



CAMP PENDLETON'S WORLD WAR II/KOREA LVT MUSEUM

by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Cromwell Downs and Staff Sgt. Alexander Panetta, USMC

The WW II-era Quonset Hut, constructed circa 1942 for tracked vehicle maintenance, now serves as the home to five meticulously restored period-correct amphibious tractors and armored vehicles once utilized by the Marine Corps during the Pacific War and later into Korea spanning from 1941 through 1953. Officially known as the Assault Amphibian School, the museum is dedicated to the WWII through Korea War Landing Vehicle Tracked (LVT) Museum, situated in Camp Del Mar (21 Area) within Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California.

While the museum predominantly showcases restored LVTs, it also houses two rebuilt LVT engines: a Radial Continental and a V8 Cadillac engine, both utilized throughout the LVTs operational history. The museum displays uniforms, equipment, photographs, and artwork that has been donated over time from living members to loved ones from living members allowing visitors to trace

the development, operational employment, and impact of these "Alligator Marines" and the "Alligator Machines" they operated, along with the history of the "Amtrac'ers."

Before finding their final resting place, LVTs used during WW II and Korea were dispersed across Camp Pendleton for over 50 years, showcasing the lineage of amphibious vehicles. However, due to deterioration from exposure to the elements, it was deemed necessary to safeguard these historical vehicles. Consequently, the majority of prototype vehicles were relocated to Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow with the remainder transferred to Camp Del Mar (aboard Camp Pendleton).

The Quonset Hut initially served as a maintenance facility for LVTs in the 1950s and 1960s; the original structure of the museum became a storage facility as newer facilities were established to accommodate the needs of Tractor Battalions within Camp Del Mar. In 1995, an initiative to repurpose or demolish unused structures across Marine Corps Installation West, Marine Corps Base Camp

Continued page 2, LVT

LVT, Cont.

Pendleton was launched, including the old maintenance facility near the “Trac” schoolhouse. However, the Assault Amphibian Community sought to preserve this structure, recognizing its historical significance dating back to WWII. In response to a directive from Lt. Col. Nans, the commander of the Assault Amphibian School at that time, the community transformed the storage shed into a museum housing various LVTs such as Roebling, LVT2, LVT(A)1 (B7), LVT (5A-30), and LVT3C (1-A-29) in addition to donated artifacts.

Thoughts of preservation soon evolved into ideas for creating an amphibian tractor museum; in May 1996, the museum officially opened.

Building 21561 is one of the last WW II style Quonset Huts. While the museum provides a home for these antique amphibian beauties, it also provides the Assault Amphibian School a unique training tool, exposing students at all levels from Marine Corps military occupational specialties (MOS) 1803, 1833, 1834, 2141, and 2143, the historical origin of their military occupational field and to give them a sense of mindset of putting upwards of 30 Marines into one of these vehicles and conducting ship to shore operations while in a hostile environment.

When asked then “... why was the museum established?” to Lt. Col. Nans, commander of Assault Amphibian School during that time (1996), he replied, “Because we are Amtrac’ers and are proud of the traditions and valor of Alligator Marines.” He spoke these words during the 1996 initial opening of the museum.



Engraved logo of the Assault Amphibian School.

