Honoring the Montford Point Marines

William Foreman (right), a Baltimore native and original "Montford Pointer," shares a moment with the keynote speaker, Commandant of the Marine Corps General James F. Amos, at the Montford Point Marine Association's 46th Annual National Convention in Atlanta on 30 July. This year marks the 69th anniversary of the opening of Montford Point, and General Amos told the group he wants the first black members of the Marines to be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. "The Marine Corps is better today because of the legacy of service of African Americans, from those who served in the Revolutionary War, to the Marines of Montford Point, to those forward deployed and engaged right now in the toughest part of Afghanistan. We honor the men of Montford Point who won acclaim on the islands of the Pacific, and those who fought so valiantly in Korea and in the jungles of Vietnam. My promise to you this evening is that your story will not be forgotten. It will take its rightful place and will be forever anchored in the rich history of our Corps." continued on page 36

Montford Point

By Sgt. Jesse Stence, Regimental Combat Team 1

EXECUTIVE ORDER 8802 signed by President Franklin Roosevelt on 25 June 1941 established the Fair Employment Practices Commission and eventually led to the integration of the armed forces. But segregation did not end immediately; Montford Point near Camp Lejeune opened in 1942 specifically to train African American Marines.

"They were challenged harder than their white counterparts who joined the Corps in the '40s," General Amos said. "They became the first legends of Montford Point. Their names included Edgar Huff, 'Hashmark' Johnson and Tony Ghadlo. For seven years, from 1942 to 1949, 20,000 young black men departed Montford Point as Marines." General Amos said he is reviewing books about Montford Point and "will add the very best of these books to the Commandant's Reading List. These books will be a must-read for young Marines of all backgrounds." The Corps also is creating a video documentary about Montford Point.

"Additionally—and this is important—we are going to anchor the rich history of Montford Point at our entry-level training facilities and through our resident and non-resident schools. Every Marine from Private to General will know the history of those men who crossed the threshold to fight not only the enemy they were soon to know overseas, but the enemy of racism and segregation in their own country."

A little-known piece of history is that 16 black men served as Continental Marines during the Revolutionary War, he said. Some of their names are lost to history, but "one of them, Isaac Walker, was recruited by none other than our first Marine recruiter, Robert Mullan, whose family ran Tom Tavern, regarded by all Marines today as the birthplace of our Corps," General Amos said.

To commemorate the 69th anniversary, the Corps "rolled out the red carpet" on 26 August at Marine Barracks Washington, DC, for those who trained and became Marines at Montford Point.