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## Our Sister Marine

By Lt. David M. Shoup, U. S. M. C.

**I**N this large brotherhood of Marines we can boast at least one sister, and inasmuch as I have yet to meet one of our Corps who has ever heard of the fact that one time long ago a woman did serve our country as a United States Marine, I feel that this bit of information I have found will prove of interest to many readers of "The Leatherneck."

The Female Marine, a little book printed in 1818 and quite rare today was written by Miss Lucy Brewer and tells of her own adventures while serving three years as a Marine on board the U. S. Frigate "Constitution" during the War of 1812 with Great Britain.

Says Miss Brewer:

"In 1812, forming an acquaintance with a young man, the first lieutenant of a privateer then lying in a neighboring port, who, in the course of an evening's conversation humorously observed that had he been a female, his disposition would have been the same to rove about and see the world, I suggested to him the difficulties that must attend him, exposed as he must be to the insults one would receive, who would presume thus to venture abroad alone and unprotected; to which he replied, 'were I a female and disposed to travel, I would assume a different dress from that usually worn by your sex, which I am confident would rather expose me to injury than afford me protection. I would garb myself as a male, and for such pass among all those with whom I might have occasion to associate; this I am confident I could effect, and travel abroad by sea and land, with proper precaution, without exposing my sex! That a female can do this, and from the knowledge of her most intimate acquaintances conceal her situation, history furnishes us with many instances.' (Here my friend referred to the remarkable instance of Miss Sampson, who during the Revolutionary War disguised as a male by the name of Robert Shurtliff, and as such, by the most scrupulous concealment of her sex, served her country as a private soldier, and performed her duty without a stain on her virtue and honor.)

"From this moment I became dissatisfied with my situation in life . . . (and) felt no other disposition than in disguise to visit other parts of the country . . .

"Fortunately for me, the accidental remarks of my friend stirred my mind with new ideas relative to my situation, and . . . I was positive that I now saw my way clear, for by garbing myself in the habiliments of a male, I should be enabled to escape. . . .

"Having provided everything necessary for my entrance in a new character on the stage of life, I seized upon a favorable opportunity early one morning to equip myself therefor; being garbed complete in a sailor's suit, I quit my lodgings unnoticed and passed into the public street. From my awkward appearance

in attempting to assume the character of a male, I was not without my fears that I should be suspected, nor were I ventured to accost one of my own sex, who, answering with a ready 'yes, sir,' strengthened my confidence that I should pass for a male.

"I bent my course toward the old Market, where, entering a victuals cellar, I procured breakfast—the remainder of the day I spent rambling about town, highly pleased in being enabled to visit places, where females (if known) would not have been admitted. Lodging I obtained without difficulty, and the next morning sought passage for the southward—this was difficult at this time to obtain, as the harbor being closely blockaded by the enemy, no vessel would venture abroad, and for want of funds not being able to travel by land, was compelled reluctantly to give up the idea of a southern excursion.

"Passing through Fish Street, I entered a house which was a public rendezvous for the enlistment of men to go aboard one of the United States frigates then lying in the harbor, and shortly bound on a cruise.

"Encouraged by the active part which one of my sex had taken in the late American war, without exposing her sex, I viewed this as a favorable opportunity to try my fortune in the public service of my country, provided I could avoid the search new recruits must generally undergo—this I succeeded in doing by an artful stratagem and entered as a Marine, received my advance and clothing, and the next day was taken on board.

"New scenes now opened to my view—pains were now taken by the officer of Marines to instruct me in the manual exercise, of which I had no necessity of pleading ignorance; I had taken the precaution to provide myself with a tight pair of underdraws, which I had never shifted but with the greatest precaution, which, together with a close waistcoat or bandage about my breasts, effectually concealed my sex from all on board. My good fortune in having for my commander one of the most humane and experienced officers in the American Navy, was much in my favor, as the respect entertained for him and under officers caused the utmost harmony to prevail among the ship's crew.

"In August we set sail with a fair wind and in good spirits; we first stood an easterly course, in hopes of falling in with a British frigate cruising in that direction. I suffered a little confinement by sea sickness (so peculiar to fresh hands) which was all the illness I experienced during the whole cruise. In the use of my arms I made great proficiency, which I soon learnt to load and discharge with an expertness not surpassed by any in my corps.

"We passed near the isle of Sables, and took a station off the Gulf of St. Lawrence, near Cape Race, to intercept vessels

bound thither to or from Canada. While cruising off this station, we captured two merchant vessels. Having received information that the British squadron were off the Grand Bank, and not far distant, our brave commander determined to change his cruising ground; he accordingly stood to the southward. On the 17th he was informed by the commander of an American privateer that a British ship of war had been seen the day before, standing to the southeast, and that she could not be far off. Our intrepid commander immediately made sail, intending if possible to fall in with her.

