

Western Military Commandery

Sovereign Order of
St. John of Jerusalem
Knights Hospitaller

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Marines' Memorial Cocktail Party A Success with Guests From Each Commandery Attending



Commander Kearney Addresses the Distinguished Knights, Dames and Guests



Marines' Memorial Event

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It was a beautiful day in San Francisco! Upon arrival to the Marines' Memorial Hotel, we were directed up to the Regimental Room where we were greeted with a room full of Knights, Dames and guests as well as a wonderful arrangement of appetizers.

The conversation was continuous and the drinks were flowing. Everyone was enjoying the chance to get to know new members and reacquaint with established members.

Congratulations to Commander Brendan Kearney for arranging such an enjoyable afternoon.

After the event, many attendees moved to the newly remodeled Leatherneck Steakhouse for

Russia awards US citizen a medal for ending WWII two weeks early!

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

Picture a 4 year old boy sitting on his mom and dad's front steps. He is just enjoying the last days of summer in the country where they lived. As he is thinking about going to his friend's house a half mile away, he hears the approach of a vehicle way down the road. Knowing that cars do not come down the road that often, he decides to stay on the stoop and see the passer-by. It was the heat of the day, so the lad was also trying to stay cool in the shade of the house.

As the car approached, the boy noticed it did not look normal. The color was not right. Coming closer, the color filtered through the bushes and trees more clearly. He now understood why it was not recognizable at first. It was an olive colored car that blended into the bushes and trees as it drove through them. The little boy stared at the car as it approached from the left and stirred up the dust around the back of the vehicle as it continued. Now in complete view, he saw a soldier in uniform driving the car and a stoic figure in the back staring out the window.

Since the post-WWII roads were not in great shape, the car continued to drive slowly past the white picket fence, the gate and more fence as he passed his house creating a Santa Cruz Maverick wave of dust. As the boy watched, he saw the car slow down and then come to a stop. It waited for a moment where it had stopped letting the dust settle and then started to slowly retreat back up the road from which it had already passed. As the car approached the gate at the front of the house, the car began to slow again and then came to a complete stop. The rear door was directly in front of the gate.

Not knowing whether to run or stay, the boy stood up to be safe. There was some rustling from inside the car when all at once, the back door of the car started to slowly open. A man started to get out of the car. As he came clear of the car door, and became more visible, the boy noticed that the man was in an Army uniform and had two stars on his left shoulder and two stars on his right shoulder with what looked like a polished helmet in his hand. The Army soldier took a few steps approaching the boy.

The boy was now uncertain of what to do. He stood in place anticipating a quick exit if danger became more apparent. Seeing the boy's apprehension, the man stopped well short of the boy and stood erect. As straight as an arrow. He slowly moved his arms to place the helmet in both hands. He continued the motion of his arms upward, placing the helmet on his head. Now he visibly took on the image of a soldier and someone very important.

Shining on the front of the helmet were another two stars. He stood there for a brief moment and as quick as an Iowa wrestler, he snapped his hand to his brow and saluted the little boy with the crispness of a West Point cadet. He stood there – standing still. Not moving. Not wavering. Knowing he was saluting the next generation and one of the reasons he fought in WWII. He cherished the moment for himself and for those soldiers who, under his command, had given all their tomorrows. This may also be his last official salute in uniform. Not knowing what to do, the small boy responded in kind bringing his small cupped hand to his forehead. Then as quick as the salute began, the soldier returned to attention and stood watching the boy.



This is the first impression, little four year old Bill Peacock had of his uncle Major General Emil F. Reinhardt. It is no wonder that he became inspired with the US military as well as with his uncle and his accomplishments.

Fast forward and retired Marine Corps Colonel Bill Peacock is in Redwood City, California exchanging email with a friend, Ted Stevens, of the Sainte Claire Club. As a part of the email exchange, Ted would forward some emails from some guy named John Tounger. After receiving one such email, Bill noticed that this John Tounger's email address was for a person identified as "gjjohn69th@XXXXXX.com". This intrigued Bill because his Uncle was the General who trained the Fighting 69th Infantry Division. General Reinhardt stood them up in 1943, led them into battle after D-Day in France, and later two of his three Regiments in the Battle of the Bulge.

After finding out that Tounger saw his first fighting with his uncle, Major General Reinhardt, Colonel Peacock started communicating via email and phone with Tounger, an Oakland resident, and found out a great deal of information about his Uncle. Even though John Tounger was a Pfc in 1945, he knew the General. Bill and John had many conversations discussing this part of WWII, the fighting and many of the events that took place.

About April of 2015, the Russian Consulate in San Francisco put out the word to US WWII military veterans that they were looking for US Soldiers who may have had dealings with the soldiers of the Soviet Red Army during the War because this was coming up on the 70th anniversary of some major WWII events.

As it turns out, one of the San Francisco Marines' Memorial members, of which Colonel Peacock is a life member, knew one of the Russian Consulate members and put him in touch with Bill. Col Peacock then contacted the Russian Federation Consul General

Sergey V. Petrov and described John Tounger, now 89, and the special mission he went on with his uncle, Major General Reinhardt.

