

*This year **Cooperative Living** is taking a road trip along the length of U.S. Route 1 as it crosses Virginia from the North Carolina border to Washington, D.C. In each issue, correspondent Deborah Huso will relate her experiences along the way.*



by Deborah Huso,
Contributing Writer

From the Halls of Montezuma ...

... to the Private's Mess in Quantico. Looking for living history? Engage with the locals along Route 1 near Quantico, and chances are good you'll run into a Leatherneck!



BILL SHERROD PHOTO

When I stopped in for lunch at The Globe & Laurel on Route 1 just south of Quantico on the happenstance recommendation of a local, I had no idea what I was in for. And it wasn't just because of the restaurant's intriguing décor — military and police officer memorabilia all over the walls ... and ceilings. In fact, the ceiling of the restaurant is completely pelted with police patches. And my waiter, William Stewart, was also covered up with memorabilia — dozens of police and military pins lining his lapels.

Located just south of Quantico Marine base, The Globe & Laurel restaurant is a shrine to military service persons and law enforcement officers everywhere. WWII veteran Richard T. Spooner opened the restaurant at its present location on Route 1 in 1975.



(Left) Waiter William Stewart sports dozens of police and military pins that have been given to him by Globe & Laurel patrons. (Below and far left) The ceiling of the restaurant is completely pelted with thousands of police patches donated by customers. "Every single patch is from an honest-to-God police officer who has eaten in this restaurant. We won't take them from tourists," says owner Rick Spooner.

After he'd fetched me a salad and a cup of broccoli-and-cheese soup, I motioned for him to stay and said, "Okay, I've got to know. What's up with all the pins you're wearing?" He grinned and told me they had all been given to him by restaurant patrons over the years and that he had hundreds more at home. "I can't wear them all at once," he explained, "because they get too heavy." Smiling a little wider, he added, "One day I came home from work and thought, 'Man, why am I so tired?' Then I realized it was the weight of all the pins I was wearing!"

So what's going on at this 45-year-old restaurant just south of the United States

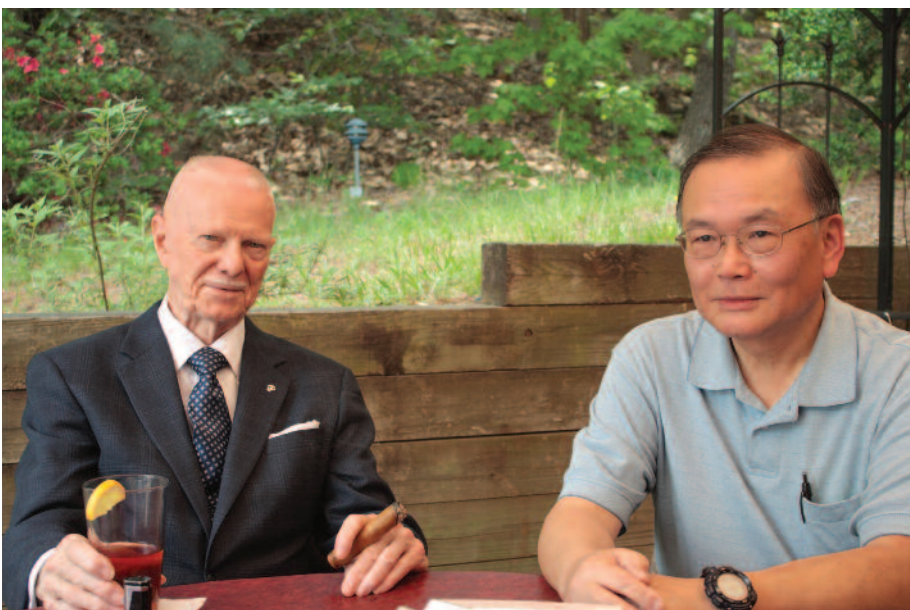


Marine Corps Base at Quantico? It's a long story. Which is probably why, after Stewart introduced me to Globe & Laurel owner Major Rick Spooner (USMC-Ret.), I was invited out to the patio behind the restau-

rant for a cigar. Spooner is a veteran of World War II, dignified and regal in his bearing, always wearing a tailored suit, looking as sharp as if he never left the Corps. And, as I was promptly corrected that day at The Globe & Laurel, no one ever does, in fact, leave the Corps. "There is no such thing as a former Marine," I was told at least half a dozen times that day.

