

MEMO FROM THE MAYOR

SUBJECT: Unsung Heroes

At a Glance:

- Historians often miss the real heroes of significant events.
- Most unsung heroes are “unsung” because they are self-effacing, simply wanting to do the right thing at the right time.
- Former US Marine Paul Feickert is one of those types.
- Recently paying \$1153.44 out of his own pocket, plus additional contributions to the Marine Mounted Color Guard, proves it.

Historians Sometimes Miss Important Things

In any endeavor involving sacrifice, unsung heroes have always participated. Apart from the fact that “winners” write the history, historians often get it wrong or produce, at the very least, an incomplete account.

One academic on the History Channel recently let out that a cache of letters discovered in 2016 written by Franklin, then in London, to a political ally (John Ross) in Pennsylvania, may result in some historians rewriting portions of their Franklin biographies.

For those forgetting what history classes taught about Franklin—apart from inventing an egregiously dangerous wood-burning stove and the lightning rod—Franklin had been sent by the Pennsylvania Assembly to England in 1764. His mission? To petition King George III, urging the monarch to make Pennsylvania a Royal Colony, thus changing its charter from Proprietary to Royal.

At the time, Pennsylvania had two main political parties: the Quakers, with whom Franklin affiliated, though not a member of the sect, and the Proprietary Party, comprised of landlords and proprietors and specially privileged as a result. While Quakers had dominated the Assembly in 1701, by mid-century, the power shifted away from them to the Proprietary Party. Franklin writes about the desire for a “happy Event to the Petition,” and the “dread of the Friends in Pensilvania falling under the domination of the Presbyterians” [sic]. Apparently, the Proprietary Party was sometimes referred to as the Presbyterian party. This is the first time historians learned Franklin had animosity against Presbyterians. Who knew?

Unsung Marines

One of the most iconic photos coming out of World War II, has to be the Marines raising the *second* flag on Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi. USMC Lt. Gen. Holland "Howlin' Mad" Smith, the V Amphibious Corps Commander who was given the assignment to take Iwo Jima, predicated the success of the entire operation on taking that "grim, smoking rock" (Mt. Suribachi). The "rock", an "extinct" volcano, still vented dangerous sulfur gases from time to time while dominating the southern tip of the island.

The Marine element taking the summit, a reinforced platoon from "Easy" Company, (Company E) of the 28th Marine Regiment, the regiment assigned to take the "rock", following a fire fight that eliminated Japanese defenders, found an abandoned waterpipe to use as a flag pole. Several Marines raised a tiny US flag—one about the size once seen in public school class rooms, 54-by-28 inches.

Not satisfied with the optics, the Regimental Commander wanted a "Fort McHenry" event. He wanted a flag that could be clearly seen by all the Marines fighting in Iwo's meat grinder on the southern end. He also wanted the original flag for regimental historical purposes. Thus, a runner took a second flag to the summit, resulting in photographer Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo that captures a 96-by-56-inch flag waving as the Marines manually drive the pole into the rocky summit.

Often, command elements comprise the first "historians" in military campaigns. After-action accounts provide the raw material for later books and treatises. But the Marine command got it wrong in naming the personnel in the second flag-raising. In a rush to get the heroes stateside to sell war bonds, command mistook a member of the first flag raisers, a Navy Corpsman, and conflated him with the second group, leaving out Marine Harold Schultz, an actually a member of the second group. Shultz opted not to correct the gross mistake, and he never spoke publicly about it. Instead, he spent the rest of his life sorting mail at night in various Los Angeles post offices.

Just before he died, Shultz mentioned to a step-daughter that he had been one of the Iwo flag raisers. She said, "Dad, you were a hero." Shultz responded with, "No, I was a Marine." Ultimately, two amateur historians got it right. They tipped off the Marine Corps, who did an intensive investigation, including close examination of Rosenthal's photo, and concluded that Harold Schulz was, indeed, in the photo, not the Navy Corpsman.

Once a Marine, always a Marine

The Gem Community has an unsung Marine hero, too. There is only one reason the Cherry Festival Parade has experienced the USMC Mounted Color Guard: former Marine and Viet Nam combat veteran, Paul Feickert. In 2012, 2021 and 2022 he filled out the paper work, took care of the local logistics, boarded and fed their horses in his pasture—four beautiful Palominos adopted from the wild—to get them here. This year, Paul also paid out of his own pocket, \$1153.44, four rooms for three nights, to house the four Marines in a local bed and breakfast during their stay. Former Marine Kirk Wille, owner of Cowboy Chop House, also fed them a great dinner on-the-house last year and this year, so Paul had some help from a fellow Marine, also commendable.

Like Harold Schultz, Paul Feickert is a self-effacing, salt-of-the-earth veteran, and a community blessing. He lives the Marine motto every day: *Semper Fidelis*. Always faithful.