

**THE
DELCO
DETACHMENT
HISTORY**



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Detachment Historian
D.E.L. January 1983

Marine Corps League

DELAWARE COUNTY DETACHMENT

PAST COMMANDANTS

1957-58
MICHAEL G. PLASKO

1966
EDWARD H. MCGRAWER

1974-75
PAUL W. PERKINS

1959-59
JAMES F. THOMAS

1960-67
THOMAS J. FENHELL

1976-76
HARRY E. MITCHELL

1950-60
JAMES F. THOMAS

1967-69
GEORGE O. ORTLIP

1976-77
HARRY MITCHELL

1960-61
RICHARD K. SWALLOW

1968-69
THOMAS J. FENHELL

1977-1978
DENNIS E. LADD

1961-62
RICHARD K. SWALLOW

1969-70
WM. S. PENNYPACKER

1978-1979
DENNIS E. LADD

1962-63
CARL B. SCHOENBAR

1970-71
WM. S. PENNYPACKER

1979-1980
JAMES P. LAGOOI

1963-64
ROBERT P. SCHATZ

1971-72
EDWARD P. DELANEY

1980-1981
HARRY E. MITCHELL

1964-65
WM. S. PENNYPACKER

1972-73
EDWARD P. DELANEY

1981-1982
HARRY E. MITCHELL

1965-66
WM. S. PENNYPACKER

1973-74
PAUL W. PERKINS

1982-1983
RAYMOND KAPRETSKI

THE DELAWARE COUNTY DETACHMENT MARINE CORPS LEAGUE HISTORY HIGHLIGHTS

The "DELCO" Detachment was founded in Council Chambers of Chester City Hall in January 1945. Fifteen Marines who served in World War I and II accepted the oath of membership. Theus MacQueen, then State Commandant for Pennsylvania, chaired the meeting wherein the new organization was named and the first officers elected. John J. Yarnell became our first Commandant. The "DELCO Detachment" was born.

The new Detachment had no permanent quarters in the beginning and met regularly in the old Hanley Fire Hall at 5th and Crosby in Chester. Later the meeting place was relocated to the 700 block of West 3rd Street in Chester. This small Marine fraternity upheld the true spirit of the Corps, socialized often, and reflected on many sea bag truths and distortions.

The early 1950's was a period of inactivity for the Detachment. Some of these old salts were in the Reserve and called to active duty during the Korean War. However, in 1957 the organization took on new life. The first permanent Detachment home in Upland was purchased for 3,250 dollars. Many of the 17 Marines present at this first meeting pledged private money to fund the down payment. The Detachment officially moved into the old Upland Boro Hall on May 30, 1957.



OUR FIRST DETACHMENT HOME

Mike Plisko was Commandant the first year in the new "C.P." The new Detachment home was the old Upland Jail and at the out-set the DELCO Detachment was unique---we had our own brig, two jail cells. A lot of building modification and fixing followed.

1957 offered another accomplishment for the League. The Marine Corps' Birthday Celebration Committee, under the chairmanship of Jim Thomas, resulted in a successful 182nd Birthday Ball at the Chester Armory with over 300 attendees. The Detachment has since made this one of their major annual social activities.

The Jail had to be renovated and in 1959 change and progress marched on. Nick Teti headed the Building Improvement Committee and with a cross section of the membership, skilled and not-so-skilled, performed an excellent remodeling job.



THE FIRST REMODELING

The Detachment grew to 30 members by 1960. New ideas and old enthusiasm sparked a variety of programs with emphasis on Marine Veterans and Detachment-sponsored community activities.

The Detachment became active in the Veterans Administration Voluntary Services (V.A.V.S.) which consists of monthly group visits to the Coatesville Veterans Hospital. This is a social activity that provides essential personal items for patients, and most importantly, a form of therapy for the patients that tends to say, "you haven't been forgotten."

Community and social activities initiated in the early 1960's and continuing include:

- Donation of Christmas baskets to needy local families.
- Annual children's Christmas Party at the Detachment Home.
- Sponsorship of youth activities; basketball, baseball, football, and the local Easter Egg Festival.

- Social activities such as New Year's Eve party, Valentine's Day, St. Patty's Day, Annual summer picnic, and quarterly dances.

One of the most significant community activities occurred during May 1969. The Detachment hosted the Fleet Marine Force Drum and Bugle Corps during their participation in the Upland Borough Centennial celebration.

1960 saw the formation of the DELCO Detachment Color Guard and Marching Unit which continues to attend many local as well as State events. In 1963, the Detachment was awarded the trophy for most outstanding Color Guard at the Pennsylvania State M.C.L. Convention. This Unit has received other awards since its inception.



