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Montford Point
Marine Association, Inc.

WWII Vet Follows His “Drum Major Instinct”



One of the first black Marines,
tells *The Root* why he still
serves his community after
all these years.

Mr. Theodore Peters

Press



Release

THE ROOT

WWII Vet Follows His 'Drum Major Instinct'

By: [Edmund Newton](#) | Posted: January 13, 2012 at 1:44 PM

This profile is the first in a yearlong series titled [The Root's Salute to Unsung Heroes](#), which will put a weekly spotlight on African Americans who have been recognized by the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) as [Drum Majors for Service](#). The inspiration for the honor is the spirit of community service that Martin Luther King Jr. described in his 1968 sermon "[The Drum Major Instinct](#)."



Photo Provided By: Sgt. Alvin Williams/U.S. Marine Corps

At 88, retired Chicago transit worker and ex-Marine sometimes wonders if he's getting too old for all the demanding volunteer work he does.

The thought comes up while he's telling you about some of the things he's involved with at Mount Calvary Baptist Church, where he's a deacon. Let's see -- there's the program to help out the neighborhood elderly, whether it's shoveling snow in front of their houses ("I stopped doing that myself about two years ago") or just knocking on their doors to see if they're warm enough on really cold days.

"There's five or six of us who work together in the inner core," says Peters, whose volunteer work prompted the White House to designate him as one of more than 1,000 recipients of the government's [MLK Drum Major for Service Awards](#). "If somebody's gas is cut off, we can take care of that. We go down to the gas or light company and pay the bill for them."

Then there's the church food basket, with monthly deliveries from a centralized Chicago food bank so the needy can pick up supplies at the West Side church. And also emergency supplies, which volunteers hand out to people whose homes are damaged by fire or who might be experiencing power outages or other family catastrophes. All of this comes under Peters' bailiwick as chairman of the church's trustee ministry and member of the men's ministry.

And that's not even mentioning the work he does as a leader of the Montford Point Marine Association chapter, what with Toys for Tots and Christmas food baskets for the poor ("First-class food with all the trimmings"). Plus, don't forget Peters' involvement in the long, hard campaign to gain official recognition for the heroic efforts of black U.S. Marines during World War II.

This last, of course, culminated last November, when [President Barack Obama signed a bill](#) awarding the Montford Point Marines the Congressional Gold Medal, raising the veterans group to the status of the buffalo soldiers and the Tuskegee Airmen.

So that's a lot of volunteering. "I might be getting too old for all of this daily volunteering," he says. "But maybe not."

Why does he do it? "Have you ever done something for someone who really needed it?" he asks. "You know how you feel after that? That's the way God blesses you, giving you that good feeling. That's the way you get your reward."
