



LISTEN UP!

CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT #636

Marine Corps League Of Pennsylvania, Inc.

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Editor: DON H. GEE



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2nd Wednesday of Month
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MARINE OF THE YEAR
WILLIAM E. JERROM

Why I Gave Up Journalism to Join the Marines

by Matt Pottinger
The Wall Street Journal

When people ask why I recently left *The Wall Street Journal* to join the Marines, I usually have a short answer. It felt like the time had come to stop reporting events and get more directly involved. But that's not the whole answer, and how I got to this point wasn't a straight line.

It's a cliché that you appreciate your own country more when you live abroad, but it happens to be true. Living in China for the last seven years, I've seen that country take a giant leap from a struggling Third World country into a true world power. For many people it still comes as a surprise to learn that China is chasing Japan as the second-largest economy on the globe and could soon own a trillion dollars of American debt.

But living in China also shows you what a nondemocratic country can do to its citizens. I've seen protesters tackled and beaten by plainclothes police in Tiananmen Square, and I've been videotaped by government agents while I was talking to a source. I've been arrested and forced to flush my notes down a toilet to keep the police from getting them, and I've been punched in the face in a Beijing "Starbucks" by a government goon who was trying to keep me from investigating a Chinese company's sale of nuclear fuel to other countries.

When you live abroad long enough, you come to understand that governments that behave this way are not the exception, but the rule. They feel alien to us, but from the viewpoint of the world's population, we are the aliens, not them.

That makes you think about protecting your country no matter who you are or what you're doing. What impresses you most, when you don't have them day to day, are the institutions that distinguish the U.S.: the separation of powers, a free press, the right to vote, and a culture that values civic duty and service, to name but a few.

I'm not an uncritical, rah-rah American. Living abroad has sharpened my view of what's wrong with my country, too. It's obvious that we need to reinvent ourselves in various ways, but we should also be allowed to do it from within, not according to someone else's dictates.

But why the Marines?

A year ago, I was at my sister's house using her husband's laptop when I came across a video of an American in Iraq being beheaded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The details are beyond description here; let's just say it was obscene. At first I admit I felt a touch of the terror they wanted me to feel, but then I felt the anger they didn't. We often talk about how our policies are radicalizing young men in the Middle East to become our enemies, but rarely do we talk about how their actions are radicalizing us.

(See *MARINES*, Page 4)

COMMANDANT'S COLUMN

Marines,

We've plowed through another successful year for our detachment.

Good fund raisers, parades, conventions, lively detachment meetings and so on.

As I have done in the past, wish to express my gratitude to our members for giving their time and effort to our cause. Job well done! Now it's time to look forward to a new year. First on the agenda is the department winter meeting being held in Grantville, PA. at the Holiday Inn on Jan. 6 - 8. **Past Commandant Budd Pearce** and I will be in attendance. Of course, anyone else who wishes to come along is more than welcome.

We celebrated the Marine Corps Birthday by joining the Montgomery County Detachment at the Blair Mill Inn on November 11. I'm not aware of any complaints from any of our members who attended. I'm assuming that a good time was had by all. Perhaps we'll do it again next year.

We ended the year on a high note at our December meeting. We all gave **Marine Wil Haas** a great big "OOH- RAH" for the many toys that he collected for the "Toys for Tots" program from his friends and neighbors.

We had two honored guests in attendance from MAG-49, Marines **LCpl. Brian Burritt** and **PFC Lawrence Vance Jr.** whom took possession of this bounty of toys. A

lot of needy children will have a happy Christmas due to this effort by **Marine Haas**.

For those members who may not be aware of it, the detachment has a new "Marine of the Year", **Budd Pearce, PC**. Congratulations Budd! You are well deserving of this recognition. Wear the title proudly.

Now that we have entered the holiday season, I would like to thank the members who have honored me with greetings of the season preferably

known as Christmas cards. I also noticed that nearly all had Commemorative Stamps depicting the four Legends of the Corps. Mostly all cards received from other Marines had the stamps as well. That's how I sent mine out.

