiled and trackless desert preserve popular with Marines on duty at the base as relaxation, hiking, and climbing country. For those Marines not familiar with the desert and the American West, the National Monument provides a wonder of new experiences.

The Joshua tree—actually a member of the lily family and not a “tree” of the annual-growth-ring type—got its name, probably, from early Mormons in the American West. They thought, so the story goes, that the plant—at least the young ones with two arms—resembled the biblical Joshua, imploring the heavens. Older Joshua trees can grow to 10, 20, or more feet tall with a magnificent spread of spiky, contorted limbs.

Creation of the Joshua Tree National Monument, improved surface for the Morongo grade, and then—chanticleer of progress—expanded telephone service at Twentynine Palms, made the year 1936 a banner one, indeed. While in Europe Hitler and Mussolini signed their Berlin-Rome Axis alliance, and in the Far East Japan continued to stir troubled waters along the

China Coast, residents of Twentynine Palms—as with most other U.S. citizens—continued to struggle out of the Great Depression. But as has been noted, in Twentynine Palms, it was difficult to tell where the rub of pioneering left off and chafing of Depression

If there had been but two toll phones in all of the community prior to 1936—which was the case—this had been accepted as part of the facts of the matter. But now in this historic year, early pioneer Frank Bagley led the appeals which caused the California Water and Telephone Company to start expanding the telephone service to businesses and homes. This is when the telephone exchange was set up in the home of David and Anna Poste. At first, the switchboard could handle five connections. Dial phone did not come along until 1953, when a new building went up to house the improved service. Until then, telephone users cranked for central, and then asked for the connection they wanted.

It was at this switchboard that early resident Blanche Ellis one evening had to sit and efficiently follow through on her “number, please” response to local phone calls while a man and wife brought in by Constable Poste because of a domestic squabble, and shackled to the Poste couch, pretty well shredded the clothing from each other in front of Blanche and her switchboard. Blanche also adds the following to the legend of the Joshua tree: she once heard a woman of her acquaintance tell a newcomer to the desert that “the Joshua trees are ten thousand and ten years old.” “How can you be so precise?” Blanche asked her later. “Because,” said the amateur botany reporter, “when we came out here, somebody told us they were ten thousand years old, and we’ve been here ten years now.”

In 1938 came the U.S. Small Tract Act, which provided for the five-acre “jackrabbit” homesteads and launched a “flood” of new claims which before long dotted the desert landscape with prove-up cabins. Old timers considered these something of a blight. Residency requirements were more relaxed than had been the case when homesteads amounted (usually) to a quarter section (a square half-mile measured from a section corner).^{2*} For claiming a small tract, one need

*The Joshua Tree National Monument area is California desert country representative of both the Colorado and Mojave deserts, which merge within its boundaries. It is typical of that portion of the desert region of the southwest known as the Basin and Range Province. For this reason, it has great geological interest. The relief of the area is due to extensive block faulting by which large sections of the earth's crust have been broken, tilted, and raised. The resulting remarkable rock formation, deep canyons and broad basins provide magnificent scenic beauty.” (Greene, *Historical Resource Study*, p. 375).

**In those earlier days the claimant—single or head of a household—had to live on the homestead at least seven months a year for three years, and he had to construct an habitable house in the first year. A World War I veteran could apply certain of his military duty time toward the residency requirements. Helen Bagley quotes early settlers as saying that “The government bets you 160 acres of land that you can't live on it for three years without starving to death.” The claimant often lost. Helen reports that most claims “had been filed three times before being finally patented.” (*Jawed In My Shoe*, p. 119)



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A357595

Created in 1936, the Joshua Tree National Monument sought to preserve stands of picturesque Joshua trees and an astonishing array of high desert plants and animals.

only build a cabin, and weekend use was enough to qualify for full and final ownership. Blight or not, the jackrabbit tract cabins contributed something to population growth, and something to the economy as well. A "flood" of newcomers, it seemed to many of those persons who had arrived earlier.

Another flood problem with which Twentynine Palms struggled from 1939 and into the 1980s, had to do with desert downpours and resulting flash floods. Early settler William B. Hatch, Jr., engineer-surveyor, gave his services to flood control during these years, as did Frank Bagley and other members of the community. Bagley in those early days was president of a property owners' league, and most efforts concentrated on getting bank loans and rights of way for construction of flood control channels.*

Yet a third flood—a violent military one—began to form in 1939. It would bring an end to the Great

Depression for all of the United States, and would bring for Twentynine Palms a new role as a site for a military training area. The infamous Munich Conference had taken place in September of 1938; in the summer of 1939, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler; and on 1 September 1939, Hitler sent his mechanized forces into Poland. World War II was underway. Although President Roosevelt issued a proclamation of neutrality, most U.S. citizens who remembered World War I knew that could not last. It didn't. A new Neutrality Act passed both houses of the U.S. Congress during November of 1939, but allowed sort of a "come and get it" for "cash on the barrelhead" sale of war materials to the Allies.²

"Goodbye, dear, I'll be back in a year" tilted the popular (and hopeful) song of the day when, based on the U.S. Selective Service Training Act of September 1940, young men began registering for the first

*In the early years—before anything, as Bill Underhill termed it—Twentyniners made their own fun and relaxation. Sally Ince (whose father-in-law Thomas H. Ince was an early Hollywood producer) tells of the sometimes activity when rains came rumbling into the desert. They'd get their folding chairs, Sally says, and hur-

ry to a strategic spot where they could watch the flash floods go by. In those days, parties were where you found them. Progress ended that pastime. A modern problem remaining has been that of keeping motorcycle riders (some of them Marines) out of the channels and off the adjacent berms during dry times.



Department of Defense Photo (USAF) AC21891A

Numerous TG-2 gliders appear in line near the hangar at the Army Air Forces' glider training facility at Twentynine Palms, California, during the early years of World War II.

peacetime military conscription in the nation's history and were soon going off to military training camps. President Roosevelt in November was swept back into office for an unprecedented third term. The nation was ready to do its share. More aid to the Allies became possible in January 1941 with passage of the "lend-lease" bill. U.S. military forces, with their new "draftees," began locating and constructing new training sites. In November 1941, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reached out and touched Twentynine Palms. He signed authority for the U.S. Army Air Corps to start a glider training school on those old dead lakes north of Dr. Luckie's health camp, where the World War I veterans—and a growing number of others—were learning to live in good health beside the Oasis of Mara where you had to arrive on purpose, and stay with conviction.

For some time in Twentynine Palms there had been dreams of an airfield north of town. In spite of the fact that aviation had played a role in World War I, and that Frank Bagley and others had been a part of that war-time activity, flying had to struggle to find its niche after the war. The adventure it promised continued to attract experimentation with new uses, however, and part of the early Twentynine Palms idea—in 1937—was to show off the desert with air tours, since automobile tours had become popular as a means for city folks to see the quaint outback. The town Chamber of Commerce, sparked by Bagley, Earle H. Nicholes, and Colonel Henry L. "Watty" Watson, made application to the U.S. Department of Interior

to lease a large tract of land north of town, at a site called Mesquite Dry Lake. Obstacles between lease and actual airfield were many. There was no road to the dry lake, no electricity, and no resources for meaningful construction.* Flying enthusiasts hoped to get help from President Roosevelt's Works Projects Administration (WPA), but this was not forthcoming. By 1939, the plans for the flying field crumpled in for lack of wherewithal

Next notion for the dry lake was land yachting and sailplaning—gliding. Early settler William B. Hatch, Jr., a water sports enthusiast in his pre-desert days, organized a Twentynine Palms Land Yacht Club. Lucile Weight reports that approximately 100 persons attended the first meeting, and that in following months many land yachters visited Mesquite Dry Lake with their wheeled "sailboats." And, according to this same local historian, national gliding champion John Robinson "brought his ship here and talked of the possibilities of a glider school." That was in November of 1941, and later that month, as we have seen, the Army Air Forces got authority to establish just such a school in Twentynine Palms—a military glider school which would send airborne troops into World War II battlefields.

Earlier that year the Germans had given a grim new

*A private entrepreneur, Leonard Wikoff, brought in generators in 1938, and over the next year began stringing an electrical grid to homes and businesses from his gasoline-powered operation near Four Corners, which is at the intersection of Twentynine Palms Highway and Adobe Road. Except for a few earlier private "light plants," this was the community's first electricity.

significance to gliders by using them in their 20 May invasion of Crete in the eastern Mediterranean. Ironically, the Germans had pioneered the construction of gliders and the development of military tactics for these motorless aircraft because of weapons restrictions imposed on them in the post World War I Treaty of Versailles (1919). Gliders were economical (and for the Germans, legal) airframes. German students at the University of Aachen in 1920 built a sporting glider—the *Schwarzer Teufel*—which had been designed by their professor, Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer (whom we shall meet again). This Black Devil of the sky proved so successful that craft of its design, and others later, inspired large-scale sporting events throughout Germany and spread gliding into many other countries, including the United States. In 1928 and 1929—at about the time Twentynine Palms was getting organized around its American Legion outpost—a few German pilots set up a glider school at Cape Cod. And it was a German, Wolf Hirth, who in 1930 taught glider fans about thermals and paved the way for the wide-spread use of the variometer which “reads” the thermals for the glider pilot.*

Hirth “discovered” thermals, according to the Soaring Society of America, in 1930 at the first U.S. Na-

*Technically, *gliding* is a steady downward flight or glide, and was the first application of the “motorless airplane.” An understanding of thermals turned the sport into soaring which makes possible sustained flight in a motorless and heavier-than-air craft. A thermal is an updraft of warm air caused by the uneven heating of the earth’s surface brought about by terrain configuration, ground cover, etc. A pilot in a “glider” rides a thermal upward by circling or spiraling on its lift; then when it plays out, the pilot glides downward in the desired direction until he encounters another thermal which can give him new lift for a subsequent glide. Also, an “upslope lift” can result when a prevailing wind rises at a hill or ridgeline, and gliders can gain elevation on these currents and soar along the upslope lift much as a surfer would run along a wave. In addition—and usually a thing of mountain country—there is “wave lift” brought about by wave-like disturbances in a briskly moving air mass downwind of a mountain range. In early days of gliders, the variometer consisted of a chamber, called the “jug,” providing a static source of air, to which two tubes are connected. One tube shows a red ball, the other a green ball. The red ball rising in its tube meant the glider was losing altitude; the green ball rising indicated that the glider was gaining altitude. Thus, sailplane pilots airborne and practicing the art of soaring say they are “looking for green air.” The military tactic involved mainly the glide technique. Military gliders were pulled aloft by mother aircraft, and then released at such an altitude and range that they could glide into landing zones in the target area. In addition to quietness, just about their only advantages were that they could built in less time—and for less money—than motorized aircraft and that they could land in less space. Parachute tactics later proved more useful in military operations. Military helicopters of workhorse value did not come along until much later—generally speaking, in the Korean War in the 1950s.

tional Soaring Contest, at Elmira, New York. The Soaring Society was incorporated at Elmira in 1932, and that area—along with Twentynine Palms—was one of three primary military glider schools established by the United States during those early days of World War II. The other was at Lockport, Illinois.**

First order of business for the new airfield was a proper land survey. Bill Hatch, who earlier had organized dry land sailing in this dead lake area, volunteered for this project. Hatch, a surveyor, was a natural for this. Years earlier, suffering as a young man with arthritis, he had been weekending in Twentynine Palms when somebody came to the Inn looking for the surveyor who was supposed to be in town. An early settler had died. Another settler had given a plot of land for a cemetery, but nobody was quite sure of the location. If Bill Hatch could find the proper land, friends of the deceased could bury him. Bill Hatch did, and they did. Now Hatch called on the Army with F. R. Whyers, who wanted to build the glider facility. Later that month—November 1941—the Army Corps of Engineers sent out a survey team of its own.

In charge was Technical Sergeant Steven Zvonar, who came down from the 29th Engineer Topographic Battalion in Portland, picked up some additional personnel from Field Company A, then in Oceanside, and came out to the desert—about a half dozen Army engineers in all. Zvonar, who later went into the Air Force, from which he retired as a major, recalled in 1985 that to beat the desert heat, he and his crew would move out of the bivouac at about 0400, do their mapping, and then at about 1500 head back to the village—then comprised of about 300 or 400 people, it seemed to him.

They had a favorite bar in Twentynine. But the first afternoon or two, they found the place crowded “with the ladies on the bar stools and the men two deep” behind them. Zvonar’s instrument man, a Blackfoot Indian, solved the problem of getting the soldiers up to the bar. He had a “pet” tarantula he’d found in the desert, named it Methuselah, and kept it in an empty kitchen matches box. Sergeant Buckland, the Blackfoot with a sense of humor and a flair for practical jokes, reached over the crowd and released Methuselah onto the bar. “Well, needless to say,” Zvonar nonetheless said, “women fell off bar stools, screamed, ran.” Buckland and the other soldiers moved up to the bar and “made their presence known!”

**Areas of rolling hills and valleys, where thermals climb. Lockport, up toward Chicago, got its name from its position on the old Illinois and Michigan canal. Elmira, south of Seneca Lake, straddles the valley of the Chemung.

"From then on, we were always greeted by 'Here's the Army!'" said Zvonar. "We were treated royally for the three weeks we were there. A most memorable time in my life."* From the work of Zvonar and his men came multi-colored topographic quadrangles, and triangulation stations from which aeronautical engineers were able to locate the light beacons for the airfield, as well as other survey reference points.

All of this was bringing the military to Twentynine Palms. Ultimately this meant the U.S. Marine Corps. While there is no way to prove it, probably the Marine Corps never would have come to Twentynine Palms had it not been for this 1941 decision to put the glider base here in these dead lakes surrounded by their brown hills of thermals and upslope lifts. There was by then an air base at Victorville—now George Air Force Base. Later, the Marine Corps set up the driest outdoor warehouse in the world at Barstow, and the Marine Corps Air Station at Yuma later came to be as a result of needs for emergency landing sites inland from San Diego and around the impact areas in the vicinity of the Salton Sea.

And then for desert training on the ground (something the Marine Corps might have inherited later), up for grabs after World War II might have been the great, sprawling acres of decomposed granite churned up by General George Patton's tanks (and those of others who followed) east of Twentynine Palms and on over into equally ghastly areas of Arizona. Desert Training Center, it was called. It amounted to some 16,000 square miles of desert, from areas east of Twentynine Palms, and then eastward throughout much of the vacant desert between what are now Highways 40 (old Route 66) in the north to I-10 in the south, then across the Colorado River and into a broad Arizona desert area from Parker in the north to Yuma in the south. Patton began training his tankers there in the spring of 1942, and then left in early fall to make his 8 November 1942 landing in North Africa with his 3d and 9th Infantry Divisions and his 2d Armored Division.

Training for tank units and individual soldiers continued in the California-Arizona areas until 1944, and Bureau of Land Management personnel who now own

*This was the age—and the sort of a place—where, as Kipling said of another time and place, a man could raise a thirst. Major General Bud Schmid said that when he first arrived in the desert as the young supply officer for the Marine facility in 1953, a desert martini was a cold beer in an icy mug, with an olive plunked in. Sgt. Buckland, the Blackfoot, by the way, knew that tarantulas are not dangerous. Repulsively scary to most of us, but not dangerous. The scorpion, the black widow, the brown recluse—now those are different matters. Especially the brown recluse.

the old center say that in all some 300,000 U.S. troops trained here during the war. Most of them must have made rocklined walkways around their tents and up and down company streets. Even now in the mid-1980s, flying over or driving through with a rugged vehicle, these pathways of rocks can be seen. And still in evidence also are some fieldstone altars and walls in the form of Gothic arches where various units had their chaplains conduct outdoor services. Those and a (now-crumbling) gigantic relief map about the size of a football field, built to represent the sprawling acres of the training center, are all that remain.

Early in 1985, the Needles office of the Bureau of Land Management sponsored the dedication of a commemorative monument to this gigantic military training effort, at arid and windswept Chiriaco Summit, just off Route I-10 and near the southernmost border of the Joshua Tree National Monument, where the Cottonwood, Eagle, and Orocopia Mountains scowl down at modern motorists speeding along in air-conditioned comfort. If these motorists squint searchingly into the heat shimmers of the brown and desolate desert, still they will see nothing to remind them of those days of training. Not even a self-respecting ghost would remain. Out of sight from the motorway, only the relief map, and the lonely altars remain, along with those lines of rocks. A future lithic wonder, a Carnac in miniature?*** These rows of desert field stones led, in their fashion, to North Africa, to Sicily, to Salerno, to Nice, to Normandy, to victory in World War II.

After the decision in 1941 to locate the glider training center at Twentynine Palms, one of the advisors who visited this desert area a number of times was Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer, designer of that famous *Schwarzer Teufel* built by his students in Aachen more than 20 years earlier. He had fled Hitler's Germany, and by this time, was a research engineer for Douglass Aircraft.

Other visitors were frequent, since gliders and the desert both were oddities which attracted attention. Lois Marlow Harz, a Twentynine Palms resident who came home from San Bernardino College and went to work in the Army office at the field, recalls that one day movie star—and by then lieutenant—Jimmy Stewart flew in to look the place over. Mrs. Harz recalled in 1985 that she was so thrilled at the prospect of seeing the popular movie star that she immediate-

***Carnac is in France, on Brittany's south coast, and is where there are located thousands of huge and rough gray granite megaliths, some of them up to 18 feet tall, standing on end and arranged in long lines forming avenues—something of a "low-tech Stonehenge," and likewise of a purpose unknown to modern man.



Department of Defense Photo (USAF) AC21888

Preflight classroom instruction in the principles of motorless flight was part of the four-week course involving 30 hours of flying which qualified participants as glider pilots.

ly activated her once-a-day chore of going from office to office with mail call, in hopes that she would encounter the lieutenant from Hollywood. At each stop she managed just to miss him, and at her final mail call visit someone pointed out to her Stewart's plane speeding down the dusty runway for takeoff.

And Gwyn Keys—a daughter-in-law of that old pioneer and goldminer Bill Keys—one day not only saw a popular star of the day, Jackie Coogan, but got volunteer assistance from him on a morning when a schedule foulup caused her to be the only worker on hand to open the Condor Field canteen. Coogan, who had played the orphan adopted by Charlie Chaplin in *The Kid*, Chaplin's first feature-length film, was now a staff sergeant instructor at the glider base.⁴

The Twentynine Palms Air Academy began as a contract operation with a civilian firm organized to build, maintain, and operate the glider facility for the Army Air Forces. President of the firm, and the on-site manager, was F. R. Whyers. First commanding officer of the Army contingent was Captain Lester C. Hess; later Captain Hadley B. Elikor became the commanding officer. On the military staff were about 50 officers and men, including flight instructors and co-pilots who rode with the students until they were ready to solo. Some of the flight instructors and co-pilots also were civilians. Vinton Harz, an early student lucky enough to catch Lois Marlow on the rebound from her

shattering experience of being stood up by Jimmy Stewart, recalls that in 1942, there were perhaps "half a dozen" civilians on Whyers' staff, and a small additional number of civilians in a security force, a maintenance section, and so forth. Major Zvonar remembered in 1985 that when he and his crew surveyed and mapped the field in 1941, there appeared to be only a few civilians there. They wore some sort of a "bronze crescent" ornament on their caps, but had rank designations equivalent to colonel down to lieutenant.*

The military side was the 17th Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment. The War Department put out a press release on 27 November 1941, to announce the training would begin on or about 1 January 1942, with an initial class of 12 students. Two weeks later a class of 18 was to start the four-week course. Thereafter, said the War Department, classes of 24 persons each will be enrolled every two weeks.

Early on, those who had previous power-plane licenses—the ones the Army sought at the outset—

*Harz, in early 1942 a staff sergeant (later a flight officer), said that he and other enlisted trainees were told to salute these civilians with their devised ranks. Damned if we will, said these salty soldiers, most of whom were in training because they had enough moxie to have earned private pilot licenses before the war. Salute the uniform, suggested an Army instructor. Vinton Harz said he would if it were hung up over there in the corner. The kind of spirit which won the war!

were to graduate after an average of 30 hours of instruction in gliders of the two-place TG-1 and TG-2 types. These were the same Frankfort and Schweizer models to be used also at the primary glider schools at Elmira and Lockport.

At this pace, over 600 pilots could be graduated per year, but local records and memories are not clear on this subject and retired records, now in the hands of the Air Force, are sparse. There was not always good weather, even in the desert which had been a health camp. Characteristic desert winds in some of the cool months hampered operations; and desert rains, which can hit with violence in the fall and with a little more even temper in winter, sometimes made the old dry lakes too wet for takeoffs and landings.

But those were heady days—finally getting to do something which was preparing to get back at Hitler in Europe, or the Japanese out there in the Pacific. Gliders, “a hell of a way to go to war,” said the Twentynine Palms base chief of staff in the summer of 1985, and he a private pilot and a glider sportsman in the bargain.

Vinton Harz, though, still would not say a bad word against them. He was here from summer into December of 1942. Part of the time he worked the Link trainer for the staff, a job he’d had at the air base at Victorville before an officer there sold him on the glider deal, because it would make a flight officer out of him. Originally from Minnesota, Harz was strongly eligible for gliders because before military service he had earned private pilot wings.

Vinton Harz remembers the training as many moments of exhilarating flying interspersed with hot drudgery and some frustrating times. One of the latter occurred when someone in authority told him to

land on a desolate dry lake, and then seemed to forget that he was there.

But you tried to get the last training flights of the day, Harz said. Then you got to stay up a bit longer. Free time, almost. And you could catch those upslope lifts along those little mountains which are behind where the mainside buildings of the Marine base now stand. You could fly those lifts along the ridge, and then turn back into green air and come back along the ridge again and again. An eternal “wave” surfers only dream of.

Harz remembers one day when there were 12 to 14 of them soaring along that ridge. Another day, he was up to almost 14,000 feet on thermals before he decided he had better get back down to the hot and dusty field.

A hell of a way to go to war? Vinton Harz did it three times, and then came back to Lois and to Twentynine Palms where they raised their family. For a time, Vint had a service station, and then he joined the Postal Service. For a number of years, he worked at the post office on the Marine base, and then he moved to the main office in town. Once, during his employment on the Marine base, he told an inquiring reporter from *The Observation Post* that he never met a Marine he didn’t like. “But,” he added, “I came close two or three times.” He retired from the Postal Service in 1985.

Forty-one years prior to this Postal Service retirement, in another spring, Vint co-piloted a glider into Normandy. It was a big British Horsa, carrying something like 39 troops and equipment. They crashed—with considerable help from the German defenders. It was almost dark; wartime, double-double daylight saving time still had not saved them enough, but

Three gliders being towed by a single aircraft take off from the Army airfield at Twentynine Palms; all will be released from the tow line at altitudes of 4,000 feet or more.

Department of Defense Photo (USAF) AC2553



bright flashes of fire from their designated landing areas convinced them that the enemy had come to wait for them there. The British pilot turned for an alternate site, but there was more enemy fire, and then tall poles put up as counter-landing obstacles. Vinton Harz came to on the ground, wearing the Horsa on his back. A near-fatal way to try to get along with a Horsa. The flight officer from Twentynine Palms' Condor Field could not walk. After much pain and other misadventures, he was rescued and evacuated back across the Channel to England, where he recovered in a hospital.

For getting well again, he got to fly his own glider into Eindhoven, Holland, in September 1944 for the Market Garden operation. Later, the Dutch gave him an award for his part in that. Then, in March 1945, he flew another glider into the Wesel operation on the Rhine. The United States by this time had given up trying to salvage gliders after such operations. Too often booby trapped. After you landed, you changed from being an Army flight officer to being an Army ground officer. After the landing at Wesel, Vint did the required thing to his big troop glider—which was something like what you did for a horse with a broken leg—and then led a ground attack across a field toward a tree line where the Germans waited. For that, he got a Bronze Star Medal. "Gliding was all right as long as I got to be the pilot," Vinton Harz said in 1985.

After gliders, Condor Field became "just another" Army Air Corps flight training school, with motor-powered planes. By early 1943, the glider training began to wind down. There had been shocking evidence in combat operations that gliders too often were serious crashes waiting to happen. Parachute operations turned out to be more effective airborne techniques. March 1943 seems to have marked the last month for

glider flights at Condor Field. J. B. Carroll, after World War II a land developer and real estate broker in Twentynine Palms and the Morongo Basin, recalls that he came to Condor Field in those early weeks of 1943 to fly motorized planes; and Gwyn Keys, who with the one-time assistance of Jackie Coogan helped operate the canteen at the field, recalls that all hands were invited to take a glider ride before those craft were crated for shipment elsewhere.

After that, the 17th Army Air Forces Flying Training Detachment continued for about a year with radial engine Stearman trainers. Then, a bit later in 1944, the Navy took over.

Great expanses of the desert, from the Mexican border northward, were gunnery and bombing ranges for the Navy. It had fields and auxiliary fields from Yuma northward along the Salton Sea, and elsewhere in the region. Condor Field became part of this string. The Navy hung on in Twentynine Palms until summer of 1945, when World War II ended.

First, after that, Condor Field went into caretaker status. Then, before the year was out, the place was given over to San Bernardino county. For seven years the silent buildings stood vacant beside the dusty old airfield. Gold miners began again to traipse through the ancient brown hills and atroyos. Nonetheless, it looked as if the desert would finally win, after all. The desert and the descendants of Sergeant Buckland's tarantula which once helped the military enter the warm social swirl of Twentynine Palms.

And the name, Condor Field? Did condots once soar along those brown hills in the upslope lifts? "No," said an old time glider man. "Not that we know of. We named it that because we admired those birds. Best flying machine ever created."

CHAPTER 4

The Marines Arrive

*She's a Yip! Yip! Yip-py-eye dolly,
A new kind of gal of the west.
And Yip! Yip! Yip-py-by golly!
Whatever she does she does the best.
She got twenty-nine di'mond rings.
Got 'em without any strings.
She's a dynamite dreamboat,
A load of atom bombs,
The Lady from Twentynine Palms!*

Well, World War II was over, and you *had* to sing something. Allie Wrubel and wife Wanda, along with young sons Robert and Thomas, were living in the Campbell house, that two-story fieldstone showplace Bill and Betty Campbell built after Betty came into her inheritance. One of the boys wanted his father to write a song for an affair at school. "After all, dad had done the score for Walt Disney's *Song of the South* ["Zip-a-dee-doodah, Zip-a-dee-ay, My O My, what a wonderful day"] and dozens of other well-known hits of the early and later '40s." And thus, published in 1947 by the Freddie Martin Publishing Company, was born "The Lady from Twentynine Palms." It became a novelty hit and—said Sally Ince—"really put us on the map."*

Maybe that song was not the highest mark there ever was, but it illustrates the point that there had almost always been a bit of a show business flavor to Twentynine Palms, perhaps because of that old Legion post in Pasadena being so close to Hollywood and Beverly Hills where the movie industry grew up. James Cagney had a home in Twentynine Palms from the 1930s into at least the mid-1980s, although by 1985 he had not visited for some time. Cagney was a friend

of John W. Hilton, desert artist and author whose paintings always have been much sought after by those who come to know and enjoy the desert.**

Other actors who had connections with Twentynine Palms over the years included Ralph Bellamy, Will Rogers, Jr., and swimming and movie star Esther Williams, whose brother Dave Williams was for years everybody's favorite plumber in town until in the late 1970s, Dave and his wife Virginia were lured away to the bright lights of Yucca Valley. Virginia kept a branch of her travel business in Twentynine Palms, however. Local historian Lucile Weight finds in her research on the latter-day homesteading in the area that in 1945 Ronald Reagan—later to be governor of California and then President of the United States—was included in a batch of Hollywood types who filed on a large tract east of town where they hoped to establish a flying club near an emergency landing field. This field later became a San Bernardino county airfield, known locally as "Twentynine Palms International." The plans of Reagan and his associates failed, however, because of water problems. Later the Knott family, of Knott's Berry Farm fame, established a sky park not far west of the downtown areas of the village. And in the 1980s, comedian Red Skelton was a frequent visitor. Twentynine Palms had been home for his wife for a number of years, and her mother still had a home here in the mid-1980s.

And although we tend to "name drop" the names of entertainers and public officials, most of them were in Twentynine Palms merely to enjoy the peace, quiet, and climate; for the most part they were left alone dur-

*Long-distance telephone operators, especially, found it difficult to tune in on "Twentynine Palms." They would demand: "Yes, but what town is it?" For a time, Freddie Martin helped, as did others who sang Allie Wrubel's song: the Andrew Sisters among them. Later, the same old identity crisis cropped up again—novelty songs like old soldiers always fade away. Now machines have trouble with the name of the town, often tacking "29" onto the end of the Post Office box number, or the street address, and then making the next line of the address read "Palms, CA." And calling in an order to a catalog sales outfit—or even to a department store in our very own state of California—often presents a problem. "You mean that's the name of the town?" Quite so. And the purists among us want the number spelled out, and all one word: Twentynine.

**Perhaps Hilton's best-known book was *Sonora Sketch Book* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), which was republished in 1966 by BestWest Publications, Palm Desert, California. Many of his excellent early paintings hang in Twentynine Palms homes with families whom John Hilton bartered with for his rather meager existence during the Great Depression and other early years of his art. Helen Bagley has Hiltons which paid grocery bills; Sally Ince has Hiltons which paid doctor bills. Hilton died in Hawaii on 27 November 1983. A modern day (1980s) dentist in Twentynine Palms now is an avid Hilton collector. In 1951, Hilton was one of the founders of the Twentynine Palms Art Gallery, which endures in its charming adobe structure between the Inn and Monument Headquarters, near the old oasis.

ing their times here to "get away from it all." More meaningful to the community which was to become something of a Marine town was the postwar arrival in Twentynine Palms of Dr. Edward Lincoln Smith, a New Englander by birth and a physician by way of an education at Yale and then the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Smith came to the desert via a war-time stint as a Navy doctor, during which he served on Guadalcanal with the 1st Marine Division, and more specifically as surgeon for the infantry battalion commanded by one of the best-known Marine Corps heroes of the period—Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller.*

"Dr. Ed," as he was known by most of the residents of Twentynine Palms for all of those postwar years until he retired and moved away in the late 1970s, was one of the few who ever got to Twentynine Palms by accident.** But he stayed on purpose. After returning from wartime duty in the Pacific, Dr. Smith served, among other places, in the Navy V-12 unit at the University of Arizona facilities in Flagstaff. After the war ended, he came back to Flagstaff to visit friends, and to pop over into California to establish his medical credentials there, since he thought that someday he would semi-retire to a small practice in that state. While in California, Dr. Smith was talked into visiting Dr. Luckie in Pasadena. Twentynine Palms desperately needed a doctor. The very sort of a call Hippocrates must have had in mind. Dr. Smith opened his practice in the desert town on 4 December 1946; he retired on 1 June 1979.

Meanwhile, also in December of 1946, Dr. William T. Ince, D.O., came to Twentynine Palms with his wife Sally, and about a year later launched construction of a small hospital—a memorial to his father, Thomas H. Ince, that pioneer Hollywood producer who was an early associate of Mack Sennett of those one-reel comedy films which became classics. Thomas Ince also produced the movie called "Civilization," one of Hollywood's first feature-length films. (There also were others in his distinguished career.)

Osteopathic physicians, which Ince was, and medi-

*In the Burke Davis biography of Puller, *Marine!* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1962), there are several references to Dr. Smith. The most moving one, p. 163, describes the doctor in the battalion aid station operating on wounded Marines, one shoe sucked off by the mud underfoot. It was an all-night ordeal for Puller and his people.

**He moved away, to the San Francisco Bay area, not because he did not like Twentynine Palms and the desert, but, as he was always careful to explain, because he knew his patients of long standing would just never stop calling him. And—left unsaid by this dedicated professional—because he knew he could never, in this village, stop responding to those calls.

cal doctors, which Ed Smith was, sometimes did not know quite how to deal with each other, but by about the time the Marines arrived in town these two doctors were cooperating with each other, and the Ince hospital provided much valuable service to early day Marines, and of course to the community as a whole. A *Desert Trail* "Progress Number" supplement of July 1953 lists William T. Ince, D.O., as administrator of the hospital and Edward Lincoln Smith, M.D., as medical director.

Meanwhile, as "The Lady from Twentynine Palms" jangled along, and with most Americans not watching international affairs, World War II was not getting tidied up satisfactorily on the far side of the Pacific. Russian troops and administrators in North Korea and similar U.S. forces in South Korea had taken over that former Japanese possession, with a view to uniting the country (split administratively at the 38th parallel) and bringing it into the United Nations. Russia did not want this to happen, and it set up a puppet government in North Korea and trained and equipped a native military force. When the matter of Korea's entry into the United Nations came up, Russia stopped it with a veto.

After nearly four years of postwar occupation, U.S. forces withdrew from the south in the spring of 1949, leaving only some administrators and token military units. About a year later, on 25 June 1950, a North Korean army, Russian trained and equipped, assaulted South Korea. The Security Council, with Russia's delegates sulking in absentia over the non-seating of mainland China, designated North Korea the aggressor, urged a cease fire, and called on United Nations members to unite for the restoration of peace in Korea. On 27 June, President Truman sent American forces into action, and throughout the nation the ancient and honorable profession of arms began again to look toward mobilization.