While I declined a cigar in favor of a glass of iced tea, I soon found myself surrounded by other Marines and one Army man, Lt. Col. John Ho (Ret.). These gentlemen with service records spanning World War II through Vietnam make up what they fondly call the "Private's Mess." It's a card-carrying organization,

Globe & Laurel owner Major Rick Spooner (left) joins fellow "Private's Mess" member Lt. Col. John Ho on the patio behind the restaurant. Private's Mess members have been meeting at the restaurant for 35 years to trade war stories.



in fact. A couple of the officers pulled out their membership cards to show me. The “Mess” has its own table in the restaurant next to the bar. Its members, retired military officers, have been meeting at that table every day for 35 years to trade war stories. “You become accepted to the Private’s Mess,” Spooner explains. “It’s an informal exclusive club.”

And you don’t have to be a Marine to gain access. Ho is a case in point. “We adopted John,” Spooner remarks with a laugh as the two puff cigars. Ho served in the Army 28 years in military intelligence and says he is accustomed to hanging out with Marines. “I’ve served with all branches of the service.” Ho now volunteers as a docent at the National Museum of the Marine Corps right up the road. One member of this exclusive club is 106 years old, and the gentlemen officers tell me the president of the mess is always the junior man.

7,000 PATCHES

Spooner first opened The Globe & Laurel at another location along Route 1 in 1968. “It started as a hobby, but it turned into my occupation when I became disabled and had to retire,” he says. The restaurant is also very obviously Spooner’s way of saying “thank you” to all the men and women who serve in uniform, whether as part of the Armed Forces or as police officers. “We have 7,000 police patches on the ceiling,” Spooner says. “Every single patch is from an honest-to-God police officer who has eaten in this restaurant. We won’t take them from tourists.”

Spooner’s love of the Corps and of those who serve their country is palpable. “I served in World War II,” he says. “I wouldn’t have missed it for the world!” Today his restaurant is like a history and military-culture museum loaded with memorabilia from around the world, including Marine Corps insignia from Spain and Venezuela. “I’m not a collector at all,” Spooner remarks, “but the place seems to be.” Most of what you’ll find on the restaurant’s walls and ceiling has been given by patrons. “We don’t ask people for these things. They offer them to us,” Spooner adds.

Spooner joined the Marines when he was a teenager, and his own son is a retired Marine Corps Major, and he has three grandsons serving in the Corps.

DEBORAH HUSO PHOTO



Spooner’s family history is not unusual, at least not among the Marines who have come to call the region of Prince William County and neighboring Stafford home. Gwenn Adams, public affairs chief at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, served in the Corps for 14 years, following in the footsteps of her grandfather who served in Okinawa in World War II.

“My granddaddy was a Marine, and college was just more expensive than I thought, so I decided to do what my grandfather did and pay for college by joining the Corps,” Adams explains. Her last duty station was at Quantico, which all Marine officers pass through at least once in their careers since it is home to Officer Candidates School.

A STANDOUT MUSEUM

The National Museum of the Marine Corps is a standout among military museums. Its unique architecture is designed to mirror the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima in 1945, an event immortalized by Joe Rosenthal’s historic photograph. The museum opened in 2006, and today covers the Marine experience up through the Vietnam War. Adams says an 88,000-sq.-ft. expansion will cover more recent wars, but the museum’s immediate goal was to allow the generations that fought in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to experience the



DEBORAH HUSO PHOTO

(Top) The unique architecture of the National Museum of the Marine Corps is designed to mirror the raising of the American flag on Iwo Jima. (Inset) Realistic exhibits often elicit emotional responses from visiting Marines. (Above) Museum Public Affairs Chief Gwenn Adams served in the Corps for 14 years. She followed the path of her grandfather, a WWII USMC veteran.

museum and its relation to their own service while they still could.

If you pay a visit to the museum, make sure to sign up for a docent-led tour. All of the museum’s volunteers are veterans, and they will point out the stories behind the exhibits. For example, in the museum’s Leatherneck Gallery, you may find yourself impressed by the incredibly lifelike features of the cast-iron mannequins. But that’s

because, as Adams says, “They’re all cast from actual Marines.” Vets volunteered for casting, allowed themselves to be wrapped in plaster of Paris, and withstood 10 minutes of carrying the heavy mix while it hardened, even enduring it covering their faces.

Highly interactive, the museum gives you the chance to be yelled at by a drill sergeant, try your mettle at doing the pull-ups required by all Marine recruits, including women, and step out of a helicopter into the heat and humidity of Vietnam with the wind from the helicopter blades blowing your hair about.

