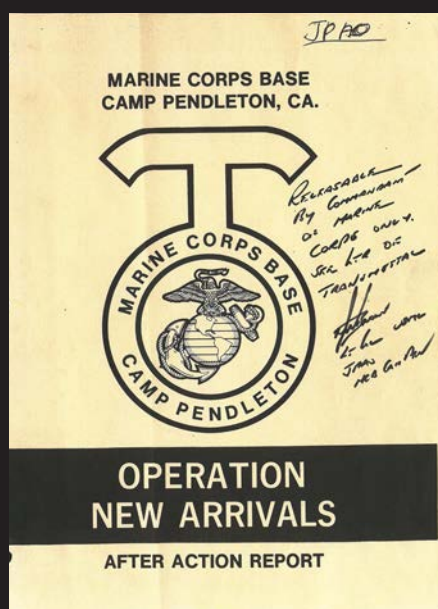




AFTER ACTION REPORT - U. S. MARINE CORPS PARTICIPATION IN OPERATION "NEW ARRIVALS"



New Arrivals Military Coordination Center processing paperwork

The official 144-page After Action report, maintained by the Camp Pendleton History and Museum Division, details the U. S. Marine Corps' role in Operation "New Arrivals" at Camp Pendleton, California, a critical humanitarian effort to house and process Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees following the collapse of their governments in Spring 1975. The operation spanned from late April to mid-November 1975, evolving through three distinct phases.

Preface: The Crisis and U.S. Obligation

As Communist forces advanced in March 1975, the U.S. recognized a moral obligation to evacuate Americans and vulnerable South Vietnamese/Cambodians. President Ford publicly articulated this commitment on April 10, requesting Congressional support for military evacuation and legal revisions for

those in peril. The evacuation from Saigon began April 15, ultimately seeing over 130,000 people depart South Vietnam, including 75,000 relatives of U.S. citizens and 60,000 "high-risk" Vietnamese, plus a large "catch-all" category. Cambodian evacuation ("Operation Eagle Pull") from Phnom Penh occurred earlier, on April 11, moving over 270 individuals. The U.S. anticipated up to 6,000 Cambodian refugees.

To manage this immense undertaking, the President appointed Ambassador L. Dean Brown on April 18 (later Julia Vadala Taft) to head an Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). This IATF, comprised of officials from various federal agencies, was mandated to coordinate evacuation, establish staging areas (Western Pacific), select U.S. reception centers, arrange logistics, facilitate migration, and ensure



Marines unpack bundles of poles used to construct tents

permanent resettlement. Funding was secured through the Indo-China Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (\$455M) and other appropriations. The report notes that the military received limited advance notice for establishing U.S. reception centers because the IATF itself was newly formed and initially focused on the immediate evacuation.

Phase 1 – Rapid Establishment (26 April to 12 May 1975)

This phase was characterized by extreme urgency and rapid construction. On April 26, Camp Pendleton was unexpectedly queried about its capacity. Despite being fully operational, a special meeting determined a tent camp in the isolated Talega-Cristianitos area was feasible, leveraging existing facilities and utilities. On April 28, Camp Pendleton was designated the West Coast Reception Center, with the first refugees arriving from MCAS El Toro in the early hours of April 29.

The Marine Corps' mission was to provide billeting, messing, medical treatment, transportation, security, and administration for up to 18,000 refugees for 90 days or more. This spurred an "almost instantaneous total effort" across West Coast Marine Corps commands. The New Arrivals Military Coordination Center (NAMCC) was swiftly organized, growing to 1,282 Marines and 77 Navy personnel by



One of the many refugee tent camps built aboard Camp Pendleton

May 12. Key sections included Operations (managing transportation/processing), Security (protecting refugees and property, notably with internal forces *unarmed* to foster trust), Refugee Affairs (welfare, locator systems, legal aid), Communications, Joint Public Affairs (managing intense media interest from over 1,000 representatives), and the Logistic Support Group (LSG) handling all supply, transport, food, engineering, medical, and administrative needs.

Camp construction was a "herculean task" completed in under six days. Initial supplies were augmented by urgent "OI" designator requisitions from various federal agencies. By May 4, billeting for 18,000 was ready, and by May 9, the camp population reached 18,608. The San Onofre area served as an overflow and later became dedicated to Cambodian refugees to manage cultural differences. Each camp was designed to be self-sufficient, offering housing (Quonset huts and tents, with heated trailers for mothers and infants), 24/7 food service (22,000 meals daily at peak, handled by 1,000 personnel), and basic sanitation. Informal recreation (volleyball, movies) and education (English, history) programs began. Medical care was provided via a main dispensary and satellite clinics, with only 133 hospitalizations out of 25,000 refugees during this phase. Refugee leaders were



Quonset hut dining facility. Photos courtesy of the Camp Pendleton Archives.



