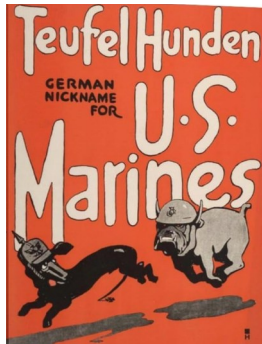




THE BULLDOG BULLETIN



Apr, May, Jun 2026 EDITION

Chuck Burrow Editor and Publisher



#1 Sgt. Maj. Jiggs Oct. 1922- Jan. 1927
THE PATRIARCH

Thanks to the German Army, the U.S. Marine Corps has an unofficial mascot. During World War I many German reports had called the attacking Marines “teufel-hunden,” meaning Devil-Dogs. Teufel-hunden were the vicious, wild, and ferocious mountain dogs of Bavarian folklore.

Soon afterward a U.S. Marine recruiting poster depicted a snarling English Bulldog wearing a Marine Corps helmet. Because of the tenacity and demeanor of the breed, the image took root with both the Marines and the public. The Marines soon unofficially adopted the English Bulldog as their mascot.

At the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia, the Marines obtained a registered English Bulldog, King Bulwark. In a formal ceremony on 14 October 1922, BGen. Smedley D. Butler signed documents enlisting the bulldog, renamed Jiggs, for the “term of life.” Pvt. Jiggs then began his official duties in the U.S. Marine Corps.

A hard-charging Marine, Pvt. Jiggs did not remain a private for long. Within three months he was wearing corporal chevrons on his custom-made uniform. On New Years Day 1924, Jiggs was promoted to Sergeant. And in a meteoric rise, he got promoted again — this time to Sergeant Major — seven months later.

SgtMaj. Jiggs’ death on 9 January 1927 was mourned throughout the Corps. His satin-lined coffin lay in state in a hangar at Quantico, surrounded by flowers from hundreds of Corps admirers. He was interred with full military honors.

But, a replacement was on the way. Former heavyweight boxing champion, James J. “Gene” Tunney, who had fought with the Marines in France, donated his English Bulldog. Renamed as Jiggs II, he stepped into the role of his predecessor.

Big problem! No discipline! Jiggs chased people, he bit people. He showed a total lack of respect for authority. The new Jiggs would have likely made an outstanding combat Marine, but barracks life did not suit him. After one of his many rampages, he died of heat exhaustion on 1928. Nonetheless, other bulldogs followed. During the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s they were all named Smedley, a tribute to Gen. Butler.

In the late 1950s the Marine Barracks in Washington, the oldest post in the Corps, became the new home for the Corps’ mascot. Renamed Chesty to honor the legendary LtGen. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller Jr., the mascot made his first formal public appearance at the Evening Parade on 5 July 1957. In his canine Dress Blues, Chesty became an immediate media darling, a smash hit!

After the demise of the original Chesty, the replacement was named Chesty II. He became an instant renegade. You name it, he did it. He even escaped and went AWOL once. Two days later he was returned in a police paddy wagon. About the only thing he ever managed to do correctly was to sire a replacement.

In contrast to his father, Chesty III proved to be a model Marine. He even became a favorite of neighborhood children, for which he was awarded a Good Conduct Medal. Other bulldogs would follow Chesty III (bulldogs don’t live long). When Chesty VI died after an Evening Parade, a Marine detachment in Tennessee called Washington. Their local bulldog mascot, LCpl. Bodacious Little, was standing by for PCS orders to Washington, they reported.

Upon arrival at the Marine Barracks in Washington, LCpl. Little got ceremoniously renamed Chesty VII. He and the English Bulldogs who followed him epitomize the fighting spirit of the U.S. Marines. Tough, muscular, aggressive, fearless, and often arrogant, they are the ultimate canine warriors.

Commandants Corner

Commandants Corner Apr/May/June 2026

Although the winter month activities tend to slow down, MCL Detachment 726 has found ways to keep busy. We are in the planning stage of upcoming Rose Campaign, parades and color guard functions. In addition, we installed the 2026 detachment officers.

