



SEMPER FI SOUND OFF

The newsletter of the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

SPRING 2023



President's Message

For the last 16 years, from our Support Group's inception, I have had the honor to meet and get to know many Marines, their spouses, and their precious families. There have been many farewells and welcome homes. Service men and women leave home to

serve their country bravely a world away from everything they know and everyone they love. It reminds us of the honor and integrity of those who came before us and fought heroically to protect the ideals we hold dear as Americans.

Memorial Day is coming and my mind drifts back to a friend of mine who never came home, Captain Trevor J. Yurista. In my last conversation with Trevor, I told him I felt guilty because I was training for a Century Bike ride in Tucson, and he was in Afghanistan. I will never forget Trevor's last words to me. He said, "Terry, I am doing what I am doing, so you can do what you are doing." That was a simple phrase, but so profound to me, even more so in the weeks to come. Trevor was supposed to be getting out of the Marine Corps and had great ambition for his life when a mission came up in the Helmand Province to replace Marines in a unit where there had been many casualties. He raised his hand and stepped up to accept the assignment. It was a dangerous mission and sadly, he was KIA in Afghanistan on October 27, 2008. Trevor's picture is posted in the header on page 4 of this publication. Trevor is in every edition of the *Semper Fi Sound Off* that I have written throughout the years. He will always be remembered.

The loss of my friend made real to me the importance of why the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group was created and still is in existence today. One of our compelling missions is to "Honor the troops and never forget the fallen." Trevor's mother and sister are very dear to me, and I was able to go to Arlington to pay tribute to Trevor when he was buried there.

As a grateful nation, not just Memorial Day, but every day, we honor all our proud veterans who fought over air, land, and sea to uphold the highest traditions of our Armed Forces. We draw inspiration from these heroes. Let's honor and thank them. Their lives made a difference and let their memories be etched in the hearts of all of us. It is my hope that we all strive to live up to the example of our heroes by leading good and honorable lives.

In this edition of the *Semper Fi Sound Off*, I will be sharing about another friend of our Support Group that I recently had the pleasure of interviewing, Regimental Chief Warrant Officer Aaron McCatty. This Marine shared about the difference that DPSG has made to his family and his Marines. It made me proud of our organization's efforts, but also reminded me of the extraordinary heart and spirit of our Marines and their families. Today's Marines stand on the shoulders of all those who came before them. What a legacy!

This summer we will be holding a Marine Family Appreciation Day Beach BBQ. We hope that you might help us make this day possible with a donation of any size. Having each one of you by our side in our objective of caring for our Brave Defenders is indeed a privilege. We are humbled by our mission.

Semper Fi, Terry Rifkin, President



Spring Carnival

A good time was had by all at the "Spring Fling" at the Parade Deck on San Mateo. The Fighting Fifth and their families were treated to fun games, a petting zoo, new toys, a bounce house, and a delicious BBQ dinner with tri-tip, chicken, corn on the cob, mac & cheese, salad and even a roasted pig! THANK YOU to our Friends of the Fifth for helping DPSG to make this possible.



Thank You Devil Dog

Interview by Terry Rifkin

Military occupational specialties (MOS) are the foundation of the Marine Corps. Each MOS is a cog, working with and relying on each other to keep the fighting machine that is the United States Marine Corps running. The Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense field is one of these cogs. Meet the Regimental CBRN Defense Chief Warrant Officer for the 5th Marines, CWO3 Aaron McCatty, a commissioned expert and educator in survival instruction for hazardous environments. As war and technology advance, the CBRN defense specialists ensure Marines and Sailors can "Survive the surprise."

Aaron's job description is impressive, and so is he. He has been deployed around the world because of his vital occupational specialty. Our Team at DPSG has been fortunate that, along with Aaron's big job, he has also served as a liaison between DPSG and the Regiment so that we could successfully facilitate our Support and Outreach to the single Marines and families. Aaron has been at Camp Pendleton for 3½ years and DPSG has also been pleased to get to know his wife of 10 years, Corinn, and their two sons, Carson, age four, and Logan, age two. They also have a new little one on the way in July.

Aaron shared with me that in his 20 years of service, he has never been part of a unit with an organization like DPSG championing it. He spoke to me about the constant and positive support from DPSG during his time at Camp San Mateo. He stated that he felt it was easy for Marines to join the unit and have an extended family or community, with most Marines being far from their hometown, family, and friends. He stated that our support has allowed Marines and their families to not worry about everyday things. He and his wife have participated in two DPSG Baby Showers (with a third baby shower coming up this summer for baby McCatty,) Thanksgiving dinner at Waterman's Harbor, the Christmas Boat Parade, and Lunch with Santa at the Dana Point Yacht Club. He stated his appreciation for every facet of life that DPSG touches on to improve the quality of life for the families.

Having been on the Marine Corps Ball Committee, he appreciated DPSG sponsoring the 5th MAR Balls and making this important traditional event more affordable for single Marines.

Aaron reflected on memories of receiving care packages from DPSG while deployed. In 2020 during COVID, when the former Commander, Col Rob Weiler, wanted to keep the Marines engaged, DPSG supported the "Crush COVID Contests" with trophies, gift cards, and personal awards.

Speaking with Aaron, I received something that I didn't expect. I was personally renewed in my energy and passion for supporting our Fighting Fifth and families and am proud of the job DPSG has been doing. It was assuring to hear from a Marine himself that we have helped to create the foundational support and continuity needed by our Regiment with our slow and steady investment. It is evident in the facilities they frequent daily: the Chapel, the Memorial Park, the dojo, and Task Force San Mateo.

