

Kathryn Hammar and Rebekah Pendleton

Mr. Peters

APUSH P. 4&2

11 April 2016

### King High Remembers

Robert L. Jackson was born in May of 1955, the second oldest of seven siblings. He was born in Washington D.C. and graduated from Rockville High School in 1973. In search of a way to escape his childhood circumstances, Jackson enlisted in the United States Marine Corps two years after graduation, in 1975. Interestingly, Jackson originally wanted to enlist in the Air Force but since the recruitment officer wasn't available he was left subject to the, apparently highly effective, persuasion of the Marine Corps recruiter.

Jackson completed recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina. His first days of training were quite chaotic, and understandably so, considering the 165 recruits that had originally applied, only 62 would eventually graduate from recruit training and move forward in their careers as Marines. One interesting occurrence that Jackson experienced during the second phase of his recruit training was when he and his fellow recruits were tasked with the completion of an obstacle course, which at one juncture required them to swing on a rope across a large mud pit. Worn out from the constant physical exertion that accompanies recruit training, Jackson decided to run up to the rope, screaming, but rather than jumping off the rope on the other side, he continued holding onto it for several more swinging intervals. As humorous as this situation may have seemed, the drill instructor was not laughing. Jackson was sent to do the course three more times as punishment. The physical aspects of

recruit training ranged anywhere from running and weight training to night land navigation exercises, during which, the recruits were required to navigate various landscapes while evading all sorts of harmful traps hidden under the cover of darkness.

Initially, in the beginning of Jackson's journey as a part of the United States Marine Corps, he trained to become a combat engineer, which is basically the military label for, construction worker. After the completion of his training, in March 1977, Jackson was assigned to a construction platoon at the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) in Iwakuni, Japan. During this time, the desire for a different, more enjoyable field of work led Jackson to retake his ASVAB which, if he attained a higher score, would enable him to choose from many other career paths. In August of 1977, Jackson changed his career path to that of a journalist, as he began training on the job at the joint public affairs office of MCAS, Iwakuni. By April of 1978, his training was complete and Jackson was transferred to MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina where he served as a sports reporter and then as assistant editor. It is here that Jackson met his first and most influential mentor, Gunnery Sergeant Theresa Gallagher, who in Jackson's early stages of being a journalist, took him under her wing and used strictness to bring out his potential in journalism and in life.

In 1983, on transfer from the Recruiting Station in Oklahoma City, Jackson traveled to MCAS New River in North Carolina. This reassignment served as a promotion of sorts as Jackson went from being a marketing and public affairs representative to serving as the press/operations chief for the New River public affairs office. From North Carolina, Jackson was sent in August of '85 to be a Marine Corps representative at the Naval Support Activity, Subic Bay, in the Philippines. The purpose of this assignment was primarily to see how well the Marine

Corps and Navy could mesh with one another. To get the full effect, Jackson participated in the naval drills while simultaneously covering their exercises and operations so as to complete his public affairs objective.

After his assignment with the Navy came to a close, Jackson began his second tour as a public affairs noncommissioned officer in September of 1986. In 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, Jackson was deployed to Honduras instead of the Persian Gulf, where the combat was taking place. This is where one of his most memorable experiences as a Marine occurred. While visiting an orphanage, a young girl immediately warmed up to him and stayed by his side the entire day. By the time Jackson was ready to leave, he was having second thoughts about leaving without her. Not knowing if his wife would be alright with him adopting a daughter, and since the only form of communication was via snail mail, he sadly had to leave behind the little girl who had had a big effect on him. Such anomalous scenes of tenderness starkly contrasted with Jackson's experience just a year later in Somalia where the view could only be described with one word, death. It was the holiday season, 1992, and most of the Marines present were tasked with getting food and supplies to the Somali people, Jackson's job, however, was of a different nature. As editor, Jackson was to mediate the media circus that had centered itself around the arrival and involvement of Marines in Operation Restore Hope. Though this task was nothing out of the ordinary for someone of Jackson's expertise, it was the environment in which it occurred that etched this particular mission into the memories of all involved. As the Marines stepped down from their transport in Somalia, they were bombarded with the "smell of death" that came from the surrounding mountains of dirt covered bodies. Witnessing such a real image of the innocent people who had been slain in Somalia was not something that just anyone could handle without

some type of overwhelming emotion, but that is exactly how the Marines were trained to deal with it. Jackson's training, centered around survival, provided him with the ability to focus on the task at hand, in an emotionless state, instead of letting the emotions that such a scene could have engendered impair his performance.

In August of 1998, Jackson completed his final tour. His last assignment before retiring was as NCO in charge of the Public Affairs and Journalism Directorate at the Defense Information School, Fort Meade, Maryland. In the concluding year of Jackson's enlistment as a U.S. Marine, he was able to mentor many, fresh out of boot camp, Marines and help them through journalism school which was an opportunity that he found much enjoyment in.

From Jackson's retirement in 1999, to the present, he has worked for the Marine Corps as a civilian photojournalist. Today, Jackson lives in Victorville, California with his wife, Margarete, of 38 years. They have two daughters, Nakita and Stephanie who both went on to join the military themselves. To the present day, Jackson is still in contact with several of his Marine buddies and he occasionally attends events for his local Veteran organization, the High Desert Marines. Jackson firmly attests to the positive impact that being a Marine has had on his life and views his decision in 1975 to be one of the best choices he has ever made.