"On the 19th at 2 P. M. a vessel was discovered (to) the southward. Our ship instantly gave chase, and soon gained on her. At 3 P. M. it could plainly be perceived that she was a ship, under easy sail, close hauled to the wind; soon after she was ascertained to be a frigate; our ship continued the chase. The chased vessel now backed her main topsail, and waited for our ship to come down.

"It is frequently observed by those who have been in battle that at the commencement of an engagement, the most resolute feel daunted in some degree; but I can solemnly declare that I never felt more composed. As did every person on board, even to the youngest lad, are on such occasions anxious to distinguish themselves at their post, so I felt an extreme desire to render myself conspicuous, and to perform that which woman never before achieved. Stationed in the tops, I waited only with impatience for the battle to commence.

"As soon as our ship was ready for action, she bore down, intending to bring immediately to close action the British frigate, which about this time had hoisted her ensign. As soon as our ship came within gunshot, the British fired her broadside, then filled away, wore, and gave a broadside on the other tack—they, however, produced no effect; her shot fell short. The British frigate manoeuvred and wore several times for about three quarters of an hour, in order to take a raking position. But not succeeding in this, bore up under her topsails and jib, with the wind on the quarter. Our brave commander made sail to bring his ship up with her. At 5 minutes before 6 P. M. our ship got alongside, within pistol shot, he ordered a brisk firing to be commenced from all her guns, which were double shotted with round and grape shot; and so well directed and so warmly kept up was our fire that in fifteen minutes the mizzen mast of the British frigate went by the board, her hull was injured; and her rigging and sails torn to pieces. I was at this time busily employed in the top plying my faithful musket with the best success, whenever the smoke would permit me to see a blue jacket of the enemy; in the heat of the action a grape shot striking and splintering the butt of my musket, I was noticed by one of my comrades who stood within a few feet from me, who, patting me on the shoulder exclaimed, 'never mind it, George, you have already won laurels sufficient to recommend you to the girls when you return to port.'

"The grape shot and small arms of our ship completely swept the decks of the British frigate; thirty minutes after the commencement of the action the mainmast and foremast of the British frigate went by the board, taking with them every spar except the bowsprit; she then struck her colors, and as soon as her crew could be removed, and in consequence of her sinking condition, was set afire and blew up a quarter past seven. She had fifteen men killed and sixty-one wounded; while our loss amounted to no more than seven killed and eight or ten wounded.

"Soon after this noble achievement our gallant ship returned to port, where she remained for some time, undergoing necessary repairs. While there I had frequent opportunities to go on shore, and in more than one instance was actually in company

with girls who were late my associates, but who did not identify my person, so artfully did I disguise myself. . . . It was from some of my old acquaintances that I learnt, that as soon as it was discovered that I had fled, the "blood hounds" were unkenelled and sent in every direction after me. I conversed with many, who, in my late situation knew me well, but to whom I was now a stranger, as I did not disclose the important secret. . . .

"As soon as refitted, our ship was ordered upon another cruise; during which I had another opportunity to assist my brethren in revenging their injuries, while cruising along the coast of South America, two strange vessels were discovered on our weather bow. At ten they were discovered to be ships. One of them stood in for the land, the other stood off shore towards our ship.

"At quarter past one the ship in sight proved to be an English frigate, and being sufficiently distant from land, our commander ordered the mainsails and royals to be taken in, to tack the ship and stand for the enemy, who soon bore down with an intention of raking our ship, which we avoided by wearing. A general action now commenced with round and grape shot. Both ves-

sels, for some time, manoeuvred to obtain a position that would enable them to rake, or avoid being raked. About three o'clock, the head of the British vessel's bowsprit and jib boom were shot away; and in the space of an hour her foremast was shot away by the board, her main topmast just above the gap.

