



POST SOLANT AMITY

With the Members of "G" Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment



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The Rhyming Essence of Being Ensign Benson

Over the last two years, I've received at least a dozen inquiries about the USS Gearing's 1961 fair-haired Annapolis graduate, and ships First Lieutenant, who impishly expressed a hesitation at being promoted to Lieutenant JG as he'd acquired a certain liking for the rhythmically poetic sound of "Ensign Benson." Alas, there was nothing I could provide.

Then in mid-November, I received and responded to a rapid fire series of emails from a Bill Benson of Spokane, Washington. Bill, it seems, besides being a former marine — enlisting in Alexandria, Virginia in 1984 and honorably discharged as Sergeant William Benson in 1997 out of Camp Pendleton — is the son of the man we so very long, long ago knew as "Ensign Benson."

And, as if that was not surprise enough for me to absorb, Bill then proceeded to explain that, in 1986, he had served in the Heavy Guns Platoon of Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion of the 6th Marines!!!

"Saw your Acrobat file of the USS Gearing cruise book for



Ensign P. S. Benson, 1961

Solant Amity," he wrote, "and, if you look at the picture of the Gunnery Department, you'll see, on the left, Ensign P. S. Benson, who is my father.

"Dad has spoken to me of those days when marines were, for a short time, part of the crew of the Gearing. I particularly remember his mentioning 'a huge marine sergeant' who loved working in the engine room, and could break the bolts of the big 14 inch steam fittings with a three foot long wrench, and the sailors REALLY appreciated HIS help."

That "huge marine sergeant" was likely as not our retired Gunnery Sergeant Delwin "Bill" Bailey,

now living in New York.

In a subsequent email Bill Benson explained that, "First off: Dad is alive and well, having served 32 years in the Navy, retiring as a Captain and his service included some pretty impressive assignments: USS Gearing DD-710, USS Growler SSG-577 (yes, as a diesel submariner), Boomer Class submarine USS Nathan Hale SSBN-623, and the USS Tusk SS-426.

"After completion of post-graduate school, he was first assigned to Naval Ordinance in D.C; then reassigned to Subic Bay, where he was involved with the recovery, repair and reassignment of former South Vietnamese warships. In addition, he attended the Navy's Dive School.

"Returning to CONUS, he served in a number of commands including that of Technical Operations Officer at Naval Undersea Warfare Engineering Station in Newport, Washington; Navy Liaison Officer with the Army Material Readiness Command — insuring grunts like ourselves — received the highest quality munitions in a timely manner; the Naval Weapons Station at Earle, New Jersey; and finally, for four

years as the Commander of the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center in Panama City, Florida.

"But retirement hasn't slowed him down. First with the Panama City Police Department, then as a Florida State Probation and Parole Officer, and more recently as a Sergeant with the Bay County Sheriff's Office working with juveniles, he continues to serve.

"He runs seven miles a day, remains an expert marksman, and has furnished me with an only recently turned five year old half-brother."

Humbly acknowledging the content of Bill's emails, the former ensign and now retired Captain Perry S. Benson wrote of his having been assigned as the Gearing's 'First Lieutenant' — a titled position more so than a rank. He recalled a time shortly after our having been embarked upon the Gearing when he came upon a mixed group of sailors and marines discussing the apparent confusion observed in Navy v. Marine insignia, title and position.

"I can't recall the identities of the folk's there, but I believe at least one of them was sailor Jerry Fawcett. Their conversation revolved around the reason for the gold bar adored Mr. Benson being a 'First Lieutenant' while the acknowledged insignia for your Lieutenant Thompson was a silver bar. At some point in the dialogue, a sailor, as if to end the session with a statement of presumed authority, said 'Look, your guy is just A first lieutenant, but our Mr. Benson is THE First Lieutenant.' This seemed to satisfy all involved. Content that my "POSITION" had been affirmed, I smiled and proceeded aft.

"Serving on the Gearing was a wonderful learning opportunity and the experience with the onboard Marines was a good one. I think it demonstrated the traditional closeness we often heard of, but perhaps did not often see, between the Navy and the Marine Corps. Gearing folks like Chief Norfolk, BM1 "Soupy" Campbell and more molded, trained and corrected that "Ensign" of so long

MERRY CHRISTMAS, MARINES!!!

The Marine—A Novel of War from Guadalcanal to Korea

This modest effort was written by James Brady, published by Thomas Dunne Books of New York and copyrighted in 2004.

