

The Marine Corps

Soon after Jimmy arrived for boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, Calif., he was sent to a week-long class with other fresh recruits who hadn't finished high school. At the end of the seven-day period, the men were tested and those who passed - like Jimmy - received a certificate.

Second Stop, Fort Riley, Kan. Next, Jimmy took an IQ test on which he scored 122. He liked to say he got lucky because it was a multiple choice exam but the Marines interpreted his high score a little differently. He received orders to attend an Army Intelligence School in Fort Riley, Kan. Since he had a 10-day "delay in route," as it was called, he went home to Beeville, got his car and drove to Fort Riley, arriving there on Easter Sunday.

Because there had been a lot of flooding on the Arkansas River, Jimmy and his group were hauled out to help with the emergency. After several days of packing sandbags on the river, Jimmy said someone finally "remembered" that these young Marines were supposed to be in a school. They willingly gave up their sandbag detail.

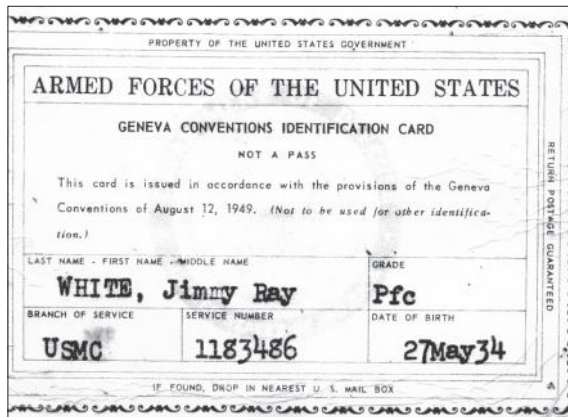
The class got down to serious business in an accelerated program in which a normal curriculum of something like 12 weeks was crammed into 10. Jimmy and his group attended classes from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. every week day and all day Saturday.

When he finished that school, Jimmy thought for certain he would be headed for a cushy job at headquarters in Korea. Instead, he got orders to report to Camp Lejeune, N.C. He had driven his car to Kansas but dropped it off in Beeville before he went to North Carolina because he had been told that he would probably be shipped out soon. His sisters drove the Ford for awhile but wrecked it before Jimmy got back from Korea. He was glad that the girls had not been hurt; that's what worried Jimmy most.

Third Stop, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Jimmy's dream of a cushy job went by the wayside for the time being when he got orders to join the Second Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion in North Carolina. This group had been formed in response to

Tarawa in World War II when landing crafts got hung up on reefs, forcing the Marines to wade onto the beach under fire.

Not long after Jimmy arrived, he reported to the submarine USS Sealion. From Morehead City,



It must have seemed a long way from Beeville to San Diego, Calif., where Jimmy went to boot camp.

About the Korean War (1950-53)

This conflict arose after the post-World War II division of Korea into North Korea and South Korea at latitude 38° N. At the end of World War II, Soviet forces accepted the surrender of Japanese forces north of that line, as U.S. forces accepted Japanese surrender south of it. Negotiations failed to reunify the two halves: the northern a Soviet client state and the southern backed by the U.S.

In 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea, U.S. President Harry Truman ordered troops to assist South Korea. The UN Security Council, minus the absent Soviet delegate, passed a resolution calling for the assistance of all UN members in halting the North Koreans. At first North Korean troops drove the South Korean and U.S. forces down to the southern tip of the Korean peninsula but a brilliant amphibious landing at Inchon, conceived by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, turned the tide in favor of the UN troops, who advanced near the border of North Korea and China.

The Chinese then entered the war and drove the UN forces back south; the front line stabilized at the 38th parallel. MacArthur insisted on voicing his objections to U.S. war aims in a public manner and was relieved of his command by Truman. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower participated in the conclusion of an armistice that accepted the front line as the de facto boundary between the two Koreas. The war resulted in the deaths of approximately two million Koreans; 600,000 Chinese; 37,000 Americans; and 3,000 Turks, Britons and other nationals in the UN forces. source: www.answers.com

N. C., the submarine traveled up the east coast of the United States, all the way to Labrador, Canada.

Onboard were 80 Marines and eight sailors, who were dubbed "the movie stars." They were members of this Navy Underwater Demolition Team 3 that did all the swimming in the movie *Frogmen*, starring Richard Widmark that had recently been released.

