

Kalamazoo Detachment Marine Corps League #879

The Scuttlebutt Spring 2026 Issue

COFFEE & DONUTS – VA BATTLE CREEK MEDICAL CENTER

Most people stay up late on New Year's Eve and drink beer, eat food, and maybe even watch the ball drop in Times Square if they stay awake long enough. Most people also choose to stay in bed the following morning as they attempt to recover from a night full of bad choices. The Marines and Associate Members with Kalamazoo Detachment #879 choose to go against the grain every New Year's Day. We come together and hand out donuts, coffee, and juice to the veterans and staff members at the VA Battle Creek Medical Center.



BAMCIS – BEGIN THE PLANNING

The newly elected officers of Kalamazoo Detachment #879 met at Mark's Diner on January 3rd, 2026 to break bread and begin planning out the new calendar year. We encourage our Marines and Associate Members to visit our webpage and view the "Event Calendar" to learn more about all of our upcoming events! We have an exciting year planned for #879!



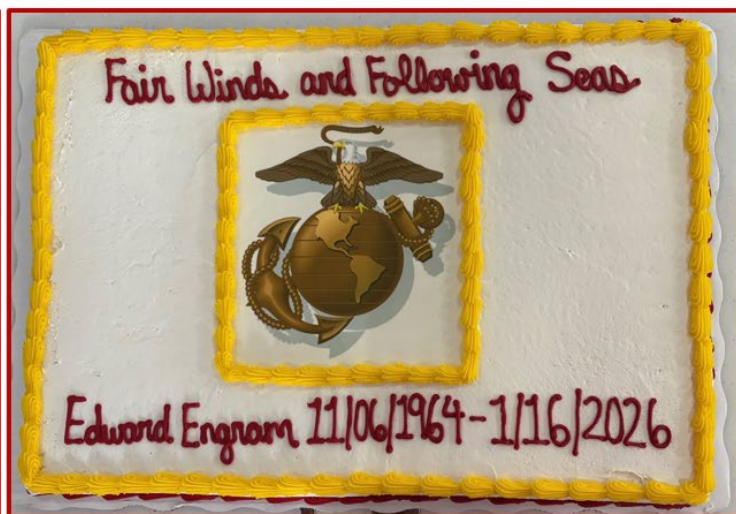
“GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN”

The Spring Newsletter would be incomplete without reflecting on the passing of one of our Marines – Edward Engram – who passed on January 16, 2026. Edward had a number of health complications over the last several years but he always found time to attend Marine Corps League functions when he was able to do so. He was incredibly proud to be a United States Marine. With a smile that would light up the room – he reminded every single one of us that we truly belong to something greater than ourselves.

Our Marines and Associate Members were asked by his daughter to carry his casket at the Fort Custer National Cemetery on February 3, 2026. Kalamazoo Detachment #879 hosted a luncheon at VFW Post #1527 after the cemetery – where Past Commandant John Hadder and Senior Vice Commandant Adan Moreno presided over a short ceremony to commemorate and celebrate the life of Edward Engram. A special thanks to Adjutant Michael Beahon for helping coordinate the luncheon. His wife and daughter truly appreciated our efforts.

Let us give pause and reflect on Edward Engram’s life and legacy – and strive to honor him and all of the other fallen Marines in Kalamazoo Detachment #879 through our continued work and outreach in the community.

Semper Fidelis, Marine. You will be missed.



EAGLE SCOUT – COURT OF HONOR

You may recall that we highlighted Addison “Addie” Smith and her Eagle Scout project in our newsletter last summer. Addie is a Life Scout and Eagle Scout from Troop 251 in Vicksburg, MI. Kalamazoo Detachment #879 sponsored her project since she sought to honor our local veterans by designing a dedicated veteran parking space at Wedel’s Nursery in Kalamazoo, MI for those that served and were wounded in combat. She was recently recognized for her efforts and celebrated for achieving the Scout’s highest rank – Eagle Scout.

