



# LISTEN UP!

## CENTRAL BUCKS DETACHMENT #636

Marine Corps League Of Pennsylvania, Inc.

VOLUME XVIII, Number 5

MAY 2006

Commandant: **WILLIAM R. MILLER**

Editor: **DON H. GEE**



**CENTRAL BUCKS  
DETACHMENT, Inc. #636**  
P. O. Box 1372  
Doylestown, PA 18901-1372  
Meets  
7:30 p.m.  
2nd Wednesday of Month  
American Legion Post 210  
315 North Street, Doylestown, PA

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**MARINE OF THE YEAR**  
**ELLIS M. (BUD) PEARCE III, PC**

## ***Mother Honors Marines Killed in Iraq***

MARINE CORPS BASE, CAMP PENDLETON, CA--**Karla Comfort** received a lot of looks and even some salutes from people when she drove from Benton, AR, to Camp Pendleton, CA, in her newly-painted, custom Hummer H3 March 2. The vehicle is adorned with the likeness of her son, 20-year-old **Lance Cpl. John M. Holmason**, and nine other Marines with F Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division who were all killed by the same improvised explosive device blast in Fallujah, Iraq, in December.

For Comfort, having the vehicle air brushed with the image of the 10 Marines was a way to pay homage to her hero and his fellow comrades who fell on Iraq's urban battlefield. I wanted to let people know (Marines) are doing their jobs honorably, and some of them die, said the 39-year-old from Portland, OR. I don't want people to forget the sacrifices that my son and the other Marines made.

Leading up to her son's death, Comfort had received several letters from him prior to his return. He had been deployed for five months, and Comfort worried everyday he was gone until she got the letters and found out the date he was coming home, she said. Marines knocked on the front door of her home in Farmington, MI, at 3 a.m. with the dreadful news. I let my guard down when I found out he was coming home, she said. There are times that I still cannot believe it happened. It's very hard to deal with.

Comfort came up with the idea for the rolling memorial when she and her two other sons attended John's funeral in Portland, OR. I saw a Vietnam (War) memorial on a car, and I said to my son Josh, we should do something like that for John, she recalled. He loved Hummers.

She purchased the vehicle in January and immediately took it to Airbrush Guy & Co. in Benton, AR, where artist Robert Powell went to work on changing the plain, black vehicle into a decorative, mobile, art piece. I only had the vehicle for two days before we took it in, she joked. Two hundred and fifty man-hours later, Powell had completed the vehicle. The custom job would have cost \$25,000. Out of respect for Comfort's loss and the sacrifices the Marines made, Airbrush Guy & Co. did it for free. Comfort only had to purchase the paint, which cost \$3,000.

I love it, she said. I'm really impressed with it, and I think John would be happy with the vehicle. He would have a big smile on his face because he loved Hummers. Comfort gave Powell basic instructions on what to include in the paint job. But in addition to the image of her son in Dress Blues and the faces of the nine other Marines, there were several surprises. He put a lot more on than I expected, she said. I think my favorite part is the heaven scene.

(See HUMVEE, Page 4)

# COMMANDANT'S COLUMN

Marines,

It's hard to believe that another year has passed since our elections. Boy does time fly. We had our detachment election of officers on Wednesday April 12<sup>th</sup>. The installing officer was the Dept. of Pa. Commandant Tom Tanner, assisted by Dept. Chief of Staff Ray Devlin, and SE Div. Vice Commandant Bob Rup. I was installed again as your detachment commandant for the third time. The only other changes in the line up are Budd Pearce, PC as Jr. Vice Commandant, and Bob Sundling, PC takes over the Sgt.-at-Arms position. It was a very good meeting with some business getting done as well. We had some fine chow at the end of the meeting provided by newly appointed mess sgt. Wil Haas. We also had some guests in attendance. Marine Terry Burcaw, PC from the Spring Hill Florida Detachment who came back home to Doylestown for a visit, and Marine Frank Grims from the Tri Boro Detachment who came with Ray Devlin also of the Tri Boro Detachment. My wife Jeanette came along for a photo shoot of the evening festivities as well. It was an enjoyable evening and I'm proud to serve again as your commandant.

