



John Larimer with daughter Dani-Ella

East Finchley's US Marine

By Daphne Chamberlain

Anywhere in the world, when the US Marine Corps celebrate their corporate birthday they cut a cake - even if it's just with a knife in the mud. The oldest Marine present cuts the first slice, and then hands the second slice to the youngest.

Their 225th birthday was last November, and the Marines of the American Embassy held a ball in Grosvenor Square. The cake-cutter was East Finchley resident John Larimer (who managed to fit in the M.O.D. Marine party at Heathrow later on that night).

John, a retired Gunnery Sergeant originally from Indiana, had 12 years distinguished service, half of them in Vietnam. After a temporary spell there, he waived his US tour relief, and went back for six years. Why? "I've often asked myself that. I think I felt I was good at what I was doing."

For Valour

For most of the time he was a supporting arms controller, with spells as naval air observer, guard officer and radio telegraph operator. When he returned to Vietnam, though, he spent 13 months in the actual Marine Infantry, and it was then he won his Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" for valour.

It was awarded after his battalion had come under sudden attack, "Completely disregarding his own safety, Sergeant Larimer exposed himself to hostile fire as he immediately moved to a vantage point where he could best observe the action

and direct counterfire."

"You rely on your training", he says, "and do it automatically."

Everyone in the service - cooks, typists and all - go through the same basic training. "Once a marine, always a marine."

World Traveller

That part of his life, though, which brought him a clutch of decorations and assignments round the world, ended in 1973. However, he continued travelling as security professional and consultant to governments, international organizations and the private sector in the Americas, Europe, the Middle-East and Africa.

John first visited London in 1968, in the year of the anti-Vietnam protest, which took him by surprise. When he returned years later, he couldn't find his favourite bars when sober, but after a little lubrication they re-appeared.

He came back in 1994, because his wife, Josephine, whom he met when she was teaching in Kenya, is a Finchley woman. Their daughter, Dani-Ella, nearly eight, goes to Holy Trinity school, and John is a valuable member of *The Archer* team.

Fairacres Monday Club

By Daphne Chamberlain

Happy birthday to Fairacres Monday Club, aged 13 and a quarter! *The Archer* missed the party, and that was our loss. Where else would you see original paintings with frames financed by supermodel Caprice? What other home-made cakes have raised £1,200 for the North London Hospice?

Fairacres is run by the Jewish Blind and Disabled Society. Built on the site of a riding school in East End Road, it comprises individual flats, each adapted for the needs of the disabled. Accommodation is completely private and self-contained, with tenants paying their own rent and living their own lives. Outside specialised assistance is available, and wardens are on call around the clock.

The First

There are six (nearly seven) of these projects, but Fairacres was the original. It was started by the late Cecil Rosen, founder of JBD, in 1987, and opened by Margaret Thatcher.

Even before the official opening, the Monday Club had started. It's a weekly social gathering run by Reuby and Rene Hyams, a husband and wife team from Elmshurst Crescent, and Sylvia Lee. Rene belongs to the Muswell Hill League of Jewish Women. So does Reuby - which is apparently quite kosher. They helped set up the club. Rene, who is nearly 80, makes those cakes, while 83 year-old Reuby organizes the entertainment.

That's Entertainment

Outside entertainers alternate with in-house afternoons, compered by Reuby. "You should be on the stage", I told him, only to find that in his wartime army

days he had been.

Michael Solomons, one of the tenants, often puts together a music programme from his own collection of tapes and usually comes up with something for everyone.

Michael, who has cerebral palsy, painted the pictures framed by Caprice.

I chatted with Leonie, an 87 year-old helper who was involved with Denis Norden's mother in an East End club for Jewish blind, and had a

laugh with Sandra, one of the wheelchair dance group run by East Finchley's Lesley Chown. I met Gordon, a blind bridge-player, and May Hass, who miraculously survived wartime execution. And, LBC listeners, this is where you find "Sippy of East Finchley".

The Monday Club has members of all ages and different disabilities. They are a lively group, with many stories to tell. I hope to bring you some of them in future editions.



Reuby Hyams (left) and Michael Solomons photo by Daphne Chamberlain

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Our Jordan's Been Today

By Reuby Hyams

Bits of paper, a biscuit crumb
An apple core, a well sucked thumb.
My books are scattered on the floor,
There are finger marks upon the door.

The telephone has been raised higher,
A metal guard around the fire.
The reading-lamp's been disconnected,
The newspapers are all collected.

Old pens and pencils strewn about,
We've even put the potty out.
There are no expensive toys,
But quite a lot of happy noise
Of furniture being moved about,
Of laughter and a happy shout.

A bright red mug, a special spoon,
His presence makes the night like noon.
A chubby nose, a little chin,
Several teeth, an impish grin.

Gone home to bed, the day seems flat.
Just look what he's done to my hat!
That little lad who means just love,
I think he's sent us from above.
For I have just described the scene
- Our beloved grandson Jordan's been.

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