



OORAH NEWSLETTER

*Granite State Detachment #542
Marine Corps League*

March 31, 2021 Quarterly Issue: 002

COMMANDANT'S CORNER



BJ Byers

Dear Detachment Members, Friends and Supporters,

As you are all aware this past year was different than any we have experienced in recent history. Not only did COVID-19 affect the health of many people all over the world, it also sent us into an economic lockdown and businesses failed, resulting in high unemployment. That, coupled with it being a Presidential Election year and a polarized political environment that has created challenges. The Detachment was not able to conduct the tried and true fundraisers that we have in past years.

I am proud of the Detachment for stepping up and identifying alternate ways to raise money so that we can do what's most important for our Detachment as a whole; which is **Helping Marines and their Families**.

I look forward to the great things we will do as a Detachment, as we navigate through 2021. This past quarter, the membership elected a whole new staff. I am very confident that our Detachment is in good hands.

Additionally, our committees are working on plans to get us back together in a social face-to-face environment, just as soon as it is safe to do so. I am hopeful that not only will we be able to get back to fundraising, but also spend some quality time as a Detachment (with family members) by enjoying each other's company with barbecuing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, etc. Please share your ideas

with us so we can plan events that you, the Detachment members, will enjoy.

In closing, I wish you all good health and hope that you enjoy the warmer weather surrounded by family and friends.

Semper fidelis

SR. VICE COMMANDANT



John Jenkins

I am very pleased to have been chosen for this position. As stated by National, the job has a main focus on fundraising. And, while I feel that it certainly does, I also feel that it is a position that is in close support of the Commandant as the Executive Officer or 'XO'. Along with fundraising, my job is to advise the Commandant and create an atmosphere of seamless continuity of leadership of the Detachment.

When I joined the League in 2015, I had no idea where it would take me. But, I am very glad to be part of this continuation of the Marine Corps culture. My experience in the Marine Corps was soul shaping and has made me who I am today. I feel fortunate to be able to continue my service with my fellow Marines.

In my new position, I hope to be able to create beneficial financial situations, suggest new and improved communication dynamics, continue to serve on Honors Details, and genuinely enjoy the camaraderie of my Marine Corps brothers, sisters and Associate members.

Semper fidelis

**GRANITE STATE
DETACHMENT #542
OFFICERS 2020**

Commandant
BJ Byers

Sr. Vice Commandant
John Jenkins

Jr. Vice Commandant
Chris Peirce

Judge Advocate
Chris Alberding

Adjutant
Karen Byers

Paymaster
Gary Gahan

Chaplain
Joe Duquette

Quartermaster
John Petralito

Sergeant at Arms
Derwood Haskell

Web Sergeant
Chris Alberding

**THIS DAY IN
MARINE CORPS HISTORY**

January 16, 1991

Operation Desert Storm begins.

February 23, 1945

Five Marines and a Navy corpsman raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima

March 29, 1973

***US withdraws troops
from Vietnam***

Throughout the Vietnam War, Marines suffered 66,227 killed or wounded (22.5 %) or almost one of every four Marines who served during this conflict.

Officers Meeting

1800 – 1830

followed by the

Membership Meeting

1830 – 2000

on the

2nd Tuesday of the month

at the

Elks Lodge #146
290 Granite Street
Manchester, NH

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 3857

Manchester, NH 03105

Website:

www.granitestatemarines.com

Marine Corps Breakfast

08:00 Last Saturday of the Month

Airport Diner, Brown Avenue

Manchester, NH



Did you know ...?

In the Marine Corps a three-day weekend is called a "72" and a four-day weekend is called a "96".

The rank of Marine "gunner" is the only Marine Corps rank that requires different insignia on the left and right uniform collars. (The rank of colonel requires the eagles on each collar to be mirror images of each other, so they are also technically different insignia).

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
1st QUARTER OF 2021**

Richard Barber



Jacob Bowen



Ron Hayward



Jim Covatis -transfer



CHAPLAIN'S MESSAGE



Chaplain Joe Duquette

Think Positive

It is so easy to get sucked into all of the negative reports in the news media, especially about the pandemic. Too many people are experiencing depression. **Remember**, you have control of your mental attitude; so think about all the positives that this pandemic has brought.

- If you still commute to work there's less traffic, saving time.
- If working from home, no commute, you'll save money on gas.
- No bagged lunches, your refrigerator and microwave are near.
- Wearing what you want to the "office", if they can't see you.
- If you are not working, find a hobby or volunteer.
- You can reach out to family and friends using your phone or computer.
- Communication with fellow veterans, friends and neighbors will not only lift your spirits, but lift the spirits of those you contact.
- You can go for a walk or enjoy many outdoor activities.