At Camp Pendleton, California, in the northern reaches up toward San Onofre beaches and that small white stucco town of San Clemente with its red tile roofs, the old World War II tent camps re-opened. Soon, new Marines and older ones from reserve status were kicking the rattlesnakes into testy wakefulness in those brown summer hills. Mainside looked like a boomtown again. The whole place was so busy there were almost no impact areas remaining for artillery, which had grown larger, or for rockets, which were growing into missiles. For artillerymen, an "R-Sop" at



Marine Corps Historical Collection

The main gate of the new Marine Corps Training Center, located four miles north of the small desert community of Twentynine Palms, housed a 70-man detachment from Camp Pendleton tasked with preparing the base for the complement of permanent personnel.

Horno Ridge was about as exciting as finding your starting notch on an acey duecy board.*

Searchers for better training areas scouted far and wide, and soon up jumped that weird hunk of desert where gliders once soared, and where Navy fliers later strafed and bombed. In early summer of 1952, whispers from these searchers and their motor transport drivers began to go around Pendleton: Buy Twentynine Palms! This to brother Marines—officer and enlisted—who individually had about as much money as those early gold seekers of the desert. Buy the sand while it is hot, one wag suggested. The base-to-be is about the size of the state of Rhode Island, with Narragansett Bay squeezed out, another early visitor said, and then he added he would not give \$14 for all of it. You've got to put on gloves to open and close your car door, or you get blisters. "Twentynine Stumps," some salty old warrior from Pacific campaigns dubbed it. And "The Stumps" it became to a whole generation of Marines who couldn't quite imagine what the

*"R-Sop" is pronounced "are-sop" by artillerymen. Their most frequently used bit of jargon. The letters stand for reconnaissance, selection, and occupation of position (for firing). Thus, what a rifleman probably would call a "field exercise" or "going to the field," an artilleryman would call an "R-Sop."

Corps was going to do in the middle of the blank-blank desert!

But barracks banter did not dissuade. On 20 August 1952, Base Headquarters at Camp Pendleton issued Post Order 343, and some of the 930 square miles of desert, more than half a million acres—Rhode Island squeezed dry—became a Marine Corps Training Center owned and operated by Pendleton. It was quite an acquisition for that once Marine Barracks, Santa Margarita Ranch, Oceanside, California. And for the Marine Corps, as we shall see.

Major (almost at once to become Lieutenant Colonel) Frederick H. Scantling was sprung from a job with the 2d Infantry Training Regiment at Pendleton and put in command of Camp Detachment, Marine Corps Training Center.** This outfit first set up in the

**Scantling, a World War II veteran of the Pacific campaigns with the 1st Marine Division, saw action on Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu. Perhaps this travel, courtesy of the Marine Corps, plus his posting to the strange and fascinating desert base—which he explored extensively—sparked his interest in geography. At any rate, after his retirement in 1963, Fred Scantling earned a Ph.D. in geography at UCLA, and taught that subject from 1966 until 1980 as a professor at Long Beach State. Dr. Scantling and his wife, Nonie, whom he met during that greatest of all World War II duty, in Melbourne, Australia, reside in Long Beach.

12 Area at Pendleton, there to get organized for later transfer up the hill to the desert. This came about for Lieutenant Colonel Scantling and his detachment on 15 December 1952. The Marine Corps dispatched them to the old Army glider base beside Condor Field to keep tabs on things while a large civilian construction firm—Twait's-Morrison-Knudsen-Macco—began to build a new base for the Marines. Construction was under the eye of a Naval Resident-Officer-in-Charge-of-Construction (ROICC), Lieutenant Commander John P. Mapes. Scantling's detachment numbered about two dozen Marines.

Scantling recalled later that the construction company, and Mapes, had started work in June or July. Mapes, with his family, lived somewhere in the vicinity of Smith Ranch—that old roller rink later to become a gymnasium, with drive-in movie alongside. Lieutenant Colonel Scantling moved his family up to the desert in August, and commuted from desert to Pendleton until the detachment came up in December. Meantime, elements of the 3d Marine Division's artillery regiment, the 12th Marines, also had been commuting up and down the Morongo Grade to explore and fire the Corps' newly acquired ranges. Commanding Officer of the 12th Marines in those days was Colonel Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., later to become the 20th Commandant.

Usually, in those days, the artillery vehicles turned north off the highway a few miles short (west) of the village of Twentynine Palms, and drove into the training center toward a small lone mountain then called Pinto.* The units frequently set up a command post at the oasis called Surprise Springs, near where water wells have been put down over the years to provide for the ever-increasing needs of the growing base.**

With Lieutenant Colonel Scantling and his small detachment in place, and battalions of the 12th Marines scouting the hills and canyons, the 3d Marine Division from Pendleton put together an ambitious

*There are Pinto Mountains elsewhere in the vicinity, and after a breath-catching firing error some years later, lone Pinto became Hidalgo—son of someone, or something, as a senior officer might have called it in the excitement of the moment.

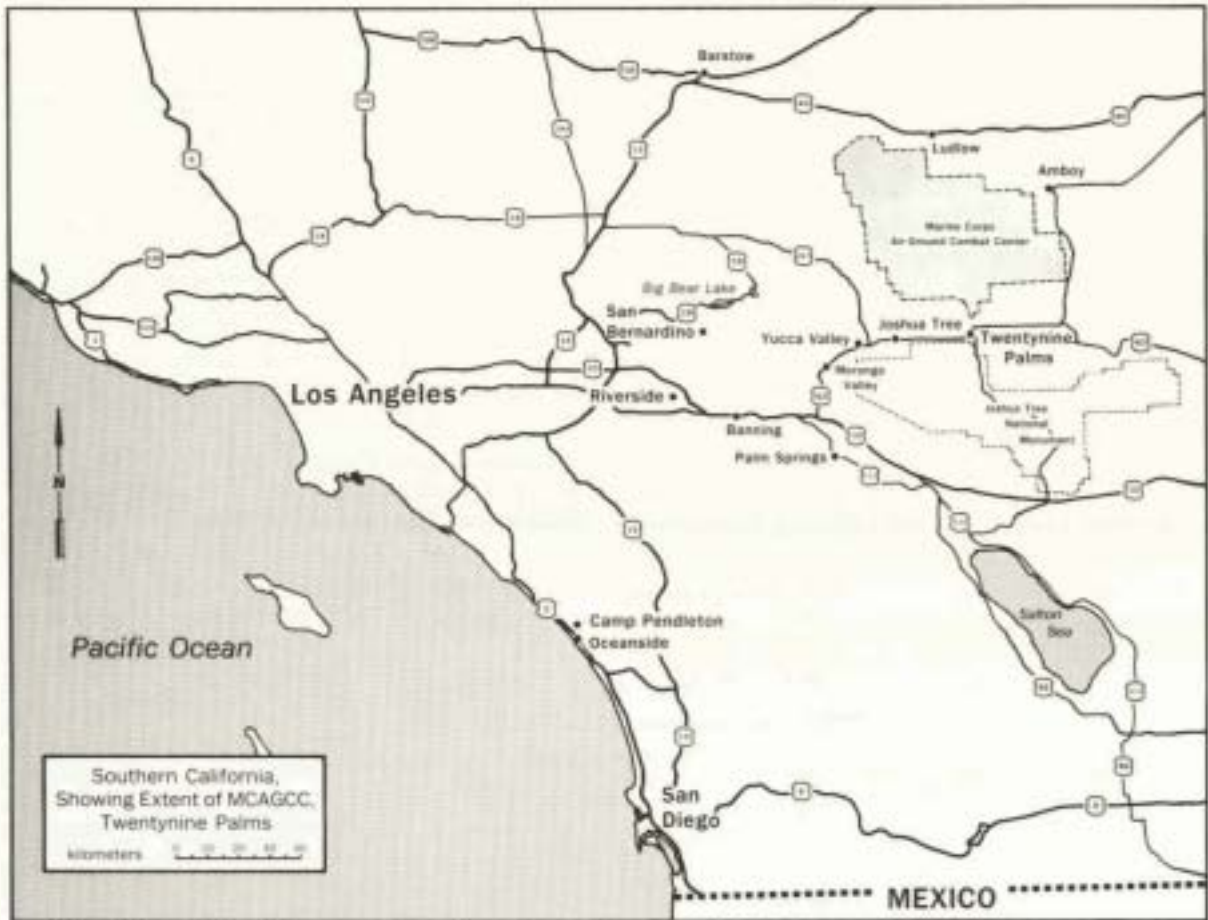
**As the base grew in the 1950s, Surprise Springs became a popular recreation site for Marines and their families—picnics and cook-outs, with park-type tables and other facilities. Latter day Marines might smile. Relaxing at a quaint oasis might seem a bit like that "mitage out south of town," which humorist Herb Schriener used to say was a popular spot near his Hoosier home. But for a town where folks used to gather to watch the flash floods go by, a nice oasis was a treasure indeed. Surprise Springs died with a lowering water table, better pay for the troops, and fast cars which could swoop to brighter liberty spots.

live-fire expedition to the new training center. The 1st Marine Division, traditional occupant of Pendleton after new members of the "Old Breed" came home from the Pacific at the end of World War II and occupation duty in North China, had gone off to that new war in Korea. Later, at Pendleton, the 3d Marine Brigade had formed, under command of that fiery warrior, Chesty Puller, who already had made new combat marks in Korea, and was now a brigadier general. After President Truman admitted he ought not to have said, early in the Korean period, that the Marine Corps was sort of the police force for the Navy, with "a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's," Congress had given the Marine Corps a new manpower level, and Chesty's brigade was authorized to grow to division size. Commanded by Major General Robert H. Pepper (the assistant division commander was Brigadier General Joseph C. Burger), the division went up to Twentynine Palms for the two weeks prior to Christmas in 1952.

As a live-firing exercise, it was rather a stilted affair, compared to combined arms exercises 30 and more years later. But as someone once said about the walking bear: be not critical of the gait, but rather marvel that he stands at all. The division was brand new, with a lot of young Marines and old retreads not yet shaken down into a smooth and measured gait. Safety measures and extreme caution rightfully ruled.

The exercise proved that Twentynine Palms was going to be a greatly useful place, and that live firing—artillery over the riflemen and all—would bring the troops to effective seasoning much quicker than simulation which frequently lacked stimulation. It also taught the Marine Corps a lot of amazing things about its new chunk of desert. At night it was bitter cold, a little spitting of snow proved that. A raw wind seemed to blow eternally out of the southwest. It could take away a little coffee fire if the blaze was not guarded in the lee of a bit of a hillock, or behind a large rock. Shaving cream from an aerosol can—rather a new product at that time—dried so quickly in the desert wind that Marines trying to shave with this stuff were all too soon scraping and pulling painfully through what seemed to be a white chalky stucco on the face.

This, for Twentynine Palms and for the 3d Marine Division, was FEX-1—Field Exercise I. The Commandant of the Korean Marine Corps, Major General Shin Hyon Joon, came out to watch. Aide to General Pepper was Captain Paul G. Graham, who came back to Twentynine Palms in April of 1971 as Brigadier General Graham, 10th commanding general of the base



which became an independent command in February of 1957.*

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Scantling's outfit was growing slowly, and he was trying to provide health and comfort accommodations for his Marines while the new construction grew north of the old Army buildings near the main gate and the control tower building. For a time, harking back to frontier days on Army posts, Marines with families could make commissary-type grocery purchases through the subsistence supply system. The command set up a small commissary in the old buildings, and made a large

messhall-type refrigerator available. The store opened for business with very limited stock—staples, meat, and canned goods, all in rather meager choices. In all of Twentynine Palms in those days, Lieutenant Colonel Scantling recalled there were perhaps three small grocery markets—Frank and Helen Bagley's by-now rather historic market on the Plaza, another on the highway near where the diagonal road went northeastward to Two Mile Road, and then another little grocery on the main stem downtown, perhaps a couple of blocks west of Four Corners. "We were strictly on the local economy," Lieutenant Colonel Scantling recalled, "and there wasn't much of it."

A messhall for unmarried Marines—and for such civilian workers who wanted to buy meals there—occupied one of the old Army buildings—a long narrow building with long narrow tables, Scantling recalled. Marines elsewhere had known more primitive accommodations in peacetime, but even the simple frame structures at Pendleton seemed most modern—and they were certainly much more spacious—compared with this little base put up by an ad hoc civilian firm for the Army's small glider school.

*Another illustrious participant was the writer of this history, then a captain commanding Company F, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines. I came back on board the base in the spring of 1973 as the Base Chief of Staff, and retired on 1 August 1975 as Deputy Commandet. After the trip in 1952, my report to my wife in our San Clemente apartment concluded with the observation that in a place I didn't catch the name of (Yucca Valley, as it turned out), there were street signs, and curbs and gutters extending out into the vacant, dusty desert. "As if," I said, to GeneCarolyn, "they expect people to live out there someday!" And now, as the old joke says: "We are one." Not in Yucca, mind you, but in the real desert. Twentynine Palms where retired Marines have been known to feature their old lawnmowers in dramatic monuments in their front yards.

General Pepper came to inspect rather early on, Lieutenant Colonel Scantling said later, adding that this was perhaps about the time of the field exercise, or maybe just after the first of 1953. The commanding officer of the desert outpost said the general "seemed appalled at conditions." He did not blame Scantling, but he disliked seeing Marines in what by now looked like a makeshift camp, after some seven years of neglect. An old China and Haiti hand who had been in command of a defense battalion at Pearl Harbor on that infamous 7 December, General Pepper seemed to feel it was a shame that Scantling's Marines had to leave Pendleton for this—so many weeks and months before new barracks and facilities would be ready for them in the desert.

But from the start, Marines in Twentynine Palms enjoyed a warmth of friendliness from citizens of the town, a closeness which often was lacking from bigger places—or even in Oceanside, then a rather small town itself. They made for the only "industry" in the desert, and they were representatives of the "outside" to still-remote Twentynine. Into the bargain, this not-

too-long-ago pioneer town founded with a strong leavening of veterans of World War I just plain enjoyed seeing the military come to town again. Citizens had liked the glider school because it allowed them a means to participate in World War II; and anyway, so soon after the end of that war, the military still was popular in the land. And California dwellers, especially, knew about the Marine Corps' share of that war in the Pacific. It was a happy marriage of Marines and town, one which has endured to the present day—made only a bit more distant because both sides have grown into more sophisticated members of a more modern and busy world.

There was a bit of a problem, though, which Lieutenant Colonel Scantling recalled, having to do with water. He was quick to add that the problem did not seem to come from members of the Twentynine Palms community, but from outlanders who had development plans for the high desert and feared that the Marine Corps might soak up too much water. Whatever this faction came from, it tried to churn up a water panic. Big city newspapers down below took up the

LtCol Frederick J. Scantling, commanding officer of the training center, hands papers to MSgt Charles H. Carpenter, as they prepare for the permanent occupation of the base.

Marine Corps Historical Collection





Marine Corps Historical Collection

The makeshift headquarters of the Marine detachment at Twentynine Palms was the operations building of the former World War II-era Army Air Forces and Navy airfield.

cause, which usually expressed itself in the fear that the military camp would take away precious water from the desert communities which had long been struggling for sufficient water for themselves. Finally, the problem went away after water explorations presented evidence that the Morongo Basin rested on quite a lot of water, and that the Marine Corps wells, maintained by the military, would not seriously draw down the table.

When the Marines first arrived in 1952, there was a water tank on a hill northeast of the main gate. Scantling said he did not remember where the well was. The Army, however, had put down wells back in 1941, calling on a well-known firm in Chino, the Mogle Brothers. Richard Mogle said later that his firm had been contacted by the Army in that year prior to the glider base going in, and they had found adequate supplies of water. The firm came back later, in response to requests from Commander Mapes and his superiors in naval construction offices on the West Coast, and drilled more wells for the expanding Marine facility.

The underground fault line which caused Surprise Springs to bubble up into an oasis, and caused the old Oasis of Mara to form a fresh pond which nurtured those twenty-nine palms, formed an aquifer with

a hidden basin rim down 80 to 400 feet. It offered up, for the tapping, a promised abundance of water for as many Marines as would likely be brought out here, said the Mogle Brothers, for the next 200 years, at least.

Marines put diesel-powered pumps at these new wells, and pushed the water through long 12- to 14-inch pipes into mainside tanks. The contractors began to stub up water pipes for all the concrete slabs where there would be barracks, messhalls, heating plants, supply and headquarters buildings, chapels, and clubs. And unlike the Biblical bitter waters of Marah, here one could drink of the waters of Mara—and surprise—for they were not bitter.

Never, in the Twentynine Palms desert, had there been such a beachhead. The construction company had a revolutionary way to pour concrete buildings in sections, great gray slabs on the ground, and then slurp them up with pneumatic suction “cups” at the ends of articulated arms, and tilt a building up, roof slabs and all, like a great monster laying up concrete blocks.

*A new kind of gal of the west . . .
 . . . a dynamite dreamboat
 A load of atom bombs,
 The Lady from Twentynine Palms!*

CHAPTER 5

The Early Years

If Fred Scantling and his few Marines roughed it in those early days at Twentynine Palms, in the view of General Pepper, it was all a worthwhile down payment on space and training assets which amounted to the Marine Corps striking it rich in a way only dreamed of by all the gold seekers who ever challenged the desert. Originally conceived as a "low-cost" range for indirect fire weapons outgrowing the capabilities of bases the Marine Corps previously thought of as almost boundless, Twentynine Palms from the early years, and on into the final decades of the 20th Century, continued to deliver up unexpected values.

Construction by pre-cast, tilt-up concrete slabs proved quick, efficient, and spectacularly economical. The method was used elsewhere later by the Twaits-Morrison-Knudsen-Macco construction company, and others, but in 1952, 1953, and 1954, the project at Twentynine Palms was the largest such endeavor ever undertaken. So said the Portland Cement Association in the November 1953 *Architectural Record*, a national trade publication serving the building field. In its first increment, the Marine Corps project at Twentynine Palms provided permanent living space for approximately 4,000 men, at a cost-per-man of \$600, a savings of about \$900 per man, according to construction computations of the day. A West Coast consulting engineer, William B. Bradford, who had been involved in the Twentynine Palms planning, said in a 24 March 1953 letter to President Eisenhower that this new and economical building method allowed the Marine Corps to establish permanent housing for the usual price of temporary, quonset-hut-type construction which had been much in vogue in the latter days of World War II and immediately thereafter.

That first flurry of building, which had been underway when Lieutenant Colonel Scantling and his small detachment came up the hill from Pendleton in December of 1952, by the end of 1953 provided six battalion-sized areas and other headquarters and utility buildings, messhalls, chapels, and so forth. By then it was about halfway to—or perhaps a little less—its initial target in accommodations.

Some \$14.5 million had been spent by 1 January 1954—most of it for the construction project. Base ac-

quisition amounted to less than \$90,000; architectural and engineering costs came in at about \$343,000. Still on the books from funds authorized by Congress for additional facilities were about \$2.5 million for ammunition storage areas, rifle and pistol ranges, two training tanks, some protected observation posts out in the indirect fire ranges, and other required facilities.* All amounted to a much larger budget than any homesteader ever had in the desert, but still a "bargain basement" undertaking as military bases went, even in those years.

Although still owned by Camp Pendleton, Twentynine Palms early on began to seem ideally suited as an all-purpose base for Force Troops units from throughout the Marine Corps. In the fall of 1953, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, needed to free up some barracks and training spaces for a four-week individual infantry training program initiated there for young Marines just winding up boot camp, and to keep replacements flowing to the Korean sector. So off went some Force Troops units from Lejeune, onto ships at Morehead City and through the Panama Canal for landing at San Diego, followed by a convoy grind up to the high desert.

One who made the trip with the 2d Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion was Gunnery Sergeant Charlie E. Miller, who spent much of the remainder of his career at Twentynine Palms.** "We were

*The training tanks were swimming pools. Some Marines claimed that calling them swimming pools would have looked a bit frivolous in budget requests. Call them training tanks, and that sounded just tough enough to get by Congress. A base commander of that period, Colonel John S. Oldfield, recalled, "The day the first training tank opened, we estimated that 2,500 men entered the pool. A very welcome addition to the base."

**This is the Charlie Miller who since the mid-1960s had a feed and tack store on Adobe Road out toward the base. Later, on part of his 100-plus acres, he irrigated and raised alfalfa hay, to bale and sell down below and to local horse owners. High cost of electricity (for his irrigation pumps) and low cost of hay stopped this activity, and those pleasantly green fields again became dusty desert. From time to time Pioneer Day carnivals and rodeos were staged on these fields. Gunny Miller frequently managed the base stables when he was on active duty, and for years he was the manager and NCO in charge of the base mounted color guard which appeared in parades throughout Southern California, from the mid-1950s into the mid-1960s. The store, in the 1970s and 1980s, began to handle building material, also.



From *The EM-Kayman*: Magazine of "M-K," December 1982

An early morning aerial view of the concrete casting yard shows rows of neatly stacked roof panels in the foreground and the graded area for the 330-acre base in the distance.

the first troops into those new, concrete barracks," Gunny Miller said. He recalled that not all streets were paved, and that no parade grounds ("grinders") were paved. His unit arrived, after that trip through the Panama Canal, in October of 1953. Mess halls were in operation, but there was no sickbay worthy of the name. Sick call went in individual units, and if somebody had a serious problem, he got sent down to Pendleton, Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, or to a naval hospital then open in Ontario, California.

One new concrete barracks was divided between use as a temporary sickbay, with a few beds at one end, and a staff NCO club at the other. Movies also were shown in various barracks, Gunny Miller said. The big theater on the base still was not finished, and the gunny recalled that the contractors had some troubles there.

What the trouble was, Fred Scantling said later, amounted to the contractors appearing to pull a fast one on the Navy's contract supervisor, Lieutenant Mapes, and getting caught at it. Because of its size, the theater had to have a number of tall pillars (or "bents" as the contractors call them) to support the transverse frame of the tall building with its high ceiling; and on these the roof would be placed, and the side slabs would be hung. Specifications called for the tall bents to be poured in stages, within the forms

which surrounded the inner skeleton of reinforcing steel. Otherwise, too much of the heavy aggregate settled toward the bottom of the pour, resulting in honeycombing at the bottom and weakness at the top. But in this case, the contractor poured a bent all at once, and Mapes made the company remove the bad work—mostly by hand chipping—and do it again, correctly.

Another problem which Scantling recalls from the early days had to do with the new power line which had to be brought up from an electrical substation near what is now the Whitewater area. This was needed because the available electrical power then in Twenty-nine Palms was not sufficient for the growing base. The first power line contractor, Scantling said, "died on his shovel" before he got to the start of the Morongo grade. He had not adequately respected the hard-rock nature of the desert below what appeared to be easy-to-dig "sand." Another contractor was found to finish the job.

In these early years, Lieutenant Colonel Scantling also had duties which perhaps helped him to later become a professor of geography. The Marine Corps did not quite know where the boundaries of the new base were located. Scantling and some of his Marines, by jeep (and map-making as they explored) located boundaries, and in the process scouted and mapped

routes by which units could get to and from the selected training areas. And along the way, Scantling said, he mapped old gold mines and other hazards to traffic—including some old ordnance from Navy bombing days.

Later, and into the period when he became executive officer to the new commanding officer, Colonel Francis R. (Monte) Brink, who arrived in mid-1953, Scantling put his knowledge of the mines to good use for the naval establishment and the federal government. To get clear title to the vast reaches of the base, for the federal government and the Marine Corps, U.S. attorneys had to go into federal court and foreclose on old mining claims, many of them "officially lost" in dusty records. "But claimants came out of the woodwork," Scantling explained later. "I often had to scout out the mine areas, to be able to say there was no evidence of recent work there. With me as the expert witness, U.S. attorneys were able to dispose of most old claims."

Most of those at the base in earlier years recall more good times than bad. It seemed that Sergeant Buckland and his tarantula had done a good job warming up the community for the military. The isolation strengthened ties in the military community, as it had done just after World War I for the civilian community. This camaraderie spread from one group to the other, and linked town and military into a strong new fellowship. Schools and many other activities, official and unofficial, had to be planned and worked out together.

On 10 April 1953, Nonie Scantling, that World War II bride from Melbourne, Australia, checked in at the Ince hospital in Twentynine Palms and delivered the Scantlings' third child, son Frederick H. Scantling, Jr. Young Fred was the first Marine child born in that community hospital, which as had been noted, served dependents from the base as well as Marines in emergencies.

As Gunny Miller noted, and as Lieutenant Colonel Scantling explained in some detail, Navy hospital corpsmen came up with those first Marines who arrived at the base, but there still were no doctors. Drs. Ince and Smith, out in town, were the nearest at hand.

Mothers of young children frequently found it tough to live all day on that pioneer camaraderie, Scantling conceded. Laundry facilities were scarce, automatic machines were almost unknown, and, anyway, low water pressure often made it difficult to use such facilities as were at hand. And if you ran out of things, you often had to do without until you or a neighbor made a run "down below."

For the young troopers, Scantling said, much of the special services-type functions and physical education training, plus indoor sports contests, centered around Smith's Ranch, where an outdoor theater survived into the mid-1980s. There, in the early years, were movies, dances, and "soda fountain" social life. But then on weekends, the young Marines "took off like shots," Scantling said. Usually for "L.A."

Scantling and young supply officer Bud Schmid (who in those days also had to pass for what later came to be called the fiscal officer) thought they should make "swooping" (a later term) easier for the young Marines, and so they set up a "bus" schedule with such motor transport trucks as they had.* The return trip vehicle from Los Angeles left at a specified time and place on Sunday evenings.

The Marines by and large ignored the service. Too much regimentation for them, Scantling said later, after duty all week. They would much rather thumb to liberty, or drive old clunkers that sometimes got them there, and sometimes did not. So the truck trips were knocked off. A Marine headed for liberty has always been a most enterprising individual.

While Scantling stayed on for a time as second-in-command to Colonel Monte Brink, he was soon off to the Senior Course at Marine Corps Schools, Quantico. After that he did a tour with the 3d Marine Division in the Far East (Japan and Okinawa), and then returned to Twentynine Palms for a three-year tour starting in August 1955.

By the end of *that* tour, most of mainside was pretty much as it looked by the early 1980s, and the Marine Palms housing area was finished near the main gate. But before that, much more sand came over the transom.

The only family quarters available on 1 January 1954 included 34 defense rental houses (off the base) plus 316 trailers and other "relocatables" near the main gate. Some of the 34 rentals off base, since torn down, included a cluster near the present post office in Twentynine Palms. These dated to World War II days, and usually were called "Navy housing." Others of the off-base houses were those built by contract after Marines began to arrive at the base. Headquarters Marine Corps knew, of course, that there was not much family hous-

*Brigadier General Oldfield recalled in the mid-1980s that "the main mode of public transportation from Twentynine Palms to San Bernardino and other connections consisted of an old civilian bus which was referred to by all as the Twentynine Palms Stage. Most of the time this bus was out of service, or if it did move, it was at an agonizingly slow pace." (Author's note: This was the "Johnny Hastie bus" which linked the desert community with the outside world in those early years.)



Marine Corps Historical Collection

Cranes equipped with vacuum mats prepare to lift precast concrete to the roof of one of the six 1,000-man messhalls under construction at the new training center.

ing left from Army Air Corps and Navy days, and also that the small community of Twentynine Palms had very little rental housing to offer.

Major General W. P. T. Hill, that famous-for-so-many-years Quartermaster General of the Marine Corps, one day in 1953 called Twentynine's young supply officer, Captain Bud Schmid. "If I send you money authorization," Schmid later recalled the word from Hill, "can you contract for some houses to be built in the town of Twentynine Palms?" "Then," said the general from Washington, "you can rent or sell them to married Marines as family quarters." These became the houses of the Sungold development, along El Paseo street which runs from the back of the county library westward to the area of the present Twentynine Palms high school. Later, there were others built.

Bud Schmid was willing to do almost anything to start getting rid of those trailers and "relocatables" (immobile mobile homes) near the main gate—units which together amounted to some 316 family quarters where the Marine wives, many of them with young children, had to live on that camaraderie and low water pressure, plus contend with gas pilot lights which often would blow out during desert winds. Then Bud Schmid and his staff Marines would have to go crawling around amid scorpions and black widow spiders under those mobile homes to get gas space heaters and water heaters going again.

Most of this early living was keeping house for indirect fire units which came to the desert for brief firing exercises, and helping the contractors watch over their material and their building projects. The kind

of tough, hot, and sometimes wind-and-rain abrasive work which the early glider pilots remembered, but without the airborne fun of soaring along those hills in the up-slope currents. There was much neighborly fun, then and later, with townspeople who could make a party out of watching the flash floods go by, or having a picnic in the national monument or at Surprise Springs. Fred Scantling got to make the first dial telephone call from Twentynine Palms, in 1953. Dr. Bill Ince had a small cannon which he would fire on "state occasions."* Life wasn't all that bad.

Except for the Marine with a surprise set of orders, and over the years, orders to Twentynine Palms always seemed to come as a surprise, first impressions always seemed pretty much the same: a hot, dusty, desolate military camp in a sparsely-settled and lonely outpost of a town. The officer who was later (in July 1953) to replace Fred Scantling as commander of the place, first thought of it as all of the above. This was Colonel Brink, who first rode up to Twentynine Palms in early 1953 with the Pendleton deputy commander, Brigadier General James A. Stuart. And what was more, as a 1925 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Monte Brink believed the amphibious Marine Corps had made a gigantic goof pouring funds into a sand pile so far from its assigned element. Brink wrote later of his first trip up to the desert:

I wasn't impressed by what I saw. The new camp was similar to several being constructed in the Camp Pendleton area.

*This little noise-maker from Mexican campaigns was known as "El Supremo," Brigadier General Oldfield recalled. Anyone saluted by it considered it a real honor.

But it was primarily the desert that did not appeal to me. The camp was being built on a narrow strip of sand between a range of rocky hills and dry lake bed. The whole landscape was bleak and desolate. These hills to the East, without a sprig of vegetation, would radiate heat on summer afternoons like a slag pile. The dry lake bed to the West was spotted with alkali. The low cement barracks were being built on a tiled rectangular plain which gave them the appearance of being strung out on a long hillside. I was sure I could have picked a better spot, even in the desert.¹

On the way back down to Pendleton, Brink wrote later, the general asked him what he thought of the place.

I wasn't sure if he meant the camp or the town. But my opinion of both was the same. "Not much," I answered. "They should give the place back to the Indians."

He smiled. "Too bad. I was hoping you would show more enthusiasm. We're sending you out here this summer as soon as the camp is finished."²

Back at Camp Pendleton, Colonel Brink soon heard of General Pepper's earlier inspection of the outpost at Twentynine Palms—the one which had so disturbed Lieutenant Colonel Scantling. Brink placed that inspection as early in July 1953. Scantling's recollection was that it had been earlier than this. At any rate, General Pepper believed the Marines in the desert had come upon a treatment more shabby than they deserved. General Pepper asked Monte Brink "When are you leaving for Twentynine Palms?" Upshot of this was that Brink left sooner than he expected, his inventory and balance sheet from his post exchange duties at Pendleton rushed to completion and several of the papers sent up to Twentynine Palms later for his signature.

At the new base, he wrote later, he began to understand some of Pepper's concern. The civilian contractor had taken over quite a lot of the old, meager facilities from glider school and later days. First order of business for improved facilities and morale of Marines was to regain control of the old galley of the glider base (Gwyn Keys' Canteen), which the contractor was using.

Armed with General Pepper's instructions, I sent Captain Smith [Bud Schmid] to open negotiations with the Contractor's Superintendent. The fact that the contractor was

¹Monte Brink later came around to believing the Marine Corps had made a good deal on the bleak and desolate land. Not only that, but after he served as commanding officer of the center from 1953 to 1954, he retired (as a brigadier general) to the place. He died in Twentynine Palms on 16 October 1973. The writer of this history, then base chief of staff, served as one of the pallbearers at Brink's funeral when he was buried in the Twentynine Palms cemetery.

two months behind in his schedule also was in our favor. He was agreeable providing we would feed his men at the regular ration price. I agreed to this and getting on the telephone got a quick promise from Pendleton for additional cooks and a new mess sergeant. This arrangement was in effect until in October when the contractor's personnel were all off of the station and worked better than I had expected.³

With the "old" galley of glider days turned into the "new" galley for Marines and such civilian workers as were authorized to eat there, Colonel Brink turned Scantling's makeshift galley into a makeshift post exchange. That sort of facility had been a major concern of General Pepper also, and Monte Brink wrote later that he was hurrying because he expected the general to come up again soon for another inspection. That did not happen, though, as General Pepper went off to a new assignment before he could visit Twentynine Palms again.

Colonel Brink also continued to press for more quarters for dependents. The Sungold Tract, supervised by Scantling and Schmid after that telephone call from General Hill, brought in its 50 homes in late fall of 1953. These, backed by Veterans Administration financing, sold only to military personnel in ranks from staff NCO through lieutenant colonel, for around \$10,000—a fair and common price range in those days for frame and stucco houses. Most had two to three bedrooms, usually one bath only, a single-car garage and "city-sized" lots.

A similar tract, near the Sungold, made available another 50 homes of this type by the end of 1954. This was the Hamilton Tract. These 100 homes, along with the trailers and relocatables near the main gate, provided the bulk of available family housing until the Marine Palms units were completed a bit later.

Colonel Brink also listed the meager assets of "Sunburnt Housing" units—some 20 apartments dating back to the Navy days at Condor Field in later days of World War II. These were on concrete slabs which still could be seen in the mid-1980s east of the present Twentynine Palms post office.

