

March 2005

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# LEATHERNECK

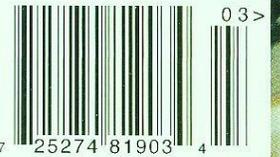
MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

## Lending a Hand To Those in Need

Country Singer's  
"Bumper of My SUV"  
A Hit With Heart

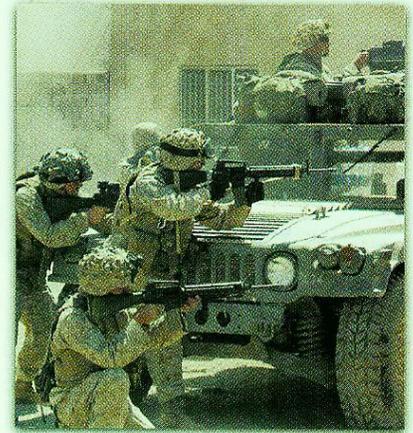
Samoa's Fiercest Warriors:  
The Fita Fita Battalion

First Battle of Fallujah  
Part II: Judgment Day

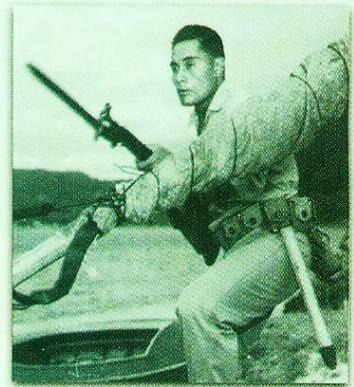


## FEATURES

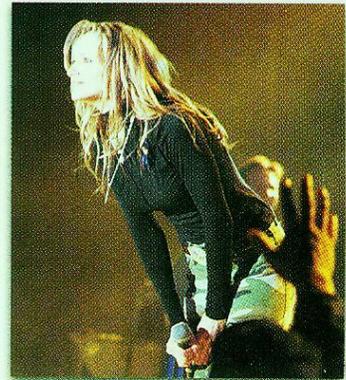
- 14 Fallujah: A Four-Letter Word** *By Ross W. Simpson*  
"Red Cloud" to the rescue. This is the conclusion of a two-part heroic tale of a squad of Marines, cut off and nearly overrun in the first battle of Fallujah, April 2004.
- 20 Hail to the Chief** *Compiled from news releases*  
Pomp and military circumstance were on parade at the 55th Presidential Inauguration.
- 22 The War on Terror** *Edited by R. R. Keene*  
Marines around the world donned their humanitarian assistance "helmets." Humanitarian operations are more commonplace than ever and usually extend far beyond simply providing a secure environment for other organizations to carry out the mission.
- 28 The Forgotten Battalion** *By LtCol Jack Lewis, USMCR (Ret)*  
Members of the Samoan Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve served with distinction but little recognition in World War II.
- 36 II MEF Leathernecks Go to War Armed With Arabic**  
*By Kirsten A. Holmstedt*  
Building on lessons learned prior to assuming the role as the higher Marine headquarters inside Iraq, II MEF sent its Marines to language training.
- 40 Extreme Leadership to Some; Routine to Parris Island Marines**  
*By 1stLt Gerald F. Merna, USMC (Ret)*  
Recruit graduation, the final event in the transition from recruit to Marine, is special to all who attend.
- 46 Country Singer Sticks by Marines** *By John Hoellwarth*  
A brother in the Corps, her Marine bumper sticker and a confrontation with an arrogant driver resulted in country music singer and songwriter Chely Wright's hit song, "Bumper of My SUV."



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## DEPARTMENTS



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**COVER:** Hospital Corpsman Second Class Chris Johnson, assigned to Company L, 3d Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, gave comfort to an Iraqi child during a December 2004 cordon and search operation outside Fallujah, Iraq. Photo by LCpl James J. Vooris. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$1 (to cover mailing costs) to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134.

# Extreme Leadership to Some; Routine to Parris Island Marines

Story and photos by 1stLt Gerald F. Merna, USMC (Ret)

**T**he overwhelming highlight of the Company E, 2d Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment (Korea) Association reunion occurred Sept. 17, 2004, when we were guests at morning colors and the Recruit Graduation Parade at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C. The performance of the MCRD band, members of the color guard, the Depot Marines present and even their bulldog mascot was just stirring. At the end of the parade, an extraordinary display of Marine leadership defied description.

Several people of note were in attendance. Brigadier General Richard T. Tryon, the commanding general of the recruit depot, is also commander of the Eastern Recruiting Region. Colonel John Valentin, the MCRD chief of staff, assists and shares the responsibilities inherent in the general's two titles. Medal of Honor holder Duane Dewey and his wife, Bertha, contributed to E/2/5's recognition. While serving as a corporal, Dewey was awarded his medal for the heroic act set out in his citation:

"When an enemy grenade landed close

**Col John Valentin told them that their accomplishments at Parris Island are not diminished one iota because they were injured at the end of their training and could not march.**

to his position while he and his assistant gunner were receiving medical attention for their wounds during a fierce night attack by numerically superior hostile forces, Cpl Dewey, although suffering intense pain, immediately pulled the corpsman to the ground and, shouting a warning to the other Marines around him, bravely smothered the deadly missile with his body, personally absorbing the full force of the explosion to save his comrades from possible injury or death."