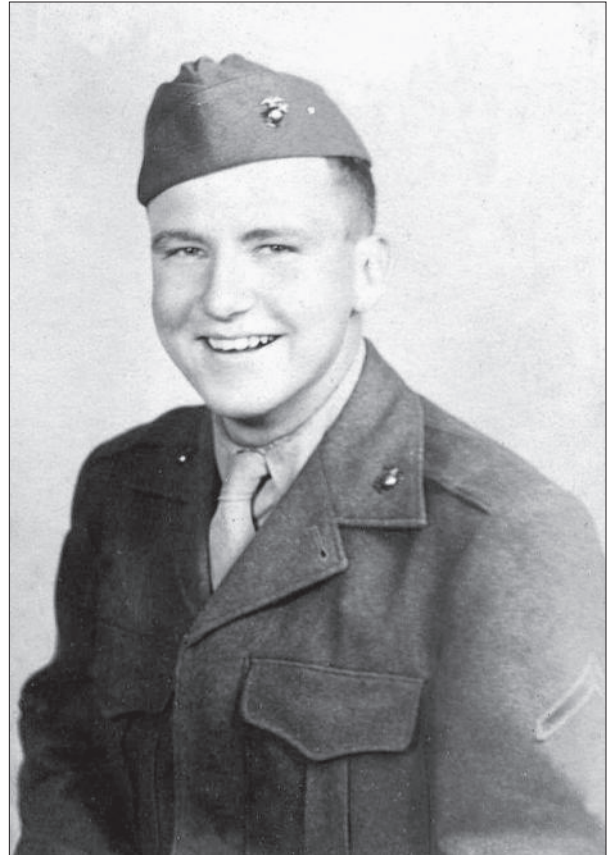
It was an interesting trip, Jimmy recalled. Setting the stage for their training was a dome-like structure built on the back of the conning tower of the submarine filled with rubber boats and other equipment. The Marines were involved in amphibious reconnaissance missions at night with radar and radios directing their activities from the water to 500 feet up on the beach. The troops got the rubber boats out and launched them, paddled out to the beach, "played around," as Jimmy described it, and then went back to the submarine before daylight. The Navy frogmen performed the underwater work, looking for obstacles, while the Marines were out on the beach. The submarine had two torpedoes on it, although there was little need for them.

Under the Sea Excursion The submarine made a number of stops to pick up supplies after leaving North Carolina. This included Virginia; the Brooklyn Navy Yards; New London, Conn; and Nova Scotia, Canada. Because there wasn't enough fresh water, the men took salt water showers.

Jimmy looked back with a smile at the mischief that he and his cohorts caused at Lovers' Lane in Virginia Beach. They "busted up a lot of dates," he said, loving every moment of it. Thoughts of romance left the minds of unsuspecting couples snuggled up in the dark of night when faces plastered with black paint popped up and peered in the car windows at them.

When the Marines weren't on the submarine or practicing jumping out of airplanes, they practiced with landing craft rafts - LCRs. Hoisting them up on their shoulders, they would walk a pretty good distance out into the surf with the boats. Then the two men up front would get in and paddle like mad to try and hold the boat, followed by "the twos" who got in, then "the threes" and finally, the passengers. The back two men were called "the fours." About half the time, Jimmy said, they swamped but he did qualify on LCRs.

After the submarine reached Labrador, it turned



Jimmy even served on a submarine before he was shipped out to Korea. It was there that he ate the best food he ever had in the service.

around and came back down the coast all the way to Puerto Rico where the Marine Corps had a large training field at Viegas.

Jimmy never forgot the meals onboard the submarine. He said it was probably the best food he ate while he was in the Marine Corps. However, since the only dining table seated 14 people, there was a race at every meal to see who could secure a place to sit down.