Scout Coordinator Rich Walsh and Adjutant Michael Beahon attended her Court of Honor to present her with a “Eagle Scout Good Citizen Award”. Furthermore, Dean Wetzel – another Marine with Kalamazoo Detachment #879 – also attended the ceremony on behalf of Congressman Tim Walberg. Dean Wetzel serves as the Green & Gold Congressional Aide in the 5th Congressional District.

The Marine Corps League takes great pride and pleasure in recognizing Scouts like Addie who have mastered the skills to become an Eagle Scout. Addie and her peers are America’s future leaders – and its an honor and privilege to recognize her for this significant accomplishment. Scout Coordinator Rich Walsh does an absolutely phenomenal job working with troops throughout the area and ensuring that their young men and women are recognized by the Marine Corps League.



“IN EVERY CLIME AND PLACE”

Unclaimed veterans are honored with a dignified military burial at Fort Custer National Cemetery. Department Commandant Michael Fry and Past Commandant Larry Sweerin attended such a ceremony on January 28, 2026. The ceremony was for Larry Allen Collins – a Marine who was born in Escanaba, MI in 1949 and served during the Vietnam War. He passed away at Intersect Healthcare of Cedar Springs on December 20, 2025. The Department of Veterans Affairs was unable to locate his family – so our very own Larry Sweerin stepped in and stood in the place of his family. Kalamazoo Detachment #879 regularly attends these ceremonies for unclaimed veterans – rain or shine.



PALLIATIVE CARE BREAKFAST – CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

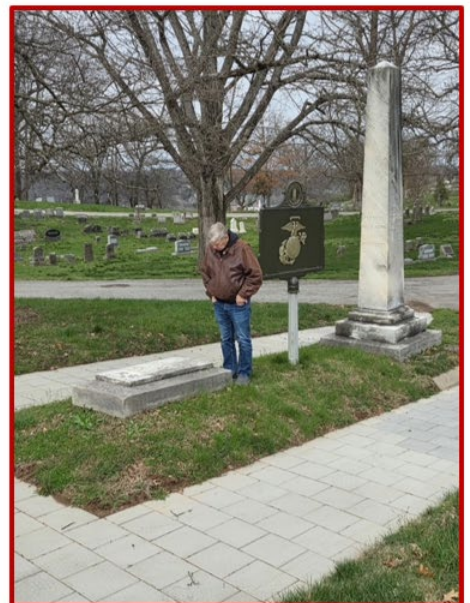
Dan Williams recently celebrated 30 years of serving the Palliative Care Breakfast at the VA Battle Creek Medical Center. Dan and a small group of volunteers regularly give their time and serve the Palliative Care Breakfast on the third and fifth Thursday of every month. The veterans residing in Buildings 83-1 and 84-1 are treated to bacon, eggs, hashbrowns, waffles, toast, coffee, orange juice, and milk.

Dan Williams and his father headed up this outreach effort thirty years ago. Dan has since taken the reins after his father's passing – and has volunteered to serve more than 475 breakfasts over the last three decades! Dan does all of the grocery shopping, coordinates the volunteers, and is responsible for communicating with the VA leadership. We are extremely thankful for Dan Williams and all of his hard work!



“TO THE SHORES OF TRIPOLI”

Past Commandant Larry Sweerin recently visited Frankfort, KY where he stumbled across the final resting place of Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon. You'll recall that O'Bannon led the attack against the Barbary Coast pirates during the Battle of Derne in 1805. He was presented with a sword for his part in attempting to restore Prince Hamet Karamanli to his throne during the First Barbary War. This sword became the model for the Mameluke sword – which was later adopted in 1825 and is part of the formal uniform for Marine Corps officers to this very day.



