



Marine Corps League Westfield River Valley Detachment 141 Westfield, Massachusetts 01069

(For further information contact
Frank Real, public affairs officer at
413-348-7885 or fgreal@aol.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Marine Leaguer's Hone Shooting Skills At PA Match

FT. INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa.—More than 170 Marine Corps League members turned out here for the 2010 Service Rifle Match on a weekend in September to demonstrate the tenant dating from 1775 that “every Marine is a rifleman.”

The match was the 31st in a series sponsored by the MCL Department of Pennsylvania that began at a range in College Park and, except for one other year, has been held at the former Army Base at Indiantown Gap, now a Pennsylvania National Guard base sporting World War II barracks that housed the Marines and Guard members on duty that weekend.

Dave Pavey, a retired Marine combat photographer, master sergeant who was event chairman, said an Ohio Marine veteran scored a perfect 200 at the match. “There were a lot of 198’s, 197’s and 195’s. They can be attributed to several old snipers in the mix.”

The shooters, Marine veterans from Maryland, Massachusetts, West Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania, spent two days reliving their days on active duty when they were required to qualify on the rifle range, first at boot camp and then annually at their duty stations, except when they manned the front lines in wars from Korea through Afghanistan.

Korean War Veteran Frederick Shannon of West Springfield, Mass., had not fired a rifle in more than 50 years when the weapon of the day was the M1 developed at the Springfield Armory near his home. He is a member of Westfield River Valley, Detachment 141, headquartered in Westfield, Mass.

- more -

“At boot camp in 1952 at Perris Island, S.C., our whole platoon qualified at the rifle range, we graduated as the Honor Platoon and were all promoted to Private First Class,” he recalled. Shannon confessed he crossed fired at another recruit’s target that helped him qualify. “It helped the entire platoon.”

Another Detachment 141 shooter, Springfield Patrolman Joel B. (JB), Stern, fired a 195 and is a veteran of rifle matches as a member of the U.S. Navy Reserve Rifle Team. He has traveled to several such events including the national matches at Camp Perry, Ohio.

As a Marine reservist I 1990, Stern deployed to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in Operation Desert Storm, where he watched the Iraqi oil wells burn and took part in several actions.

In 1991, after serving with the Marine Reserves, he transferred to the Army Reserve as a military policeman. His unit was deployed to Kuwait in 2003. In 2007, as a member of the Navy Reserve he again deployed to the Middle East with the rank of Master of Arms, First Class.

Facing that shooting expertise, Shannon was determined to outscore Stern or “at least do as good,” even though he had never fired an M16, a much different rifle than the M1 he had fired for score years ago. “It was overpowering as I did not want to make a mistake in front of my peers. I received plenty of help to familiar myself with the M16.”

He had good coaching from Ron Smith of the Penn-York Detachment 445, Towanda, Pa., and Bill Laird, Aka Billy G, of the Bob Smith Detachment 784, Hummelstown, Pa. “They were really great and help me overcome my anxiety,” Shannon said. As a Marine Reservist in the 1950’s, he shot an “expert” score with an M1.

Marine Pavey said .30 caliber bullets are not allowed at the Ft. Indiantown Gap range so the match was limited to the M16, the rifle used in Vietnam and in the current conflicts in the Iraq and Afghanistan. “In the future, we may go to another range in Altoona, PA, where we can fire the M1, M14 and M16’s.”

PA Department Commandant Leanna Dietrich was on hand to assist the Marines range safety officers. The familiar chant of “ready on the right, ready on the left. All ready on the firing line,” rang out throughout the event. At the conclusion of the shoot, the Marines collect all the brass and policed the area before departing the range.

“It was a great two days and all were eager to demonstrate their shooting skills,” Commandant Dietrich commented.



Marines Veterans Take Aim

Top photo, red dots on the targets show shooters score. The red dot directly below the bullseye is a bullseye. In center photos, Shooters stand ready for standing round, left, and right photo, command center is manned by range officers, Sitting with red cover and yellow band is Corpsman, Above left, Bill Laird coaches Fred Shannon on M16, who, standing readies to fire. Event Chairman \Dave Pavey, with microphone, instructs shooters on safety rules as Pennsylvania MCL Dept. Commandant Leanna Dietrich checks down line . In lower photos, Joel B. Stern, let, aims in for kneeling round. He shot a 195 for the day. Center is event patch issued to shooters attending event,. At right, shooter gets ready for sitting position. (MCL photos by Fran Real)

