

Semper Fido

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It's hail and farewell to Sgt. Chesty XII, the mascot of the 207-year-old Marine Barracks in Washington. The 8-year-old bulldog who doubles as the unofficial mascot of the entire Corps is hanging up his doggy dress blues this month after endearing himself to thousands who've seen him at the legendary Friday evening barracks parades. The canine tradition dates to WWI, when the Germans found the leathernecks so tough they reportedly called them "devil dogs." Since the 1950s, the mascots have been "Chesty" in honor of Lt. Gen. Lewis "Chesty" Puller, a no-nonsense trainer and fighter who led Marines in combat in World War II and Korea.

The mascot is retiring early for a reason. "We want him to have some playful years in retirement," says his handler, Cpl. Moncelly Fuller. Chesty XII will be replaced by 1-year-old Chesty XIII, a lowly private even though he's the son of the champion bulldog who was best of breed at Westminster Kennel Club this year. "What makes Twelve growl," says Fuller, "is when Thirteen is around him." He predicts the new pup will also be a crowd pleaser. "Everybody likes to see a dog in uniform," says Fuller. "They think it's so precious."

