

President's Message

Richard B. Rothwell



I am pleased to introduce two new members of our Board of Directors: Col. Joe Mueller, USMCR (Ret) and Sgt. Maj. Dave Francisco, USMC (Ret). Both have distinguished careers in the Corps and a passion for preserving the history of Camp Pendleton. They will be valuable additions to our efforts to keep this history alive.

Cal Frantz, our grant coordinator, recently gave the good news that the Camp Pendleton Marine Officers' Wives Club awarded CPHS a \$900 grant for the construction of display cases at the Mechanized Museum.

The cases will make visitors' experiences even more enjoyable and meaningful. I look forward to accepting the donation during an OWC Ranch House event in May. CPHS thanks OWC for their generous support.

We have had two member events this quarter with a third coming soon. In February, we enjoyed a visit to the private museum Only Yesterday/Hall of Heroes. Museum owner, Chuck Speilman, is a great fan of the military and a supporter of the Mechanized Museum.

Later in that month, CPHS hosted its second annual gathering at a magnificent performance of the Marine Corps Drum & Bugle Corps and Silent Drill Platoon. Both events are mentioned elsewhere in this Groundbreaker.

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The Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docent Organization turns 37-years-old

by Linda Holmes

Thirty-seven years ago the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docent organization was born. From 1947 to 2007, the ranking General on Camp Pendleton lived in the Rancho Santa Margarita Ranch House. Many of the General's guests were interested in the history of the house, ranch and the families who had lived there.

In 1975, the docent group was formed from the Officer's Wives Club volunteers at the request of the Base Commanding General to serve as guides for the community-wide open house celebration he hosted. Many of the Officers Wives, being history buffs themselves, began to research the history and stories related to the Ranch, and volunteered to tell the story.

The history of the rancho was fairly easy to research as the US Government was only the fifth owner and the families who had lived there were wealthy influential people. Upon landing in the Alta California area, Spanish explorer Gaspar De Portola claimed the land for Spain and for the Church. He brought with him Franciscan Priests to set up missions on the land to secure it for Spain.

When they passed through the ranch on Saint Margaret of Antioch's Day, the land was named the Santa Margarita in her honor. The missions nearest the Santa Margarita were the Mission San Luis Rey to the south and the Mission San Juan Capistrano to the north. When Mexico gained independence from Spain, the land was taken from the Church and was given in land grants to influential individuals. The Santa Margarita was granted to Pio and Andres Pico in a land grant. Andres Pico, a military man, sold his interest in the land to his brother Pio.

In 1862, Pio Pico sold his interest in the Rancho Santa Margarita to his brother-in-law, Don Juan Forster - an English-man (John Forster) who had taken on Mexican citizenship so that he could own land. When Forster died in 1882, his widow and surviving sons sold the property to James Flood and Richard O'Neill. It was from the descendants of the O'Neill and Flood families that the government purchased the land from in 1942.

The Docent organization, originally made up of volunteer Officer's Wives, is now mostly made up of retirees - both male and female who share a love of history and a desire to volunteer their time. Many are retired service members and/or their dependents. Others have no connection with the military at all but desire to give of their time and expertise.

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Still others who volunteer for the Mechanized Museum include young, old, active duty and retired military as well as non- military folks who love the vehicles and enjoy getting their hands dirty. They are respectfully referred to as the “Dirty Docents”.

The role of the docents has changed significantly over the past 37 years. They originally only gave tours of the Santa Margarita Ranch House to the General’s guests. Now docents provide assistance to the Museums Division on Camp Pendleton in a number of areas.

In addition to Ranch House complex tours for school children, group adult tours, VIP and military dignitaries, Docents provide tours of the Las Flores Adobe which was built in 1864 within the boundaries of Rancho Santa Margarita. Additionally, Docents work in the Museums office providing assistance with archives and accessions, researching various questions posed to Museums staff, assisting with the gardens at the Rancho Santa Margarita Ranch House complex as well as the gardens at the Las Flores Adobe and the Marine Memorial Garden located by the South Mesa Club.

Thanks to one of our industrious docents, Beverly (Mickey) Urlie, the docents also have a gift shop. Many of the first items offered for sale were made by Mickey and her father, Pappy – one of our oldest docents, a retired Marine who had marched aboard Camp Pendleton from Camp Elliot, San Diego in 1942. Unfortunately, both Mickey and Pappy have passed away. We are forever indebted to them for beginning our Gift Shop.

In 1999, the Mechanized Museum was born. With the assistance of the Museum’s Officer and under the leadership of MGySgt James King, the “Mech” as the museum is known, has acquired and restored, maintains and exhibits over 90 historic wheeled and tracked vehicles spanning 60 years of military history.

The Mech museum provides vehicles for parades and static displays at events all over San Diego County

proudly representing the Marine Corps. Although, MGySgt King is now retired and has another full time job, he continues to lead the group with his expertise in motor transport, track vehicle and ordnance knowledge in his spare time..

In response to the devastating floods of 1993 that all but demolished the Ranch House Chapel, in 2001, the Docent Organization became a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization so that the organization could accept donations.

Since then, the funds that have been donated to the organization and profits from the Gift Shop have helped to restore many historic artifacts. They have paid for the replacement of the St George stained glass artifact that was lost in the 1993 flood. They have also helped to provide a stipend for child care assistance for docents who want to volunteer but who have small children at home.