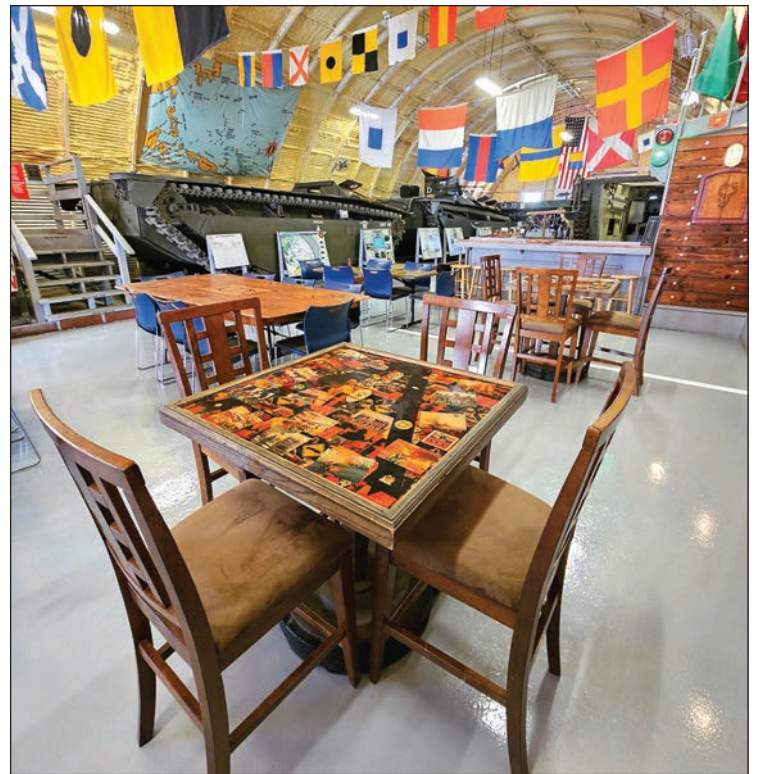


Freshly repainted deck (floor) inside the museum.

Over the years, the museum has undergone improvements, including internal structural enhancements and the addition of amenities such as a “Viewing Platform” and a designated event area named the “Gator Crossing”. Despite periodic neglect, efforts to maintain and revitalize the museum persisted, culminating in a significant remodel in 2020, resulting in its rededication as the “WELLDECK.”

Since 1996, the museum has been maintained by Marines from the Assault Amphibious Community and has hosted numerous events, serving as a beacon of historical significance for the Assault Amphibious community and beyond.

To find out more about the LVT Museum, visit the LVT Museum Facebook page at www.facebook.com/groups/928712104281846 or contact the museum via email at lvtmuseum@gmail.com.



Seating area inside the LVT Museum.



Ramp of the LVT 4 inside the museum.

The LVT Museum is presently staffed and operated by active duty Marines, all who volunteer their time outside of their daily Marine Corps' duties, to help promote the Amtrac history and preserve the LVTs and artifacts within the museum, as well as the building itself. The LVT Museum is guided by a Board of Directors, comprised of active duty Marines, which meets once a month.

The LVT Museum does have a "wish list" of projects. The next significant project the Museum would like to undertake, funding permitting, is the repair of the roof of the LVT Museum; there are significant leaks that need to be repaired in order to protect the LVTs and associated historical artifacts. Since the Marine Corps does not provide funding for the museum projects, the LVT Museum relies on donations and fundraising events for funding. The museum recently held a St. Patrick's Day event to raise funds to resurface the museum floor. If you'd like to donate to the LVT Museum to support future projects, you can do so at the museum; monetary donations can be either through cash or credit card (via the museum's point of sales system).

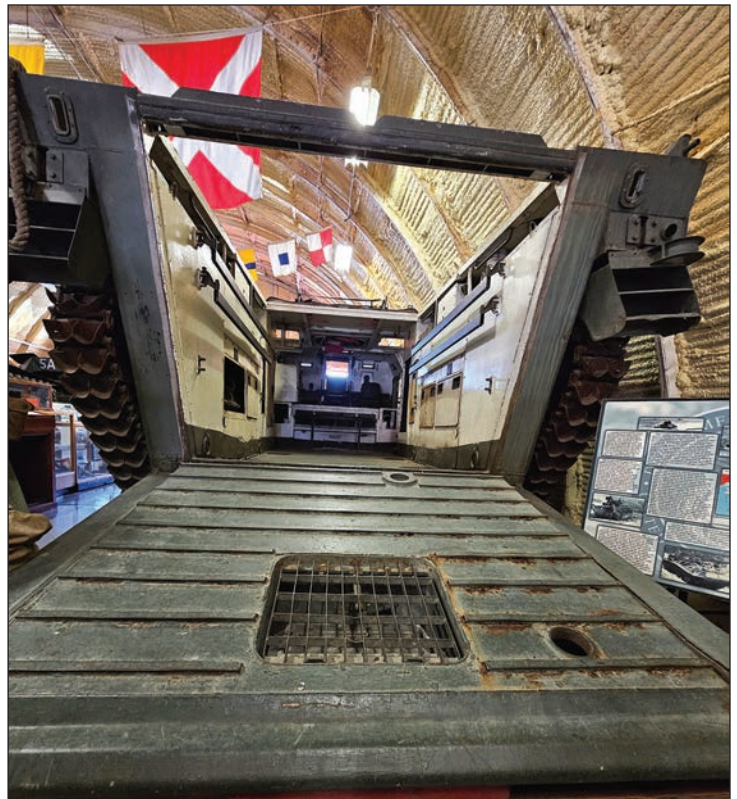
Are you interested in volunteering with the LVT Museum? The Museum welcomes all who would like to volunteer with the museum; no prior Amtrac experience is necessary! To find out more about volunteer opportunities, please email the Museum at lvtmuseum@gmail.com for more information.

