

as a nonrequired collateral duty within the Corps for every unit battalion-size or larger or at least for each base.”

Stodghill also expressed a desire for a “Piper to the Corps.”

“After Marine pipers achieve official status, I would like to see a billet at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps in Washington, D.C., for a ‘Piper to the Corps.’ The billet would last for three years and the piper chosen from among the ranks of the Marine pipers.

“If a billet were created at Headquarters, Marine Corps for a ‘Piper to the Corps,’ the piper’s main purpose would be to aid the Commandant in whatever role determined and to perform ceremonial duties in Washington and wherever the Commandant travels.”

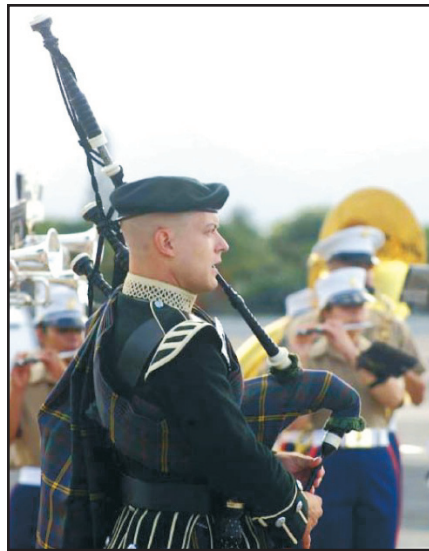
Capt Stodghill listed several benefits that official pipers would provide to the Corps.

- Availability of pipers for any event
- Performance in functions important to Marines’ morale (e.g., deployments, forced marches, physical training events, parties and other ceremonies)
- Professionalism of pipers coinciding with the professionalism of Marines
- Continuity of historical tradition and enrichment of present traditions
- Use as a powerful tool in Marine Corps recruiting and public relations

MSgt Bailey championed the Marine piping cause when he said, “Having a piper available can assist an already overworked Marine band for functions. [To provide] live music at a mess night or to augment the band at a Marine Corps ball for certain tunes can really enhance the event. A piper is a good instrument for field music. The sound carries over great distance, and the music is easy to march to. Beats playing a CD!”

MSgt Plessinger said, “[Bagpipes provide] motivation, especially if they ever get the opportunity to lead troops into combat, since it has been said throughout history that a piper and his pipes are worth a hundred guns. The bagpipes are part of our heritage, and in today’s world we have to give up too much as it is. This is one bit of heritage that can be carried on with relatively little cost since any piper in the Marine Corps that is out there performing his duties as a Marine and a piper is doing it at his own cost.

“Marines like doing anything with pizzazz and flair and doing anything to spread good will, hope and motivation or just to give that special touch to make someone feel special. Just to be able to spread the good will in the Marine Corps—what better public relations tool is there? I think the pipes are like a hidden weapon.”



**Above: In August 2001, Capt Stodghill and the Marine Forces Pacific Band performed during a solemn ceremony as the remains of the Marines of 2d Marine Raider Bn who had been missing since their August 1942 raid on Butaritari Island in Makin Atoll were placed on an aircraft in Honolulu for transport to Washington, D.C., and interment at Arlington National Cemetery.**

**Below: MSgt Phil Plessinger, USMC (Ret) roused spirits at the 1999 MCAS, Futenma, Okinawa, Japan, Marine Corps Birthday celebrations.**



The members of the Marine Pipers Network want the Corps to recognize pipers in an official capacity.

Cronin said, “The bottom line truth of the matter is this: The Marine Corps will always have its magnificent bands for musical and ceremonial support, and individual Marine bagpipers will likely remain few and far between. Even so, they will continue to be pressed into service whenever and wherever they are. That

being the case, why not try and do that the very best way we can? The time is right for the Corps to officially recognize and support Marine pipers.”

While it has taken years to approach such a quest, the goal of the network—“achieving official status for Marine pipers and for piping in the Marine Corps”—will not simply fade away into the night. The network is continuously growing and opening its doors to new members. The Marine Pipers Network boasts members from around the globe—men and women from various backgrounds and ethnicities.

Stodghill said, “In our network right now, we have members, associate members and supporting members from a wide and diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, from Scottish and Irish to African-American, Hispanic and Italian. One of the top bands in the world is in Tokyo, Japan.

“While it may seem strange, the popularity of the pipes across ethnic lines only makes sense in the light of the fact that the bagpipes themselves—in one form or another and at one time or another—have been an integral part of every European, Middle Eastern and most African and Asian cultures.

“It is the second-oldest instrument known to mankind, preceded only by the rudimentary horn. The current form of the pipes has only been ‘distilled’ into that form by the Scots. Perhaps the reason it is so tied to the Scots is they are the last culture to embrace and integrate them, bringing them into the modern age.”

Marine pipers share the dream to reach official status within the Corps. This dream will continue in the hearts, hands and lungs of pipers throughout the Corps.

As bright, young faces join the ranks of “The Few, the Proud,” a low moan echoes from centuries ago. A moan birthed in a sheepskin bag with two wooden limbs reverberates across the highlands of one battle to be heard today in every Marine battle “in the air, on land and sea.”

Marine bagpipers will ever remain “Yours Aye and Semper Fidelis.”

*Editor’s note: Joy E. Stodghill, a journalism major at William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss., is co-lifestyles editor for The Cobbler student-led newspaper and co-editor of the Crusader yearbook.*

*Stodghill comes from a Marine Corps family. Her father, the Rev. John W. Stodghill, is a Marine veteran, and her brother, Capt Justin B. Stodghill, is currently stationed at Marine Aviation Training Support Group 90, Pensacola, Fla.*

