



An Unglamorous Way To Be a Fallen

Staff Article

In the last four years, 40 Marines have fallen from buildings, balconies, windows, and roofs; four were permanently disabled and later discharged from the Corps. Over half of the Marines had been drinking alcohol, and most were lance corporals and corporals. Here are a few of their stories:

Fallen Marine Gets Metal

After a tough day's work, it's not uncommon to see Marines hanging out on the catwalks of their barracks. Whether you're smoking a cigarette, having a cold

drink, or talking to your buddies, it's a place to unwind. Throw in a ledge to sit on, and you've got a view. Sounds relaxing, and it is, until you lose your balance and fall several stories to the ground. Three Marines learned the hard way that there is a better place to sit than on a ledge, especially when they've been drinking.

After a night on the town, a lance corporal and several of his friends returned to their barracks. Not wanting to set off the smoke alarm, the lance corporal decided to sit on the window ledge of his room to smoke a cigarette. After he finished, he tried to stand



Photograph by Capt. Joe Cleary

but lost his balance and fell. The lance corporal landed on a strip of grass between the sidewalk and parking lot. Doctors placed five metal pegs and two pins in his body to reset his broken tibia and fibula. The doctors also found that his blood-alcohol level was 0.25 percent.

In a similar incident, a sergeant returned to his barracks after an evening at the E-club and headed for the stairwell-railing for a smoke. He sat on the railing and lit up. He had taken a few puffs when he lost his balance and fell 14 feet, breaking his back and severely bruising his head. At the hospital, doctors said his

blood-alcohol level was 0.29 percent and that he nearly had broken his neck.

What Was He Thinking?

A corporal was talking with his friends while sitting on the second-deck railing of his barracks when he lost his balance. He landed on his head, fracturing his skull and causing internal bleeding. After barely surviving his brush with death, he told his leaders that he had been drinking beer and was on pain-killers at the time.

I Just Want a Ribbon

Do I still get my sea-service ribbon? That's what one Marine asked after a deployment to the Mediterranean.

It had been a long five-and-a-half-month deployment, and the only thing that stood between a staff sergeant and home was the week-long transatlantic voyage, so he thought. Here is his story:

It was the last night of liberty in Malaga, Spain, and time (0130) to return to the ship. While walking back to the ship along a dimly lit path, the staff sergeant encountered a dead end—a wall. Time was ticking, and he wanted to get back before his Marines. He decided the fastest way to the ship was to climb over the wall, rather than trying to find another route. After all, Marines overcome obstacles, right? That may be what he thought before he came crashing down on the other side. He fell 25 feet and crushed his hip. Yes, he had been drinking.

The good news is that he made it back before his Marines: He was flown back to Camp Lejeune where he underwent surgery. He was awarded the ribbon because he met the 90-day requirement.

Fifteen minutes after the staff sergeant fell, another Marine showed up, but not to help. This Marine came the same way the staff sergeant did—from 25 feet above. He wasn't any more sober, and he, too, suffered broken bones.

These Marines probably didn't think they could get seriously injured on liberty, but they did. After having a few beers, their judgment and sense of equilibrium obviously diminished.

Some of the Marines were able to return to duty after recovering from broken backs, limbs, and skulls. However, not every Marine is that fortunate. 🍷