

Curtiss Atomic Marines
USS Curtiss AV4
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Operation Castle and Wigwam.

In all nuclear operations in which the USS CURTISS participated, there were over 250 officers and enlisted Marines who served in the Marine Detachments assigned to the CURTISS. If one were to intensely scrutinize the background, military bearing, military achievements, and personal character of these Marines, one would find that they, as a group, were Marines of exemplary quality.

As one of those Marines, I count it as one of my life's accomplishments to be able to call myself a "Curtiss Marine". In 1953, three days after I graduated from North High School, in Des Moines, Iowa I boarded a train and was headed for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, in San Diego, California. In receiving barracks, I would meet several fellow recruits, whom I would be privileged to serve with through out most of my Marine Corps enlistment. I remember clearly the names of Obie Jo Draper, Tom Hultgren, Willie P. Smith, and Devon Keen. After completing recruit training in Recruit Platoon 183, the above Marines and I would be posted to Sea School-MCRD- and then assigned to the Marine Detachment-USS CURTISS AV-4, to serve in Operations Castle, Surfboard, and Wigwam

Once assigned to the CURTISS, my duties initially, were very similar to all other Marines of the Detachment. These included copious amounts of Guard Duty, special security assignments, and a continuous training regimen. I was also assigned to a 20mm gun crew, and subsequently was a member of a Quad 40mm gun crew. All of which were exemplary in their firing exercise...nobody, but nobody, could out shoot the Marine gun crews aboard the CURTISS.

I was also fortunate to be selected as the Marine Orderly for the Executive Officer of the CURTISS, Cmdr. Egbert, USN, I was subsequently moved up to serve as the Marine Orderly for the Ship's Commanding Officer, Captain Jones. After, serving in this position for a period of time, I was assigned as the Marine Orderly for the Commander of Task Force 7.3, Flag Admiral BRUTON. Fellow Marine, Dave Matsler, and myself would fly back to the United States with Admiral Bruton, at the conclusion of Operation Castle.

After serving two years aboard the CURTISS, I was posted to Twenty-nine Palms Marine Artillery Base, where I served in Charlie Battery, 1st 155 Gun Battalion. I was promoted to Sergeant shortly after my arrival at 29 Palms. In June of 1956, my enlistment completed, I was honorably discharged and returned to my hometown of Des Moines, Iowa. Four days after discharge, I enrolled in summer school at Iowa State Teachers College, where I majored in Speech Pathology. By attending school year round, I was able to complete four years of college in three years. (Another example of acquired Marine tenacity).

Upon graduating from college in 1959, I joined the staff as a speech pathologist for a three county special education unit. I also continued my education by enrolling in a graduate program in Speech Pathology at the University of Iowa, and later at the University of Minnesota, to continue my studies in Speech Pathology and Audiology. It was during these graduate studies that I felt I could positively impact the lives of more disabled children if I enrolled in a graduate program of Special Education Administration. I completed this program with a Masters Degree in 1968. I was appointed Director of Special Education in the same Special Education Unit in which I was employed in that same year. I would continue to serve as a Special Education Administrator in a very large 8 county Area Education Agency in northeast Iowa, until 1996, when I would retired after 37 years of service to Iowa's disabled children.

Many times during those years I would wonder, "What had become of all those Marines I served with aboard the CURTISS. One evening in 1998, my phone rang, and Sgt. John Riggins, asked if I would join a group of Curtiss Marines meeting in San Diego, for a reunion. From that point on my life was once again impacted by not only Marines I served with during my posting on the CURTISS, but many

other fine Marines whom I would meet from other nuclear operations, who also served on the CURTISS.

It goes without saying, that the Marines who served in the Marine Detachments aboard the CURTISS were an exemplary group of men. Most were driven by an intrinsic desire to achieve far beyond the expectations of their Officers and NCOs. This motivation would carry them on to contribute significantly to a variety of professional and personal achievements in both the civilian and military communities. It is to all the Marines who are now referred to as "Curtiss Marines" that I am proud to call my brothers. We Curtiss Marines are a part of a unique brotherhood forged in nuclear security service aboard an outstanding and proud ship of the United States Navy.... the USS CURTISS AV-4.