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SIXTY-SIXTH YEAR NO. 8
AUGUST 8, 2026



GRAPPLING MATCH Lance Cpl. Tania Guerrero, left, and Cpl. MaKenna Hearne participate in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program culminating event at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, July 26, 2026. The event was designed to develop Marines mentally and physically while fostering camaraderie through friendly competition. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Samuel E. Estridge

AUTO DEALERSHIP TO PAY \$137,000 FOR MISHANDLING SERVICEMEMBERS' VEHICLE LEASES

from Department of Justice
Office of Public Affairs

The Justice Department announced recently that Holmes Motors Inc., a “lease here, pay here” dealership with locations in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, has agreed to pay over \$137,000 to resolve allegations that it violated the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) by illegally repossessing vehicles owned by servicemembers and failing to refund security deposits and prepaid lease amounts to servicemembers who terminated their vehicle

leases due to military orders.

“The Servicemember Civil Relief Act provides certain rights and protections to the members of our Armed Forces. These protections are designed to lessen the legal and economic burdens of military service and enable our warfighters to focus



on the defense of our nation,” said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “The Department of Justice will not waver in its commitment to enforcing these rights.”

“As someone with 30 years of military service, enforcing the law to protect servicemembers’ rights is of the highest priority to me and to my office,” said U.S. Attorney Phillip W. Williams Jr. for the Northern District of Alabama. “The law is clear that when servicemembers are on active duty, they shouldn’t have to worry their car will be repossessed while they serve their county. I’m very proud of this settlement.”

The Department alleges that Holmes Motors illegally repossessed three vehicles leased by SCRA-protected servicemem-

bers without obtaining court orders. In at least one case, Holmes Motors repossessed a vehicle even after the servicemember gave the company a copy of her military orders requiring her to deploy in support of operations at the southern border.

DOJ also alleges that Holmes Motors violated the SCRA when it failed to refund security deposits and prepaid lease amounts when servicemembers terminated five vehicle leases early after receiving qualifying military orders.

Under the settlement, Holmes Motors will pay \$77,348 in compensation to the affected servicemembers. The company will also pay a \$60,000 civil penalty and will be required to make policy and training changes to avoid committing future violations.

Trump establishes Military Spouse Commission

by Matthew Olay

President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order in the White House’s Oval Office Aug. 3 establishing the President’s Military Spouse Commission.

The commission, which is authorized by Executive Order 14415, will provide recommendations for improving the quality of life for military spouses by addressing common challenges, such as housing, employment, healthcare, childcare, education and “just about everything else you can think of,” according to the president.

“America cannot have the strongest military in the world without the love and devotion of our remarkable military spouses, who make the extraordinary sacrifices for our country. ... Many military spouses spend months separated from their loved ones, while our heroes are deployed overseas,” Trump said while surrounded by numerous military spouses who will serve in the commission.

He noted that military families also endure frequent moves and other unique challenges.

The commission will be chaired by the spouse of the secretary of war. During brief remarks, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, who attended the ceremony along with his wife, Jennifer Hegseth, explained that strong military families make for strong warfighters.

“If that warfighter knows that their family is good to go, they will go the extra mile, which is what our nation asks,” he said.

The executive order states that the spouses of various senior military leaders will serve as members, including the spouses of all service secretaries and the joint service chiefs.

“This entire group has mountains of experience, and they’re raring to go put it to use on behalf of the great Americans who serve our nation. ... This is going to be full speed ahead to address every quality-of-life issue we can,” Hegseth added.

Jennifer Hegseth said the members have decades of experience that they’ll be bringing to the commission, but in addition to the experience, she said support from the top down is the biggest asset.

“Every time [Secretary Hegseth] travels around to the troops, he tells them that the president has [their] back. And now the families know that you have their back, too, and we are grateful,” Jennifer Hegseth told the president.

<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4562726/trump-establishes-military-spouse-commission/>

High-speed Wi-Fi expanded for military families at Camp Pendleton

Boingo Wireless has been selected to deploy advanced Wi-Fi networks across eight child development centers at Camp Pendleton July 29. To better serve military families, Boingo will design, build and manage high-speed, secure wireless infrastructure to support day-to-day childcare operations and interactive educational tools. The network expansion builds on Boingo’s established footprint at Camp Pendleton, where the company provides high-speed Wi-Fi to more than 28,000 Marine beds on base and over 50 amenity locations such as gyms, lounges and libraries.