If you would like to schedule a tour of the LVT Museum, please contact the museum via email. Besides tours, the Museum is also available for Professional Military Education (PME) meetings, as well as a venue for promotion and retirement ceremonies and social gatherings.

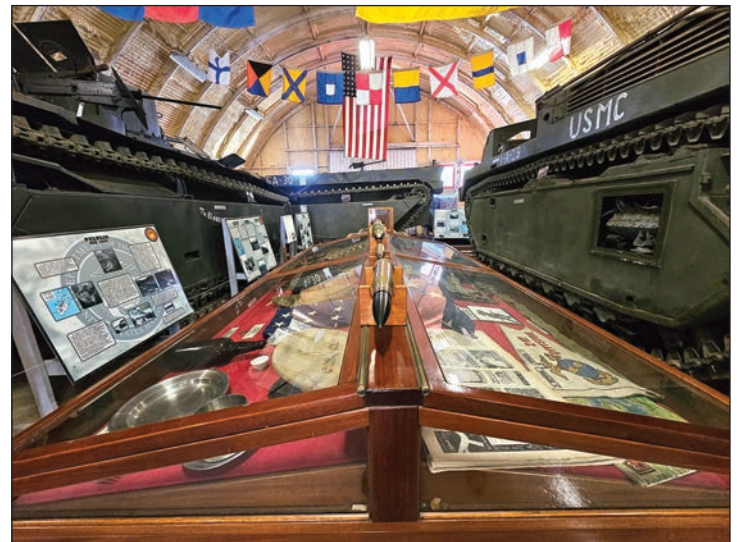
For additional information about the origins of the Camp Pendleton LVT Museum, read the article by Chris Lawson on the AmTrac.org website at amtrac.org/2atmc/Museum/Gatorgalley.asp.

For a virtual tour of the LVT Museum, view the 46-minute video (circa 2004), narrated by former LVT Museum Director, Tom Adametz, with an introduction by Lt. Col. Chris Houser, USMC, on YouTube at https://youtu.be/IRu4NDjU_YY

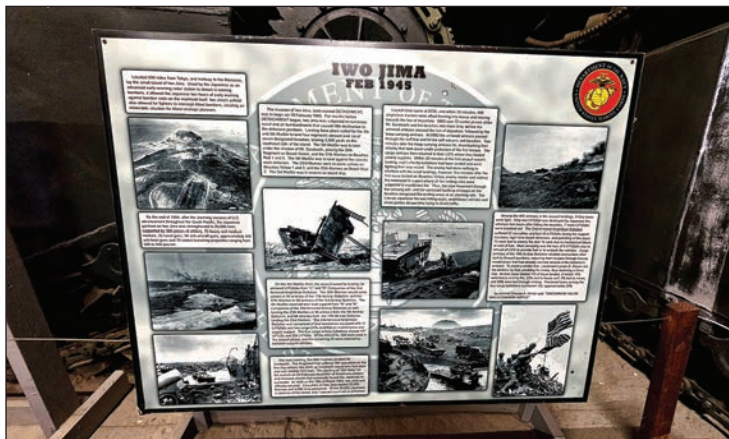
The Assault Amphibian School commander, Col. Venning, and the Museum Director, CWO3 Downs, welcomes everyone who would like to visit and tour the museum.