We plowed forward with plans for the SE Division meeting being held on April 30, and for our Del. Val. A-Day fund raiser being held on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. We need volunteers for both functions. I will be at A-Day Saturday and until 1230 Sunday when I along with Budd and at least one other person will have to set up the Legion hall for the meeting and clean up afterwards. Please contact Budd or myself if you have the time to give. We need help! It's also

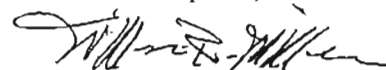
raffle ticket time. Sell as many as you can. It's for a worthy cause and the detachment gets 40% of each ticket sold. The department convention this year being held in Wilkes-Barre from June 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>. I will be attending and would like to have some company. Anyone wishing to join me just let me know so we can sign you up as a delegate.

Commandant Tanner enlightened us on activities going on within the League and was very informative as well.

The last thing on the agenda before closing the meeting was an announcement by me. Many of you know that a statute of a marine belonging to me was stolen from my property back in January. I named the statue "Smedley" after Maj.Gen. Smedley Butler. I'm pleased to inform you that Smedley has been found and returned to me. I received a call from a Marine Frank Yochum who lives in the Trevoise area of Bucks County. Frank said that he found it in front of his house and that someone just dropped it off. He flies the marine flag and has marine influence all over his property. It took two months, two weeks, and three days for Smedley to reappear. I'm figuring that it was the power of the press (newspaper articles) and the brotherhood of the Corps that made his return possible. Now for the rest of the story. I received a phone call from the daughter of a retired Marine Lt. Col. Charles W. Bushar, who is the owner of the Smithville Inn in Smithville, NJ where the shop that I bought Smedley is located. He bought a statue of a marine at cost from that same store and gave it to me. Now I

have two statutes. I decided to give Smedley to Marine Frank Yochum to display on his property and I'll keep Smedley the 2<sup>nd</sup> to display on mine. It humbles me to say that my Marine Corps family really came through.

Semper Fi,



## VA LAUNCHES "IT" REORGANIZATION

In an effort to streamline and modernize the information technology (IT) environment throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the VA will bring its IT resources under more centralized control.

The main feature of the reorganization, referred to as "the federated IT system," will place VA's IT budget, along with IT professionals involved in operation and maintenance work, directly under the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology. IT workers involved in system development will remain under their respective administrations and staff offices.

VA acknowledged the leadership of Congress in helping VA to move toward this consolidation, which he said will "enhance our operational effectiveness, provide standardization, and eliminate duplication."

Ultimately, the reorganization will improve the Department's ability to provide the full range of benefits and programs to the nation's veterans.

### 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.

## 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 and 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 - individual envelopes. **Thanks for your continued support!**

# Highlights

The regular meeting of the Central Bucks Detachment #636, Inc., of the Marine Corps League of Pennsylvania, Inc., was held April 12, 2006, at the Albert E. Atkinson American Legion Post #210, 315 North St., Doylestown, PA. There were 20 members present including all officers. Distinguished members in attendance included **Past Commandant and Marine of the Year Budd Pearce**, **Past Commandants Don Gee**, and **Bob Sundling** and **Past Commandant of the Department of New Jersey Ed Hoth**. The **Installation Team** from the Department of Pennsylvania was present as was Springfield, FL, Detachment #708 Chaplain **Frank Grim**. The **Minutes** of the March Meeting were unanimously approved. The **Paymasters Report** was delivered by **Paymaster Bob Cody**. The Paymasters Report was unanimously approved.

## OFFICER REPORTS

**Commandant Bill Miller** reported on the Department Quarterly Meeting and the County Golf Outing on May 25. He also reminded the members about the Department Southeast Division Meeting on Apr. 30 at the Legion Post.

**Senior Vice Commandant Jim Powell** reported the strength of the Detachment at 50 including 23 Regular Members, 23 Life Members, 1 Associate Member and 1 Honorary Member.

**Junior Vice Commandant Jim McComb** reminded the members about the Department raffle. He has raffle tickets available.

**Adjutant Gary Smith** reported he had received no communications from either the National Headquarters or the Department since the last meeting.

