



THE MAGNIFICENT MARINE MACHINE MUSEUM

*By Faye Jonason, Director
Camp Pendleton History and Museum Division*

Greetings from the Marine Corps Mechanized Museum! It is the home of two Mules, a Goat and an Otter, as well as a DUKW (pronounced "duck"), a tank killer and a movie star. This is a place to get a close-up of Marine Corps history from 1942 to the present.

The Marine Corps Mechanized Museum, fondly called the "Mech", is a place where children learn how Marines use protective camouflage designs and colors on their often monster-sized machines to increase survival and tactical success. Marines and Sailors who come to the Mech for Professional Military Education (PME) learn about the technological developments of these machines and how they function. Visitors who come understand the importance of these mechanical advancements and how they relate to the accomplishments of the Marine Corps from 1942 to the present. Veterans bring their families to share their own hard-to-talk-about wartime pasts.

In a collection of more than 130 vehicles and artillery, these treasures reflect Marine Corps history from World War II, through the Korean, Vietnam and Cold wars and into the War on Terror. The collection started with a Mechanical Mule forgotten in the weeds and has developed into the world's largest collection of Marine Corps vehicles. Veterans bring their families and friends to show them the equipment that supported their fight against the enemy, carried them through battle and sometimes saved them. These mechanized artifacts are hard evidence of the Marines' time spent in the mud, on volcanic ash, in the jungles, on the sand and in the sea to get the job done.

The Base's first large display of Marine Corps vehicles was established in April 1975 on an outside lot at the top of Rattlesnake Canyon. It consisted of 30 mostly very large vehicles including several of the original experimental Marine hydrofoil crafts. These had metal skirts instead of the rubber skirts currently utilized by hovercraft. They were built by FMC (Food Machinery Corporation), a residual development from World War II contracts from the United States Department of War to design and build amphibious landing vehicles. Due to moisture damage at that exhibit site, most

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Museum, Cont.

of those vehicles were transported to Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow, CA. A select few have been brought back to Camp Pendleton to become part of the collections exhibited at the museum.

One such piece is the unique Marginal Terrain Vehicle XM759 with its more than dozen balloon tires on each side. This tracked prototype was created to travel at 32 miles per hour on land and 5.2 miles per hour in the water. The refrigerated and insulated railcar manufacturing company, Pacific Car and Foundry, designed and manufactured this vehicle under a government military vehicle contract.

Late in the 1990s, that little Mule in the weeds was rescued by Gunnery Sgt. James King, who consulted with the head of the History and Museum Division on Camp Pendleton as to the correct paint and repairs needed to restore it. The M274 Mechanical Mule, a platform vehicle introduced in 1956, is basically a seat mounted on a four-wheeled flat-bed able to carry a half-ton of cargo or personnel. The M274 Mule was the first of eight such early projects first displayed at the 1st Marine Division "grinder" or parade deck in the 33 Area of Camp Pendleton. Eventually, it was decided there needed to be a larger dedicated space for these vehicles.

Building 2612 on Vandegrift Boulevard is a large wooden warehouse built next to the railroad track as part of the 1940s buildup of the then-newly dedicated Marine Corps Barracks Camp Joseph H. Pendleton. First designated as a hospital warehouse and staging center, Marines were processed through the building on their way to war. The war-time construction rush found shortages in some materials, including plywood. The plywood designated for the base's warehouse roofs was sent to New Orleans for the building of Higgins Boats. Instead, the warehouse roofs were built with stacks of gypsum board, better known today as sheet rock. Research revealed that in 1946, as troops were being separated from service at the end of World War II, this building became the Redistribution Regiment Center. Here, hundreds of thousands of Marines were screened, then sent by rail to other



Tanks located outside of the Mech Museum

separation centers to be discharged.

In the 1990s, Building 2612 was used by the Range Maintenance Department on one end and as an IRONMAN race supply storage on the other. That storage area was offered up to the History and Museum Division Director, providing a new space for the growing collection of vehicles refurbished by a cadre of volunteers in time for the 60th anniversary of the opening of Camp Pendleton. The director also gained the services of Sgt. Candice Coffman to oversee cleaning out of the area, to buy the needed supplies and paint, and to recruit and coordinate additional volunteers. Master Sgt. Jim King brought in his wife and sons to work to prepare the space and move the vehicles into the new museum site.

