

SEA STORY PROJECT

MARINE CORPS COUNTERINTELLIGENCE ASSOCIATION

From time to time most of us have wondered: “Beyond my immediate family, will I leave any footprint on this planet? Will anyone know I was here? That I loved, and I lived, and that I fought the good fight?”

Native American tribes routinely appointed their own memory-keepers. They memorized the tribe’s history and myths, including its great battles, and the names and actions of its heroes. On special occasions they were called upon to recite the tribe’s entire history, so none would forget.

When CI Marines from the Vietnam era expressed an interest in having their stories researched and written, they learned that all records of CI teams and personnel no longer existed. Our tribe - the Marine CI community - had no memory-keeper. Nor do today’s CI/HUMINT Marines. If today’s CI/H Marines believe their history, and in particular their own individual and team stories are being recorded, they are mistaken. No one is recording their deployments, operations, KIAs, WIAs, personal decorations, team awards, locations of HETs or even the units they supported.

Nonetheless, when it comes to bold, fascinating, intriguing (and funny) stories to tell, our tribe’s cup of stories runneth over. And it’s time we told them. We’re looking for first-person anecdotes, essays, stories – lengthy, medium and short – told, or narrated naturally, *written in the same style and vernacular as one would tell them verbally to a friend.*

This request for CI sea stories is three-fold:

- To collect our stories in the form of personal essays, memoirs and anecdotes.
- To assemble these recollections in a form that’s suitable and attractive, and make them available to our tribe members. Contributors will receive their own free copy, and a number of copies will be provided to the Schoolhouse for the enjoyment of incoming students.
- To sift the best, most representative stories from the collection, and prepare them in a bound book for sale not only to the broader Marine Corps community, but to the civilian market as well. If there is a net profit, it will go either to our own MCCIA do-good programs, and/or to other Marine-centric charities.

The project is entirely separate from the work being performed by Clay Niles, the MCCIA Historian, although input to the project will be sent to Clay (or made available to him when he requests it).

Sam Moyer and Mike Dubrule have discussed this project for several years, and with Mike’s retirement approaching the summer of 2012 the time has come to actually begin it. Mike and Sam are designated the Sea Story Subcommittee, but will of course request and need all of our support. The projected launch date is January 2012. Milestones will be developed so members can follow the progress, and more importantly, so contributors will know this isn’t just another exercise where they pour their hearts out providing stimulating, interesting, funny and sad personal essays, and never hear anything back. While the target completion date is 31 December 2014, with everyone’s support and participation they hope to complete the work before then.

On the following pages you’ll find additional information on the program, its concepts and submission notes.

PROCEDURES

Address for Submissions. For email submissions please send to mccia-seastories@mccia.org. For submissions via USPS, please mail to Sam Moyer, 315 Palmdale Drive, Oldsmar, FL 34677.

Acknowledgement. When we receive your essay, we'll drop you a note telling you we have it.

Attribution. In the final product we'll identify each submitter by name or leave it anonymous, depending on each person's wishes.

Oral Histories. From time to time a phone call or a series of phone calls may be made to clarify or expand on information in the essays.

Individual Writing Skills. In a collection of essays such as this, we believe the difference in writing styles and ability will offer readers a sense of how genuinely individual each essay is. We do anticipate that some essays may be improved with minor editing without changing the substance, impact or thrust of the story in any way.

Use of True Names. Sea stories are about people. There will be stories about successful operations; heroism or impressive actions by members of our tribe; performance in combat by teams and individuals; our more distinctive – some might say outrageous – characters and their escapades; and stories about liberty excursions in ports of call around the world.

Insofar as possible, the use of true names in our essays is encouraged. Our tribe is a small one, and our members and their families will enjoy seeing their names in print, telling of their accomplishments, the hairy situations they found themselves in, and even the occasional episodes of misbehavior.

Due to legal considerations, if we use true names in print, it means we must have signed permission from anyone whose true name is used. Toward that end we'll develop a simple document individuals can sign, we'll place them in file, and that will provide MCCIA and the eventual publisher the legal protection they must have.