First troops to move into new barracks at Twentynine Palms, those new tilt-up concrete buildings, were the Marines of Lieutenant Colonel Eugene V. Boro's 1st Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, as General Brink recalled. This was on 29 Sep-

²Brigadier General Brink wrote this manuscript some time after his retirement, hence his reference throughout to "Smith" as his supply officer in those early days. He had died before Bud Schmid came back to town as commanding general of the base, in May of 1974.



Marine Corps Historical Collection

Modern-design barracks constructed of precast concrete panels incorporated wide cantilever overhangs which offered maximum protection against the desert sun and heat.

tember 1953.* In October of that year, the 1st 155mm Gun Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Raymond D. Wright) arrived in the desert, but first moved into a tent camp out toward Surprise Springs and Camp Wilson. It moved into some of the new buildings on 4 November.

As Force Troops units began to arrive and settle in at the new complex in the desert, a Force Artillery Headquarters set up shop on 27 October 1953, with Lieutenant Colonel George H. Ford in command. He was succeeded on 18 November by Colonel Clarence A. Barninger. Barninger remained until early the following year when on 8 January 1954, Colonel Thomas S. Ivey assumed that command. This was a Force Troops organization which functioned under the umbrella command of Brigadier General Joseph W. Earnshaw of Force Troops, Pacific. General Joe Earnshaw's flag flew at Camp Pendleton in those days.

Other units which came up the hill to the desert following those mentioned above included the 1st 75mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery Training Battery, the 2d 155mm Gun Battalion, the 2d 90mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, the 2d Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, the 1st 155mm Howitzer Battalion, and a detachment of the 1st Combat

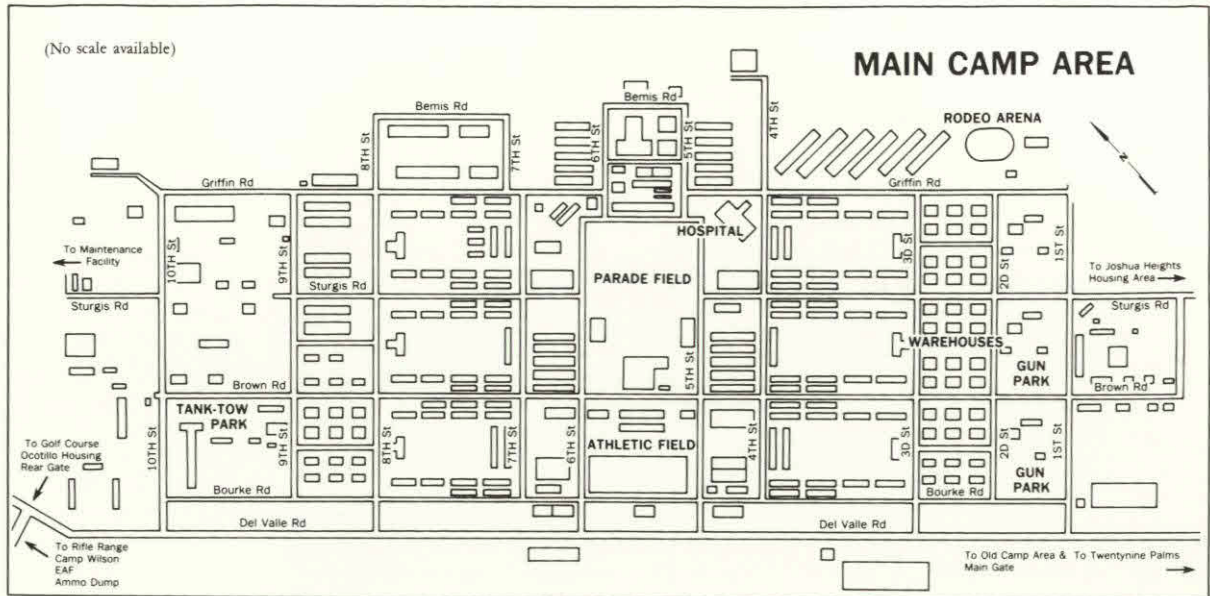
*This does not square exactly with the recollections of Gunnery Sergeant Charlie Miller. But official sources do credit Colonel Boro's Marines as the first to move into the new buildings. No doubt the pace of adjusting to the new camp became brisk at this time; memories fade a bit over the years. The point is that Twentynine Palms was coming to life as a new major facility in the desert.

Service Group. This lineup of units, with Tom Ivey in command of Force Troops elements and Monte Brink in command of the base, continued until late 1954 when Colonel Brink's tour ended.**

While this early Force Troops buildup took place, Colonel Brink later wrote that his command had grown to about 200 enlisted Marines (by early 1954), and from eight to about a dozen officers. That enlisted strength, Brink noted, amounted to "less than half of the authorized strength." Not an uncommon kettle of fish in the Marine Corps at any time before or since, and especially then while the Korean War emergency continued. At least now there were growing numbers of Force Troops Marines, who could "augment" for the base—if the normal administrative arrangements could be hammered out.

In April of 1954 the two chapels were dedicated, with General Earnshaw up from Pendleton, along with Major General and Mrs. John T. Selden. Colonel Brink, Colonel Ivey, and both general officers said a few words, as did the senior chaplain from the 11th

**Force Troop and "base" commanders then, and through the successor of Brink, Colonel John S. Oldfield, actually and legally were detached commands. Commanding officers had legal jurisdiction for "office hours" and lower-level courts-martial. General courts-martial jurisdiction remained with the respective commanding generals at Pendleton. A bit later, as we shall see, a commanding general of Force Troops, Pacific, moved from Pendleton up to Twentynine Palms, and thus took his own general court jurisdiction with him. Base status for Twentynine Palms, which came early in 1957, made it in all respects a "base" with complete legal and fiscal jurisdiction and responsibility.

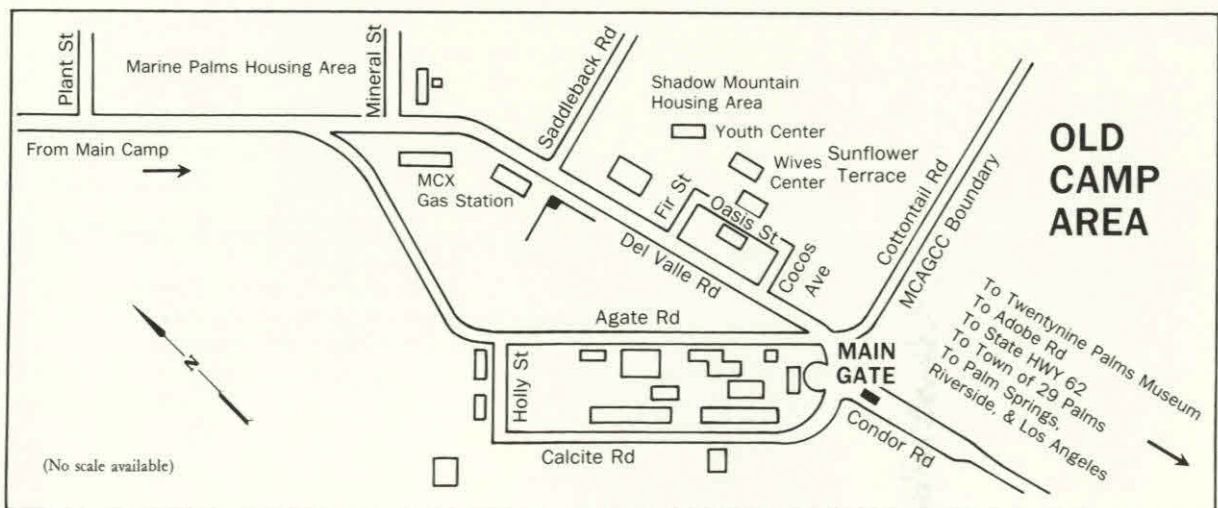


Naval District, Navy Captain Donald F. Kelly, from San Diego. By this time the Twentynine Palms parade ground had taken on its mid-1980s configuration (before Sturgis Road crossed it).

At the top of the slope stood the newly-cast headquarters building, looking westward to the snow caps of San Gorgonio and San Jacinto. The chapels faced each other across the parade. Below them stood the clubs for enlisted Marines—from the lower ranks to sergeant on one side, to the staff NCO club on the other. At Brown Road, beyond the clubs, was the base “civic center” of post office, post exchange, bank, and theater. It was a base of which to be proud, even—or perhaps because of—its frontier-like setting on that previously desolate hillside which Colonel Brink had so disliked.

The chapels were buildings of great beauty and simplicity. Hereafter, whenever I escorted VIPs around the Base, which was often, I took them through one of the chapels first, then to the theater and finally to one of the messhalls. By that time they were convinced that remarkable things could be done with concrete.⁴

Colonel Brink, who started a tradition during his tour in Twentynine Palms by being grand marshal of Pioneer Days parades on horseback (although later commanders have mostly ridden in open autos), was winding down his desert duty. Although he continued to live in old quarters in the Condor Field buildings near the main gate, most other activities and units had moved into new concrete buildings. In the fall of 1954, some four grades of elementary school held classes in those old buildings, since a growing population of Ma-



rine juniors had put the meager town school building facilities into over-capacity. Even then, the help was not sufficient, and double sessions had to be held in those make-shift school rooms.*

By late 1954 a number of things cast shadows toward Twentynine Palms. Monte Brink neared retirement. Colonel John S. Oldfield, Basic School Class of '35 classmate of Tom Ivey, wound up his tour as commanding officer of the 11th Marines in Korea, and needed a new assignment. Commands at Pendleton owned the most artillery units at the first major stop east of Korea; but for west coast artillery, all roads now led to Twentynine Palms. Pendleton "seconded" Barney Oldfield toward Twentynine Palms, after some leave, to arrive late in 1954.** And meanwhile, with so many west coast FMF units now up at Twentynine Palms, Brigadier Joe Earnshaw's command at Pendleton began to seem lonely. He decided, however, not to move to the desert, but the officer slated to replace him in the summer of 1955, Brigadier General Thomas G. McFarland (then assistant commander of the 3d Marine Division in Japan) thought he might move his command post to Twentynine Palms.

Also, at about the time Colonel Brink prepared to leave, the officer who had replaced Scantling as executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Marshal R. "Ray" Pilcher headed for transfer and retirement. This provided an opening for Fred Scantling, soon to return from duty with the 3d Marine Division in the Far East (in mid-1955), to become executive officer for Barney Oldfield. It provided a team which made for a very effective command and management through the transition period from late 1954 to full base status for Twentynine Palms.

The Brink-Oldfield change of command took place on 29 December 1954. Colonel Brink went back down to Pendleton where he prepared for retirement, and Colonel Oldfield and his wife moved into a house which Tom Ivey had arranged to be available for them

*Mr. Schoolmaster in Twentynine Palms then, and for many years both fore and aft of the time, was Ted Hayes, a delightful and scholarly old rascal of plain talk, good company, and great stories. He recalled in the mid-1980s that, back in the post-World-War-II days before the Marines took over in 1952, San Bernardino thought about taking over the old base as a part of the school facilities for Twentynine Palms. Turned it down, though, Ted recalled. The buildings were not stressed to withstand earthquakes. Those one-story frame buildings were about as prone to earthquake damage as an orange crate. But that decision saved the place for the Marine Corps, Ted said.

**This was an era when anyone named Oldfield got nicknamed "Barney" after a famous driver on early auto race tracks. "John Sherman Oldfield" lost out to "Barney" during the Basic School Class of 1935.

out in town. Although much of the base construction now was winding down, at least in its first major increment, there was not yet much improvement in on-base housing. Construction of what later was to become the Marine Palms housing area had just scratched the desert, and so the trailers and relocatables remained. In the mid-1980s, Oldfield recalled that there were then, when he came on board, about 7,000 enlisted Marines at Twentynine, the bulk of them being Force Troops personnel. As has been noted, more housing was available in the town; and into the bargain some slow growth in the town reflected the boost to local economy which came from the base and its growing population.

Noting this economic linkage, the Joshua Tree Monument National Bank, a small, privately held bank "chain" with its main high desert facility in Twentynine Palms, opened a service branch on the base, on 20 January 1955, early in the tenure of Barney Oldfield. Bank owner and president Joseph P. Wasserburger came to the base for ceremonies, Camp Pendleton base commander General Selden came up; Colonels Oldfield and Ivey were there. With General Selden, portending things to come for Twentynine Palms, was Colonel Randall M. Victory, then assistant base commander at Pendleton. Later, as a brigadier general, Victory became the second commanding general of the new base at Twentynine Palms, following commanding general number one, Tom McFarland.

On this day, welcoming the bank facility to the base, ribbons were cut and brief words of dedication and welcome were spoken. Service, security, progress, community cooperation, convenience, all were lauded or promised. No more did citizens, town or base, think themselves a frontier or a desert version of the wild west. But in a bit less than six months came the infamous Twentynine Palms bank caper. Neither a Jesse James nor a Bonnie and Clyde affair, the event nonetheless caused an exasperating inconvenience for a number of days, a subject for gossip and speculation for months, and a water shed episode which forever after separated early-day-Marines (and townspeople) from those who came later when civilization, no doubt about it, really arrived.

On Monday morning, 24 July 1955, base and town re-opened after a seemingly uneventful weekend, but then almost at once the two-year-old dial telephones in both communities began to ring off the bulkheads, said Marines and townspeople who remember the day. In town and on the base, facilities of the Joshua Tree Monument National Bank—the only bank in the communities—had been locked up tighter than new boots by Federal bank examiners. Shortages figured

to go over a half million dollars, rumor had it. (Later official word put the deficit at \$678,000.) And the FBI was looking for the Twentynine Palms manager of the bank, Roscoe D. Coons. They soon found him, a 47-year-old \$6,000-a-year man, at Del Mar, that race track down toward San Diego once advertised by an early owner, Bing Crosby, as the track where turf meets surf. In Twentynine Palms, Roscoe and Betty Coons lived on a modest scale. At Del Mar, the FBI found them at their B & R Stables. Roscoe Coons not only played the ponies, he owned a five-head clutch of them.

Marines and townspeople had a few anxious and inconvenient days, with no way to write checks or withdraw money. Many stores extended credit to Marine families and townspeople alike. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) soon set up temporary shop to give depositors limited access to limited funds for health and comfort items. Not long after that, the Citizens National Trust and Savings Bank of Riverside (later assimilated by the present Security Pacific Bank) was authorized by the Federal authorities to open emergency facilities on the base and in the town. Finally, on Wednesday, 3 August 1955, Citizens Trust re-opened that once proud Joshua Monument National Bank branch on the base, and things got back to normal.*

Roscoe Coons was indicted by a Federal grand jury on 21 September on 25 counts of embezzlement. He eventually pleaded guilty to eight counts, and in April of 1956 was found guilty, fined \$20,000, and sentenced to 20 years in prison. If his race horses seldom finished well, neither did he. Broken in spirit and health, Roscoe Coons died not long after he went off to prison.

Meanwhile, in the week before the bank closed, Brigadier General Thomas G. McFarland moved his Force Troops command post from Pendleton to the desert. On 1 July, he had replaced Joe Earnshaw at the command; and as has been noted, had determined it was time for the command to follow the bulk of its units—most of them of the artillery family—out to Twentynine Palms. Colonel Oldfield remained commanding officer of the “base,” still technically the Ma-

rine Corps Training Center under Camp Pendleton.

Also in the life-goes-on department, on Thursday of that week of the bank closing, Colonel Oldfield and officials of the P. I. Wilsey Company of Long Beach cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the Marine Palms housing area. These were home-style versions of the concrete tilt-up techniques, and Wilsey and company brought in 483 units for just a bit under \$4 million dollars. Actually, the contract was for \$3,988,000 and included streets, sidewalks, sewers, lights along the streets and, of course, in the homes, giant swamp coolers on the roofs for desert air conditioning, the works for a complete suburb.

A later commanding general at Twentynine Palms, surveying what progress had wrought by the mid-1970s when the base got a new name and a new mission, called the place of the early years “a sleepy little artillery base.” Many Marines of that period would go after him with aiming stakes. Far from sleepy, the artillery people “wore out the tubes” training on their vast expanse of desert in the waning days of the Korean War period when budgets and manning levels still remained healthy. Nor was there much napping for Colonel Oldfield’s base Marines, “housekeepers” for an ever-expanding “house.” Now there were clubs to manage, a post exchange system, swimming pools, the theater, special service activities, base stables, a modest inter-base athletic program, ranges, ammunition bunkers, base maintenance, new construction budgets to justify and supervise, messhalls, medical and dental facilities expanding, and cooperation with the civilian community where schools for dependents drew Federal “impact” funds.

In the midst of all this, and early in 1956, came the least sleepy day of all for Barney Oldfield and Fred Scantling—plus a number of others at Twentynine and at El Toro. Although the “need to know” list was kept to an absolute minimum, and no one ever suggested a plaque ought to be put up, a designation never thought of at the time might have become “The Day They Re-named the Mountain.” In those early artillery days, many firing exercises began from bivouac out near Surprise Springs. If a convoy came up from Pendleton, it turned north on the Sunfair Road, some distance west of the town of Twentynine Palms, and headed into the base area generally toward a lone mountain then called Pinto Mountain. There were other mountains in the area then sometimes called the Pinto Mountains (plural). These actually were the Bullion, the Sheep Hole, and the edges of the Pinto Basin, the latter actually in eastern reaches of the Joshua Tree National Monument. On the day in ques-

*Of the bank closing, Brigadier General Oldfield says: “I had written a check to the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) in June 1955 to pay my quarterly [income tax] payment. But when the bank was closed, my check bounced, and the IRS threatened me with all things bad. I then had to send a cashier’s check since the IRS now wouldn’t accept my check, even on another bank. A major problem also was the fact that Marines were delayed five days in receiving their pay since we had to make up new payrolls. Otherwise, . . . nearly everyone in town liked Roscoe Coons, and most were sorry to see him in a jam. He had befriended many people.”



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A366762

Col Spencer S. Berger, right, Commanding Officer, 7th Marines, discusses the operation of a machine gun with members of Company G, 3d Battalion, who acted as aggressors during DesFEx III, one of several field exercises held during the winter of 1956.

tion, all of this confusing desert terrain conspired to cause Marine aircraft from El Toro to dump a string of bombs off the reservation, generally along the highway—just east of the town of Twentynine Palms. To the credit of a suspicious flight leader, who has been frequently blessed even if his name cannot be recalled, the bombs went out locked in the safe setting. There were five or six of the “hummers” (to use a term from a later period) and almost before the dust settled Barney Oldfield (a cool-headed man who earned the Silver Star Medal on Iwo Jima), was on the horn with old friend Colonel Michael Sampas, the chief of staff at El Toro.

As Oldfield recalled much later, this was in that frightful spring of 1956 just after six recruits drowned in a tragic training accident at Ribbon Creek at Parris Island. The Marine Corps walked on eggs then, for really the first time that anyone could remember—going clear back to at least prior to World War I. Suddenly, in the aftermath of Ribbon Creek, it had become a Marine Corps with a bad press. Barney Oldfield and Mike Sampas, not wanting to contribute more to this, held their breath, sent explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams out along the road, brought in all the unexploded bombs, and then breathed a collective sigh of relief. And it was then, or very shortly thereafter, that the mountain became known as Hidalgo.

“I guess we got away with it,” Fred Scantling said many years later. But present at the same gathering was Chet Ellis, husband of Blanche Ellis who “centralized” that long-ago telephone switchboard, and who collected great stories about Joshua Trees and many other highlights and lowlights of desert history. Chet, who in those early years had been president of the Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce, smiled knowingly, but shook his head. “We knew about it,” he said, “but we were rooting for you all the way.” Which, over the years, sums up quite well the cooperative spirit which has prevailed between the town and “its” base.

And this “day they renamed the mountain” is not to be confused with another slightly less frightening day, “the day of the drone.” On that occasion, Barney Oldfield recalled, an airborne target drone went AWOL, did a “Horace Greeley” westbound toward populated regions of San Bernardino county, and soon zoomed out of sight. General Oldfield recalled that the California Highway Patrol was called, and “then we sat and waited for bad news.” None came. Remains of the wayward drone were found weeks later in the mountains, where it crashed harmlessly.

If this was the wild west, it brought enjoyment to no one. Clearly, Twentynine Palms no longer was an artillery bivouac in the uncharted outback. More man-

power was needed for a number of things. Excellent leadership had been on hand from the outset, but often commanders were forced to have to get by on the cheap. Clearly there was greater potential in this vast expanse of desert than initially had been thought. Time had come for complete command autonomy, to cut apron strings from Camp Pendleton.

By the end of 1956 the Marine Corps had weathered pretty well the bewildering period of the Ribbon Creek tragedy. The bile slick of unpopularity of the Korean War began to fade from the civilian front's memory. In the Middle East, President Nasser of Egypt began

to court the Russians with a cotton-for-arms deal, signed up the Soviets to build his Aswan dam, and then recognized Communist China—a move the U.S. tried to thwart wherever it could. Then, match dangerously close to fuse, the British and French on 31 October 1956 followed Israeli forces into the Suez in an attempt to prevent Nasser from turning back time to an age of no-canal. A majority of U.S. voters decided they still liked Ike, and that military forces had best be looked to again. Time to build. The Training Center at Twentynine Palms prepared to become a new Marine Corps base.

CHAPTER 6

Base Status

In construction days, Colonel Monte Brink, commanding officer of the base side of the house, and Colonel Thomas Ivey, then commanding such artillery and other Force Troops units as were in the high desert at Twentynine Palms, moved their respective command and staff organizations into the new headquarters building at the top of the parade ground in mid-February 1954. As has been noted, Brink served under base command of Camp Pendleton; Ivey commanded under the flag of Brigadier General Joseph W. Earnshaw of Force Troops, Pacific, then in headquarters at Camp Pendleton. The headquarters building at Twentynine Palms had been planned for the hanging of two hats, a Force Troops command at one end and a base command at the other, with the structure connected in the middle by a sally port. Offices lined single corridors in each direction, a suite of command space ended each corridor at the far ends. At the postern side of the central breezeway, an inner courtyard shaped up, for additional offices and for communication center buildings. Looking westward, the sally port framed the parade in the foreground and the sweeping desert vista beyond, stretching in all its subtle colors to the mountains, often snow-capped, at the San Gorgonio Pass. Except for the very modern pre-cast concrete construction, it might have been a U.S. military fort of a century earlier.

Into this building, at the Force Troops end, the new Force Troops, Pacific, commander, Brigadier General Thomas G. McFarland, had moved his staff and flag in mid-July of 1955. On the 1st of July 1955, that big, ex-football player—from The Citadel and from All-Marine teams in the 1920s—had replaced Brigadier General Earnshaw in command. A bit more than a year and half later, Force Troops, Pacific, and the base at Twentynine Palms had grown up together into a new age and a new status.

Facilities, letterheads, funds, and budgets were lined up during the remainder of 1955 and most of 1956. At the end of May 1956, California Congressman Harry R. Sheppard visited General McFarland and Colonel John S. Oldfield, bearing the good news that some \$15 million in new funds were being made available for the base. Things had to be looking good for a con-

gressman to make that kind of a trip, with that kind of news. Earlier, this same friend from Washington had championed the Navy Department's request for a moratorium on the filing of "jackrabbit" homesteads near the base. This was in the days when Fred Scantling worked so hard to help U.S. attorneys close out all those bothersome abandoned, and all but forgotten, mining claims which dotted the reservation. Now, by late 1956, all seemed to be in order. The loyal seamstresses from the Marine Corps Supply Depot in Philadelphia stitched up a new flag for a new command; the day for unfurling was soon at hand.* Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, came into being on the desert.

On 1 February 1957, at 1330, Major General George F. Good, Jr., of Camp Pendleton, gave this new flag to Brigadier General McFarland, and thereby gave him also Pendleton's former "desert training center." General Good also "gave" him Colonel Barney Oldfield and the remainder of the base side of the command. Now, with one officer owning both ends of the command building, the general officer at Twentynine Palms wore both hats—as commander of Force Troops, Pacific, as well as Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms.

Colonel Oldfield was there for the ceremonies, as were other officers of command and staff. And on the parade ground for the ceremonies, and marching in review to the music of the new command's band, were Marines of the 1st Medium Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion, the 1st 75mm Anti-Aircraft Group, and the headquarters command of the new base.

About four months later—near the end of May 1957—came a jaw-dropping news account from Washington. Senator Alan Bible from Nevada said that a Senate Public Lands Subcommittee hearing in the nation's capital had found that the Marine Corps

*These latter day "Betty Rosses," by terms of paragraph 20367, The Marine Corps Manual, did up all flags, colors, standards, guidons, streamers, and etc. Then they sent them out to they knew not where, except by consultation with maps which took in the whole world and by watching news rapidly turning to history. This was the same Philadelphia "tailor shop" where officers for years could order made-to-measure uniforms and other accoutrements.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356164

Exterior view of the headquarters building, Twentynine Palms; beginning in the late 1950s, it housed both the base commander and the Commander, Force Troops, Pacific.

had "taken over" Twentynine Palms with no title and no permission. He was shocked, said Senator Bible, that the Marines had taken over the land and had spent more than \$14 million "without even the scratch of a pen to show it had a right to be there," on a base where ownership still was in doubt.

Congressman Sheppard came to the rescue. Permission had been granted, he said, in 1952. There was a bill, said the California congressman, passed by Congress and signed by the President, which authorized the land acquisition and base construction. In 1956, Sheppard said, he helped the Navy and Marine Corps get approval and funds to pay off all those claims for land not a part of public domain (Fred Scantling's gold mines, and etc.). The new Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, continued to march.

In the meantime the new base had been far from idle. On 16 March 1957, marking an age which was perhaps more genteel, the base laid on a Shamrock Ball for sergeants and below at the theater building. It was the first such social event for the new base, and well attended, too. USO efforts brought in young ladies in formal attire, to be met by desert-burned Marines in dress blues or some form of coat and tie. It was a smashing success. Dance music of a type which has not been heard much since those days was played.

But it was not all parties, even in that age when the Korean War was gone and the one in Vietnam was yet so far away. From the start, the desert base had existed for serious training, and in late April the command put together "Big Shoot," which the press called "the largest artillery demonstration ever held here." Representative weapons from those on hand at Twentynine Palms participated, as did other artillery units from the 1st Marine Division, now back "home" again from Korea and shaking down at Pendleton. Although a staged affair, the shoot demonstrated what the weapons could do, and showed as well what the new base was worth as a training asset. Some 1,500 guests were on hand, said *The Observation Post*. Among them were such notables as retired General Holland M. (Howling Mad) Smith, the person who did much to conquer the occupied islands of the Pacific in World War II; retired General Alfred H. Noble, who went back with the old timers to Belleau Wood (where as a first lieutenant he earned the Navy Cross) and forward to command of Parris Island where he launched President Truman's Executive Order No. 9981 (of 26 July 1948), which ended racial segregation in the armed services; retired Lieutenant General Edward A. Craig, veteran of battles at Bougainville, Guam (where he earned the Navy Cross), and Iwo Jima before be-

coming a hero all over again in the early days of the Korean War; retired Major General Gregon A. Williams; and serving Brigadier General William W. Stickney, then Deputy Director of Marine Corps Reserves.

It was General McFarland's final big show at his new command. After all, he had taken over Force Troops in the final days of its Pendleton stay, and had been on board in the high desert since mid-1955, when he moved his command post into the new headquarters building. Now he was being succeeded by a newly promoted brigadier general, Randall M. Victory, who had been present in Twentynine Palms on the fateful day in January 1955 when that ill-fated branch bank opened on Brown Road. Then a colonel, he had been chief of staff at Pendleton.

General Victory, a veteran of Saipan and Tinian (Legions of Merit), and Iwo Jima (Bronze Star Medal) as an artillery officer, and before World War II as officer in charge of the famous "Horse Marines" in Peiping, China—among many other duties ashore and afloat—accepted that five-month-old Twentynine Palms flag from General McFarland in ceremonies on the parade on 28 June 1957.

All in all, the first year for the new base and its tenants had been a busy one. *The Observation Post* touched such highlights as the spring triumph of a singing group from the 2d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (first called the "Boondockers" and later the "Four Palms"), which first won an 11th Naval District talent contest, then the All-Navy finals in New York, and then on 12 May 1957 reached the heights of those days—an appearance on the Ed Sullivan TV show. In October, *The Observation Post* reported that "Pvt Muggs, base mascot, was back on duty after doing a stretch in the pound." Charges and specifications were not spelled out. Early in November, the 1st and 2d 105mm Howitzer Batteries (towed) came up from the 11th Marines at Pendleton, and integrated into the 1st Field Artillery Group at Twentynine Palms. And in December, individual mail deliveries began for residents in the Marine Palms and the Trailers housing areas.

Then, reporting other sorts of deliveries, *The Observation Post* in its birth column of the 2 January 1958 issue carried an historical note of some moment in this fashion:

23 December—son, Ralph Neill, to Major and Mrs. Ralph K. Culver.

24 December—son, John Kenneth, to Major and Mrs. Ralph K. Culver.

And of course they were twin sons born on both sides of that midnight as the new base neared its first

Christmas; and of course they were the first twins born to Marine parents at Twentynine Palms, even though the only medical facility up to such a task still was off the base, in the Ince Hospital.

In the mid-1980s, retired Colonel Ralph Culver said that although the medical facility on the base still amounted to only a small dispensary, he and his wife had decided that she would stay in the high desert for the births of the expected twins, and depend on the Ince hospital. Their first born, a daughter, had been a bit early; they chose not to try to plan ahead to get to the hospital at Pendleton at the proper time, or the Air Force one at March Air Force Base, either. Besides, Colonel Culver said, they were in the good and experienced hands of Chesty Puller's former battalion surgeon, Dr. Edward Lincoln Smith. Also, although that provided assurance enough, the Ince hospital staff frequently was augmented by young Navy doctors from the base, "moonlighting" in their off-duty hours.

Colonel Culver, an attorney, in 1952 had been S-3 (operations officer) of 1st Battalion, 1st Marines; then he got transferred to Force Troops, Pacific, in March 1957, and sent up to Twentynine Palms to join the Force Troops-Base legal staff of Lieutenant Colonel George P. Blackburn, Jr. With the new flag for Twentynine Palms came also general courts-martial jurisdiction, and other such allied legal duties and responsibilities for the general officer with his two hats. In everything except medical facilities, the "frontier" days were over. Drs. Smith and Ince could take care of medical needs—backed up by hospitals at Pendleton, March, and San Diego; but law and order was something else again, and could not be "farmed out."*

During the days that he was a major and the assistant legal officer, Colonel Culver recalled, both the post exchange and the commissary were substantially upgraded—the post exchange in the "business district" along Brown Road, the commissary near the main gate. Also, in the interest of safety, appearance, and legality, the main gate got upgraded in those early base days, too. Colonel Culver said the old gate, dating back to glider days, was so indistinguishable that civilian

*Col Blackburn recalled in 1987 that the San Bernardino County deputy sheriffs from the substation in Twentynine Palms "were most cooperative in our law enforcement." Col Blackburn added, "as legal officer, I sat with the local civilian school board. Since all children attended off-base schools, the Marine and civilian community seemed to cooperate in an excellent manner. My wife was active in Girl Scouts, and we both participated in P.T.A., as did many Marine parents. We found our tour exciting and enriching. It was a real adventure." Comments of Col George P. Blackburn, USMC (Ret), dtd 28 Aug 1987.

motorists frequently went whizzing by without noticing that the gate house had a military sentry.

Also during these early years after the base opened, contractors tilted up a converted pre-cast messhall building to serve as an officers' club on the high ground above the headquarters building, and found a way also to put in a "training tank" adjacent to this building. And—civilization indeed for the desert—General Victory got the great Special Services "Father" fund in Washington, D.C., to come forth with a grant of \$25,000 with which was constructed (with help from the civilian community) a TV translator/relay station atop a "mountain" in the Joshua Tree National Monument. This provided two or three signals (usually the network channels) to viewers on the base and in the community.*

The NBC network was the first to approve reception and rebroadcast of its TV signal here; CBS followed shortly, both in early February 1958; and the Marine Corps Exchange began selling TV antennas and converters which Marines were allowed to mount on their quarters. The ABC network soon was on line.

Still, and as always, fun and TV watching were not the main orders of the day. Near the end of January 1958, the 1st Field Artillery Group, commanded by Colonel Marshall J. Hooper, for the first time ever took to the field as a unit and staged a five-day field firing exercise. In addition to Headquarters Battery, firing units participating included the 1st Heavy Rocket Battery, the 1st 155mm Howitzer Battery, the 1st, 2d, and 3d 155mm Gun Batteries, and the 1st and 2d 105mm Howitzer Batteries.

*In addition to the \$25,000 which the Marine Corps contributed to the local TV club, Marines also did much of the field engineering work to get a road up to the translator site, and to erect the equipment on top. But it was all justified in the name of morale and entertainment. The first time citizens of Twentynine Palms "caught" a television signal was in the mid-40s shortly after World War II. Then a group of those individuals given to celebrating flash floods, or firing Dr. Ince's little cannon, *El Supremo*, during moments of significant civic commemoration, took a television set, an antenna, and a gasoline-powered generator up to Keys Overlook in the national monument and picked a television signal out of the air above the broad valley which contains Palm Springs and the San Andreas Fault. Except for the novelty of it all, seldom has television been worth all that. For later heroic efforts of television watching before the "mountain got fixed," Marines and townspeople could remain at home, but still it was hardly worth it. This method, Colonel Culver explained, involved hanging a silk scarf or scrim over the set's screen, turning the veiled set toward a mirror, and watching the picture in the mirror. Somehow or another this method made the picture less "snowy." Marines from the base continued to help maintain the translators and the precarious mountain trail up to them until a television cable system came in, in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During that first full year of basehood, more than 2,000 Marine reservists trained at Twentynine Palms, mostly in the harsh summer months. In mid-November General Randolph McC. Pate, Commandant of the Marine Corps, commended Twentynine Palms for its "outstanding support" of the reserve units. That began a long tradition of such support, ever-expanding.

