



**EXTENSION OF REMARKS
HONORING THE 228TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDING OF THE
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

November 6, 2003

Mr. Speaker,

November 10th will mark the 228th Anniversary of the founding of the United States Marine Corps. To mark the occasion, I would like to submit for the record a special tribute to the Marines who participated in the Liberation of Guam written by Retired Brigadier General and former Delegate from Guam, the Honorable Vicente Tomas (Ben) Blaz.

Ben was a teenager during World War II when Japanese Imperial forces invaded and occupied Guam in December 1941. During the Liberation of Guam in July 1944, he was captured by a Marine Patrol of the 9th Marine Regiment and later released upon confirmation he was a native Chamorro. Years later, he would serve as Commanding Officer of the same Regiment.

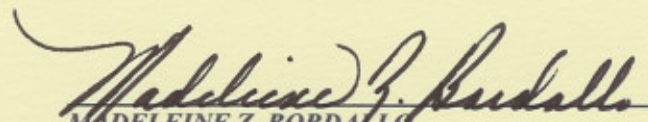
He holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Notre Dame where he was later honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award. He also holds a Master's Degree from the George Washington University and a Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Guam. In addition he is a distinguished graduate of the Naval War College. In 1992, he was recognized as an Outstanding Asian-American in Public Service.

After a distinguished career in the Marine Corps, which included being awarded the Legion of Merit (twice awarded), the Bronze Star (with Combat V), Navy Commendation Medal (twice awarded), the Combat Action Ribbon, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (Gold Star) General Blaz retired and returned to Guam in 1980.

In 1984, the People of Guam elected him to Congress where he served with distinction for four terms. During his time in office, Congressman Blaz began the difficult task of addressing the unfinished business of World War II, the issue of war reparations for the people of Guam. He brings a unique perspective to this issue as a survivor of the Occupation of Guam, as a Marine, and as a public servant. Today, Congressman Blaz is a statesman respected by the People of Guam and a strong moral voice for our times. His insight is reflected in the following essay which conveys his deep love for our island and his profound admiration for the liberators of Guam.

Few people have achieved so much in one lifetime as General Blaz. I am honored to enter his essay into the Congressional Record so that all Americans may come to appreciate the men and women who wear the eagle, globe and anchor of the United States Marine Corps. The People of Guam honor all those who serve our nation in the armed forces, but in our hearts, first among equals, are the Marines, Guam's liberators, for whom our main street is named "Marine Drive".

On this 228th Anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corp, I submit this tribute written by one of the Corps' finest, Brigadier General (Ret.) Vicente Tomas (Ben) Blaz.


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

A MOVING MOMENT OF SILENCE ON MARINE DRIVE
by Ben Blaz

The news that the Marine Corps Drive Rededication Act is scheduled for introduction in the Guam Legislature on November 10 brought a smile to this *manamko's* face. It sharpened the focus in my mind on an episode that took place during the Liberation Day parade in 1958.

As Commanding Officer of a company of Marines at the Barracks, I had the honor of leading them in the parade. For the special event, we decided to wear combat clothing and carry packs and weapons much like the liberators did. Participating in this annual observance and remembrance was a new experience for my men as it was for me in my role as their commander.

It is not unusual for those in a parade staging area to be a little edgy before a march. But the march that day was not part of a football rally or a Little League parade. Symbolically, we were following in the footsteps of a long line of heroic Marines of World War II, many of whom fought and fell where we were gathering. It was a sobering thought that prevailed over a solemn occasion.

The parade route was different. As always, it was festive. Spectators lined both sides of Marine Drive stretching from Adelupe to East Agana. Most of them had survived the war and had vivid recollection of the enemy occupation. Whatever animosity they harbored, however, it was subdued that day. The crowd cheered loudly for everyone and everything that moved before them. All the villages had a float and every military service was represented in the parade -- including marching bands.

As the parade was about to start, I braced myself against the possibility of emoting publicly. When we entered the parade route, the crowd roared. As we approached the reviewing stand full of military and political dignitaries, I gave the traditional command to salute, "Eyes Right." At that instant, as though directed to do so on cue, the crowd "returned" our salute with deafening silence.

For a few minutes, the only audible sound was from our boots pounding the pavement in unison. Just a few years earlier, similar boots pounded the original road all along the coast as Marines charged from their landing crafts, crossed the road under heavy gunfire, and fought their way inland against an entrenched enemy. For 1200 Marines, it was to be their last crossing. About 6000 of their comrades returned to the beach on stretchers.

My effort to control my emotions failed. I was marching solely on disciplined automation. Although tears swelled, I was able to connect with the faces in the crowd, young and old. Without uttering a sound, I heard the message radiating from their faces -- of appreciation, of admiration, and of affection -- for the Marines passing in review, for whom Marine Drive was originally dedicated. I, a liberated son of Guam, had the privilege of marching at that parade with a company of United States Marines who were, in effect, my liberators.

In the ensuing years, I have participated in Liberation Day parades as a general officer of Marines and as a Member of the U. S. Congress. But, I was never again to feel and embrace a moment such as I did that day in 1958.

I tip my hat to Senator Bob Klitzkie, himself a Marine, and to his fellow Senators for sponsoring the bill to rededicate Marine Drive. It is a magnanimous expression of remembrance. Unlike the typical inanimate monoliths that serve as memorials and centerpieces at annual ceremonies, Marine (Corps) Drive is a living memorial, a touchstone, a reminder to future generations how dearly we paid for the freedom we enjoy.

Happy Birthday, Marines!