

The Tattoo

Over waffles and coffee in the Reston VA Diner¹ one morning
Two friends recalled Marine Corps memories, and an idea came aborning
In common they shared their deep love of the Corps
But each lamented they failed a tattoo to score



Each confirmed to the other they *always* wanted a tattoo
Of The Corps' *Eagle, Globe and Anchor*² (with their service dates too).
Not getting this Emblem was among their overlooked needs,
During years of Marine service, performing honorable deeds.

"Now is the time to get this done" they said, (with a slight hint of bluff?) Absolutely determined they were both macho *and had "The Right Stuff."*

So on Route 7 to Leesburg³ they traveled, with nary a blink.

To Loudoun County's *only* tattoo parlor, fittingly named the *Insane Ink*



The noticeable age difference between these proud Marines
Mattered not because they had parallel dreams.

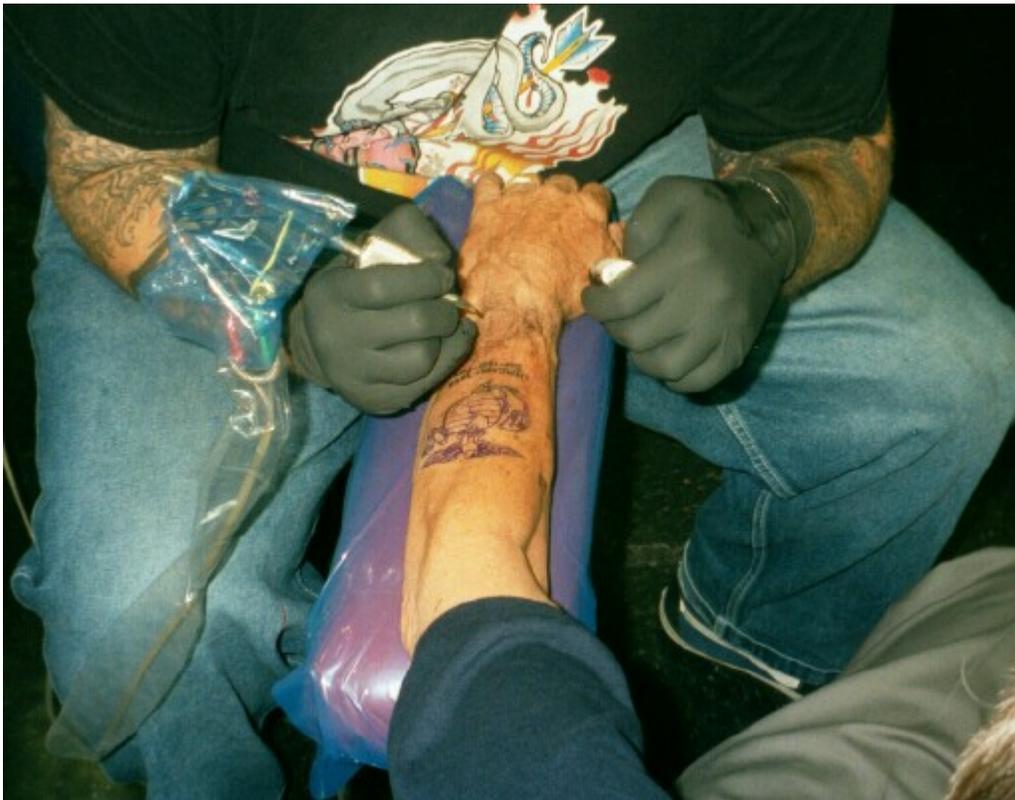
So with health waivers signed and artist's fees paid, Jerry was first to explore
The needle's vaccination and trivial sound of its motors unmusical score.



"How's it feel?" thoughtfully inquired the younger Dean
(Noting slight grimaces from the older Marine).

"Not as bad as I thought, but I could do with a 'Bud,'"

Was the reply from Jerry, his arm showing some droplets of blood.



Almost two hours later, a gold-colored Marine Corps Emblem appeared,
And the artist ensured Jerry's forearm was surgically cleared.

Dean snapped a few pictures to record this momentous event
For future "sea stories" ⁴ could show later the deeds significance and symbolic portent

The *Marine Mustang's* ⁵ new Emblem in bright color appeared,
(With dates of military service in which he so long served⁶),
Included his tribute to "*Dot Forever*" his former classmate and loving Spouse
that he so truly endeared



USMC 1947 - 1968
Dot - 1951 - Forever

"It's your turn now" the artist matter-of-factly announced,
Pointing to Dean, who anxiously entered (not about to be trounced).



A small name he desired (on a forearm so large for just one word),
And in a short time five letters in a calligraphic font occurred.



The nickname "BECCA" emerged in a glowing blue ink,
Wife and Mother of their Son Nick, the lights of Dean's life.
As with his military and other responsibilities he never did shrink.
He fulfills their needs and desires with little or no strife.