To help support such field maneuvers, and the hosting of reserve units for training, Company D of the 7th Engineer Battalion got a permanent transfer up the hill from Pendleton to the desert. Roads to and from training areas always needed repairs from the ravages of tactical traffic and of flash floods, and other facilities were needed. Some of it was important for considerations of morale in the desert where living still was harsh, and liberty a long way off. Picnic and park-like facilities were constructed at Surprise Springs, and in the planning phase were pioneer-type improvements for a field camp for reserve units as well as visiting active duty units to use while on board for special training.

Early in June 1958 came the First Annual Navy Relief Carnival. This was an outdoor extravaganza designed to bring in money for Navy Relief, and to focus attention on the annual, naval-service-wide solicitation for this fund which is used as emergency where-withal for personnel. The solicitation in that first year brought in nearly \$20,000—or about \$3.50 per serviceman on the new base; some \$6,500 of it coming from the two-day carnival.

This trend-setter, ever larger in size, continued for another 15 years, until finally terminated in a more sophisticated age when financial contracts and concern for frightening tort judgments did away with such fund-raising "community fairs." After that, all the begs went into a single "ask-it," and became mostly plain old arm twisting. The good cause remained, and responsible citizenship kept service personnel contributing, but without the carnival rides and the money-making booths sponsored by the various on-base units.

In many ways it was a simpler age. In mid-summer of 1958, in answer to queries, *The Observation Post* set forth housing charges married personnel had to give up for the various types of facilities then available: a 2-bedroom, furnished trailer out near the main gate cost \$39.60 per month; a "relocatable" (slightly larger "immobile" mobile home) 2-bedroom, furnished, \$54 per month; a 2-bedroom, unfurnished Sunburst house out in town, \$55.50; Wherry housing on the base (Marine Palms), 2-bedrooms, \$86.50 per month for NCOs and company grade officers; \$98



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A358114

BGen Edward J. Megarr, base commanding general, and Mrs. Megarr, pass a group of spectators during the Pioneer Day Parade in 1976. Activities such as this established a close relationship between the base and surrounding community which continues to this day.

per month for field grade officers. A bit later in the fall, the base child care center—sponsored by staff NCO and officer wives through proceeds from a thrift shop—celebrated its first anniversary.

Meanwhile, the 4th 8-Inch Howitzer Battery, plus a platoon of the 1st Heavy Artillery Rocket Battery, left Twentynine Palms for duty on Okinawa with the 3d Marine Division; and a new outfit was activated, the 2d Medium Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion, armed with Terrier surface-to-air missiles. In mid-October, Honest John rockets fired at Twentynine Palms, in the Delta Corridor, as part of an artillery demonstration planned and executed by Colonel Charles Burton, then commanding the Field Artillery Group. As another feature of this event, Marine Aircraft Group 36 of the Santa Ana Air Facility, near El Toro, sent up some HUS-1 cargo helicopters with special lifting slings, and they lifted a 105mm howitzer and crew into firing position as part of this training exercise.

By the end of Twentynine Palms' first full year as a base and home for ever-increasing numbers of Force Troops units, the roll call of units—in addition to the base headquarters and service personnel—included:

- Headquarters Company, Force Troops
- Headquarters Battery, 1st Field Artillery Group
- 1st and 2d 155mm Gun Batteries
- 3d 155mm Howitzer Battery
- 1st Heavy Artillery Rocket Battery
- 1st and 2d 105mm Howitzer Batteries
- 3d and 4th 8-Inch Howitzer Batteries
- Headquarters Battery of the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group
- 1st and 2d Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalions
- Detachment, 1st Force Service Regiment

- Company D, 7th Engineer Battalion
- 5th Dental Company
- Medical Section (from Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton)
- 1st and 2d Medium Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalions
- 1st 75mm Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion

All in all, it had been a busy and productive period of nearly two years that Twentynine Palms experienced its fledgling period, and there was not a serious bobble. General McFarland had been on board and commanding Force Troops units when the new base command came into being; and Brigadier General Victory had enough long and distinguished service in the Marine Corps, plus his recent service at Pendleton which then "owned" Twentynine Palms, to effectively continue the march.

Now, at the end of his year and a half tour, Randall Victory chose to retire, effective 1 January 1959. The ceremony, with little fanfare, took place on 31 December 1958, with the new commanding general, Brigadier General Alpha L. Bowser, not yet in place. In the meantime, base chief of staff Colonel Charles W. McCoy took command of base personnel; command of Force Troops units was in the hands of Colonel Bruce T. Hemphill.

During part of 1952, Al Bowser had been chief of staff of the 3d Marine Division, while Major General Pepper had commanded that division and also the Force Troops, Pacific units; so like Randall Victory, Brigadier General Bowser was no stranger to Twentynine Palms. An artillery officer of distinction, Bowser entered the Marine Corps via the U. S. Naval Academy, served at sea and elsewhere before World War II, and as an artillery officer in combat during the war



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A355401

Marines load a 155mm howitzer during a field firing exercise in the winter of 1971, one of many such exercises held by both active and reserve units each year at Twentynine Palms.

at Bougainville (Bronze Star Medal), Guam (second Bronze Star Medal), and Iwo Jima (Legion of Merit). He was promoted to major general in 1960, later became a lieutenant general, and commanded Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic.

Under his command of Twentynine Palms, which began on 14 January 1959, artillery training continued apace. Each field firing exercise for the Field Artillery Group was called the "largest yet," and such was the case for the first one General Bowser witnessed. Among other dignitaries who visited during this exercise (19-23 January) were Marine Corps Commandant General Randolph McC. Pate, along with Major

General Wang Chianoan, deputy commandant of the Nationalist Chinese Marine Corps, from Taiwan.

At about the same time, in this new year, Marine engineers from Company D, 7th Engineer Battalion, had Camp Handyman ready for such Pendleton units as needed to bivouac before and after the field firing exercise. It was mainly a field camp for reserves due in later in the year, and for all such field training of units, regular or reserve, who came to the desert. This was the field camp, out in the Alpha Area near Dead Man Lake, later named Camp Wilson for an early-day commander of the 12th Marines (an artillery regi-

ment), and again later much upgraded for Twentynine Palms' new mission.

In May 1959 two episodes illustrated human values within the Corps. A fire chased Sergeant and Mrs. Vincent F. Venezia, along with their three young children, from a rented home on Adobe Road, and destroyed all their clothing and other possessions. The Navy Relief organization, then in the midst of another fundraising drive on the base, re-outfitted the family and moved it into one of the relocatables near the main gate.

The other touching episode involving a Marine Corps family had to do with the dedication, on 16 May 1959, of Mike Fenton Field as a Little League baseball field on the base. Mike Fenton, the younger son of a well-known Marine family, had been killed in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. Now his father, retired Brigadier General Francis I. Fenton, and mother, Mary Elizabeth Fenton, were on hand for the dedication of the field; so also was Mike's brother, then Lieutenant Colonel Francis I. Fenton, Jr., and his wife, Eloise Rowan Fenton.*

Meanwhile, training continued, units deactivated and changed, new weapons came on line as others went the way of slings and arrows, and other Marine units sailed away for "transplacement" duty on Okinawa. First to go was the old 1st Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, which had been at Twentynine since the summer of 1953. Now its twin 40mm guns mounted on the T-141 Walker Bulldog light tank chassis had become museum pieces.** Some of the troops went off with a contingent of 200 Marines to Okinawa to replace personnel there; others in this transplacement were from the 4th 8-Inch Howitzer Battery and the 1st Heavy Artillery Rocket Battery.

Near the end of June, wonder of wonders, the long-promised and much-touted short-sleeve shirt got an up-beat fanfare. It would be at cash sales shortly, said an article in *The Observation Post*, and rules for wearing this new item of uniform were spelled out. Marines at Twentynine Palms figured nobody needed this item more than they.

*See Appendix C, "Mike Fenton Field," for a more complete account of the history of Mike Fenton and his family. See *Quantico: Crossroads of the Corps* (Washington: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1980) p. 58, which contains a photograph of Mary Elizabeth Fenton—with Bob Hope and others—as a "Gray Lady" at the Quantico Naval Hospital in 1942, when she was doing volunteer duty while her husband and sons served in World War II.

**Army versions of this weapon, the M-42 "Duster" proved valuable in Vietnam while attached to units of the III Marine Amphibious Force. Their high fire power made them especially useful for convoy escort and base defense.

Also in that month Donna Robinson, the wife of Sergeant H. R. Robinson of Force Troops, became "Queen for a Day" on that then-popular NBC TV show, and received many helpful gifts—thoughtfully to assist the family overcome the illness and trauma of a near tragedy. Two-year-old Donald Robinson was bitten by a rattlesnake near the family home in Yucca Valley. His nine-year-old brother, Hal, squeezed his brother's arm above the bite, rushed young Don to their mother, and was credited by doctors with saving the younger boy's life. But it was not a sure thing until the Twentynine Palms base hospital ambulance rushed the boy to the Air Force hospital at March Air Force Base. Once back home, young Donald needed to be in an air conditioned room and to have other special aids. The air conditioner and other items turned up for his mother during her reign as "Queen for a Day."***

In August of 1959 appeared the Redeye missile, which was to have a home and a school for itself at Twentynine Palms into the 1970s. It put the age of missiles into a one-man load for the Marine grunt, who could get it to follow its heat-seeking electronic guidance "mind" right "up the tail pipe" of a speeding aircraft. Or, more usually, a target drone.

In September (things still getting named and organized on the new base) the base main athletic field below the post office and the bank area was dedicated as Victory Field—named for Randall M. Victory and hopefully for many future wins by local teams. General Victory was on hand to accept the honors from General Bowser.

And as the year—and the decade—ended, Marines could look back on nearly eight eventful years in the high desert. Monte Brink clearly had been wrong—it had *not* been a mistake for the Corps to move so far away from the sea. Nor was there any longer doubt about putting the frontier days behind.

As if to celebrate—and perhaps to gild the lily—the Marine Base went out and bought 44 mature palm trees. Give us 44 for the road, might have been the order. Actually, the way it happened, base heard of a landscaping contractor clearing out an old date palm grove near Indio, and he could give the Marine Corps a good deal. So up came the 44 palms, to line Del Valle Drive. Even if you started counting late, when you came back in from liberty, probably you'd still get to 29, and then you knew you were back safely on board.

***This story not only has human interest, but also demonstrates the "frontier" quality of a place where your child could get his by a rattler while outside at play.

CHAPTER 7

The 1960s

Now the novelty was gone — except for each and every Marine and dependent who came to the desert for the first time. But officially, Twentynine Palms was just one in the list of “every clime and place” categories. Regulars and reserves trained and fired the seemingly endless ranges out across the huge base. The new Hawk missiles entered the inventory, and led to the organization of the 1st Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion (LAAM, for short). General Bowser did the honors at an activation ceremony in May 1960. Commanding officer of the new outfit was Lieutenant Colonel Armand G. Daddazio; the battalion sergeant major was R. E. Winslow. A second LAAM battalion was formed here later, and in September 1960, Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, joined White Sands, New Mexico, and McGregor, New Mexico, along with China Lake, California, as one of four surface-to-air missile ranges in the United States.*

Meanwhile, Marines with the first Terrier missiles at Twentynine Palms were trying out the new range there. This was Battery B, 1st Medium Anti-Aircraft Missile (MAAM) Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bertram S. Ryder.

It was a new age. In early fall of 1960, recently-promoted Major General Bowser used a welder’s torch to cut a steel “ribbon” to open officially the nearly 15,000 square foot Building 2000. In it, 1st Force Service Regiment Marines and civilian craftsmen performed fourth and fifth echelon repair work on Force Troops and other Marine Corps equipment, which was becoming ever more sophisticated. (A few years later, a larger repair facility was built beyond 10th Street, and Building 2000 became the Base Supply Center.) Shortly after the ceremony, General Bowser went on to duty at Headquarters Marine Corps, then to command of the Marine Corps Base at Lejeune. After that, and elevation to three-star rank, he commanded Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic. Brigadier General Lewis Jefferson “Jeff” Fields, another distinguished artillery officer

*The missile range at McGregor, New Mexico, was rather a part of Fort Bliss, in El Paso, Texas. But it is across the border into New Mexico. The Hawk Marines from Twentynine Palms first fired their missiles there in September of 1960. General Bowser went down there to observe.

from World War II battles (Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu), assumed command of Marine Base, Twentynine Palms, and Force Troops, Pacific from General Bowser on 30 September 1960.

In other highlights of the first year of the new decade, unit transplacements continued between state-side units and combat-ready units on Okinawa. This went on until the Vietnam War began in 1965 and soon took almost all units from West Coast installations to war duty there. That year, the 3d 8-Inch Howitzer Battery went to Okinawa to serve with the 3d Division’s artillery regiment, the 12th Marines, and to let its sister battery, the 4th, return to the States after completion of its transplacement cycle.

Late in May 1960, a Twentynine Palms rifle team won the Wharton Trophy at Western Division matches at Camp Matthews. And, in a less happy note, in late June a violent desert wind and rain-sand storm — for which Twentynine Palms is unfortunately a bit infamous — caused the base to hunker down and hang on as best it could. There was much damage — the Staff NCO club said \$1,500; the Exchange said \$1,000 for the roof of its “outdoor store.” Fortunately, there were no serious injuries.

At Christmas time 1960, Brigadier General Fields wielded the ceremonial spade to break ground for a \$2.25 million project which in eight months or so would begin to provide new quarters for Marines and dependents. This was to be that swank subdivision by the golf course (later), out Berkeley Road — Ocotillo Heights. The D&L and O&J Construction Companies of Los Angeles said they hoped to have the first 150 quarters ready in approximately mid-summer 1961.

In January 1961, the ham radio station completed its first year in operation on the base, and Lance Corporals Robert W. Kimmons and Robert L. Bennett computed that they had patched through over 13,000 telephone calls between overseas Marines and their families in the States. And in another department of vital communication, the Base Communications Section, assisted by the Marine Corps Auxiliary Airfield from Yuma, Arizona, plus technicians from Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, put up a new, portable tow-



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A357654

The Naval Medical Facility's new X-ray room, shown here in 1976, along with other improvements, provided Marines and their dependents a greater degree of inpatient care.

er at the airfield near the main gate. *The Observation Post* reported that the tower was 30 feet tall, and in matters of communications, had all the latest equipment.

And if you could not believe *The Observation Post*, then whom? In late February 1961 the base newspaper won top honors among Marine Corps letterpress newspapers in a world-wide contest sponsored by the American Heritage Service Newspaper. In addition, the base newspaper's public information officer "boss," Captain Edward J. Clarkson, won a George Washington Honor Medal for an essay he entered in the Freedom Foundation's annual contest. Captain Clarkson, from King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of Villanova, had been an artillery battery commander before being tapped for the "PIO" job. His press chief was Gunnery Sergeant Ed Barnum. The young sports editor was Corporal Ronald R. Fraizer, who later was promoted to warrant officer and returned as the base's "PIO" in the 1970s and again in the 1980s. Eventually, in 1986, only the Joshua trees had more time in Twentynine Palms than Ron Fraizer. He was by then a CWO-4. On his license plate, he spelled it "Fore."

Another facility of which to be proud, the Naval Medical Facility got a new addition (dedicated by General Fields on 31 March 1961), and, for the first time ever, could provide inpatient care for dependents at Twentynine Palms. Seven Navy nurses came on board on 27 March, and a new 12-bed dependent ward, operating room, and infant nursery were ready. So, it turned out, was Sherwood Earl Cox, who was born at 1838 on Easter Sunday, 2 April 1961, to his mother Miyoko Cox, the wife of Gunnery Sergeant Earl Cox of the 1st MAAM Battalion. The attending physician was Navy Lieutenant Thomas J. Krizek. On the first day of the new work week, General Jeff Fields visited Mrs. Cox and son. Seems the general had dedicated the new medical facility none too soon. By mid-June, about two dozen Marine wives who had been Gray Lady hospital volunteers elsewhere were capped in ceremonies at the new base hospital, and it was a fully functional concern.

Later in summer, bids were accepted for the second increment of 100 houses for Ocotillo Heights; this brought to 250 quarters the number under construction, and the new bid, reflecting a bit of inflation,

came to a bit over \$1.5 million. And late in November of that year (1961) Brigadier General Fields announced that the Commandant of the Marine Corps had approved the grant of some \$100,000 for the construction of a nine-hole golf course near this Ocotillo subdivision. Jeff Fields said he hoped the course would be completed during the fall-winter of 1962-63. It would be supported by special services funds and user fees, and it would be irrigated by reclaimed water—from that famous on-base body of water, Lake Bandini.

Meantime, in other outdoor "sports" always underway at Twentynine Palms, reservists called their summer training exercise "Inferno," and the biggest enemy turned out to be desert downpours. Flash floods caught some units in Quackenbush Pass, and a five-foot wall of water swept away two-and-a-half-ton trucks, many smaller vehicles, tents, trailers, mess equipment, and a lot of other equipment—not to mention good humor. There were no serious injuries, but the clean-up work that season was particularly back-breaking.

The next training exercise, that fall, perhaps sought to ward off evil spirits of the desert by naming the

operation "Sandstorm." That part of it worked to ward off the weather jinx; but two Marines in night bivouac suffered bites from coyotes, and Navy doctors put them through the Pasteur treatments, just in case.

Early in the new year (on 6 February 1962) the first 82 sets of quarters in Ocotillo Heights got a formal opening, courtesy of Rear Admiral James R. Davis, Director of Southwest Division, Bureau of Yards and Docks, from San Diego. Brigadier General Fields attended also, as the admiral presented keys to Staff Sergeant Charles W. Richart of Maintenance Company, Support Battalion; and then Sergeant Richart and his wife, along with their twin daughters (the family had had a key of their own for two weeks or more and had gotten settled), showed Admiral Davis, General Fields, and the rest of the official party through the Richart Quarters.

It was a momentous year. In its 20 February 1962 issue, the prize-winning *The Observation Post* featured a story about the Marine aviator, Lieutenant Colonel John Glenn, who had a week earlier become the first earthling to orbit the earth; and in the same issue appeared a story that President John F. Kennedy had

An aerial view of the Ocotillo Housing Area, formally opened in February 1962, and a nine-hole golf course constructed with Special Services funds and irrigated by reclaimed water.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356796



praised the January 1962 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* for its special issue on guerrilla warfare. Also, the base newspaper announced that Major General Victor H. Krulak had been reassigned from Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense, as Special Assistant for Special Warfare. There he would work with William B. Rosson, soon to be the Army's youngest major general. Before too many years were to pass, many Marines who read those stories would be joining "Brute" Krulak and Bill Rosson in the Pacific, to take part in special warfare in South Vietnam.

On 20 March 1962, in another one of those human stories so typical of the Marine Corps—perhaps of all American servicemen, wherever they are—a seeing-impaired Twentynine Palms couple, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schneider, came to the base to officially thank Lance Corporals John W. Saunders and William E. White. The two Marines had met the Schneiders at church services out in town, had befriended the couple, and then had helped the couple get a new seeing-eye dog. Sanders and White did not understand what all the fuss was about. After all, the Schneiders had been kind to *them*; and these Marines also knew that the Schneiders had been helping regularly at the USO in town, especially at Christmas time when for nine years they had been bringing candy and cookies to Marines for the holidays.

The year 1962 also marked the start of a community service project which the base was to sponsor for many years to come; and later it was to take on a special poignancy for the community and for a later commanding general and his family. Now, in this first year, it was the Southern California Invitational Championship Basketball Tournament, and some 500 schoolchildren came up with their coaches and were billeted on the base and fed in the messhalls. The amazing fun of the whole thing stemmed from the fact that these championship basketballers were from grades three through eight. A "sack of eels" for many dedicated Marines for a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday once a year. But one did not have to study the youngsters very long or very closely to decide that it was all worth it.

In June 1962, the 1st, 2d, and 3d Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalions, which earlier had shifted to the operational control of the 3d Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, but remained in the desert, got a liaison officer on board Twentynine Palms in the person of Colonel Thomas J. O'Connor, a Marine aviator. With the O'Connor family came son Bryan and other offspring. In 1964, Bryan O'Connor graduated from high school in Twentynine Palms, and in 1985,

as a Marine lieutenant colonel, he was pilot of the 26 November 1985 flight of the space shuttle "Atlantis." Lieutenant Colonel O'Connor's parents (his mother, Helen, had been a Navy nurse) returned to Twentynine Palms for retirement in the early 1980s.

In the spring of 1962, the new age lodged a new test on the supply system. Some little distance from mainside Twentynine Palms, farther into the desert, Marines of the Nuclear Ordnance Platoon worked behind locked gates and locked doors to keep themselves proficient in their assigned tasks of being able to handle nuclear rounds for artillery, and nuclear charges for the engineers. Duties were scientific and exacting, even on the "dummy" equipment with which they trained. Weather, and dust from vagrant breezes, amounted to potential enemies, so Marines at the NOP site were the only ones on the base in those days to have fully air-conditioned spaces—NOP Marines and crickets. Those black, chirping fiddlers, which are supposed to be on the hearth, liked the air conditioning, too. They moved in with the NOP Marines and began to thrive. They thrived in seething masses, like black breathing rugby balls in corners of the NOP passageways and work spaces. Marines with vacuum sweepers slurped them up and cremated them in GI cans outside. More crickets came back. They crunched underfoot. In desperation, the NOP Marines requisitioned chickens: chickens, live, each—12.

Earlier, the Marines had sneaked in some chickens, and the chickens ate the crickets. Their requisition seemed logical to them, but not to the supply types. The "sock counters" were not amused: no chickens in the system; not "out of stock"; never in stock. The solution, such as it was, called for a better caulking of openings through which crickets could infiltrate; and more research into anti-insect spraying. Neither measure was a complete success. Over the years, the cricket problem has persisted, but no longer do the NOP Marines have to endure the plague alone. Other air-conditioned spaces—notably those in the Communications and Electronics School complex—also attract the insects. Spraying by the "bugs and juices" department of Base Facilities Maintenance later became much more efficient, however.

Also in 1962, on 5 June, the base hospital began another expansion. It was expected to cost about \$1 million and add 32,000 square feet and much-needed new facilities. On 12 June, for the first time ever at Twentynine Palms, Marines of the 3d Heavy Artillery Rocket Battery fired their Honest John missiles. On 17 June, reserves of the summer training cycle moved into the pyramidal tents and other facilities which base Marines and workers had prepared for them at Camp



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A411482

A veteran of the Korean War Chosin Reservoir campaign, BGen Joseph L. Stewart, assumed command of the base and Force Troops in the summer of 1962.

Wilson, out by Dead Man Lake. On 26 June, additional Marines came up from Camp Pendleton to beef up 4th Battalion, 11th Marines to full battalion size, and to assume use of their 155s. And on 31 August, Brigadier General Joseph L. Stewart, in change-of-command ceremonies, took the reins for Base and Force Troops, Pacific, from Brigadier General Fields. Fields had been selected for promotion to major general, and he was on his way to become Assistant Director of Personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Joseph Lester Stewart, a three-letter athlete from Auburn University (graduated 1937), also won scholastic honors there, as well as an Army ROTC commission which he traded for one in the Marine Corps. During World War II, Stewart served in the Pacific at—among other places—Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima (Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal). During the Korean War, he fought in the Pusan perimeter with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade; took part in the Inchon landing; was executive officer of the 5th Marines during the Chosin Reservoir campaign (Silver Star Medal); and later commanded 3d Battalion, 5th Marines in further fighting in Korea. By the time he came back from Korea in June 1951, he also had

his second Legion of Merit and Bronze Star Medal, plus an Air Medal.

In less than two months after General Stewart came on board, the Cuban Missile Crisis of October brought the mount-out of many Marines from Twentynine Palms. Most of these individuals and units were home again before Christmas; but it amounted to the first taste of a war-time footing for the desert base. Too young and underdeveloped, for the most part, for the Korean War, now the base and its Force Troops tenants could be counted on to participate fully. It was a taste of things to come by mid-decade, when the Vietnam War came close to turning the base into a "ghost town." Those who mounted out for the Cuban "flap" included the 3d LAAM Battalion; Battery L, 4th Battalion, 11th Marines; plus some 500 other Marines of Hawk missile units.

Just in time for Christmas, George B. Lloyd, a base civil service worker, earned a record-setting (for then) award for a beneficial suggestion about how to save a lot of money and time calibrating thermostats for space heaters in base housing areas. Experts in Washington figured that this suggestion would save, service wide, in one year alone, \$20,952. For that, George Lloyd got for his record-setting "Benny Sugg" something a bit under \$1,000. Over the years, Twentynine Palms has been blessed with outstanding civil service workers who, often like Marines, must be twice-volunteers for their duty in the desert. From 1966 to 1968, George Lloyd served on board the base at Guantanamo, Cuba, where his wife, Marian, also worked for civil service. They returned to Twentynine Palms after that, and George finished out his service in the desert, retiring in 1970.

In 1963, it was pretty much business as usual at the desert base which was getting down to a routine, and could no longer call itself new. On 8 May, Vice Admiral Ephraim P. Holmes, commander of Amphibious Forces, Pacific, came up from San Diego to officially open the Twentynine Palms golf course. He cut a ribbon. One must not say sliced. Then he joined in a round of golf with General Stewart and some others.

Then, on 22 November 1963, came the announcement which was to do more to change the appearance, permanence, and life blood of the base than anything up to the mid-1970s and the "new mission." Headquarters Marine Corps said it would begin steps to move the Corps' fastest growing school, the Communications-Electronics School Battalion, from San Diego to Twentynine Palms. It was a new age, communications grew ever more sophisticated; gone forever

were the Navajo Code Talkers and the semaphore flags; even radios and other "black boxes" talked in bits and bytes with each other, and in inhuman segments of time. The desert area—Twentynine Palms—would give the school more needed space, and the remote location would keep atmospheric interference to a minimum. In addition, it would permit training without the constant interruptions due to the noise of aircraft taking off and landing at San Diego's Lindbergh Field.

Colonel Arnold W. Harris, commanding officer of the school in San Diego, said his 1963 student output was up nearly 600—from 1,051 graduates in 1962 to 1,640 graduates in 1963—and still the school was falling short of filling all the orders from Marine Corps commands world wide. Transfer of the school from San Diego to Twentynine Palms proceeded with all deliberate speed after this announcement, but there were many delays. The school grew while moving plans were

underway. It was a move which went on for a bit more than 10 years.

Early in 1964 (18 March) came a new commanding general for Twentynine Palms-Force Troops. General Joe Stewart was off to Headquarters Marine Corps to become Director of Marine Corps Reserves. In for Stewart was Brigadier General William K. Jones, alias "Willie K." Jones, alias "Base Plate McGurk" for long-time readers of the *Marine Corps Gazette* who followed his pearls of wisdom in plain barracks language. In spite of Twentynine's reputation as an artillery base, here was the first commanding general with no previous duty as a "cannon cocker." A native of Joplin, Missouri, and a graduate of the University of Kansas (1937), he entered the Marine Corps via a college reserve program and the Platoon Leaders' Class. In November 1939, after an abbreviated Reserve Officers' Course at Quantico, Bill Jones joined the 1st Battal-

A graduate of the University of Kansas, base commanding general, BGen William K. Jones, talks with members of the university's NROTC unit during a firing demonstration in 1964.

Marine Corps Historical Collection



ion, 6th Marines, and stayed with that infantry battalion for the next six years. This included duty in Iceland, then into the Pacific for Guadalcanal. By September 1943, he was a major and commanding the battalion. In that capacity he led the battalion on Tarawa (where he earned the Silver Star Medal and a field promotion to lieutenant colonel); Saipan (Navy Cross); Tinian; and the Okinawa diversionary "landing." In Korea, Jones served as G-3 (operations officer) of the 1st Marine Division, and later as regimental commander of the 1st Marines. In Korea, he earned the Bronze Star Medal. After a variety of other duties in the later 1950s and the early 1960s, Jones was promoted to brigadier general in October of 1962. After a tour as legislative assistant to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Jones assumed command of Twentynine Palms.

At about the time General Jones moved into his new office, the latest "biggest ever" training exercise got into full swing on the desert. Some 43,000 regular Marines from the 1st Marine Division and the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, plus artillery units from the Force Troops desert dwellers took part in this one, called Winter Night.

In April 1964, three Marines and two Navy hospital corpsmen (not to be outdone) hiked from Twentynine Palms to Las Vegas (291 miles) as a money-raising effort for National Health Agencies and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Entertainer Danny Thomas invited the five on stage during his night club performance at the Sands Hotel. Participants were First Sergeant David H. Stephens, Gunnery Sergeant Frank Pond, and Sergeant Esmond McBride for the Marines; and for the Navy, Hospitalman Third Class Gordon Johnson and Hospitalman First Class Robert Reschke. Dave "Steve" Stephens later retired to Twentynine Palms, worked for years for the Kenney Drug Store firm, and later became director of the San Bernardino county park and recreation department in Twentynine Palms.

This 1964 hike started something. For most years thereafter, a "Stephens March" was part of the local Pioneer Days activities; Steve hiked in them for years, until like all Marines, the lucky ones, he grew gray in service and had to admit to being part of the old breed. In the mid-1980s, Steve retired from the park and recreation directorship, too.

By the end of 1964, the quickening build-up of U.S. Forces in and around Southeast Asia (Vietnam)—and so far this amounted to air and air-defense units, advisors, and increased manning levels in afloat duty in the Western Pacific—caused many Marine dependents

at Twentynine Palms to be left behind suddenly by husbands and fathers who received hurried and unexpected orders to deploy. One such entire unit from Twentynine Palms secretly mounted out in late November; and while the departure was common knowledge on the base, it was not until February 1965 that the unit's movement was announced publicly. This unit was the 1st LAAM Battalion with its Hawk missiles, off to provide air defense for Marine aircraft units going into the Da Nang area of South Vietnam. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Bertram E. "Bert" Cook, this battalion included some 600 Marines of all ranks, plus a Navy doctor and eight hospital corpsmen. Considering this first major mount-out to Vietnam as a harbinger of things to come, base officers set up a Family Assistance Office to aid dependents left behind. Many of the latter stayed on board the base, if quarters were available. In increasing numbers, quarters were available.

At about the same time, Headquarters Marine Corps passed the word that Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, had for the fourth consecutive year taken the annual Corps-wide honors for the highest number of most valuable and productive beneficial suggestions. The base was to win the same award the following year, also, and with that (fifth) win, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Commandant, sent along a message saying he was pleased by Twentynine's "high state of morale."

In many ways, 1965 was a momentous year at Twentynine Palms. Officially and with a quickening pace, the Vietnam War got underway; Marines began to leave the base, on individual orders or with various units mounting out for service in Southeast Asia. The new Base Family Affairs office worked long hours. Marine families toughed it out as always.

There were bright spots. Colonel Virgil W. Banning, since August 1964 the assistant commander of Twentynine Palms, got the word he had been selected for promotion. There was a June wedding in the family of Brigadier General Bill Jones and wife Charlotte when their daughter Carol was married, and Gunnery Sergeant Charlie Miller broke out the "circus wagon" (which he had overhauled and painted) to take the wedding party up the hill for a reception at the officers' club.* Wives who stayed on the base organized a "Lassic" Program (Ladies Auxiliary Special Service In-

*The "circus wagon" was the special services hay-ride wagon which, under General Jones' sponsorship, served to enhance morale and relaxation for Marines and their families. The wagon was painted scarlet with USMC on the side in large gold letters. Jones comments. Note: "Circus wagon" appeared in Gunnery Sergeant Miller's comments.

dividual Endeavor) to take over special services and recreation programs, to replace Marines leaving for duty in Vietnam.* There were also moments of great human tragedy and sadness. Casualty reports began to come in from Vietnam; and, one night in August, the second-youngest son of Bill and Charlotte Jones died in an automobile accident on Condor Curve. Thus Hugh M. Jones, 16 years of age, became another of the grim statistics of that curve in the road on the way to the base.

The lay of the land, the configuration of base boundaries, any number of other happenstances of history and traffic patterns going back to earliest days in Twentynine Palms led to the creation and endurance of Condor Curve. Inbound toward the base, Adobe Road heads toward the west side of the little airfield. An adjustment is needed to reach the main gate, which is near the east side of the airfield. So at Indian Trail, Condor Road begins its lazy curve to the east, and then a bit later curves again to straighten out going northward toward the gate. Looks like a piece of cake. But too often over the years, Marines and others have tried to do it too rapidly; or, thinking they are all but home, they have dozed off—often with fatal results.

Hugh McIndoe Jones, called "Chief," was born in Stockholm, Sweden, in March of 1949, while his father was there with the family on naval attache duty following World War II. After his fatal accident, there was a memorial mass for Hugh Jones at the Catholic Chapel on 24 August 1965. Burial followed at Arlington National Cemetery outside Washington, D.C. Thereafter, those annual schoolboy basketball tournaments hosted by the Marines in Twentynine Palms were known as the "Chief Jones Tournaments."

