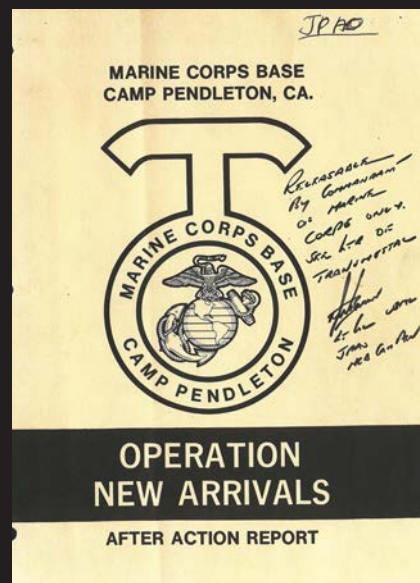




## U. S. MARINE CORPS PARTICIPATION IN OPERATION “NEW ARRIVALS” – FINAL PHASE



Vietnamese refugees prepare to board buses for Los Angeles airport after being processed at Camp Pendleton. Courtesy Camp Pendleton Archives



*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. This following article summarizes the last phase of Operation New Arrivals.*

### **Phase 3 – Phasedown and Closure (1 September to 15 November 1975)**

Phase 3 marked the systematic phasedown and closure of the Camp Pendleton refugee center. New arrivals were minimal, primarily family reunifications. The focus was entirely on securing sponsorships for the remaining refugees to meet the planned

November 1 camp closure date, driven by concerns about cold weather and lack of heated quarters. A detailed “Phasedown Plan” was implemented, coordinating the gradual closure of individual camps based on factors like flood risk, food contract efficiency, and comfort from the elements. Refugees were progressively consolidated into the more robust Quonset hut camps.

Key events during the phasedown included the final resolution of the Vietnamese repatriate issue, with a group of 23 sent to Guam after a tense situation, and over 1,600 repatriates departing Guam for Vietnam on the “Thuong Tin I.” A group of 126 Cambodian repatriates, who had refused sponsorship, were transferred to Fort Chaffee on October 30; a search prior to their departure revealed twelve “Saturday Night Special” .22 caliber pistols and over 1,100 rounds of ammunition that were confiscated.

*Continued page 2, After Action*

Special sponsorship programs from Canada, the States of Washington, New Mexico, and Iowa, as well as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, played a significant role in finding homes for thousands of refugees.

MCAS El Toro continued to function efficiently as the primary Port-of-Entry. Financial management was meticulously handled by the Base Comptroller, establishing specific job order numbers to track reimbursable costs, which totaled approximately \$15.47 million (excluding salaries, travel, dismantling).

The phasedown occurred as planned and on schedule. On October 31, 1975, the last 11 Thai Dam refugees departed, completing the Camp Pendleton portion of Operation "NEW ARRIVALS." The camp was officially closed on November 15, 1975, marking the successful completion of a complex and demanding humanitarian mission by the U.S. Marine Corps.

*Source: U. S. Marine Corps; After Action Report of U. S. Marine Corps Participation in Operation "New Arrivals" at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California; 1975*



Equipment is boxed and loaded onto trucks for storage during the shutdown of the refugee camps here.



Tent cities that sprang up overnight are now becoming all but a memory as the refugee camps are closed.



Miles of electrical lines came down as the order to shut down was passed.

## The Archives Collection A Page From The Past *The Scout* (Oct. 30, 1975)

Over 50,000 processed

# Refugee center closes tomorrow

Camp Pendleton's refugee center will close tomorrow. Six months after "Operation New Arrivals" began, the tent cities in the Base's northern area have all but disappeared.

More than 50,000 Indo-China refugees have been housed, fed, treated and processed here.

The first bus loads of refugees arrived a few minutes before noon, Tuesday, Apr. 29, less than 24 hours after the Base was notified to begin preparations. Between 18-20,000 refugees were to be expected.

Around-the-clock preparations began. Areas had to be leveled to place the tent cities; tents had to be erected; eating facilities set up; hospital aid stations erected and a multitude of other details taken care of.

Hundreds of chemical toilets, miles of pipeline and electrical and communications wiring, tons of food and comfort items such as towels, soap, sheets, pillow cases, air mattresses, blankets and cots were needed and made ready.

When the first refugees arrived, facilities for more than 2,800 were ready.

And the work went on.

A series of tent cities were built at Camps Talega and Christianitas.

A week later, facilities were ready for 18,000 refugees.