**Judge Advocate Bill Jerrom** reported the Detachment had no legal problems and that the annual Non-Profit Statement had been filed.

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

**Public Relations Officer** set Apr. 20 as the deadline for submitting material for the April issue of *Listen Up!*

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**RIFLE & PISTOL TEAM**--The Department Pistol Match is set for June 2-4. Anyone interested in joining the team should contact **Team Captain Bill Rosenberger** or **Past Commandant Budd Pearce**.

**ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY**--**Adopt-A-Highway Coordinator Budd Pearce, PC**, scheduled Apr. 15 as the date for the next highway clean-up.

**YOUNG MARINES**--**Young Marines Coordinator Bob Sundling, PC**, reported the Unit is conducting a "Boot Camp" for its newer members.

## OLD BUSINESS

**MEMORIAL DAY FUND RAISER**--**Past Commandant Budd Pearce** announced the Detachment will hold its annual Memorial Day Fund Raiser at the State Store from Thursday, May 25, through Sunday, May 28. Detachment members will be needed to man the donation table during those dates.

**A-DAY FUND RAISER**--**Past Commandant Pearce** reported on progress for the A-Day Fund Raiser at Delaware Valley College on Apr. 29- & 30.

## NEW BUSINESS

**ANNUAL VETERANS GOLF OUTING**--A motion was made and unanimously passed to sponsor a "Green" for this year's Bucks County Annual Veterans Golf Outing on May 25.

**INSTALLATION CEREMONY**--**Department Commandant Tom Tanner** installed the Detachment Officers for the coming year. Installed were **Commandant Bill Miller**; **Senior Vice Commandant Jim Powell**; **Junior Vice Commandant Budd Pearce, PC**; **Adjutant Gary Smith**; **Paymaster Bob Cody**; **Judge Advocate Bill Jerrom**; **Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Sundling, PC**; and, **Quartermaster Bob Duff**.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**FLAG DAY CEREMONY**--**Junior Vice Commandant Pearce** reported Cold Spring Elementary School had requested the Detachment conduct a Flag Day ceremony at the school. Volunteers are needed to assist.

**MEMORIAL DAY PARADE**--**UVD Memorial Day Parade Marshal Don Gee, PC**, announced the next meeting of the United Veterans of Doylestown Parade Committee Meeting will be held on Apr. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Legion Post. Volunteers are needed to help staff the Parade. He also reminded the member that St. Paul's Lutheran Church will hold a Veterans Memorial Service on Sunday, May 28, at 11 a.m.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned until 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 10.**

# INSTALLATION CEREMONY



**ELECTED STAFF MEDAL**—Newly Installed Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Sundling, PC, is presented the Detachment Elected Staff ribbon by Commandant Bill Miller.



**OUTGOING JUNIOR VICE**—Former Junior Vice Commandant Jim McComb receives the Detachment Elected Staff ribbon from Commandant Bill Miller.



**2006-2007 DETACHMENT OFFICERS**—Newly elected Detachment Officers prepare to take the Oath of Office during the April Meeting. Shown are (left to right) Quartermaster Bob Duff, Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Sundling, Judge Advocate Bill Jerrom, Junior Vice Commandant Budd Pearce, Senior Vice Commandant Jim Powell, Commandant Bill Miller, Paymaster Bob Cody, Adjutant Gary Smith, and Chaplain Ed Hoth.

## HUMVEE

*(From Page 1)*

On the left side of the vehicle, a detail of Marines are depicted carrying their fallen comrades through the clouds to their final resting place. The American flag drapes across the hood, the words, Semper Paratus crown the front windshield and the spare tire cover carries the same Eagle Globe and Anchor design that her son had tattooed on his back. All the support I have been getting is wonderful, she said.

Comfort decided to move back to her hometown of Portland, and making the cross-country trip from Arkansas was a way for her to share her sons story. Its also her way of coping with the loss. Along the way I got nothing but positive feedback from people, she said.

What got to me was when people would salute the guys (Marines). Its hard to look at his picture. I still cry and try to get used to the idea, but its hard to grasp the idea that hes really gone.

