

TRIBUTE TO A FALLEN MARINE: Sergeant Major David R. Hatfield, Sr., USMC (Retired)

(September 5, 1947 - April 20, 2020)

Reveille was at 0500 hours on the 20th day of April 2020. The wake-up call was immediately followed by a barrage of phone calls, text messages and emails. The news began to filter down through the ranks of the Lt. Alexander Bonnyman, Detachment 924, that our beloved Sergeant Major David Hatfield was dead. A host of emotions filled the detachment **chaplain's office as he consoled** a distraught Marine, notified detachment leadership, contacted family members, and confirmed his death to several Marines that were reluctant to accept this unbelievable news.

Within hours, as word began to circulate throughout the country, the chaplain received a message from Major General Albert C. Harvey, USMC (Retired). An excerpt from that letter eulogizes this highly esteemed Marine. "Sergeant Major Hatfield was one of our finest Marines. He had a distinguished career while on active duty. He felt strongly about his obligation to train young Marines in the traditions of the **Corps and to make them capable of winning the Nation's battles.** He carried that same belief and mission into his life as a retired Marine and member of the community, particularly with his work with the Young Marine Program and with the Marine Corps League. We will miss him greatly, but we will recall with pride his service to our Country and to our Corps. Semper Fidelis."

As we near the anniversary of **David's** death, we render tribute to this fallen Marine. We honor his exemplary life and his impeccable service. He was outstanding in character and worked tirelessly for the benefit of others. Sergeant Major Hatfield's **training began at** Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California on January 28, 1966. It was there that he began his 30 years of active-duty service, followed by an additional 25 years of continued support for the Marine Corps. Among his many qualifications, he served as a drill instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina, to mold through rigorous training, legions of new Marines. He trained generations of Devil Dogs, always leading by example, and looked out for his brothers in combat. He was a mentor to countless active-duty Marines, to the youth of the Young Marine Program, to members of the Marine Corps League, and to everyone privileged to have known him. He was a **Marine's Marine, a friend**, a brother, and a father to a great many! He was our hero, and he became a legend in his own right! He was the Marine Corps League personified! Sergeant Major Hatfield received full military honors at the East Tennessee Veterans Cemetery.

We can sum up Sergeant Major David Hatfield's life with these words. Semper Fidelis, always faithful. **"God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."** One of **David's sons spoke to the chaplain** about the faith that his father had embraced and openly declared. We may have great comfort knowing that we will meet again. When our tour of duty is done here on earth and our old tents become full of holes, ragged, and worn, we will receive Divine Orders to fold them up and fall in. Taps will give way to Omnipotent Reveille and we will board the bus that is bound for our heavenly mansions. As we arrive and the door opens wide, we will see Sergeant Major Hatfield standing on the other side of those yellow footprints in full dress uniform, white gloves, and duty belt. He will not **be saying, "form up you miserable little maggots"** with his hands positioned on his hips and wearing an expression of disdain on his face. But instead, with a sweet smile on his lips, and with outstretched arms, he will embrace each of us and say; "Welcome Home Marine!" Ooh-rah!

Chaplain Ron