Though an easy enough read, I found it less than fulfilling.

Brady provides little and weak character development for a person touted as being "special."

The insights into the Raider Battalions of Carlson and Edson, as well as the Korean War, were interesting. But the author's nearly relentless barrage of unflattering commen-

tary about the *personal* quirks of Generals Macarthur and Almond seemed more than a little "pushed" at times. And, I've no love for either man.

And the ending? Well, phffff, the thing could have been written by an always and in all ways dull French intellectual and not, as Brady was, a former marine lieutenant.

The issue is burdensomely driven home that the "hero," early on a lieutenant in Carlson's Raiders and later a lieutenant colonel in Korea, may

have been little more than a fool for wasting a Yale education on something as *banal and infantile* as Marine Corps service.

This is made even more glaring, as his "successes" are so often compared with those of his college "goomba," who rises to the ranks of the celebrated through simply *writing* about the heroics that make for a warrior: live it or write it? Which is the *wiser* course?

We certainly know the *safer* one.

(Continued on page 2)

Ensign Benson continued:

ago. In that same process, Marines, too, had similarly contributed both on the Gearing and in subsequent assignments."

For sure, our "Mr. Benson" has had something of a full life and seems determined to grasp still more out of it. The members of 3rd Platoon, G-2-6 and, at one time, part-time crew of the Gearing, wish him well in the continuing pursuit of what has until now been a life of service to his nation and the people of Florida.

To put into perspective the many things we've learned of the now retired Captain and lend support for one of the more important purposes for our website: a source of history and knowledge of those who help make it, I offer some salient remarks by his son, Bill.

"It's natural to seek out sea-stories about one's forefathers. Age breeds introspection and, in my case, a need for answers to what made my father tick when I was growing up. Many things, as a consequence of that search, have now fallen into place and helped me to love him even more as I grew to understand 'where he was coming from.'

"I'm glad that "G" Company 26 had the opportunity to work alongside tin-can sailors [and] isn't it ironic that the son of a Gearing sailor would wind up in a marine battalion that had served a tour aboard his dad's ship? I find that an intriguing link across time and one that cinches up my family's naval

history. My grandfather was the Engineering Officer on the USS Oklahoma on 7Dec41. Surviving, he later went on to *command service* of his own.

"It's been a long road traveled and I don't know what ya'll of 3G-2-6 did aboard the Gearing, but it worked."

Thank you Bill and Merry Christmas to both you and your dad, Captain Perry S. Benson—USN, Retired
Ed Shea

Sales Tax Deductions on Your Next Fed Return

Congress recently passed tax legislation allowing one to write off state and local sales taxes in lieu of state income taxes. You get to claim the greater of the two as a deduction on your itemized 2005 income tax return for tax year 2004.

Though its one hell of a time to learn about a deduction requiring the squirreling away of a shoe box full of receipts to gain full advantage of the new law, I've found a way of getting around the record keeping problem: your credit card records.

So much of what we buy today is on credit cards. Call their customer service divisions and ask for the statements for each month of the past year. [And make a point of saving them next year.]

Once received, unless you live in a

state that taxes even groceries, run a line through supermarket purchase. [Next year, use one of your cards for groceries only.] Then, add the remaining entries and deduct credits provided for items returned. What you have left is the total dollar amount spent on taxable items. Circle that number and do the same thing for each month on every statement received.

Now comes the pleasant part. Add up all those circled amounts and multiply the total by the decimal equivalent of your state and local taxes. Here on Long Island that would be .085, representing 8.5%. In Florida that would be .06, for the 6% charged there.

The result: your tax deductible total. For every \$1000 dollars spent in New York or Florida respectively, one would have an \$85 or \$60 deduction. If your thinking it might not add up to much because you've not bought big ticket items, your wrong. I'm expecting as much as a \$1500 deduction because of travel and cumulative small item furnishing expenses. Try it, you'll like it.

Then, on April 16th, tell your uninformed Liberal neighbors it was just one more gift from that "GOD-damn red-necked baby-killing Bush and his right-wing-Christian congressional conspirators."

Donation with a Purpose

The following was sent to the Boy Scouts of America, after reading of

the most recent tragedy perpetrated by the ACLU:

Enclosed herewith will be found a check for \$___.

It is provided in support of the activities for which the BSA has long been credited, because of its oh-so-politically-incorrect stand against homosexuality, and your openly professed support for something so apparently out-moded as a belief in God.