Camp Pendleton cooks prepare meals for the refugees



Vietnamese refugees line up to shop at temporary store

integrated into camp organization, assisting with various functions. Refugee accounting was initially challenging due to movement but improved with meal cards and refined census procedures. Refugee processing involved registration with INS, HEW, Public Health Service, and Volunteer Agencies (VOLAGS) to secure sponsorships.

Phase 2 – Stabilization and Expansion (13 May to 31 August 1975)

Phase 2 saw the operation transition from chaos to a "stabilized phase," as the initial flood of refugees slowed to a more manageable flow. The camp complex evolved into a temporary home rather than a transient facility. By August 31, over 36,000 refugees had been processed through Camp Pendleton, with the population stabilizing around 14,000 after reaching a maximum capacity of 20,048 on July 13.

Services and facilities proliferated: Mobile Marine Exchange facilities and commercial gold/currency dealers were established to provide legitimate access to goods and financial services. A commercial mobile banking facility and a cafeteria were also added. Recreation programs expanded significantly, coordinated by the YMCA, including sports, nightly movies, TV tents, Bingo, dances, and even professional live entertainment. Child Day Care Centers were organized by the American Red Cross, and camp libraries and sewing centers (critical for altering donated, often oversized, clothing) were established. Education programs became more formalized, with the San Diego County Board of Education implementing a highly organized curriculum taught by civilian teachers, with 70% of the camp population participating. Sanitation improved with permanent shower buildings and refined drainage. Communications expanded with commercial phone/telegraph access, amateur radio links, intra-camp loudspeakers, and the publication of the "Thong Bao" refugee newspaper in multiple languages.



Brig. Gen. Graham and First Lady Betty Ford look over reports during a visit to the base.

Military strength stabilized, and Marine Corps Brigadier General Paul G. Graham, the initial commander, was recalled from retirement to oversee the operation as Military Coordinator, ensuring continuity. Food services were refined with culturally appropriate menus, but a transition to a commercial food services contractor (Southeastern Services, Inc.) in July proved problematic, leading to issues with food quality, quantity, sanitation, and inventory that required constant military oversight.

Significant events included the construction of the "Hand of Hope" sculpture, symbolizing welcome and hope. The issue of repatriates emerged, with some refugees desiring to return home. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) became involved, and Vietnamese repatriates were eventually consolidated on Guam to await clearance for return to Vietnam. Unaccompanied children were identified, and supervised centers were established for their care. Religious services were organized for the predominantly Catholic and Buddhist populations, with over 80 weddings performed, often becoming camp-wide celebrations. Discipline issues were minor, mostly interpersonal altercations, and strict conduct guidelines for military personnel, including a prohibition on fraternization, were enforced to maintain order and trust.

In the October 2025 issue of the Groundbreaker newsletter, we will conclude the overview of the official Operation New Arrivals After Action Report by highlighting Phase 3 (Phasedown and Closure) covering the period of 1 September to 15 November 1975 and provide a timeline of this significant humanitarian effort.

Editor's Note: The preceding summary of a portion of the 144-page official After Action Report was generated using NIPRGPT Generative AI Platform (U. S. Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate).



9th "Golf with a Hero" Golf Tournament

by Mike Lewis

1ST PLACE



Sgt Timothy Miller, Thomas Jones, Kyle Welch, and Tim Anderson

On May 9, 2025, the Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) held its 9th Annual "Golf with Hero" fundraising golf tournament in partnership with the Camp Pendleton Marine Memorial Golf Course. The 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 active-duty Marine or Sailor and three civilians or retired military; all active-duty golfers played for free thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and donors. A total of 114 golfers hit the links at the Base golf course, which was composed of 69 civilians and retired military and 45 active duty Marines and Sailors.

This annual fundraising event would not have been possible if not for our generous sponsors and donors. Our major sponsors included:

Semper Fi Sponsor Level (\$2,500)

Brig. Gen. Jay Bullard, USMC (Ret)
Calvin Frantz
Frontwave Credit Union

Devil Dog Sponsor Level (\$1,000)

Mike Lewis / Fallbrook Batting Cages

2ND PLACE



Carlos Veintimilla, Jr., David Banks, Carlos Veintimilla, Sr., and Bob Ross

Donors who supported the golf tournament were Judith Burns and Jim Keefer (each donating \$1,000), Maj. Gen. Anthony Jackson, USMC (Ret), Mike Kelley, Jim Naylor, and Gerald Polyascko. Additionally, tee sign donations were made by the Pendleton Memorial Golf Association, The Blair Group, and Surf Coins.