Marine expeditionary unit transits Panama Canal

For the first time in 18 years, a Marine expeditionary unit has navigated the Panama Canal, The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit - operating as Littoral Combat Force 24 - transited the canal Aug. 1, aboard USS *San Antonio* amphibious transport dock ship. The large-scale maneuver is a demonstration of the Marine Corps’ capacity for rapid global mobility, maritime dominance and seamless power projection. “This historic transit is a powerful testament to the flexibility and readiness of Littoral Combat Force 24,” said Col. Ryan Lynch, LCF 24 commanding officer.

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The Meat & Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari, 23-year Navy wife and mother of three, writes a regular column on parenting, marriage, pets, vacations, military life and more!

Hegseth: Department success buoyed by courage, spirit, leadership

by C. Todd Lopez
Pentagon News

The War Department has had a lot of success in the past 19 months, said Secretary of War Pete Hegseth. And that’s in no small part due to the dedication and training of the men and women in uniform who form the heart of the U.S. military.

But underwriting that success is presidential leadership from the very top, Hegseth told President Donald J. Trump July 31 during a cabinet meeting at

Camp David in Maryland.

“It’s great Americans here and all around the country, and all around the world, who are the core of what keeps us safe,” Hegseth said. “But in order to do that, you have to have a leader that’s willing to put them in a position to do it.”

The secretary listed three things Trump provides that make success possible for American warfighters: courage, a mandate to restore the warrior spirit and a generational

investment in making the U.S. military the best it can be.

“I think people miss ... the courage it takes to seal the border, to say we’re going to do it, and we’re going to do it every single day, and we’re going to do it on behalf of the American people,” Hegseth said.

Since January 2025, American troops from all services, and with various skills, have been working first to gain and then maintain 100% operational control of America’s southern border and to stop both drug traffickers and the flow of illegal immigration.

“[It takes] courage to bomb the Houthis and say we will maintain freedom of navigation,” Hegseth said. “If you wonder why they’re not involved in this conflict [in Iran], even though they’re a proxy of Iran, it’s because they’ve felt the weight of American power for 45 days, and you had the courage to do that.”

In the Red Sea, Iran-backed Houthi forces had been attacking U.S. ships and those of other nations for years, disrupting legal commerce for all. In March 2025, the U.S. took steps to put an end to those attacks during Operation Rough Rider, when U.S. Central Command, at the direction of the president, began a series of attacks at key terrorist Houthi targets in Yemen. Two

months later, the president announced that the Houthis agreed to a ceasefire.

Operation Midnight Hammer, the June 2025 mission to obliterate Iran’s nuclear capability, also resulted in a ceasefire of the 12-day war, Hegseth noted, calling it a bold move no other president had dared to do.

“Other presidents had the option on their table to do [that], but they never pulled the trigger because of the complications, because of the challenges, because of the risk,” he said. “Courage.”

The secretary also cited presidential leadership and a willingness to take risks as key enablers for stopping the flow of illegal drugs in the Caribbean, the capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro as part of Operation Absolute Resolve and the willingness to undertake the significant Operation Epic Fury, to ensure the Iranian regime will never have a nuclear weapon.

The secretary also credited the president with reinvigorating the spirit of the U.S. armed forces by providing a mandate to eliminate distractions in the force and refocus the warfighter on lethality, meritocracy, accountability, readiness and standards.

<https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4561838/>.

USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr., completes acceptance trials

Future fleet replenishment oiler USNS Hector A. Cafferata Jr., completed acceptance trials, marking a major milestone before delivery to the Navy. Acceptance trials are conducted to evaluate a ship’s systems and overall performance at sea, ensuring that the vessel meets Navy requirements before entering operational service. The ship is part of the John Lewis-class replenishment oiler program, which is intended to modernize the Navy’s logistics fleet. Once commissioned into service, Hector A. Cafferata Jr., will provide fuel and supplies to deployed naval forces around the globe, strengthening the Navy’s ability to sustain operations far from shore. The successful completion of trials represents another step in the Navy’s effort to replace aging support ships and maintain the logistical backbone required for worldwide maritime operations.