DEWEY AWARD – DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

The Duane E. Dewey Award is presented by the Marine Corps League to honor individuals for exceptional service. Kalamazoo Detachment #879 is responsible for awarding this honor on behalf of the Department of Michigan every year. Past Commandant John Hadder, Past Commandant Larry Sweerin, and Sergeant-At-Arms Mick Hornev attended the 69th Annual Armed Forces Appreciation Luncheon at the Battle Creek Area of Commerce on March 5th, 2026 to present the Dewey Award to this year's recipient!



MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

Detachment Commandant Michael Fry and Adjutant Michael Beahon braved the winter elements and travelled up to Mount Pleasant, MI to attend the Department of Michigan's Mid-Winter Conference. Past Commandant Larry Sweerin was also in attendance as he also serves as the Department Paymaster.



ENGINEER GAMES – ENGINEER SUPPORT COMPANY

Kalamazoo Detachment #879 recently received an invitation to attend the “Engineer Games” at the Engineer Support Company at the Reserve Center in Battle Creek, MI. The Engineer Games is a yearly challenge between Marines within the engineer community to raise unit cohesion and pay homage to the patron saint of Marine combat engineers – St. Patrick. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the relationship with the Engineer Support Company!



MARINE OF THE QUARTER

It's not uncommon to look across this detachment and find an older Marine that easily gets frustrated with technology. Maybe an e-mail finds its way to the "Spam Folder" rather than the Marine's inbox. Or maybe a PowerPoint isn't working properly. Most Marines will grow increasingly frustrated and opt to throw their computer across the room. But sometimes we're blessed to find a unicorn like Roger Hensley in our ranks. Roger thankfully knows his way around a computer and gives the younger Marines in the detachment a sliver of hope that we can still teach some of these old dogs some new tricks. In all seriousness – if Kalamazoo Detachment #879 needs tech support we know we can count on Roger Hensley to get the job done. And that's why we're excited to feature him as our "Marine of the Quarter" this spring!

Name: Roger Hensley

Years of Service: 1979 – 1986

Rank: Staff Sergeant

MOS: 5954 Air Traffic Control Communication Technician

5958 Air Traffic Control Communication Repairman

5711 Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Warfare Specialist



1. Where did you go for recruit training / officer training? Describe your initial MOS training pipeline for the readers.

I completed recruit training at MCRD San Diego, CA / Camp Pendleton, CA (Third Battalion, Platoon 3022)

When I signed up for the Marine Corps; my contract was for the Aviation field of training. After recruit training I was sent to Marine Aviation Training Support Group 90 (MATSG-90), Naval Air Technical Training Center (NATTC), Naval Air Station (NAS) Memphis; Millington, Tennessee, where I trained to be a Mobile Air Traffic Control Communication Electronics Repairman / Technician.

Upon completion of the Basic Electronics training; I was meritoriously promoted to PFC; then finished 2nd in my Air Traffic Control Communication Repairman class, and got my choice of duty stations. I picked the East Coast and was sent to Marine Air Traffic Control Squadron (MATCS) 28, located at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) New River; Jacksonville, NC (Part of the Camp Lejeune Complex).

While at MATCS 28, I was soon promoted to LCPL and then was VOLUNTOLD I would be the Squadron's Nuclear - Biological - Chemical (N-B-C) Warfare Specialist, on top of my duties as an Electronics Repairman. I was sent to Camp Geiger, Jacksonville, NC for N-B-C training.

A few years later, I was selected to work on a research and development (R & D) project for a new advanced computer controlled, air traffic control system being developed by the United States Marine Corps, and Sperry Corporation at Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River, MD.

After getting acquainted with the R & D project parameters, and my specific responsibilities in developing the new equipment; I was sent back to NATTC, NAS Memphis; Millington, Tennessee for advanced Air Traffic Control Technician Training.

Since Sperry Corporation was the prime contractor for this R & D project; after completing the communication technician training at NATTC, NAS Memphis; Tennessee, I was then sent to Sperry Corporation's, UNIVAC Computer Engineering and Training Center, in Minneapolis / St. Paul, Minnesota for intensive computer / computer-controlled systems training.

