

THE STRAIGHT SCOOP

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Marine Corps League, McLemore Detachment #324
Founded 1922, Houston, Texas



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Notable Passing's

General Robert H. Barrow – 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps, on October 30, 2008. A highly decorated veteran of three wars, General Barrow's personal decorations include the Navy Cross, Army Distinguished Service Cross, Defense Distinguished Service Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, three Legions' of Merit, Bronze Star with Combat "V" and Gold Star in lieu of second award, and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Col. John W. Ripley – A highly decorated colonel who single-handedly blunted a major North Vietnamese offensive, on October 28, 2008. Col. Ripley, who was a captain at the time, blew up the southern end of the Dong Ha bridge over Cua Viet River on Easter Sunday, April 2, 1972. On the north side of the bridge were some 20,000 North Vietnamese troops and 200 tanks, which were poised to sweep into the lightly defended Quang Tri Province. His personal decorations include Navy Cross, Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart.

Ted Briggs – last surviving crewman of the destruction of the *HMS Hood*, on October 4, 2008. The *Hood*, along with the *HMS Prince of Wales*, engaged the *Bismarck* and heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, on May 24, 1941. The *Hood* was struck by one or more shells from the fifth salvo from the *Bismarck* – this strike produced a massive explosion (the prevalent theory was a hit to the aft magazine), which destroyed the ship. The *Hood* sank in approximately 3 minutes – only three men of the 1,418 crew survived. The *Bismarck* was sunk by a British task force on May 27, 1941. The *Prince of Wales* was sunk, along with the *HMS Repulse*, by Japanese aircraft on December 10, 1941. The *Prinz Eugen* survived the World War II and was sunk during Operation Crossroads atomic bomb tests on December 22, 1946, at Kwajalein Atoll.



Minutes of Meeting

14 October 2008

Date: 14 October 2008
Place: Old Hickory Inn (Bar-B-Q), Missouri City, TX
Time: 1900 Hours

The regular meeting of the Marine Corps League, McLemore Detachment #324, was called to order by Commandant Charles Ynman. 9 members and 4 guests present.

Officer Reports:

- **Sr. Vice Commandant** – Charles Couch – need volunteers for Rose Program for October 25th gun show – have 5 gross of roses.
- **Jr. Vice Commandant** – absent.
- **Adjutant** – minutes in last newsletter. Bob Gill motion to accept, Gayle Twyman second, all in favor, minutes approved.
- **Paymaster** – Ken Knoblock – reported balances.
- **Judge Advocate** – Al Kotrla – Bylaws amended at National – no update yet. New uniform – red NCO stripe on dress blue trousers with Dinner Jacket/Red Jacket.
- **Chaplain** – Paul & Wilma married 56 years. Have certificates for schools participating in troop support program – setting up presentations. Sgt Maj Barney Welch on downhill slide. Still collecting US flags for disposal – possible ceremony in February at Sagemont Baptist Church.
- **Color Guard** – absent.
- **Webmaster** – absent.

Old Business:

- **Marine Corps League Christmas Party** – 13 December @ Ninfa's on Gulf Freeway. \$16/ticket plus a new unwrapped toy, uniform will be Red blazers. This will be held in lieu of December meeting.
- **Detachment Shirts** – a few are left – cost is \$25/shirt.
- **VA Hospital** – 10 November, 20:00, 4th floor – red blazers is uniform of the day.
- **Marathon Flag Presentation** – 11 November, 0730 muster @ Marathon Oil. Red blazers is uniform of the day.
- **Veteran's Day parade** – 11 November – start is 1145. Red blazers is the uniform of the day. We will have a military vehicle.
- **Marine Corps Birthday Ball** – 8 November – cost is \$50/ticket. Bob Gill motion to purchase 4 tables, Larry second, all in favor. Everyone get checks to Ken ASAP.
- **Staff Meeting** – 26 – 27 March in The Woodlands.
- **Dress Blue Trousers** – cost is \$31.75 pair, blood stripe is \$2.86 – pay Ken and he will order. Jose will check on a place to get blood stripe sewed on.
- **Brownsville Trophy Presentation** – possible in April for the 8th District trophy.