“The Vietnam immersion is so realistic,” Adams says, “that some Marines have led their wives out of the helicopter and then

instinctively pushed them to the ground.” Adams says it’s also not uncommon to find a Marine standing before an exhibit in tears or sharing his or her story with a docent, something the Marine may have never told even his own family. “When they get here, they’re safe,” Adams explains. “They’re surrounded by people who understand.”

Among the 150 active docents who volunteer at the Museum of the Marine Corps is Roger McIntosh, who enlisted in 1955 when he was only 17 and served in the Corps for 21 years. Like Adams, he had intended on going to college but didn’t have the money, so he opted for the military.

“The problem is,” he says with a chuckle, “I didn’t get to college until I

got out!” McIntosh is partial to the Corps, as many Marines are, in no small part because he met his wife of 57 years while in the service. He retired from his last duty station in Yuma, Ariz., as a chief warrant officer. “My highest rank was as a captain in Vietnam,” he explains.

PLEASANTLY CHILLING MEMORY

And while you might think a Marine’s most potent memory would be of an experience on the battlefield, one of McIntosh’s involves ice cream. “When I was in Vietnam, I represented the Marine Corps at Army Headquarters in Saigon,” he says. “I normally went with a general, but this particular time was by myself.” When he landed in a helicopter at an isolated post in Lang Thien, the pilot dropped him off in what McIntosh calls “a pile of dirt with nothing anywhere.” Yet as he walked down a dusty road away from the landing area, he ran into an Army private in full combat gear, including flak jacket, eating an ice cream cone. When the young man realized he was approaching an officer, he fumbled crazily, unable to figure out how to salute without dropping his ice cream.

McIntosh laughs, “I said, ‘Soldier, forget the salute! Where the hell did you get an ice cream cone?’”

While McIntosh is a native New Yorker, when he retired from the Corps, he decided to stay in Virginia, where he worked for 20 years in public television and radio before retiring completely to Stafford County. He volunteers at the museum twice a week. “You can’t say ‘no’ to this place,” he says. “The museum itself is outstanding, and the people you meet ... they come in with their own stories, and you keep picking up what really happened in the wars.” ■

IF YOU GO...

Before you visit Quantico and surrounding areas of Prince William County, check out the **Prince William**

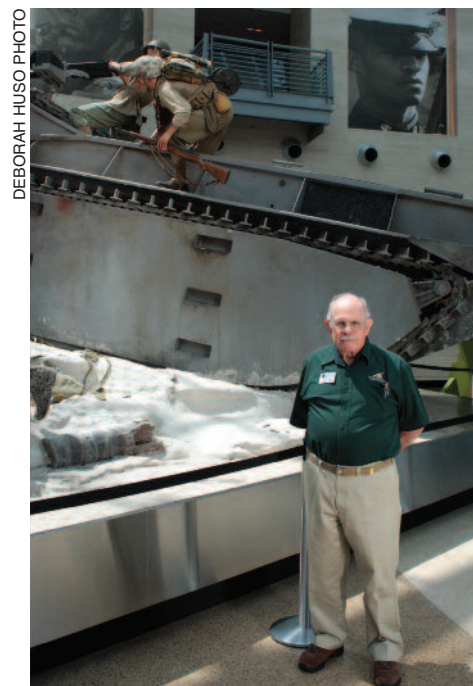
County & Manassas Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.discoverpwm.com. Absolutely do not miss a visit to the **National Museum of the Marine Corps** (18900 Jefferson Davis Highway, Triangle, www.usmcmuseum.org, 877-635-1775) and allow at least half a day to experience the museum fully. Take a break for lunch at **The Globe & Laurel Restaurant** (3987 Jefferson Davis Highway, Stafford, www.theglobeandlaurel.com, 703-221-5763), and if you’re a veteran of the military, the FBI, CIA, or any police force anywhere, consider leaving a memento when you come! ■



BILL SHERROD PHOTO



(Top) Participants in the October 2012 Honor Flight Program, an initiative created to remind veterans that their service is appreciated, visited the museum on their way back from the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. (Inset) Perhaps the most iconic artifacts in the care of the museum are the pair of original American flags raised by the Marines on Iwo Jima. To reduce exposure to harmful light, the flags are displayed on a rotating basis, with one always on display. (Left) Roger McIntosh is one of 150 volunteer docents at the museum. McIntosh served in the Corps for 21 years.



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