Once we completed the development of the new Air Traffic Control System at NAS Patuxent River, MD; my job changed to developing test plans, testing the equipment in an operational environment, and training the Marine Corps Instructors who were going to teach Marine Air Traffic Control Electronic Technicians, and Marine Air Traffic Controllers how to operate and maintain the newly developed equipment.



Pvt Hensley Qualifying Rifle Expert during recruit training, Camp Pendleton, CA.



LCpl Hensley on portable airfield, next to a USMC AV8A Harrier, at Trondheim; Trange Fjord, Norway

2. Where were you stationed throughout your military service? Did you have a favorite duty station?

- MCRD San Diego, CA / Camp Pendleton, CA
- MATSG-90, NATTC, NAS Memphis; Millington, TN
- MATCS-28, MCAS New River; Jacksonville, NC / Camp Lejeune / Camp Geiger; Jacksonville, NC
- USS IWO Jima (LPH-2) / Trondheim, (Trange Fjord) Norway
- MATCS-18, MCAS Futenma; Okinawa, Japan
- MCB Quantico, VA / MATCS-28 Detachment C MCAF Quantico, VA
- NAS Patuxent River; Lexington Park, MD / Naval Electronics System Engineering Activity (NESEA); St. Inigoes, MD
- Sperry Corporation, UNIVAC Engineering & Training Center; Minneapolis / St. Paul, MN

My favorite duty station was NAS Patuxent River, MD / NESEA; St, Inigoes, MD. I loved the Sea Food, Climate, Ocean, the People, and my Job. I met my wife at NAS Patuxent River, MD; and she blessed me with a wonderful son. Now I have a wonderful daughter in law, and three awesome Grandchildren.

3. What was your most memorable experience from your time in the Marine Corps?

While stationed at MATCS-28, MCAS New River; Jacksonville, NC I participated in combat exercises on the USS Iwo Jima (LPH-2), and in Trondheim, Norway. Upon my return to MATCS-28, I received a Meritorious promotion to Corporal, and then shortly thereafter I received orders to MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii for a three-year tour. Receiving orders to Hawaii didn't sit well with me. I was a young, single, unattached Marine; yet going to Hawaii for three years didn't feel right; and I didn't know why.

Fortunately; I learned that another Marine Corporal in my squadron with the same MOS as me, had received orders to Okinawa, Japan for one year; so, I asked him if he would be interested in swapping orders. He excitedly agreed, and Headquarters Marine Corps agreed with the change. My orders changed, and I went to MCAS Futenma; Okinawa, Japan for a one-year tour of duty.

Upon my arrival at MATCS-18, MCAS Futenma; Okinawa, Japan; I learned I was the senior enlisted Marine in the Communication section of the Squadron. Consequently, I became the Squadron's Communications Chief.

Many good things happened while I was in Okinawa; but, also a lot of significant issues and obstacles had to be worked through. I worked with excellent Marines; and we were able to adapt and overcome those issues.

I was promoted to Sergeant and before returning state side, the Master Sergeant I worked for asked me if I would be interested in working on the MATCALs (Marine Air Traffic Control and Landing System), research and development (R&D) project. I knew of the project, but not a lot about it: I accepted the assignment.

One week later I had new orders; reported to Marine Corps Air Facility (MCAF) / Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico, VA; went through a background check for an updated security clearance, and did all the activities Marines have to do periodically. Then I was sent to NAS Patuxent River, MD where my whole life changed.

Joining the Marine Corps, and NOT going to Hawaii were the most memorable experiences, and most pivotal career changes I had. What I learned while in the Marine Corps is priceless. The knowledge, skills, and abilities I acquired through the Marine Corps; especially through the MATCALs R&D project I was assigned to; have helped in my successes in every endeavor I have had since then.