Additionally, funds have been used to purchase historic items for display at the Bunkhouse, the Ranch House and the Mechanized Museum, and to purchase display cases to help in preservation of artifacts.

Over the past thirty-seven years the organization has gone through changes big and small. The constant is that it is made up of dedicated and knowledgeable individuals who enjoy volunteering on Camp Pendleton, whether that is telling the story of the families who lived on the land, working the soil with the gardener, working at the Museum’s Office, or getting their hands dirty working at the Mech. The Docents are a motivated and enthusiastic happy group – happy and proud to be of service.

If you are interested in becoming a docent or in going on a tour, please call the Docent Hot Line at 760-725-0770. Please leave your name, phone number and the reason for the call. The Museum staff will be happy to return your call.

Members visited the Only Yesterday Classic Autos and Hall of Heroes Museum in Sorrento Valley, San Diego

On February 1, 2012, CPHS members visited Chuck Spielman's private collection of Only Yesterday Classic Autos and Hall of Heroes. Chuck has approximately 40 vintage, antique, "muscle cars" and high performance vehicles at this location. All vehicles are in mint condition both on the inside and outside of the vehicle and are exercised monthly.

This exciting and memorable three hour tour was led by Robert Rabourne. Bob provided an exemplary tour as he possesses a wealth of professional knowledge on vintage classic cars and military equipment from the Civil War to 9/11.

The Hall of Heroes is a private collection and while not open to the public it is open to various veteran groups and members of the active duty community. The Hall of Heroes is brought to you by Only Yesterday and pays special tribute to the men and women of our armed services who have served their country in time of need but in particular WW II veterans.

The Hall of Heroes collections focus and tribute is on WW II, "The Greatest Generation," to thank them for their service and sacrifices.

Items on display include historical documents, vintage military vehicles, WW II posters and wonderful murals depicting Americans involvement in WW II.



Top picture are members standing in front of the famous Babe Ruth's 1940 Lincoln "Zephyr." Continental which is also featured in the picture below the group.

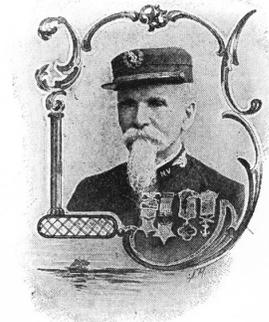
WHO WAS THE FIRST MARINE TO BE AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR?

It was Corporal John Mackie. He was born in New York, NY. Corporal Mackie enlisted in the Federal Marine Corps on Aug. 23 1861. He later married and settled in the Philadelphia area. Mackie died in 1910.

He was the first Marine to be awarded the Navy issue Medal of Honor. His citation reads: "On board the USS Galena in the attack on Fort Darling at Drewry's Bluff, James river, on May 15, 1862. As enemy shellfire raked the deck of his ship, Corporal Mackie fearlessly maintained his musket fire against the rifle pits along shore and, when ordered to fill vacancies at guns caused by men wounded and killed in action manned the weapon with skill and courage."

After receiving his Medal of Honor on 10 July 1863, the Corporal was transferred to the Norfolk Navy Yard and was subsequently posted to the nine-gun sloop USS Seminole as "Orderly Sergeant in Charge." For the remainder of the war Mackie served aboard this ship. He was discharged from the Corps 24 August 1865 in Boston, after having completed four years and four months of service with the Marines.

An interesting after note on the action which earned him his Medal of Honor, Drewry's Bluff, and the Confederate Fort which the Union was attacking was a major training base and post for the small Confederate Marine Corps. It was never taken from the river, but was eventually outflanked during the Federal push on Richmond. Today it is a National Park with several of the revetments still in evidence.



JOHN F. MACKIE,
Corporal on U. S. S. Galena. Born in
New York City in 1835.

Courtesy of Marine Corps Legacy Museum, marinecorpsmuseum.org/tohonor/jmackie.html

CPHS MEMBER EVENT

U.S. Marine Corps Battle Color Ceremony

Thirty-six CPHS members and their guests joined the Marines from School of Infantry (SOI) and their guests for a motivating and spectacular ceremony. The ceremony featured the professional Marines from Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 8th and I Barracks, Washington, D.C. where the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, Silent Drill Platoon, and Color Guard performed their infamous Battle Color Ceremony.



This ceremony took place on Friday, March 9, 2012 at 15:30 at the Camp Pendleton 53 Area (SOI) Upper Parade Deck. The weather was perfect, the location and setting was beautiful and the Battle Color Ceremony was noteworthy and motivating. Everyone had a enjoyable time and had the opportunity to talk to the young performing Marines after the ceremony.

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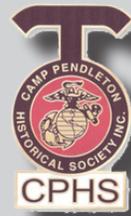
Don't forget our annual fundraiser on August 11. We will gather at the Ranch House with opportunities to visit the nearby Mechanized Museum. It will be an afternoon in a beautiful setting with music, good food and drink, and a silent auction – all for a worthy cause. I hope that many of you will join us. If you have made arrangements for another event scheduled during August 11, we would hope you would consider making a donation to the CPHS.

Once more I thank our loyal members. Your support allows our efforts to bear fruit. Together we can make a significant contribution to preserving the history of the land we know today as Camp Pendleton.

Richard B. Rothwell

www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org
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