After a September 2004 recruit graduation ceremony, Col John Valentin welcomed newly graduated Marines to the Corps. Being injured and unable to march in their graduation parade made them no less United States Marines, and Col Valentin saw to it that they appreciated their accomplishments.

Dewey and his wife were recognized at the morning colors ceremony. When Col Valentin suggested the association pose for a group picture in front of the headquarters building, Dewey was given the honor of holding the leash for the mascot, Lance Corporal "Mac."

More than 500 new Marines earned their eagle, globe and anchor that day. Almost 2,000 visitors, consisting of family members and friends of the graduating recruits, attended the ceremony. Various introductions were made to the assembled guests, each accompanied by substantial applause. At about that time it started to drizzle. Almost as suddenly, the rain stopped, and the sun came out bright and hot.

Six male and two female platoons of new Marines assembled at the rear of the parade field in preparation for "passing in review." Drill instructors assumed their positions in front of their platoons.

The "honor graduate" of each platoon also was given the honor of carrying the respective platoon's guidon. The honor of being the reviewing officer was given to Sergeant Major Adam C. Terry.

The order was given to the platoons standing at parade rest to pass in review. With this, the official parade began with continuous rounds of applause. This is what family and friends came to see, and no one was disappointed.

At the end of the pass in review, the following command was given: "Dismiss your platoons." The result can best be described as "organized bedlam," as more than 500 new Marines broke ranks and immediately ran to their family and friends, who streamed down from their seats to meet their Marines halfway.

It was at this juncture the remarkable display of leadership occurred.

Ten Marine privates, five female and five male, were seated in the first row of the bleachers. Directly behind them were numerous pairs of neatly stacked crutches.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the graduation, Col Valentin literally



As is part of tradition at the graduation parades, platoon guidons are received by DIs from platoon honor graduates and stored for issue to future recruits. The mission for the recruits who follow is to honor a previous platoon's success by superb performance and successful completion of recruit training in order to earn the title "Marine."

dashed out of the main reviewing stand and headed straight to where the 10 privates were seated.

As Col Valentin approached them, he beckoned for them to gather near. With that, each one quickly picked up a set of crutches and formed a semi-circle around him.

Col Valentin put his arms around as many of those injured Marines as he could reach. As he moved among them, he made sure he touched each of them at least once and then spoke to them.

He told them that while they were unable to march in their graduation parade, that did not make them any less of Marines. He said their accomplishments at Parris Island are not diminished one iota because they were injured at the end of their training and could not march. He congratulated each and every one of them for earning their eagle, globe and anchor, for finishing recruit training honorably, and for joining the ranks of the United States Marine Corps. He then

hurried them off to join their family and friends and enjoy the rest of that great day.

Col Valentin shook hands with each of the Marines and then left almost as quickly as he arrived. At that instant, 10 very proud, smiling and happy new Marines limped off with the help of the crutches, seeking family members and friends.

This colonel of Marines had seized the moment to congratulate each of those injured young men and women, now Marines. They had earned the right to be in one of those eight platoons to march with their fellow recruits, but because of their injuries, were not able to.

Recruits must endure physically, mentally and emotionally challenging tests before they earn their Marine emblems.

Those 10 young Marine privates had completed their training, successfully finished the Crucible, and graduated, and they did it on crutches.

Col Valentin and other Marines like

him practice not only extraordinary acts of command but also routine exercises of leadership, exemplified by their unique daily conduct, inherent qualities of character and temperament, their special brand of Marine Corps spirit, leadership and courage.

*Editor's note: First Lt Merna, a Marine Mustang whose career spanned 22 years, is a two-war veteran. He served in W/1/5 and as a platoon sergeant in E/2/5, First Marine Division during the Korean War, 1952-53, and as the assistant division adjutant/awards officer of 3dMarDiv in Vietnam, 1966-67.*

*During an 18-year United States Postal Service career, he was one of only 34 officers among 850,000 employees. He later spent six years each as director of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association and as vice president of the National Defense Industrial Association, respectively.*



## EPILOGUE

Shortly after completing his article, Lt. Merna sent a bound copy to Chief of Staff Col. Valentin and received the following response:



From the Desk of  
the Chief of Staff

30 November 04

Lieutenant Merna--

Please allow me to express my gratitude for your letter and especially for your comments. Furthermore, thank you for compiling and forwarding the binder with the story -- how very thoughtful.

We here at Parson Detachment feel both a professional and personal responsibility to maintain the legacy

passed to us by our forebears. Your comments help us know that we are still "making them like they used to!"

Again, thank you and we look forward to your next visit.

Respectfully,

Col Valentin  
Col USMC  
Chief of Staff