On the 60th anniversary of the base in 2002, Maj. Gen. William G. Bowdon hosted six World War II Marines who, in 1942, had marched for four days from Camp Elliott to the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores. These men who witnessed the dedication of Camp Pendleton, touted as the world's largest Marine Corps amphibious training base, would later fight on the bloody shores of Iwo Jima. Together, in tribute of the base's 60th anniversary, the general and the veterans dedicated the new Marine

Corps Mechanized Museum with a crowd of guests and media.

By 2006, the History and Museum Division Director and the lead volunteer Vehicle Curator, now a master gunnery sergeant, gained additional space for the exhibits, expanding into the rest of Building 2612. Transforming the interior of the former Range Maintenance shop into a museum would take much more time and the hard work of many volunteer hours and Base Facilities support. The walls were repaired, new push bar exit doors were installed, and, thanks to the work of Jim King's wife, Amanda, the floor was refinished to create a more formal space. In recent years, themed exhibits have utilized the environment of vehicles and artillery to interpret various history subjects: the 75 years of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, the military service of women on Camp Pendleton since 1943 and the Marines who trained on Camp Pendleton to ultimately fight on Iwo Jima in World War II. The History and Museum Division has received numerous donations and loans of military artifacts to further illustrate these histories in the exhibits at the museum.

The boat-shaped DUKW is found near the front entry in the World War II section. The DUKW name is a manufacturer's code: D indicates model year 1942; U stands for its utility amphibious body style; K indicates all-wheel drive; W identifies its dual rear axles. World War II DUKW crew members who contributed funds for its restoration, affectionately referred to themselves as the "Quack Corps." Driving the 2.5-ton single propeller DUKW, these veterans resupplied troops by transporting ammunition, supplies, equipment and troops over land and water. Manufactured by GMC (General Motors Corporation) from 1942 to 1945, it remarkably withstood heavy winds, rains and surf and was proven seaworthy when it crossed the English Channel. It included a high-capacity bilge pump system, an air compressor, a winch and a thin hull, light enough to stay afloat even when penetrated with 2" holes. The driver could change the tire pressure from inside the cab, giving the vehicle added terrain versatility. The DUKW was not an armored vehicle, but on about one-quarter of these vehicles, 50-caliber Browning heavy

DID YOU KNOW?

How many pieces of equipment does the Mech Museum have?

- **121 pieces are in the inventory**

Numbers on display in the building?

- **38 Wheeled Vehicles**
- **10 Tracked Vehicles**
- **5 Trailers**
- **5 Artillery**
- **46 of the 58 pieces on display are owned by the National Museum of the Marine Corps**

machine guns were mounted on a ring mount. During World War II in the Pacific Theater, the coral did not damage the tires as Marine Corps DUKWs crossed the reefs on Saipan and Guam.

One of the few M76 Otters to be found in a museum, this boat-nosed vehicle is on display thanks to the four-year volunteer efforts of Dr. Jerry Cook, retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Chip Lovett, Marine Capt. Connor Riley, and Cpl. Steven Everett. This 1950's Pontiac-designed amphibious cargo carrier could carry 3,000 pounds of cargo or eight people in shallow rivers and swampy terrain, and is noted in Marine Corps' history for this work in Vietnam in the late 1960s. With a mostly aluminum construction and pneumatic wheels, the Otter is very light and buoyant and traveled at 30 miles per hour on tracks. It had no armor and the Otter's only defense was a mounted Browning M2HB 50-caliber machine gun. Well suited for rescuing wheeled vehicles stuck in the swamps with its 5,000-pound capacity winch, the Otter served the Marine Corps into the 1970s and was even used in arctic operations.

The museum's "movie star" is a Korean War vintage LVT (Landing Vehicle, Tracked) that played the part of a World War II LVT in the Clint Eastwood film, "Flags of Our Fathers." Warner Brothers Studio negotiated the transport of the huge amphibious warfare vehicle to Iceland for the filming of the Iwo Jima movie. The museum director negotiated to have its head volunteer curator and experienced motor transport chief accompany and oversee the handling and drive the vehicle. Due to computer movie work, this LVT represented all of the Marine Corps landing vehicles in the film and appeared again in the movie, "Letters from Iwo Jima."

At the Mech, one can find the six-wheeled M561 Gama Goat originally developed for use in the Vietnam War. Named for the inventor of its articulated joint, Roger



Troops crowding the camp depot (January 1946)

Gamaunt, together with its mountain-goat type agility, the articulated chassis appears to be a vehicle with a trailer. However, it is in fact a single vehicle with its front and rear wheels turning in opposite directions. A later ambulance version was developed, a logical choice for its ability to climb over tough and muddy ground and an aluminum body weight allowing it to swim.