A group of Marines from the Second Marine Division in the Mediterranean had just returned to the United States and were making practice landings at Camp Lejeune. Jimmy and his unit played the role of the enemy in the maneuvers. They would load up, make yet another landing and repeat the same thing over again. That's how Jimmy spent his summer and fall.

When Jimmy got through with those drills, he took parachute training, also at Camp Lejeune. They made practice jumps from a tower about 34 feet tall during November and December and were



Jimmy was awarded the Purple Heart Medal for injuries received in battle during his service in the Korean War.

supposed to go to Fort Bragg, N.C. in January to actually jump out of an airplane.

But first, Christmas rolled around and Jimmy got a leave to come home to Beeville. When he returned to Camp Lejeune on December 27, he turned in his orders and they threw him another package. He was on his way to Camp Pendleton, Calif. and then on to Korea. (He never did make it to Fort Bragg to parachute out of an airplane.)

Fourth Stop – Camp Pendleton, Calif. Jimmy returned to Beeville once again before heading to Camp Pendleton where he spent four weeks. He especially remembered a week of cold weather training at Bishop, Calif. After loading up in Greyhound buses, the Marines traveled all night before they arrived at the base camp about noon on a pretty, clear January day. Jimmy told the other troops that he was from South Texas and it was colder at home in the winter there than it was on that exercise. However, once the sun started going down behind the mountains, Jimmy was among those who gladly pulled on more cold weather gear. He didn't think he had ever been as cold as he was during that training and, before it was all over, he also was mighty tired.

When the Marines got back to Camp Lejeune, they boarded the USS President Hayes, an old World War II troop carrier, to begin their slow voyage to Inchon, Korea. The ship moved at about half speed, breaking down so often that the trip took 21 days to complete.

No Desk Job for Jimmy Peace talks had been underway for two years when Jimmy arrived in Korea in late February 1953. He still was looking forward to that cushy office job but that didn't

happen.

Instead, he was sent to the First Marine Division Reconnaissance Company. Each of the regiments (first, fifth and seventh) had small reconnaissance units and the 11th Regiment was artillery. They worked for the division intelligence officer, G-2, the long-range reconnaissance patrols.

Jimmy was wounded for the first time a few weeks later on March 28, 1953 when he was hit in the back with shrapnel but his parents were not notified. Less than a month later, on April 18, he was hit again and that time, a notification was sent to his family.

It happened when Jimmy and his group were moving up a steep hill and a live enemy grenade rolled between his feet. As he turned to look back at it, it went off. Although he was the closest person to the blast, he downplayed his injuries, saying the Marines behind him took the brunt of the explosion. Tragically, at least one man died. Several others were injured including the Marine walking next to Jimmy. That Marine's heel was blown off. Although Jimmy and his group were hurt about 9 p.m., it wasn't until 7:30 the next morning that he finally was transported back to the line and a hospital. He had lost a lot of blood in that 10-hour period and had to have a transfusion.

Jimmy received the Purple Heart for the wounds he received during combat. Needless to say, this harrowing experience stayed with him for the rest of his life.

At that time, the Marine Division was situated on the very west end of the line where a major highway ran through the sector, which was recognized as a no-fire zone. Since Jimmy was in a reconnaissance company, he and his group regularly made patrols between the North Korean and South Korean line. Some were only a couple of hundred yards but others involved distances of two or three miles, depending on the territory. Both the Americans and the Chinese observed the rule that no one would carry a loaded weapon on the no-fire zone or fire on those traveling it.

Jimmy recalled that more than once when they were out at night patrol the Chinese would begin shooting mortars at him and his group. The Marines would race over to that road, unload their weapons and walk back to the mainline undisturbed. They once met a group of Chinese walking toward them but neither side fired. They both honored the no-fire zone rule.

(Right) On leave in Seoul, Korea, Jimmy and his buddies take in the sights. (Below right) Jimmy was trained and certified in the operation of landing craft rafts. Pictured is one of many drills he participated in.