As Tounger, a 19 year old heavy machine gunner, relates the story, four heavily armed machine gun jeeps were assigned to accompany General Reinhardt on a patrol 20 miles behind German lines to meet the Russian Red Army across the Elbe River from a city called Torgau.

On April 26th, 1945 Major General Emil F. Reinhardt shook hands with a Soviet Field Marshal and a 4 star General after rendering a snappy hand salute. This meeting was one of the most significant events of the war because the Russian



and the American armies sliced the NAZI German forces in half. Dubbed “The great link up”, this moment was is often memorialized in films and history books as a bigger event than the actual signing of Germany’s surrender. This event is celebrated every year in Moscow’s Red Square by 24 cannons firing blanks all day long.

On the return trip from the Elbe River to the US lines, Tounger’s 4 jeep patrol encountered many German soldiers who wanted to stop fighting. They surrendered to the patrol totaling over 3,000 German soldiers! Tounger and the other US Army Soldiers on the patrol lined the Germans up in 4 columns and marched them back to the US lines. As they marched, more Germans came out from hiding and join the march. They did not want to be captured by the Soviets.

In San Francisco, the Russian Federation Consulate decided to have a ceremony at the Golden Gate Presidio WWII monument with Pfc. John Tounger, in his wheel chair. Speakers included Consul General Petrov, John Tounger, a couple of decorated WWII Russian Veterans (Not from the Torgau event).



After the event, the Russian Federation Consulate requested Colonel Peacock to help them get Tounger a commemorative medal from Russia. Bill Peacock, a former Assistant Secretary of the Army, was happy to do so and started a hurry-up two week process of accumulating 70-year old records from 1945 from The Fighting 69th. With the help of Dena Tounger, John's wife, Bill also collected a handwritten letter from one other Army survivor of the Torgau event, a note which validated the presence of John Tounger



at the Torgau meeting with the Russians. The final packet of information read like a Supreme Court brief, and included honorable discharge papers as well all of his records while in the Army from 1943-1945. The package was taken by Bill to the Russian Consul General who passed the paperwork up their chain of command which we are told included the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation and quite possibly as high a President Vladimir Putin himself.

On June 10th, John Tounger, along with Bill and Nancy Peacock, and a small gathering of 200 others were invited to the Russian Consulate. Once there, they were greeted with life-size images of 19 year old WWII Army Pfc John Tounger posted all around several of the rooms. After some superb "Russian Standard Vodka", the Consul General requested John Tounger to wheel himself to the podium to be presented with the commemorative medal. John, with tears in his eyes, apologized to Dena, his wife of 64 years, and simply said, "This is the best day of my life."



It is honor for the Consulate General of the Russian Federation for the first time to present a Medal of the 70th Anniversary of the World War II Victory to

Mr. John S. Tounger

for his contribution to the victory over Nazism when he risked his life in favor of peaceful future

in the World



Two great articles published in major local newspapers about the award ceremony may be seen at the following links (which may need to be cut and pasted into your browser).

Oakland Tribune

article: http://www.insidebayarea.com/news/ci_28591009/oakland-hills-veteran-honored-by-russians

San Jose Mercury News article:

http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_28591003/oakland-hills-veteran-honored-by-russians

**Save the date: October 17, 2015 at 1500
Assemblage of Western Military Commandery
at the Chateau de JR
(42 West Oak Knoll Drive in San Anselmo, California)**

Wine Country Marines Start Fund for Slain Marines in Tennessee

As a Marine myself, the events of July 16, 2015 in the Chattanooga, Tennessee shooting where four Marines and a sailor were killed shook me to the bone. There are many other Marines that felt the same. Among them is a group that has raised and donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Semper Fi Fund. They have now started a USMC Domestic Terrorism Fund.

The Wine Country Marines is a patriotic group of Marine veterans located in Sonoma, California. Knights and Dames in the organization follow:

H E Conventual Bailiff Grand Marshal Prior
Emeritus William Eldred Peacock, GCS -
Wine Country Marines Chairman and CEO

Chevalier Robert Kenneth Leonard, KCSJ - Wine Country Marines President and COO

Chevalier H. Christian L'Orange, Wine Country Marines General Counsel

Chevalier James D. Brown, KSJ – Wine Country Marines Birthday Ball Chairman

Dame Jaime Ann Payne, DSJ – Wine Country Marines Treasurer

Saddened by the tragic murders of four Marines and sailor in Tennessee on July 16, 2015, James Brown and Jamie Payne, with the help of Garth Langley and SgtMaj Liechty, led the effort in asking for contributions to the GoFundMe account in order to assist the family members of those killed. Over \$3,500 dollars was raised so far with 100% of the funds being used to assist the families with travel and funeral related expenses. Any excess funds will be placed into a scholarship or trust fund for the surviving dependents. The Wine Country Marines strive to support their fellow brothers and sisters in arms, active-duty and veterans alike, and hope that you will help the loved ones of these fallen heroes. Semper Fidelis.

If you wish to contribute to this cause, please go to:

<http://www.gofundme.com/USMCDomTerrFund>

A special thanks to the Wine Country Marines for their special effort in this sad situation.



If you have been participating in, providing services to, or helping a military organization or veterans, please drop me a note and I will include your activity in the next Western Military Commandery Newsletter.

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