Ramp and interior view inside of one of the LVT on display in the museum.



Artifacts display cases in the middle of the museum.



Iwo Jima battle (1945) storyboard. One of the many informative storyboards within the museum.



"THE WELLDECK" wall inside the museum, displaying uniform nametapes and rank insignia of Amtrac'ers who retired from the Marine Corps.

Museum's monsters muscled by Marines

Editor's Note: This is a reprint of the article, Pendleton Scout newspaper, April 24, 1975

by Staff Sgt. Ron Franck, USMC

It's not an ordinary museum and moving it to a new location is not an ordinary move.

It's the unique Landing Vehicle Tracked (LVT) Museum, comprised of 26 metal monsters representing a quarter-century of amphibian vehicle development by the Marine Corps.

Ranging in size from the 3,000 pound "Otter" to the 88-ton "Goliath," the gross weight of the museum's vehicles is more than 1.5 million pounds.

Located at Camp Del Mar since 1953, the museum was a part of the Amphibian Vehicle Test Division of the Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity and with its relocation it is now a part of the Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps.

The official reopening at the new location is scheduled for April 28, 1975.

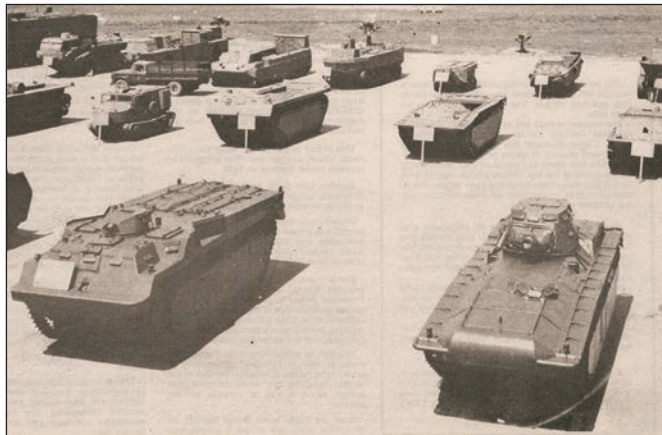
Salt air from the nearby ocean was having a deteriorating effect on the vehicles. In the interest of preserving the historical value of the amphibian relics, it was decided to move them mainside, away from the ocean. An unused, black-topped lot in the 12 Area, near the upper junction of Vandegrift Blvd. and Rattlesnake Canyon Road, was chosen as the new site.

Movement was accomplished with the coordinated efforts of 1st Force Service Regiment, Schools Battalion, Base Maintenance and the Base Provost Marshal, under the direction of Gunnery Sgt. D.G. Kraft, Schools Battalion and Chief Warrant Officer K. E. Weadbrock, Base Maintenance.

Most of the vehicles could be trucked to the new location on flatbed trailers. Huge cranes hoisted each machine onto a trailer where it was secured for the trip. At the new site, another crane



Front page of the Pendleton Scout newspaper, April 24, 1975



Site of the LVT Museum at an unused lot near the junction of Vandegrift Blvd. and Rattlesnake Canyon Road.

lifted the tractor off the flatbed and settled it slowly into position.

While many of the museum's vehicles are combat veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam, others are prototypes - one-of-a-kind test models which for various reasons were never adopted for production.

Though the history of tracked vehicles in the Corps reaches back only 25 years, they have developed quickly into a sophisticated and vital part of amphibious warfare.

At the LVT museum this development may be traced graphically. The 26 vehicles on display represent every amphibian ever used or tested by the Marine Corps.

Marines became interested in amphibians before WWII while testing amphibious assault doctrines. In 1940 the Corps bought two Roebling Alligators, lightweight tracked vehicles designed by Ronald Roebling for rescue work in the Florida swamps.

When the war began, the U.S. Navy bought (#) of the vehicles, replaced their aluminum hulls with steel and designated them LVT-1. They were first used in combat at Guadalcanal in 1942.