State Department and Immigration officials arrived to help along with Red Cross officials and volunteers from church groups and other volunteer agencies.

Medical stations treated the sick; schools were set-up and taught young and old alike to read and speak English and how to survive in a new, foreign culture.

And there were the forms, a myraid of them, to be filled out during the processing; during the waiting, hoping and looking for new friends, homes and lives.

Now it is over.

The closing of the refugee center has been an orderly systematic "draw down" of facilities as they were no longer needed, in contrast to the first hectic days.

As tents were vacated, working parties removed the temporary lighting fixtures, removed and bundled cots and finally struck and folded each tent. But, before materials were stored, they were inventoried, inspected, repaired, treated for storage and finally bundled, tagged and stored.

The center will officially close tomorrow. A few unsponsored refugees were transferred to Ft. Chaffee, Ark. But, nearly 50,000 Indo-China refugees were processed through here and found new homes in the United States and other countries.

They found new homes, new friends and a new life!



In an opposite movement, Marines take down the many tents that housed thousands of refugees here during Operation "New Arrivals".



Before the tents came down at the refugee camps, tent numbers had to be painted over and checked for possible repairs. Photos by Sgt. R. O. Wilkins

## President's Message

*Jay Bullard*



Dear Members and Supporters,

As summer concludes we roll into the fall in which we celebrate the Corps 250th Birthday. For 250 years, the United States Marine Corps has prided itself on exemplifying its motto of "Semper Fidelis" or "Always Faithful." Each year, this solemn and joyous gathering reminds us of the honor, valor, and legacy of the Corps. Please join in celebrating 250 years of the Marine Corps faithful service to our nation as we celebrate on Friday 7 November at the MCB Camp Pendleton Marine Memorial 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.

World War II, the most destructive conflict in history ended, 2 September 1945, with a short ceremony aboard the battleship USS Missouri (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay. It has been eighty years since representatives for the emperor signed an instrument of unconditional surrender. As a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Major General Joseph H. Pendleton's advocacy for a west coast Marine Corps Base gained significant interest in Washington DC, since Marines would require housing and training facilities for our Nation's wartime footing. Eighty-three years ago, 25 September 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the West Coast Marine Corps Base in honor of World War I veteran Major General Joseph H. Pendleton. This new 100,000-acre training area was appropriately named for the staunch and vocal advocate of a west coast Marine Corps Base.

As we celebrate the 83rd anniversary of Marines at Camp Pendleton, the historical society continues to flourish. We continue to explore opportunities to increase membership and find opportunities to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Camp Pendleton. I sincerely thank everyone for their continued support and participation and encourage you to join in our 250th USMC Birthday celebration. Our story is a story worth telling and sharing with future generations.

In closing, we have to recognize the loss of one of members. Col. Jim Williams, previous vice president of the Historical Society, passed away on 17 September. He was loved and respected by all who knew him. He will be missed, but he touched many lives and we are all the better for having known him. Rest in peace and Semper Fi Jim.

*Jay Bullard*

## "In Memoriam" - Col Jim Williams, USMC (Ret)

**James Laney Williams**

**May 21, 1938 – September 17, 2025**



Jim was a much-loved husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, uncle, and a cherished friend to many.

He was born to Florence and Ralph Williams in Winona, Minnesota. Upon college graduation from St. Mary's of Minnesota University in the spring of 1960, he entered the U. S. Marine Corps Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Quantico, Virginia and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant that December. Jim retired from active duty as a Colonel after 29 years of service to the Marine Corps.

Growing up, Scouting was a major influence on his life. The experience of earning the rank of Eagle Scout, along with seven summers as a camp counselor, provided Jim with the leadership, organizational skills, and teamwork mindset that served him well as a Marine Corps Officer.

His early military assignments included tours of duty in the Western Pacific as a Rifle Platoon Commander, then platoon and company-level commands back at OCS in Quantico. In 1967, he deployed to the Republic of Vietnam, assuming command of Company B, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion at the Khe Sanh Combat Base. Reassigned later, as the commanding officer of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, he and his Marines engaged in frequent combat action against the North Vietnamese regulars along the Demilitarized Zone. In April 1968, he was seriously wounded during the battle of Dai Do and was evacuated back to Camp Pendleton, CA.

Colonel Williams was twice awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallantry in action. His other military decorations included the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star (with Combat V), Purple Heart, Joint Service Commendation Medal, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. Jim was a graduate of the Naval War College School of Command and Staff, the Army War College, and earned a Master's Degree in International Affairs from George Washington University.