"Stretch out on this bench" said the artist with a laugh.
"Now is the hard part, putting needle on calf."
Knowing as wide as his worktable was, it could not compromise
to accommodate our man Dean, well above average size

It was now Jerry's turn to watch, (taking pictures as well),
Waiting while Dean endured *his* two hours of hell



As a radio played disruptively (some wicked heavy metal band)
Dean's *Marine Emblem* took form, and looked just grand.
Displaying the Camp David⁷ logo, Dean's earned choice of brand



MARINE SECURITY CO.
CAMP DAVID

Both men's art was bandaged (they were no worse for the fray);
Dean and Jerry headed home, their new tattoos to display.



But their dreams were accomplished, and they both did endure
And now forever possess the Emblem, worn only by *Marines of the Corps*



Gerald F. Merna



Dean A. Smith

G F Merna 08-11-02

Footnotes:

1. After discharge as a Corporal from the U. S. Marine Corps and his last assignment as a Security Guard at Camp David, Dean Smith became an Executive with the Silver Diner chain of restaurants in MD and Northern VA. While Managing Partner of the Reston Silver Diner Dean Smith organized the collection of items for our troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan by not only placing collection barrels in the lobby of his diner, but also visiting area schools to personally pick up items donated by school children all over Northern Virginia. He would personally make up the packages and lug them to the post office as soon as there were enough items to fill a package. He would solicit names of *any* military person serving overseas from any of his customers and *ensure* they were all included. He also inaugurated "Children's Night" at the Diner every Tuesday so parents could bring their children in for dinner at reduced prices and to be entertained by a clown, "Snow White," "Pocahontas" or other children's heroes. With the able assistance of one of his great waiters Rusty Marshall, he organized a weekly free Antique Car Show for customers, which attracted antique cars from all over Northern Virginia. Besides the pleasure of showing off their prized automobiles Dean also ensured the drivers/owners of these cars got reduced prices for dinner. The congeniality and friendliness displayed by this giant of a man (well over six feet with matching weight), belied his former serious and weighty "occupation" as a Camp David Marine Security Guard. Dean left the Silver Diner chain to open his own business, *Sunflower Landscape and Design* in Clinton Township, Michigan (see: <http://sunflowerlandscapes.com/>).
2. The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor is the official emblem of the United States Marine Corps. The current emblem traces its roots to the designs and ornaments of early Continental Marines as well as British Royal Marines.
3. Leesburg is a historic town in, and county seat of, Loudoun County, Virginia, United States of America. Leesburg is located approximately 40 miles (64 km) west-northwest of Washington, D.C. along the base of the Catoclin Mountain and adjacent to the Potomac River. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leesburg, Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leesburg,_Virginia))
4. "Sea Stories" are tales that often contain a small grain of truth somewhere. (<http://4mermarine.com/USMC/dictionary/s.html>)
5. A "Mustang" is any Marine, who after serving on active duty in the enlisted ranks of the United States Marine Corps or Marine Corps Reserve, has been promoted to the officer ranks, and further served as a commissioned or warrant officer on either active duty or reserve status. The title includes all such Marines: active duty, reserve, retired, and/or honorably discharged. The title of a Marine of this status is, and shall evermore be...MUSTANG! "There is no honor greater than to be called "Mustang." "You have long epitomized the warrior virtues of courage, devotion to duty, sacrifice, and imaginative leadership." General Alfred M. Gray USMC, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps and a Mustang. (<http://www.marinecorpsmustang.org/>).
6. Jerry Merna enlisted in the USMC at 17 and served for 22 years, including service in Korea and Vietnam. Advanced through grades to Master Gunnery Sgt., commissioned 2dLt in 1966, promoted to 1stLt in Vietnam 1967. Retired in 1968; various positions in USPS 1968-1987 (exec. Asst. to Postmaster Gen., sectional ctr. Mgr/Postmaster NoVa. 1987-1993 advt. dir. Signal Mag. AFCEA; 1992-2002 VP/Assoc. Publisher National Def. Mag.
7. Camp David is a Presidential weekend retreat in Maryland's Catoclin Mountains. Originally a military base, it was turned over to the White House during the Great Depression and was named Shangri-La by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. President Dwight Eisenhower renamed it Camp David for his grandson David. It consists of 180 forested acres, protected by a ring of three fences and is guarded by one of the Marine Corps' most elite units, MSC-CD (Marine Security Company, Camp David). Each Marine is handpicked from the infantry and sent through a battery of psychological and physical tests. He then must undergo specialized security training at the Marine Corps Security Forces School, in Chesapeake, Virginia. The Marines then report to Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. Assuming the Marines successfully complete all their schooling, they still must attain "Yankee White" security clearance. (http://www.fairfaxcountyva.com/Camp_David_Presidential_Retreat-a-361.html)