Coast Guard interdicts more than \$2.8 million in illegal narcotics

The U.S. Coast Guard announced the seizure of more than \$2.8 million worth of marijuana during counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean. The interdiction was carried out as part of ongoing efforts to disrupt transnational criminal organizations that use maritime routes to transport illegal drugs into the United States and other countries throughout the region. Coast Guard cutters and air assets routinely patrol the Caribbean and eastern Pacific in support of national security and law-enforcement missions. The seizure demonstrates the service’s role in combating illicit trafficking, protecting maritime borders, and working alongside international partners to enhance security and stability across the Western Hemisphere. Coast Guard: Maritime safety ops for major summer events The Coast Guard issued notices regarding special maritime safety and security operations in support of major summer events, including Seattle’s Seafair Festival and other large public gatherings. Temporary safety zones and restrictions were established to protect participants, spectators, and commercial traffic while allowing Coast Guard personnel to coordinate with local authorities and event organizers. These operations illustrate the Coast Guard’s domestic mission of safeguarding the nation’s waterways and ensuring public safety during high-profile events. Through the use of patrol boats, communication networks, and coordinated response plans, the service works to maintain order on the water while supporting recreational activities and maritime commerce.

Army

- Army offers up to \$200,000 in bonuses to keep senior pilots
- Soldiers can now wear the Jungle tab Army-wide

Navy

- Navy offering up to \$150,000 retention bonuses for select aviation billets
- Virginia-class submarine USS *Minnesota* completes first deployment
- Navy relieves commander of USS *West Virginia*

Marine Corps

- Marines to get new anti-drone round for M4 and M27 rifles
- MARSOC wants to automate armory recordkeeping

Air Force

- After being denied wrongful death claim, family files lawsuit alleging failures to prevent suicide, sexual assault at Air Force Academy

Veterans

- GSA official put on leave for social media post saying veterans’ preference in federal hiring is hampering tech recruiting



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FC1 Aaron Frigm
York, Pennsylvania

"Venison with lentil beans, onions and green peppers."
Scott Nicoll
National Park, New Jersey



"Dipped french fries in ice cream."
Kameryn Rein Schwarz
Redlands, California



Marines, autonomous drones & training

by 1st Lt. Matthew Hart
2nd Marine Division

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER - 2nd Marine Division's Unmanned Systems Center of Excellence recently completed several days of integrated training and demonstrations with Perennial Autonomy, a leading American defense technology company that produces AI-enabled drone systems.

The training included tests of multiple autonomous drone platforms, including the Bumblebee V1 quadcopter, the Hornet mid-range strike drone and the AS-3 Merops, an interceptor designed to counter one-way attack drones such as the Iranian Shahed 136.

"2nd Marine Division is the first Marine Corps unit to work directly with Perennial Autonomy,"

said Col. Thomas Short, the air officer for 2nd MARDIV. "This experience was invaluable as the Division looks to receive these drones in the future and work with Perennial Autonomy testing and collecting data before they are actually implemented as weapons systems."

Marines successfully flew two platforms from Perennial Autonomy—the Bumblebee V1 and the Hornet—showcasing a wide range of capabilities, including reconnaissance and attack, as well as the ability to drop payloads. A highlight of the demonstration occurred when Perennial Autonomy showcased the effectiveness of the Merops interceptor, which has been credited with more than 4,000 interceptions in Ukraine, by successfully taking down one of its own Hornet strike drones.

Maj. Gen. Farrell J. Sullivan, left, commanding general of 2nd Marine Division, speaks about a Hornet drone system during a Perennial Autonomy drone demo on Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, July 28. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Carla Perez Ramirez

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Fisher takes command at NBPL

Naval Base Point Loma (NBPL) welcomed its newest commanding officer July 31 when Capt. Michael D. Fisher assumed command from Capt. Jeff Yackeren.

Yackeren’s tour was marked by infrastructure modernization and strengthened community partnerships throughout the San Diego region.

