

# CHATTANOOGA

THE FIGHTIN' 311 + MOVES SOUTH

We left General Chesty and his fledgling band of Marines in Philadelphia securing the area and providing back up for General George and his Continentals but it was time to move on. General George cut orders for Chesty and his Marines to head south and secure a beachhead at the Tennessee River at Ross Landing. General George suggested they leave the Pennsylvania Station about quarter to four the next day, travel down through the Carolinas where they could pick up some ham and eggs from the locals for rations and continue through Georgia and into Tennessee. Chesty thought about it for a minute and declined saying that his Marines had gotten soft from occupation duty and numerous forays to Tun's Tavern for medicinal purposes. Besides that, the Fightin' 311 was increasing in ranks every nine months and it was getting harder to provide rations and health care benefits. So General Chesty hiked his Marines across Pennsylvania west to the Ohio River and the Amtrak station at Cincinnati. Upon their arrival Chesty noticed that there were great numbers of Native Americans on or about the area. He was informed by the station master that these were the Cincinnati Reds who owned the train station and the floating crap game down on the river.

The Fightin' 311 + loaded up lock, stock and families and headed south to Ross Landing on the Tennessee River. On the way down Marine Pvt. Alton Miller composed a song about the trip but as they were nearing Nashville the train was met by a Congressman named Crockett that said he had a message from General George transferring Pvt. Miller out of the Marines and into the Army with the rank of Captain. Seems General George was putting together a swing band and Pvt. Miller's was well known throughout the land a great musician. Pvt. Miller finished the song years later but when Chesty heard it he couldn't say that the words were actually true to what the trip was like.

Chesty and his officers met Chief John Ross upon arrival at Ross Landing. John Ross was the leader of the powerful Cherokee nation which had settled in the area in 1777. Chesty said that General George had sent them to help out in any way that they could. Chief Ross said they were in pretty good shape but were lacking in security and asked if Chesty and his men could secure a post up on the mountain that overlooked Chattanooga and be used for an early warning system. Chesty said "No Problem".

The next day General Chesty got his officers and non-coms together and formulated a plan to scale the mountain and set up an OP. Chesty told Lt. Yunk to find some way to signal when they reached the summit. After the meeting Cpl. Basilone told Chesty that there was an Indian who wanted to join the Marines, name of Hayes. He was here from Arizona visiting relatives and wanted to join up. Chesty said no problem and Pvt. Hayes was now a member of the Fightin' 311 +.

It took the Marines a couple of days to get up the mountain and Lt. Yunk led his men courageously and by example stopping only at Ruby Falls to bathe and change socks. Lt. Yunk did not want his Marines to be known as "High Smellers". After two days and into the third they secured the post on the summit. Cpl. Basilone noted that it would take a messenger two days to get back down the mountain to tell Chesty. Lt. Yunk thought about it and decided to dye a blanket red and paint USMC on it in gold letters, skin the tallest tree on the point of the mountain and hang the flag for Chesty to see. Pvt. Hayes volunteered to shinny up the tree and hang the flag. One of the men was heard to remark "Wish we had a picture of that."

Another problem was feeding the troops. Chief Ross told Chesty that his cooks couldn't keep up with the market so Chesty suggested he put on a second shift. They could only find one cook in the whole village that was willing to work the night shift for time and a half. Her name was Little Debbie and she cooked really good pastries. Because she worked at night the Marines called her pastries "Moon Pies" which became a staple for the region and continues to this day.

So General Chesty and his Marines settled in once again to occupational duty on the Tennessee River. One day Chesty was bathing in the river and riders approached and he recognized the Congressman that he had met on their trip down. Crockett said he and his band of Tennesseans were bound for Texas to back up Col. Travis. Seems the Texicans were outnumbered 500-1 and they were going to even up the sides and asked Chesty to ride along. This was Chesty's kind of fight and what his Marines were trained for but said he couldn't

make a move without orders from General George but said he'd put in for orders and follow west when he could.

One day General Chesty was sitting out on the patio of Little Debbie's pastry shop sipping a local brew when he noticed Lt. Yunk running around the field pulling a contraption with a string. The thing would go up in the air and make a couple loops and crash back to earth. "What is that thing?" asked Chesty. "I don't know," replied the Lieutenant, "something the Cherokee kids were playing with. They call it an "air wing" but it doesn't stay up in the air very long. I think I can make some modifications to the design and use thinner sticks and add some counterweight to the backside I can get it to stay in the air longer." "How many of these things are there?" asked Chesty. "Well, I'm really not sure. The Cherokees have a bunch of them but I'm pretty sure that this is the first Marine Air Wing that I know of."

WELL, MAYBE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN QUITE THAT WAY

## *Welcome to Chattanooga!!*

On behalf of the reunion committee we welcome you to TOMCAT REUNION 2010. We have put together a nice program and there are plenty of things for you to see and do while you are here. We have lined up two tours, a full day on Thursday and a half day on Friday. You will have ample time to spend with your friends outside of the collective get togethers and do some exploring on your own. The area is rich in Civil War History and you will see that in the Chickamauga Museum and Battlefield tour and Lookout Mountain "Battle in the Clouds". For those of you who can walk with no problem you can visit Ruby Falls and Rock City and we'll have lunch and sail down the Tennessee River on the famous Southern Belle.

The Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel is a historic landmark and has been restored to its former greatness as a main railroad link from Cincinnati to Tennessee. It's eye catching from the minute you walk into the lobby and are greeted by music from the Big Band era. There are five eating areas in the hotel and numerous shops. You can spend a good day just taking in everything at the hotel and then relax on benches that are surrounded by beautiful gardens in the station platform area. When we went there last November we were impressed by everything and everyone. We know your stay will be enjoyable.

**Reservations: 1-800-872-2529 State that you are member of VMF/VMA-311 Reunion group and specify if you want single or double king rooms.**

Some of us will be checking into the hotel on Monday the 6<sup>th</sup>. If you plan to make a week of it and are going to be in the hotel Monday or Tuesday look us up. I think Tuesday night some of us were getting together and doing the dinner cruise on the Southern Belle so the more the merrier.

Friday night, time to be announced, we will be holding out fundraiser auction either in the banquet room or Hospitality room (it's big enough!). My auctioneer, Ralphie Reed, hopefully will be in attendance to sell you some things for the good of the group. Bring something, buy something! Works out great.

Hopefully the Marines from VMA-311 will be able to attend but obviously they cannot commit until getting back off deployment in the summer. When I talked to Col. Gough in November he said that they had already marked the reunion dates on the calendar and were planning to attend barring unforeseen circumstances. They are always a great addition to our reunions.

Those of you who have computers can visit the Chattanooga Choo Choo hotel at [www.choochoo.com](http://www.choochoo.com) or get an overview of the area at [www.chattanoogaafun.com](http://www.chattanoogaafun.com) we will have maps, discounts and information in your welcome packets when you check into the hotel. Pick up your packets at the Penn Station hospitality room straight through the lobby and down the right side of the loading platform about 50 yards.

Again thank you for joining us. If you have never attended our reunions you will be a stranger for a very short time. We're all Marines and all TOMCATS. What greater common bond is there than that!

Jim and Sue Galchick 330-337-9383  
Les and Bonita McMillan 330-939-2827  
George and Jackie Phander 610-584-5654

SEMPER FIDELIS- ONCE A TOMCAT- ALWAYS A TOMCAT