

SOUNDOFF! ★

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UPCOMING EVENTS ON FORT MEADE

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PHOTO BY RONA S. HIRSCH

Samuel E. Stavisky, a former *Washington Post* editor and reporter who served as a Marine combat correspondent, checks out the photo display of the late Maj. Robert B. "Mo" Morrissey in the reading room dedicated Aug. 31 to the deceased combat correspondent. The room also features Stavisky's Marine-issued manual typewriter.

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

Marine Detachment dedicates reading room to deceased combat correspondent

By Rona S. Hirsch
Staff writer

Samuel E. Stavisky was determined to tell the stories of the grunts on the line.

For nearly three years, the World War II Marine combat correspondent and former assistant city editor for *The Washington Post* lugged around a manual typewriter to chronicle the stories of Marines in the South Pacific. Fifty years later he used a similar Marine-issued typewriter for his book about their experiences.

(Ret.) Marine Maj. Norman Hatch used a different medium to document the war. A Marine combat correspondent cinema-

ographer, Hatch shot footage of the battle on the Pacific island of Tarawa that won the 1944 Academy Award for Best Short Documentary.

Both Stavisky's 8 1/2-pound typewriter and a replica of Hatch's movie camera are on display in the new Maj. Robert B. "Mo" Morrissey Combat Correspondents Reading Room at the Marine Detachment at the Defense Information School (DINFOS). The room was dedicated Aug. 31 to Morrissey, a combat correspondent who died last year.

"We've got a challenge to prepare young men and women to face the physical and

mental rigors of combat," said Capt. James D. Jarvis, commanding officer of Marine Detachment. "So our ties to our past, to that legacy of people who blazed that path for us, are important to us."

The dedication was held during the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association annual conference that was held Aug. 31 - Sept. 3 in Tysons Corner, Va. DINFOS students greeted the combat correspondent veterans of several wars, who toured the facility and dined with Marines.

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WAR AND REMEMBER

Marine Detachment dedicates reading room to deceased combat

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Sgt. Wil Santiago, a combat videographer at DINFOS, taped the dedication. “We want to show the Marines the meaning behind this room,” he said. “That it’s not just pictures on the wall but of Marines who fought for this country and brought the real face of war so people back home could see how it really was.”

Stavisky, 91, and Hatch, 85, participated in the ribbon cutting with Don Gee, president of the Combat Correspondents Association. “Everyone who knew Mo loved him,” Gee said. “It keeps his memory alive and fosters a spirit of camaraderie that he was known for in this organization.”

Morrisey served twice as the association’s national president and as its first executive director. After

servicing in the Pacific during the latter months of World War II, Morrisey returned to his hometown of Joliet, Ill., where he edited *The Spectator*, then the nation’s largest weekly newspaper. During the Korean War, he was called back to active duty as a combat correspondent and public affairs officer, and was decorated for valor.

After serving as special assistant for public affairs for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Morrisey retired in 1967 and worked in public relations, including for the Apollo space program. He died in 2005 at age 78.

“Maj. Morrisey had been a friend of the Marine Corps,” Jarvis said. “When he passed away, the family was looking for a place to donate his books. So the idea came to have a reading room.”

In June, Jarvis approved the

decision to dedicate the Marines’ reading room to Morrisey and add photographs and tools of the trade. “It seemed like a perfect fit to put in imagery and artifacts,” Jarvis said. “It is also a place for our young Marines to fellowship with those who went before them. For the Marine Corps, it’s central to who we are to have a strong foundation in the past.”

The room is open to Marine students in training and other DINFOS students. It is filled with Morrisey’s collection of first-edition books signed by their author, framed photographs and posters. In addition to Stavisky’s typewriter and a replica of Hatch’s camera, the glass display case features a World War II-era pack, helmet and personal war gear.

“I think it’s awesome,” said Capt. Reuben D. Maestre, II Marine



PHOTO BY RONA S. HIRSCH

Samuel E. Stavisky, a World War II Marine combat correspondent who covered five battles in the South Pacific, signs his autograph for Sgt. Wil Santiago, a combat videographer at DINFOS who filmed the day’s events. “I wrote about everything going on I could see or hear or confirm,” Stavisky said.

The Write Stuff

After World War II broke out, Samuel E. Stavisky, then 27, tried to enlist but was rejected by the Army and Navy because of his poor vision.

He was accepted however, into the Marine Corps’ new combat correspondents program started by Brig. Gen. Robert L. Denig.

“The idea was to bring in newspaper people with experience and send them through boot camp,” said Stavisky, who resides in Washington, D.C. “If we survived that, then we became Marine riflemen and combat correspondents. Remember, I was a Marine first.”

Correspondents were sent to record the experiences of individual Marines. Over 34 months, Stavisky served in five battles, including Guadalcanal. He wrote nearly 1,000 stories. “I wrote about everything going on I could see or hear or confirm,” he said.