A Night Patrol Out of the Ordinary Another incident that left an indelible mark on Jimmy's life was the time he and three other Marines were on patrol, walking along a dike in a rice field. A soldier carrying an old rifle was coming toward them. Assuming that he was another Marine, one of the Americans spoke to the stranger when they got close enough. Instead of answering, the man quickly loaded his bolt action rifle and shot at them from close range, blowing the Marine's left earlobe off and knocking him to the ground.

Unscathed, Jimmy lifted his Thompson submachine gun loaded with 19 rounds of ammunition and "unloaded" it from a distance of eight or nine feet at their attacker. He hit his adversary only once - in the groin. By then, the Marines were taking mortar rounds so they grabbed their prisoner and hustled off, back to the west to the no-fire zone highway. Using their radio, they summoned help and before long, both the wounded Marine and the Communist Chinese sergeant were loaded on stretchers in a jeep ambulance headed back to the hospital. Although technically they were not supposed to take their captive past the checkpoint, the driver told the guards that he had two wounded Marines in the back and they waved him on through.

The main objective of all patrols - in both North and South Korean - was to capture prisoners, Jimmy said. He always thought that had he been captured by the Chinese, he probably would have been shot because all he knew was that he was on the west side of Korea. He hoped their hostage knew more about the North Korean offensive than he did about the South Korean because otherwise, he would have been in big trouble!

Part of the camaraderie of those divisions serving in Korea was playfully insulting each other. The 25th Division, whose symbol was a bolt of lightning, was nicknamed "The Yellow Streak." The 7th Cavalry was named "The Line They Couldn't Hold and Horse They Couldn't Ride."

Because they were in the reconnaissance company and outfitted with automatic weapons, Jimmy explained that he and his group saw lots



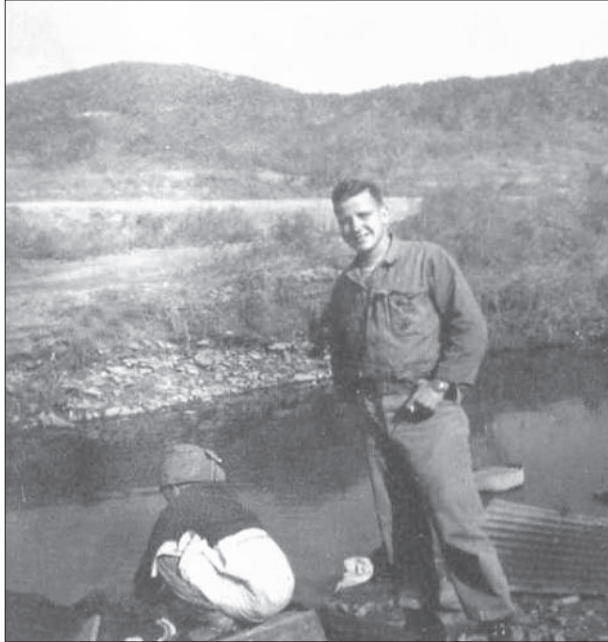
of action. For example, when hill battles were being fought, they got involved since they had more firepower than a regular company.

Placed in Reserve About May 1953, Jimmy and his group were pulled off the front line and put in reserve. Military methodology, he noted, called for "two up and one in reserve" deployment from platoons all the way up to regiments. He and his group were sent to the very furthest west outpost. It was located on the top of a hill where the army had built several bunkers, one of which was equipped with a 50-caliber machinegun.

The Yellow Sea was visible in the distance and a river, which was about 200 feet wide at low tide, ran in front of the site. He said there was added protection from a mile of marsh and mud on both sides that went underwater when the tide came in. The Marines felt very secure from their vantage point.

During his service in Korea, Jimmy and some of his pals once got a five-day pass and flew to Kyoto, the old imperial capital of Japan. He was impressed. Largely spared from World War II bombing, the city had several thousand Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, as well as elaborate palaces, gardens and architecture.