That's it for now, Marines. See you in January. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Fitzpatrick Fights to Honor a Local Marine

On Nov. 10, **Congressman Michael Fitzpatrick** introduced legislation to award Newtown's **Richard Gresko** the Medal of Honor for his heroism and actions above and beyond the call of duty in combat during the Vietnam War.

The introduction of this legislation marks the most recent development in a long battle to award **Richard Gresko** the nation's highest military honor.

In 1970, then 20-year-old Lance Corporal **Richard Gresko, USMC**, was stationed in Vietnam. He and his men were tasked with preventing North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong raids on villages to exact retribution on pro-American Vietnamese or loot the villagers.

On the Night of March 11, **Gresko** formed a squad to set up an ambush to eliminate an enemy raid on a small village.

During the ambush, **Richard Gresko**, without thought to his own welfare, flung himself over a live grenade to save his fellow Marines. **Gresko** absorbed the full force of the blast, sparing his men, but seriously injuring him in the process.

Although seriously wounded, **Gresko** continued to lay down fire and direct his troops. He even managed to fire a signal flare for their helicopter extraction from the area. Upon learning of that night's events, **Gresko's** commanding officer, **1st Lieutenant Joseph F. Sloan**, filed paperwork to award him the Medal of Honor. However, that paperwork

never reached Washington and **Gresko** was denied the distinguished honor he deserved.

The family and friends of **Richard Gresko** began to redress the failure of the Department of the Navy to award the Medal of Honor beginning in 1971.

His story spread throughout Bucks County and won the support of numerous veterans' organizations and local governments.

Although multiple attempts were made, progress to obtain the medal was slow.

In 1976, the Navy awarded **Gresko** the Navy Cross for his gallantry, but the quest for the Medal of Honor continued.

A total of 48 servicemen were awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam, many for acts mirroring the bravery **Richard Gresko** demonstrated on the night of Mar. 11, 1970.

Although Senators and Congressmen attempted to convince the Department of the Navy and the Commandant of the Marine Corps that **Gresko** was worthy of the medal, only Congressman **Fitzpatrick** has taken the step to introduce legislation to award **Richard Gresko** the Medal of Honor.

Currently, the legislation is being considered in the House Armed Services Committee, awaiting approval for a hopeful move to the House for a vote.

LISTEN UP!

LISTEN UP! is the internal information publication of the CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT #636, Inc. of the Marine Corps League of Pennsylvania, Inc. It is published monthly by and for the members of the Central Bucks Detachment.

Highlights

The regular meeting of the Central Bucks Detachment #636, Inc., of the Marine Corps League of Pennsylvania, Inc., was held December 14,, 2005, at the Albert E. Atkinson American Legion Post #210, 315 North St., Doylestown, PA.

There were 14 members present including all officers except the Public Relations Officer and Quartermaster. Distinguished members in attendance included **Past Commandant and Marine of the Year Budd Pearce** and **Past Commandant Bob Sundling**; and **Past Commandant of the Department of New Jersey Ed Hoth**.

Special guests included Marines from MAG-49, at Willow Grove, who were attending to pick up "Toys-for-Tots" donations brought in by **Marine Wil Haas**.

The Minutes of the November Meeting were unanimously approved.

OFFICER REPORTS

Commandant Bill Miller reported on the Southeast Division Meeting he attended on Nov. 20. He announced the Department Staff & Members Meeting is scheduled for Jan. 6-8 in Grantville, PA.

Senior Vice Commandant Jim Powell reported he had received the Detachment's first allocation of tickets for the Department's Annual Raffle.

Junior Vice Commandant Jim McComb reported the Detachment strength at 49 including 22 Life Members, 15 Regular Members, 4 Associate Members, and 1 Honorary Member. There are 7 members delinquent in their dues.

Adjutant Gary Smith reported he had received no communications aside from that already reported by the Commandant.

Judge Advocate Bill Jerrom reported the Detachment had no legal problems.

Sergeant-at-Arms Bill Mickelson reported the Color Guard has not been requested since the last meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

YOUNG MARINES--Young Marines Liaison Bob Sundling, PC, reported the Young Marines Unit helped the Reserve Marines with the "Toys-for-Tots" program. The Unit has scheduled a visit the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Philadelphia.