Some stories – while otherwise hilarious – might reflect unfavorably on, or tend to discredit one or more of the individuals mentioned in the story. In such cases writers have the option of using pseudonyms for individuals about whom a story might not be especially favorable to his reputation. While some members may recognize the individual whose story is being told, or recognize the participants in a particular incident, the omission of true names should provide adequate legal protection.

Even when stories of individuals are entirely praiseworthy, even heroic, our first consideration must be for the individual, and whether he wants his story told using his true name. Thus, the permission letters must be obtained even when the story is flattering and effusive in its praise.

Corroboration. Funny or outrageous sea stories – again, by their very nature – often are re-told by so many individuals that by the time it's been repeated 10 or 15 times, 10 or 15 embellishments have been added. Getting back to the actual facts of a humorous story, however, may cause it to lose its value as a sea story. Even lose its humor. Furthermore, attempting to corroborate the details (names, places, dates, events) of every sea story sent in, would literally be impossible. Accordingly, attempts to corroborate will not routinely be performed.

Use of Profanity. Gratuitous profanity in telling the stories is discouraged. On the other hand, pretty much everyone knows Marines excel in profanity, perhaps especially in vulgarity. Rule of thumb: If profanity, including vulgarisms, legitimize the story, or the story would not be as funny or as realistic without it, include it. This rule of thumb acknowledges that in the heat of an

argument, the stress of combat, or the condition brought about by excessive consumption of adult beverages, a Marine's language will become exceptionally colorful. If the story would lose its punch by cleaning up the language, then..... don't clean it up. Tell the story as it happened, and use the words used by the subject(s) of the story.

Classification. Our community is comprised of men whose careers focused nearly exclusively on protecting classified information. Accordingly, we believe we need emphasize only this single admonishment: Each individual is responsible for ensuring that the essays he submits are unclassified. As additional protection, the final manuscript will be submitted to HQMC with a request for security review, as well as to any other agencies considered appropriate.

MOTIVATION

The Marine counterintelligence / human intelligence tribe is small. But it's also special, unique. While there are other intelligence sub-specialties, our tribe is the only one that operates. The others analyze, listen, interpret imagery and do all kinds of other vital intelligence chores. But we're the only operators.

In peacetime we're out there liaising with local and foreign intelligence and police officials, developing personal relationships, collecting and exchanging information, building databases.

During periods of conflict our members are out with the mud Marines, accompanying them on operations, interrogating and interviewing, spotting and recruiting human sources, and developing actionable intelligence for tactical response.

Like the Native American tribes whose memory-keepers told the history of their people, our tribe's memory-keeper will be this collection of personal, first-person essays about our birth, growth, development, achievements, and ultimate recognition by others for our accomplishments.

From the Vietnam generation alone, the stories are manifest: Rick Shamrell's experience during the attack on Marble Mountain, his experience as advisor to the Nungs when he and they operated from two armed junks, Bill Sterling as head of security at NAD, Chuck Cofty's escape and evasion for five days inside Hue City while it was occupied by the North Vietnamese Army, the Operation Homecoming debriefs of Marine POWs, the screening of Vietnamese refugees on Guam, Tom Knoll's two years at the Rose Garden in Thailand, bonding with village headmen by sharing their monkey blood whisky.....

Following Vietnam, and in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, our CI Marines fought in Desert Storm interrogating POWs and providing critical insight to commanders in that conflict, Bob McKinney and others battled warlords and their henchmen (including those who would become Al Qaida) on the streets of Mogadishu, garnering praise from generals who proclaimed the importance of "out by nine, in by five, intelligence driving operations," during the late 90s our Marine Expeditionary Unit HETs blazed a trail into the Balkans, building networks responsible for information leading to the arrest of war criminals and foreign jihadists, and most recently our CI Marines have fought for nearly 10 years alongside conventional and special operating forces in every major battle and many smaller skirmishes in places like Nasiriyah, Najaf, Fallujah, Ramadi, Baghdad, Marjeh, Garmsir, Sangin and nameless other places in between.

We have stories to tell.

If we don't tell them, who will?