A very special thanks to the staff of the Camp Pendleton 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 this annual event.

3RD PLACE



CW02 Zach Selvig, Chip Dykes, Bill Birnie, and Andy Gasper

CPHS photographer, Deb Hellman, was out and about during the course of the tournament, documenting the day's activities; her images are posted on the CPHS Events webpage via the following link: <http://bit.ly/4oEP0Yp>



Brig. Gen. Nick Brown, Brig. Gen. Jay Bullard and Sgt. Maj. Sherri Cook before the start of the tournament.



Author and CPHS member Amy Forsythe signing a copy of her book *Heroes Live Here* for Staff Sgt. Ryan Chapman.



CPHS volunteer Jim Pruitt and two Frontwave employees, Diana Mascarenaz and Maya Maturino, helped make the day a success.

President's Message

Jay Bullard



Dear Members and Supporters,

I would like to thank everyone for their support and participation in our 9th Annual "Golf with a Hero" golf tournament. We had 114 golfers / 28 foursomes, of which 23 golfers were E5 and below. Everyone had a wonderful time and MCCS put out a fabulous spread for us. We were able to have drawings where our junior enlisted received golf clubs and other golfing accessories. I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize our major sponsors' – Frontwave Credit Union, Judith Burns, Cal Frantz and our own Mike Lewis. Without their backing, we could not continue our support to the Camp Pendleton 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 8, 2026. Please save the date as this event is our primary fundraiser and a wonderful opportunity to have some fun.

On May 12, we recognized our Essay Contest winners and their families at the Ranch House. Every year we reach out to the local high schools and offer the students a chance to compete for scholarship awards by submitting an essay about the History of Camp Pendleton. Sofia Max, Fallbrook High School, was our winner with her essay submission titled "Camp Pendleton: A Historical Look into the History of the Land". The runner up was Marina Bogatyreva, Sage Creek High School, with her essay submission titled "Camp Pendleton from the Mission Era to Modern Day". Honorable mention went to Isai Villalobos, San Juan Hills High School, with his essay titled "The Original Settlers of Camp Pendleton". We graded their essays on historical accuracy, historical interest, and presentation. All of the 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 provided by the docents.

Please save the date for Friday, Nov. 7, 2025 as we will hold our 250th USMC Birthday celebration. We will hold our celebration at the MCB Camp Pendleton Golf Course / Windmill Canyon restaurant from 4:30 - 8:00 pm. Our celebration is a happy hour setting/ hors d'oeuvres open seating where we can all socialize with each other while celebrating our history. The dress code is business casual (open collar) and all members are more than welcome, even if you didn't serve in the Marine Corps. We will send out invites in August; please RSVP.

In closing, I'd like to wish the US Army a Happy 250th Birthday. Throughout our beloved Corps' history, the Army has fought side by side with Marines. I sincerely thank everyone for their continued support and participation. Our story is a story worth telling and sharing with future generations.

Jay Bullard

"Save the Date"

10th Annual
"Golf with Hero"
Golf Tournament

Camp Pendleton
Marine Memorial Golf Course

Friday, May 8, 2026

5th Annual Historical Essay Contest

by Mike Kelley

The annual CPHS Historical Essay Contest encourages high school students to research the history of the land and the cultural and economic significance of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.



Gen. Bullard presenting the award certificate to Sofia Max.

This year, CPHS saw the largest participation of local high students, with essays submitted on topics ranging from history to paleontology to environmental concerns. Students from six high schools across two counties participated, prompting CPHS to add a new award group (Honorable Mention) this year in the winners' category.

Sofia Max from Fallbrook High School was awarded 1st Place honors with her essay, "Camp Pendleton: A Historical Look Into The Land." Marina Bogatyreva of Sage Creek High School took 2nd Place with her essay, "Camp Pendleton from the Mission Era to Modern Day". The new Honorable Mention category honors went to Isai Villalobos and Lucas Gonçalves, both from San Juan Hills High School.

Essay contest winners were presented with their respective awards by CPHS President, Brig. Gen. Jay Bullard, USMC (Ret), at a ceremony held at the Ranch House aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. A representative from the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents provided the award recipients and their family members with a guided tour of the Ranch House after the ceremony.

