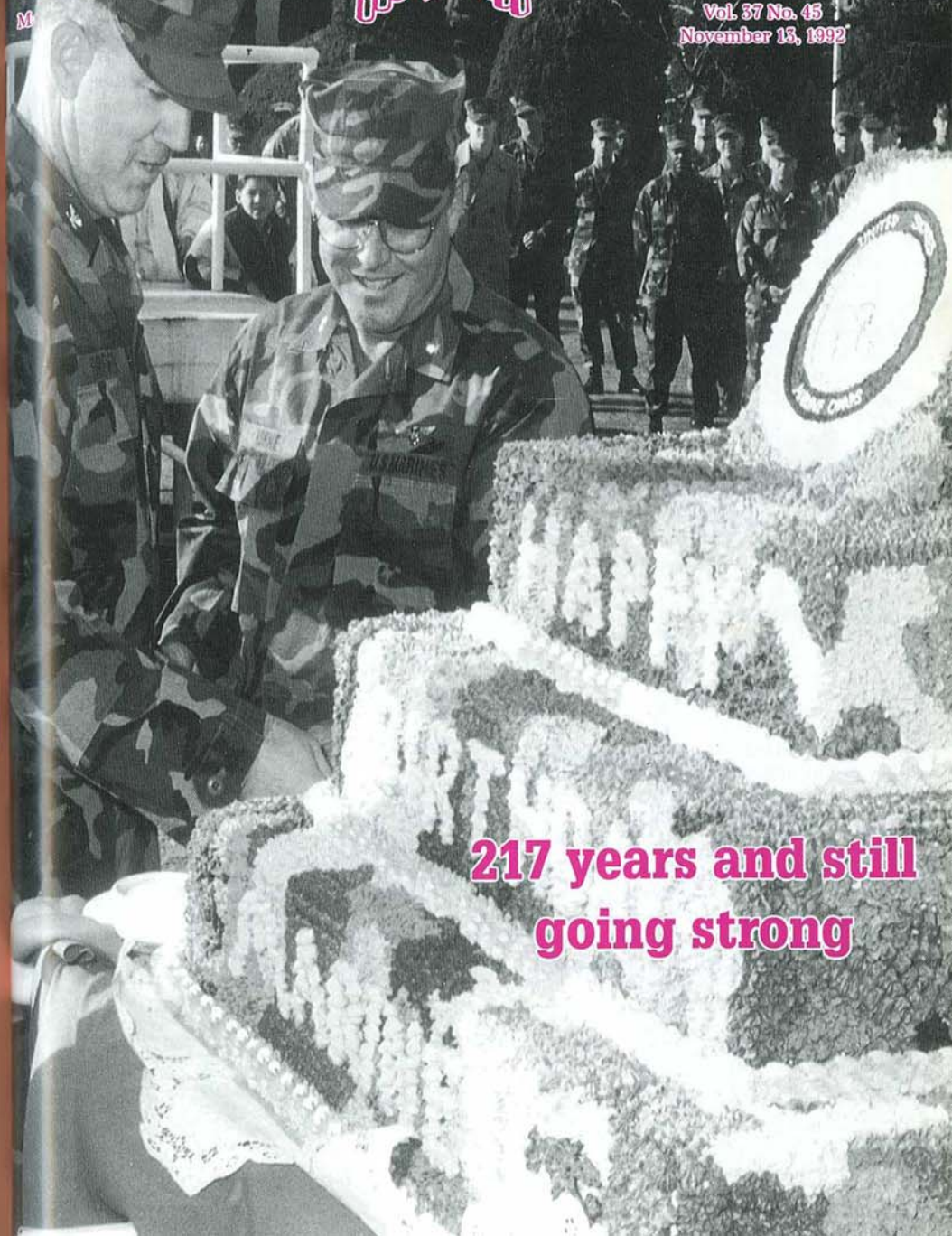


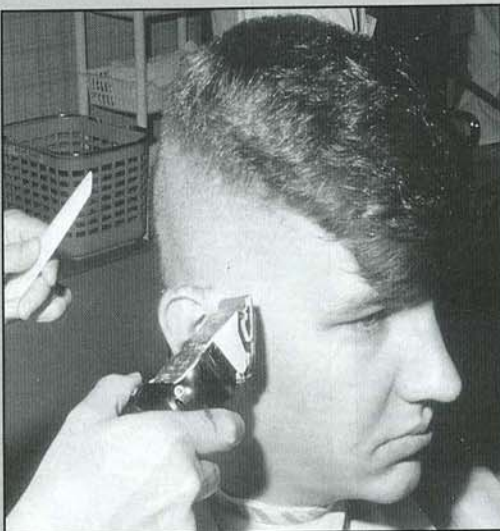
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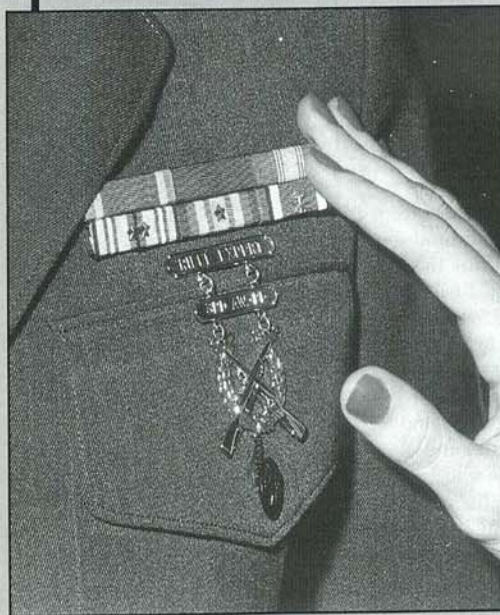
Vol. 37 No. 45
November 13, 1992



**217 years and still
going strong**



(above) LCpl. Leigh K. Weld III gets his hair cut before the Marine Corps Ball. (right) Cpl. Troy P. Louviere places a corsage on Enid Griffin's wrist while preparing for the Enlisted Ball. (below) A final adjustment to the ribbons ensures the Marine is squared away. (Photos by Cpl. Timothy D. Flack)



Preparing for the Marine Corps' 217th Birthday Party



Native Americans: Serving from the beginning...

"All of our people all over the country - except the pure-blooded Indians - are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, including those who came over here on the Mayflower."

President
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
1944

More than 16 million people making up hundreds of tribes populated our nation long before Columbus' arrival and no matter what some historians may tell us, it has been a constant struggle for these "Original/Native" Americans to exist ever since.

Society as a whole has often based its opinions of Native Americans on exaggerated historical accounts and old westerns which depicted Indian attacks on whites as massacres, while white genocide of the Indians was chalked up as victories. However, books such as "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee" and movies such as "Last of the Mohicans," "Dances With Wolves," "Son of the Morning Star," "Last of his Tribe," and "A Man Called Horse" trilogy, not only show a more accurate account of reality, but they inform today's generation like none before of reality vice hearsay.

We in the armed forces share a special tie with the Native Americans. Indians served for the Union as well as the Confederacy in the Civil War. And until 1924 the government treated the Indians as wards thereby preventing them from military service. Upon receiving citizenship more