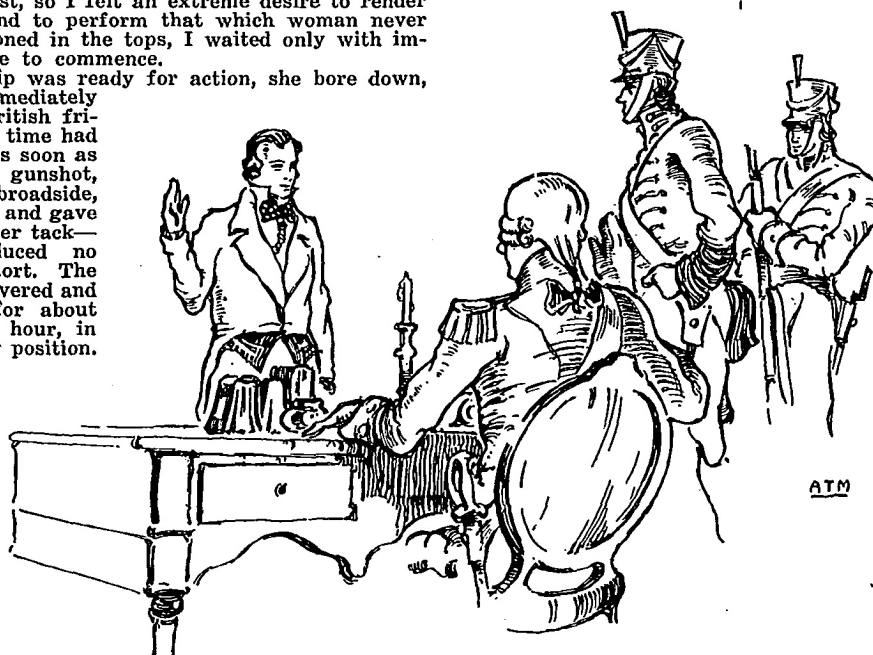
"About four o'clock the fire of the British vessel being completely silenced, and her colors in the main rigging being down, she was supposed to have struck, but her flag was soon after discovered to be still flying. About a quarter of an hour after, the mainmast of the British vessel went by the board. About three-quarters of an hour after four, our ship got into a very good position for raking when the enemy prudently struck her

flag, being almost a wreck. She was a frigate mounting forty-nine guns, with a complement of four hundred men, of which sixty were killed, and about one hundred and fifty wounded. Our loss was comparatively small.

"In this engagement I did not attempt to signalize myself less than in the former. From the ship's top I discharged my piece nineteen times, which, as I had learnt to take pretty exact aim, must, I think, have done some execution. An accident soon after the conclusion of the engagement occurred, which was near betraying my sex to the whole crew of the ship; attempting to go below, I made a misstep, and fell from the shrouds overboard, not knowing how to swim, I sunk immediately; a boat was sent to my relief, but before they could recover me and get me aboard, life had become nearly extinct. As soon as they had succeeded in getting me on deck (as I had not strength to do it myself), some of my shipmates were ordered to strip off my clothes and to furnish me with a dry suit, and they had nearly divested me of my outdress, when I mustered sufficient strength to beg them to desist, as I then felt able to effect it myself. Not long after our late engagement we returned to the United States, where our brave officers and whole ship's crew were received by our countrymen with every demonstration of joy and esteem, for our late gallant exploit.

"So closely were all our harbors blockaded at this time by large ships of the enemy, that it was thought imprudent for

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Enlistment of Private Lucy Brewer as a Marine at Boston, 1812.

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## Our Sister Marine

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us to attempt then to get out: we consequently lay a long while in port, during which the time for which I had enlisted expired; but I immediately re-enlisted, and before the conclusion of war made two more successful cruises—at the expiration of which I received a regular discharge.

"Thus for nearly three years I passed for and performed the duty of a Marine, on board a frigate, the most calibreous of any in the American Navy; during which I have been in three severe engagements, and never absented myself from my post in time of danger. I have, like others of the ship's crew, freely associated with my shipmates, both at sea and on shore, and yet, as extraordinary as it may appear, I have not the most distant idea that a single soul on board ever had the least suspicion of my sex. I had thoroughly studied the memoirs of Miss Sampson and by a strict adherence to the precautionary means by which she was enabled to avoid an exposure of her sex, I, too, was enabled to conceal mine."

\* \* \* \*

From the foregoing paragraphs of Miss Brewer's account of her experiences we note that even then as since the Marines had battle stations in the tops of our fighting ships; that they shot well, and that they were in the thick of the fight always. Thus we see that the traditions of the Corps today are the sum total of many such acts of heroism numbering down through the years until the present. And in this case it was a woman who built so faithfully her part of the foundation of that great *Esprit de Corps*.

## The Fita Fita of Samoa

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are sometimes almost embarrassing. When the American Government took over control of Samoa it agreed not to interfere with the ancient Samoan customs more than was considered needful. As a result there are more chiefs than Irish in Dublin. The high chiefs and native officials are of great help in enforcing the law and keeping order. The chiefs are given a free hand as long as their conduct is for the best interest of the natives and the American Government. The rank of chief is hereditary, each chief choosing his own successor, who is usually a member of his own family, but sometimes someone not a blood member of his family is chosen. The "family" in Samoa goes further than the immediate blood relatives and often consists of from 50 to 150 persons. The head of each family is the "Matai," recognized by law as well as custom and has control of the property and resources of the entire family. He allots the labor to be performed in gathering the crops, fishes, etc., and supervises the distribution of the food and clothing. It is a common and apparently true saying that a Samoan need never go hungry. There is no such thing as poverty as we see it in the United States. The Samoans are a very hospitable race and should one pass a Samoan house while they are eat-

ing, he is invariably invited to enter and eat. They spend a great deal of time in visiting each other, the visit often lasting for days. When the food supplies begin to get low the visitors move on and visit someone else. When the visitors finally return to their own homes they then become hosts for the people who entertained them and these people likewise stay until food begins to be scarce when they move on to visit some other family and finally return home when they can't find any other place to go. This custom is said to be dying out somewhat due to increases in population and necessity for someone to stay at home long enough to plant crops and raise the required amount of food.

