



President's Message

Richard B. Rothwell



I hope this finds our members enjoying the New Year, a number of whom I had the pleasure of at our November membership tour and luncheon. We had a fine turnout and everyone, including me, seemed to have a good time. Those who attended the luncheon may recall seeing a rough version of a short DVD about the history of Camp Pendleton and your Society's interests in preserving it. That project is now complete. I invite you to view the finished product, which we have titled "Friars, Vaqueros, and Marines: A History Worth Preserving," on our web site -- www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org.

In my last report I mentioned two projects that your Society had initiated. The first was to reframe Camp Pendleton's collection of original Col. Charles Waterhouse paintings depicting the life of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees who in 1975 stayed temporarily aboard Camp Pendleton during their resettlement in the United States. A committee has selected a vendor and will soon present the proposal to the Executive Committee for final approval. Regrettably, we were not so fortunate with the second project -- a grant request for funding to support the partial restoration of the Las Flores adobe. The granting organization received several thousand applications and ours was not selected. We will continue our efforts in this area with what I believe is a compelling message that will ultimately lead to success.

Many of you are aware that significant numbers of Camp Pendleton Marines and sailors departed for duty in Iraq this month. We wish them a safe and successful deployment. By the same token we welcome back Col. Steve Fisher USMC (Ret), a member of your Board of Directors. Steve recently returned from six months of duty with the II Marine Expeditionary Force staff in Iraq.

Once again, I thank you for your support. We cannot succeed without it. I look forward to reporting to you again next quarter.

Richard B. Rothwell

Four-Legged Hero Retired to Camp Pendleton

This article appeared in the Nov. 14, 2004 issue of the San Diego Union-Tribune and was written by Lillian Cox, a freelance writer from Encinitas.

CAMP PENDLETON – Few stories better illustrate the military's promise to leave no one behind than that of Staff Sgt. Reckless, a horse who became a decorated Marine during the Korean War. Plans have begun to honor the horse, once left behind in Korea.

A Marine officer purchased Reckless from a Korean boy who needed money to buy his sister an artificial leg, according to Marine Lt. Col. Andrew Geer, who commanded the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment of the 1st Division in Korea. Geer wrote two articles about the horse for The Saturday Evening Post in the 1950s and later wrote a book, "Reckless, the Pride of the Marines." The horse served at the bloody Battle of Vegas after training as an ammunitions carrier, according to Geer.

He wrote: "Every yard she advanced was showered with explosives. Fifty-one times she marched through the fiery gantlet of the Red barrage – and she saved the day for the Leathernecks."

Bob Rogers, a former Navy corpsman who now lives in Kansas, remembers Reckless wandering around a military camp in Korea wearing a blanket bearing stripes and her Purple Heart. Rogers said in a recent interview that he is planning a statue to honor the horse. The location has yet to be decided. Rogers said Reckless had a weakness for rations. "We'd go out for the day and return to a wrecked tent," he said. "Reckless could smell any goodies, especially cookies, and would find them – guaranteed!"

"A lieutenant, myself and others were in a circle talking. Reckless came up behind one fellow and nuzzled the back of his neck. It scared the guy, and he cussed Reckless, calling her a 'blinking nag.' The lieutenant sternly let him know Reckless was a hero and had done more for the Marine Corps than he ever would.



And since Reckless outranked him, any further verbal abuse would be cause for disciplinary action." "I had the honor of being in formation when Cpl. Reckless was promoted to sergeant," said Rogers, 70

Reckless was left in South Korea as her Marine buddies returned home, but after publication of Geer's article, Post readers and friends of the horse arranged to bring her to the United States.

In preparation for her transfer to Camp Pendleton, Geer wrote the Commandant of the Marine Corps in Washington, D.C.:

"The undersigned is in hearty agreement that Reckless should be stationed at Camp Pendleton...It should be kept in mind, however, that this is no ordinary horse and she should have special care and attention...It is suggested her court be in the vicinity of the Commanding General's quarters and properly marked with appropriate sign, so that all will know this to be the home of Sergeant Reckless, Pride of the Marines.

"...Her shoes should be removed and she should be allowed to go barefoot for a period of six weeks." Geer continued. "At that time, her feet should be trimmed and new shoes fitted. Only the most knowing and patient horseshoer should be employed. Sergeant Reckless is extremely proud of her feet and will not

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HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS AND GUEST LUNCHEON

Preserving a Rich and Colorful History

On November 14, 2007 the Camp Pendleton Historical Society held a special event for members of the Society and their guests. It started under a beautiful, cloudless sky with a tour of the Las Flores adobe. The adobe, which dates from 1845, is located on the base near the Las Pulgas gate. Forty-seven members and guests learned about the history of the adobe, its need for repairs, and its importance to the history of Southern California. The stories came alive as some guest and members were decedents of the family who once lived there. Some recollections dated to early 1940's.