All award recipients were underclassmen, paving the way for an intense competition next year. Stay tuned to CPHS for the announcement in the Fall (2025), detailing the 6th annual CPHS Historical Essay Contest.



Essay winners and their families received a tour of the Ranch House from the Docents.



Gen. Bullard presenting honorable mention award to Ernesto and Claudia Villalobos, parents of Isai Villalobos. Photos by Deb Hellman



Sofia Max, 1st Place



Marina Bogatyreva, 2nd Place



QR code to the essays posted on the CPHS website



The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is currently planning the following event:

250th Marine Corps Birthday Celebration

Date: Nov. 7, 2025

Location: Marine Corps Memorial Golf Course, Camp Pendleton

Cost: \$10 per person

Additional Birthday Celebration event info will be posted on the CPHS Facebook, website, and broadcast via Eventbrite invitations and separate digital communications.

Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) Awards Program

by Jerry Polyascko

Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) was proud to present the 2025 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.

On May 12, 2025, Cadet Ashley Colores-Cisneros from Oceanside High School was presented with the CPHS Marine Corps JROTC Award by the Senior Marine Instructor, Col. Brian Kerl, USMC (Ret).



Col. Brian Kerl, USMC (Ret) and Ashley Colores-Cisneros

On May 14, 2025, CPHS Vice President Jerry Polyascko presented the CPHS Marine Corps JROTC Award to Cadet Lt. Col. Brianne Lucchesi of Fallbrook High School. Brianne was the Commanding Officer of the JROTC unit from September 2024 to end of the school year in May 2025. Additionally, she was commander of the unarmed drill team, which placed in the top three at two drill competitions. Brianne was also a member of the Fallbrook High School Cross Country and Track teams. She will be attending Grand Canyon University (Phoenix, AZ) in the Fall (2025), where she will study forensic science and plans to enroll in the Air Force ROTC Program.



Sr. Marine Instructor, CWO3 Tom Smith, USMC (Ret) and Brianne Lucchesi

Oceanside Historical Society Donation

On July 25, CPHS was the fortunate recipient of a mixed box of photographic negatives and "cut sheets" from the Oceanside Historical Society (OHS). These negatives, dating from the 1990s

from the local North County Times newspaper, are Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps related. OHS President and CPHS member, Kristi Hawthorne, contacted CPHS and offered the donation of the negatives. CPHS sincerely appreciates the generosity of Kristi and OHS!

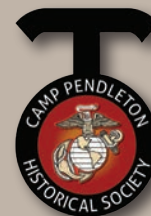
We're in the process of examining, cataloging, and digitizing the negatives and anticipate coordinating an offer of digital copies of this collection with the Camp Pendleton History and Museum Division for use in their archives.

For those not aware, OHS has moved into their new building, Robert A. and Bessie J. Weese Oceanside History Center, located at 510 Civic Center Drive in Oceanside; they officially open on Friday, August 29 at 10 a.m. at this new location.

For more information, visit the OHS website at: <https://oceansidehistoricalsociety.org/>



One image from the sheets of negatives donated by the OHS. Image taken by Hayne Palmour on June 2, 1992 from the deactivation ceremony for 1st Tank Battalion leaving Camp Pendleton.



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

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OR ANY OF ITS COMPONENTS AND IT HAS
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Membership News

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

Kristi Hawthorne
Kaz Kishimoto
Anthony Pierotti
Andrew Williams

Many thanks to our loyal members for their recent renewal:

Joseph Dertinger, Jr.
A. B. Diggs
Patricia Dolbeck
Paul Durrance
Maj. Gen. John Ewers, USMC (Ret)
Gerald File
Kim Fox
Bartley Moore
Catherine O'Brien
Richard Quandt
Richard Schultz

Lifetime Member:

Dennis Bevis

Commander's Circle:

Laura Dietz
Mark Sheehan
Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, USMC (Ret)

Donations:

Nancy Taylor



Jim King at the Mech Museum

Happy Retirement!

On July 31, 2025, retired Marine Master Gunnery Sgt. Jim King retired from his civilian position at the Marine Corps Field Supply and Maintenance Analysis Office (FSMAO) West at Camp Pendleton. His 16+ years of service as a FSMAO Logistics Management Specialist combined with 30 years of active duty service in the Marine Corps is a testament to his four-plus decades

of unfailing service and dedication to the U. S. Marine Corps. CPHS wishes Jim a happy, healthy, and relaxing retirement though we're certain that he'll continue to lead the charge as volunteer curator and head "Dirty Docent" at the Marine Corps Mechanized Museum as he has done since the Museum's opening in 2002. Fair winds and following seas, Jim!

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

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



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