

# LISTEN UP!

CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT

#636

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE  
OF PENNSYLVANIA, INC.

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Commandant: JAMES POWELL

Editor: DON H. GEE

## VA Expands 'Agent Orange' Links

by Donna Miles

*American Forces Press Service*

WASHINGTON--A new Department of Veterans Affairs ruling will soon relieve Vietnam veterans suffering from three specific illnesses from the burden of proving their ailments are linked to Agent Orange exposure to receive VA health care and disability payments.

**Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki's** decision, announced in January, establishes a service connection for Vietnam vets stricken with hairy-cell leukemia and other B-cell leukemias, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease, **VA Chief of Staff John Gingrich** told *American Forces Press Service*.

Shinseki made the decision based on a recent report by the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine. The report cited new scientific studies pointing to a strong connection between the illnesses and Agent Orange exposure.

Shinseki determined that evidence was compelling enough to establish a presumption that af-

fectected veterans' illnesses are service-related, Gingrich said.

This determination will short-cut the process for them to receive services through what Shinseki called "a world-class health care system," as well as monthly disability payments.

But before the ruling takes effect, it must be published in the Federal Register and opened for final comment, Gingrich explained. He predicted that the process would be completed shortly.

It's unclear exactly how many of the 2.1 million Vietnam veterans the ruling will affect, Gingrich said. If 10 percent have the presumed illnesses, that could result in some 200,000 new VA claims.

Agent Orange, named for the orange-colored barrels in which it was stored, was sprayed widely during the Vietnam War to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy. Veterans have long blamed the herbicide for causing a variety of illnesses, but until now, there's been no official recognition of a link.

That put the burden on veterans

(See **AGENT ORANGE**, Page 5)

## Another Pennsylvania Marine Killed in Afghanistan

**Michael Freeman, Jr.** was from Fayetteville, PA. The 2008 graduate of Chambersburg Area High School and his wife, Stephanie, were married in early October.

Freeman had joined the Marine Corps in August 2008, and was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal on October 1, 2009. Freeman was a machine gunner assigned to 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, at Camp Lejeune, NC. He had his first deployment later in October when he was sent to Afghanistan. He was expected to return in April.

Freeman's 18-year-old wife is quoted on the *Herald-Mail* site:

Freeman was an outdoorsman who enjoyed target shooting, fishing and visiting Caledonia State Park. He and his wife met at a graduation party in 2007, and he proposed five months into their relationship.

"I said 'yes' immediately,"

(See **FREEMAN** Page 5)



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## COMMANDANT'S COLUMN

Marines,

Well what can I say? Three to four feet of snow in a span of about 24 hours can actually stop Marines! At least here in Pennsylvania! Our February meeting was called off due to the excessive snow. So much for that global warming dream!!

Due to the cancellation, we were unable to have formal nominations for the elections coming up at the March Meeting. So at our March meeting it will be Nomination and Election Day. Please think about being involved in your Detachment.

It is NOT OK to sit by while others step up. I will agree to hold the office of Commandant for one final year if no one else will. But be forewarned that next year someone else will be expected to take the reins of leadership for our Detachment.

The other duties I have been asked to take on and the ones I wanted to do the past year make it difficult to properly carry out all these duties at the same time. So this will be my last year as Commandant unless and until my other duties are lessened which I do not see any time soon.

Our Detachment cannot move forward if no one is willing to step up and help.

We have several capable and distinguished Marines that can serve and I implore them to do so! And on that note, I would like to thank **Junior Vice Commandant Jack Gentile** for stepping in this year.

He did a great job.

Since the January meeting, I attended the Southeast District Meeting held on Jan. 31 at the Chester County Detachment Home along with **SE District Vice Commandant Bill Miller** and our Junior Vice Commandant Gentile. I also attended the National Mid Winter Conference at the Marriott in Fall Church, VA, Feb. 11-13. **Past Commandant Bill Miller** was also in attendance. I will discuss these in more detail at the next meeting.

I have finished putting the Detachment Roster on our Website. I will again discuss this in more detail at the next meeting and provide login/passwords to all in attendance. After that I will be sending the information out to those who do not attend.

Well, that's it for now and I hope to see you for our March meeting, when we will be electing the Officers to represent the Detachment for the next year. Hoping for a good turn out.....

Semper Fi,

Jim Powell

Check Out Our  
Detachment Web Site  
at:

**www.mclcb.org**

# 'THE PACIFIC' MAXI-SERIES CHRONICLES 1ST MARDIV IN WWII

by Capt. Dale Dye USMC (Ret)  
Senior Military Advisor

It took nearly two years of hard campaigning to get it right but in March of this year American TV audiences will get an unflinching, historically accurate and very absorbing look at World War II in the Pacific as fought by men of the vaunted 1st Marine Division.