We all have hope that the new vaccine will return our lives back to normalcy.

To all Marines and FMF Corpsmen, have a positive attitude and hope for better things to come as we go forward in 2021.

God Bless.



America is still America

By John Petralito

- She still has all the people that makes her great.
- She still offers the freedoms that many in this world dream of having.
- She still has a flag that waves in honor of those who fought and died for her.
- She still is a powerful nation that will continue to bring peace when called upon to do so.
- She still has the courage to face and overcome adversity.
- She still presents opportunity to those willing to seek and find.
- She still stands for liberty and justice for all.
- She still is our home.
- God Blessed America, be thankful that she still is.



PROUD TO FLY THE MARINE CORPS COLORS

As a Marine friend once told me back in the seventies -
“Once a Marine, Always a Marine”

With flag poles raised and our Stars and Stripes waving high, there is a bright red flag waving just below. The golden colored Eagle, Globe and Anchor United States Marine Corps Flag waves proudly for the Marine and his/her family who resides below it. Some of the Marines have passed on but these families continue to fly the EGA as a memorial. Parents of active duty Marines, fly the EAG with full honor towards their son/daughter. The USMC Flag represents men and women who have worn the uniform with pride, courage and with an inner gut spirit, **“ALWAYS FAITHFUL”**.

As you drive throughout our communities, you cannot help but notice how many USMC Flags fly high. The quarterly publication of the *OORAH Newsletter* will feature photographs and stories of the Marines that fly their flags in front of their homes.

We give a grand salute to them for showing that they will be forever **“Always Faithful”**. So, when you see the pole raised, our USA Flag waving high with the EGA proudly flown below, know that it is here where a **MARINE** stands in life and spirit.

Semper Fidelis, John Petralito



Marines Curtis Farrar and Gary Gahan

The USMC flag is proudly displayed by Marine Curtis Farrar on his porch in Manchester, New Hampshire. Curtis is eighty-two years old. He served six years in the Marines and was based out of Hawaii as a Recon with the purpose to find and observe the enemy and report back – also known in the military as “snoop ‘n poop”. He served in Vietnam in the early sixties where he was also involved in many Recon missions.



Marine George Comtois and wife Martha, Raymond, NH

Read more about George and Martha in the “Member Spotlight” section of this publication.

The Pride of Flying the Marine Corps Colors Never Fades!

★ ★ ★
 DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM????



★ ★

The first person who identifies this GSD Marine via email to oorah@granitestatemarines.com will win a \$5 Dunkin Donut gift card compliments of the editor.

★ ★ ★

TIME TO GO FISHING!!!



By Marge Romano

On behalf of the membership of the MCL Granite State Detachment #542, Commandant BJ Byers presented Past Commandant, Derwood "Woody" Haskell, with a **Johnny Morris 2.0 Carbonite rod and reel**. The gift is in recognition and appreciation of Woody's accomplishments, dedication and his valuable contribution of time and energy during his four years of service as Commandant of the GSD.

MEMBERSHIP ANNIVERSARIES

JANUARY – 0

FEBRUARY

Chris Alberding 2/15/15

Joey Duquette 2/12/20

Gannon Robert 2/22/86

Pauly Labbe 2/14/17

Christopher Peirce 2/12/20

Donald Schnare 2/9/88

Joseph Duquette 2/13/13

Keith B. Gagne – 2/2/02

Nancy Gero – 2/14/17

Christopher Martin 2/14/18

Richard "Doc" Plitcha 2/18/11

Gerard Tanguay 2/12/19

MARCH

John Balcom 3/2/03

Jim Covatis 3/1/03

Daniel Fedor 3/12/19

William Gibbons 3/3/14

Frank Silva 3/14/89

Richard Belcourt 3/3/03

John Fallon 3/8/88

David Freschi 3/18/17

John Jenkins 3/15/15

MEMBERSHIP BIRTHDAYS



JANUARY

Jacob Bowen

Robert Callahan, Sr

Gary Gahan

Maurice Lemay

Richard "Doc" Plitcha

FEBRUARY

Richard L. Murphy

MARCH

Charles W. Clough

Robert Gannon

VETERANS HELPING VETERANS



By Marge Romano

Representing the members of the MCL, Granite State Detachment #542, Paymaster, Gary Gahan presented a \$200 donation to Jeff Nelson, Executive Director of Liberty House.

Liberty House helps homeless and struggling Veterans by connecting them to available resources and providing a safe, substance-free transitional house. The organization recently moved to a new facility located at 221 Orange Street in Manchester, New Hampshire.

