

Memories from a Marine

As told by Town of Newburgh Supervisor Wayne Booth

The Sentinel reached out to the Town of Newburgh Supervisor Wayne Booth when we recently discovered that Booth had spent a total of six years in service to his country (1975-1981). We explained that we were looking for those military stories that wouldn't otherwise be recorded anywhere in the history books and Booth provided us with two separate events that stood out in his mind. Booth named his memories, "Another Day in Paradise," and this is his story:

"I spent the bulk of my service time in the Marine Corps with various elements of the 1st Marine Brigade. While preparing for my first deployment, or West Pac float as it was referred to, I was attached with D Company, 3rd Assault Amphibious Battalion who was conducting amphibious landing exercises on the beaches of Bellows Air Force Base on the Island of Oahu.

Part of the exercise was to transport jeeps and other vehicular equipment in the amphibious tractors. There was only one problem. All of the assigned jeeps for our platoon were in for repair. So as good Marines who always adapt and overcome any obstacle, we loaded up my Forest Green MG Midget in the belly of the Amtrak to simulate the jeep and proceeded out into the Pacific Ocean from Kaneohe Bay, turned Southward and conducted the mock invasion of the beaches of Oahu. As our amphibious vehicle landed and came to a halt on the beach, the rear ramp opened and I drove the MG out onto the sand. I then quickly executed a perfect 180-degree turn and headed inland.

It was at this point a Marine who was wearing shiny eagles on his collar immediately halted me. It was Colonel Slack, the Regimental Commander who had decided to conduct an unannounced observance of our unit's operation. It was at this point in my life that I learned that timing is everything. About 200 feet behind the Colonel at the end of the beach was a desert tan MG Midget. It belonged to the Colonel. I quickly explained to the Colonel that my car was the only vehicle available that had similar dimensions and weight of the A1 Jeep. He was somewhat impressed with our quick thinking even though he could not officially approve of having privately-owned vehicles transported in amphibious attack vehicles. He was also impressed to know that his own MG would fit in the amphibious vehicles under similar conditions. It was another day in paradise. I had made a new MG driving buddy, kept my stripes and left on schedule a few weeks later on deployment.

On a more serious note, while overseas on the before mentioned deployment, I was injured and medically evacuated to Clark Air Force Hospital in the Philippines. Just by chance it was on my birthday. The last thing I remember that day was the emergency room doctor preparing me for surgery and telling me, "Happy Birthday Marine".

I woke up the next morning in a hospital room. I didn't know where I was or what was going on. All I knew was that there was a small chocolate birthday cake sitting on the table next to the bed. Alongside of it was a neatly wrapped box with a bow and a birthday

card attached. I was in a strange land, I did not know a soul here but somehow there was a cake and presents for the birthday I had just missed. I opened the card that said "Happy Birthday Jarhead and get well soon". I then opened the box that contained a full length bath-robe, several sets of underwear and socks and basic toiletries. This was more like Christmas than a birthday considering I was flown in with only what was left of the clothes I had on my back.

Later that morning I was visited by an Air Force Master Sergeant. His name was Doug and he was stationed at Clark Air Force Base. He was also the Crew Chief of the Helicopter that had brought me to the Hospital. It was his wife who had made the cake, purchased and wrapped the gifts and delivered them while I was still asleep. They had felt compelled to make me feel a little more at home for my birthday even though I had a multitude of tubes inserted into my body in a hospital over 10,000 miles from home.

Well, it worked. I did feel a lot better knowing someone took the time out of their busy life to really care. It was the day I realized how lucky I was. Not just lucky to be alive, but lucky to be alive in the United States of America surrounded by great and caring people who asked nothing in return for their generosity and love. I never have had the opportunity to see either Doug or his wife after leaving Clark Air Base Hospital, but I continuously think of them whenever I have the opportunity to repay them by passing on their good deeds. Sometimes it's the little things in life that make the biggest differences."

Semper Fi and God Bless.
Wayne