In my billet as the Senior Military Advisor for this monster undertaking, **Executive Producer Tom Hanks** gave me a set of deceptively simple marching orders: "Get up under the helmet of those Marines and take the audience on the trip they made to hell and back between 1942 and 1945." That's what we did over the year we spent in shooting the project which HBO has given a simple, evocative title: "The Pacific."

And it's what HBO subscribers will see when the first episode of the maxi-series airs on March 14. Like its hugely successful predecessor "Band of Brothers," this series will be presented on HBO in ten one-hour episodes with plans to sell a boxed set sometime following initial TV release. A series of special sneak previews are being set up around the country including one for 1st MarDiv Marines and WW II vets at Camp Pendleton. Given what I saw every day for a full year on sets in Australia where we shot the series and the edits I've seen done over the past year in post-production, there's no question Marines are going to love this series but I believe it will also find a huge following among civilians and veterans of other services who will quickly lock on to the drama, pathos and hardships faced by men who fought the war in the Pacific. We certainly did our best and spared no expense to recreate it.

My orders to the Warriors Inc. cadre who assisted me in the training and in daily on-set advising were direct and specific. We will do everything in our power to give audiences an insight to the thoughts, emotions and passions of men who faced a brutal, tenacious and unfa-

miliar enemy in the Pacific campaigns of World War II. It was immediately obvious we were facing a big challenge and one that was quite different from what we faced in doing "Band of Brothers," which focused on one company of paratroopers from the 506th PIR of the famed 101st Airborne Division in the ETO.



This new project required us to raise, train and employ actors and special ability extras who would realistically portray WW II-era Marines from all three regiments of the 1st Marine Division. The focus is on three main characters: **Gunners Sergeant John Basilone** from 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, **PFC Eugene Sledge** from 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, and **Private Robert Leckie** of 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines as the Division fought from Guadalcanal to Cape Gloucester, Peleliu and on to Okinawa. Much of the source material for our scripts was taken from books written by the latter two Marines ("With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa" by Sledge and "Helmet for My Pillow" by Leckie) so we had at least two early touchstones for historical research.

We immediately worked out a Table of Organization for a training unit and began to sketch in the details of a schedule designed to produce a credible WW II

Marine infantry company in the fourteen days allotted prior to start of principal photography. All hands on the Warriors Inc. crew were advised to pack their seabags for a long deployment and begin researching WW II Marine Corps weapons, equipment, uniforms and tactics.

In Melbourne, the city in which the 1st Marine Division rested after the grueling campaign on Guadalcanal in 1943, my **XO Mike Stokey** (1st MarDiv CC in Vietnam from 1966-69) and I began to recruit Special Ability Extras who would be trained along with the cast members and support the mission throughout the production. All of the three hundred or so young Australian or New Zealand men we saw in the process of selecting fifty candidates were avid to be a part of the production but few of them had much more than a rudimentary knowledge of World War II. These guys – and the actors who were being cast back in the States and in the UK – would need plenty of background information to effectively portray the young Americans who volunteered for Marine Corps service in World War II.

Stokey and I also used this trip to interview and hire thirty Asian extras that would be trained as Imperial Japanese infantrymen to oppose our Marines. We've always believed that the most effective portrayals of combat derive from using a skilled adversary rather than cartoon characters in enemy uniforms. For "The Pacific" we deemed this a vital concern. Despite propaganda portrayals from the period, IJA soldiers were anything but cartoons. Just ask any WW II Pacific combat veteran. To effectively communicate the jeopardy and the difficulties encountered by our forces facing tenacious and dedicated Japanese forces in the Pacific, we needed an on-screen enemy that demonstrated those characteristics.

As the principal actors began to arrive in Australia, we moved to Far North

Queensland and set up for training in a huge patch of triple-canopy jungle running up the slopes of steep hills. With our CP established, we began to amass the weapons, ammunition, rations and canvas we'd require when the troops arrived. From this remote site we'd conduct a curriculum that ran the military gamut from terrain appreciation, through tactical formations and movement, to fire and maneuver and into combat engagements between our Marines and the Japanese forces training at a site nearby. We took an absolutely minimalist approach to creature comforts as we wanted our trainees to experience life in the field as it was lived by World War II Marines who were chronically short of everything except Japanese enemy.

Our training command was organized into three platoons: Assault Platoon, Machinegun Platoon and Mortar Platoon, each commanded by a Marine veteran and member of my Warriors staff. I commanded the training company with Stokey as my XO. When the troops arrived for transport to the training area, they were issued a seabag with World War II Marine dungarees, boondockers and period field equipment which left them both clueless and apprehensive. That situation was reinforced as the NCOs gave them a typical welcome based on personal experience with Marine Drill Instructors. It was loud, profane and scary which served to put our trainees in the desired mind-set: numb, sweaty and confused. That's precisely the way we wanted them to be for reasons based on my own Marine Corps experience and what I've learned over the past 25 years about performing in military movies.