Fisher brings extensive operational and leadership experience

Most recent Marine Corps general and special court-martial results

At a special court-martial at Camp Pendleton, a military judge convicted Sgt. A. M. Hernandez, pursuant to the accused’s pleas, of battery, and resisting apprehension. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to a bad conduct discharge and reduction to E-1.

At a general court-martial at Camp Pendleton, a military judge convicted Cpl. J. G. Lease, pursuant to the accused’s plea, of possessing or receiving or viewing child pornography. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to a dishonorable discharge, 24 months of confinement, and reduction to E-1.

At a general court-martial at Camp Pendleton, a military judge convicted Cpl. Sidney C. Pointer, pursuant to the accused’s plea, of one specification of burglary with intent to commit certain offenses. Consistent with the plea agreement, the military judge sentenced the accused to a dishonorable discharge, 6 months of confinement, and reduction to E-1.

At an Art. 16(c)(2)(A) court-martial at Camp Pendleton, a military judge convicted Sgt. R. Jimenezcordero, contrary to the accused’s plea, of battery. The military judge sentenced the accused to 5 months of confinement, reduction to E-1, and a reprimand.

Navy christens Future USS William Charette (DDG 130)

BATH, Maine – General Dynamics Bath Iron Works christened the Navy’s newest guided missile destroyer, future USS William Charette (DDG 130) Aug. 1.

The 43rd Arleigh Burke destroyer built at the Maine shipyard is named for Mast Chief Hospital Corpsman William Charette, a career Sailor who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War.

The Navy welcomed the 1,500 shipbuilders, family members and invited guests, describing how Charette’s bravery and life of service inspire their work.

“When DDG 130, the future William Charette, joins the U.S. Fleet, it will sail with the motto ‘Valor in Service’—a fitting tribute to its namesake’s heroism in Korea and his two decades of commitment to the U.S. Navy,” said Charles F. Krugh, president of General Dynamics Bath Iron Works.

“It will also sail with the promise that Bath Built is Best Built—when our Navy’s Sailors take this ship into harm’s way to protect our country and our families, they deserve our best.”

In addition to William Charette, Bath Iron Works currently has under construction the Flight III ships Louis H. Wilson Jr. (DDG 126), Quentin Walsh (DDG 132), John E. Kilmer (DDG 134), Richard G. Lugar (DDG 136), J. William Middendorf (DDG 138) and Thomas G. Kelley (DDG 140).

General Dynamics is a global aerospace and defense company that offers a broad portfolio of products and services in business

Secretary of War flag officer announcement

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced Aug. 3 that the president nominated Rear Adm. (lower half) John D. Saccomando for appointment to the grade of rear admiral, with assignment as chief of Navy Reserve, N095, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations/commander, Navy Reserve Forces, Pentagon, Washington, D.C. Saccomando is currently commander of Naval Air Force Reserve, San Diego.



Streamers fill the air following the christening of future USS William Charette (DDG 130) at the General Dynamics Bath Iron Works drydock. Courtesy photo

aviation; ship construction and repair; land combat vehicles, weapons systems and munitions; and technology products and services.

Sen. Angus King, Acting Sec. of the Navy Hung Cao, Col. (Ret.) Harvey C. Barnum, representing the Medal of Honor Society, Michael Charette, son of the ship’s namesake, and Rear Adm. Matthew Case, Acting Navy Surgeon General.

Fort Worth (LCS-3) decommissioned in San Diego

The Navy decommissioned USS Fort Worth (LCS-3) at Naval Base San Diego on July 29, concluding nearly 14 years of service for one of the first Freedom-class littoral combat ships.

Commissioned in 2012, the vessel participated in operations and exercises throughout the Indo-Pacific region, including humanitarian missions and multinational maritime operations. The ceremony brought together current and former crew members, Navy leaders, and representatives from the city of Fort Worth, Texas, to recognize the ship’s service and accomplishments.

The decommissioning reflects the Navy’s broader effort to modernize its fleet and reshape the littoral combat ship force by retiring older hulls and redirecting resources toward next-generation capabilities. While on active duty, Fort Worth played an important role in testing and developing the operational concepts of the LCS program, and its retirement marks another milestone in the Navy’s ongoing transformation of its surface fleet.