Faye Jonason (left in red vest and hat) and Ann Hallock, (right wearing the red sash)



University of Vermont graduate engineering students have already completed some necessary renovation at Las Flores. Among their projects is the second floor balcony shown at the left. In keeping with its mission of preserving Camp Pendleton history, CPHS is attempting to raise additional funds to continue this effort.



After the tour the group formed a car caravan and headed for the San Luis Rey Officer's Club for a delicious buffet lunch. Following lunch CPHS President, Richard B. Rothwell, extended his welcome and introduced officers, directors and advisory council members who were present. He also explained the mission of CPHS and brought members and guests up to date on the projects in which we are involved. He turned the meeting over to the Marketing Manager, Howard Blair, who explained the importance of membership and encouraged everyone to join or renew their membership.



The tour started in the Ranch House Chapel (left). Ann Rothwell, one of the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents, presented the history of ranch from its beginnings as Spanish mission property to the present day. Docents then led small groups through the beautiful, historic property (right).

The outing was a great success. Members and guests had a good time learning about the history of Camp Pendleton and the efforts of CPHS to preserve it.



The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to supporting and promoting the historical programs of Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton by:

- * raising funds for the preservation of Base historic sites and museums,*
- * promoting public pride and patriotism through an understanding of the historical, cultural, and architectural significance of the Base as mission land, a working ranch, and an amphibious training base, and*
- * increasing public awareness of the Marine Corps role in preserving this national treasure.*

Reprints from the Oceanside Blade-Tribune, October 25, 1943

N C O CLUB

The non-commissioned officers of the Marine Corps—often called the backbone of the Corps—have not been forgotten at Camp Pendleton. For them a beautiful club was constructed situated at the top of a hill affording panoramic view of a large part of the camp that cannot be equaled at any other place in camp. An influx of Leathernecks necessitated the club be taken over for an officers' bachelor quarters.



Approximately 150 non-commissioned officers enjoyed the mess facilities of the club and sleeping accommodations were available to about 70 members. The club was managed by the non-commissioned officers themselves and this responsibility was not misplaced as it was considered one of the best managed clubs in the Marine Corps.

A spacious lounge, furnished in ranch style, in keeping with the spirit of the Camp, offered relaxation to members after a hard day's work.

Each member of the club was privileged to bring visitors for dinners and parties from time to time. A good many of the present members consisted of old-timers who have seen combat service, both in the present war and also in World War I, and many are the yarns heard from these hard-bitten and grizzled Marines.

GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY OF OLD MEXICO HELPS LABOR SITUATION

With the rush of farm workers into defense plants of San Diego's industrial area and the drafting of many others into the armed forces, the farmers of San Diego faced a critical situation in the planting and harvesting of essential food and fibre this year, according to the Associated Farmers of San Diego county.

Heeding America's call for help to harvest her food and fibre, Mexican Nationals, respond and are now in San Diego county as essential "war workers" to help the farmers. Eager to do their part in helping to win the war, the 800 Mexicans in the county are part of a contingent of nearly 33,000 that have been imported into California for a nine-month contract to help in this type of work. Farmers are praising their efforts.



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stand for inexpert attention. Several Korean horseshoers will painfully attest to this statement.”

The memo continued, “During the extreme heat of Korea, when potable water was scarce or non-existent, Reckless came to know and like certain liquids other than water. She is fond of coca cola, and milk. Under the stress of battle she has been know to drink beer.”

Geer cautioned the commandant about a producer with plans to portray Reckless as a chatty horse modeled after the 1950 movie, “Francis, and Talking Mule.”

“One is a Hollywood clown and the other a gallant Marine who won honors in one of the bloodiest battles fought by American troops,” he wrote.

In 1959, five years after arriving at Camp Pendleton, Reckless was promoted to staff Sergeant, according to a November 2002 article in Leatherneck magazine.

Reckless died in 1968 and was survived by three offspring.

Get on Board

One of the keys to building awareness of CPHS is networking with our friends. To help members become familiar with our story, we are offering two brochures for distribution. Please order your free copies by e-mail to Howard Blair at hgblair@cox.net or phone 858-583-0067.

New On Our Website

The history of Camp Pendleton now comes to life in a new video on the CPHS website. The six-minute video was produced as part of the San Diego Stories by Digital Stories Series. It is narrated by Charlie Ware, video was the courtesy of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton Combat Camera, and photos were courtesy of the Marine Corps Archive, Camp Pendleton History and Museums Office and the Historical Collection of the Title Insurance & Trust Company. Music in the video is courtesy of the San Juan Capistrano Historical Society. The project was made possible with funding by the San Diego Foundation. Additional support for San Diego Stories is made possible by the City of San Diego Public Library, KPBS, National Latino Research Center California State University San Marcos and the Escondido Public Library’s Pioneer Room.



Stay Tuned

We invite our readers to contribute stories of their experiences aboard Camp Pendleton for publication in future issues. Humorous pieces would be particularly welcome. Please e-mail your 300 words or less to hgblair@cox.net, subject line “CPHS.” Submissions may be subject to editing.

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www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org

Camp Pendleton Historical Society, Inc. is a non-profit 501(3) corporation.