

Nation's highest civilian award earned by Montford Point trailblazers

Sgt. Marcy Sanchez
Press Chief

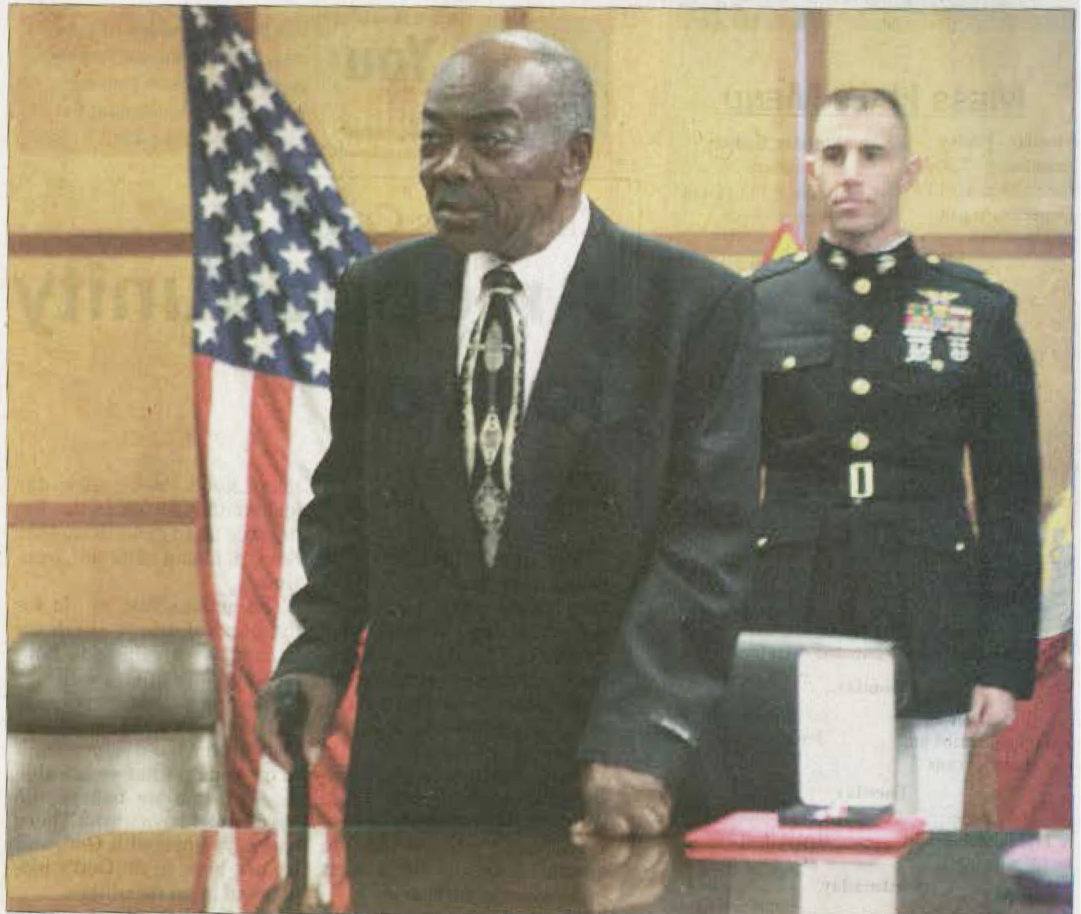
From 1942 to 1949 during a time of war and segregation, a distinguished group of men undertook arduous basic training at Camp Montford Point, N.C. More than 60 years later, the Marine Corps' first African American Marines were honored for their service.

On November 11, 2011, Congress passed a legislation to honor the service of men who trained at the segregated boot camp. The Surviving Marines were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian award.

The Rev. Frankie Washington was awarded his congressional gold medal replica at a ceremony aboard the Air Station, Aug. 31.

The ceremony included members of Washington's family and Marines of Marine Aircraft Group 39.

"They paved the way for Marines, not just myself because I'm African American but the whole Marine Corps, that's



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The Rev. Frankie Washington stands in front of a full room of Marines and family members during a ceremony aboard the Air Station, Aug. 31. Washington was awarded the congressional gold medal for his service in the Marine Corps after going through a segregated boot camp located at Montford Point, N.C. during the 40's.

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why we're so diverse now," said Cpl. Gordon Musel, an administrative clerk for Marine Aircraft Group 31. "If it wasn't for their perseverance and heart to keep going the Marine Corps wouldn't be the same."

The Marines of Montford Point served in multiple wars throughout the 20th Century and despite the segregated training, excelled in ranks both enlisted and officer.

During the ceremony, the Marines of MAG-31 were privileged with words from Washington, a resident of the Lowcountry, describing his experiences and lessons learned from life and the Corps.

"There isn't anything better than Marines," said Washington. "Keep on working, be faithful to each other, be honest with each other, because when you get in the woods out there you're going to need all the help you can get."

"It's a huge honor to be a part of this and to hear his stories," said Musel. "I wish we had more time to talk to him."

The congressional gold medal is awarded to those who have performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and culture.

