

# VGCA's Second Field Trip in November – the National Museum of the Marine Corps

*By Rob Becker*

On Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, members and family of the VGCA made their second field trip of the month, this one to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Virginia. It all started with 12 of us watching the film “We, the Marines” shown in the Medal of Honor Theater. Narrated by Academy Award-winning actor and Marine, Gene Hackman, the film follows the journey of Marines from boot camp to training, deployment, and finally homecoming and is well worth price (\$7 per person for a group of 10 or more – we had 12). After the movie, most of those attending posed for quick picture in the main hall (*below*) before starting our tour of the museum.



The tour was completely self-guided, and our members quickly split into two groups – those who took their time and those who REALLY took their time! I was in the latter group, and we didn't eat lunch at the museum's recreated Tun Tavern – inspired by the original Tun Tavern in Philadelphia where the Marine Corps was founded on November 10, 1775 – until almost 2 pm.

Before leaving the main

hall, a dilapidated relic (*right*) caught my eye. It was a Bofors 75mm light field howitzer originally captured by the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies in early 1942. It was then one of six such howitzers sent to Guadalcanal in late 1942 to bombard the Marines at Henderson Field, before being captured by the Marines during a counterattack. Note the battle-damage in the recoil system below the barrel. This is just one of many such stories documented in this museum.

The story of the Marine Corps is one that revolves around combat, and the museum is organized chronologically to reflect the relevant wars, battles and weapons. Exhibits and





associated dioramas reflect the actions, uniforms, and conditions experienced at the time. For example, the environment in the Korean War exhibit is cooled down to remind the museum guests of the brutal winter conditions experienced by Marines during that war.

VGCA members Marc Gorelick and Mike Hardesty (*right*) check out a Hotchkiss revolving cannon from the early 1900s. This hand-cranked brass and steel masterpiece consists of five 37mm barrels and had a rate of fire of 43 rounds per minutes.

The Viet Nam exhibit included a Marine armed with an M79 “Thumper” (*below*). The M79 was a single-shot 40mm grenade launcher That would eventually be replaced by an M203 grenade launcher mounted on an M16. Behind the Marine mannequin is an M50 “Ontos” armored vehicle. Developed in the 1950s as a light, easily deployed anti-tank vehicle, it was armed with six 106mm recoilless rifles and a .30 caliber Browning machinegun. It saw service in Viet Nam before being retired in 1969. “Ontos” means “the thing” in Greek!

This Soviet 122mm field gun (*right*) was captured on February 20, 1969 by Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines. It is the largest artillery piece captured during Viet Nam and was one of twelve captured or destroyed during Operation Dewey Canyon.



This display of U.S. M16s and Eastern Bloc AK family of small arms of the Cold War (*above*) was a “crowd pleaser.” Included was the M110 Semi-Automatic Sniper System (SASS) chambered in 7.62x51 NATO (*center top*) and the Soviet Dragunov SVD in 7.62x54R (*center bottom*).





The M198 155mm howitzer (*left*) - being checked out by members Dan Helm and Mike Hardesty - has a range of 19 miles. It was developed in 1982 to replace WWII-era artillery for the USMC. This particular example, nicknamed “Damn Yankees” by its crew of Battery F, 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines, fired the first U.S. shot of Operation Desert Storm. This occurred on Jan. 21, 1991, during the Battle of Khafji on the border between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. “Damn Yankees” was retired in 2009 and replaced by the M777.



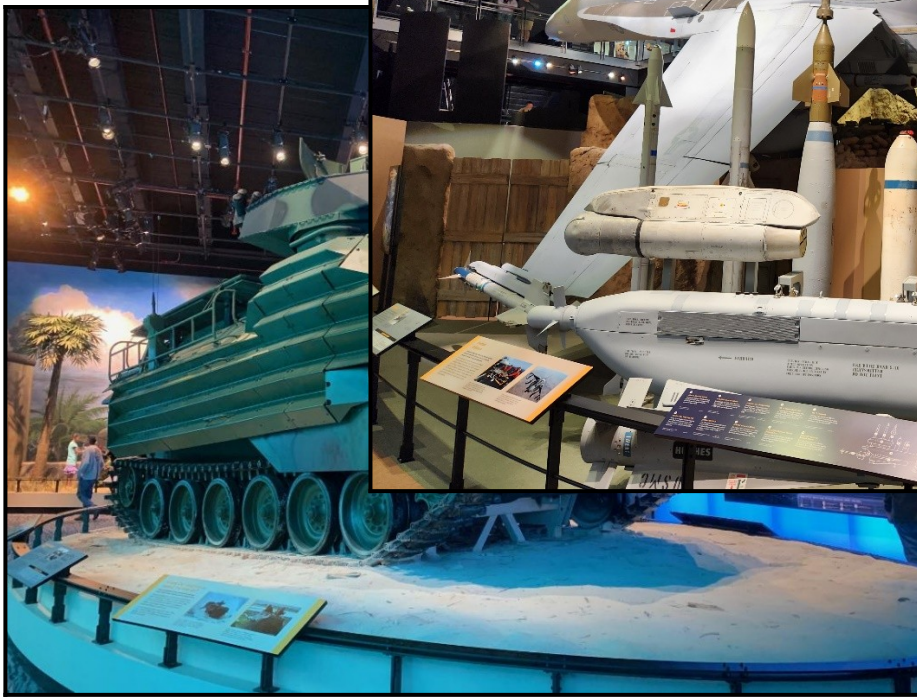
Shown here is a Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) All-Terrain Vehicle (M-ATV) (*left*). Intended to replace M1114 HMMWVs (Humvee), it was designed to provide the same levels of protection as the larger and heavier previous MRAPs, but with improved mobility to handle the poor roads and difficult terrain of Afghanistan. This M-ATV still has the battle damage from when it hit an improvised explosive device (IED) while delivering supplies in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.



A display of the weapons from the Global War on Terrorism (right) included some unusual examples. Note the British Martini-Henry rifle dating from the 1880s in the upper right.



This F/A-18 Hornet and some of its associated ordnance (at right) was an impressive sight, filling an entire room!



The Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) symbolizes the Marine Corps core mission. A

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