Marine Headquarters sent the stories to the local newspapers. “We wrote about the guys on the line — you didn’t have to be a general,” Stavisky said. “(Families would say,) ‘There is a story about my Joe’ — maybe he saved somebody or killed 15 Japanese soldiers. They became hometown heroes. Families had no other way of getting information. They mailed clippings back to the guys on the line and raised their morale because they were reading how they became hometown heroes.”

In addition to protecting their typewriters from the rains, the rifletoting correspondents had to contend with wartime censorship. Stavisky recalled his breaking story of a Marine pilot, Capt. Joe Foss, who shot down 26 planes over Guadalcanal. “I expected it to be headline news, but my story never got through,” he said. Foss’ heroism became known later, and he went on to receive the Medal of Honor.

After 2 1/2 years of service, Stavisky requested a new typewriter, which he used to write the first chapters of his book, “Marine Combat Correspondent: World War II in the Pacific,” published in 1999.

Stavisky, who returned to *The Washington Post* after the war, had achieved the rank of master tech sergeant. “They wanted to promote me several times,” he said. “I didn’t want to be an officer. Only a grunt can talk to a grunt.”



From left to right, Norm Hatch, Sam Stavisky and Don Gee cut the ribbon for the Maj. Robert B. “Mo” Morrisey Reading Room at the Marine Detachment Barracks by the Defense Information School on Fort Meade.

RANCE

combat correspondent

Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune, N.C., who attended DIN-FOS in 2003. "It's such a beautiful room. There is a lot of history in this small room."

The newest addition is a framed movie poster that Hatch presented to Jarvis at the ceremony. Emblazoned, "With the Marines at Tarawa In Technicolor," the poster features caricatures of Japanese soldiers and Marines in hand-to-hand combat.

After the dedication, Hatch and Stavisky lounged in the reading room as clusters of students and association members gathered to shake their hand, get an autograph or talk about their experiences.

"It's important to know what our history is," said Pfc. Regina Rust, a DINFOS combat correspondent student. "I want to be a journalist for the Marine Corps. What better job can there be today?"



PHOTO BY NAVY SEAMAN RECRUIT AMANDA WILLIAMS
Morrissey Combat Correspondents Reading



PHOTO BY RONA S. HIRSCH

(Ret.) Marine Maj. Norman Hatch, a World War II Marine combat correspondent, presents Capt. James D. Jarvis, commanding officer of Marine Detachment, with a framed movie poster of "With the Marines at Tarawa." The presentation was made at the Aug. 31 dedication of the new Maj. Robert B. "Mo" Morrissey Combat Correspondents Reading Room.

Behind the camera

(Ret.) Marine Maj. Norman Hatch, who enlisted at age 20, worked for the Navy's Office of Public Relations before joining the Marine Corps' first school created to train Marines in combat photography.

Accepted on his third try, Hatch was sent to Quantico, Va., to shoot training films. He was then assigned to the 2nd Marine Division, which invaded the Pacific island of Tarawa in 1943.

The beach at Tarawa was the Marine Corps' second engagement in the Pacific. "This was the first attack on a heavily-fortified beachhead that succeeded," said Hatch, who resides in Alexandria, Va.

During the ferocious three-day battle on Tarawa, which is one-third the size of Central Park in New York, more than 6,000 were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded.

Hatch was the only cameraman at Tarawa during the first day and a half of battle and shot most of the combat footage. While under fire and carrying a pistol, he filmed with a 13-pound Bell and Howell 35mm Eyemo camera.

"I had film on 100-foot rolls and they went through the camera at 90 feet per minute, so I couldn't put my finger on the camera and just hold it there," Hatch said. "I had to select my shots and pick what I thought was important and also try and tell a story with what I was shooting, plus the fact I had to focus and I had to worry about

exposure. So I was pretty well occupied as a cameraman."

Films shot in battle were initially viewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then sent to Hollywood, where they were edited for newsreels and films. The footage that Hatch and other photographers shot at Tarawa was turned into the Academy Award-winning documentary, "With the Marines at Tarawa."

"The Academy had never seen combat footage like that before," Hatch said. "In the course of shooting I got the only scene that probably existed throughout the Pacific War as well as the European War — and that is a single shot of the enemy and our own troops in the same frame fighting. I had 15 seconds of fame that lasted 64 years, mostly because of that shot."

In 1945, as a photographic officer for the 5th Marine Division, Hatch filmed the Marines' first landing on Iwo Jima. On the battle's fifth day, Marines raised the U.S. flag at Mount Suribachi, which was famously captured by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal as well as by Hatch's team of one movie cameraman and two still photographers.

In tribute to Hatch's service, the Marine Corps bestows the Major Norman Hatch Award to the best mini-documentary (longer than four minutes) videotape dealing with historical or current Marine Corps subjects.