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The USS Midway Museum is currently recruiting
for docents, air craft restoration, ship restoration and safety volunteers. These assignments are a regular commitment of at least 6 months.
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Military medical heroes of the Korean War

This year, the Military Health System is celebrating 250 years of America by recognizing military medicine's enduring history of innovation and impact to the warfighter.

America recognizes National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, honoring the nearly 1.8 million U.S. service members who served there and the 36,576 who died in the three-year fight.

The Korean War began June 25, 1950, when North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel and attacked South Korea. The United States military joined South Korean and allied troops in the war across the Korean Peninsula. The Korean Armistice Agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, ending major combat operations.

American military medics and corpsmen served on the front lines to care for thousands of wounded — some giving their lives to support the warfighters. Those who received the Medal of Honor represented selflessness and a dedication to care above and beyond the call of duty.

Korean War medical personnel who received the honor include Army Pfc. Bryant Homer Womack, who, despite being struck by enemy fire, “insisted that all efforts be made for

the benefit of others that were wounded,” the citation reads. Womack Army Medical Center is named in his honor.

Here are more stories:

Army Pfc. Richard G. Wilson

With Medical Company, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment, Wilson was on a reconnaissance-in-force mission through the hilly country when they were ambushed by enemy fire. He put himself in harm's way to aid the wounded, moving them to safety. As the company was ordered to withdraw, he rushed back out to save a comrade, unarmed and under attack by the enemy. Wilson was found beside the man he returned to aid, shot several times while trying to shield and administer aid to the wounded man, according to the citation.

Army Sgt. David B. Bleak

Bleak, born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, served with the Medical Company, 223d Infantry Regi-

ment, 40th Infantry Division. On June 14, 1952, near Minari-gol, Korea, he volunteered to join a reconnaissance patrol sent to capture an enemy prisoner for interrogation.

The patrol came under heavy fire and took casualties. Bleak



Stories of Korean War military medical heroes and their brave actions show the courage, perseverance, and dedication of military medical heroes saving the lives of warfighters. Courtesy photo

moved the wounded out of harm's way and treated as many as he could. When enemy soldiers fired from a nearby trench, he entered the trench and killed two with his bare hands, and a third with his knife. When he turned his attention back to the wounded, a grenade landed and he threw himself over a service member to shield him from the blast.

Though wounded, Bleak knew he still had to get the man back to safety. He carried the injured Soldier down a hill when two

enemy soldiers charged him with bayonets. He “grabbed them and smacked their heads together—Journal entry” before getting the wounded soldier to safety.

Dwight D. Eisenhower presented Bleak the Medal of Honor at the White House Oct. 27, 1953. Bleak died March 23, 2006.

Navy Hospitalman Richard D. Dewert

Dewert served as a medical corpsman with 1st Marine Division in Korea, when his company went under enemy fire.

Despite a painful leg wound, he rushed to aid the seriously wounded, bringing struck warfighters out of the line of fire. Dewert was mortally wounded by the attack.

Navy Master Chief Hospital Corpsman William Richard Charette

Also serving with the 1st Marine Division, Charette risked his life in action against enemy aggressor forces. He moved to render assistance to his wounded comrades, and when an enemy grenade landed within a few feet of a U.S. Marine he was treating

— he threw himself upon the stricken man and absorbed the blast. Despite sustaining painful facial wounds and undergoing shock, he continued to administer medical aid to the wounded, even removing his own battle vest and placed it upon seriously wounded comrade whose armored vest had been torn from his body. As the only living the Medal of Honor recipient from Korea, his namesake ship was recently christened.

Read more hero stories at <https://www.health.mil/News/Dvids-Articles/2026/07/24/news570652>.

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³ Availability of renters insurance to residents of another country is limited to qualified members.

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by Jan Wagner

For years the founders of Reel-Charge created products for major national brands. Eventually they decided that they could offer customers easy, reliable and accessible power without the added costs of too many middlemen, markups and unnecessarily complicated technology. Their goal: real, practical and genuinely useful tech.

They own their own manufacturing: their factory, their process and their standards, to eliminate the middlemen and deliver high-quality products directly to you, their customers.