The temperature in Samoa ranges from about 68 to 90. The seasons are just opposite those of the United States—February is the hottest and wettest month, June and July are the coolest and driest, although there is no real dry season and the rainfall is heavy throughout the year. Little clothing is needed at any time and most of the Samoans wear only the one piece lava lava.

There are very few foreigners in Samoa, the few here being mostly Americans, English and Germans. These are mostly merchants and planters and some of them have succeeded very well. No foreigner is permitted to come here without depositing \$100.00 as a guarantee that he will not become a public charge or undesirable character. Should his presence be undesirable at any time the \$100.00 is used to provide a passage on the next boat to some other port. The result of this is that Samoa is one of the few places in the South Seas without its quota of beach combers and undesirable white men.

## Customs in the South Seas

It is part of the many duties of the village councillors to see that the natives keep their houses, food and clothing clean and that they do not gossip, that the children are sent regularly to school and to church. They visit the native gardens to see that they are properly tilled and planted to full capacity. If they are suspicious of a housewife and her cooking they enter her kitchen, lift up the lid of the pot of whatever is being cooked. If any fault is found she is summoned to appear the following day before the local court.

Love making in most islands is made by lovers congregating, sitting and looking into each others eyes by the hour. On the wedding day the mother of the groom displays much grief. When he leaves his home the groom is preceded by his mother dancing before him down the village street, weeping and wailing all the while.

The groom, and not the bride, is always the center of attraction. In the few places where shoes are worn, the groom endeavors to procure a new pair of "squeak" shoes for the marriage ceremony, and the louder the "squeak" the more swell and aristocratic the groom and his family are believed to be.

In imitation of the American custom of throwing rice, flour is thrown over the bride and groom. The effect of flour on the brown faces of the native can be imagined and this custom is the source of much fun for the natives.

The natives are very religious and al-

most all of them belong to some church and attend church very regularly as they are entirely devoted to their religion. The men usually sit on one side and the women on the other. In some places, the "verger" of the church is armed with a 15-foot bamboo rod. The rod is the symbol of his office and his weapon with which to keep order. Anyone who snores, wiggles his toes, is inattentive or otherwise disturbs the services is sure to feel the point of the rod, forcibly applied. At one town where the "verger" had been in office many years, a visiting bishop had just presented the ancient "verger" with a large silver ferrule which bore an engraving which set forth the fact of the long years of faithful service the "verger" had rendered the church. When the bishop held the service immediately after presentation of the ferrule, the "verger" was there with his newly presented rod, but no one winked an eyelash, wiggled an ear or moved a toe. The "verger" stood it almost until the end of the service, and then, determined to show that possession of the rod meant something, he gave his perfectly unoffending wife a whack across the shoulders which knocked her sprawling on the floor.

In many isolated villages, the wishes of the high chief of the village and the "councillor" constitute the law and from the decisions of these important personages there is seldom an appeal. The following well authenticated story comes from the island of Badu where there is but one horse on the entire island.

The horse was the joint property of the village councillor and another native. The partnership did not work well, but neither partner would sell his interest to the other. Recently the unofficial native partner committed some minor offense and was brought before the councillor for trial. The councillor promptly fined his unofficial partner half a horse. It is said that the councillor takes great pleasure in galloping his steed past his late partner in business, this unfortunate member of the firm being afraid to appeal from the decision rendered against him and his half of the horse.

The Samoans are a very hospitable people and they are constantly visiting each other or being visited. Food is usually plentiful, and not counting the roast pigs, chickens and pigeons which are invariably served, the most of the food grows on trees or bushes and is easily obtainable. A novel feature of the feast is the habit of the guests of carrying away every last morsel of the food which is left on the table and this is no inconsiderable amount. It is the custom to simply load the table with food in order that each guest may carry home enough food to last his family for several meals. Each guest comes prepared with a basket made from a branch of the cocoanut tree in about 3 minutes. At a feast which I attended some time ago in celebration of the installation of a very high chief, I saw one guest who placed in his basket and carried away from the table, 6 whole roast chickens, about 12 large roast pigeons, a piece of roast pig which must have weighed 15 pounds, besides many smaller tid-bits. This procedure seemed to cause no surprise to anyone, as each guest was busy filling his own basket. Many of the guests had servants standing behind them, the servant's job being to fan the chief while he ate, and to fill the basket of the chief