NEW BUSINESS

VETERANS DAY--Past Commandant Budd Pearce, Judge Advocate Bill Jerrom and Marine Bill Rosenberger provided a Color Guard on Veterans Day at Kutz Elementary School.

DONATION--A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to donate \$100 to the *Intelligencer's* Christmas program.

GOOD OF THE LEAGUE

GOODIES FOR THE TROOPS--Past Commandant Bob Sundling reminded the Detachment about the "Goodies for the Troops" program.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned until 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 11.

MARINES *(From Page 1)*

In a brief moment of revulsion, sitting there in that living room, I became their blowback.

Of course, a single emotional moment does not justify a career change, and that's not what happened to me.

The next day I went to lunch at the Council on Foreign Relations where I happened to meet a Marine Corps Colonel who'd just come back from Iraq. He gave me a no-nonsense assessment of what was happening there, but what got to me most was his description of how the Marines behaved and how they looked after each other in a hostile world. That struck me as a metaphor for how America should be in the world at large, and it also appealed to me on a personal level. At one point I said half-jokingly that, being 31 years old, it was a shame I was too old to serve. He sat back for a second and said, "I think I've still gotcha."

The next morning I found myself roaming around the belly of the USS Intrepid, a World War II aircraft carrier museum moored a few blocks from Times Square, looking for a Marine recruiting station and thinking I'd probably lost my marbles. The officer-selection officer wasn't impressed with my age, my Chinese language abilities or the fact that I worked for one of the great newspapers of the world. His only question was, "How's your endurance?"

Well, I can sit at my desk for 12 hours straight—14, if I have a bag of Reese's. He said if I wanted a shot at this I'd have to ace the physical fitness test, where a perfect score consisted of 20 pull-ups, 100 crunches in two minutes, and a three-mile run in 18 minutes.

Essentially he was telling me to pack it in and go home. After assuring him I didn't have a criminal record or any tattoos, either of which would have required yet another waiver (my age already required the first), I took

an application and went back to China.

Then came the Asian tsunami last December. I was scrambled to Thailand, where thousands of people had died in the wave. After days in the midst of the devastation, I pulled back to Thailand's Utapao Air Force Base, at one time a U.S. staging area for bombing runs over Hanoi, to write a story on the U.S.-led relief efforts. The abandoned base was now bustling with air traffic and military personnel, and the man in charge was a Marine.

Warfare and relief efforts, as it turns out, involve many skills in common. In both cases, it's 80% preparation and logistics and only a small percent of actual battle. What these guys were doing was the same thing they did in a war zone, except now the tip of the spear wasn't weapons, but food, water and medicine. It was a major operation to save people's lives, and it was clear that no other country in the world could do what they were doing. Once again, I was bumping into the U.S. Marines, and once again I was impressed.

The day before I left Thailand I decided to do my first physical training and see what happened. I started running and was winded in five minutes. The air quality in downtown Bangkok didn't help, but the biggest problem was me. I ducked into Lumpini Park in the heart of the city where I was chased around by a three-foot monitor lizard that ran faster than I did. At one point I found a playground jungle gym and managed to do half a pull-up. That's all.

I got back to Beijing and started running several days a week. Along the way I met a Marine who was studying in Beijing on a fellowship and started training with him. Pretty soon I filled out the application I'd taken from New York, got letters of recommendation from old professors and mentors, and received a letter

from a senior Marine officer who took a leap of faith on my behalf.

I made a quick trip back to New York in April to take a preliminary physical fitness test with the recruitment officer at the USS Intrepid. By then I could do 13 pull-ups, all my crunches, and a three-mile run along the West Side Highway in a little under 21 minutes, all in all a mediocre performance that was barely passable.

When I was done, the officer told me to wipe the foam off my mouth, but I did him one better and puked all over the tarmac. He liked that a lot. That's when we both knew I was going for it.

Friends ask if I worry about going from a life of independent thought and action to a life of hierarchy and teamwork. At the moment, I find that appealing because it means being part of something bigger than I am. As for how different it's going to be, that, too, has its appeal because it's the opposite of what I've been doing up to now. Why should I do something that's a "natural fit" with what I already do? Why shouldn't I try to expand myself?