I've always believed the most effective training tactic is to work from the inside out rather than the other way around. You can train actors to walk, talk, maneuver and handle weapons appropriately – and that's been done by others before me – but the real convincing performances come from the heart and from places deep in the brain that are unreachable without full and complete immersion in the alien experience of intimacy, lack of privacy, total inter-dependency, deprivation, hardship and unselfish devotion to a larger ideal that only those who have served in the military can understand. The idea is

simply to give the performers a large, unavoidable dose of experience with the way real military people must feel, think and function to survive.

Any Leatherneck would recognize the regimen. Isolate them completely; no cell phones and no contact whatsoever with the world outside their training unit. From the start, work them hard in physical training and manual labor such as calisthenics, long formation runs and digging their own fighting positions until they are numb and focused exclusively on surviving the next five minutes. At that point, you have a blank slate and an open heart. We quickly launched on a steep learning curve during which the trainees gradually worked their way up into the appropriate positions of leadership and followership called for in the scripts.

A typical training day in the field went something like this. All hands muster at 0500 which was a bit shaky since we'd been on fifty percent alert throughout the previous night which was punctuated in thrilling fashion by a Japanese probe of our lines. No breakfast was allowed as we felt two ration meals in a 24-hour period would reduce body fat and give us the slim, slightly underfed look we'd need in the first episode covering Guadalcanal. We formed for PT at 0530, did calisthenics and then launched on a four-mile formation run. Following PT, we set the platoons against each other in full-contact close-quarters battle and bayonet drills with sheathed blades on M-1 rifles and carbines.

By 0800 we were on our firing line with blanks ammo streaming through Garand rifles, BARs and carbines. During our field training period, our people had to become intimately familiar not only with the M-1 rifle, carbine, Thompson SMG and BAR infantry combinations that Marines carried beginning in 1943 but they had to master the M1903A1 Springfield bolt-action rifles and M1917 water-cooled heavy machineguns required for the Guadalcanal sequences prior to the Corps' adoption of the more modern weapons systems during WW II.

While the riflemen worked on the fir-

See **PACIFIC**, Page 6

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY  
22 FEBRUARY**

**DETACHMENT MEETING  
10 MARCH**

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS  
14 MARCH**

**ST. PATRICK'S DAY  
17 MARCH**

**SPRING STAFF MEETING  
19-20 MARCH  
JONESTOWN, PA**

**FIRST DAY OF SPRING  
20 MARCH**

**PALM SUNDAY  
28 MARCH**

**PASSOVER  
30 MARCH**

**APRIL FOOLS DAY  
1 APRIL**

**GOOD FRIDAY  
2 APRIL**

**EASTER  
4 APRIL**

**DETACHMENT MEETING  
14 APRIL**

**AGENT ORANGE** *From Page 1*

to prove an association - a process Shinseki conceded too often has created an adversarial relationship between the VA and veterans.

Shinseki, a retired Army General and a Vietnam veteran himself, lamented this situation this summer at a medical symposium in San Antonio.

"I have asked why, 40 years after Agent Orange was last used in Vietnam, this Secretary is still adjudicating claims for presumption of service-connected disabilities tied to its toxic effects," he told attendees at the Association of the U.S. Army's Institute of Land Warfare Army Medical Symposium.

Shinseki also questioned why the debilitating effects of Gulf War illnesses still are being debated 20 years after Operation Desert Storm.

"Why weren't conclusive studies conducted by [the Department of Defense] and VA to render presumption of service-connected

disability resulting from exposure to toxic environments associated with these operations?" Shinseki asked. "Such findings would have facilitated VA's settling of service-connected disability claims in far less time. The scientific method, and the failure to advocate for the veteran, got in the way of our processes."

Veterans deserve better, he said.

"We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will," he said. "Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence."

Shinseki's decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses VA recognizes. Others are:

- Acute and subacute transient peripheral neuropathy;
- AL amyloidosis;
- Chloracne;
- Chronic lymphocytic leukemia;
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2);
- Hodgkin's disease;
- Multiple myeloma;
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma;

- Porphyria cutanea tarda;
- Prostate cancer;
- Respiratory cancers; and
- Soft-tissue sarcoma other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma.

**FREEMAN** *From Page 1*

Stephanie said.

Freeman developed his commitment to the Marines at an early age.

"He wanted to serve his country," Stephanie said. "He grew up in a military family."

Lance Corporal Michael L. Freeman Jr. died Feb. 1 in the Helmand province of Afghanistan from injuries suffered in the detonation of an improvised explosive device (IED). He was killed during what military authorities called a "hostile incident." He was 21 years old when he lost his life.