His post war years of service involved command and staff positions at home and abroad at Marine Barracks, Newport, Rhode Island; 1st Reconnaissance Battalion; 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment; Assistant Naval Attache at the American Embassy in Rome, Italy; the Pentagon; and School of Infantry, Camp Pendleton, CA.

Following his retirement from the Marine Corps, he was hired as the Director of Corporate Relations for the Rancho Mission Viejo (RMV) Company in San Juan Capistrano, Calif. During that period, he served on numerous boards of directors for community organizations in Orange County on behalf of Tony Moiso and the RMV Company, including several years as Executive Director of the San Juan Capistrano Boys and Girls Club. After his military career,

the friendships and camaraderie he cherished most were the 30+ years riding the trails of Old California on horseback with the El Viaje de Portola group alongside his three sons.

In November 2005, along with Col. Richard Rothwell, USMC (Ret) and Col. Joe Kirkpatrick, USMC (Ret), they together formed the Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS), serving as the Society's Vice President from December 2005 through March 2017 and remained active with CPHS after his retirement.

Jim is survived by his wife, Cindy, son Grant (daughter-in-law Lisa), son Michael (daughter-in-law Kara), son Christopher (daughter-in-law Heather), daughter Laney (son-in-law Andre) and 10 amazing grandchildren.

## A Smooth Devil Dog

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

Jim Williams and I met in 1979, when he relieved me as commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines. He and his family had just returned from a three-year tour in Rome, where he had served as the Assistant Naval Attaché, a position that required more than a modest amount of savoir-faire. The Marine Corps had chosen well. Jim was a smooth Devil Dog. Consider how he wooed his wife, Cindy.

Jim and Cindy met in 1966 on a blind, double date brokered by her sister and brother-in-law. The evening went well and before saying good night, Jim casually mentioned that he had two tickets to Swan Lake staring Rudolph Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn and would she be interested in accompanying him? Talk about smooth.

On the surface, the change of command was similar to many others -- the battalion in formation, the band playing smartly, passing the colors, mercifully short speeches, and, finally, the Marines passing in review. Only, they were Jim's Marines. It was a proud occasion for him; bittersweet for me. So began a friendship that would last over 46 years.

We became neighbors in Oceanside during our final years of active duty and on into retirement. In 2004, Jim and I discussed the need for a historical non-profit organization to help the Marine Corps protect and tell the long history of the land known today as Camp Pendleton. Our conversation was the genesis of the Camp Pendleton Historical Society.

Good fortune smiled as we climbed the chain of command. I knew Faye Jonason, the Base History and Museum Officer, through my wife Ann's volunteer work with the Ranch House Docents. Faye enthusiastically welcomed our offer of assistance. She suggested that we seek a meeting with the Base Chief of Staff, Col. Stewart Navarre, a former commanding officer of the 5th Marines. He agreed to meet with two retired officers who had served with that storied regiment. Stewart warmed to our idea and arranged a meeting with the Commanding General, Major General Michael Lehnert.



**Above:** The three original CPHS Board Members, Jim Williams, Joe Kirkpatrick, and Dick Rothwell, with CPHS President Jay Bullard at the Pacific Views Event Center on March 1, 2023.

**Below:** Jim and Cindy Williams, Oct. 6, 2018 supporting one of the many CPHS events.



General Lehnert, a college history major, liked like our plan too. Not only that, but he knew Jim, who had hosted him during a trail ride with the Portola Riders, an Orange County group dedicated to celebrating the American West, California history, and "The Cowboy Way."

Our meeting with General Lehnert highlighted one of Jim's many talents. He was a smooth schmoozer in the nicest sense of the phrase. It seemed that there was no one he did not know or who, after a few minutes of conversation, would not become a new friend. While I wrote the bylaws of our new organization, Jim began recruiting talent and supporters.

First, he convinced retired Marine Colonel Joe Kirkpatrick, an enrolled tax agent, to be our treasurer. Joe prepared the application that established the Camp Pendleton Historical Society as a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Next came Tony Moiso, a successful Orange County land developer with a soft spot for the Ranch House, gained from his mother, Alice O'Neil Avery. She was the granddaughter of Richard O'Neil, co-owner of Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores, which included Camp Pendleton before the Marines purchased the land in 1942. Tony made the first significant donation to our empty treasury. In the years that followed, he remained a loyal, generous supporter.

Others who Jim brought on board included Board of Director member Charlie Kershaw and Council of Advisors members Joseph Fegan III, Pat Forster, Major General Tony Jackson, and generous donor Tony Joseph. Jim's contributions to CPHS were a critical part of the successes of our Society.

