

and establishes a minimum composite score necessary to be eligible for promotion. If a Marine is thus eligible, he may be promoted only if recommended by his commander.

This system has several drawbacks, which are important to the individual concerned and to his unit. First, the promotion to corporal is based on a very short term of service for most Marines. A large portion of the composite score is based upon multiples of the average semiannual proficiency and conduct markings. It follows, then, that one low semiannual mark could make a Marine ineligible for promotion for two and possibly four quarterly promotion periods. When only three or four marks are used to compute the average, a low mark can have a disastrous effect.

The second weak point in the system is that the needs of the Marine Corps may not reflect the needs of a particular division or wing. For example, the Second Marine Division may have a greater need for corporals than does the Third Marine Division. Computation by MOS diminishes this problem somewhat, but because of the importance of these noncommissioned officer ranks, any shortage in these grades can cause turmoil in a unit. A billet requiring a corporal that is filled by any other rank is likely to be less effective, because the authority and responsibility of the position necessitates a Marine of at least

that rank and experience.

The third shortcoming of our present system concerns those many Marines working out of their primary MOS. Recruiters and drill instructors come from all occupational fields as do Marines for barracks duty, sea duty and embassy duty. These Marines work together each day in their respective duties, are marked accordingly on proficiency and conduct marks and fitness reports, yet are considered for promotion with an entirely different population. It has happened that two Marines of otherwise equal leadership potential have been promoted as much as nine months apart, simply because one Marine's occupational field was filled at his rank. It stands to reason, then, that less qualified Marines have also been promoted ahead of better qualified peers for the same reason. This is a source of serious morale problems not only for the Marine not promoted, but also for the unit that can see the inequity in the system.

The final and most important drawback of the NCO promotion system concerns the retention of our good Marines. Those affected by the inequities are usually first-term enlistees in their third and fourth years of service. This is the critical point at which they must decide whether to leave the Corps or reenlist. These Marine are vitally aware of their own personal needs and desires. A system that treats them less than fairly

will most certainly force them out.

These problems in the promotion system affect an extremely critical portion of our rank structure. Because these junior leaders are so important, I propose a simple solution to help alleviate some of the inequities:

- Give commanding generals promotion authority for all corporals and sergeants rather than only meritorious promotions.

- Give the Inspector General promotion authority for Marines in category B billets, such as Marine barracks, sea duty and embassy guards.

This simple change would put each Marine concerned closer to his promotion authority and would allow access to him through routine request mast procedures. HQMC could authorize to each commanding general a percentage of the authorized promotions based upon Congressional allowances for each rank and current monthly strength reports. This would further allow CG's to make more timely and effective use of promotions in correcting any rank imbalances in their own commands. Local use of a modified composite score system as is used now would ensure equitable promotion standards throughout the Marine Corps. If we save one good noncommissioned officer through my proposed revision, the change would be well worth the effort.

USMC

Commentary on the Corps

Commanders use your chaplains

by LtCol James D. Ingram

"Welcome aboard, Chaplain. You are assigned to handle spiritual matters while I do the rest. Let me know when you have problems requiring my attention or assistance." Sound familiar? Such is the way of life, unfortunately, in numerous units when a new chaplain reports aboard.

Following such a hearty welcome by his commanding officer, the new chaplain then seeks out his office in the rear of the chapel and waits for opportunities of service between his Sunday activities. This wait often turns into numerous hours of reading and writing with little effective contact and help to the men assigned to his unit. What a waste! The almost negative approach to his arrival fails to enhance desire to serve as more than a "Sunday minister." Lack of command interest contributes to an ineffective performance.

The services of a chaplain can and should be used to the maximum. He has much to offer. With his desire and talent, reinforced by the active interest and support of the unit commander, fruitful results can occur.

The first step in effective use of a chaplain is to move his office from the chapel into the headquarters building. This gives him immediate identity as a staff member linked to all key sections. He no longer is isolated and thus is seen on a day-to-day basis by many Marines.

Numerous other advantages are realized by this new location. Accessibility is facilitated. Closeness with other command sections is established. Newly joined personnel immediately identify the chaplain with the unit. Opportunities to meet Marines casually are increased. Any idea that this too closely associates him with the "command" and



contradicts his role as a chaplain doesn't hold weight. Too many new opportunities exist, which offset such thinking.

Orientation for the new chaplain is mandatory. Many chaplains are, of course, new either to Marine service or even to the military. The ideal member of the unit for this task is the sergeant major. Yes, the sergeant major! Who else can better inform the chaplain of courtesies, traditions, physical appearance, physical fitness and the unit's facts of life? Eyeball-to-eye contact with this epitome of enlisted Marines will be welcomed and needed by any chaplain. Establishing this unique relationship will pay dividends for the unit.

Briefings by all staff sections, including the career planner, are important. This new staff officer must become aware of the total programs and mission of the unit he is to serve. He must be an active staff participant, and his knowledge of other sections can be used within the scope of his own ministry.

The chaplain is soon an established member of the unit and his work potential is unlimited. He should be included on the check-in sheet for all new arrivals

to visit. He should accompany the unit commander and the sergeant major when they address new arrivals. The C.O. can add prestige and significance to the role of the chaplain by taking him to various activities such as inspections, field exercises, mess hall visits, work shops, etc. The chaplain must become a familiar face throughout the area. He can eat C-rations with the troops and participate in weapons exercises. He can spend the night in the field with his Marines and share in their experiences. Physical training is activity in which the chaplain must participate. Let him participate in formations and stand inspections in his camouflaged utilities with his Bible.

Visits, after working hours, to common areas such as recreation rooms, "E" Club, library, movies and guard house are important. Excellent contacts can be made under these situations. Doors for new opportunities of ministry and counseling will be opened. This type of informal contact far exceeds in importance the initial meeting either in chapel services or in the chaplain's office.