At the January 7, 2026 meeting we installed the following officers:

Commandant Gary Woodside

Sr. Vice Commandant Matt Popovich

Jr Vice Commandant Frank Ottena

Judge Advocate Alex Papiernik

Sergeant of Arms Joe Spinnenweber

Paymaster Joe Turba

Adjutant/Assistant Paymaster Bettina Radcliff

On January 14, 2026, myself, Matt Popovich Frank Ottena, Joe Spennenweber and Tom Hasslet conducted a Color Guard for the Peters Township High School Wrestling Team assembly.

On January 28, the detachment officers participated in a PA MCL Zoom training regarding Report of Installation.

The Baileys attended the Marine Corps League Mid-Winter Conference February 26-28, 2026.

Matt Popovich and Joe Spinnenweber attended the PA MCL Department meeting March 13 -14, 2026.

Overall, for the period January through March 2026 Detachment 726 completed a total of 116.5 service hours covering 35 hours Marine Corps League, 62.5 hours Veteran Volunteer Services and 19 hours Young Marines.

Semper Fi

Gary Woodside

Commandant Gary Woodside

MCL Detachment 726



DETACHMENT OFFICERS

COMMANDANT

Gary Woodside

412-779-1666

gwoodside@comcast.net

Sr Vice Commandant

Matt Popovich

412-225-4420

mattandrose625@comcast.net

Jr Vice Commandant

Frank Ottena

724-317-1282

dottena104@gmail.com

Adjutant/Paymaster

Joe Turba

412-321-1264

sgtjat2533@gmail.com

Judge Advocate/

Web Sergeant

Alex Papiernik

330-261-6244

apapiernik@gmail.com

Chaplain

Ralph Jedd

412-563-4533

ralphjedd@gmail.com

Sgt-at-Arms/

Color Guard Coordinator

Joe Spinnenweber

412-670-0561

joep125@msn.com

Communications/

Newsletter Editor and Publisher

Chuck Burrow

412-341-8646

flightmech352@hotmail.com

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

OORAH!



At the helm that keeps driving our detachment.

(L-R) Judge Advocate Alex Papiernik, Sr. Vice Matt Popovich, Commandant Gary Woodside, Jr. Vice Frank Ottena. The installation was held Wednesday January 7, 2026.



Did you know that Senator Devlin Robinson is a member of our detachment.



I was proud to personally honor and congratulate the many scouts across the district who achieved the rank of Eagle Scout in 2025! It's no small feat to attain this rank, and your hard work and dedication reflects what a massive accomplishment it is.

Social Time!

After a short February meeting there was a gathering of camaraderie and good food.



*(L-R) Sr. Vice Matt Popovich
Commandant Gary Woodside
Jr. Vice Frank Ottena*



It's hard to be humble when you are the Sgt At Arms (Joe Spinnenweber)



Attending, Joyce Baily and Bettina Radcliff

Also attending are the three "B's" (L-R)

- Bob Malley*
- Bob Saunier*
- Bob Priganc*



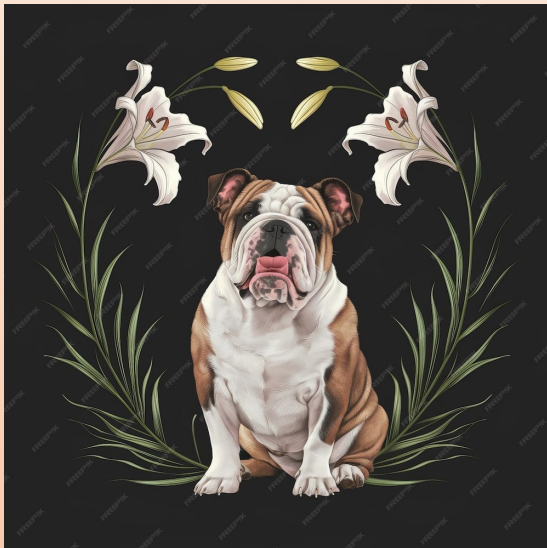
CHOW TIME!