OUR COLOR GUARD

On June 1, 1963, the mortgage on the old Jail was properly burned during a party at the Detachment home. In five short years the DELCO Detachment proved it was a solid Marine fraternity.



THE FIRST MORTGAGE BURNING

In September 1971 the Detachment realized its first major crisis. A devastating flood nearly covered the entire building. The League home was extensively damaged. The membership reaction was spontaneous and positive. A government flood loan was obtained and the members once again renovated the building.

By 1978 the Detachment had grown to approximately 60 members and there was a casual ground swell developing in terms of progress, expanding, or moving.

In 1980 this was labeled the Detachment's "Impossible Dream." The Wynhurst Mansion (Oak Crest) was for sale. With a fair share of both enthusiasm, skepticism and optimism a committee was established to investigate and recommend. They found the property ideally suited all Detachment needs and with a lot of work and commitment we could purchase and renovate. The membership approved one of the most ambitious undertakings in the Detachment's history.



THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

The Home Acquisition and Renovation Committee was established in early 1980 headed by Dennie Ladd. The first phase for this committee was an intense negotiation activity involving both buying and selling. Results were beyond expectation.

- The old Detachment home was sold 20% higher than the realtor's optimistic expectation. "An American Legion Post accepted the facility as a ready made home."
- The Wynhurst Mansion purchase by the Marine League required Upland City Father's approval. The Committee made a presentation to City Council and received their blessing.
- The Detachment purchased Wynhurst on June 25, 1980 at 78% of the asking price. The sale price agreed to was \$62,000 for property appraised at \$280,000 when in top shape.

The next phase of the operation concentrated on heavy restoration work as the new facility was most recently a nursing home that was dormant for three years. The Detachment membership responded. The H.A.R.C. organization consisted of six specific subcommittees each of which tended to function as subcontractors to the H.A.R.C. Work parties often numbered 25 to 30 persons. The effort through the fall and winter resulted in the following accomplishments by mid 1981.

- The top floor apartment was complete and rented.
- The electrical system was completely upgraded to modern standards.
- The heating system was completely redesigned and installed.
- The nursing home interior add-ons were completely removed.
- The outside of the building was completely refurbished including roof, gutters, windows and paint.
- The grounds (1.8 acres) were cleaned, trimmed and restored.
- The first deck was completely renovated and one of the most modern bars in the county built and "activated".

On August 5, 1980 the Detachment suffered a second major crisis, a loss to their facility. An estimated \$70,000 fire gutted the upstairs apartment and took most of the new roof.



THE FIRE

Five fire companies responded and did an excellent job minimizing the damage. Many firemen were treated for heat exhaustion. The source of the blaze was the result of a Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA) employee on the process of removing exterior paint with a torch. This was a tragic disappointment hitting the organization at exactly the wrong time. Funds were low and a lot of hard work went up in flames. Nonetheless, the rework momentum continued and member, and good non-member labor contributions grew.

On Memorial Day 1982, the Detachment home was dedicated by Commandant Hitchcock. This ceremony was the most highly attended affair of record. The press attended, the Gold Star mothers, our Marine widows, and hundreds of friends and families participated and observed the Detachment Marines raise the colors on our new flag pole. It was a most satisfying meritorious moment.



THE DEDICATION

As we begin 1983 we find the majority of the work accomplished. However, there is much to be done and work continues by a devoted group. There is evidence of a success story here:

- Today we have over 200 Marine members representing all national conflicts. A sound mixture of young and old to guarantee organizational survival.
- The Detachment members enjoy affairs on our premises for large groups.
- In 1981 our Detachment's Sr. Vice Commandant received the award for most new members in a M.C.L.
- The woman's auxiliary is back, active, and making a significant contribution.
- The Detachment continues to participate in Veteran's affairs and community activities. In fact these functions have grown--- Recently the Detachment received a V.A.V.S. award for highest participation in Veterans affairs.

There is a theme to the Delco Detachment history. People made this success story happen over many years. A blend of people with determination to work the problems of the day and the foresight to consider the future, people that worked together with a high degree of perserverance, people that came along and picked up people - MARINES.

REMEMBRANCE

Marine Corps League

DELAWARE COUNTY DETACHMENT

DECEASED MEMBERS

BRYARD K.
SWALLOW

JAMES B.
DORSET

WILLIAM S.
PENNYPACKER

MICHAEL G. PLESCO

HOWARD E.
FERRO

SAMUEL
GREEN

RALPH
FRANK

ROBERT A.
SMITH

JAMES
GILLESPIE, JR.

CHESTER A.
BENDA

FRANCES B.
FERGUSON

JAMES M.
RILEY

PAUL
LORETTA

WILLIAM
BURN

W. J. LOWER Sr.

ROBERT
SWANSON

CARL E.
SCHOENMAN

GUY C. SMITH