Most chaplains can help with a human relations program. Why not exploit this talent with a local program to reach those in need? Alcohol, drugs, loneliness, boredom, a sense of failure — all day-to-day problems of Marines — can perhaps be lessened (without pampering) by this professional staff member. S-3's and company commanders can draw upon the chaplain for instructional assistance as well as a resource person.

The chaplain can be a key member of any staff. His desire, abilities and ingenuity can be productive toward the success of any unit. Participation in roles described above, as well as numerous others, will neither compromise nor detract from his spiritual mission. His Sunday chapel activities will not be reduced but, in fact, will be supplemented by the effectiveness of his unit ministry. The spiritual awareness of the men can be increased. His total service can be realized, however, only when a commanding officer is willing to assist and implement such a program. The rewards are many. The opportunity is there. Use your chaplain!

USMC

Professional Note from MCAGCTC

Saving money on batteries

by Capt Robert E. Haber

In February 1977, a team from 2d Radio Battalion was conducting operations with units of the Brazilian Marine Corps. During the exercise, 1st Lt Jerry Duran was shown a simple device that the Brazilians used to supply electrical power to their AN/PRC-77 VHF radios. This quickly-made, do-it-yourself battery substitute has been field tested here at MCAGCTC, and has the potential to save thousands of training dollars yearly.

The device is used to transfer the electric potential stored in a 12-volt wet cell battery to a radio which normally uses a 15-volt dry cell battery as an energy source.

The first step in construction requires cutting a wooden 2" x 4" to the size of a BA-4386. A 3/4-inch hole is then drilled through one end of the board. Into this hole the female plug and connecting wires from a discharged BA-4386 are inserted. The red wire is the positive lead, and the brown or black wire is the negative lead. The green wire, attached to the plug, may be removed, because it plays no part in the operation of the RT-841/PRC-77. A 1/4-inch wide groove

is then cut into the bottom of the board so that the radio will sit steady after the wood is emplaced. (See Figure 1.) This completes the construction.

Electric current can be supplied to the device in two ways. The positive and negative wires can be lengthened with WD-1/TT and attached directly to the battery with the aid of an alligator clip or can be spliced into a wire, such as 12-gauge Romex, that is connected directly to the 12-volt source.

An evaluation of this device was conducted by the Tactical Exercise Control Center (TECC) during the conduct of PALM TREES 8-77 and 9-77. This test

was made in order to find an inexpensive method of operating the 12 VHF radios monitored in the TECOC.

The Army Technical Manual TM 11-5820-667-12 Radio Set AN/PRC-77 says that the BA-4386 has a 60-hour battery life based on a 9:1 receive/transmit ratio. In the harsh desert environment of Twentynine Palms, however, the battery life is often less than six hours. In past PALM TREE exercises, the TECC has used up to 250 batteries, paid for and provided by the Exercise Force at cost of \$6.49 each. This adds up to a lot of dollars spent on consumable items for the TECC, money which could be used to enhance training.

Through the use of this field expedient, we get this money — or a large part of it — back into the hands of each Exercise Force.

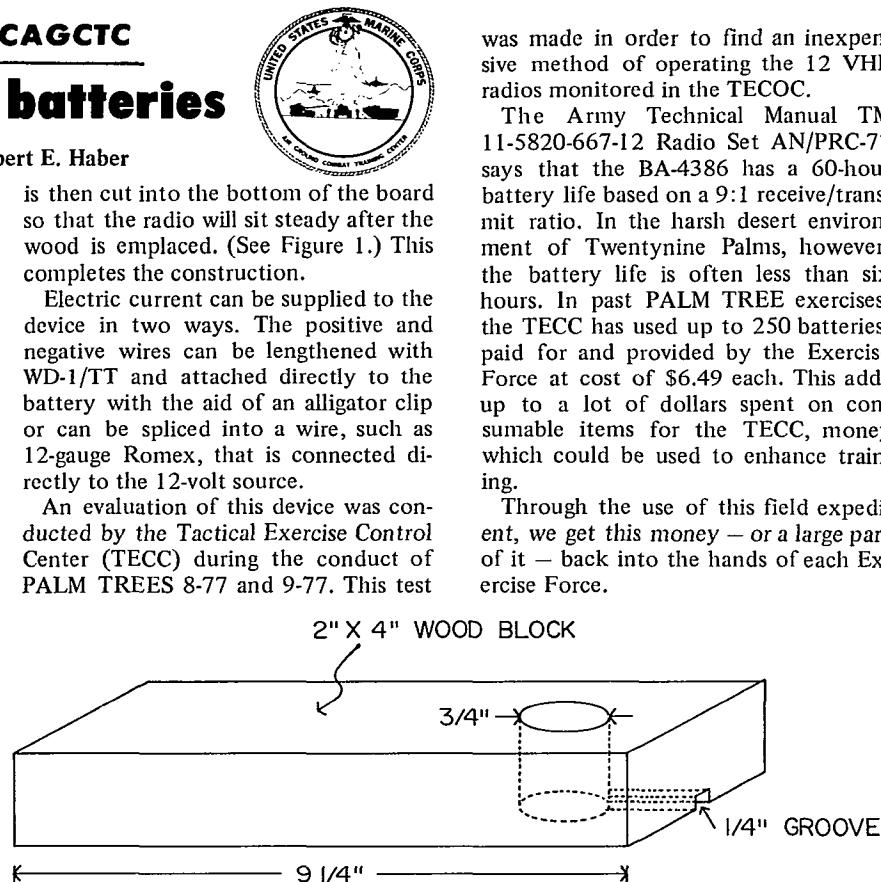


Figure 1.