At the end of 1965, newly promoted Brigadier General Virgil W. Banning took over from General Jones as commanding general. Jones was off to Vietnam, where he served this time as Director of the Combat Operations Center at Headquarters, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon. Later, he had other command assignments in Vietnam, including the 3d Marine Division as a major general. As a lieutenant general, he headed Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, in Hawaii. He retired 1 September 1972.

And, last but not least for the historical events of 1965, on 20 July 1965, there came on board the base a corporal from Camp Pendleton with a set of orders for permanent duty assignment in the desert. Corporal

*General Jones originated this concept, and it proved most useful during the Vietnam War years, and a bit beyond.

Ida Endsley Burchman, of Pasadena, Texas—the first-ever female Marine assigned to Twentynine. She was married to a Marine here — a prerequisite at the time. He was Staff Sergeant Robert E. Burchman, who ran the base photo lab.

These were the days, going back forever, when the military took its cues from coeducational colleges, where from the start, officials assumed the role of "parents on the campus" for young ladies rooming and boarding away from home. At Twentynine Palms in 1965, there was no "secure sorority house" such as the one at Pendleton and some other places where access to and from the building was controlled, and a "house mother" in the person of a female Marine officer (aided by a staff of women Marines and by duty NCOs always keeping an eye on the doors.) This situation continued at Twentynine Palms until late 1967, or early 1968. Until then, from soon-to-be Sergeant Ida Burchman onward, a woman Marine could get permanently assigned to Twentynine Palms only if she were married to a male Marine assigned to the desert, or to a male Marine officially retired there. Navy nurses had arrived in 1961, of course, but they were, after all, officers of the medical profession. Nurses had served with the military, including combat areas and foreign shores, from at least 1854 when Britain's Florence Nightingale and her other "lamp ladies" went off to the Crimean War. At Twentynine Palms, the Navy nurses had the wherewithal to rent homes in town, or the rank to live in their own private spaces in officers' country.

By early 1968, with a special building set aside for them, there were about 20 women Marines on board Twentynine Palms. More were on the way, to total nearly 30 by the end of that year. The senior woman Marine in February 1968 was Master Sergeant Eloise R. Smith Kirby, recently promoted to that rank by Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Kucharski, Jr., officer in charge of Sub-Unit 1 of Communications and Electronics School Battalion. Elois Kirby by that time had been in the Marine Corps for 19 years. She was in charge of the C&E school testing section.

At about this same time in 1968, Lieutenant Colonel Patricia A. Maas came to Twentynine Palms as Base G-1. This well-known Marine Corps name was helping to improve opportunities for women in the Corps. Pat Maas was the daughter of Major General Melvin J. Maas, by then retired from the Marine Corps Reserve. After duty during World War I days, Mel Maas had served in Congress from 1926 until 1944. Part of his duties in the U.S. Congress put him on the Naval

Affairs Committee, and there he originated a bill to allow women permanent roles in the military services. General Maas retired from the Marine Corps reserve in 1952, with by then nearly all of his eyesight gone. But for many more years he championed the cause of the Marine Corps, and of women in the Armed Forces.

By this time, Pat Maas had served in many a clime and place. Commissioned in 1950, she had been on duty at Pendleton; Boston; Lejeune; Hawaii; Washington, D.C. (where she had been commanding officer of the Woman Marine Company at Henderson Hall—that barracks across the street from Headquarters Marine Corps); San Francisco; and Quantico. She held a bachelor of arts degree in social sciences from San Francisco College.

It was perhaps fitting that more women Marines were arriving that year at Twentynine Palms (and elsewhere.) Women Marines counted 1968 as their 25th anniversary year, and in San Francisco at a convention of women Marines, the U.S. Post Office issued a commemorative post card in their honor. (In another fashion of reckoning, it had been 50 years since Mrs. Opha M. Johnson enlisted for duty in the Marine Corps Reserve, on 13 August 1918.)

Eternal Father, grant we pray,
To all Marines, both night and day,
The courage, honor, strength and skill
Their land to serve, Thy law fulfill;
Be Thou the Shield for-ever-more
From every peril to the Corps.

Chaplain James Emmett Seim,
Lieutenant Commander, CHC, USN

This was a new verse for the Navy Hymn, officially adopted, and it was perhaps appropriate that *The Observation Post* printed it in the 4 March 1966 issue, and seemed to claim it for special ownership at Twentynine Palms. This new base, after all, was entering its first war under a command flag of its own. Middle sections of the base newspaper began to be devoted to Marine Corps news from Vietnam; more and more quarters on the base were occupied solely by wives and children; that Lassie program which General Jones had inaugurated the previous year became more and more significant. Now the ladies "manned" special service "shops" such as the base theater, stables, ceramics, library, bowling alley, and golf course. More volunteers were needed, and letters were going out to all dependent women of the command. By this time, General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., had heard of the Lassies of Twentynine Palms. From the Commandant's office, a message lauded the women of the desert, plus the command, and Greene urged other commands to take

up such programs for the duration of the Vietnam War.

On the first of April 1966, the base hospital (which has never really broken all ties with the Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton) celebrated its fifth anniversary at Twentynine Palms. Senior medical officer was Commander Arthur D. James, the Chief Nurse was Commander Mary C. Montague. Special notice also went to Hospitalman First Class R. O. Carter, who, everybody agreed, had "come in with the lumber" when the hospital started its life in the desert.

That April the base hosted the schoolboy basketball tournament. Some 740 schoolboys showed up for this 8th Annual Twentynine Palms Invitational Basketball Tournament, which was called (so far, unofficially) the "Chief Jones" tournament in memory of the son of General and Mrs. Jones. Also on hand with the schoolboys were actor Frank Sutton, "Gunnery Sergeant Vince Carter" of the "Gomer Pyle, USMC" television show; and Burt Ward, "Robin" of the "Bat Man" television series.

On 5 July, the first Redeye Missile School in the Marine Corps began classes at Twentynine Palms, with 49 students. Commanding officer of the school was Captain John W. Spivey. On 9 September, the first class graduated. Thirty-five students made the grade; diplomas were presented by Lieutenant Colonel Merton R. Ives, commanding officer of the Marine Air Reserve Missile Training Detachment of El Toro. Also on hand was Ira Sykes, an executive of General Dynamics, manufacturers of this, "the world's smallest guided missile" infantry support weapon for air defense. Another visitor from General Dynamics—not otherwise identified by *The Observation Post*—came along as a special guest; even though he had worked on the Redeye breed since 1958, he never had seen one fired.

Then, at the end of July, General Banning departed for a two-year tour with the JCS Joint Staff. The new commander was not yet on hand. This was Brigadier General Regan Fuller, a recipient of two Silver Star Medals for combat performance on Guadalcanal. Now he was winding up a tour in Vietnam, where he served, among other assignments, as chief of staff of III Marine Amphibious Force. Meantime, as had happened between Generals Victory and Bowser back in early 1959 (when Colonels McCoy and Hemphill filled in for a time at Base and Force Troops, respectively), two colonels held the reins until Regan Fuller arrived. These were Colonel Henry M. Wellman, Jr., for the base, and Colonel Nat M. Pace for Force Troops. They filled in for about two months, until



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356371

Cpl Bernard Lee, a graduate of the Redeye Missile School, demonstrates the missile's operation for Marine Corps Commandant, Gen Robert E. Cushman, Jr., in the fall of 1972.

Fuller arrived and assumed command on 3 October 1966.

In the fall, the first increment of construction for the Communications and Electronics School was about 12 percent complete, the contract supervisor, Lieutenant John A. Gunther, USN, told *The Observation Post*. This amounted to eight new buildings, plus renovations and additions, to provide some 59,000 square feet of space including labs and classrooms. The R. J. Webb Company, Inc., of Riverside, was doing this work, on a contract amounting to approximately \$2.3 million. This phase was to be completed in spring of 1967.

At the end of the year, Hank Wellman went over the side into retirement from the base chief of staff job. His replacement was a Medal of Honor recipient, Colonel Carl L. Sitter, who as a rifle company commander had come out of the Chosin Reservoir with the 1st Marine Division in the winter of 1950 in Korea. Earlier, in World War II, he had earned the Silver Star Medal on Guam.

Another old-timer retired at Twentynine Palms that winter. This was Staff Sergeant John A. "Jack" Murdock, and his outfit, the 5th 8-Inch Howitzer Battery (Self-Propelled) did him the honors. Jack Murdock came into the Marine Corps in Portland, Maine, in November 1939. In World War II, Jack Murdock fought with the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester, and Peleliu. At the end of the war,

he was in the States again, on the color guard at the Marine Barracks at Eighth and I Streets in Washington. He did special guard duty at President Roosevelt's "Shangri La," later named "Camp David." After that, Murdock left the Marine Corps for a time, but then returned for Korea. Following that war, he had a number of duty stations, had been at Twentynine Palms in 1965, then went to Vietnam where he served with the 3d Battalion, 12th Marines. Now, with that Navy Wave he met and married after World War II, Mary L. Davis of Marietta, Ohio, he would retire in Twentynine Palms.

But time marches on. *The Observation Post* at year's end reminded one and all that the postal ZIP codes would be a must, effective 1 January 1967; 92278 for the base; 92277 for the town of Twentynine Palms. But that was all right, because by mid-year, Marines did not have to remember their old Marine Corps serial and file numbers any more. Henceforth, for both officers and enlisted, the Social Security number would do the trick.

Early in 1967, now that a number of Marines were returning from tours in Vietnam, Force Troops artillery units began to be rebuilt at Twentynine Palms. Now called the 5th Field Artillery Group, this unit started in February with four officers and 27 enlisted Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Andrew E. Hare was the commanding officer. Captain Vincent D. Sweeny was commanding officer of Headquarters Battery; Captain

Victor B. Snider commanded the Searchlight Battery; and Major King D. "Tiny" Thatenhurst commanded the 7th 155mm Howitzer Battery. Soon the 5th 8-Inch Howitzer Battery, commanded by Major Robert D. Jameson, joined the group.

Also on hand at Twentynine Palms at the time was the 9th Communications Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Miles M. Hoover, Jr., and in mid-March this outfit had a special promotion ceremony for Lance Corporal R. R. Ziolkowski, who had taken an heroic route to his corporal stripes. Early in February, Ziolkowski, a driver, saw another Marine Corps vehicle burning alongside a road. He grabbed his own fire extinguisher and attacked the blaze. When he saw flames flicking around the gasoline tank, he crawled underneath and finished putting out the fire. "Thus," read his meritorious mast at the promotion ceremony, "saving major damage to a \$3,000 truck."

In March, April, and May, West Coast Marines, plus the 1st Marine Brigade from Hawaii, activated a 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Regan Fuller. The brigade held a command post exercise, then a landing on the beaches at Camp Pendleton, followed by a field exercise ashore. Participants, in addition to Force Troops and the Hawaiian Brigade, included the 5th Marine Division (a Vietnam war baby) then occupying Pendleton, and elements of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing from El Toro. "Exercise Alligator Hide" it was called, perhaps to take note of the fact that units such as these really came out of the hide of a Marine Corps very heavily committed in Vietnam.

Sad notes came with greater regularity from Vietnam now. A "more than typical" one came in early June. One Marine killed in Vietnam was Gunnery Sergeant Ralph W. Smith. Before he went to Vietnam he had been at Twentynine Palms since 1959, and had been a stand-out volunteer for the Twentynine Palms Coaches Association, the Little League, the Chief Jones Schoolboy Basketball Tournament, and the Dolphin Swim Team. Gunny Ralph Smith was survived by his wife, Barbara, and five children, who had remained in Twentynine Palms.

For another old timer, the summer of 1967 brought a departure of another sort—normal retirement from an on-again, off-again Marine Corps career which included service with Old Gimlet Eye himself, Brigadier General Smedley Butler, in Tientsin, China, in 1927. Gunnery Sergeant Alton D. "Doug" Culbertson, then a young Marine not long out of boot camp, remembers that fearful day before Christmas 1927, when the big fire started at the Standard Oil Plant on the banks

of the Hai River in Tientsin. For four days, 2,000 Marines—off and on—fought the fire; at one time, early on, they formed a human "bucket" brigade and passed gasoline tins out of adjoining warehouses. Doug Culbertson remembered that Smedley Butler himself was often in the bucket brigade.

Among his many souvenirs, in addition to a sharp and vivid memory of those days and others, Gunny Culbertson had a photograph of Butler, and other officers, at the Race Course in Tientsin, waiting for some visiting dignitary to arrive in a light plane. All planes were light in those days, Doug said. And when he retired in the sunset parade, as one of six Marines departing that night, Gunny Culbertson said the base at Twentynine Palms then owned more motor transport than did the entire Marine Corps when he fibbed (a bit) about his age and enlisted in 1927. Alton Douglas Culbertson, 209694, U.S. Marine Corps. He stayed in Twentynine Palms, in a very snug harbor of a home in the Indian Cove area. His wife, Naomi, is an artist and member of the local Art Guild.

At mid-year, the Communications and Electronics School began its move from San Diego up to the desert. First to make the move was Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Kucharski, Jr., with his Marine Tactical Data Systems Maintenance School. He brought approximately 100 Marines, to get organized for what by later in the fall was to be an operating school with 400 students. Three more schools were then on tap to move up later—Basic Electronics; Operations and Communications; and Telecommunications Maintenance.

The first increment of building and preparing had finished, and, as this first school was ready to resume classes in September, out came the ribbon cutters. Congressman Jerry Pettis, always a friend of the Corps at Twentynine Palms, snipped the ribbon. General Fuller and other local officers were on hand, as was Colonel James A. Blakely, the commanding officer of C&E Schools, up from San Diego.

Lassies, those loyal volunteers who kept the "home fires burning" at special services activities, ended the year by honoring Mrs. V. L. Cullman, one of two original participants, as she prepared to depart the base with her husband, the base's sergeant major. A monogrammed bracelet was presented to Mrs. Cullman by General Fuller, and he noted that she had logged some 325 volunteer hours, mainly as cashier at the Base Theater. The Cullmans were off to duty on Guam.

Meantime, Mrs. Lionel D. Rogers, who had been Lassie coordinator for a year, had been replaced by Mrs. Francis I. Renton, Jr., who was living on board the base

with her children while husband "Ike" served in Vietnam with the 3d Marine Division. Unfortunately, ill health soon forced Ellie Fenton to give up the Lassie job.* The program continued. Mrs. Joseph A. Mallery, Jr., wife of the base legal officer, became chief coordinator.

Near the end of 1967, Base Fire Chief Stewart D. Knight signed up for a one-year civil service hitch in Vietnam, at Da Nang, and General Regan Fuller commended him in a send-off.

Then came a permanent transfer not mourned at all. In the fall, accountability for those 100 "relocatable" houses near the main gate passed to the property administration office of the federal government's Office of Economic Opportunity, Washington, D.C. Farewell fragile pilot lights, and the scorpions and black widow spiders thereunto pertaining.

In 1968, as the Vietnam War continued, the base at Twentynine Palms noted more and more participation in memorial services for Marines throughout the Southern California area. In addition, more and more parades were held for the presentation of medals and awards earned in Vietnam by Marines now returning to the desert for duty.

A note of commendable enterprise: in the spring a local retired military man was brought into the small hospital on the base suffering from a heart attack. After he was cared for by Navy doctors, there still was a need for close monitoring of his heart. Sophisticated equipment was not at hand, but doctors did not want to move the man to a large hospital down below. Hospitalman Second Class R. D. Smith and Hospitalman T. L. Gemmer came up with the solution. They borrowed an oscilloscope from C&E School, rigged it to measure the electronic impulses from the patient's heart, and thus gave doctors a better "fix" on how the man was doing.

In the fall, the base's chief of staff, Colonel Howard A. "Howie" Westphall went off to Vietnam, and his wife, Nannette, stayed on board and became the new coordinator for Lassies. Colonel Bernard M. Boress became the new chief of staff. In October, the 2d LAAM Battalion came back from Vietnam; and just before Christmas, Stew Knight came back from Da Nang and resumed duties as Base Fire Chief.

As the final year of the 1960s began, much fighting remained for Marines in Vietnam (Dewey Canyon, Virginia Ridge, Pipestone Canyon, to name a few of the operations), but 1969 also was the year when Richard Nixon became president on the promise that

he would begin to extricate the nation from the unpopular Vietnam involvement. "Vietnamization," this plan began to be called. More and more, it turned the war over to the South Vietnamese, and at the same time diminished U.S. manning levels in country. Strengths of stateside installations began to increase as individuals and units left Vietnam for home duty again. Often units were "zeroed out" in Vietnam, and then reorganized stateside.

Early in 1969, most of the Marines from Twentynine Palms spent nearly a week helping neighboring communities dig out from under a heavy snowfall, and from mud and sand washed onto homes, roads, and streets. Army troops from Fort Irwin also were on hand, as were Air Force personnel around Norton and March Air Force Bases. Federal, state, and San Bernardino County resources were called upon for relief. Hardest hit were the communities or areas of Big Bear, Yuai-pa, Mount Baldy, and Loma Linda.

Shortly after the storm, Brigadier General Carl W. Hoffman assumed command from Regan Fuller. A native of Omaha, Nebraska, and a graduate of Drake

BGen Carl W. Hoffman accepts the unit colors from BGen Regan Fuller during the change of command ceremony held at Twentynine Palms on 25 March 1969.

Marine Corps Historical Collection



*See Appendix I, Mike Fenton Field.

University in Des Moines, Iowa, Carl Hoffman entered the Marine Corps in much the same fashion as did Bill Jones, Twentynine's commander in 1964-65—via the college-oriented Platoon Leaders Class (PLC) program. During World War II, Hoffman fought at Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian, was wounded twice, and earned the Silver Star Medal on Saipan. In the Korean War, he commanded the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, and later served on the staff (Assistant G-3) of the 1st Marine Division. He came to Twentynine Palms from the war in Vietnam, where he served as the assistant division commander of the 3d Marine Division; as commanding general of Task Force Hotel; and later as operations officer for III Marine Amphibious Force. General Hoffman faced the exacting task of gathering returning forces at Twentynine Palms and beginning peacetime training programs and cycles all over again.*

Generals Hoffman and Fuller had in effect, traded jobs. Regan Fuller went out to Vietnam and the 3d Marine Division. Polly Fuller, his wife, remained in Twentynine Palms and became coordinator of that Lassic program which still was needed until more Marines got home again to stateside duty.

The base prepared for these homecomings. Mess-halls 2, 3, 5, and 6 underwent a spiffy treatment: indoor-outdoor carpeting for a new level of "civilization," colorful fireproof drapes, stereo music wafting from mysterious sources. Now they were to be called "dining halls" (later "dining facilities"). Old Gunny Doug Culbertson, sitting in the sun and remember-

*Over the years, Twentynine Palms has been blessed by an unending parade of popular and accomplished commanding generals. While some of the rest of us may have been assigned to the desert for a "twilight cruise," this never has been the case with general officers. None has been more accomplished and talented than Carl Hoffman. Before he was selected for flag rank, he served as a colonel in the exacting Policy Analysis Division at Headquarters, Marine Corps, then as military secretary to General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., the Commandant. Carl Hoffman has a master's degree in international affairs from George Washington University (Washington, DC.). After World War II, he wrote the official historical monographs of the Saipan and Tinian campaigns. Music written by him has been published. And last, but not least, Carl Hoffman is an artist with the trumpet—of the caliber which would have enabled him to stand in with the likes of Harry James, Louis Armstrong, Lu Watters, Bob Scobey As commander of the 1st Marines at Camp Pendleton in 1965, he sent the author off to the Western Pacific with an infantry battalion which, under the transplacement system, later became the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines in Vietnam. In those final days of the old transplacement system, it was customary to hold voluntary services in the camp chapel before shipping out. Chaplains and commanders were expected to say a few words. Colonel Carl Hoffman's "few words" on that occasion amounted to a trumpet solo, a medley of religious and patriotic numbers. As he finished, there was scarcely a dry eye in the house.

ing when he protected the International Settlement in Tientsin back in 1927, might have snorted in derision. Would we next train Marines to lift a pinky while dining in those facilities? (We were all to be pleasantly shocked, in the 1970s, when the "Holiday Inn" barracks came along!)

General Hoffman tells a "moving" story about this period:

The obvious need for additional recreational facilities caused me to embrace someone's idea (perhaps it was mine) that we construct a lake on or near the Base. Through cooperation with local civilian agencies, we selected an off-base site near Copper Mountain. At any rate, it cost the Marine Corps nothing.

Soon we had detailed plans for two adjacent lakes, one for swimming, the other for fishing and boating.

The organic engineer unit at Twentynine Palms enthusiastically carved out the two lakes, and built the berms that would protect against flash floods, sandstorms, and the ravages of nature.

But where would we get enough water in the desert to fill the two lakes? The answer, of course, was a deep well. But who would pay for the drilling? A civilian agency . . . provided the money (\$60,000, I think).

A few months later the lake beds were ready to receive water, and the well was ready to pump. The time was ripe to dedicate the facility with pomp and circumstance.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Leonard F. Chapman, accepted my invitation to attend the dedication ceremony. Using a flatbed [trailer] (properly decorated with red, white, and blue bunting) as a speakers' platform, we assembled a covey of dignitaries. Each spoke briefly, emphasizing the recreational merits of the project, and extolling the virtue of civilian-military cooperation. The band played some spirited tunes, the chaplain invoked the Almighty's blessing, and we all felt good inside.

The pageantry completed, we turned on the tap. Within a few days, the lakes were about half full, and we were discussing what kinds of boats we would purchase and who would furnish lifeguards.

And then it happened. As our night sentry at the site stood his lonely vigil, he suddenly heard the strangest sound he had heard in his young life. He described it later as the "sloop-whoosh" that would be produced by 100 toilets flushing simultaneously. In a matter of seconds, all the water was gone, and our "lakes" were dry holes in the ground. Something had pulled the plug. The desert landscape returned to normal.

My disappointment was monumental. Now, 18 years later, I can laugh about it; but, at the time, there was no joy in me. I suppose we could have tried again, but we didn't. It seemed the desert was telling us something. We heeded the message.¹

In 1969, a new \$4 million construction increment began for the Communications and Electronics School complex. This one (Phase II), in the hands of the Riha Construction Company of La Mesa, called for the removal of 16 old Butler buildings between 8th and 9th streets, and the construction of six new single-story

concrete buildings, each of which would provide some 31,000 square feet of offices, classrooms, and laboratories for the ever-expanding school.

Navy Lieutenant Joseph M. Stevens, now the Resident Officer in Charge of Construction, was not only overseeing this large contract, but soon he was able as well to announce plans for construction and upgrading of the commissary store. The Heathman Construction Company of Palm Springs was going to do this one: cost was about \$452,000; and planned completion was in early 1970.

Another pleasant—and well deserved—surprise. After world-wide judging, *The Observation Post* was named the best Armed Forces letterpress newspaper for 1968, marked on content, layout, and makeup. Ser-

geant David Butler, who had been editor of the *OP* during much of the award-winning year, flew from Vietnam to Williamsburg, Virginia, to receive the award. Then he flew to Twentynine Palms to hand the award on to General Hoffman, who commended him and the current staff of the paper.

Then, at year's end, the Vietnam wartime units such as the 5th Field Artillery Group and Company D of the 13th Engineer Battalion changed their names. After tailing off into individual orders from Vietnam, Marines were showing up again to beef up stateside units under old familiar names: the 1st Field Artillery Group and Company A, 11th Engineer Battalion. Someone said Marines came back from Vietnam to the desert to "free a Lassie for housework again." Mostly this made for mutual happiness.

CHAPTER 8

New Mission

As 1970 began, more and more Marine units were preparing to leave Vietnam under the provisions of President Nixon's Vietnamization plan. There was much fighting left, but with less and less participation by ever-smaller Marine forces; although, as a matter of fact, Marine aviation and communications units were present to the last, and Marines of the embassy detachment in Saigon climbed up that ladder on the embassy roof and into helicopters in those final hours in 1975. But for Twentynine Palms, manning levels were on the increase again.

So far, plans for Twentynine Palms amounted to more of the same, mostly an artillery base, plus its Communications and Electronics School, and the large training area for regulars and reserves. The desert base certainly was not going to go away. Here in the first year of the new decade, \$800,000 came on line for improvement of the base water system. Two new wells were put down out beyond Surprise Springs, with electric-driven turbine pumps in two pump houses complete with new chlorination equipment. There were new pipes put down for collection lines from these and older wells, along with electric controls for those wells. Then, finally, 10 miles of new 20-inch water main to mainside. The new commissary store opened in the main gate area, touted as the "first commissary store constructed entirely from funds derived from profits." The contract had been let the previous spring.

In the fall of 1970, at no cost to the government, a new United Services Organization (USO) building was dedicated in downtown Twentynine Palms' Four Corners area. Mrs. Allene Hoffman, wife of the commanding general, cut the ribbon and General Hoffman accepted a ceremonial key from USO Commissioner William J. Parkins of the Western Territory of the Salvation Army, the unit responsible for the USO at Twentynine. This USO remained popular and much used by local servicemen, women, and their families for some five more years. Then, this one, one of the last two remaining as "base side" USOs (the other was someplace in Montana) was closed, along with that other one, as no longer supportable from the donations from a grateful citizenry.

In October 1970, a couple of artillery units came back from Vietnam to rejoin the 1st Field Artillery Group. These were the 1st 8-Inch Howitzer Battery (Self Propelled) commanded by Captain Thomas R. Siggins; and the 3d 175mm Gun Battery (Self-Propelled) commanded by Captain Carl W. Neier. Hot scoop had it, also, that the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines also was on its way from Da Nang. It had left the desert in 1965 near the start of heavy U.S. involvement. Now it was bringing back, along with men, weapons, and gear, a Presidential Unit Citation, a Meritorious Unit Citation, plus a South Vietnamese award—the Gallantry Cross with Palms.

At about the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Richard O. "Owen" Gillick returned to the desert to assume command of the Field Artillery Group, replacing Lieutenant Colonel John A. Hamilton. Owen Gillick had been at Twentynine first back in 1954 as a first lieutenant; he served as executive officer and later commanding officer of Battery B, 1st 155mm Howitzer Battalion. Now his rank ornaments and pay had improved, along with increased responsibilities, but his new office was right back in that same building he occupied during that 1954 duty.*

"Old home weeks" in a variety of forms and visits continued. Among those of the year which included, of many, one by that former artilleryman of the desert, General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr., now Commandant, was the visit in December of Lieutenant General William K. Jones, who was commanding Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. He retired on 1 September 1972.

General Jones' replacement, Lieutenant General Louis H. Wilson, had an idea about the base at Twentynine Palms. Eventually, that idea not only did a great deal to change the desert base, but also changed the way the Marine Corps conducted its air-ground tactical training.

Before all that came to pass, time marched on for that longest climb up to the desert ever logged by

*Owen Gillick retired here as a colonel in 1975, with his family, and joined the staff of College of the Desert (later Copper Mountain College).



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356813

A 1974 aerial view looks north toward the airstrip and "main side" Twentynine Palms.

Marines—those communicators and communication repair technicians of the Communications and Electronics School. Not only was this C&E move from San Diego to Twentynine Palms slowed somewhat by the Vietnam War, but it was slowed by the fact that communications and electronics continued to grow almost beyond all technical bounds while the movement was underway. It reminded one of that stick Abraham Lincoln said he once found in the woods: a stick so crooked it could not lie still. The C&E business was so busy one could not get a hold of it; and all during the Vietnam war, all units clamored for more and better equipment and expert Marines to use it.

As a school, C&E traced its origins back to the 1st Signal Company of Quantico, Virginia, in 1932. In January 1943, it became the Post Signal Battalion at Quantico; in October of that year, it moved to New River (Camp Lejeune), North Carolina to become the Signal Battalion Training Center; by November 1944, it was the Signal Battalion, Special Training Regiment, Marine Training Command, Camp Lejeune. In August and September, 1946, it went west to Camp Pendleton where it settled in the Del Mar area along with the Radio School from Marine Barracks, Philadelphia. Ever growing, the school left Pendleton in 1950 for San Diego, where it took up residence at the recruit

depot under the name Communications-Electronics School Battalion.

Even in "modern" times (from the 1950s), the school had grown from an annual student population flow of 500 to 800 to (by the time major units got to Twentynine Palms in 1971) 2,000 to 2,500.

Phase II of the C&E construction finished in January 1971, and some 700 more of the school students and their instructors came up to the desert. The commanding officer, Colonel Charles W. "Bill" Blyth, came up for a ribbon cutting on 20 January 1971, and said there were some \$6.8 million invested in the new facilities at Twentynine. On 2 February, he came back up with the school colors and made a presentation to the commanding general, Carl Hoffman.

The school then received the new name, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School. By then, it trained 33 military occupational specialties (MOSs) in 51 separate courses; and there still were more courses, students, and staff to make the move later from San Diego.

With the Vietnam War continuing to wind down, and there being time for the planning of all sorts of "rope yarn Sunday" ideas, Brigadier General Harry C. Olson, who commanded the other desert place in

California, the supply base at Barstow, said to Carl Hoffman of Twentynine Palms that he thought the desert establishments ought to go together and set up a summer-winter recreation area in the mountains at Big Bear. Desert heat a morale problem? Go up to the cool mountain. Fish in the summer and lounge under the tall pines. Ski in winter, and lounge in front of the fire places in eight attractive "A" frame "Alpine" cottages built by Company A of the 11th Engineer Battalion. The Marines also built a lodge, and prepared places for campers and for tents. Non-appropriated special service funds provided the money, and user fees added to this. A low-cost lease agreement was worked out with Don R. Bauer, supervisor of the San Bernardino National Forest. It was all very pleasant, and much used by Marines both from Barstow and from Twentynine Palms, as well as other Marines and military personnel on a space-available basis. However, married Marines with young families were the primary users. Younger Marines from Twentynine and Barstow did not want to look at a desert for a week or two—or a month—and then go look at a mountain on their time off. Give them the lights of the big cities!

The camp at Big Bear which began operations in the fall of 1971, hung on for a few years. It was pleasant

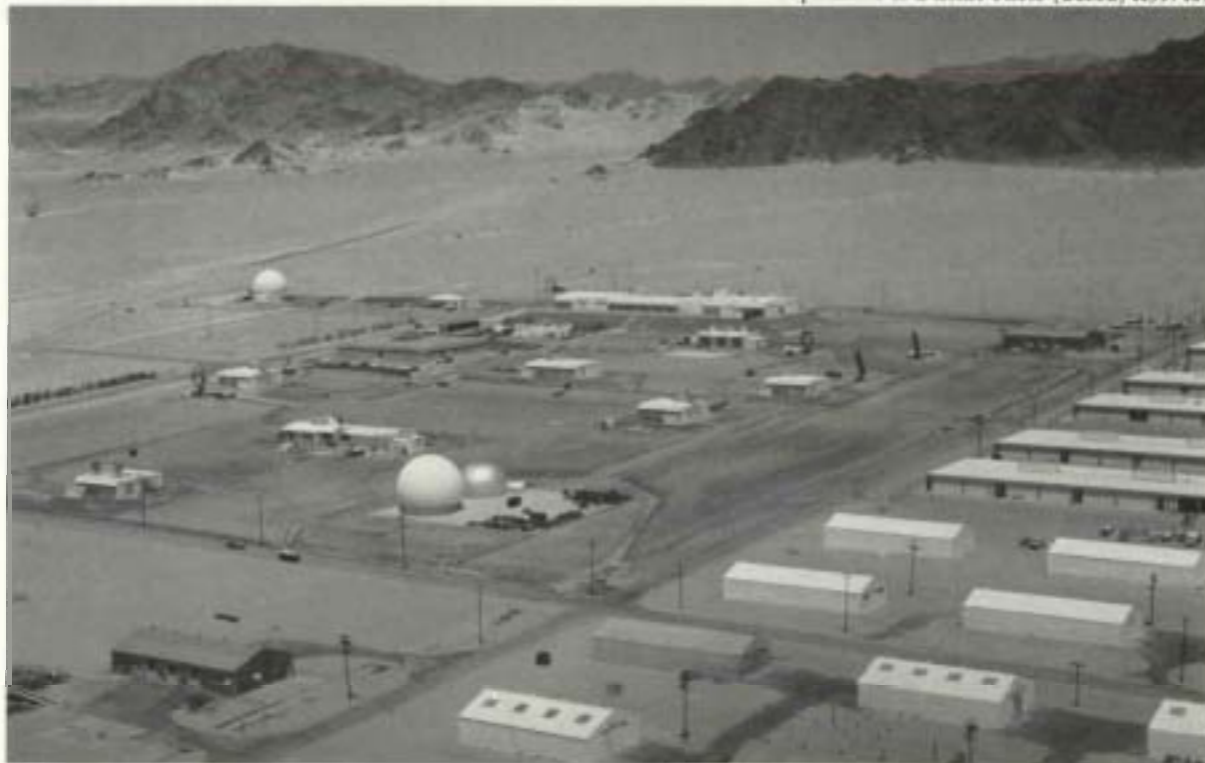
and reasonable for those who used it. It did not cost much for Barstow and Twentynine Palms to maintain until the winter of 1973-74, when some more of that bad weather came along. Then there was road work, camp site work, and, perhaps because of all the water, the plumbing began to give trouble, too.