By the end of WWII, several models were in production, including a variety of gun carriers - LVTs with artillery pieces mounted on them.

One tracked vehicle at the museum is unique in that it was neither tested nor used by Marines. It's the Katasha, a Japanese vehicle designed to be carried on the deck of a submarine. Although never used against American forces, several of these amphibians were captured in the island campaigns of the Pacific. Ironically, the Katasha was originally developed in the United States and sold to the Japanese before the war began.

Another model on display is the amphibious hydrofoil. Tested extensively but never adopted for production, the hydrofoil proved to have great speed in the ocean but was basically unseaworthy.

Technology as well as history is preserved at the Tracked Vehicle Museum. While many of the models on display proved unsatisfactory for combat use, they provided valuable information and experience for the design and production of newer models.

At its new site, the Tracked Vehicle Museum will be open to the public.

President's Message

Jay Bullard



Dear Members and Supporters,

As we roll into the summer season, I would like to thank everyone for their support and participation in our Golf Tournament. We had 128 golfers, of which 38 active-duty Marines and Sailors were able to participate. Everyone had a wonderful time and MCCS put out fabulous spread for us. I think we set a record for the number of mulligan's that were purchased, but that's always part of the fun. I'd be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to our major sponsors -- Frontwave Credit Union, Otterbox, Judith Burns, and Cal Frantz. Without their support, we could not conduct our support to base historical programs as well as our community outreach with scholarship awards. In addition to our major sponsors, we had many items that were donated by members and supporters, that we were able to auction and raise additional money. Next year, our golf tournament will be held on Friday, May 9, 2025. Please save the date, this event is our primary fundraiser and a wonderful opportunity to have some fun.

Marine Corps Installations West / MCB Camp Pendleton Commanding General, Brigadier General Jason Woodworth is departing the pattern. He's going back to Headquarters

Marine Corps where he will take command of Marine Corps Installations Command. General Woodworth and his wife Renee have been very supportive of the historical society and base historical programs, we wish them all the best in their future endeavors. At the same time, we welcome Brigadier General Nick Brown and his wife Anneese. General Brown has served at Camp Pendleton before with his last tour being the Commanding Officer of CLR-17. We look forward to greeting General Brown and his wife Anneese.

On June 7th, we were able to recognize our Essay Contest winners and their families at the Ranch House. Emily Tovar was our winner with her essay submission titled "Traces of History: Native American Heritage on Camp Pendleton". The runner up was Madison Nguyen who submitted an essay titled "Tracing the Footprints of Camp Pendleton Through Time." We graded their essays on historical accuracy, historical interest, and presentation. Both High School students did an outstanding job and well deserving of their scholarship checks. The families appreciated the recognition and enjoyed a tour of the Ranch House that was conducted by Faye Jonason.

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

Jay Bullard

4th Annual CPHS Essay Contest

Participation in the 4th Annual CPHS Essay Contest continued to grow as we received applications from students representing the largest number of high schools to date. The competition is coordinated through eleven school district offices in the three counties surrounding Camp Pendleton.

This year marked several firsts for the essay contest as Emily Tovar from El Camino High School became our first two-time winner and Madison Nguyen from Mission Hills High School became our first freshman to place.

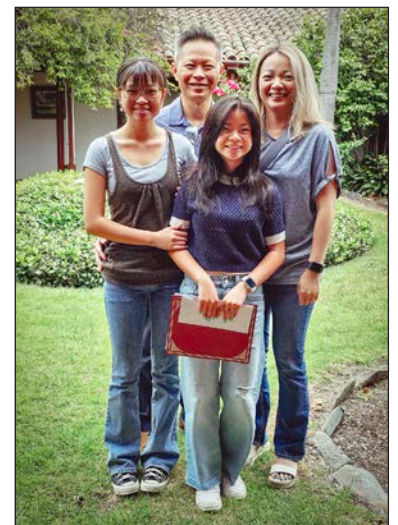


Emily's first place essay entitled "Traces of History: Native American Heritage on Camp Pendleton" documented not only some of the history of the tribes but also the impact of the arrival of the Europeans. Madison's essay entitled "Tracing the Footprints of Camp Pendleton through

Time" provided a concise yet fact-filled snapshot of the history of the land - from the Indian era to the cultural and economic impact that the base has today.