The tank-killer is an M50 Ontos, a small light-armored tracked anti-tank machine, light enough to cross a pontoon bridge and be transported by aircraft. It derives its name from the Greek for "thing" and was developed in the 1950's by Allis-Chalmers. Three uncomfortably-seated Marines must staff the vehicle, but troops were always happy to see the "Thing" supporting them. During the Vietnam War, the very capable Ontos, with its six recoilless rifles was utilized by the Marines for direct fire support of the infantry in combat.

Soon an outdoor drive-through exhibit will open in the Mech's Back Lot near the restoration shops. The exhibit will display and interpret vehicles reflecting the Vietnam, Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom time periods. The proposed horse-shoe layout will allow Marine and Navy families to follow a guide vehicle in their car to see a display of tanks, large utility trucks, and big artillery guns.

Here, thanks to Sean and Erik Jones, Jim King and other "Dirty Docents," one will be able to see the M198 Howitzer, the M60A3 Battle Tank, a M42 Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Gun, or "Duster," prototype and even an Ontos with its six recoilless rifles.

These unique vehicles comprise just a sampling of the large collection of Marine Corps heavy artillery, earthmovers, transports, and armored machines in the Marine Corps Mechanized Museum collection. The Mech volunteers come from all walks of life, all services and include teens and retirees. It is because of these dedicated volunteers that the Ontos is able to run, that the vehicles have been in parades, official military ceremonies, on exhibit in Balboa Park museums and at community-outreach events. Without the many devoted volunteers, well beyond those named here, who researched each vehicle, studied to find the correct missing parts and correct paint schemes, who worked most of their weekends and evenings to restore each piece, the Marine Corps Mechanized Museum collection would not be preserved for future generations.

Interested volunteers can email MCBCAMPEN_HISTORY@usmc.mil.

Faye Jonason brought her extensive museum background to manage Camp Pendleton's historical programs since 1995.



Current image of recently repainted Mech Museum building exterior

Mech Museum Hours



Monday: Thurs 0800 - 1600

Friday: 0800 - 1300

(760) 725-5758

www.themech.org

The Force Behind the Mech Museum



Master Gunnery Sgt Jim King, USMC (Ret) (front) and Erik Jones by the "Leisure Lady" tank which was renovated by the "Dirty Docents"

Dirty Docent Spotlight - Erik Jones

As a high school student, Erik began volunteering as a Dirty Docent at The Marine Corps Mechanized Museum on Oct. 14, 2017. He continuously spends his weekends repairing and bringing back into order vehicles from World War I to vehicles still in use today. His favorite vehicle to have worked on is an M151A2 1/4-Ton 4x4 Utility Truck. It became his favorite because it was one of his first vehicle projects where he replaced the engine with a fresher one and, during this project, learned the process of pulling the engine and transmission out as one assembly. The M151A2 currently resides at the Museum today as a functioning artifact and is used to support events such as the Armed Services YMCA Camp Pendleton Annual Golf Tournaments.

"HIT THE BEACH!" - CAMP PENDLETON RELIC MAKES A SPLASH IN HOLLYWOOD

A very notable item on display at the Mech Museum is a 1947 LVT A-5 Mod 2. It started out with its service year in 1941 and ended around 1945. The "A" stands for the fact that it is amphibious and the "5" to designate that it is a fifth generation LVT. The LVT can hold up to 24 troops and had a crew of 2-3 Marines. There were only 269 of the LVT A-5s that were built but there are only two of the Mod-2s left, one which is located at the Mech Museum. The LVT's weapons changed frequently from a 75mm howitzer to a Canadian Ronson Flamethrower. On some LVT A-5s, there was either a single or dual pintle mount .50 caliber machine gun and a secondary armament of two pintle-mounted 30 caliber machine guns. The Marine Corps first used this vehicle on Guadalcanal, and later in Tarawa, Bougainville, Saipan, Peleliu, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The LVT in the Mech Museum was used in Clint Eastwood's films, "Flags of Our Fathers" and "Letters from Iwo Jima", and made 25 beach landings with Museum Curator Jim King at the controls.