Brigadier General Schmid, then at Barstow, called Brigadier General William G. Joslyn at Twentynine Palms with, as Bud Schmid put it, "an offer you can't refuse." General Schmid had talked the "high-paid aviators" at El Toro into taking over the mountain camp at Big Bear. Not only did they have a greater population, but it was easier to "sell" a mountain retreat or a ski lodge to Marines who could spend evening liberty in bright lights whenever they wanted.

In the spring of 1971, Carl Hoffman, who had been selected for major general (and was promoted at the change of command ceremony and awarded a gold star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit for his performance at Twentynine Palms) was off to command the recruit depot at Parris Island. Command at Twentynine passed to Brigadier General Paul G. Graham, that long-ago aide to General Pepper who had been to Twentynine Palms in that capacity in 1952. As a rifle platoon lead-

An aerial view of the two large white radar domes and new construction, center left, taking place in the Communications and Electronics School area in the early 1970s.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A357405





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356434

Deacon Arnold Lodge, headquarters of the Marine Corps Recreational Facility at Big Bear, was used by Marines stationed at both Twentynine Palms and Barstow, California.

er, Paul Graham had fought during World War II at Guam and Iwo Jima. After the war, he commanded the 2d Reconnaissance Battalion at Camp Lejeune, then did a "Med Cruise" as commander of 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. In 1964, he graduated from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Defense College in Paris, and then served in Europe on NATO staff. In 1967 he served, as a colonel, in the Vietnam War, first as 1st Marine Division G-3, then as regimental commander of the 5th Marines. After that, Graham commanded the prestigious Marine Barracks at Eighth and I in the "front lawn" of the Commandant's Quarters. While serving there, he was selected for promotion to brigadier general. And now here he was with the two-hatted command at Twentynine Palms.

General Graham's tour of a year and a half (whereupon he went back out into the Western Pacific again, this time to be assistant division commander of the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa) was a time of more consolidation, building, and growth for the desert command. Additional facilities and buildings for the C&E School went into contract; two old buildings from Condor Field days were torn down near the main gate.

The Redeye Missile School thrived, graduating some 50 to 60 students per year. The C&E School taught an average of about 2,000 students in 35 formal courses.

On 15 September 1972, ground was broken for a new-concept barracks for enlisted Marines—the so-called "Holiday Inn" facility. It did look more like a large motel than any military barracks imagined by old salts of earlier ages.

Earlier (to be effective 30 April 1972) the base at Twentynine Palms got the word that one of its own had been tapped for a prestigious assignment at Headquarters Marine Corps. This was Master Gunnery Sergeant June V. Andler, then personnel chief at C&E School. She was to be the new (and fifth ever) Sergeant Major of Women Marines. Sergeant Major Andler, a native of St. Paul, Minnesota, had entered the Marine Corps in March of 1944. She would replace Sergeant Major Mabel A. R. Otren, who had held the women's top enlisted position since 1969. June Andler, who then had been at Twentynine Palms for a year, would become the top enlisted advisor to the Director of Women Marines.

On 17 October 1972 came another change of command for Base/Force Troops. Replacing General Graham was Brigadier General Kenneth J. Houghton, just in from Hawaii where he had been chief of staff of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific. An energetic and feisty infantry unit commander, this San Franciscan in his career commanded units in the 1st Marine Division from the Reconnaissance Company in Korea (where he earned the Silver Star and Bronze Star Medals); to the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines in peacetime; the 5th Marines in Vietnam (where he received the Navy Cross, another Silver Star Medal, and his second and third Purple Hearts); and, after Twenty-nine Palms, commanded the division itself at Camp Pendleton. During World War II, he served in combat on Tarawa and Saipan.

It was not all General Houghton's doing (General Graham had shepherded much of the planning), but 1973 started for the new commanding general just the way he liked it—on its toes and punching through any delays. A base gymnasium finally was under construction, across 6th Street from the end of Victory Field; a new Marine Corps Exchange store was under construction on Brown Road between 5th and 6th Streets; the sewerage treatment plant (headwaters of Lake Bandidi) was being improved; another \$3 million was on hand for more building for the C&E School; the enlisted "Holiday Inn" was shaping up; a small and secluded (near the dental facility) new "residence" was being built for women Marines; and 100 more sets of quarters were in the works for the hillside above that first Marine Corps-built housing area, Marine Palms. This latter project, to be called Shadow Mountain, was a \$2.5 million project.

Some individual Marines (plus a dependent wife) also were "on a roll." Private First Class Susan Chester graduated at the top of her class in Basic Electronics at C&E School; and what was more, she was the only Marine in her 15-Marine course to finish without having to repeat a single phase of the course—a feat not often accomplished in that program. Next, she went on to radar school.

Mrs. Rita Nastri, wife of Major Anthony A. Nastri, was selected Twenty-nine Palms Military Wife of the Year at a joint officers-staff NCO wives luncheon at the Staff NCO Club. A nurse, a Navy Relief volunteer, and a Sunday School teacher among other activities, Rita Nastri soon earned "Alternate Wife of the Year" in Headquarters Marine Corps judging. "Now," said Rita with good humor, "everybody kids me about being a number-two wife."

And then—perhaps one of those "it could happen

only in the Marine Corps" episodes—in the fall of 1973, "Top T," First Sergeant Fuc I. Tuiteleapaga took leave and went home to Western Samoa to get sworn in as chief of his village, Pu'a Pu'a. Earlier in the spring, his mother-in-law nominated him for the office, and now he was off with his wife, Rufo, and daughter Elizabeth, to be officially installed. "Top T," then 44 years of age, said he thought he would retire to this home town office when he left the Marine Corps.

Brigadier General Houghton got the word that he had been selected for the rank of major general, and that he was off to command the 1st Marine Division. Brigadier General William G. Joslyn, another San Franciscan, took the command passed on by Houghton. A football player from Stanford University, he became rifle platoon leader with the 2d Marine Division in the Pacific at the end of World War II, and went into Japan with the division on post-war occupation duty. Later, during the Korean War, as a captain, he served as a rifle company commander and later as battalion operations officer with the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. There he earned the Bronze Star Medal for combat performance. During the Vietnam War, Joslyn served in the combat zone twice—once in the 1965-66 period, and later in 70-71. On that second tour, he had been chief of staff of the 3d Marine Division, and later chief of staff of III MAF. During this tour in Vietnam, he was selected for promotion to brigadier general. Within a year, Bill Joslyn was selected for major general, and he was on his way again, this time to command the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune.

Replacing Joslyn was that long-ago first supply officer at Camp Pendleton's Marine Corps Training Center in the desert at Twenty-nine Palms, Bud Schmid. It was perhaps fitting that Bud Schmid had returned to the Twenty-nine Palms desert, which he and his wife Margaretta loved, at about the time it was to become a "training center" again, this time for the entire Marine Corps.

As had happened a time or two before, there was a bit of "underlap" between Joslyn and Schmid. During the nine days between Joslyn's departure on 1 May 1974 until Schmid's assumption of command, the acting commander was Colonel Albert E. "Ted" Coffeen, an artillery officer who had first come a-shooting in the desert in 1952 with Leonard F. Chapman's regiment from Pendleton. Coffeen, a Stanford classmate of Bill Joslyn, had been Joslyn's assistant commander.

By this time, Lieutenant General Louis H. Wilson had been in command of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific since September of 1972, and he had begun to devise a plan to make more efficient use of the large desert



Marine Corps Historical Collection

BGen Clarence H. Schmid, the center's first supply officer, returned as commanding general in 1974.

base at Twentynine Palms — at least by his Pacific-wide command. In this capacity, Wilson, of course, commanded Bud Schmid and his Force Troops at Twentynine. Wilson had been to Twentynine Palms before, and he returned early in Schmid's current tour. He thought the base, as a training area, had more potential than was being realized.^{1*}

General Wilson, who earned the Medal of Honor commanding an infantry company on Guam in World War II, thought during a flight back to Honolulu of the impressive training conducted during the Korean War (when Wilson was an operations officer for the 1st Marine Division) on what was then called "Nightmare Range." Colonel Bob Boyd ran that range, Wilson recalled, where infantry units back off the line could train new men and sharpen veterans in a live-fire, combined-arms environment. Colonel Boyd and his staff then would record objective judgments on the professional performances of the commanders going through the training experience. General Wilson thought this special training range "went a long way

^{*}On 26 July 1984, during an oral history interview, General Wilson agreed with an earlier observation. Wilson said that on his trip back to Hawaii he "did indeed" think Twentynine Palms had become "a sleepy little artillery base" with a much greater potential for combined arms training.

to developing fine officers for later years in the Vietnam war."²

Back in Hawaii, General Wilson outlined his thoughts to his G-3, Colonel Reverdy M. "Rev" Hall, and the head of the staff Operations Section, Colonel Robert E. Haebel. In addition to the excellent training which General Wilson envisioned at Twentynine Palms, he could see a way to improve unit stability by working the brigade in Hawaii into the readiness and "transplacement" cycle, and trying to keep Marines in their battalions for three-year tours, during which they would have two separate six-month deployments overseas. It has never worked precisely that way, but at any rate, there was a temporary delay in inauguration of the new mission for Twentynine Palms.

While staff planning continued at Hawaii and at Twentynine Palms, Lieutenant General Wilson mentioned his plan to General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., the 25th Commandant. "He seemed to think it was a good idea," Wilson noted, "but I never did hear any more about it from him, and as a result of this, I was convinced that in my final year at Pac, I was not going to get any support from Headquarters Marine Corps, either financially or philosophically."³ Even as a "Pac-wide" training program, Wilson could not find the financial wherewithal, "so as a result it languished for a while."⁴

What might have happened to Wilson's idea to develop a new mission for Twentynine Palms, if in fact he had been in his final Marine Corps job at Pac, is of course an "iffy" question lost in a world that never was. In less than a year after his visit to his "sleepy little artillery base" at Twentynine Palms, Wilson advanced to the rank of general, and on 1 July 1975 became the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps. In the midst of many other exacting duties, which included the need to clean house of too many high school dropouts at the first-enlistment level of the Marine Corps of that moment, Wilson determined that "when I was selected to be the Commandant, I then determined that I was going to make the Twentynine Palms Base, to enlarge its mission to include [training of] all the [tactical] units of the Marine Corps."⁵

By this time, Bud Schmid had been selected for promotion to major general, and he was off to command the Marine Corps Supply Activity in Philadelphia. There, after a short time, health problems began to plague him; but as the old facility at Philadelphia began to be phased out, Bud was able to move to command of the Marine Corps Logistic Support Base, Atlantic, in Albany, Georgia. He remained there until July 1977, when his fight with cancer dictated that

he leave that command. A native of San Diego (born 2 October 1921), Bud Schmid had himself evacuated from Albany to Balboa Naval Hospital which overlooks the Pacific in his home town. He died there on 23 August 1977.

In Washington, D.C., the new Commandant, General Wilson, selected Brigadier General Ernest R. Reid, Jr., as the person he wanted to go to Twentynine Palms and revive that idea for a new mission for the base. General Reid, who had been wounded and captured by the enemy during the Korean War and then held for nearly three years as a POW, was now the legislative assistant to the Commandant at Headquarters Marine Corps. This is a job Lou Wilson himself had when he was a brigadier general.

Also to Twentynine Palms to gear up for the new mission went Colonel Billy D. "Bill" Bouldin, an aviator then on duty at El Toro with the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. He replaced the assistant commander, Colonel Verle E. Ludwig, who retired. Together this ground-air team of Reid and Bouldin carried forward Commandant Wilson's plans for the desert.

Central to all the plans to make Twentynine Palms a combined arms training center for the Marine Corps was the need for an adequate airfield at the base. The old field near the main gate, much remade and overhauled, and going back almost to glider days, clearly would not support the new concept. Said General Wilson:

I envisioned that units would come from the 2d Marine Division and from the 1st Marine Division, be landed in a combat-like situation and with their artillery already there, go into operation with a minimum of administrative delay.⁹

Besides, the Commandant had a long view on the whole plan. He wanted an airfield well away from main side, and from any possible expansion of the town of Twentynine Palms, so there would be no citizens' complaints later that airfield noise was a nuisance. Also, farther down the possibilities, General Wilson said he could see the time when the Marine Corps might have to use Twentynine Palms as the fall-back position from El Toro—and maybe even from Pendleton—if ever that coastal real estate becomes too valuable to retain.

Initially—and this was just for the basic training idea—General Wilson said: "I did not receive a lot of support from Marine aviation on this, initially because they thought of it only as a chore which was over and above their own flight training." The Commandant continued to insist, however, and he soon got significant help from Major General Thomas H. Miller, Jr., who had been Wilson's chief of staff at "Pac," and



Marine Corps Historical Collection

Gen Louis H. Wilson, 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps, who provided the impetus for establishing the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center.

now was coming to headquarters to be the Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation. "Tom helped me push this," Wilson said later.

In the same context that General Wilson had assured Brigadier General Reid that he was not "sending him out to pasture," he also talked with Bill Bouldin about the new mission plans. Bouldin, still at El Toro, had heard that with General Wilson coming in as the new Commandant, he "was going to turn Twentynine Palms into this big training center for the entire Marine Corps."⁹ Now the Commandant said he wanted "to especially bring in air," and Bouldin understood this as not only a need to construct facilities for air operations, but as a professional mission for him to lead the way for integrating air operations into the air-ground training concepts.⁹

Ernie Reid and Bill Bouldin talked, coast-to-coast, before they met at Twentynine Palms. By the time Reid assumed command on 17 July 1975, Bouldin had started pulling together all previous studies about airfields at Twentynine Palms—including the many budget-oriented thoughts about re-doing the small old airfield near the main gate—plus the latest thinking (from Vietnam operations and elsewhere) about new ways to make suitable low-cost airfields. The decision

settled on a C-5A-capable Expeditionary Airfield "somewhere out in the desert"; and the central aim for the location was that it be close enough to planned training exercises that it be "capable of supporting the exercises in a real world tactical environment."¹⁰

The site selected was near Camp Wilson, that austere facility for reserves and others undergoing desert training, which had been built by engineers back in the early days of the base. The location allowed for an 8,000-foot runway, it was near the existing water grid, and far enough inside the base boundaries so that no infringement problems could be foreseen. Plus, Bill Bouldin said, after he had scouted out great areas of the desert, here the field would take advantage of terrain which was situated ideally in reference to prevailing winds.¹¹

Construction began in January 1976, with Colonel Bouldin as the "general contractor" for the project. Bouldin and his assistants, guided by Brigadier General Reid's mission assignment, and reined in by tight budget restrictions, put together a work force which included Marines of Company A, 7th Engineer Battalion; other Marine engineers from Pendleton; plus Seabees (naval construction battalion units), both regular and reserve, from Port Huene, California.

Most of the land preparation, grading, and rigging of the aluminum matting was done by June 1976. Planes could land, but much work still was needed before the facility would be ready for C-141s (one landed on 13 August 1976) and C-5As (first landing 30 August 1978). Some austere buildings and other facilities remained in the planning phase, although funds for such construction had been made available for the "Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Training Center" at Twentynine Palms.

The new airfield became 3,000,000 square feet of aluminum matting, with an 8,000-foot runway 150 feet wide. Also provided was a parallel taxiway plus a large Marine aircraft group (MAG) parking ramp on the tactical side of the field, and a smaller parking ramp on the other side for aircraft of the Military Airlift Command (MAC). Here the C-141s could unload and load units coming and going to and from exercises; or they could lift tactical units for training or actual operations anywhere in the world. A control tower was constructed. Also added over several months were expeditionary type hangars and maintenance structures, often test or temporary buildings provided by the Development Center at Quantico.

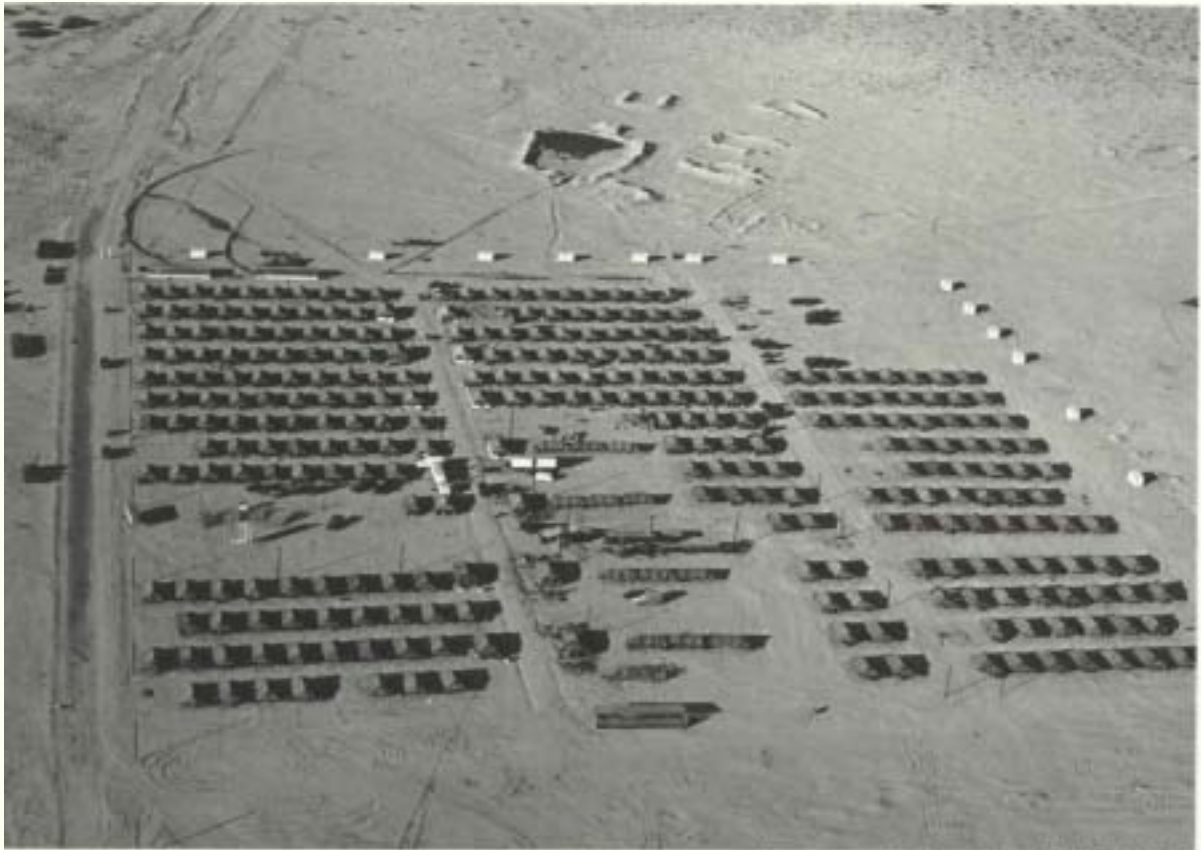
Official opening of the field came on 29 June 1976 when Lieutenant General John N. McLaughlin, along

with members of his FMFPac staff, landed in a C-118. They were met by General Reid, Colonel Bouldin, and other members of the Twentynine Palms staff. Also on board the FMFPac aircraft with McLaughlin were Major Generals Charles D. Mize of the 1st Marine Division and Andrew W. O'Donnell of the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing.

Meanwhile, of course, Twentynine Palms was not merely standing still waiting for its new mission and its new airfield. Funds which had become available for the "expeditionary complex" included those for resurfacing the soft-top desert road to the Camp Wilson area to make it an all-weather blacktop route, and money to improve the camp itself.* This included, first off, new heads to replace 12 old eight-holers which previously dotted the campsite, and which had to be moved frequently to new pits dug in the ground. Their flimsy sheds, boards curled by desert sun, wind, and blowing sand, often had to suffer one last assault from visiting Marines who had had their aggressive spirits sharpened in a less than genteel environment and by spirit-vaulting field exercises which often caused them to want to make one last comment about the desert before they saddled up to go home. After these new head and shower facilities were completed, soon came permanent messing structures, a small but durable PX store, and a U.S. Mail facility which maintained an air of being a battalion mail tent somewhere at the edge of a combat zone. Also, something on the order of a "poor man's" Quonset hut, several shelters were built, twice as long as squad tents perhaps, and roofed overhead by corrugated steel roofing stood up on end to meet a central ridge pole perhaps 12 to 15 or so feet high. Most units still had to set up some tents to make Camp Wilson work properly for them.

And while this work continued to prepare the expeditionary area for the new mission, money and efforts continued to come together for the relocation of the 1st Tank Battalion to Twentynine Palms, and to that end planning and programming for permanent tank parks and maintenance facilities were completed in April 1976. This, too, was a product of Lou Wilson's thinking when he was at FMFPac. He believed

*Although Marines of this period usually believed that Camp Wilson surely was named for their current Commandant, the location had in fact been named in the early 1930s for the late Brigadier General John B. Wilson. He commanded the 12th Marines when that artillery regiment was activated in the fall of 1942 as the Nation mustered forces for World War II. Earlier, the Surprise Springs-Camp Wilson area had been the traditional camp for artillery units. The 12th Marines had been the Pendleton artillery regiment, as part of the 3d Marine Division, during much of the Korean War when the 1st Marine Division with its 11th Marines was in that war.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A356668

Camp Wilson, originally composed of squad-size tents shown here, is the summer home of thousands of Marine Corps reservists who undergo their annual training at the base.

then that the mechanized resources of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific were not properly distributed. The former head of General Wilson's Operations Section at FMFPac recalled: "he [Wilson] thought tanks were virtually 'hostages' on Okinawa (poor training areas), very limited at Camp Pendleton (cross compartments, etc.), and that the desert environment at Twentynine Palms was ideal."¹²

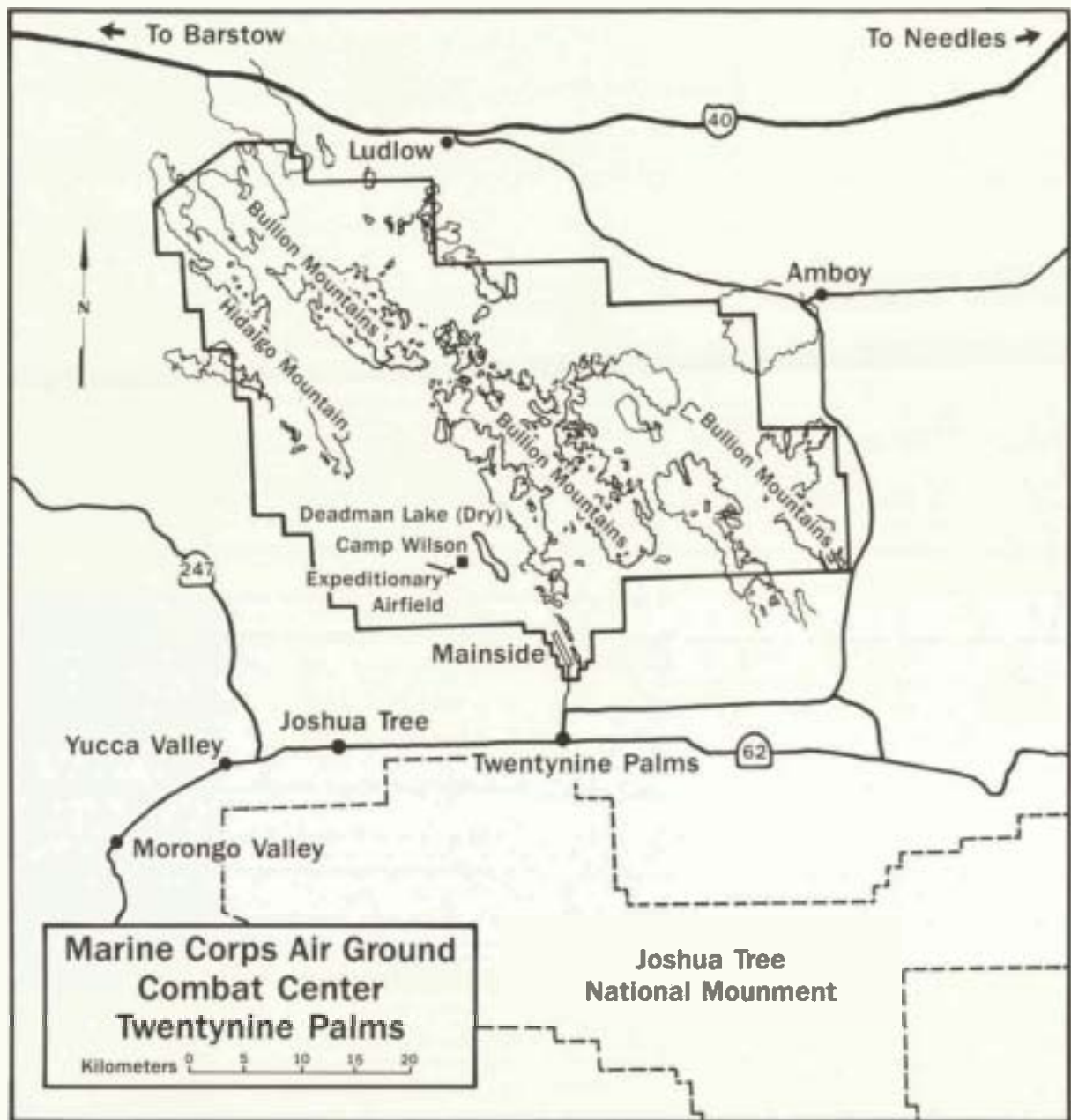
At about mid-year 1976, General Reid retired from the Marine Corps, and he was replaced on 30 June by Brigadier General Edward J. Megarr, just in from the Western Pacific where he had been assistant commander of the 3d Marine Division on Okinawa. As he came on board, Ed Megarr stepped into presiding over the 1st Annual Planning Conference, already assembled at Twentynine Palms, of major Fleet Marine Force commands (both Pacific and Atlantic). Here detailed plans would be made for the Combined Arms Exercises (CAX) of battalion landing teams with supporting arms and air, to arrive and train at Twentynine Palms on a schedule of 10 CAXs per year. Korea's old Nightmare Range, from the memory of Lou Wilson and others, was now reborn.

Earlier, in the fall of 1975, the Force Troops staff, under the guidance of General Reid, had drawn up plans for a Tactical Exercise Control Center (TECC), the rationale for exercise control, and exercise objectives.¹³ All of this remained straightforward, and not unlike similar exercises which had gone on at various commands in the Marine corps for a great many years. In this case, however, General Wilson left no doubt that these exercises were more significant because they would take place before all the eyes in the Marine Corps—and many more throughout the Department of Defense. Twentynine Palms was to be a permanent "combined arms exercise college" for all of the Marine Corps.¹⁴ The lessons learned had to lead to sound guidance and doctrine for all.*

So here it was, Monte Brink's little spit kit of a desert

*In his comments of 1984, Major General Haebel said: "General Wilson's vision from the beginning was to establish a major training facility at Twentynine Palms, streamline the command structure and gain the full potential of this ideal training base.

As we look back today and reflect on his initial concept and thoughts . . . it is absolutely amazing that with few exceptions his ideas and concepts have become reality."



outpost between its "hot slag heap" of hills and the alkali dustings of that dead lake on the long-ago glider training field, with yet another new lease on life. Quantico might still claim the title as "Crossroads of the Corps" for Marines carrying books and wearing spit-shined shoes; but here was a new crossroads, for

Marines in combat gear and putting to the test all those things they learned in the books at Quantico. General Wilson's vision had been the better one, when he decided that Twentynine Palms was "frankly the best training area in the United States. The Army had nothing like it whatever."¹⁵

CHAPTER 9

Toward A New Century

While things were getting organized for the new mission, the Marine Corps at Twentynine Palms and elsewhere throughout the world paused to commemorate, on 10 November 1975, the 200th Birthday of the Corps. "The bicentennial of its uncommon valor," said President Gerald Ford as he stood beside Commandant Lou Wilson in the rain at the Marine Corps War Memorial on the banks of the Potomac.* Then everywhere throughout the Corps—in every clime and place—traditional ceremonies followed the words specified by the 13th Commandant, John Archer Lejeune—"Old Gabe"—that learned and devout Cajun who in the 1920s pointed the Corps toward a modern amphibious mission. *A toast to you and to our Corps, which we are proud to serve.*

In the 6 August 1976 issue of *The Observation Post*, Navy doctors followed by news reporters rushed in where perhaps only angels should be unafraid to tread (as Alexander Pope did not quite say.) Reported the base newspaper: "Naval Regional Medical Center here has reported a record 39 births during the month of July, nine months after the Corps' memorable 200th anniversary." Total births nearly double a normal month, said Navy Commander H. E. Garner, who commanded the medical facility—at least a 10-year record. Thirty eight mothers gave birth to 21 girls and 18 boys, including a set of fraternal twins, said the commander—New Mission Indeed!

During the time marked by Brigadier General Ed Megarr's arrival at Twentynine Palms on the last day of June 1976, until 20 March 1978 when Brigadier General Harold G. Glasgow replaced him, command structures made some moves which Lou Wilson had envisioned from the birth of his new mission idea. Ed Megarr took over Marine Corps Base/Force Troops, Twentynine Palms; he passed on to Hal Glasgow command of Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms. What previously had been Force Troops in the desert, going clear back to 1952, on 30 April 1980 became known as the Combined Arms

Command; by May of that year the name had changed to 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade. After that, general officers at Twentynine Palms were designated Commanding General, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center/Commanding General, 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, Twentynine Palms. In those first years of the new mission, Twentynine Palms found itself building its credibility as the "combined arms exercise college" for all of the Marine Corps (as Colonel Bill Bouldin had earlier termed it) and finding as well a strategic-tactical mission for itself in the capabilities of the brigade.

For quite a number of years in the desert community—since at least the age of bumper stickers—there has been a defiantly cocky little sticker which asks: *Where the hell is Twentynine Palms?* A bit later, as the age of the "T" shirt came along, they, too, asked that question. In the mid-1980s, you could buy such a "T" shirt at the post exchange at the Combat Center. Major General John P. (Phil) Monahan said somebody sent him such a shirt when he got the word, in the Spring of 1985, that he was to take command at Twentynine Palms.

Early in the new mission period, what the rest of the Marine Corps—particularly in divisions scheduled to send Marine Amphibious Units (MAUs) to the desert "college"—asked was: *Who* the hell is Twentynine Palms? Colonel James E. Stanton, who by the mid-1980s spanned most of the new mission period, said that at first it went down a bit hard with some that they had to come be tested and judged by a "pack of desert rats" of unknown credentials.**

If Twentynine Palms in those early new mission days had to take much of the wherewithal "out of hide," it soon became apparent, Jim Stanton recalled, that staffing could not long remain one of them. Needed were officers of stature and excellent credentials in all arms—infantry, artillery, armor, and air. These came along, as did new range regulations. It was one thing, on Nightmare Range during the Korean War, to put Marines through live fire exercises within the sounds

*Despite being a memorial to all Marines in all wars, the Marine Corps War Memorial is often called the "Iwo Jima monument" since the inspiration for the statue came from the famous Joe Rosenthal photograph of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima.

**Col Stanton came to Twentynine Palms in March 1976 as the G-3 (Operations Officer) of Force Troops. He came back in the mid-1980s as chief of staff of the Combat Center.

of a real war, at Twentynine Palms in peacetime, normal range regulations did not permit some of the things which needed to happen if training was to be realistic and worthwhile.³

Ultimately, it all came together. New range regulations retained safety factors but allowed for realism. Division or brigade commanders and their representatives came from both coasts and Hawaii for an annual conference to plan their units' participation in the Combined Arms Exercises (CAX) in the desert. Twentynine Palms officers visited participating commands to fine tune plans as arrival dates for units grew near. Units scheduled to take part in an exercise sent officers to act as umpires for other units. After action reports and critiques, after some early experiences of being loud and stressful, became believable and useful.³ And from *where* and *who* is Twentynine Palms came the time when for a unit commander, "doing a CAX at Twentynine Palms became a Marine Corps-wide badge of honor."³

Last gripe were the riflemen. Always wary of command post fat cats and indirect fire philosophers from the rear, the grunts said it seemed to them that the exercise was simply a shoot-em-up for artillery, a dusty tear for tanks and light armored vehicles, and a few quick zooms and popups for the airdales.⁴

At about this time (early 1979) General Glasgow welcomed on board Colonel Gerald H. Turley, assigned him to replace the departing Jim Stanton as Director of Operations and Training for the Combat Center, and together they pretty much whipped this shortcoming of the exercise scenario which seemed to leave riflemen in the role of neglected tag-alongs. Urged on by Hal Glasgow and Jerry Turley, the combat center built bunker complexes and other riflemen "problems" and put them into the exercise.

General Glasgow has singled out Colonel Turley's contributions for special praise. Turley had received orders to Twentynine Palms on the recommendation of his former division commander, Lieutenant General Kenneth M. McLennan, who was the chief of staff of Headquarters Marine Corps. General Glasgow said:

Turley was an ideal nominee, having had considerable experience with supporting arms in Vietnam, as well as just having completed two years in regimental command.

He designed combined training courses for BII, MAU, and MAB units that satisfied the [guidance] of the Commandant. The courses built were demanding and challeng-

³In print, these gripes aired in *The Marine Corps Gazette*, notably in 1979. See comments by Captain Terrence P. Murray in the January 1979 *Gazette*, and First Lieutenant A. J. Franklin in the July 1979 issue. In between, in the June 1979 issue, Captain R. A. Stewart of Twentynine Palms offered some answers for the riflemen.

ing; one in particular was 42 miles in length, with 289 targets. All elements of the combat, combat support, and combat service support units were involved. The combat center became the showplace of the Marine Corps. Jerry Turley's accomplishments at MCAGCC should never be questioned. I doubt seriously if they will ever be matched.⁴

As part of the enhanced exercises, pesky minefields were simulated, and radio battalion Marines came out "from behind their Force-level cloaks"⁵ and cranked into the scenario some practical lessons in overcoming jamming, electronics eavesdropping, and the value of communications discipline and electronic countermeasures.