For additional information, visit their website at: <https://libertyhousennh.org>

GSD #542 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP 2021

\$1,000



Applicants must be in one of the following eligibility groups:

- A. Children, step children and grandchildren of Marines who have lost their life in the line of duty and residing in the GSD's area of membership.
- B. Children, step children, and grandchildren of Marines honorably serving in, or honorably discharged from, the United States Marine Corps and residing in the GSD's area of membership.
- C. Members of a Young Marines or ROTC unit who have a legal residence for the scholarship year in the area of GSD membership or attend meetings regularly held in the area of membership for the GSD.

The Scholarship Application and the Application Instructions are available on our website at:

www.granitestatemarines.com

- 1. Click on RESOURCES**
- 2. Under Important Links section scroll down**
- 3. Click on Granite State Detachment Scholarship Application**
- 4. Click on GSD Academic SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

**Completed applications with all required documents
must be post-marked by May 15, 2021**

**PLEASE MAIL COMPLETED APPLICATION TO:
Marjorie A. Romano
Scholarship Chairman
MCL Granite State Detachment #542
55 Harding Street
Manchester, NH 03109**

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MARINE – CPL GEORGE COMTOIS

USMC 1956 – 1962



As the oldest of four brothers, I grew up in St. Charles Orphanage in Rochester, New Hampshire. The rules at the orphanage were very strict and I learned the value of discipline and hard work at a very young age. When I was twelve, I was very fortunate to be placed with foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Philip Lavoie in Hampstead, New Hampshire. The Lavoie family and the Latoil family, plus many residents of the town, were a positive influence in my young life.

One of the reasons that I joined the Marine Corps was that my friend, Lance Dixon and I skipped school one day in April of 1956 and we decided to sign up for the Marine Corps. However, I was not old enough to join; but I did talk my foster mother into signing the required paper work that allowed me to enlist in the Reserves.

In February 1958, several months after high school graduation, I joined the regular Marine Corps. I spent thirteen weeks at Parris Island boot camp and then eight weeks of Advance Infantry training. I was then transferred to the G-26 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for approximately two months. I then transferred to the USS York County LST 1175, (a De Soto County-class tank landing ship) and I was deployed to Beirut, Lebanon.

The mission of our BLT (Battalion Landing Teams) was to make a landing on the beaches south of Beirut and secure the Beirut International Airport. At this time, I was eighteen years old and a bit nervous. I quickly realized as I was climbing down the cargo nets into the boat below, hauling a seventy-five pound full pack and a nine and a half pound M1 rifle, that my Marine Corps training was imperative and beneficial for this endeavor.

I made Acting CPL right after Beirut and was sent back to Camp Lejeune. Within approximately two weeks, I was transferred to the 8th Marines at Camp Lejeune and I made CPL. I was informed that the transfer occurred because experienced CPLs were needed and I was being sent back to Beirut on the troop transport ship AOA 28 USS Oglethorpe. However, before sailing on the USS Oglethorpe, I married my high school sweetheart, Martha Barnes.

The USS Oglethorpe sailed all over the Mediterranean. While on liberty, I explored twelve different ports from Gibraltar to Beirut and I was exposed to many different cultures.

During my six years in the Marine Corps, I was stationed in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Sanford, Florida. My MOS was 0300 – I was a platoon leader in Top Secret Security in Florida. I was released from active duty on February 16, 1962.

While in the Marine Corps, a major turning point in my life was meeting and understanding people from all walks of life, the importance of team work and cooperation with other people. My Marine Corps training and experience helped me in civilian life when I became a foreman and managed crews up to thirty-five people on three different construction jobs.

All my life I have enjoyed and been interested in all sports. I especially love baseball and I was very good at it. One of my fondest childhood memories is that my baseball coach, Mr. O'Brien, got me a tryout with Johnny Pesky of the Boston Red Sox. It was a great experience, but the timing was bad as I had just signed up with the Marine Corps Reserve. I have always found great pleasure in outdoor sports; I particularly enjoy fishing and hunting. My current hobbies are woodworking and gardening.

I joined the Granite State Detachment of the Marine Corps League on June 11, 2011 and I have enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship of the Detachment. I like attending the monthly GSD breakfasts at the Airport Diner where I enjoy chatting and catching up with everyone.

The advice I would like to pass on to others is to work hard and have respect for everyone. I am most grateful for my family; I am very proud of our country and our freedom for all people in the United States of America. SEMPER FI



Editor's note: While many stories are written about the experiences of young Marines, what is forgotten is the story and the experiences of the supportive wife waiting back home while her husband is deployed. This is Martha's story!