The Dirty Docents



For more information on the vehicles and renovations done by The Dirty Docents

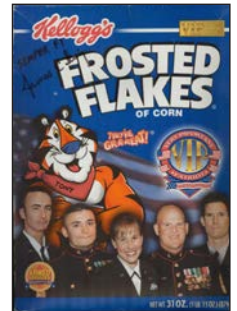


Museum Curator

Master Gunnery Sgt. James King, USMC (Ret)

Born in Harbor City, Calif., Jim enlisted in the Marine Corps on Aug. 24, 1978 and attended boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego. He attended Field Artillery School and was assigned as a MOS 0811 Field Artilleryman Marine; in 1983, he made a lateral move to the Motor Transport Occupational Specialty. He was promoted to master gunnery sergeant in August 2003 and retired from the Marine Corps in January 2009. Jim is currently employed as a Logistics Management Specialist for the Marine Corps Field Supply and Maintenance Analysis Office (FSMAO) West at Camp Pendleton.

In 2002, Jim was selected by the National Military Family Association for the 2002 Very Important Patriot Award; his photo, along with other military servicemembers selected for the same award, was featured on the box of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes cereal.



Jim King (second from the right)

In July 2005, Jim escorted a vintage 1947 Landing Vehicle Tracked Armored (LVT A-5) to Iceland; he was assigned as the technical advisor, driver and mechanic for the LVT in two movies. Once filming was complete, Jim returned back to Camp Pendleton and completely restored the LVT back to its original condition.



Cpl. Tobias Laskowski describes the history and facts about the 1947 LVT during a tour to group of Marines at the Mech Museum on July 14, 2023. Photo by Deb Hellman

President's Message

Jay Bullard



CPHS held its 7th Annual "Golf with a Hero" Golf Tournament on May 12 at Marine Memorial Golf Course on Camp Pendleton. In the past, we've held this tournament at the Omni La Costa Resort & Spa in Carlsbad. The CPHS Board made the decision to return to Camp Pendleton for a variety of factors to include cost. The Course staff with Marine Corps Community Services did a tremendous job supporting us to make this a memorable tournament,

and we will definitely return next year. This was a major fundraiser for us, but also an opportunity for 36 Marines or Sailors to play golf with members of the local community. I would be remiss if I did not thank all of the donors, volunteers, and participants who made this a special day of enjoyment and recognition.

As part of our outreach with the local community surrounding Camp Pendleton, we sponsored a Scholarship Essay contest with the local high school history departments. Additionally, we have a Merit Scholarship for Marine Corps Junior ROTC students. This year, we made an adjustment to the Essay contest by dropping down to the high school level. Previous Essay contests were held at the collegiate level. As a result, we had an increase in the number of participants and a lot of encouragement and support from the high school history departments. Emily Tovar from El Camino High School won the \$1,000 first place award for her essay, and Abigayle Hutchison from Fallbrook High School won the \$500 second-place award. Our Junior ROTC Merit Scholarship award

winners include Fallbrook High School's Cadet 1st Lt. Erin Hale (who will be attending UC Davis) and Cadet Capt. Johnny Perez of Oceanside High School. Both Cadets received a \$500 scholarship from CPHS and were judged on academics, military skills, leadership, and community service.

I am pleased to announce that Staff Sgt. Reckless underwent a cleaning and treatment to help preserve the statue's longevity. Robin Hutton placed us in touch with a company that specializes in statue cleaning in order to give Sgt Reckless a "Spa Day Treatment". CPHS helped cover the costs with Robin and provided the necessary coordination to ensure access to Camp Pendleton. This was a short notice event and special recognition goes to Faye Jonason for overseeing the project with the Base to ensure cleaning crew had access to Sgt Reckless.

In closing, CPHS is working with Camp Pendleton's History and Museum Division to open the Mechanized Museum one Saturday every month. This facilitates veterans visiting the museum to observe the collection and hopefully provide an oral history of their time in the Corps, or with other Services to reflect the time they served. Our desire is to collect and preserve this history. Camp Pendleton and the personnel that have served are part of a unique history. Capturing and preserving this history allows the stories and the insight behind the story to be passed on to future generations.

I sincerely thank everyone for their continued support and participation. Our story is a story worth telling.

Jay Bullard

2023 CPHS Essay Contest

The entry requirement for students participating in the 2023 Camp Pendleton Historical Society Essay Contest was moved from the college level to the high school level. This move resulted in one of the largest number of applications and essays submitted in the contest's history. The competition was coordinated through 11 school district offices in the three counties surrounding Camp Pendleton. Each of the districts approved the contest and were very helpful in marketing to their high schools.