New Business:

- **15 November** – NASA Bay Young Marines Charter presentation and 1st recruit graduation, New Beginning Church, Clear Lake, 1000. Jose discussed program.
- **November meeting** – Bob Gill motion to cancel, Gayle second, all in favor, motion passed.
- **9 November** – Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation Fund Raiser – Houstonian on 9 November.
- **Officer elections** – Al recommended appointing a nominating committee to prepare slate of officers for January. Discussion ensued – proposed officers are as follows:
 - **Commandant** – Charles Ynman
 - **Sr. Vice** – Roberto DeLeon
 - **Jr. Vice** – open

- **Adjutant** – Mike Mahady
- **JAG** – Al Kotrla
- **Sgt. At Arms** – Jose Rodrigez

Closing prayer; Sgt at Arms retired the colors.

Famous Last Stands – Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, 9 A.D.

The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest took place in the year 9 A.D. (probably lasting from September 9 to September 11) when an alliance of Germanic Tribes led by Arminius, the son of Segimer of the Cherusci, ambushed and destroyed three Roman legions led by Publius Quinctilius Varus.

The battle began a seven-year war which established the Rhine as the boundary of the Roman Empire for the next four hundred years, until the decline of the Roman influence in the West. The Roman Empire made no further concerted attempts to conquer Germania beyond the Rhine. The Roman force was led by Publius Quinctilius Varus, a noble from an old family, an administrative official who was assigned to establish the new province of Germany in 7 AD. Varus' opponent, Arminius also called Herman the German, had lived in Rome as a hostage in his youth, where he had received a military education and had even been given the rank of Equestrian. After his return, he was a trusted advisor to Varus. In secret, he forged an alliance of German Tribes that had traditionally been enemies, but which he was able to unite due to outrage over Varus' measures.

Varus's forces included three legions (Legio XVII, Legion XVIII, and Legion XIX), six cohorts of auxiliary troops (non-Roman allies) and three squadrons of cavalry, most of which lacked combat experience with Germanic fighters under local conditions. The Roman forces were not marching in combat formation, and were interspersed with large numbers of camp-followers. As they entered the forest (probably just northeast of Osnabrück), they found the track narrow and muddy; according to Dio Cassius, a violent storm had also arisen. He also writes that Varus neglected to send out advance reconnaissance parties.

The line of march was now stretched out perilously long — estimates are that it surpassed 15 km (9 miles), and was perhaps as long as 20 km (12 miles). It was then suddenly attacked by Germanic warriors. Arminius knew Roman tactics very well and could direct his troops to counter them effectively, using locally superior numbers against the spread-out Roman legions. The Romans managed to set up a fortified night camp, and the next morning broke out into the open country north of the Wiehen mountains, near the modern town of Osterkappeln. The break-out cost them heavy losses, as did a further attempt to escape by marching through another forested area, with the torrential rains continuing, preventing them from using their bows, and rendering them virtually defenseless, as their shields too became waterlogged.

They then undertook a night march to escape, but marched straight into another trap that Arminius had set, at the foot of Kalkries Hill (near Osnabruck). There, the sandy, open strip on which the Romans could march easily was constricted by the hill, so that there was a gap of only about 100 m between the woods and the swampland at the edge of the Great Bog. Moreover, the road was blocked by a trench, and, towards the forest, an earthen wall had been built along the roadside, permitting the Germanic tribesmen to attack the Romans from cover. The Romans made a desperate attempt to storm the wall, but failed, and the highest-ranking officer next to Varus, Numonius Vala, abandoned the troops by riding off with the cavalry; however, he too was overtaken by the Germanic cavalry and killed, according to Velleius Paterculus. The Germanic warriors then stormed the field and slaughtered the disintegrating Roman forces; Varus committed suicide.

Around 15,000–20,000 Roman soldiers must have died; not only Varus, but also many of his officers are said to have taken their own lives by falling on their swords in the approved manner. Tactius wrote that many officers were sacrificed by the Germanic forces as part of their indigenous religious ceremonies. However, others were ransomed, and the common soldiers appear to have been enslaved. All Roman accounts stress the completeness of the Roman defeat, the extremely heavy Roman casualties, and the minimal Germanic losses. That account is confirmed by the finds at Kalkriese, where, along with 6000 pieces (largely scraps) of Roman equipment, there is only one single item — part of a spur — that is clearly Germanic. The victory over the legions was followed by a clean sweep of all Roman forts, garrisons and cities — of which there were at least two — east of the Rhine; the remaining two Roman legions, commanded by Varus' nephew Lucius Nonius Asprenas, were content to try to hold that river. One fort (or possibly city), also, fended off the Germanic tribes for many weeks, perhaps a few months, before the garrison, which included survivors of the Teutoburg Forest, successfully broke out under their commander, Lucius Caeditius and reached the Rhine.