General Glasgow said of this period:

The combined arms training program was the vision of one man, General Louis H. Wilson . . . There were several others [who made] significant contributions; still the man who steered the ship was General Wilson, and that should never be forgotten . . . His specific instructions to me were: "Hal, my hope is that we build the finest combined arms training center in the world—a place where every Marine can learn the basic techniques of fire support coordination—let's get on with it, let nothing be an obstacle, and call me personally once each week and tell me how you're doing."⁶

Going into the last half of the 1980s, the combined arms exercise still had not become the "clockwork" evolution sometimes envisioned. Budget considerations sometimes caused some commands (notably the brigade in Hawaii) to forego part of their scheduled periods at the combat center. At other times, things at Twentynine Palms brought about some delays.

The geography of the desert, with fault lines running though it, remains mysterious in many ways. The high roll of land above Dead Man Lake, where Bill Bouldin built that airfield, developed the amazing habit of "pumping" under repeated landings of heavy aircraft. Moisture actually worked its way up under the aluminum matting, and caused the surface to develop some irregularities and some soft spots.

A number of things were tried to correct the problem. By summer of 1986, all the matting was up again, and a new stabilization program was underway. This amounted to mixing in a dusting of cement with the desert's decomposed granite, dampening and grading for—it was hoped—a firmer sub-surface for the matting.

Exercises continued around this work, but it was a slowing factor. The problems rekindled dreams for a concrete field. But as the stature of the combat center and its program grew, more division commanders worked diligently to make the experience a true "graduation" exercise for their units. "Real professionals



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DMST-8205855

A line of Marines from Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, 2d Marine Division assaults an enemy-held position during a winter training exercise in the early 1980s.

said, 'This is the best exercise we've ever been in. Stay tough and teach tough.'"⁷

As with any training program, changes always were in the works, being thought of, or being tested. Inevitably, the divisions' problem of paying for the lift of the units to Twentynine Palms meant they would send only the bare minimum number of personnel. This, in turn, caused many an infantry battalion commander to believe he was being thrown into the fiery furnace and asked to do the work of higher-level staffs (in fire support coordination especially) while those officers stayed safely at home and practiced—as the riflemen has always thought of it—philosophy.*

Commanding Generals Joe Knotts (April 1981-July 1983) and Bill Etnyre (July 1983-June 1985) worked with the notion of brigade-level combined arms exercises. Major General Etnyre thought this would make for greater economy, and would provide training for more staff levels.⁸ Into the second half of the 1980s, this had not become standard, however. Increased staff levels sometimes were added, however, to meet more realistically the scenario which made the MAU the maneuvering element of a "large force."

As has been noted, parts of General Wilson's ideas about the new mission for Twentynine Palms included freeing up tank units from Okinawa and Camp

*In this regard, see Major Dennis C. Lindeman, "A Case for Brigade Level CAXs," *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1984.

Pendleton and releasing them onto the vast desert where their training would be virtually unrestricted. He also sought the modernizing of the Twentynine Palms command structure to make it and its units more responsive to the Marine Corps roles and missions. In 1977, the 3d Tank Battalion arrived, followed by the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, an infantry unit.

The 4th Battalion, 11th Marines, an artillery unit, arrived in 1979. In October 1984 it became the 5th Battalion, 11th Marines. In addition, in 1980 what used to be called Force Troops became known as the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) and it "owned" all the Fleet Marine Force tactical units on board and arriving. For tactical and contingency purposes, a regimental headquarters, designated the 27th Marines, came into being in 1981. Company D, 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion formed in 1982, followed in the next year by the 1st Light Armored Vehicle Battalion.

These and other units made up an element in a joint, all-Service command once called the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, and now called Central Command (CentCom). Then came the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade designation, and a deployment plan called the Near Term Prepositioned Force (NTPF). The latter soon became the Maritime Prepositioned Force (MPF). In a nutshell, this plan called for heavy equipment and some 30 days of supplies to be on board ships in areas of concern; the 7th MAB then

could configure and mount out quickly to marry up with its weapons and supplies for such contingencies as might arise.

The 7th Brigade provided the command element for this Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The 27th Marines was the command echelon for ground elements; Marine Aircraft Group 70 controlled the air units attached or serving with the task force. Supplies and logistics were to be handled by a brigade service support element, BSSG-7. In a manner of speaking, this was a "pick-up" team housed at Twentynine Palms, Camp Pendleton, El Toro, and Tustin, California, plus Yuma, Arizona. But it worked and trained, often together, and has mounted out a number of times to join up and work with its floating supplies and weapons. Its readiness is tested frequently. It can deploy rapidly to anywhere in the world. It is a highly professional force of some 16,500 Marines—or can be adjusted in size for such tasks as are assigned.

So the times they were a-changing, and nowhere within the Marine Corps—from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s—were there any changes more dramatic and far-reaching than those for women. In May of 1974, the Woman Marine Company at Twentynine Palms moved into its new quarters, near the dental facility and the Roman Catholic chapel. Sometimes called the

Pill Box (by male Marines—the women probably consider the term chauvinistic), the structure resembled a small motel. Around the building were walls (more tasteful than that chain link "cage" around the women at Pendleton years ago, but walls nonetheless). Everyone entered through a "dragon's gate" where sat a duty NCO answerable to the commanding officer of women Marines and her officers and staff NCOs. Within the walls was a patio area, indoors a lounge, a laundry facility, a kitchen. There were 44 rooms—one might say suites, for as with a modern motel, each large living room had a "hallway" with storage spaces which in turn led to a bathroom with, wonder of wonders, a bath tub into which a shower splashed, or women soaked. "You've come a long way, Baby" one of those male chauvinists might have said to Sergeant Major Sarah N. Thornton, then the administrative chief in the office of the base adjutant. A long way since July of 1965 when Corporal Ida Endsley Butchman managed to get orders to Twentynine Palms only because her Marine husband was in charge of the base photo lab. But, as Sarah Thornton probably would have answered, "you ain't seen nothing yet."

In charge of that beautiful and tasteful little residence building was Captain Elaine M. Andreshak, who had come to Twentynine Palms in August of 1973 from duty at the Marine Corps Automated Services Center

A row of parked LVTP-7 tracked landing vehicles and M60A1 tanks from the 2d Marine Division stand by ready to begin a live fire exercise during Operation CAX 4-81.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DMSN-8300631





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A357611

A bedroom shows personal touches in the separate barracks housing women Marines in the 1970s. Today Marines, both men and women, are housed together in the same barracks.

at Kansas City to command the Woman Marine Company. However, about two weeks after the women moved into their new residence, the company was deactivated (on 15 May 1974) and the women assigned to the units in which they actually worked. They continued to live in their new residence, however. Except for some students in the Communications and Electronics School, all women on the base then were serving in Base Headquarters and Service Battalion. Altogether there were a few less than 130 women, officer and enlisted, then at Twentynine Palms.

In August of 1974, two women became the first at Twentynine Palms assigned to duty with Force Troops. These were Privates First Class Victoria Bullard and Cynthia Southworth, and their assignment took them to the Provisional Maintenance Company to repair and calibrate fire control instruments for artillery units. Victoria Bullard was a graduate of the basic electronics course at Twentynine and a test instrument repair school at Albany, Georgia. Cynthia Southworth was a graduate of an instrument repair school at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

About a year later, Headquarters Marine Corps announced that only four military occupational specialties (MOSs) were closed to women. These were:

infantry, artillery, armor, and air crews in combat.

In 1976 three women second lieutenants graduated from the air defense control course. Lieutenants Paula A. Futrell and Janice P. Closson got orders to Marine Air Control Squadron 7 at Camp Pendleton; Lieutenant Jo A. Kelly went to Marine Air Control Squadron 5 at the Marine Corps Air Station at Beaufort, South Carolina.

In March of 1977, the first two women qualified on the rifle range at Twentynine Palms with the M-16 rifle, both from base Headquarters and Support Battalion. Corporal Pauline Mettack fired expert, scoring 221, and PFC Wiki Myers fired marksman, with 203. By autumn, two women were serving in the Field Artillery Group of Force Troops. First Lieutenant Carol E. MacDonald, from Pittsburgh and a graduate of Duquesne University, served as group adjutant. Sergeant Mary Bettinger, a native of Eable, Idaho, was administrative chief of the headquarters battery.

But those assignments did not last long, said the last commanding officer of the former women's company at Twentynine. In September of 1975, Elaine Andreshak married Major Holland C. "Bo" Bowden; and by the time of these assignments of the women to the

artillery group, Elaine was a major and was S-1 and adjutant of Base Headquarters and Support Battalion. (In which office she had nothing to do with the assignment of personnel to the artillery group.) But those assignments were "too close to the field level" of artillery, Elaine Bowden said later.

Not at Twentynine Palms, but for all of the Marine Corps, in the spring of 1978 Colonel Margaret A. Brewer became the first female Marine general officer. General Louis Wilson, the Commandant, pinned on the stars, and Brigadier General Brewer became the Director of Information. Then about a year later, in early summer of 1979, Major Bobbie Winberger came to Twentynine Palms and became the Public Affairs Officer. She had been in the public information field for some time, but this was the first time a woman officer had the assignment at Twentynine Palms.

Then, as colleges and universities had done some time earlier, the Marine Corps at Twentynine Palms (and elsewhere at various times) in the summer of 1981 moved the women out of that neat little "women's dormitory." By this time "Holiday Inn" barracks were in operation. Bachelor Enlisted Quarters (BEQs) they are called, usually three floors, motel-type room "suites" much like those of the women's residence building. Into these moved the women to make them "co-ed" BEQs. There are rules. The women often have floors, sections, or halls of their own. And for all, no booze, no parties, no hanky panky. Military rules tend to be more strict than those at colleges and universities.*

So how is it all working out? "Single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints," Kipling said a long time ago. Nor single women either, it is to be assumed. If we treat the young unmarried on campus and base in a more civilized and adult fashion, do they respond well?

In 1986, Lieutenant Colonel Elaine Andreshak Bowden said she thought so. Elaine, a graduate of a Roman Catholic school for women—Mt. St. Mary College in Milwaukee—said that at least if the Marine Corps (and the other Services) discovered that they needed women in the military, opportunities had to be open and treatment had to be adult and professional. "Without all this," said Elaine, "I know I would not be here in this job."

Her job, as she spoke, was as executive officer of C&E School, one of the largest and most prestigious schools

*So who got that neat little "Pill Box?" You're right: senior staff NCOs. Can't you just imagine your old World War II first sergeant soaking in one of those tubs?

in the Marine Corps. In 1981, as a major, she had left Twentynine Palms for Pendleton. During that tour she was selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel. In 1983 and 1984 she served on Okinawa as the G-1 (Personnel) officer. She returned to Twentynine Palms and to the C&E assignment in mid-1984.

By mid-1986, there were some 15 women officers and 350 women enlisted Marines serving at Twentynine Palms—at least twice as many as when Captain Elaine Andreshak arrived in 1973 to command the Woman Marine Company. Back then, a young lieutenant, Barbara Cole, came to the base. While in that assignment, Lieutenant Cole accepted a regular commission; in the mid-1980s she was back as a major and adjutant of the combat center. Sergeant major of the school in the mid-1980s was Sergeant Major Therese A. Malstrom, the first woman to hold that position. After 1984, women Marines stopped having a birthday of their own, celebrating only 10 November as with all Marines. A long way, indeed!

As has been noted, what is now the C&E School at Twentynine Palms had a long and varied journey to the desert. The final ascent from San Diego slowed somewhat during the Vietnam war, because more concentration had to be put on turning out more Marines for that war.

By the mid-1980s there were three schools at the C&E complex. Communications and Electronics Operations School provides formal training in both ground and aviation communications. It has three sections which handle radio operations, communications, and senior level courses. The Communications and Electronics Maintenance School trains Marines for 25 specialties in 31 courses of instruction. The Air School teaches introductory courses for both officer and enlisted Marines in an Air Defense Training Section and an Air Support Training Section. In all, the C&E School, which calls itself the largest formal school complex in the Marine Corps, conducts 44 separate courses of instruction for 38 different specialties.

Course lengths at the school range from 4 to 60 weeks. Going into the latter half of the 1980s, the courses were training more than 6,400 students each year, and the student population averaged about 2,400 students at all times.

In early 1976, when the Training Exercise Control Center (TECC) was formed for the new mission, its first officer in charge was Lieutenant Colonel Ervin J. Crampton. In his honor, the observation post overlooking the Delta Corridor where the exercises run was named OP Crampton.

On 10 December 1976, the dependable new black-top road to Camp Wilson and the new exercise airfield—the one which used to, in its days of sand, go underwater at least once a summer when the Reserves were in the field—was dedicated as Phillips Road. This was in honor of a Seabee who lost his life in a construction accident while the road was building: Equipment Operator Constructionman Victor B. Phillips of Mobile Construction Battalion 4 from Port Hueneme. Old friends and Seabee shipmates were on hand as General Megarr made the dedication. Also present were Phillips' parents from Statesville, North Carolina, and a sister as well.

In January of 1978, Corporal Michael Isom of the Center Graphics Shop, got a 96-hour liberty for winning the contest to design a new logo for the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. The logo depicts aircraft swooping over desert hills above Marine riflemen and tracked vehicles.

In May of 1978, Sergeant Brian Pensak brought his 1st Battalion, 4th Marines rifle squad back from a Corps-wide combat competition at Quantico with an impressive second-place win. The new commanding

general, Brigadier General Hal Glasgow, and the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas F. Meehan, honored the squad at a ceremonial formation.

At year's end, the command welcomed on board a detachment of Marine Air Base Squadron 11 from El Toro. It moved out to the Expeditionary Airfield to "housekeep" for exercises and other air operations.

Then came another episode in the "hazards of the desert" department. At Victory Field on the evening of 9 April 1979, all but one of the scheduled intramural softball games had to be called because of "sand." A desert wind came out of the southwest, blowing so much sand that a catcher could not see second base. Worse than Candlestick Park, somebody said, "Where a cold fog once obscured Willie Mays in center field and a San Francisco wind once puffed pitcher Stu Miller into a balk."

In a sadder note—pointing up a danger which Marines must constantly be aware of—back in the summer of 1976 two Marines lost their lives when their four-wheel-drive vehicle crashed into an abandoned mine shaft east of the base in the old Gold Park mine region.

Two Marines troubleshoot the power supply for the AN/TPQ-10 ground control radar for aircraft during hands-on training at the Communications and Electronics School.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A358221



At the end of 1979, two proud first lieutenants gave the combat center a Christmas present. They were William J. "Bill" Bagley, assistant provost marshal, and Guyfrank M. "Frank" Candelaria of 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, both of whom were graduates of that well-known Boys Town in Omaha, Nebraska ("He ain't heavy, Father, he's my brother.") After Boys Town, Bagley had won a scholarship to the University of Nebraska; Candelaria went to the University of Notre Dame on a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship. Now these two officers had arranged for the Boys Town choir to come to the base for a concert. A smash hit for all who attended, and a bit of a nostalgic tug at the hearts of Bagley and Candelaria, as well as all others who have seen that famous movie with Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney.

In September 1980, a new stone building near the main gate was dedicated as the Matteson Memorial Building, named for a Marine lieutenant who lost his life trying to salvage papers from the old frame building which burned on that site in April of 1978. This was Second Lieutenant Richard J. Matteson of Portsmouth, Virginia, a 1976 graduate of The Citadel. Although assigned to 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, Matteson had been seconded to the Counter-intelligence Team housed in the old frame structure which dated back to glider base days. He died of smoke inhalation while trying to save CIT and Naval Investigative Service (NIS) papers from the fire. On dedication day, his parents were on hand—Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Matteson, plus two brothers and a sister. The family brought a portrait of Richard which now hangs in the new building.

In April of 1981, Hal Glasgow, who had been promoted to major general, departed Twentynine Palms for Quantico where he took over the Development Center. During his tenure at Twentynine Palms, Glasgow had honed the combined arms exercises for all the combat arms, and especially the infantry units, and had assumed command of the new structure of the brigade.

In for Glasgow was Brigadier General Joseph B. Knotts, a big infantry officer from West Virginia, where he had been a football player at Fairmont State College. He came to Twentynine Palms from Quantico where he had commanded, as a colonel, the Officer Candidate Course.

Joe Knotts soon welcomed on board Lieutenant General Andrew W. O'Donnell of FMFPac, who cut the ribbon for the brand new tank park for Lieutenant Colonel Joseph P. Schultz's tank battalion. It provid-

ed some 40,000 square feet of inside shops and work space, plus more than twice that in outside shaded parking. The tank park took a bit over a year to build and cost slightly over \$5 million. Tanks never had it so good.

By mid-1981, construction got underway on 100 new sets of quarters south of Shadow Mountain quarters near the main gate. In November—shades of war zones past—a big USO show came to the base and went into the field to entertain units who had to spend the Marine Corps Birthday out in the desert. These included the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines from Camp Lejeune, plus units from El Toro, Cherry Point, and Pendleton. On a makeshift stage, to the amusement of all hands, cavorted the Los Angeles Rams cheerleaders, comics, singers, dancers, and magicians. Old timers could squint and imagine it was Bob Hope up there with a troupe in that desolate terrain around Marble Mountain in South Vietnam. Colonel Laurence R. Gaboury, who commanded the 8th Marines, invited the troupe to share the birthday dinner with the Marines.

The 7th Brigade's units and roles/missions have been touched upon. Official day for the activation of the 27th Marines was 17 December 1981. The regiment was first activated at Camp Pendleton during World War II (on 10 January 1944) as part of the wartime 5th Marine Division. The Marine Corps also activated at Twentynine Palms the beginnings of Brigade Service Support Group 7, and Marine Aircraft Group 70 (at El Toro).

Colonel Leemon B. McHenry commanded the newly activated regiment. And on 15 January 1982, Marine Commandant Robert H. Barrow came to Twentynine Palms to review a regimental parade and to present historic colors to Colonel McHenry. Battle streamers from World War II danced in the desert winds alongside those from Vietnam where the regiment served as part of the 1st Marine Division.

In July 1982, Colonel Frederick E. Sisley replaced McHenry as commanding officer of the 27th. By late February 1984, came word that Fred Sisley had been selected for promotion to brigadier general, and he was soon off for a staff job with the European Command in Stuttgart.

Later in 1982, a fancy "gedunk stand", the "Last Oasis," opened below the gymnasium toward del Valle Drive, and Marines could now buy hamburgers and other fast foods if hunger pangs struck between meals at the dining facilities. Those new quarters, dubbed Sunflower Terrace, were opening; and on the high ground above the medical facility loomed hopes for



Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A357400

An aerial view includes Joshua Heights, center left, and Shadow Mountain, center background, housing areas originally constructed in the late 1970s and added to in the 1980s.

a soon completion of more "Holiday Inn" BEQs. The first in this increment opened in April of 1983, and the base announced that two more were in the planning stage.

On 15 July 1983, General Joe Knotts was off to new duties at Camp Pendleton, and he was replaced by Brigadier General William R. Etnyre, an up-from-the-ranks native of Kansas City who came to Twentynine Palms from being deputy fiscal director for the Marine Corps in Washington. Bill Etnyre enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1951, and was commissioned in 1953 during the Korean War period. Later, while on duty in San Francisco, he put himself through the University of San Francisco where he earned the BS degree in economics. About five years later, the Marine Corps sent him to George Washington University in the nation's capital, where he earned a master of business administration degree. In the 1970s, Bill Etnyre worked for the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and later attended the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, from which he earned distinguished graduate status in June 1976.

By now the command which General Etnyre took over was a far cry from the Force Troops command of mostly artillery units supported by base housekeepers who frequently hosted Reserve and Regular training exercises in the desert. Now the commanding general headed a vigorous combat center with a competent and respected Tactical Exercise Control Center, a huge

and busy communications and electronics school complex, and other service and support units. Under his other hat, the commanding general controlled the 7th MAB headquarters, the 27th Marines, and other tactical units of the deployable forces.

And deploy they did: to Somalia, Africa, in 1983, to Korea in 1984. In early summer of 1986, the force was off to the Philippines. The MAB was out and back, checking and working with prepositioned weapons and supplies afloat, staying ready.

In the midst of these activities, as has been noted, brigadier general selectee Frederick E. Sisley got orders to Europe. He turned over his command, the 27th Marines, to Colonel Michael P. Downs, who had been on board Twentynine Palms since mid-1982 as Director of Operations and Training.

In 1986, Mike Downs said he remembered himself and his bride getting a wedding gift from Twentynine Palms, years ago, when he married Martha Leigh Puller, daughter of that grand old Marine Corps legend, Chesty Puller. The wedding present, of course, was from that long ago battalion surgeon of Chesty's outfit on Guadalcanal, Dr. Edward Lincoln Smith, who for years served post-war Twentynine Palms. Dr. Smith had retired and left town before the Downs arrived. Mike Downs came into the Marine Corps via the Naval ROTC program (College of Holy Cross) in 1961; in February of 1968, as a rifle company com-

mander, he earned the Silver Star Medal in the fierce battle for Huc City in Vietnam.

Tear in the eye department: In December of 1983, the 3d 175mm Guns outfit went to the field for the final time. It was to be reorganized into an 8-inch howitzer unit. In several configurations, tube sizes, and deployments, this old outfit had been around since organization at Twentynine Palms in August of 1957. Then it went to Vietnam, to Chu Lai, Da Nang, An Hoa. In 1970 it came back to Twentynine. Now, into the hills of the desert, Corporal James Spinks, "plugger" for gun three, got to fire the next-to-the last 175mm round. Then the last round, forever, went to General Bill Etnyre.

But then, as if lighting the way for Twentynine Palms toward its new century, Sergeant Tyrone Keniry, a telephone switchboard course student at C & E School, got to carry the Olympic Torch toward the games in LA—on 19 July 1984. The C&E school adjutant, First Lieutenant Christine A. Cooper, thought of the idea; you could buy a one kilometer run for the good of the cause. C&E students donated \$3,000, and Sergeant Keniry carried the torch along Highway 1 near Lompoc. Many students and staff members went up to watch, to cheer him on, and to run alongside. His torch came back to Twentynine Palms and into an honored trophy case in the school's headquarters.

So where does the Marines' own torch lead Twentynine Palms, now that the year 2000 is closer than that day in 1952 when Fred Scantling came up from Peridleton to watch over the beginning of that then revolutionary tilt-up construction which launched Monte Brink's little stung-out training center alongside its sunbaked hills. There, where in those young days of World War II, Vinton Harz and others rode the endless surf of air in the gliders?

"The thrust in the Marine Corps now is to enhance and expand the combined arms training, and therefore to enhance and improve the Combat Center." So said major general selectee Bill Etnyre in the spring of 1985 as he was about to relinquish command at Twentynine Palms to Brigadier General John P. Monahan. As contingency planning becomes more sophisticated, with greater speeds possible in world-wide response times, the Marine Corps saw a need to get more elements of the 7th Brigade up to the desert for better training and for more efficient mount-out if a need arose. This meant an increased population of Marines and their dependents at Twentynine Palms, said the general, and therefore expansion of the combat center.

As General Phil Monahan came on board the center, there was about 35 million dollars worth of construction underway or in planning. By the end of 1987,

BGen William R. Etnyre, right, fires the last round from a 175mm self-propelled howitzer which was slated to be retired from Marine Corps artillery arsenal in the mid-1980s.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) DMSN-8510416





Marine Corps Historical Collection

One of several multi-story enlisted men's barracks, part of an ambitious facilities improvement program, currently being constructed at the Air Ground Combat Center.

another \$67 million was expected to have been spent for this construction, bringing the 1986-87 construction to a bit over \$100 million.

In 1986, the working population of the Combat Center amounted to approximately 8,000 Marines and 1,000 civilian employees. Counting dependents, the size of the Marine family came to about 15,000. Projected to 1989, nearly 2,000 more Marines were expected on board the Center: 775 in 1986-87, 494 in 1988, 625 in 1989. In this four-year period, new units scheduled to arrive in the desert included the 3d Light Assault Vehicle Battalion; the 5th Battalion, 12th Marines (self-propelled artillery); and the 4th Battalion, 11th Marines (towed artillery).

On the construction griddle for 1986 were more bachelor enlisted quarters (BEQs), administration buildings (including a new headquarters for the C&E school), a physical fitness center, 100 more sets of family quarters, and a new commissary store. For 1987, some \$67 million would buy more BEQs; administrative, maintenance, and training facilities; and 392 sets of family houses. In 1988 (\$94 million), still more BEQs, administrative buildings, training and maintenance facilities, and airfield improvement. And a new main gate!

Really, that new main gate is mainly for the purpose of getting rid of that deceptively deadly Condor Curve, which during its long years, has claimed too many lives. And into the costly toll must be added several near misses and a lot of property damage. To get rid of the Condor, the approach to the Center would remain on Adobe Road, go straight in along

the west side of the old and small airfield of scratchy history and now questionable value, and reach del Valle Drive at about 1st Street where the new main gate area would be built. For better traffic flows on board the Center, plans also call for a "loop road" to go up 1st Street, turn westward at about Griffin, to serve the major row of BEQs and other facilities.

Also listed as "pending and possible," but with funding not yet inked in, are such things as a new hospital, new dental clinic, a more modern (and perhaps contracted) child care center, more family housing (perhaps contracted for with a civilian supplier and manager), and an elementary school building and facility near all that additional housing, much of which will be in the vicinity of the "old" main gate.

A bit farther off the page was the hoped-for project of a 10,000-foot concrete runway out in the training area to replace the Expeditionary Airfield which, as has been noted, manages to cost a lot of maintenance money by becoming wobbly on its roll of desert soil above Dead Man Lake. This might get started in 1989.

In mid-1986, the officer who had his finger on all these projects and dollars was Lieutenant Colonel Teddy J. Etsell, facilities and housing officer for the center. He spoke of two other companies of Marines scheduled to come to the desert before the end of the century.

These, to boggle the minds of old timers, will be the officers and men (about 100 people for the two companies) who will operate "Remotely Piloted Vehicles." These might be called "smart model airplanes." Controlled from the ground, these RPVs will fly at

about 4,000 feet above the battlefield and send back TV pictures to the field commander. Remote eyes in the sky, what they are seeing can be translated into fire direction assistance. The capability exists for RPVs to communicate with smart bombs and projectiles, and to send them precisely onto targets seen below.

On 13 May 1986, at 1000 on a crisp, bright day on the desert, the green parade deck before the headquarters building was lined with more Marines of greater tactical diversity than ever before in its history. With the drum and bugle corps on the right flank, they extended southeastward across the parade ground: C&E Schools Battalion; the center's Headquarters Battalion; Detachment A, 1st Force Service Support Group; a composite color guard flanked by organizational colors; the 27th Marines staff; the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines; the 5th Battalion, 11th Marines; the 3d Tank Battalion; and Company D of the 3d Assault Amphibian Battalion.

Change of command time again. For the first time ever, a two-star general was coming on board. Major General Ernest T. Cook, Jr. Some, of course, had made two stars while stationed in the desert, as Phil Monahan had just done; but Ernie Cook, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, and just in from Training at Headquarters Marine Corps, was the major general symbol of the still-growing importance of the combat center, the 7th MAB, and Lou Wilson's new mission, now some 10 years into lustrous values still

expanding. Before this day, in a classic career as a Marine officer, Major General Cook had served at sea in command of the Marine Detachment on the *Northampton*, commanded infantry units, been the academic head and later deputy director of the Command and Staff College; chief of the Amphibious Warfare Presentation Team; and commanding officer of the Basic School. General Phil Monahan was off to Korea, to a staff position with the allied forces there.

The Center and the 7th MAB composite staff, led by the parade commanding officer of troops, Colonel Jim Stanton, Center Chief of Staff, began the pass in review.

You had to be good to be in this formation. Young men who had not stuck it out through high school need not apply. Your military "IQ," the GCT (General Classification Test), had to be around 100 or better. You had to be clean and stay clean. You had to pull your weight, learn, and keep learning. There were no drop-outs here. One old timer in the stands could not remember better looking Marines since the days when the intense desire to win gave them everything: vigor, confidence, determination, in those lump-in-the-throat days of national pride in World War II.

These Marines now, in the growing heat of the desert day, went by in review and marched off across 5th Street, to their BEQs, their duties . . . Toward a new century.

Notes

CHAPTER 1 THE DESERT

Unless otherwise noted, sources for this chapter include various newspaper, manuscript, and pamphlet files in the Twentynine Palms Branch of the San Bernardino County Library; Ronald Dean Miller, *Mara: The Desert Oasis* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Corral, 1978), hereafter Miller, *Mara*; Ronald Dean Miller, *Mines of the High Desert* (Glendale: La Siesta Press, 1968); Neal Harlow, "California Conquered," in *War and Peace on the Pacific, 1846-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), hereafter Harlow, "California Conquered," Linda W. Greene, *Historic Resource Study: A History of Land Use in Joshua Tree National Monument* (Denver: National Park Service, 1983), hereafter Greene, *Historic Resource Study*; Harry Lawton, *Willie Boy* (Balboa Island, California: Paisano Press, 1960); Rick Erickson, "In Avid Pursuit of Willie Boy: The Last Manhunt," *Yucca Valley, California Hi-Desert Star*, Grubstake Edition, 20 May 1983; and interviews with local historian Lucile Weight, who also graciously allowed access to her extensive files and writings concerning the area of Twentynine Palms.

1. One of the best accounts of these early routes to the West Coast is contained in that classic of the westward migration: Bernard DeVoto, *The Year of Decision: 1846* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1943).
2. Harlow, "California Conquered," pp. 41, 42.
3. Miller, *Mara*.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Harlow, "California Conquered," p. 246.
6. Miller, *Mara*.
7. Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, p. 39.
8. Miller, *Mara*.
9. *Ibid.*
10. J. D. Borthwick, quoted in Elisabeth L. Egenhoff, ed., *The Elephant as They Saw It*, centennial supplement to *California Journal of Mines and Geology*, Oct 1949. This booklet has been re-issued several times in editions of 2,000 to 3,000 copies.
11. Miller, *Mines*, p. 9.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Erickson, *op. cit.*
15. Miller, *Mara*.

CHAPTER 2 THE COMMUNITY

Unless otherwise noted, sources for this chapter, in addition to those listed for Chapter 1, include Helen Bagley, *Sand in My Shoe* (Twentynine Palms: Calico Press, 1978); Elizabeth W. Crozer Campbell, *The Desert Was Home* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1961); and conversations with Helen Bagley and other early settlers in Twentynine Palms, and especially with Harold and Lucile Weight, local

historians of the Twentynine Palms region and other desert areas of the Southwest. Lucile Weight is the author of many of the *Desert Trail* articles used as references for this book.

1. Miller, *Mines of the High Desert*, p. 12.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
8. Lucile Weight, "How a Doctor Became Father of 29 Palms," *The Desert Trail*, 1976 Pioneer Days Souvenir Edition, 14 Oct 1976. Copies are in the Twentynine Palms Branch library.
9. Hazel Spell, *The Twentynine Palms Story*, p. 11.
10. Bagley, *Sand in My Shoe*, p. 3.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-174.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
15. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3 CONDOR FIELD

Sources for this chapter, in addition to those from the community library previously mentioned, Helen Bagley's *Sand in My Shoe* and the Linda W. Greene *Historic Resource Study*, include correspondence with Maj Steven Zvonar, USAF (Ret); conversations and interviews with Bureau of Land Management officials, plus William J. Underhill, Blanch Ellis, Helen Bagley, Ada Hatch, Gwyn Keys, and Vinton and Lois Marlow Harz. Also consulted were the very meager Condor Field files from the U.S. Air Force archives obtained for me by Marine Corps History and Museums Division, Washington, DC.

1. Greene, *Historic Resource Study*, p. 375.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 375-382.
3. Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, Ninth Ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 715.
4. Charlie Chaplin Productions, 1921.

CHAPTER 4 THE MARINES ARRIVE

In addition to materials from the community library, sources of information for this chapter include Headquarters Marine Corps archives relating to Twentynine Palms; personal experiences of the author while on duty with the 3d Marine Brigade and later the 3d Marine Division at Camp Pendleton in 1951 and 1952 while plans for the training base in the desert were being formulated, and participation in the first large field exercise conducted at Twentynine

Palms in late 1952; plus interviews and conversations with Sally Ince, Lucile Weight, Dr. Edward Lincoln Smith, and Dr. Frederick H. Scantling (Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, Ret).

CHAPTER 5 THE EARLY YEARS

Unless otherwise noted, sources for this chapter include the community library files—and especially from there the unpublished manuscript, "Sailor on Horseback," by BGen Frederick R. (Monte) Brink, USMC (Ret.); the Scantling interviews; material from Marine Corps archives; personal recollections of the author; and correspondence, conversations, and interviews with MajGen C. H. (Bud) Schmid, USMC (Ret), BGen John S. Oldfield, USMC (Ret), GySgt Charlie Miller, USMC (Ret), and, from the Twentynine Palms community, Ted Hayes and Chet Ellis.