In a way, I see the Marines as a microcosm of America at its best. Their focus isn't on weapons and tactics, but on leadership. That's the whole point of the Marines. They care about each other in good times and bad, they've always had to fight for their existence—even Harry Truman saw them as nothing more than the "Navy's police force"—and they have the strength of their traditions. Their future, like the country's, is worth fighting for. I hope to be part of the effort.

(ED. NOTE: Mr. Pottinger, until recently a Journal correspondent in China, was commissioned a Second Lieutenant last month. He spent the last three months at Officer Candidates School in Quantico, VA. As of early December, his three-mile run was down to 18 minutes and 15 seconds.)

Willis Comes Out Fighting for Iraq's Forgotten GI Heroes

By Sarah Baxter

London Sunday Times

LONDON--Angered by negative portrayals of the conflict in Iraq, **Bruce Willis**, the Hollywood star, is to make a pro-war film in which American soldiers will be depicted as brave fighters for freedom and democracy.

It will be based on the exploits of the heavily decorated members of Deuce Four, the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry, which has spent the past year battling insurgents in the northern Iraqi town of Mosul.

Willis attended Deuce Four's homecoming ball last month in Seattle, WA, where the soldiers are on leave, along with **Stephen Eads**, the producer of *Armageddon* and *The Sixth Sense*.

The 50-year-old actor said that he was in talks about a film of "these guys who do what they are asked to for very little money to defend and fight for what they consider to be freedom".

Unlike many Hollywood stars Willis supports the war and recently offered a \$1 million (about £583,000) bounty for the capture of any of Al-Qaeda's most wanted leaders such as **Osama Bin Laden**, **Ayman Al-Zawahiri** or **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**, its commander in Iraq. Willis visited the war zone with his rock and blues band, the Accelerators, in 2003.

"I am baffled to understand why the things I saw happening in Iraq are not being reported," he told MSNBC, the American news channel.

He is expected to base the film on the writings of the independent blogger **Michael Yon**, a former special forces green beret who was embedded with Deuce Four and sent regular dispatches about their heroics.

Yon was at the soldiers' ball with

Willis, who got to know him through his internet war reports on www.michaelyon.blogspot.com.

"What he is doing is something the American media and maybe the world media isn't doing," the actor said, "and that's telling the truth about what's happening in the war in Iraq."

Willis is likely to take on the role of the unit's commander, **Lieutenant-Colonel Erik Kurilla**, 39, a Bruce Willis lookalike with a chest full of medals, more hair than Willis and a glamorous blonde wife.

He was injured in August after being shot three times by insurgents "in front of my eyes," Yon recorded in his blog.

"He continued to direct his men until a medic gave him morphine and the men took him away."

Kurilla now has a titanium plate in his leg. He met Willis at the ball and said that his men were "very excited and appreciative that he was there."

Deuce Four has a chequered history. For decades it was a segregated black unit commanded by a white officer. It was disbanded in 1951 but veterans felt hurt that its past was considered to be a stain on the army and it was revived in the mid-1990s.

When the battalion arrived in Mosul in November last year the city was under threat from insurgents.

"We faced very heavy fighting for about three months," Kurilla recalled. "Every patrol was making contact with enemy forces."

"We would hit them where they slept, where they worked and where they ate."

Today the picture was very different, he said. "I have watched a city that was in absolute chaos turn into one that has a viable Iraqi security force, which is taking the lead in fighting the terrorists."

Yon, 41, went to Iraq after a friend from high school, **Scott Helveston**,

a former Navy Seal, was hanged from a bridge in Falluja in an incident that shocked the world.

Yon had never blogged before but was the author of *Danger Close*, a book about his experience as a green beret when he killed a man in a bar-room brawl. He was charged with murder and acquitted on the grounds of self-defence.

"When I landed in Baghdad I was immediately struck by how much of a war zone it was," Yon said. "Explosions were going off constantly. It was full-on."

His first experience of Mosul was worse.

"I got attacked on my first mission. One of our vehicles got hit with a car bomb and three guys were killed."

In May, Yon took a photograph of a soldier from the Deuce Four cradling a little Iraqi girl who had been fatally wounded by a suicide bomber. He sensed that the inhabitants of Mosul were turning against the insurgents.

