

A Taste of Victory

by LtCol Thomas W. Williams

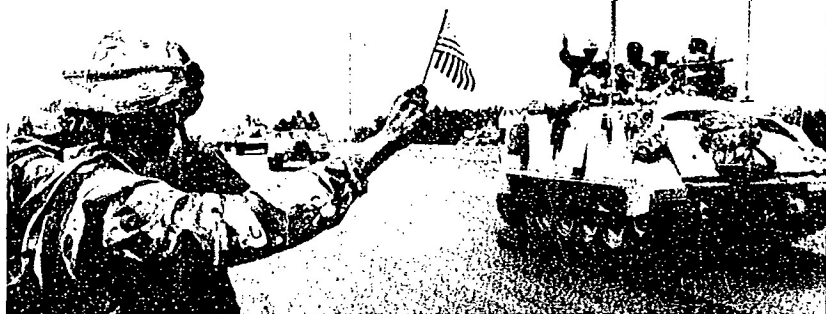
Although thousands of Marines worked to liberate Kuwait, only a handful had the privilege to ride triumphant into Kuwait City. One of those few now shares that experience with all.

The coalition campaign to liberate Kuwait is now over. Peace is at hand. The healing process can now begin. However, for many Marines who participated, the end was anticlimactic. Only a relatively small group of 34 Marines, a correspondent, and a corpsman had the pleasure of experiencing the total emotional satisfaction of victory. This group was the I MEF commanding general's mobile forward command post. At midafternoon on 27 February 1991, when Kuwait City was declared secure from most enemy forces, LtGen Walter E. Boomer directed that he would personally survey the damage done to the city by taking his mobile command post in for a look. There are many hundreds of thousands of Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, and Marines who were just as deserving of this honor as the I MEF command group. It is for them that I am writing this, so they too can share in that special deep feeling of profes-

sional satisfaction.

Throughout the days of the campaign that brought us to this moment—204 days to be precise—much hard work, personal sacrifice, and even loss of life saw the coalition molded into a cohesive professional military force with only one purpose—to liberate the small country of Kuwait from a tyrannical aggressor. For the few who made this victory ride through Kuwait City, the hardships were paled into insignificance by the cheering crowds of Kuwaiti citizens. Initially the numbers were few, but in time thousands turned out waving flags and praising the liberation of their country. Many of the small Kuwaiti girls were wearing red, green, black, and white dresses representing the Kuwaiti flag. Many Kuwaitis were standing on top of destroyed or abandoned Iraqi tanks and other Iraqi equipment.

Throughout the course of the ride,





LtGen Boomer surrounded by members of the 1 MEF mobile command post shortly after the liberation of Kuwait.

horrible evidence could be seen of the Iraqi occupation. Every highway overpass had Iraqi-constructed concrete sentry posts and anti-aircraft gun emplacements. Hundreds of stripped cars were left as mute evidence that Iraq had intended to strip the country of anything of value. Once beautiful luxury hotels were completely gutted by fire, and most shop windows were shattered and their contents taken away. Just a short distance away, in the desert outside the city, oil wells burned on, the work of Iraqi vandals.

The resultant smoke arising from these wells created an eerie Dante's inferno, blackening the sky charcoal gray. At midday, it gave one the creepy feeling that it was really late evening. This, however, was made tolerable by the cheering throngs of people who had come to welcome LtGen Boomer and his small command group. The full rush of emotion was greatest when mothers held their small children in the air, yelling in broken English, "Thank you for coming."

There can be no better tribute to our

collective cause than to have witnessed this degree of appreciation. Our Nation, as a whole, has every right to be proud that this righteous cause was pursued.



> LtCol Williams served as the operations security officer for the 1 MEF mobile command post during the culmination of Operation DESERT STORM. He is now stationed at Camp Pendleton acting as the officer-in-charge of the 1 MEF command element advance party.

Quote to Ponder:

The First Engagement

No plan of operations can look with any certainty beyond the first meeting with the major forces of the enemy. . . . All consecutive acts of war are, therefore, not executions of a premeditated plan, but spontaneous actions, directed by military tact. . . . It is obvious that theoretical knowledge will not suffice, but that here the qualities of mind and character come to a free, practical and artistic expression, although schooled by military training and led by experiences from military history or from life itself.

—Helmuth von Moltke
Quoted in *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*
Spring, 1989