*It's that time again,
May is a month we
hit the pavement in
support of the Rose
Program.*



*The location is the
same place as last
year, Sam's Club in
West Mifflin, 2251
Century Drive,
hours are 10 AM to
2 PM and the date
is Saturday May
9th.*



*Memorial Day is Monday
May 25th, keep that in
your brain housing group.*



⚠️ **SCAM WARNING:** A Facebook account named “Union Apparel” is claiming to sell apparel bearing the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs logo and the [Keystone State Challenge Academy](#) logo. Union Apparel is NOT affiliated with DMVA in any capacity and these advertisements are a scam. If you see this content, please report it as a scam to Facebook

**BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR
THESE MERCHANDISE
SCAMS!**

**THESE
ADVERTISEMENTS
ARE NOT FROM
DMVA!**



Pennsylvania
Department of Military
and Veterans Affairs

Historical Section

John Ripley and the Bridge at Dong Ha

It was Easter Weekend, 1972, and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), was surging south in their "Easter Offensive." Their objective: Dong Ha, a strategic city guarding the most direct route to the ancient capital of Hue. And at Dong Ha, the My Chanh River, a vital artery, was crossed by a single, critical bridge.

John Ripley, a Marine advisor with a reputation for audacious courage, knew the bridge at Dong Ha was the linchpin. If the NVA captured it intact, their tanks would roll unimpeded, and the entire South Vietnamese defense would crumble. His orders from his South Vietnamese counterpart were chillingly simple: destroy the bridge.

The bridge was a monstrous steel and concrete beast, heavily guarded and under constant observation. It stretched for hundreds of feet, a daunting target for a single man. Ripley, however, wasn't just a single man. He was a force of nature, driven by an unshakeable belief in his mission and a profound understanding of what was at stake.

Ripley gathered what demolition materials he could: several hundred pounds of plastic explosives, detonators, and fuses. The sheer volume a death wish. With the help of a small team of South Vietnamese soldiers, Ripley began the arduous task, inching forward, carrying the heavy blocks of C4, each step a gamble against the unseen enemy.

The bridge itself offered no easy access. Its underbelly was a maze of girders, crossbeams, and support structures – a formidable challenge for even an experienced demolitions expert. Ripley, with a quiet determination that bordered on obsession, began to climb. He shimmed, crawled, and squeezed his way through the greasy, grimy metal, planting charges at critical points. Each placement was precise, a carefully calculated step in dismantling the colossal structure from within.

Finally, with the last charge meticulously placed and wired, Ripley scrambled back to a safe distance. He looked at the bridge, now a silent, unsuspecting giant, and felt a surge of grim satisfaction. He took a deep breath, shouted a warning to anyone nearby, and then, with a resolute press of the detonator, sent the signal.

The explosion that followed was a magnificent, earth-shattering roar. A blinding flash of orange and black billowed into the sky, followed by a shower of twisted metal and pulverized concrete. The bridge, the seemingly invincible gateway for the North Vietnamese, buckled, groaned, and then, with a final, agonizing shriek, collapsed into the murky waters of the My Chanh River.

Slightly burned and exhausted, John Ripley, watched as the dust settled, revealing a gaping chasm where the bridge once stood. He had done it. He had bought precious time for the South Vietnamese, denying the enemy a vital crossing, and in doing so, had etched his name into the annals of military heroism. The bridge at Dong Ha was gone, and with it, the immediate threat to Hue. Ripley had faced down an army with nothing but courage, an iron will, and a few hundred pounds of explosives, and he had won.

Gary Woodside

Detachment Commandant MCL 726

Mission Statement

The mission of the Marine Corps League is to promote the interest and to preserve traditions of the United States Marine Corps; strengthen the fraternity of Marines and their families; serve Marines, FMF Navy Personnel who wear or have worn the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor; and foster the ideals of Americanism and patriotic volunteerism.

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE



Ask Me What I Was

*I'll reply with what I've done;
Those things others would not do, I did;
Those rivers others would not swim, I swam;
Those hills others would not climb, I conquered;
Those bridges others would not cross, I crossed;
I have celebrated. I have mourned.
I have smiled and I have frowned.
I have seen death and felt it's warm breath.
It did not faze me.
For I was different. I was a warrior.
You ask me what I was? It was my destiny,
Until my last breath,
To be a United States Marine.
And my spirit shall live forever.
Semper Fidelis
For I was, am and shall forever be a*

"United States Marine"



TAPS

NO CASUALTY REPORTED