His awards included a Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal. Survivors of the Lance Corporal include his wife, his parents, Michael Sr. and Chris, and his sister, Dawn.

Funeral plans have not been announced but services are expected to be held at the Thomas L. Geisel Funeral Home in Chambersburg. Flags throughout Pennsylvania have been lowered to half-staff in honor of Lance Corporal Freeman, including those in his hometown, as well as all across Franklin County and in Harrisburg.

The flags will remain at half-staff until Freeman is brought home and buried, according to a spokesman at Governor Ed Rendell's office.

## **GOODIES FOR THE TROOPS**

**Peggy Sundling**, who continues to send "Goodies to the Troops," has provided a sampling of items which are needed for the shipments. She cautions, "NO CHOCOLATE!" Items include Moist Wipes--with or without aloe (some people are allergic); Beef Jerky/Slim Jims--very popular; Hard Candy--no lollipops; Lotions and Moisturizers; Lip Balm; Chewing Gum; Crackers/Snacks/Granola Bars--in individual packages for easy toting; Fruit Snacks/Raisins--in individual packages; Writing Tablets/Envelopes/Pens; Crossword Puzzles; Magazines--military, automotive, hunting, etc. (used, are fine); Drink Mixes--in individual envelopes.

**Thanks, Marines, for your continued support!**

ing line, Machinegun Platoon conducted gun drills – blank fire in support of maneuvering squads, displace, and re-engage area targets – while the Mortar Platoon conducted missions with the 60mm mortars firing creeping barrages with shells that give a satisfactory and attention-grabbing blast via 12-gauge shotgun shells embedded in the base of dummy HE rounds.

After noon chow, we briefed a company-sized reconnaissance patrol that would take us via compass heading through the heavy green to the top of a jungle covered hill where listening posts had reported enemy movement. Prior to moving out we issued the machetes we'd need to cut through the bush and conducted a review of field telephone and wire procedures that would keep everyone in contact with the CP.

As we began to climb and cut through

the tangle of vines and undergrowth under field marching packs (approximately 40 very real pounds of weight including rations and water) the heat smashed into us. The humidity in this jungle often matched the air temperature and those who rolled up their sleeves or unbuttoned their dungaree shirts rapidly became familiar with stinging nettles that added significantly to the agony of the march. The jungle climb was particularly difficult for machinegunners and mortarmen who had to hump all their T/E gear and a basic unit of fire. A pre-planned firefight with our Japanese training on the reverse slope of that jungle hill significantly lightened their load and gave them some excellent feeling for fighting at close range in a thick jungle. Machinegun crews had to constantly displace in support of the creeping infantry squads closing on enemy hard-points. Mortars were working their sights and tubes according to a rapid rate of adjustments I was sending to them via wire with the student officers observ-

ing the technique.

When we returned to the CP, cleaned all weapons and ate parts of a second meal, we opened the schoolhouse to conduct lectures on Marine Corps history, the state of the world and the U.S. in the war years, and worked on 1940s vocabulary and Marine jargon. When the inky darkness particular to Pacific jungles descended we set the watch and waited for the pre-planned, full-scale banzai assault that we'd arranged for some time close to 2200 when heads would be nodding on our perimeter. By the time we were hit in a sector defended by a pair of water-cooled machineguns, the troops were demonstrating admirable fire discipline. Our mortars fired a night area suppression mission to drive off the attackers. And that was just one training day. Our final field exercise at the end of two weeks involved a full scale amphibious assault via period LVTs and LCIs on a heavily-defended beach. That was truly gratifying and as close as I'll ever get to experiencing what our brothers in World War II faced on beachheads at places like Tarawa, Peleliu and Iwo Jima.

We paid meticulous attention to the details in uniforms, weapons, equipment and tactics. That's an overdue tribute to the men who fought the great naval campaigns in the Pacific during World War II, Of course, there will be Marines, veterans and fans who will argue that we should have covered some of the other major Pacific battles. Vets of action with the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Marine Divisions might feel slighted, but we did include some sequences with the forming of the 5th MarDiv at Pendleton and we follow Basilone with that unit onto Iwo Jima where he was killed in action. It's about all we could manage in bringing that under-appreciated, misunderstood and frequently forgotten aspect of World War II to life and to the attention of worldwide audiences.

There is one serious omission for which I should apologize, especially to this audience. Despite my best efforts, I never managed to talk the writers into including a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent in the action. But we did have a couple of real ones working behind the cameras and given our history and mission, I guess that's the way it should be.

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***"ONCE A MARINE, ALWAYS A MARINE"***

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I hereby apply for membership in the **CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT**, Marine Corps League, and enclose **\$35.00** for one year's membership (which includes subscription to **MARINE CORPS LEAGUE MAGAZINE**).

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.

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