

"LEATHERNECK"



By R. R. Keene

Photos courtesy of Thomas L. Torget

Marines and their equipment aren't usually considered reliable until they've earned some "salt." Even the business of recruiting acknowledges seniority and precedence.

Today's Marine Recruiting 2001 humvee respectfully gives way as a mere "boot" when the restored 1937 Ford Marine recruiting panel truck makes an appearance.

The guy behind the wheel of "Leatherneck Express," wearing a field hat and World War II herringbones, is "salty"

too. Thomas L. Torget of Kerrville, Texas, served in the Reserve in the 1960s and '70s. He found this old Ford, and with an eye for detail, some elbow grease, a few bucks, a splash of paint and a dash of that Marine Corps panache, violà: Marine history, legend, lore and tradition flourish in yet another medium while becoming an eye-catcher for recruiting.

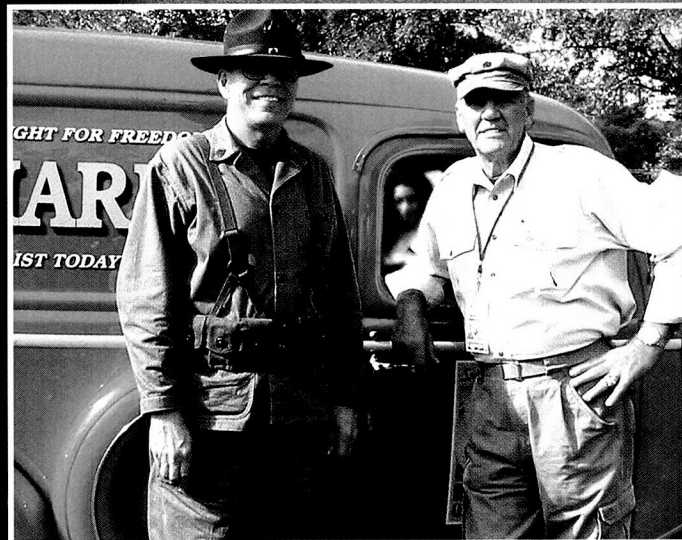
According to Torget, the Corps' use of such vehicles goes back to 1916 for recruiting in rural areas. The restored truck

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has been a hit at the Marine Corps Marathon, Washington, D.C.; Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C.; the National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas; and will appear at the opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, at Quantico, Va., on Nov. 10, 2006.

It's salty and bold—just like today's Marines. For more information, visit www.LeanerneckExpress.com.



Everybody wants to get his picture taken with the Leatherneck Express and its restorer/driver, Tom Torget. Retired Gunnery Sergeant R. Lee Erney, star of The History Channel's "Mail Call" and gyrene flicks such as "Full Metal Jacket" and "The Boys in Company C," paid a visit at the 2004 Marine Corps Marathon.



The modern Marine Corps recruiting humvee and the Leatherneck Express faced off under the palmettos at Parris Island, S.C., in 2004. The "boot" humvee had its hatchback open almost in deferential salute to its saltier forerunner.