

Island Veteran Shares Memories: 'Once a Marine, Always a Marine'

By Adelbert

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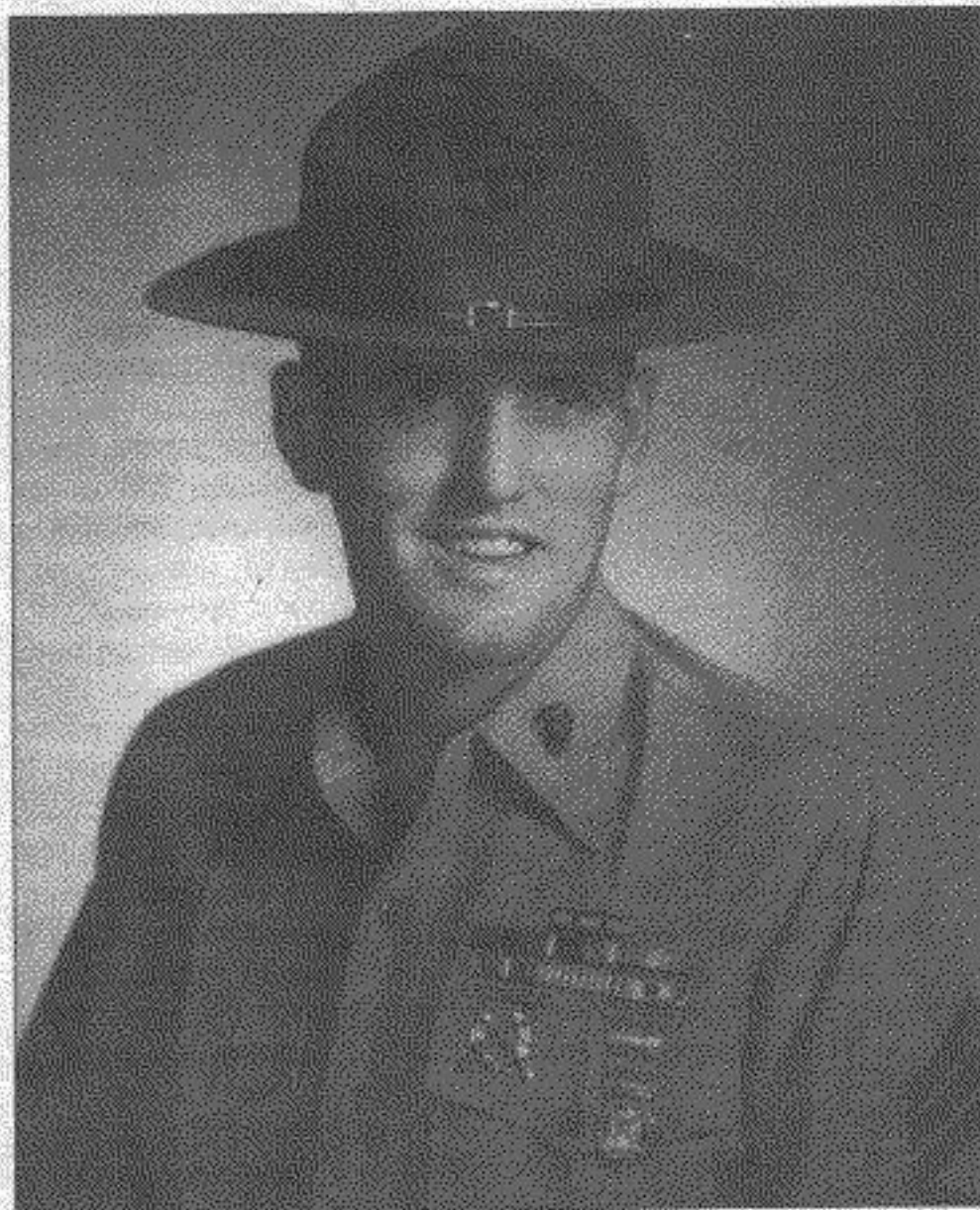
After 21 years, retiring as a Marine Gunnery Sergeant, my mind many times goes back to those years.

In my small shirt shop on Star Line Main Dock in St. Ignace, I have a small decal on the cash register that reads "U.S.M.C. Retired," and on the counter there is a cap with a Marine Corps emblem with the words "Presidential Guard."

Each of these two items has a special reason for being in those places. Each day present or former members of the military pass through the store, and when they spot those two items, it sparks some conversation. No matter what service they're in, it's always an enjoyable conversation.

Even after all the years, we still joke about the other services. One old Navy man asked the question, "Why are there Marines aboard Navy ships?" I thought for a moment and gave him my answer, "To serve as a landing party when needed." This old Navy man, with a smile, said, "No, it is so the crew would have someone to dance with."

An old Army man once said



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he was going to join the Marines, "but when the recruiter found out my mother and father were married, they turned me down."

With the jokes aside, there is always seriousness. The question always comes up about where we were assigned and what our duties were. I mention all of mine, but the one that is of most interest to anyone is my five-year assignment to the White House Ceremonial Guard, from 1951 to 1954, when President Harry Truman was leaving office and President Dwight D. Eisenhower was coming in, and then from 1959 to 1961, when President Eisenhower was leaving office and President John F. Kennedy was coming in.

During these times, we performed parades, ceremonies, wreath layings, and were assigned duties at Blair House and at Camp David. At these functions we saw many heads of state: USSR Premier Nikita

Kruschev, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, and French President Charles de Gaulle, among them. At the inaugural ball for President Kennedy, I was assigned the duty as Non-commissioned Officer in Charge of all the Marines at the ball.

But then people ask me what I recall most vividly of my career. Well, it wasn't any of those ceremonies or important people. On this Memorial Day, I would like to tell about the ceremony that sticks with me the most.

Most of you are familiar with Washington, D.C. and Arlington National Cemetery across the Potomac River, where men and women from every service are buried.

When military personnel are buried at Arlington, their respective service is involved in the burial. When the remains first arrive, they're brought to a local funeral home and the funeral director contacts the military service of the individual to arrange the burial service. The military service responsible provides a bugler, body bearers, and a firing party.

On this one occasion, I was assigned as the Non-commissioned Officer in Charge of a burial detail for a Marine. At the completion of this detail, a

man from another funeral approached me and asked, "Sergeant, I wonder if you could help me. We have an Army man to be buried, but because of a mix-up in the scheduling, we could not arrange for a burial detail from the United States Army. Would you be able to help with his burial?"

My Marine burial detail was there, we had ammunition for a proper gun salute, and I told him, "We would be very pleased and honored to help with the Army man's burial."

We proceeded to the other side of Arlington and performed the ceremony for this soldier's burial. The thing that I remember the most is that there was no one at the grave side except the man from the funeral home.

No, it's not the heads of state from around the world, it is this Army man who may have been a private, corporal, sergeant, or maybe even an officer, but I remember him.

So on this Memorial Day, let us remember those who somehow have been forgotten, and at their burial let there not just be a bugler, firing party, body bearers, and the man from the funeral home.

Always remember!