Aaron has been selected to be promoted and has received orders to go to Marine Forces Reserves in New Orleans. He will be stepping away from the 5th Marines in July when his baby will be born and then driving cross country in September for the next leg of his Marine Corps journey. Aaron and his family will be missed for many reasons, but "Once a 5th Marine, always a 5th Marine." I am appreciative of the time this remarkable man spent talking to me and the opportunity to get to know him better. I am humbled by the sacrifice of those who fearlessly choose service over self. From my full heart, I say, "Thank you, Marine." There aren't enough words to express my gratitude to you for fulfilling your duty, honoring your commitment, and upholding your oath. I know I speak for all who will be reading this Semper Fi Sound Off edition, we are forever indebted to you for protecting our life and liberty.



Do You Follow Us on Social Media?

Scan this QR code to link to our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts—be in the know about our events!





From the Command Post

Greetings from Camp San Mateo,

The Regiment has covered quite a bit of ground since the last newsletter, so I thought I'd take an opportunity to tell you where we've been and are going.

The Regimental Headquarters returned from its deployment to Australia last October and has been running ever since. Our time in Australia was rewarding and provided myriad opportunities to train alongside our Australian counterparts and a host of other militaries. Within the first four months of the deployment, our Marines and Sailors had an opportunity to train alongside military personnel from Australia, Japan, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and the Philippines. During each training event, the Marines were able to sharpen their skills in challenging environments while simultaneously building relationships with Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors from across the Pacific. Truly, this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our team, and we're all thankful to have had the experience.

As our deployment ended, we had one final opportunity to join our Australian hosts for a game of Rugby... The match was held on September 11th. On September 11th, 2001, a group of Marines played a Rugby match against a local team known as the "Stray Cats." The Marines and Stray Cats were on the field when they received news that our Nation was under attack... Every year since, the Stray Cats have invited the Marines to play another game on September 11th. The citizens of Darwin and the Marines come together every year, remember, and use a friendly game of Rugby to celebrate our enduring friendship. We were honored to participate in this match last year.



U.S. Marines with Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) 22 and the Stray Cats team take a moment of silence prior to a rugby match in Darwin, NT, Australia, Sept. 10, 2022. MRF-D and the Stray Cats held a rugby match as a way to come together and commemorate the events from Sept. 11, 2001. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Cameron Hermanet)

Since returning, the Regiment has been focused on preparing each of its battalions for routine deployments across the INDOPACIFIC while simultaneously readying our headquarters to deploy in response to any emerging crisis or contingency. Preparing to deploy... standing ready to deploy on a moment's notice... and executing routine deployments across the Pacific to stand the watch... this is what the Marines and Sailors of our Regiment do every day.

Over the last two years, I've been thoroughly impressed with their dedication and spirit in the execution of their assigned mission, and I remain honored to count myself among them. I have also witnessed and am thankful for the tireless support the DPSG volunteers offer our team. Like the Stray Cats, DPSG is always there for our Marines and Sailors. For that, we are all truly grateful.

*Semper Fi,
Colonel Christopher Steele, Commanding Officer, MRF-D*

Marine Family Appreciation Day Beach BBQ

Marine Family Appreciation Day will be a summer event for Marines and Families. It will be a day to honor and pay tribute to our brave defenders and those who support them. The Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment recognizes the selfless dedication of its Marine families. Their unwavering dedication does not go unnoticed. They are the "force behind the force" and have a profound impact on the readiness and resiliency of Marines.

Planned is a day to include a large BBQ with over 400 Marines and those they love, games with trophies and awards, music, and fun. The day is about recognizing and thanking the Marines and their families for their significant contributions, dedication, and sacrifice.

Civilians don't always realize how resilient the Marine Corps families are, and events like this bring all the families together; families of all races and religions who will bond together through each change, each absence, each life event ahead. Operation Marine Family Appreciation Day helps to build the morale of our Marines, families and children and we consider it to be an essential mission.

If you would like to **help support** this extraordinary day of appreciation for our **brave defenders and families**, please contribute by returning the enclosed envelope or go online to danapoint5thmarines.com. Your generosity is appreciated and will help make this special day of tribute to our Marines and families possible! These remarkable individuals are strong, tenacious and never waver from honor, duty and service. Their families should be honored and recognized for the same personal attributes as well.



Thank you for your service and sacrifice.



Join us for the most fun you'll ever have on a golf course!

Not a golfer? No problem! Please consider giving a Marine or Wounded Warrior from the Wounded Warrior Battalion West a day of R&R on the links. The proceeds from the 14th Annual Combat Golf Tournament will benefit our Fighting Fifth Marines, our Combat Wounded, ill and injured Warriors and their families.



A Game of Chance

Helicopter Golf Ball Drop

Win \$2,500 if your ball drops in the hole!

\$10 PER TICKET

Please call 949-500-4951. Reserve your spot to be part of the tournament or buy your Ball Drop tickets at danapoint5thmarines.com/combata-golf-2023/.

There are many sponsorship opportunities still available. We welcome the business community and local organizations to support this much-loved annual event.



Thank you for your confidence in our organization by voting us **Best Non-Profit in Dana Point** for the 8th year in a row.

As a citizen and Patriot, you can proudly serve!

Volunteers@danapoint5thmarines.com

We are an all-volunteer force, non-salaried and your generous donations form the cornerstone for our efforts. Please help us with our mission by using the self-addressed envelope, or make a donation online at danapoint5thmarines.com.



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