I am particularly incensed about the continuing efforts of the ACLU to denigrate the reputation of the BSA and the more recent court ruling denying military sponsorship of scouting activities.

On the positive side, however, I am so very grateful that, despite incredible political and legal pressures, the Boy Scouts of America continues to prevail.

My gift is in response to your worthy and successful efforts.

It is made to the National Council in the belief that it is YOUR responsibility to protect the interests of the ENTIRE organization. If such is not the case, please advise me of same and I will in the future donate the money to the council for those states most greatly affected by the shameful and ludicrous efforts of the ACLU.

Though "the season to be giving," I thought it great that someone took the time to make clear what it is they expect in return.

Notes from the Member-

Delwin "Bill" Bailey confirms his "tour" in the Gearing's engine room, referred to by the then Ensign Benson, and looks forward to a reunion of any size with former G-2-6 members.

He meets annually with members of his PI grad Platoon, 121-53. Of the 16 remaining, there are 12 active participants, down one from last year.

Four members of that "Post Honor Platoon" made careers for themselves in the Corps. All were wounded in Vietnam. Two died there.

Remember them and all who fight in your prayers this CHRISTmas season.

From the looks of excellent satellite photos acquired of **Dave & Debra Beraudo's** clandestine Deers for Santa [DFS] facility, high in the mountains of Colorado, the "troops" look well prepared for their arduous assignment kicking off at 0001 25Dec04. Good job, Dave!!!



Dave Beraudo's place under assault by Colorado critters

Dick & Lisa Landry are planning a move from their home in Tampa Bay to the Rome, Georgia area in mid-January. Dick will furnish the details as they become available.

Trevor & Ruth Davis, though

suffering the ill affects of what appears to be a major bout with a flu, are enjoying their well earned status amidst the retired elite of Massachusetts. Trevor is looking forward to seeing the failing presidential candidate Senator John "Forever-Planning" Kerry join their

ranks.

Well, I've lived long enough to see the end of a three generation tradition. My son, Kevin...soul survivor of his FDNY mid-town Manhattan Division caught in the collapse of the terrorist assaulted World Trade Center...retired effective 10/29/04.

His grand-father on his mother's side retired as a Deputy Chief in 1978 after 32 years, I did so as a Lieutenant in 1987 after 23 years of service, his brother Brian after 15. Kevin, entering the Department in 1999, was retired with a Service Connected Disability.

All tolled: 81 years of emergency service that for each of us passed in the blink of an eye.

Now, in returning to G-2-6 business, it was Colonel John W. Ripley of the Marine Corps Museum that furnished our 11/61 company roster. Read his AMAZING history, next time in the Post Solant Amity newsletter.

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See the whole story at:
SolantAmity.com

The First Marines in Monrovia

Marine Corps Hymn Not A Casual Sing-Along

[This piece, suggested by Charlie Wilson, has been excerpted and greatly modified from "Warrior Culture of the U.S. Marines," written by Marion F. Sturkey, copyright 2001.]

The U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force each have their own songs.

"Anchors Aweigh" was written in 1906 by Lt. Charles Zimmerman and midshipman Alfred Miles as a tribute to the Naval Academy Class of 1907. Revised over many years, the final stanza was penned by another midshipman, Royal Lovell, in 1926. It's a snappy little tune, but no one knows what the words imply. The original first stanza in 1906 had dealt solely with the game of football, ending with a "wishing you a happy voyage home.

The Army, on the other hand,

adopted a snazzy tune with words that make sense. Indeed, the words of each stanza of "The Caisson Song" clearly indicate it to be a melody for rural motorists. Edmund Gruber wrote the original lyrics in the Philippines during World War I. Since most of the fighting was 8000 miles away in Europe, Gruber made only a passing reference to warfare. Yet, he was careful to be "politically correct." He apparently sought the help of first grade students in composing the lyrics. The banal "Hi, hi, hee" is a dead giveaway. No one has a clue as to what it might mean. Still, ...it rhymes.

The U.S. Air Force did not exist in 1938. But, that year Liberty Magazine sponsored a contest for an official song for the Army Air Corps. There were 757 entries. A group of Army Air Corps wives

paths.

My father fought in WW2, my brother in Vietnam, my oldest son in the first Iraq war. It seems nearly every generation has its own war to fight, civil wars, wars to end all wars, wars of aggression, and wars of preemption. There is nothing new under the sun.