This year also marked the first time that we were able to present the awards at the Ranch House. On Friday, June 7, CPHS Board Members Jerry Polyascko and Mike Kelley presented the awards. History and Museum Director Faye Jonason then led the winners and their families on a tour that provided a fascinating glimpse of life in the Rancho era and of the people who have stayed and lived in the house over the decades.

The Society would like to thank all the school districts for their help. We would also like to give a special thanks to our team of judges. We are looking forward to an even better contest next year.



Left: First Place winner, Emily Tovar (Front) with her parents, Marcos Tovar, Angelica Cervantes and her sister, Lillian Tovar. Right: Second Place winner, Madison Nguyen (Front) with her family, Samantha, Baochau, and Julie.

8th Annual "Golf with a Hero" Charity Golf Tournament



Active duty Marines and Sailors who played in the golf tournament. Photos by Deb Hellman

On May 10, 2024, the Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) held its 8th Annual "Golf with a Hero" fundraising 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 (128) golfers hit the links at the base golf course, with a field composed of 90 civilians and military retirees and 38 active duty Marines and Sailors.

This annual fundraising event would not have been possible if not for our generous sponsors and donors: Semper Fi

Sponsors (\$2,500) Frontwave Credit Union, Otterbox, Judith Burns, and Cal Frantz; Esprit de Corps Sponsors (\$1,500) Brig. Gen. Jay Bullard, USMC (Ret) and VetCTAP; and Devil Dog Sponsors (\$1,000) Fallbrook Batting Cages, Care Choice Home Care, and Guaranteed Rate. Donors who support the tournament were Veterans Association of North County, Pendleton Memorial Golf Association, The Bartley Group, The Blair Group, Armed Forces and Dispatch Newspaper, and SurfCoins. A special thanks to the staff of the Marine Memorial Golf Course for their help in organizing and executing the golf tournament and providing all golfers with great meals and service as part of the event.

"Save The Date" as CPHS is planning to hold the 9th Annual "Golf with a Hero" golf tournament at the Camp Pendleton Marine Memorial Golf Course on Friday May 9, 2025. Hope to see you there!



First Place Team: Phil Fascetti, Michael Joe, CW02 Zachary Selvig and Capt Brendan Roberts.



Volunteers Abbie Bachert (front) Jim Pruitt and CPHS Treasurer Tim Anderson.



MCIWEST Deputy Commander, Col. Dan Whitley, addresses the golfers.



CPHS Board Members Mike Lewis (l) and Jerry Polyascko (r) with Semper Fi Sponsor, Judith Burns.



Marines from H&S Bn, MCB Camp Pendleton, who volunteered to support the golf tournament.



Elise Siam from Otterbox (Semper Fi Sponsor) with CPHS President Jay Bullard.

“Mission Accomplished”



by Col. Richard B. Rothwell, USMC (Ret)

Eight years after beginning a project to place a monument to Major Gen. Joseph H. Pendleton aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CPHS can finally say, “Mission accomplished.”

The monument had been dedicated on Dec. 1, 2022, lacking the final touch - bronze plaques: one with a short biography of General Pendleton and the other recognizing major donors who had helped make the project successful.

On April 20, 2024, Terry Parks, owner of the sign installation company, Sign-Up, and his wife, Tammy Roman, drilled three-inch holes in the monument’s concrete base and, with the help of strong epoxy, attached both plaques.

The installation of the two plaques, prepared by Southern California Bronze, marked the final step on a long, but satisfying trip.

CPHS thanks all who worked so hard to make this project successful.

Marine Corps JROTC Awards Ceremony

Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) was proud to present 2024 Marine Corps JROTC merit scholarship awards for excellence in academics, leadership, military skills and community service to cadets at Fallbrook High School and Oceanside High School.