## 8th & I Bus Trip

The Liberty Bell Chapter, 1st Marine Division Associon, is sponsoring a Bus Trip to 8 and I, Washington DC June 9, 2006.

Includes Lunch, Dinner at Barracks; stop at Army Museum, Aberdeen, MD; Vietnam Memorial; Arlington National Cemetery; Marine Corps Memorial; and the Evening Parade

Cost is \$60.00.

See Mike Waldron for more information

# More 'Mids' Make Corps Their First Preference

By Bradley Olson  
Baltimore Sun

When it came time for Jake Dove, a senior at the U.S. Naval Academy, to decide how he would fulfill his required military duty after graduation, there was no question about it: Marine Corps all the way.

"In my eyes it's a perfect community," said Dove, an Annapolis High School graduate. "The idea of being a platoon leader in charge of guys that have done two, three tours in Iraq already, when I haven't been over there - that's an awesome responsibility. I'm eager to take it on."

Despite a war that has entered its fourth year with mounting casualties and waning public support, more and more midshipmen at the Annapolis military college are volunteering for the Marines when asked to choose how they will fulfill the five-year commitment required of all academy graduates.

When the assignments were made official last month for the 992 members of the class of 2006, 209 were placed as officers with the Corps - the most in the school's 161-year history. And more would have done so if there were enough openings: an additional 45 who sought the Marines were assigned to other duty when the allotment was filled.

Naval aviation remains the most popular choice among midshipmen, but a growing interest in Marine duty - in spite of its dangers - has been under way for several years, even as applications to the academy have dropped sharply in recent years, a development blamed by some on the Iraq war.

Three years ago, 162 slots were set aside for the Marines and the academy ended up turning away some applicants. The number of slots was increased the next year, to 195, and the Corps drew 207 applicants. Last year the cap was set at 207; more midshipmen were turned away.

Dove said the threat of being hurt or killed in Iraq is "always in the back of my head, and I'm sure it's the same for everybody going in the Marines."

"It's a consideration, something you have to prepare yourself for mentally,"

he said. "But this is the way I want to serve my country and I'm not going to let anything get in the way of what I've always wanted to do, which is to lead men in combat."

In a recent presentation to a civilian oversight board, Vice Adm. Rodney P. Rempt, the academy's superintendent, said midshipmen are increasingly asking to go to the front lines or "where the action is," so they can "prove themselves."

"There are many more that want to be Marines than we can take," he said to the academy's Board of Visitors, which includes members of Congress, retired military officials and educators. "There are many more that want to be SEALs than we can take. It's very heartwarming to see the determination of these young people and what they want to do."

Surveys the academy conducts of midshipmen show that the upturn in Marine interest will continue for the classes of 2007, 2008 and 2009, with more than 300 current plebes declaring their interest in the Marine Corps, more than in surface warfare or submarines.

More than 650 Marines have been killed since the Iraq war began three years ago this month, but that has not deterred midshipmen from becoming Marines. Academy officials joke that the Marine Corps might have finally eclipsed naval aviation or submarines, both of which were popularized by Hollywood in *Top Gun* and *The Hunt for Red October*.

The appeal of the Marines has stretched beyond the Naval Academy. While the Army and its reserve components have struggled to meet recruiting goals during the Iraq conflict, the Marine Corps has not.

Most academy officials believe interest is high for patriotic reasons - the phenomenon began not long after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Others, including midshipmen, said the enthusiasm could be part of a common trend in wartime at the nation's service academies, where young students have been eager to bolster their military credentials with combat experience.

Having a surplus of mids who want to be Marines has been a change from the Vietnam era. In 1968, the Marine Corps

failed to meet its quota for the first time in academy history.

In the 2006 class, 349 mids were assigned to naval aviation as pilots or navigators; 270 chose to "go SWO," academy parlance for working on surface warships; 88 went to subs; 21 will train for the SEALs - the Navy's elite fighting force. Fifteen went to special operations such as explosives disposal, 10 will attend medical school and the rest will fill a variety of military billets, including intelligence, civil engineering and information warfare.