On Sept. 17, 2025, I lost a dear friend and CPHS a treasured leader. Farewell, you smooth Devil Dog.

# Camp Pendleton Mechanized Museum Information Placard Project



by Jerry Blandford

## Overview of the Project

The Camp Pendleton Historical Society (CPHS) has initiated a project to provide detailed informational placards for the vehicles on display at the Camp Pendleton Mechanized Museum, which is located at the bottom of Rattlesnake Canyon Road. CPHS thoroughly researches each vehicle and creates an individual sign intended for placement within the frame that will hold each placard.

## Partnership with UA Veterans in Piping (VIP) Program

In support of this project, CPHS partnered with the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada (UA) Veterans in Piping (VIP) program. The UA VIP program generously contributed their time and expertise to assist CPHS by constructing the frames that will hold each placard. This partnership not only supported the museum but also highlights the valuable training provided by UA VIP.

The UA VIP program equips military service members who are preparing to transition out of the service with highly desirable skills for careers in the growing pipe trades industry. The course, which lasts 118 days and is provided at no cost on military bases nationwide, allows participants to earn industry-recognized certifications and direct entry into stable private-sector jobs that offer competitive pay and benefits.

## Research and Review Process

CPHS is responsible for researching each vehicle and creating a proposed sign that accurately reflects its history and significance. These drafts are then reviewed by the Camp Pendleton History and Museums Division to ensure historical accuracy and to highlight the vehicle's importance to the Marine Corps. Once approved, the signs are printed and mounted into the frames, which are then placed in front of their respective vehicles.

## Visitor Experience at the Mechanized Museum

Previously, visitors touring the Mechanized Museum depended on Marines working at the museum to answer any questions about specific vehicles. With the introduction of the new informational placards, visitors can now enjoy self-guided tours and learn detailed information about many of the vehicles on display. The placards provide insights such as the manufacturer, production years, cost, interesting facts, the wars in which the vehicle was used, nicknames, and in some cases, information about which vehicle it replaced in the Marine Corps inventory.

## Plan Your Visit

If you have not recently toured the Mechanized Museum, it is highly recommended to plan a visit soon. The museum is open each weekday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., offering an excellent opportunity to explore and learn about the rich history of mechanized vehicles used by the Marine Corps.



**Top:** Welded informational placard frame. **Bottom:** One of the 16 completed informational placards. Photos courtesy of Jerry Blandford.



To find out more about the UA Veterans in Piping (VIP) Program at Camp Pendleton, scan the QR code

# "Save the Date"

## 10th Annual "Golf with Hero" Golf Tournament

Camp Pendleton  
Marine Memorial Golf Course

Friday, May 8, 2026



### 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)

### ASSOCIATE BOARD MEMBER

Col. Ken Derry, USMCR (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 Coglianese, 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



6th Annual

The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is pleased to announce the 6th Annual Historical Essay Contest for high school students living in those school districts adjacent to Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton.

## SUBJECT SCOPE

The subject of the contest is limited to the land now known as Camp Pendleton. This scope includes the pre-history (archeology) of the land, its native American occupants, the Spanish exploration and mission era, the rancho era, the history of the Camp as a significant cultural and economic institution in San Diego County since 1942, and significant historical figures as their story relates to the Camp. Not included in the scope is military history of Marine Corps units stationed at the Camp as tenant organizations.

## ELIGIBLE

High school students living in those school districts adjacent to Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton

## PRIZES \*

1st Place \$1,000  
2nd Place \$500

All entrants will be recognized with a certificate and a one year free membership in the Camp Pendleton Historical Society

\* Additional prizes may be awarded based on the quality of the essays submitted

## DEADLINES

Application Letter December 31, 2025  
Essay Submission February 28, 2026

For further details and submission guidelines visit:  
Camp Pendleton Historical Society website

[www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.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.*

## Noteworthy News

**Many thanks to our loyal members  
for their recent membership renewal:**

Lillian Cross  
Kevin Leahy  
James McDonough, Jr.  
Harold Meeks  
Mary Russell  
Wallace Siems  
Gary and Mary West

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**Ranchero Level:**  
Dan Beach



Congratulations to the Rancho Santa Margarita y Las Flores Docents as they celebrated 50 years of service to Camp Pendleton through tours, presentation, and interpretation of the histories of the Santa Margarita Ranch House National Historic Site and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton.



# Happy Birthday Marines!

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

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