



Press



Release



Norman D. Epkin

Master Gunnery Sergeant (USMC Ret)

November 27, 1926 – February 5, 2016



MGySgt Norman Davis Epkin was the last Montford Point Marine to serve on active duty. His retirement ended an era of Marine History that began on June 25, 1941, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8802. The order said in part: "In affirming the policy of full participation in the defense program by all persons regardless of color, race, creed, or national origin...all departments of the government, including the Armed Forces, shall lead the way in erasing discrimination over color or race." Blacks were then recruited into the Marine Corps but were trained separately.

Norman Davis Epkin was born in Jackson, Mississippi, on November 27, 1926. Later moving to Louisiana, he graduated from St. Joseph High School (St. Joseph, LA) in June 1944, entering the Marine Corps 13 months later on July 10, 1945. He underwent recruit training at Montford Point, North Carolina, across the New River from Camp Lejeune, NC. Monthford Point was the World War II training area for black Marines until September 9, 1949. After that date, black recruits were trained at Parris Island, South Carolina and San Diego, California.



Master Gunnery Sergeant Epkin's Marine Corps career has spanned 30-years and three wars (WWII, Korea, and Vietnam). After serving at the Oldest Post of the Corps (8th and I) from 1946-1948, he ended his first enlistment with the Marine Corps, but re-entered four years later in February 1952 and was transferred to Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, just a few miles from the former Montford Point training area. He has served overseas in Korea, Hawaii, Okinawa and Vietnam. His stateside duty stations include three separate tours at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC (District of Columbia). He is a graduate of the culinary Art School of New Haven, Connecticut (1966), and the Club Manager School of Patuxent River, Maryland (1977). His awards and decorations include: the Congressional Gold Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal (9th award), World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal (3 stars), United National Service Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Vietnamese Service Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal (1 star).

Brother Epkin has been a faithful member of Fort Foote Baptist Church for 22 years. He served on the fellowship Ministry for 12 years and as the Fellowship Ministry Chair for two years. He has been a committed member of the Men's Choir for over 12 years. He married the former Verla Mae Walker of White Castle, LA and they have three children, Norman, Jr. (1962), Vernetta (1973), and Nathaniel (1978).