For the Fallbrook High School MCJROTC program, Cadet Company First Sergeant Everly Arwood was the award recipient. On April 18, 2024, Col. Jerry Polyascko, USMC (Ret), CPHS Vice President, presented Everly with a plaque recognizing her accomplishments and a check for \$500. Everly will be attending Oregon State in the Fall (2024) and has joined the Oregon National Guard.

For the Oceanside High School MCJROTC program, Cadet Captain Paloma Aguilar was the award recipient. On May 14, 2024, Lt. Col. Charlie Kershaw, USMC (Ret) presented Aguilar with a plaque recognizing her accomplishments and a check for \$500.

Membership News

Welcome aboard to our newest members who recently joined our cause:

Mark Matthews

Richard Schultz

Many thanks to our loyal members for their recent renewal:

Laura Dietz

Bart Moore

A. B. Diggs

Catherine O'Brien

Joseph Dertinger

Wanda Prosser

MGen John Ewers, USMC (Ret)

Ralph Zimmerman

Kim Fox

Commanders Circle:

Charles Rothwell

Donations:

Rancho Mission Viejo

Nancy Taylor



CPHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brig. Gen. John Bullard, Jr., USMC (Ret)
President

Col. Jerry Polyascko, USMC (Ret)
Vice President

Master Sgt. Tim Anderson, USMC (Ret)
Treasurer

Col. Bo Hellman, USMC (Ret)
Secretary/Membership

Master Sgt. Jerry Blandford, USMC (Ret)
Michael Kelley, Ph.D.

Lt. Col. Charles Kershaw, USMC (Ret)
MGySgt. Mike Lewis, USMC (Ret)

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

Col. Richard B. Rothwell, USMC (Ret)
President Emeritus

Faye Jonason
Base History and Museum Division

Kelli Brasket
Base Environmental Security Dept.

COUNCIL OF ADVISORS

A distinguished group of advisors is helping to guide us as we grow. We are pleased to acknowledge their support.

Maj. Gen. Vincent Coglianesi, USMC (Ret)
Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA

Wayne Eggleston

Lt. Col. Joseph C. Fegan III, USMC (Ret)

L. Patrick Forster

Lt. Gen. Edward Hanlon, Jr., USMC (Ret)

Maj. Gen. Anthony Jackson, USMC (Ret)

Anthony B. Joseph

Maj. Gen. Michael Lehnert, USMC (Ret)

Anthony R. Moiso

Nicole Weiler

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

CAMP PENDLETON HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS A NON-FEDERAL ENTITY. IT IS NOT A PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OR ANY OF ITS COMPONENTS AND IT HAS NO GOVERNMENTAL STATUS.

Spotlight on the Past

A special thanks to our CPHS volunteer, Abbie Bachert, as she has been combing through The Pendleton Scout newspaper archives and finding interesting tidbits from the Scout and posting them to the CPHS Facebook page; she has been posting these historic gems every few days since June 26, 2024.

If you have not been to the CPHS Facebook page to view these excerpts from the Scout newspaper, please visit the site (www.facebook.com/camppendletonhistoricalsociety).

If you are interested in lending a hand by looking through the Scout newspaper archives in support of this effort (and the more extensive Scout digitization project), please contact Deb Hellman at cpenscout.cphs@gmail.com.



Right this way Daddy!

GySgt. Lonnie R. Hines carries his wife across the threshold of their new home at Wire Mountain Homes, while their children hold the door for daddy. Hines and his family are among the first families to move into the recently completed addition to the base housing. MajGen. John C. Munn, base commander, presented GySgt. Hines with the key to his new home.

Source: *The Pendleton Scout*; May 1, 1964

Marching for March of Dimes!

Little Debbie Cabanas, 6, gave the two Marines marching from San Diego to Los Angeles a solid send-off when she dropped a dollar bill into the pack of GySgt. Roy Doherty at San Diego City Hall. GySgt. Marion Perkins got his first donation from San Diego Mayor Charles Dail.

Source: *The Pendleton Scout*; Jan. 13, 1961



**Remember to follow us on Facebook
and visit our website:**

**facebook.com/camppendletonhistoricalsociety
camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/**



Camp Pendleton Historical Society
P.O. Box 5497
Oceanside, CA 92052