MARINE WIFE

MARTHA COMTOIS – 1958-1962

George and I were high school sweethearts when he joined the Marine Corps. When George was at Camp Lejeune, in G-26, waiting for his orders, I would travel by bus from New Hampshire to North Carolina to visit him. During my visits, I stayed at the "Hostess House" at Camp Lejeune and we would visit for short periods of time each evening.



We were married on July 5, 1959, before George was deployed on his second tour of the Mediterranean.

While George was deployed on the USS Oglethorpe, I lived at home with my family in Hampstead, New Hampshire. We were young and in love and it was a difficult time for me as I missed him so much, but we constantly wrote letters back and forth to one another. Deployments were the hardest part of being married to someone in the Marine Corps. As a military wife in the late fifties and early sixties (before cell phones and the internet) I knew that if my husband didn't call, it may be because he could not call – he may be on an operation, or because of many other reasons.

When George returned from his Mediterranean tour, we lived at on-base housing at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and off-base housing in Sanford, Florida. In 1960, Charlie, our oldest son was born. Financially, it was a very difficult time for us as the pay was minimal.

However, in those early years, I learned quickly how to stretch a dollar to make ends meet until the arrival of the next paycheck.

To keep loneliness at bay while George was performing his duties, I made friends and bonded with other Marine wives as we were all in the same situation. Also, as a young couple, we enjoyed many friendships with fellow Marines and their families on and off-base. As Marine wives, we all accepted that the military duties of our husbands was their first priority and the wives and family were second; however, we were always there to support our men and the United States Marine Corps.

George and I will celebrate sixty-three years of marriage this July. We have two sons, eight grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

While George was serving in the Marines, there were some challenging experiences and difficult times for me, but the joys of being a Marine's wife were many.

I am, and always have been, proud to be the wife of a United States Marine!

BREAKFAST AND COMARADERIE AT THE AIRPORT DINER!

On March 27, 2021, the last Saturday of the month, several GSD members gathered together to "break bread" while enjoying the sharing of information and catching up on life happenings since the last monthly breakfast.

COFFEE AND MORE!



A MILITARY POEM

MCL Granite State Detachment member, David "Doc" Freschi, served along with U. S. Marines Corps units as an FMF U. S. Navy Corpsman in Vietnam. Featured below is a poem "The Kiss", written by David; it is one of twenty-seven in his Military Poems - Volume #1 collection. "The Kiss" conveys experiences and emotional feelings, on a given day, while he was serving as a Corpsman "Doc" in Vietnam. More of David's insightful poems can be found on the Detachment website at: www.granitestatemarines.com - click on RESOURCES, scroll down to Military Poems by David "Doc" Freschi, click on Military Poems – Volume #1.

The Kiss

By David F. Freschi

That's all it was, a kiss
Didn't mean anything
Pulling out the next day- big up up
Young man, nervous, scared, ready
Half an hour left till the gates closed
Shutting little runaway pleasures down
Time would become the ritual
Of packing and unpacking over and over
Morphine counted, enough dressings
Got to be able to stuff a few more someplace
Luck pieces packed, corpsman's personal tools
Rush down a dusty street, the only one
Ville emptying of green men in baggy pants
Saw Missy Lan, saw the smile
Stopped and bought a coke, almost cool
There she was, only a space away
"You going to the valley"
How'd she know? I hadn't heard yet
A coldness rumbles my gut
We always lose some in the valley
Up on tiptoes, she brushes a feathery touch
Smell of Jasmine and cooking fire
"Be safe Bacsí, be safe"
And she disappears and a young man/boy
Confused and grateful for the touch of warmth
That pushes the cold back for just a moment,
A few precious moments, trudging
Back through the gate, a lightness in my step
Before tomorrow's walk
To meet other young men and clash
In the valley that always mauls with fire and pain
No touch, no embrace
Just a kiss that's all it was
Didn't mean anything, nothing. Move on



**Attention
Veterans,
Veterans' Families,
Caregivers and Survivors.**

VA News

[TogetherWeServed.com](https://www.togetherweserved.com)

Reunites Veterans

With over 2 million Veteran Members, and one of the most complete databases of U.S. Military Units available, [TogetherWeServed.com](https://www.togetherweserved.com) enables Veterans, from all eras, to find and reconnect with other Veterans who served in their units, commands, ships or squadrons at the same time. Simply register your basic military service details to take advantage of this **FREE reconnect service** which you can cancel at anytime.

HAPPY SPRING 2021, MARINES!



“SEMPER FI”