Major C. L. Lott presenting Meritorious Mast to Cpl Hensley at MATCS-18, Okinawa, Japan



Colonel L. Delmore III swearing in Sgt Hensley during re-enlistment ceremony at Marine Base Quantico, VA

4. Why did you join the Marine Corps?

I was a motorhead in High School, and I wanted to be a professional Stock Car Driver. I took skilled trades classes like Small Engine Repair, Auto Mechanics, Welding, and Machine Tool Technology. I raced Stock Cars at the local tracks, and won my very first race. Then won more races after I graduated High School.

After graduating high school, I worked as a Die Setter at W. L. Molding (Parts Manufacturer) in Portage. Later: I went to work at Checker Motors in Kalamazoo building Checker cars and frames for General Motors. But as time quickly went by, I realized that I would not be discovered as a race car driver for a NASCAR team. I did very well working in the factories; but I didn't like factory work; so, I looked into a complete career change.

Several relatives served in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, and after talking to them; I talked to the recruiters of all the services. The Marine Recruiters were the most squared away of all the recruiters I talked to. They also seemed to be the most honest about the military; especially about what to expect if I joined the Marine Corps. Integrity matters: So, I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps for 4 years.



Sgt Roger Hensley at NAS Patuxent River, MD



Sgt Roger Hensley and his wife

5. Why did you join the Marine Corps League?

Getting out of the Marine Corps was the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I was a Staff Sergeant, I loved what I did, and according to my MOS Monitor; I was on the fast track to becoming an LDO (Limited Duty Officer). However; my father was very ill with heart problems, and my next assignment was not going to allow me time to go home to visit my parents. I was torn between a career in the Corps, and risk not seeing my father before he passed away; or I could get out of the Marine Corps and spend time with my dad as best as I could.

At the end of my second enlistment; I got out of the Marine Corps and moved back to Kalamazoo.

My dad died a couple of years after I got out of the Marine Corps. However; before he passed, he helped my racing career come to fruition. My dad got to be part of me and my crew set Track Qualifying Records, and win two Stock Car Racing Championships; one Championship at Kalamazoo Speedway, and one Championship at Galesburg Speedway in the same year. My dad video recorded me as I raced. In those videos I hear my dad's voice; which I will always cherish, and be able to pass down to my son and my grandchildren.

Although racing helped fill some of the void I had when I left the Marine Corps; it still wasn't enough. I needed to feel I was doing something more than doing for just myself. So, I began using my race car in parades and car shows as a way to do outreach to people; and talk about military service and my time in the Marine Corps.

I met a former Sailor, T. W. Lane, at a car show and he talked to me about the Marine Corps League. He talked about the way the Marine Corps League helped Veterans, and the camaraderie of the members. So, I went to a few meetings; liked the people, liked the mission of the Marine Corps League, and I joined.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kalamazoo Detachment #879 has several events on the calendar in the coming months. Please mark your calendars accordingly. Please reach out with any questions. Thank you!

EVENT	DATE	POINT OF CONTACT
DETACHMENT MEETING	THURSDAY – APR 9	MICHAEL FRY
PALLIATIVE CARE BREAKFAST	THURSDAY – APR 16	DAN WILLIAMS
RIFLE SHOOT	SATURDAY – APR 18	JOHN HADDER
PISTOL SHOOT	SUNDAY – APR 19	JOHN HADDER
LUNCHEON – RESERVE UNIT	SUNDAY – APR 19	MICHAEL FRY
BIRTHDAY BALL PLANNING COMMITTEE	THURSDAY – MAY 14	RICH WALSH
DETACHMENT MEETING	THURSDAY – MAY 14	MICHAEL FRY
RIVERVIEW CEMETERY – FLAGS	SATURDAY – MAY 16	MICK HORNEV
MEMORIAL DAY PARADE – KALAMAZOO	MONDAY – MAY 25	LARRY SWEERIN
MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY	MONDAY – MAY 25	DON JARZAMBEK