Jimmy and his friends ate like kings at a big hotel



that the government had taken over. They bought souvenirs and did lots of partying, enjoying the local beer sold in quart bottles. They also traveled to a unique hotel outside Kyoto about 15 stories tall and built up against the side of a mountain. The elevator opened to the inside for the first seven floors. However, on the eighth floor, doors opened up on both inside and outside because that level was on top of that mountain. Jimmy and his friends stayed in one of four elegant little cottages on the grounds. He remarked that it was “a damn swanky hotel for a kid from Beeville.”

When Jimmy and his cohorts went to check in to go back to Korea, they were told that because of heavy fighting, all the aircraft were tied up flying ammunition. Therefore, the Marines got another four days to enjoy Kyoto before returning to the war.

Finally, The Ceasefire Up on that hill in west Korea is where Jimmy stayed until the war ended, although technically, it never did. A ceasefire was signed but not an armistice. It’s a war that is still going on, Jimmy explained.

After the ceasefire, Jimmy had an opportunity to go to Taiwan to teach how to successfully launch landing craft rafts but there was a string attached; he had to go directly from Korea. But Jimmy was ready to come home so he passed on the chance to put his rubber raft experience to good use.

Jimmy sailed back to the United States onboard the USS General Walker, a World War II troop carrier, to Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay.



Seven or eight miles from the front line, the Marines set up a laundry (above) that Jimmy (at left) and another Marine took turns running. South Korean women washed the troops’ clothes in the river for about 25¢ a day.

He always remembered that 5,000 men in his platoon went over but only 2,800 came back. Some were killed and others were lost through attrition. He shook his head and said, “We were short a few hands.”

Once they were back on U.S. soil, the Marines spent a week in San Francisco going here and there, always standing in line, it seemed. They would sign some sort of paper or take a physical or get a shot. Although they weren’t engaged in combat and were enjoying some rest and relaxation, they all just wanted to go home. Every day when he was away from home, Jimmy kept his promise and wrote his grandmother in Beeville.

Back in the U.S.A. Jimmy finally came home on leave but all too soon had to return to California to check in. He got his orders to report to El Toro Marine Station, Santa Ana, Calif. to the Third Marine Air Wing. Finally, he was going to get an office job! He worked for the S2 Third Marine Aircraft Group 25 Intelligence Office. Even though he had already been to school for that, he was sent to an air force base in Denver for more training. Eventually though, he did get his office job and enjoyed it very much.

By then, Jimmy had been promoted to corporal. His promotion record wasn’t exactly a textbook example, however.

When he got out of boot camp, Jimmy had been a

(Top right) In June 1953, Jimmy and his group were on the front line for 38 days. He is laying down, looking back over his shoulder. (Middle) After they came off the front line, they were put in reserve at an outpost on the farthest west point of Korea, where Jimmy is smoking a cigar and (bottom) Jimmy is on the end of the front row, grinning at the camera.



private first class but got busted after an argument with a drill instructor/gunnery sergeant who was trying to show how tough he could be. Too bad he made the mistake of roughing up the boy from Beeville because Jimmy readily admitted he never liked anyone to either cuss him or hold him. Provoked, he punched his adversary, breaking his jaw. In fact, Jimmy was so mad that bystanders had to pull the two men apart because Jimmy seemed ready to break the drill instructor's neck. While their superiors low-keyed the incident, they didn't dismiss it entirely. Although the company commander cut the private first class stripe off his shirts, Jimmy never regretted using his fists. In fact, he always was proud that he couldn't have hit the drill instructor any better if he had tried.



Despite this setback, Jimmy again made private first class before he went to Korea and, while on the front lines, was promoted to corporal. After returning to California, he made sergeant in September 1954.