Veratek Multifunction Jump Starter & Inflator All-in-One

The all-in one V8 Pro Air is designed in Seattle. It delivers safe, anti-spark jump-start power for most vehicles with up to eight-cylinder engines. Ten built-in safety protections guard against high and low temperatures, low battery, reverse polarity of the battery cables, short circuits and more.

An air compressor is built-in, and it comes a hose and a variety of adapters to inflate car tires and others. There are inflation mode settings on the LED display for car, motorcycle and bicycle tires, as well as balls, each with a preset default pressure level. Plus and minus buttons let you

set the air pressures manually.

The included LED flashlight has three modes: flashlight, SOS and strobe.

Powering the V8 Pro Air is a 2,000A peak lithium battery with a high-capacity 16,000mAh (59.2Wh) battery pack for everyday use and emergency preparedness. Dual 18W USB-A outputs allow you to charge

The Veratek Multifunction Jump Starter package

phones, tablets, and other devices. It is designed to hold a charge for up to 6–12 months between uses. Recharge it with the included charging cable.

The included ballistic nylon carrying case, complete with a handle, easily and conveniently stores everything.

<https://reelcharge.com/products/vehicle-jump-starter-air-compressor-v8-engines-copy>.

ReelCharge Solid-State battery cells power banks

Power banks are widely available from a multitude of companies, so for companies to stand out from the rest requires that their power banks offer more. These ReelCharge power banks have advanced solid-state battery technology, to provide thermal stability and a reduced risk of overheating, swelling, fire or thermal runaway.

They provide two charging outputs: up to 15W wireless charging plus 20W USB-C output.

They are ruggedly designed for

everyday use with a precision aluminum housing, in a trim, slim, compact package.

The 5000mAh power bank features a premium tempered glass surface, offering enhanced scratch resistance, and is available in gray and an attractive shade of orange. Four colored LEDs indicate the state-of-charge.

The 10,000mAh power bank foregoes the tempered glass surface, while replacing the LED state-of-charge indicators with an LED display. While its depth is

greater than the 5000mAh power bank, it is noticeably slimmer than an older tech 10,000mAh power bank that I have from another manufacturer.

www.reelcharge.com.

I do not recommend storing electronics or items that could easily melt in the interior of a closed vehicle, as it can quickly get extremely hot inside.

<https://reelcharge.com/collections/solid-state-power-bank>. Additional models, offering up to 27,000mAh are also available. Visit <https://reelcharge.com/collections/reelcharge-power-banks>.

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The Meat & Potatoes of Life



by
Lisa
Smith
Molinari

“Old folks get scared when somebody dies, so at Brookdale Senior Living, we hold brief memorials to honor our residents who’ve passed on. Okay if Chaplain Steve rings you for information about Mr. Durwood?” a friendly lady asked me in a thick southern accent.

“Of course,” I said, apprehensive about what Brookdale residents thought of my cantankerous, opinionated father who’d passed away unexpectedly. After a sudden health decline left him unable to live independently, I’d helped Dad sell his house and move into an apartment at Brookdale back in March.

When I called him during the few months he’d lived at the honest facility that served homemade fried chicken on Tuesdays, held Friday happy hours, and Wednesday men’s lunches with police and firemen, you would’ve thought I’d abandoned him in a Turkish prison.

“This place is horrible!” he’d bellow during our conversations. And, “They never change my sheets!” or, “You’ve gotta get me outta here!” and, “The food is terrible!” and during one call at the end, “You put me in two rooms to die!”

I’d heard about elderly parents laying guilt trips on relatives designated to help them, and told myself that Dad was simply depressed and taking it out on me.

The glimmer of good in us all

After all, we’d had a complicated relationship ever since he left my mother for a younger woman when I was thirty years old. I was devastated and shed many tears over what I saw as our shattered family foundation.

As the decades passed, my brother and I, and our respective families, experienced a few ups and many downs with Dad. By the time he passed, his anger and negativity had alienated many of his family members.

After some phone tag, Chaplain Steve called. He asked questions about Dad’s past, his work and hobbies, what made him proud, and how he’d like to be remembered. Memorial services are meant to recognize good things about the dead. So, I scaled the blockade of anxiety-inducing thoughts of my father, and stepped into long-forgotten positive memories of Dad.