While the academic level of the contest may have changed, the standards of the research and the writing skills remained exceptional. The competition was keen but, in the end, two essays stood out from the others both technically and historically. The winner of our \$1,000 first-place prize was Emily Tovar from El Camino High School. Her essay was titled, "Camp Pendleton: From Spanish Exploration to Rancho Era." Abigayle

Hutchison from Fallbrook High won our second-place \$500 prize with her essay "The Perspectives of Portola Explorers." Both of these well written documents highlighted different eras in Camp Pendleton's rich history, and demonstrated how the Base's history runs in parallel into California's history. Emily was presented her award by contest coordinator Dr. Kelley (top right image), and Fallbrook High Principal Lauren Jones presented Abigayle with her award (bottom right image). Emily and Abigayle have some unique similarities as both have parents that work on the Base and both are still eligible for next year's contest.

The Society would like to thank all the school districts for their help, and would like to give a special thanks to our team of judges that included two highly respected experts on Camp Pendleton, Calvin Franz and Richard Rothwell. We are looking forward to even better contest next year.





On May 12, 2023, the Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) held its 7th annual “Golf with Hero” golf tournament in partnership with the Camp Pendleton Marine Memorial Golf Course. This event provided many the opportunity to converse with Marines who have worldwide experience carrying out the mission of the United States Marine Corps.

Individual teams participating in the event were comprised of one (1) active duty Marine or Sailor and three (3) civilian golfers; all active duty golfers played for free thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and donors. A total of one hundred and twenty-eight golfers (128) hit the links at the base golf course, with a field composed of 85 civilians and military retirees and 43 active duty Marines and Sailors.

This annual fundraising event would not have been possible if it weren’t for our generous sponsors and donors: Frontwave Credit Union, Judith Burns, Cal Frantz, JL Wennes CPAs, Jim Wolfe Appraisal Services, Wade Blair Real Estate, Dang Brother Pizza, Mantech International, Callaway Golf, Sycuan Casino and Resort, and Ronald Leonardi. A special thanks to the Marine Memorial Golf Course staff for their help in organizing and executing the golf tournament and providing all golfers with great meals as part of the event.

“Save the Date” as CPHS is planning to hold the 8th annual “Golf with A Hero” Golf Tournament at the Camp Pendleton Marine Memorial Golf Course on Friday, May 10, 2024. Hope to see you there!



For additional team and event photos from the 7th “Golf with a Hero” Golf Tournament, please go to our webpage under Past Events





CPHS 2023 Marine Corps Junior ROTC Merit Scholarship Award

In May, CPHS Board members Jerry Polyascko and Charlie Kershaw each presented a plaque and a \$500 check to the outstanding Marine Corps JROTC cadet at Oceanside High School and Fallbrook High School for their excellence in academics, military skills, leadership and community service.

Pictured: Left: Chief Warrant Officer Tom Smith, Cadet 1st Lt. Erin Hale, and Jerry Polyascko at Fallbrook High School. Right: Col. Brian Kerl, Cadet Capt. Johnny Perez, and Charlie Kershaw at Oceanside High School.

Camp Pendleton Volunteer Recognition

Three Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents were presented a Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award at the Pacific Views Event Center on April 19, 2023. The Docents receiving this special honor were retired Marine Lt. Col. Paul Durrance, Robert Warrick, and Suzanne Davis.

Paul Durrance took on the leadership of the Docents as Chairman in 2008. He drives from Tucson, AZ monthly to support the History & Museum program by leading tours, helping to maintain the Ranch House Complex, and guiding and training incoming Docent volunteers. He is credited with donating 9,843 hours.

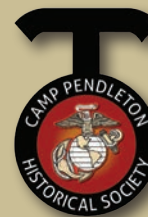
Bob Warrick is the lead garden manager of the Camp Pendleton Veterans Memorial Garden; he is responsible for the successful planting of the Garden and gaining numerous donations of plants and benches and more volunteers. He coordinates with local Native American basket weavers to provide non-poisonous materials from the Garden. Since 2009, his service has included 9,375 hours.

Susan Davis has given 12,218 hours since 1998, serving as a coordinator of the Docents, providing outstanding and informative Docent publications, keeping Docent records and even using her home for Docent meetings. She has worked to keep the Docents informed and to liaison with the History & Museum Office on their behalf. In addition to her devoted work, she has represented military spouses and their issues as a speaker reporting to Congress.

The total volunteer hours for the Docents, Archive and MECH volunteers is 3,880 hours. Also recognized were CPHS volunteers who amassed 1,199 hours in 2022; each was provided with a Certificate of Achievement signed by the base commanding general.



Award recipients Lt. Col. Paul Durrance, USMC (Ret), Suzanne Davis and Robert Warrick. Photo by Ron Jonason



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