Every four years ambitious men vie to win the presidency of this great land. They want to make their mark on history. They promise us peace, prosperity and happiness if we elect them. As Emerson noted, they give up most of what it really means to be a man in order to wield power. It's heady stuff. Some flourish, some wither under the intense pressure of being Top Dog. Events dictate, and no matter how much power one has, there are limits as to how it can be used. No matter how much power or how many advisers one has, there are choices to be made that are fraught with

selected the entry from one Robert Crawford. After World War II the Army Air Corps evolved into the U.S. Air Force. and adopted Crawford's "Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder." as their official song.

These three songs, "Anchors Aweigh," "The Caisson Song," and "Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder," are often played at public events. They obviously delight the members and advocates of the affected service. When their song is played, sailors, soldiers, and zoomies leap to their feet, shout, cheer, and clap their hands, as though at a high school pep rally.

The U.S. Marine Corps is a brotherhood guided by principles, values, virtues, love of country, and its Warrior Culture. This brotherhood of American Patriots has no SONG. Instead, Marine Warriors have a HYMN. When The Hymn is played, United States Marines stand at attention. They silently show pride in their fellow Marines, their Corps, their Country, their heritage, and their hymn. It's a tribute to Warriors. Marine Warriors stormed fortress Derna, raised the American flag, and gave us "the shores of Tripoli." Marines fought their way into the castle at Chapultepec and gave us the "Halls of Montezuma." Marines exist for the purpose of warfighting. Fighting is their role in life. They "fight for right and freedom" and "to keep our honor clean."

They fight "in the air, on land, and sea." The Marine Corps is Valhalla for Warriors. Yet, ironically, no one knows who wrote the hymn, already in widespread use by the mid-1800s. Col. A.S. McLemore, USMC, spent several years trying to identify the origin of the tune. In 1878 he told the leader of the Marine Band that the tune had been adopted from the comic opera Genevieve de Barbant, by Jacques Offenback. Yet, others believe the tune originated from a Spanish folk song. Whatever! Regardless of its origin, The Marines' Hymn has remained a revered icon of the United States Marine Corps for almost 200 years.

In 1929 The Marines' Hymn became the official hymn of the Corps. Thirteen years later in November 1942 the Commandant approved a change in the words of the first verse, fourth line. Because of the increasing use of aircraft in the Corps, the words were changed to "In the air, on land, and sea." No other changes have been made since that time. When you have attained absolute perfection, there is no need for further modification:

*From the Halls of Montezuma,
To the Shores of Tripoli;
we fight our country's battles
In the air, on land, and sea;
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean;
We are proud to claim the title
of UNITED STATES MARINES*

*Our flag's unfurled to every breeze,
From dawn to setting sun;
We have fought in every clime and
place
Where we could take a gun;
In the snow of far off northern lands
And in sunny tropic scenes;
You will find us always on the job
the UNITED STATES MARINES.*

*Here's health to you and to our Corps
Which we are proud to serve;
In many a strife we've fought for life
And never lost our nerve;
If the Army and the Navy
Ever look on Heaven's scenes;
They will find the streets are guarded
by UNITED STATES MARINES.*

Merry Christmas to you all.

Additional copies of the newsletter can be obtained at our website, where on page one you will find a link to a downloadable version.

I hope you've enjoyed this effort. Please, send in your stories by e-or-snail mail to make for an even better next issue.

Semper Fi;
Ed Shea

Nothing New

As life races by, a theme emerges: repetition. One realizes that the prophet was right when he said there is nothing new under the sun. Everything that happens in this world happens time and time again. All the mistakes, all the triumphs, all the fallings in and out of love, everything that feels unique to ones own experience when it takes place is as commonplace as dust.

As we age, the sense of time is altered. Summers rush by in flash, events that seem recent weren't; they happened more years ago than seems possible. The children can't really be that old, can they? My sons are fully grown men, and I have the pleasure of being a grandfather several times over. With luck, they will have similar experiences down their own life

risk and the guy at the top has to make them.

I've read and believe to be true that the characteristic of human history, its special theme is the programmatic exercise of power by men over men. There is no escaping that.

"History is the interaction of power, on one hand – its establishment, maintenance, and increase – and those counter-forces, on the other," wrote Joseph Campbell. "Various names have been given to the latter," he continues, "of which the simplest and most inclusive is love."

This is the truth. There is nothing new under the sun.

Merry Christmas, *Ron Smith*

[Ron can be heard weekdays, 1500-1800 on Baltimore's WBAL. Tune in on your computers at <http://wbal.com>]