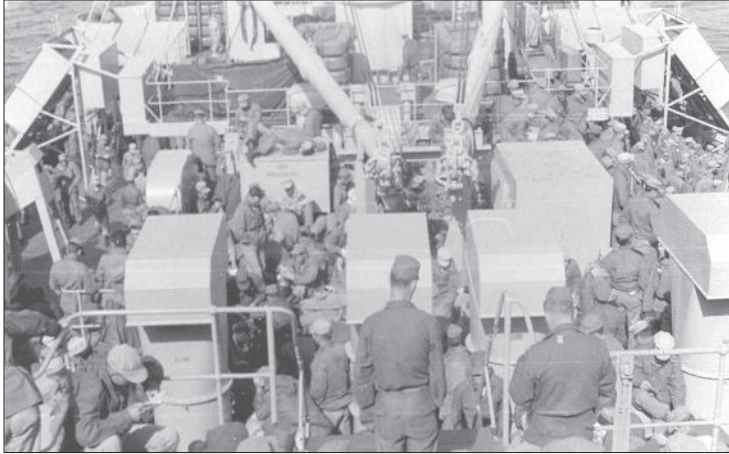
It was about that time that Jimmy and two aircraft mechanics who roomed in the same barracks became good friends. When Jimmy made sergeant, his friend, Bobby, made sergeant too and his other friend, Wallace, was promoted to staff-sergeant.



While on a three-day pass to San Francisco, they had a great time - too good a time, really. When it came time to report back to base on Monday, they agreed that they probably wouldn't even be missed. So Jimmy, Bobby and Wallace didn't return to base until Thursday.

Their commanding officer took a dim view of their decision to go AWOL and busted Bobby and Jimmy right away. To Jimmy, there was a humorous side to the story. Because the Marine Corps was big on seniority and Wallace was a staff-sergeant, he had to be busted out of Wash-

ington, D.C. It took about two weeks for the Marines to take that disciplinary action and because Wallace was more senior than either Jimmy or Bobby, and should have been more responsible, he was busted back to corporal.



(Left) Jimmy returned from Korea aboard the USS General Walker, a World War II troop carrier, which is pictured above at right. Jimmy shot the top photo of marines milling around on the deck of the ship during the trip back to the U.S.

While he was still stationed at the El Toro base, Jimmy went to see the Miss Universe Contest in Long Beach, Calif. It was another unforgettable experience for the boy from Beeville.

A Sickbay Scare In October 1954, Jimmy began experiencing chills and a high fever. At first, he was treated in the base hospital and discharged but he got sick again with the same symptoms several weeks later.

When the doctors at the El Toro dispensary couldn't identify the cause, they transferred Jimmy to a naval hospital in Corona, Calif. At first, the doctors expressed concern that he had a fever that had killed several people in Arizona and New Mexico but not so.

Jimmy had *malaria*.

He always figured that the blood transfusion he received after he was wounded for the second time in Korea was tainted.

Soon after arriving at the naval hospital, which was filled with both retired and active servicemen,

he got into a conversation with the soldier in the next bed. About that time, some hospital staff went by carrying screens that they placed around a patient in a bed at the end of the ward. Jimmy's neighbor informed him that that man was going to die. Taken aback, Jimmy asked how he knew and was told that when a patient was not expected to live, screens were placed around his bed. Sure enough, a few hours later, members of the hospital staff went past Jimmy's bed, pushing a gurney carrying a body covered with a white sheet. Obviously, the soldier in the next bed knew what he was talking about.

Jimmy was very ill with chills and fever, and was running a temperature of 106 degrees. It was time for drastic measures. Hospital personnel first tried washing Jimmy down with alcohol but they were not successful in lowering his temperature. Next, they brought a big bag to his bed, placed him inside it and packed ice all around his body. While the frigid bath lasted only a few minutes, Jimmy said it seemed much longer. The unusual measure was enough to break his fever. What totally unnerved Jimmy was that screens that were placed around his bed. He promptly informed the nurses that he wasn't going to need them that day and the staff reassured him that they were just for privacy while they iced him down. Jimmy was mighty relieved to hear that!

The Rest of the Story When it came time for Jimmy to be officially discharged on January 3, 1955, he still was in the hospital. Finally, his health improved enough for him to return to the airbase on January 14. Jimmy Ray White left the United States Marine Corps for good on January 15 or 16, 1955. He was more than ready to head home to Beeville.