than 8,000 Indians served in the Army and Navy during WWI, 6,000 voluntarily enlisted.

More than 25,000 Indian men and women served in the armed forces during WWII fighting on all fronts in Europe and Asia. Two Medals of Honor and more than 50 Silver Stars for Valor, 47 Bronze Stars and 34 Distinguished Flying Crosses were given during that war alone. And during the Korean Conflict one Indian earned the Medal of Honor, while none were awarded to the 41,500 Indians who served in Vietnam.

Military history does acknowledge the Navajo "Code Talkers" of WWII, especially the Marine Corps' ranks. However, it was the Choctaws who saved many an Army unit from being overrun by using their native tongue to baffle the eavesdropping Germans in WWI. And in WWII the Comanches joined the Choctaws in assisting the Army again.

Native Americans are extremely patriotic. It was the 158th Regiment, a Mexican-American and Indian unit, which was extremely combat effective, and one of the most decorated WWII units. PFC Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian, was one of the men who raised the flag on Iwo Jima.

Native Americans made up most of Co. I, 180th Infantry, 45th Infantry Div. which spent 511 days in combat during WWII. Gen George S. Patton told them; "Your fame shall

never die. Your division is one of the best, if not the best, in the history of the American Army."

In November 1990 the American government realized the American Indians' contributions and ended years of a mere day or week of recognition. The month was chosen as one which most tribes use as a time of the year for festivals. American Indian Heritage Month should serve as a wake-up process about the heritage, culture and contributions of Indians to this nation. And we in the military owe them for many of our tactics as well as their patriotism.

Compiled by
GySgt. George D. Bieber
Photo by Rudi Williams



Sam DeCory, an Oglala Sioux holyman leads a group of tribesmen to Arlington National Cemetery. DeCory served in both the Army and Marine Corps.