

BULLDOG MASCOTS IN THE MARINE CORPS

The tenacious fighting of the Marines at Belleau Wood in during World War I earned them the sobriquet, “Teufel Hunden” or “Devil Dogs.” Teufel-Hunden were the vicious, wild, and ferocious mountain dogs of Bavarian folklore. It wasn't long before a recruiting poster painted by Charles B. Falls appeared showing a dachshund wearing a spiked helmet and Iron Cross. The dog was running from an English bulldog wearing a helmet with the globe and anchor insignia on it. Written on the poster was, "Teufelhunden - Devil Dog Recruiting Station." The poster was embraced by the Marine Corps and public, and the bulldog would soon become a much loved mascot of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps has Smedley Butler to thank for the adoption of the English bulldog as its mascot. Following the end of World War I, public interest in the military waned. In 1919 Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler, fondly known as “Old Gimlet Eye,” was appointed Commanding General of Marine Corps Barracks, Quantico, Virginia. General Butler understood the importance of top quality sporting events and of favorable publicity in attracting men to the Marine Corps. He became the driving force that put Marines in the public spotlight through the “Quantico Marines” football team, a venture that was to last half a century and garner widespread publicity and recognition, not only for Quantico but the entire Marine Corps. In 1921 General Butler purchased a pedigree English bulldog, named “King Bulwark” to become the official Quantico Mascot. This breed was known for its fierce stocky body and tenacious temperament.

King Bulwark was not considered to be an appropriate name for a Marine Mascot so his name was changed to “Jiggs” after a popular personality in the cartoon strip “Maggie and Jiggs.” He was enlisted in the Marine Corps on 7 October 1922 and issued a service record book, a custom already in effect for mascots in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. General Butler himself signed Jiggs’ enlistment papers and appointed him a sergeant major. Jiggs received worldwide recognition and appeared at all sporting events where Marines played and everywhere else that his presence might draw public attention and enhance the morale and spirit of Marines. Many Marine Corps athletic teams were called “Fighting Bulldogs.”

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Sergeant Major. Jiggs' death, on 9 January 1927, was mourned throughout the Corps. His satin-lined coffin lay in state in a hangar at Quantico, surrounded by flowers from hundreds of admirers. He was interred with full military honors. Former heavyweight boxing champion, James J. "Gene" Tunney, who had served with the Marines in France, donated his English bulldog, to become the next mascot. The dog, which was renamed Jiggs II, died in 1928. During the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s mascots were all named "Smedley", a tribute to General Butler.

The "Chesty" dynasty took up residence at Marine Corps Barracks, Washington, D.C., on 5 July 1957. Chesty XIV became the current mascot in August 2013.

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