1. Brink, unpublished manuscript, "Sailor on the High Desert." A copy is in the Twentynine Palms branch library.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

CHAPTER 6 BASE STATUS

Unless otherwise noted material for this chapter derives from previously cited sources from the community library, Marine Corps archival materials including from this period command diaries of Twentynine Palms, and the BGen Oldfield correspondence and conversations. Additional materials consulted during the preparation of this chapter included the Twentynine Palms base newspaper, *The Observation Post*, and correspondence with Col Ralph K. Culver, USMC (Ret).

CHAPTER 7 THE 1960s

In addition to the sources previously cited from the community library, Marine Corps archives (including biographies of commanding generals at Twentynine Palms), and *The Observation Post*, other materials relied upon in the preparation of this chapter included correspondence and conversations with GySgt Miller, CWO-4 Ronald R. Fraizer, GySgt Alton Douglas "Doug" Culbertson, USMC (Ret), Col Francis I. Fenton, USMC (Ret), and Mrs. Eloise Rowan Fenton. Ron Fraizer died of cancer in the summer of 1987.

1. MajGen Carl W. Hoffman, comments on draft manuscript, n.d. (1987), copy in Comments File, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER 8 NEW MISSION

Unless otherwise noted, information for this chapter derives from previously cited sources in the community library, Marine Corps

archives in Washington, D.C., and *The Observation Post*. Other materials providing assistance during the preparation of this chapter include interviews, correspondence, and audio tapes with or from Gen Louis H. Wilson, USMC (Ret), MajGens Edward J. Megarr, USMC, Robert E. Haebel, USMC, and the late Clarence H. Schmid, USMC; Cols Billy D. Bouldin and Richard Owen Gillick, both USMC (Ret); and the active duty participation by the author in Base/Force Troops events of 1973, 1974, and 1975.

1. Gen Louis H. Wilson intvw, 26Jul84 (OralHistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Wilson intvw.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Bouldin intvw, by the author, (OralHistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Bouldin intvw.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. MajGen Robert E. Haebel, comments on an earlier version of this chapter.
13. Twentynine Palms/Force Troops bulletin 1500, dtd 20 Oct 1975.
14. Bouldin intvw.
15. Wilson intvw.

CHAPTER 9 TOWARD A NEW CENTURY

In addition to the sources previously cited from the community library, Marine Corps archives, and *The Observation Post*, other materials providing information for this chapter include interviews by the author with MajGens Harold G. Glasgow, John P. Monahan, and William R. Etryre, plus BGen Joseph B. Knotts, each of whom at various times commanded Twentynine Palms; also Cols James E. Stanton, Blaine King, and Michael P. Downs; also LtCols Elaine M. Bowden and Teddy J. Etsell; also Mrs. Martha Leigh Puller Downs; and finally, SgtMaj Therese A. Malstrom. In addition, files of the *Marine Corps Gazette* from 1975 through 1986, held by the base library, also were consulted.

1. Col James E. Stanton intvw, May 1985 (OralHistColl, MCHC, Washington, D.C.), hereafter Stanton intvw.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. MajGen Harold G. Glasgow, USMC (Ret), comments on draft manuscript, June 1987 (Comment file, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, D.C.).
5. Stanton intvw.
6. Glasgow comments.
7. Ibid.
8. MajGen William R. Etryre intvw, 24Apr85 (OralHistColl, MCHC, Washington, D. C.).

Appendix A

Roads and Places Mainside

del Valle Drive

Since the base at Twentynine Palms began as an artillery outpost, it is fitting that the “main stem” roadway from the main gate along the west border of mainside is named for one of the most famous Marine artillery officers of the World War II period, Lieutenant General Pedro A. del Valle. That is “del Vah-yea,” with the soft Spanish sound to the double “l’s” (the general was a native of San Juan, Puerto Rico) and not, as many modern Marines insist on calling it, “del Val.” The general was an all-around Marine officer, as well as an artilleryman of distinction. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1915, landed from the *Prairie* the following year, and participated in the capture of Santo Domingo City and the following campaigns in the Dominican Republic. He served at sea in the *Texas* (as commander of the Marine Detachment) during World War I, and after that served at Quantico, had more sea duty, and then was aide-de-camp to Major General Joseph H. Pendleton—the one for whom is named that smaller Marine Corps base down by Occaside.

In command of the 11th Marines at the outbreak of World War II, del Valle took the artillery regiment overseas with the 1st Marine Division, and served throughout the Guadalcanal campaign. After a brief tour in the States, del Valle returned to the Pacific in April 1944 as Commanding General, Corps Artillery, III Marine Amphibious Corps, taking part in the Guam operation that summer. Next, Major General del Valle took over the 1st Marine Division. He commanded the division throughout the Okinawa operation from April to July 1945.

After the war, he served first as Inspector General and later as Director of Personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps. Upon his retirement on 1 January 1948, he was promoted to lieutenant general.* He died 28 April 1978.

Bourke Road

Just above del Valle Drive, and linked to it by 1st, 3d, 5th, 6th, 8th, and 10th Streets, is Bourke Road, named for another artilleryman, who also “ran alongside” del Valle in much of World War II. This was Lieutenant General Thomas E. Bourke, who was the 2d Marine Division’s artillery officer and commander of that division’s artillery regiment, the 10th Marines, from 23 December 1940 to 10 December 1943. During that time, General Bourke participated in operations on Guadalcanal and Tarawa. Later he served as artillery officer for the V Marine Amphibious Corps. At war’s end, he assumed command of the 5th Marine Division, and took it to Japan for occupation duty in September of 1945.

Born 5 May 1896, General Bourke graduated from St. Johns College, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on 5 February 1917. He retired 1 November 1946, and was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general.

*During this period, Federal law permitted Navy and Marine officers who had earned combat decorations to receive a promotion to the next higher rank upon retirement. These “tombstone promotions” had prestige only; they did not increase the officers’ retired pay.

Brown Road

Mainside's second busiest artery, after del Valle Drive, is Brown Road, named for perhaps the most famous and colorful artillery officer of them all—the artilleryman's artilleryman, Major General Wilburt S. "Big Foot" Brown. He fibbed about his age to enlist in the Marine Corps for duty in France in World War I. In the summer of 1920, while he was still 19, the Marine Corps let him out to accept an appointment to the Naval Academy. He left there two years later to reenlist in the Marine Corps. He was commissioned from the ranks in 1925.

Twenty-eight years later, as a major general, Brown retired and entered the University of Alabama where he earned the Ph.D. in history, and subsequently became a member of the university's history faculty. In between, he did it all. Sea duty, schools, the "banana wars," command of artillery units in World War II, and command of an infantry regiment (the 1st Marines) in Korea in 1951.

The nickname "Big Foot" came about amidst much heckling and joking during the Nicaraguan campaigns of the 1920s, when fellow officers had to air drop him a pair of size 14 F shoes to replace those he had worn out on jungle patrol. The pilots initially dropped only one shoe, along with a note saying it would take a second flight to bring the other shoe.

Another colorful episode in "Big Foot's" career came during the Okinawa campaign, when he commanded the 11th Marines in Pedro del Valle's 1st Marine Division. One night Brown put together a 22-battalion time on target (TOT), which not only shook up the enemy and much of Okinawa, but also that old artilleryman, Del Valle, who did not know the great and sudden deluge of rounds was coming.

Someone once quoted a famous "Big Foot" line he apparently used often with "visiting firemen" who were going on to another command, perhaps back to Headquarters Marine Corps—"say hello to anyone who remembers me favorably." For a long time to come, that should be the entire Marine Corps. Brown Road is the way to get to important places on board Twentynine Palms—the post exchange, the bank, and the post office.

Sturgis Road

Sturgis Road stops and starts through the central part of mainside. It loses a segment at C & E Schools area, and then until the late 1980s skipped the parade ground by the chapels at 6th and 5th Streets. And until new housing went in beyond Marine Palms, Sturgis Road had no place much to go beyond 1st Street.

The road is named for Colonel Galen Miller Sturgis, an artillery officer whose commission in the Marine Corps dated back to World War I. He spent the war as part of the Marine forces in the Dominican Republic. He held a degree from the University of Maryland, and in the Marine Corps completed most of the important schools of the day, including the advanced artillery course at the Army artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He had sea duty on the *Arizona* from 1922 to 1924, and, in addition to many state-side billets, he served in Cuba, China, and the Philippine Islands.

During World War II, Colonel Sturgis occupied a series of increasingly responsible positions. He commanded the 1st Battalion, 11th Marines from July 1940 until he became the regimental executive officer in March 1941. He took command of the 155mm Group of the 5th Defense Battalion in April 1942, and commanded it during the early campaigns in the Pacific. Command of the 14th Defense Battalion came to him in January 1943, but ill health forced his evacuation to the United States in May of that year. He spent the remainder of World War II in the San Diego and Camp Pendleton areas, primarily as a member of a general court-martial board. His health remained poor, and he retired soon after the end of World War II. Colonel Sturgis died in 1963.

Griffin Road

At the top of the main grid of streets comprising mainside of the base is the road named for another "old salt" from the artillery, Brigadier General Raphael Griffin. Like all the others for whom these streets are named, Griffin was born during the 19th century, 1894 in his case. (Bigfoot Brown was born in 1900, but, technically speaking, the 20th Century did not start until 1901—otherwise the 19th Century would not have been 100 years long.)

Griffin did his World War I time in the Caribbean, later served in the "banana wars," had duty at sea, went to the proper schools, and then taught in some of them. And like the others whose names identify these mainside streets, when World War II came along, Griffin was ready.

Griffin served as corps artillery officer for the I Marine Amphibious Corps in the South Pacific, and later commanded defense groups in the Solomon Islands. In November 1943, Colonel Griffin assumed command of the 10th Marines, and led that artillery regiment at Tarawa, Saipan, and Tinian. He retired, after the war, in September 1948, and was advanced to the rank of brigadier general on the retired list.

Bemis Road

Brigadier General John A. Bemis gives his name to the shortest street in the mainside grid—a disconnected two blocks at the top of the built-up area, back of the Officers Club and above an early billeting area. As did the others whose names appear in the main grid, Bemis entered the Marine Corps during the World War I period—in his case as an enlisted Marine who served in France and then in Haiti. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1919. After that he served again in Haiti, later in Nicaragua, then at sea, and still later in Peiping, China. In World War II, Colonel Griffin served with and in command of artillery units on Guam and on Okinawa. He retired in 1948, at which time he advanced to brigadier general on the retired list.

After retirement, General Bemis served as city councilman, then treasurer, and finally mayor of Oceanside, California, during 1952-56. He died in 1961 at the Naval Hospital at Camp Pendleton.

Victory Field

Victory Field, for years the main lighted athletic field for Twentynine Palms, was named for the second commanding general of the base, who served in that capacity from 28 June 1957 until 1 January 1959. It lies below and west of Brown Road and the bank and post office complex. It was dedicated in September 1959.*

Major General Randall M. Victory was born in Augusta, Wisconsin, on 28 December 1904. He went to school in Twin Falls, Idaho, and then the University of Washington, where he had earned an Army commission through the ROTC program. This he traded for a commission in the Marine Corps. After Basic School at Philadelphia, he went to the Pacific where he first served in the Marine detachment of the *Pittsburgh*. He subsequently transferred ashore to serve with the Legation guard in Peiping. There, from September 1932 until May of 1933, he commanded the famous "Horse Marines" of Peiping's Mounted Detachment.**

*See Chapter 6.

**For a brief synopsis of his World War II duties, see Chapter 6.

Mike Fenton Field

Mike Fenton Field, where youngsters play Little League baseball, commemorates a young Marine who fell in World War II's final battle, Okinawa. It also marks a most poignant chapter in the human history of the Marine Corps and of one of the Corps' best known families.

Mike and his elder brother, Ike, grew up in the Marine Corps, the sons of the late Brigadier General Francis I. Fenton and Mrs. Mary E. Fenton. They were "mascots" of outfits served in or commanded by their father, or of athletic teams coached by him, from Sumay on Guam to Shanghai, China; from up and down the West Coast, and to Quantico, Virginia. At Sumay, Mike rode the police sergeant's mule during working party hours; Ike had a drum and tagged along with the band. Sometimes they got in the way and were "thrown in the brig" by Marines, or "confined to quarters" and "put under hack" by a kind, but firm father.

During World War II, the elder Fenton served in the Pacific and earned two Bronze Star Medals while an engineer officer with the 1st Marine Division on Peleliu and Okinawa. Young Ike—Francis I. Fenton, Jr.—earned a Marine Corps commission and went to sea in the *Missouri*. Young Mike—Michael James—three years younger than Ike, feared he was going to miss the war. Preparing to enter the Naval Academy, Mike feigned bad eyesight so that his wartime service would not be delayed. A few weeks later, after he talked his mother into letting him try to enlist in the Marine Corps, he had perfect vision.

After boot camp and other training, Mike went out to the Pacific and joined Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines where he became a scout-sniper. Ike saw his younger brother in Hawaii, passing through with his replacement draft; the father saw Mike a few times on Okinawa. Once the father joined the son for breakfast in the field at the battalion headquarters. Three or four days later, on 7 May 1945, Mike was killed in fierce fighting in the Awacha Pocket north of Shuri.

Next day he was buried, along with other Marines who fell in those tough battles in and around the Shuri "castle," at the division cemetery at Hiza. His father was there. A wire service photographer took a picture as the elder Fenton kneeled before his son's body on its stretcher covered by the U. S. flag. On that day on Okinawa—as with so many others there—even the skies wept. Colonel Fenton and other Marines standing there with bowed heads were soaked. Mike's open grave, in that picture, is filled with Okinawa rain.*

Mike Fenton, who probably had the talent for the baseball big leagues, and who certainly had the talent for the Naval Academy and a career in the officer ranks of the Marine Corps, has one other baseball field named for him. It is the high school field at Quantico, where he played during some of his high school years. The main athletic field at Camp Pendleton is named for the father, the late Brigadier General Fenton.

Mike's brother, Ike, after World War II married the daughter of Colonel George Rowan, who himself spent almost 35 years in a distinguished career in the Marine Corps. Ike and Eloise (Ellie) Rowan met when they were young, in Shanghai. Ike (who later retired as a colonel) and Ellie have five children, one of whom—George P. Fenton—entered the Marine Corps via the Military Academy and by the mid-1980s was a major. This family once lived in quarters on board the base at Twentynine Palms, while Ike was in Vietnam, but the boys were by then too old for Little League baseball on the Mike Fenton Field.

One other historical note, in the early days of the Korean war, then Captain Ike Fenton commanded Mike's old company—Company B, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. His battle-weary face is captured in a famous photograph from a work *This Is War*, by David Douglas Duncan. Of such traditions and dedications of individuals and families is woven the strong fabric of the Marine Corps.

*Along with all the others from that temporary cemetery Mike's body was later disinterred; his final grave is in the National Cemetery in Honolulu.

Ashurst Street

Two former Commandants of the Marine Corps and four Medal of Honor recipients are among the famous Marines who lend their names to the cross streets in Ocotillo Heights, but the "A" street is named for a different sort of hero, Brigadier General William W. Ashurst. He earned the Silver Star and the French Croix de Guerre for leading an attack in Belleau Wood in France during World War I.* Between the wars he was a distinguished marksman and unit commander. In North China at the outbreak of World War II, Ashurst was one of the Marine Corps' first senior officers captured by the Japanese.

Also in North China, the outbreak of World War II and a quirk of fate linked then-Colonel Ashurst with a famous anthropological treasure lost in the war—the bones of Peking Man. Chinese authorities, hoping to save these famous fossils, gave them to Ashurst and his Marines for transport to safety on a U.S. ship then loading at Chinwangtao up the rail line, north of Tientsin. The Japanese stopped the train, interned the Marines, and the bones of Peking Man have been missing ever since.

Ashurst and his Marines were liberated by Allied forces in September 1945. After that he served mainly at Parris Island. He retired in February 1949, at which time he was promoted to brigadier general.

Bailey Street

"B" is for Bailey, from west to east the second cross street in Ocotillo Heights. For his place on the honor roll of the Marine Corps, Major Kenneth Dillon Bailey gave his life and earned the Medal of Honor in fierce fighting on Guadalcanal early in World War II.

Major Bailey, as commanding officer of Company C, 1st Raider Battalion (Edson's Raiders) led his Marines in a 10-hour battle, often hand-to-hand, in repulsing Japanese attacks near Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. So desperate were those fights that Edson himself earned a Medal of Honor the next night.

Bailey was born in Pawnee, Oklahoma, in 1910, and grew up in Danville, Illinois. He became a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps in July of 1935, and had a variety of duties prior to World War II. In landings and earlier action in the Solomons—on Tulagi across the channel from Guadalcanal—Bailey earned the Silver Star Medal. He had been promoted to major just prior to the Tulagi landing.

Cannon Street

While the commemorative streets of mainside take the names of notable Marines born before or at the turn of the century, some Marines who were young at the outset of World War II gave their names to Ocotillo streets. One of these was 1st Lieutenant George H. Cannon, who earned the Medal of Honor for heroism under fire as the Japanese bombarded Midway Island on 7 December 1941—that day which has lived in infamy.

Cannon was born in 1915 in Webster Groves, Missouri, grew up in the Detroit area, and attended high school there; he also attended the Culver Military Academy in Indiana. Later, he graduated from the University of Michigan and "traded" an Army ROTC commission for one in the Marine Corps. He served at sea onboard the *Boise*, at Quantico, and at San Diego, and then went overseas in early 1941, first to Pearl Harbor and then to Midway with the 6th Defense Battalion. Wounded in the Japanese bombardment of December 1941, he refused evacuation until he could assist his wounded Marines. He died helping them. Later in World War II, a destroyer, the *Cannon*, was named in his honor.

*His silver star was literally just that: a small silver star which attached to his campaign ribbon. It was, however, equivalent to, and predecessor to today's Silver Star Medal, which is actually made of bronze, but with a small silver star in the center.

Daly Street

Daly, in the Ocotillo housing area, is the only street on the base named for an enlisted Marine, and what a Marine! One of two Marines (the other was Smedley Butler) ever to receive two Medals of Honor for separate acts of heroism, Daniel Daly enlisted in the Marine Corps in January of 1899, hoping to get into the Spanish-American War. He did not make it, but he was present for most other conflicts thereafter—from the Boxer Rebellion through World War I—until he went on the retainer list in 1919.

Daly earned his first Medal of Honor on the Tartar Wall near the American Legation in Peking, standing off so-called Chinese “Boxers” until reinforcements from an international relief expedition arrived. Fifteen years later, in Haiti, Daly earned his second Medal of Honor when, as part of a small Marine force of three officers and 35 enlisted men, he played a prominent role in defeating an attacking force of some 400 Cacos rebels. One of the officers in that scrap was then-Captain Bill Upshur, who named that north-border street in Ocotillo.

As impressive as are Medals of Honor, young Marines always have taken a deeper gasp of respect for wiry little Dan Daly (he was five feet, six inches tall, and weighed about 130) when they hear that story of his leading his exhausted Marines in a charge from their positions near Belleau Wood in World War I. “Come on, you sons of bitches,” yelled Daly, “do you want to live forever?” He led the way.

Major General John A. Lejeune, the 13th Commandant, and who also has sign posts in Ocotillo, once called Sergeant Major Dan Daly “the outstanding Marine of all times.” For a Marine, that is as close as you can get to living forever.

Elrod Place

Elrod Place, the shortest street in the Ocotillo housing area, is named for a Marine aviator Medal of Honor recipient who stood out even among those valiant heroes who defended Wake Island in the desperate early days of World War II. Major Henry T. Elrod was born 27 September 1905 in Turner County, Georgia, and attended the University of Georgia and Yale before entering the Marine Corps in late 1927. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in February 1931. Later he earned his wings, served at several state-side stations, and in January 1941 went out into the Pacific. He was among the 12 Marine pilots of VMF-211 (equipped with F4F-3 Grumman Wildcats), who slipped with extreme official secrecy away from Pearl Harbor on the *Enterprise* and went to Wake in late 1941, just before the Japanese attacks throughout the Pacific on 7 December and thereafter.

These pilots, as well as other Marines, gave good accounts of themselves before Wake fell to the Japanese on 23 December 1941. Prior to that, Elrod and other pilots had used up their planes, and they were fighting in ground positions with other defenders. Elrod was killed that final day while leading his Marines in ground attacks against the Japanese landing force.

Earlier, on 12 December, Elrod attacked alone into a flight of 22 enemy planes, and downed two of them. In other action, he and other Marine Corps fliers made low-level attacks against Japanese ships, and Elrod was credited with getting a killing bomb into a Japanese destroyer, and this ship blew up and sank. In this daring action, enemy flak cut the main fuel line in Elrod's Grumman, and although he was able to nurse the craft back to Wake, his nearly powerless landing deposited him in a crash among boulders along the atoll's south beach.

In Ocotillo Heights, Elrod Place extends a short distance from Berkeley Avenue and parallel to other cross streets. It ends in a cul-de-sac in the housing areas' central park where children play on green grass.

Fuller Street

A turn-of-the-century Marine who became the 15th Commandant, Major General Ben H. Fuller, gives his name to another of the streets which connect Berkeley and Upshur in the Ocotillo housing area. As with other Marines of his period, Fuller served in "every clime and place" during his career which started with the Naval Academy of the 1880s, and ended with his service as Major General Commandant from 1930 to 1934. He was born 27 February 1870 in Big Rapids, Michigan, and after schooling which included Naval Academy graduation in 1889, Fuller did his prescribed two years with the fleet as a "passed midshipman" and became a Marine second lieutenant on 1 July 1891. He served at sea during the Spanish-American War, after which he saw action in the Philippines where he distinguished himself as a battalion commander in the Battle of Novaleta. Next came China service in the Boxer Rebellion, where he was commended for his participation in the siege and capture of Tientsin.

In the early 1900s, Fuller served in various command and staff roles in Caribbean actions, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and elsewhere afloat and ashore. During World War I, Colonel (and temporarily Brigadier General) Fuller commanded a provisional brigade in Santo Domingo and assumed several administrative positions of high rank in the military government of that island nation. For this duty, he was commended by his naval superiors. During this period, a son, Captain Ted Fuller, was killed in action in France.

After World War I, Colonel and later General Fuller served in a number of post, station, and school duties, and became the Major General Commandant in August of 1930. He retired 1 March 1934, at age 64. Altogether, he had served on active duty for 48 years, 9 months, and 8 days.

Goettge Street

"The Great Goettge," he was sometimes called in those post-World War I days of the Roaring Twenties when a scarlet sweater with gold "M" won for beating out Army and Navy service teams for the President's Cup could be worn as proudly as a ribbon earned in battle. Football writers of the day compared him to Jim Thorpe. Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune commended him for his football performance on the 1925 team which won the cup, and he was coach of the team which won the cup for the Marine Corps the following year.

This was Colonel Frank Bryan Goettge, promoted to that rank posthumously after having lost his life in a daring patrol on Guadalcanal in the early days of that World War II operation. A native of Canton, Ohio, where he was born 30 December 1895, Goettge enlisted in the Marine Corps in May 1917, for World War I duty in France. He received a "field commission" to second lieutenant in the summer of 1918, and sailed for France where he took part in the final stages of the Meuse-Argonne offensive with the 5th Marines.

After the war, Goettge served at various posts and stations, in Haiti, in China, and at sea and schools. In between such normal assignments of the day, he served as coach and player on a number of Marine Corps football teams. In the 1930s, he served for a time as an aide to President Hoover, and at another time as aide to Commandant Fuller.

Lieutenant Colonel Goettge was the G-2 (Intelligence Officer) of the 1st Marine Division when it landed on Guadalcanal on 7 August 1942. A few days later, a Japanese prisoner gave word that an enemy force in a nearby coastal village wished to surrender. On 12 August, Goettge and a patrol moved by boat to the village to arrange the surrender. When they reached the beach, the Japanese opened fire. The ambush killed Lieutenant Colonel Goettge and all but three of the patrol. The survivors either swam back to friendly lines or worked their way through the jungle to safety.

Henderson Street

Commandant of the Marine Corps for so many years that some members of his family reportedly thought he owned that big old house at Eighth and I Streets (its address is actually 801 G Street, S.E.) in Washington, Brigadier General Archibald Henderson, the fifth Commandant, once closed Headquarters Marine Corps and put on the front door a sign saying he could be found in Florida fighting the Seminole Indians—or so it is said. Henderson served as Commandant from 17 October 1820 to 6 January 1859—38 years, 2 months, and 19 days. He died in office, age 76. President James Buchanan and members of his cabinet attended the funeral.

In the year following Henderson's death, the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter. It was an amazing life span, in world-shaking years for the young United States. Born in Fairfax County, Virginia, on 21 January 1783, Henderson became a second lieutenant of Marines on 4 June 1806. In the War of 1812, he served on board the frigate *Constitution* ("Old Ironsides") and helped fight her in that famous battle at sea against the British frigate *Java* in December of 1812; and he was present also in 1815 for those engagements with *Cyane* and *Levant*.

During World War II, a Navy transport ship was named for General Henderson. Henderson Hall, the small base adjacent to the present Headquarters Marine Corps in Arlington, Virginia, is named for him. Henderson Hall someday may hold Headquarters Marine Corps itself. Headquarters at present is a tenant of Federal Building No. 2, previously called the Navy Annex, but now known as the Arlington Annex (to the Pentagon). The General Services Administration actually manages the building, part of which is occupied by the Navy. There are plans for new buildings at Henderson Hall, which would allow the Marine Corps to own its own headquarters buildings.

Berkeley Avenue

First there was Marine Palms housing near the main gate, a no-nonsense checkerboard of gray concrete tilt-ups surrounded by sand, where early residents chummed up streets with such names as Plant, Mineral, Cactus, Lead, Ironwood. Then, when it became apparent that a Marine base was here to stay, Ocotillo Heights blossomed from the desert, with fancy windows which tried to catch desert views (but caught mostly heat), quarters posing above curving streets named after famous Marines of yesteryear, and rather smugly embraced a golf course, never mind that it was watered by sometimes malodorous reclaimed water from "Little Lake Bandini." There beyond the settling ponds and on the left a desolate chunk of desert which the base does not own, is the back gate and—wonder of wonders—a "subdivision" which almost seems to be off the base.

To get to this housing area apart, turn left beyond 10th Street on Berkeley Avenue, named for Major General Randolph C. Berkeley, who earned the Medal of Honor at Vera Cruz during the intervention in Mexico in 1914. Later, in Nicaragua in 1927, he earned the Navy Cross. He was born in 1875 at Staunton, Virginia, and after schooling was appointed a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on 8 August 1898, during the Spanish-American War. Although he left the Marine Corps briefly in early 1899, he returned before the year was out, and then served for more than 40 years in a variety of duties which included service at sea, in the Philippines, Cuba, Panama, Mexico, China, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Guam. He retired in January of 1939, and died in 1960.

Lejeune Circle

Lejeune Circle can perhaps be thought of as binding together the west end of the Ocotillo Heights streets in the same way that the 13th Commandant, Major General John Archer Lejeune, bound together historically the Old Corps and the New Corps. Lejeune was a

native of Louisiana (born 1867) and noted for diplomacy, staff and command competence, plus forward thinking. Lejeune served the Corps from the pre-World War I years of small detachments and seagoing service through World War I and into the dawn of the modern amphibious age which came to fruition for the Corps later, during World War II.

In France during World War I, General Lejeune became the first Marine officer to command a division in combat. This was the American Expeditionary Force's 2d Division, which included the 4th Brigade, composed of Marines, as well as an Army brigade, artillery, and other units. His preparation for that assignment went all the way back to his days at the Naval Academy, from which he graduated in 1899, and then through assignments of sea duty, in Panama where his diplomatic talents first attracted attention, in the Philippines, Cuba, Vera Cruz (1914), and as assistant commandant (to General Barnett), and command of the new, large Marine Corps base at Quantico in 1917.

During his years as Commandant (1920-29) Lejeune is credited with forging the way for modern methods of administration and personnel selection and promotion, for expeditionary force concepts which led the way later for amphibious doctrine, and for making useful to the nation a larger and fully modern Marine Corps. And as all Marines know, the 13th Commandant created much of the ceremonial trappings of traditional Marine Corps birthday observances—an almost magical annual rebinding of Marine Corps spirit and dedication which has touched us all during the years since Lejeune held the helm of the Corps.

Upshur Avenue

When Berkeley Avenue, coming across the desert from del Valle Drive, reaches the Ocotillo Housing area, it curves around the south border of the subdivision and then disappears north beyond the golf course. At the eastern point of Ocotillo, Upshur Avenue branches off northward and then turns westward to form the north border of this housing area. In between are eight cross streets—named for Marines from "A" to "H", and at the southwest region is a loop, Lejeune Circle.

Upshur, the north border, is named for another Medal of Honor recipient, Major General William P. Upshur, who entered the Marine Corps shortly after the turn of the century. He also served "in every clime and place" from Haiti, where he earned the Medal of Honor in 1915, several tours of sea duty, Cuba, the Philippines, China, and then France in World War I.

His name is burned indelibly into the memory of an entire generation of officer candidates who trained during the Korean War and later at Camp Upshur at Quantico. Also, Major General Upshur wrote and signed the foreword of the *Guidebook for Marines of the World War II period*.

Upshur, born in 1881 in Richmond, Virginia, graduated from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and became a Marine Corps second lieutenant on 1 February 1904. In 1942 he was Commanding General, Department of the Pacific (a command of the World War II period, located in San Francisco), when he was killed in a plane crash near Sitka, Alaska.

Appendix B

Twentynine Palms Commanders

LtCol Frederick H. Scantling.....	15 Dec 1952-Jul 1953
Col Francis R. Brink.....	Jul 1953-29 Dec 1954
Col John S. Oldfield.....	29 Dec 1954-30 Jan 1957
BGen Thomas G. McFarland.....	1 Feb 1957-27 Jun 1957
BGen Randall M. Victory.....	28 Jun 1957-30 Dec 1958
BGen Alpha L. Bowser.....	31 Dec 1958-29 Sep 1960
BGen Lewis J. Fields.....	30 Sep 1960-30 Aug 1962
BGen Joseph L. Stewart.....	31 Aug 1962-17 Mar 1964
BGen William K. Jones.....	18 Mar 1964-27 Dec 1965
BGen Virgil W. Banning.....	28 Dec 1965-28 Jul 1966
Col Henry M. Wellman, Jr.....	29 Jul 1966-30 Oct 1966
BGen Regan Fuller.....	31 Oct 1966-25 Mar 1969
BGen Carl W. Hoffman.....	26 Mar 1969-23 Apr 1971
BGen Paul G. Graham.....	24 Apr 1971-16 Oct 1972
BGen Kenneth J. Houghton.....	17 Oct 1972-30 Apr 1973
BGen William G. Joslyn.....	1 May 1973-1 May 1974
Col Albert E. Coffeen.....	2 May 1974-9 May 1974
BGen Clarence H. Schmid.....	10 May 1974-17 Jul 1975
BGen Ernest R. Reid, Jr.....	18 Jul 1975-29 Jun 1976
BGen Edward J. Megart.....	30 June 1976-19 Mar 1978
BGen Harold G. Glasgow.....	20 Mar 1978-10 Apr 1981
BGen Joseph B. Knotts.....	11 Apr 1981-14 Jul 1983
BGen William R. Etnyre.....	15 Jul 1983-14 Jun 1985
BGen John P. Monahan.....	15 Jun 1985-12 May 1986
MajGen Ernest T. Cook, Jr.....	13 May 1986-27 Aug 1987
MajGen Gene A. Deegan.....	28 Aug 1987-18 Jul 1989
MajGen John I. Hopkins.....	19 Jul 1989-

Appendix C

Chronology

- 20Aug52 Activated as Camp Detachment Marine Corps Training Center, Twentynine Palms, California.
- 6Feb53 Redesignated as Marine Corps Training Center, Twentynine Palms, California.
- 1Feb57 Redesignated as Marine Corps Base, Twentynine Palms, California.
- 1Oct78 Redesignated as Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Training Center, Twentynine Palms, California.
- 16Feb79 Redesignated as Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California.

Appendix D

Honors

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER
TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIFORNIA

NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE STREAMER WITH ONE BRONZE STAR

MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATION-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL
MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER
TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIFORNIA

MERITORIOUS UNIT CITATION, 1 SEPTEMBER 1979-1 JANUARY 1984
MERITORIOUS UNIT CITATION, 1 JULY 1987-31 JULY 1988

Appendix E

List of Reviewers

Marines

General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., USMC (Ret)

Lieutenant General William K. Jones, USMC (Ret)

Major General William R. Etnyre, USMC

Major General Harold G. Glasgow, USMC

Major General Robert E. Haebel, USMC

Major General Carl W. Hoffman, USMC (Ret)

Brigadier General John S. Oldfield, USMC (Ret)

Colonel George P. Blackburn, Jr., USMC (Ret)

Colonel Ralph K. Culver, USMC (Ret)

Colonel Francis I. Fenton, USMC (Ret)

Colonel James E. Stanton, USMC (Ret)

Lieutenant Colonel Donald E. Noll, USMC (Ret)

Lieutenant Colonel Frederick J. Scantling, USMC (Ret)

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The device reproduced on the back cover is the oldest military insignia in continuous use in the United States. It first appeared, as shown here, on Marine Corps buttons adopted in 1804. With the stars changed to five points, this device has continued on Marine Corps buttons to the present day.