"People began to realise that all the insurgents ever did was break things and kill people," he said. "It started to switch from a firefight to an intelligence war."

"People started to talk more to us. They would pull us over and give us tips."

The Iraqi security forces began to take pride in their work, Yon added: "These guys were getting slaughtered but they continued to volunteer and fight. It's very dangerous now to be a terrorist in Mosul. They're still out there but it's not like it was."

Willis said it would be wrong for Americans to give up on Iraq just as progress is being made. "The Iraqi people want to live in a world where they can move from their homes to the market and not have to fear being killed," he said. "I mean, doesn't everybody want that?"

The Few, The Proud, The Marines

(This letter to Rich Scott was forwarded by Peggy Sundling)

Rich,

Just wanted to let you know that we got the package full of chocolate chip cookies that Evan and Corie made and Margaret Sundling mailed out. We kept one tin for our office and that night we went around the base passing tins out to the Marines manning the various watch towers around the base. It was beautiful full moon night in the desert and I really enjoyed going out and visiting them. Needless to say, they really enjoyed the cookies. I told them I would pass along their thanks but you may also receive thank you notes from them.

Please thank Evan and Corie for us. It means a lot to know we have so much support back home. I've been delinquent writing a thank you note to Margaret Sundling for sending out the packages but I will get busy sending thanks to her and the Marine Corps League. I have a small

office here but when I get packages in I take them over to the areas to share with the rest of the Marines. I say Marines but we are really quite a diverse base. Our unit is a mix of Army, National Guard, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Being a Wing unit most of us stay confined to the base but we have quite a number of Marines and soldiers who run convoys and security off base. We just finished up election support and we had one of the quietest days yet in theater.

Our time is almost up. Most of the Marines in our unit are ten months into a twelve month tour and then it's back home to MCAS Cherry Point and New River, NC. I'm due to move next summer and one of the places on my wish list is Willow Grove. Judging from the hospitality of the people from that area it sounds like it would be a great place to be stationed.

LT Col Randy D Smith
2d MAW (Fwd) Safety

Beware! A Cunning New ID Scam

Most of us take those summons for jury duty seriously, but enough people skip out on their civic duty that a new and ominous kind of scam has surfaced. Fall for it and your identity could be stolen, reports *CBS News*.

In this con, someone calls pretending to be a court official who threateningly says a warrant has been issued for your arrest because you didn't show up for jury duty. The caller claims to be a jury coordinator. If you protest that you never received a summons for jury duty, the scammer asks you for your Social Security number and date of birth so he or she can verify the information and cancel the arrest warrant. Sometimes the crooks even ask for credit card numbers. Give

out any of this information and, bingo, your identity just got stolen.

The scam has been reported so far in 11 states, including Oklahoma, Illinois and Colorado.

Martha Rhynes, a real jury coordinator in Grayson County, OK., told KXII-TV, "We never call and ask anyone for their Social Security number, date of birth, or other personal information." Instead, the courts communicate with potential jurors only by mail and never by phone, including people who don't show up. Most states don't even have jurors' phone numbers until they have actually been chosen to sit on a jury. And even then, such information is sealed with the court records.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

CHRISTMAS
25 DECEMBER

NEW YEAR'S DAY
1 JANUARY 2006

DETACHMENT MEETING
11 JANUARY

DETACHMENT MEETING
8 FEBRUARY

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY
12 FEBRUARY

VALENTINE'S DAY
14 FEBRUARY

PRESIDENT'S DAY
21 FEBRUARY

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY
22 FEBRUARY

DETACHMENT MEETING
8 MARCH 2005

ST. PATRICK'S DAY
17 MARCH

DETACHMENT MEETING
12 APRIL

DETACHMENT MEETING
10 MAY

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE
29 MAY

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I hereby certify I have served as a U.S. Marine for more than 90 days, the character of my service has been honorable and, if discharged, I am in receipt of an Honorable Discharge. By signature on this application, I hereby agree to provide proof of Honorable Discharge/service upon request.

(Sponsor - where applicable)

(Applicant's Signature)

Remit this form with check or money order (made payable to **CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT, MCL**)
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