

UC San Diego

# UC San Diego News Center

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By Erika Johnson

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## UC San Diego and Marine Corps Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Camp Matthews Land Transfer



*Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications*

More than one million marines underwent training at Camp Matthews, part of a large military base that existed from 1917 to 1964 on the site where the University of California, San Diego now resides. More than a dozen marksmanship training facilities, including rifle, pistol and skeet ranges, served new recruits until the base was decommissioned and transferred to the university in 1964—the same year the campus's first undergraduate students arrived.

On Monday, the UC San Diego Veteran's Association held a special celebration in Town Square to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Camp Matthews land transfer. More than 75 campus and community members gathered for the occasion, including leaders from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego; alumnus and San Diego City Councilmember Sherri Lightner; and family members of UC San Diego's founding chancellor, the late Herb York.

The ceremony began with a flag presentation by the U.S. Marine Corps Color Guard, and was followed by a performance of the National Anthem by the Marine Corps Band. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Juan González offered a welcome to those in attendance. "This 50th anniversary of the Camp Matthews land transfer is a momentous occasion, an opportunity to recognize a significant point of history for this institution and for the Marine Corps," said González. "I hope you agree with me that this land and this valuable resource that was deeded to UC San Diego has been put to good use."



Former Camp Matthews instructors and trainees were in attendance, including guest of honor Jerry Kranz, an Iwo Jima survivor, who shared his memories of Camp Matthews. Colonel Christopher B. Nash, commanding officer of Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, provided insight on the shared goals and historical partnership between UC San Diego and the U.S. Marine Corps.

"In the second decade of a new century our nation is in need more than ever of young leaders motivated to make the world a better place, able to sift through distractions, identify central issues they are facing...and generate positive change," said Col. Nash during the ceremony. "The Marine Corps and the University of California, San Diego are two institutions that develop, foster and nurture those human beings who will lead our nation into the next century."

In memory of the original land transfer—which took place between Chancellor Herbert York and Bruno Hochmuth, commander of Marine Corps Recruit Depot—the Camp Matthews memorial was presented anew to the crowd by Sargent Major Bill Paxton, reinforcing the significance of place and partnership. Sybil York, wife of the late Herb York, recalled the initial ceremony in 1964, remarking that the ceremony "was a wonderful replay" of the first.



The celebration brought back emotions for Leonard Haff, who took part in marksmanship training at Camp Matthews in July 1958. “It makes me feel like I’m 75 going on 18...I practically remember everything.” He recalled the trek taken as a recruit from the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, over Mount Soledad and through Torrey Pines to Camp Matthews. “It was the first time I had ever seen the ocean.” After serving four years in the marines, he obtained a Ph.D. and

returned to UC San Diego where he taught mathematics for more than three decades, coming full circle.