Upon hearing of the defeat, the emperor Augustus, according to the Roman historian Suetonius, showed signs of near-insanity, banging his head against the walls of his palace and repeatedly shouting *Quintili Vare, legiones redde!* ('Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!'). The three legion numbers were never used again by the Romans after this defeat, unlike other legions that were restructured — a case unique in Roman history. The battle abruptly ended the period of triumphant and exuberant Roman expansion that had followed the end of the Civil Wars 40 years earlier. Augustus' stepson Tiberius took effective control, and prepared for the continuation of the war.

Though the shock at the slaughter was enormous, the Romans immediately began a slow, systematic process of preparing for the reconquest of the country. In 14 AD, just after Augustus' death and the accession of his heir and stepson Tiberius, a massive raid was conducted by the new emperor's nephew Germanicus, followed the next year by two major campaigns with a large army estimated at 70,000 men, backed by naval forces. He was able to devastate large areas and eliminate any form of active resistance, but the majority of the Germanic tribespeople fled at the sight of the Roman army into remote forests. The raids were considered a success since the major goal of destroying any rebel alliance networks was completed. After initial successes, including the capture of Arminius' wife Thusnelda, the army visited the site of the first battle. According to Tactius, they found heaps of bleached bones and severed skulls nailed to trees, which they buried, "looking on all as kinsfolk and of their own blood". Burial pits with remains fitting this description have been found at Kalkriese Hill.

In spite of doubts on the part of his uncle, Emperor Tiberius, Germanicus managed to raise another huge army and invaded Germania again the next year, in 16 AD. He forced a crossing of the Weser near modern Minden, suffering heavy losses, and then met Arminius' army at Idistoviso, in an engagement often called the Battle of the Wester River. Germanicus's leadership and command qualities were shown in full at the battle as his superior tactics and better trained and equipped legions inflicted huge casualties on the Germanic armies with only minor losses. One final battle was fought at the Angvarian Wall, repeating the pattern of high Germanic fatalities forcing them to flee. With his main objectives reached and with winter approaching Germanicus ordered his army back to their winter camps, with the fleet occasioning some damage by a storm in the North Sea. Although only a small number of soldiers died it was still a bad ending for a brilliantly fought campaign. After a few more raids across the Rhine, which resulted in the recovery of two of the three legions' eagles lost in 9 A.D., Germanicus was recalled to Rome and informed by Tiberius that he would be given a triumph and reassigned to a different command.

The last chapter of this story is recounted by the historian Tactius. Around 50 AD, bands of Chatti invaded Roman territory in Germania Superior, possibly an area in Hesse east of the Rhine which the Romans appear to have still held, and began to plunder. The Roman commander, Lucius Pomponius, raised a force from the Vangiones and Nemetes, supported by Roman cavalry. They attacked the Chatti from both sides and defeated them, and joyfully found and liberated some of the men from Varus' legions, who had been held in slavery for 40 years.

Contact Info

Detachment Website: www.geocities.com/mcl324
Dept of Texas: www.mcltexas.org
MCL National: www.mcleague.com
Marine Corps Coordinating Council: www.houstonmccc.org

Now Hear This

Due to the number of events in November, we will not have a regular November membership meeting.

Our December meeting will be the Christmas Party on 13 December at Ninfa's on the Gulf Freeway

From the Commandant

Marines,

Again, short and sweet. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MARINES!!!** I hope to see many of you at the ball. If you are unable to attend, please join us at one of the other activities coming up in November. If nothing else, take a moment on 10 November to reflect on the 233 years of our beloved Corps. Also, please stand for a minute of silence at 11:00 on 11 November and remember the sacrifice of all of the men and women who have died to preserve our freedoms.

Semper Fi,

Charles