Midshipmen are asked to list a first, second and third choice for their duty preference. A service board makes the final decision based on the preferences, order of merit or class standing, academic qualifications, physical requirements and the needs of each service branch. The students learned of their assignments in November, and the selections were made official last month in an annual ceremony where the mids find out the specifics of their assignment, such as the ship on which they will serve.

Sheivon Davis, a 23-year-old sprinter on Navy's women's track team and a graduate of Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, said she asked for Marine duty and was surprised that she wasn't selected.

"I was clearly qualified, but they turned down a lot of qualified people," said Davis, who will become a junior officer on the USS *Elrod* in Norfolk, Va., after graduation. "I guess it was just God telling me, 'No, Sheivon, you don't want to be in Iraq with bullets flying past your head.'"

Before 2004, when Rempt responded to the increased interest of midshipmen by asking the Navy and Marine Corps leaders to take more Marine billets from the academy, the Marine Corps had selected about 16 percent of the graduating class. Now it's closer to 20 percent, which academy officials say better mirrors the proportion of Marine Corps officers in the leadership of the combined Navy-Marine service branch.

Charles Krulak, a former commandant of the Marine Corps, who originally pushed for an increase in Marine billets

(See USNA, Page 7)

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**"A-DAY"**  
**FUND-RAISER**  
**29-30 APRIL**  
**(VOLUNTEERS NEEDED)**

**SOUTHEAST DIVISION**  
**MEETING**  
**30 APRIL**

**DETACHMENT MEETING**  
**10 MAY**

**MOTHERS DAY**  
**14 MAY**

**STATE STORE**  
**FUNDRAISER**  
**25-27 MAY**  
**(VOLUNTEERS NEEDED)**

**MEMORIAL DAY PARADE**  
**29 MAY**  
**(PARADE STAFF**  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED)**

**DETACHMENT MEETING**  
**14 JUNE**

**INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE**  
**4 JULY**

**DETACHMENT MEETING**  
**12 JULY**

**DETACHMENT MEETING**  
**9 AUGUST**

**DETACHMENT MEETING**  
**13 SEPTEMBER**

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in the late 1990s, said he was pleased with the change and believed it reflects well on the class of midshipmen, despite an almost 25 percent decline in applications to the academy in recent years.

"What I'm happy about is that midshipmen want to walk to the sound of the guns," he said, "whether it's on the sea, under the sea, in the air or on the ground. The people who are coming to the Naval Academy want to serve, and they want to be leaders."

Col. Michael Paulovich, the senior Marine at the academy and director of its Humanities and Social Sciences Division, said he doesn't really have an explanation for the surge, except to emphasize what Marines have always emphasized: fitness, esprit de corps and leadership opportunities for junior officers:

"That's the steady message that's always out there."

Paulovich said enthusiasm for serving in the Iraq war also might reflect a strong

"spirit of patriotism" among midshipmen who came to the academy in the aftermath of Sept. 11.

"I was here 20 years ago, and it was all Top Gun and Red October," he said. "We had to work hard to attract high-quality midshipmen" to the Marines.

Dove and Joe Mihoces, another senior who will become a Marine, said their decision was due in large part to the influence of 1st Lt. Mike Simon, a junior officer and 2003 academy graduate whom they befriended and who recently went to Iraq for a second tour.

The thrill of being in the action in Iraq or in any combat situation is something he and a lot of people think about, said Dove, 22, but it's not the primary consideration.

"My father was a paratrooper in Vietnam, and talking to him definitely de-glamorizes what happens out there," he said of combat situations. "It's something that has to be done, and I'd like to be the one that does it. I'd like to be the one that leads Marines in a combat environment."

Dove and Mihoces will go to the Marine Corps' Basic School at Quantico, Va., for six months. After that, Dove could be deployed and Mihoces will go to flight school in Pensacola, Fla., to join a smaller community of Marine Corps pilots. Although he won't necessarily be leading troops on the ground in Iraq, Mihoces said he is thrilled to be in the Corps.

"You could take the pilot away from me tomorrow and I would still want to be a Marine," he said.



"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil— cuz I'm the toughest mutha in the vall."

**DONALD D. PARZANESE JR.**

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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.

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