“What three words would you use to describe Mr. Durwood,” Chaplain Steve inquired at the end of our call.

After delicate thought, I answered, “Larger than life.”

Two days later, the memorial service was held at Brookdale in a common room where weekly movies and chair aerobics took place. I’d flown in to clean out my father’s apartment, so I attended the service with my aunt and cousin.

We sat in the back and watched a dozen or so elderly women file in, each with a wheelchair or walker. “Miss Phylis, sit right there,” a staff woman directed, making room for more that were headed down the hallway.

“Standing room only,” my cousin whispered with a grin.

“Yeah,” I giggled, “only, nobody can stand.”

“We’re here today to honor William Durwood Smith, Jr.,” Chaplain Steve began next to a portrait of Dad from his younger days.

Suddenly, a large old man sitting in the open double doorway yelled toward noises coming from down the hall, “Hey! Close your door! There’s a memorial service going on in here!” During a Psalm reading, the old man interrupted again, “Close your door!” When the racket continued, the man suddenly jumped to his feet and blasted angrily, “GOD _____! I said CLOSE THAT DOOR!”

“SECURITY!” shouted a staff member, quickly restraining the furious old man. The elderly ladies appeared scared and confused.

Eventually, Chaplain Steve restored order and relayed the good things I’d told him about Dad — his youth at Fork Union Military Academy, his football scholarship to college, his business career, Dad’s many golf, hunting and poker buddies. His loud, brash, irreverent personality. The family he loved (despite not always showing it.) Listening to Chaplain Steve recount Dad’s positive accomplishments and attributes felt like the closure I didn’t know I needed.

A tiny old Italian woman called me over as I was leaving.

“If I was 50 years younger,” she smiled mischievously and winked, pointing to the portrait of my father as a young man, “I’d have made a move on him.”

As I walked back down the hall to Dad’s empty apartment, I chuckled and mumbled to myself, “Dad would’ve thought his service was perfect.”



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Active duty military, Museum Member, Children under 12: Free
Veterans/Seniors: \$4 • Adults: \$5 • Student ID: \$2
2115 Park Blvd, San Diego (Balboa Park) • (619) 239-2300
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MCRD Command Museum & Historical Society. Museum focusing on Marine Corps history from the 19th century to today is also a research library. <https://www.mcrdmuseum.org/>
Free admission • The Pass and ID Center may issue day passes to visitors who wish to visit the museum and do not possess military ID-call (619) 524-4200 for information on base access.
1600 Hochmuth Ave, San Diego, 92140 • (619) 524-4426.
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USS Midway Museum. The USS Midway Museum is a maritime museum located in downtown San Diego at Navy Pier. The museum consists of the aircraft carrier Midway. The ship houses an extensive collection of aircraft, many of which were built in So Cal. FREE for children 3 & under and Active Duty military including reservists (w/valid ID). Adult \$39 (ages 13+). Youth \$26 (ages 4-12). Veterans (w/ID) \$26*Must show ID at entrance. Open daily 10-5, last admission 4pm. <https://www.midway.org/>

The Ranch House Complex at Camp Pendleton. Listed as the Santa Margarita Ranch House Nat'l Historic Site and as a California State Historical Landmark. Docent-led tours are available by appointment; masks required. Please email your request to: MCB CAMPEN_history@usmc.mil or phone (760) 725-5758
The Camp Pendleton Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization in support of the base's History and Museum's programs. Go to: www.camppendletonhistoricalsociety.org/ for information. Hours: Open Mondays 10am-2pm

Marine Corps Mechanized Museum Camp Pendleton. Managed under the auspices of Camp Pendleton's Museum Division Office, the collection of over 50 vehicles ranges from World War I to the first Gulf War. It includes Patton tanks, armored wheeled and tracked vehicles, trucks, jeeps and amphibious vehicles. When coming aboard Camp Pendleton, please ensure that you have a valid photo ID for every vehicle occupant along with current registration and proof of insurance. <https://www.themech.org/> 24194 Vandegrift Blvd, Oceanside, CA 92058. (760) 725-5758. Mon-Thur 8am-4pm, Fri 8am-1pm, Closed Saturday & Sunday

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