

FHG and the USMC - An Enduring Solidarity

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February 2022



USMC-FHG performance, August 29, 1963.

Image credit: <https://www.forthenryguardclub.ca>

The Fort Henry Guard (FHG) and the United States Marine Corps (USMC) have shared a special camaraderie since the two units first paraded together in a captivating joint ceremonial at Fort Henry in 1954. The shared mutual respect between the FHG and the USMC was exemplified in 1955 with the appointment of General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., 20th Commandant of the USMC, as the first Honorary Guard Commander of the FHG. The Fort Henry Guard is one of only a small number of civilian organizations that has paraded with the Marines at the Iwo Jima Memorial and on the Parade Deck at 8th and I Barracks in Washington, D.C. and received a drum emblazoned with the USMC emblem. The exchange of meaningful gifts represents the pride of an exclusive affiliation that cements the alliance between the two units.

Ronald L. Way, the creator of Fort Henry as a “living history museum”, formed a positive relationship between the FHG and the USMC. After Ronald Way stepped down as Director/Manager at Fort Henry, it was the forethought and dedication of Brigadier-General (Ret.) William J. Patterson, FHG 211, who continued to strengthen and build on the foundation of the long-term friendship unique to the FHG and the USMC through his personal affiliations with General Shepherd and other notable Marines. Without the commitment of Brigadier-General (Ret.) Patterson to nurture this lasting bond, the continuing relationship between the FHG and the USMC might never have occurred.

Honorary Fort Henry Guard, Colonel (Ret.) Frederic L. Tolleson, Lt. Colonel (Ret.) Richard L. (Bill) Cody and his late brother, Lt. Colonel (Ret.) Joseph F. Cody, generously supported the Fort Henry Guard Club Awards Program by donating trophies such as the Col. James B. Ord Memorial Award for best fifer and the Lt. Col. Joseph F. Cody Award for most proficient gunner. The three Marines often visited Kingston to present the awards at the annual Awards Ceremony, further demonstrating the esprit de corps between the USMC and the FHG. Colonel (Ret.) Frederic Leroy Tolleson, Honorary FHG 29, passed away on June 10, 2021 in Seattle, Washington. Colonel Tolleson cherished his friendships in the FHG and his loyalty, support and comradeship will be profoundly missed and forever remembered by his friends in the FHG.



The Lt. Col. Joseph F. Cody, USMC Award for the Most Proficient Gunner in the Fort Henry Guard (2008), presented to Justin Briginshaw, FHG 2005, by Honorary FHG 30, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Richard L. (Bill) Cody and Honorary FHG 29, Colonel (Ret.) Frederic L. Tolleson.

Photo credit: *Guardsman*, Reunion 2008, July 18-20, 2008, Kingston - FHGCC, 2008

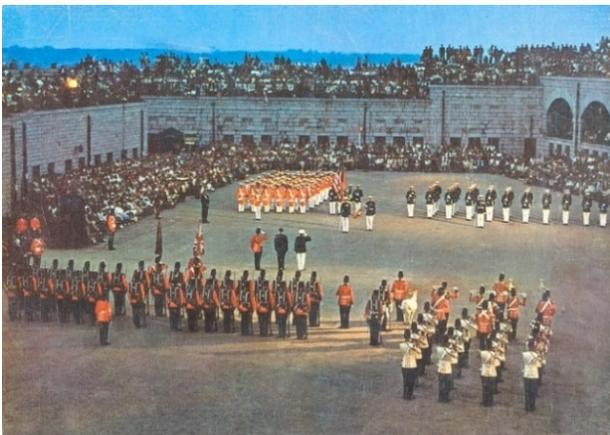
Many former FHG have experienced oft-life-changing connections with the USMC. Dr. Garry Willard, FHG 381, can attest to the strength of these ties firsthand. In order to help with the expenses of medical school in 1958, Dr. Willard joined the internationally-renowned FHG, a military re-enactment group that had participated in the 1956 Royal Tournament in London, England, and paraded in Washington, D.C. with the USMC at Quantico. The self-discipline and integrated approach to organized performance as a member of the FHG benefitted Dr. Willard when he and fellow classmate, Dr. Kenneth J. Bradley, volunteered in 1968 through the Canadian Red Cross with a Volunteer Physician Program organized in the United States to help Vietnamese civilian casualties at the height of the Vietnam War. As the first two Canadian Medical Officers to be deployed as trauma surgeons in areas with suboptimal medical conditions, they were imbedded with 1st Battalion 3rd Division of the United States Marine Corps (1/3 USMC) at the rank of Major (Acting). By coincidence, during the Second World War, then-Colonel Lemuel G. Shepherd, Jr., commanded the 9th Marines, helping to organize the 3rd Marine Division for overseas duty in the South Pacific. Dr. Willard recalled parading at Fort Henry to the Marines' Hymn, played by the FHG Fifes and Drums out of respect for General Shepherd, and he saw his later attachment to the 3rd Marine Division as a positive sign.

In Dr. Willard's recently-published book, *Into the Dragon's Jaws: A Canadian Combat Surgeon in the Vietnam War* (2021), the Foreword written by Brig.-General (Ret.) William J. Patterson, eloquently compares the attributes of discipline and performance excellence required of the FHG to the need in Wartime to be calm, collected and methodical, illustrating a common ground for both units.

What makes the improbable association of university students "portraying the lives of soldiers in 1867 during the summer months" and full-time professional Marines especially remarkable, is the link that binds two diverse lifestyles and jobs. I can attest to the respect members of the two units have for one another after participating in a performance with the USMC in 2017. Expectations run high and perfection is strived for by both groups, but nothing captures or compares to the overpowering feeling of standing at attention on the Parade Square with fellow Guard as members of the USMC burst through the limestone archway at Fort Henry.

Parading with the USMC inside the historic walls of Fort Henry, engulfed by the music of the USMC Band and the performance of the Silent Drill Platoon, is an experience second-to-none. Perhaps it is the unequivocal contrast of a small fife and drum corps trained to imitate British soldiers performing their duties in 1867 and the consummate professionals of the USMC that reinforces a mutual respect. Both are unquestionably professional groups with diverse goals that are reciprocally admired and respected. One unit is comprised of successful professional Marines who march to silent counting, while the other is amazingly disciplined and parades to the unwavering barking of commands. At the end of the day, it is humbling for the FHG to be appreciated and respected by an organization with the reputation and stature of the USMC. Both units share a similar code of excellence and it is irrelevant that the code of the FHG was written in 1867 by the British while the USMC was established in 1775 to augment naval forces in the Revolutionary War, with the recruiting headquarters organized by American Captain Samuel Nicholas in Philadelphia.

The long-term relationship that connects the FHG and the USMC is adversely affected by the current global pandemic. The FHG is enthusiastic to resume joint performances with the USMC once it is safe to do so and the Fort Henry Guard Club of Canada looks forward to supporting future U.S. Marine visits and to reinforcing the unbreakable bond between the Fort Henry Guard and the United States Marine Corps.



The Fort Henry Guard on parade at Fort Henry with the United States Marine Corps, c. 1963
Image credit: The St. Lawrence Parks Commission/Parks of the St. Lawrence