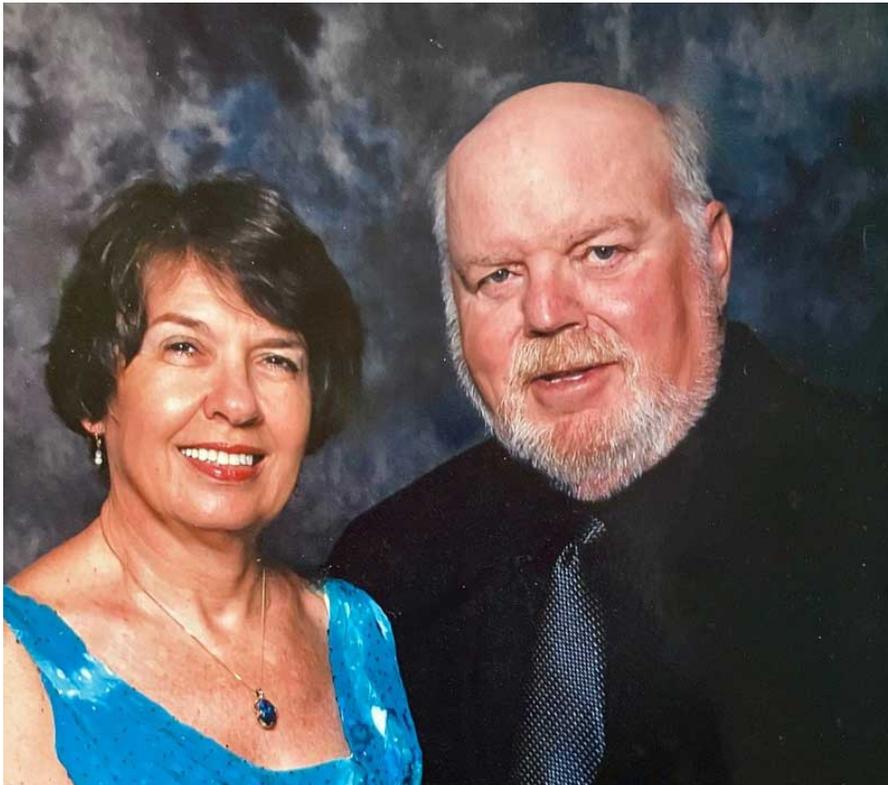


CAROLINA MUSEUM OF THE MARINE

A Love Story: Service, Leadership, and the Legacy They Share



Tom Moore, Class of 1958, and Brenda Johnson, Class of 1959, were high school sweethearts in Winston-Salem — captain of the football team and chief cheerleader, Most Valuable Player and Forsyth County spelling champion. His path led to the United States Marine Corps; hers to a lifetime devoted to education.

As detailed in the biography she shared, their early years took them in different directions. Tom served two tours in Vietnam, worked with the Armed Forces Police in San Francisco during the “Summer of Love,” and became a top recruiter in the St. Louis region. Brenda advanced innovative programs at the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Governor’s School, and the NC Advancement School for underachievers.

After decades of dedication — he to the Corps, she to the classroom — they married and made Jacksonville their home. At Camp Lejeune he served as acting First Sergeant under Jim Battaglini and John Ripley and was honored by his troops as “Best Company Gunny in 2nd Marines.” His final competitive sprint before retirement was representing the Corps in the national Armed Forces racquetball competition in Las Vegas.

Meanwhile, Brenda’s leadership in education continued to grow. She earned her doctorate and became principal of Lejeune High School, where she strengthened academic excellence and community partnership. Under her leadership, Lejeune earned the state sportsmanship award, was one of the state’s representatives in the national School of Excellence program, initiated the ROTC program and the block schedule, trained teachers in the Socratic seminar method to develop critical thinking skills, and even designed seating for the new auditorium to allow administration of the ASVAB — always mindful of the unique needs of military families.

Their lives reflected the very theme of this month’s essay, Education for a Good Society. Tom served the nation through military leadership and mentorship. Brenda shaped the next generation through intellectual rigor, character formation, and civic engagement. Both understood that strong communities are built by disciplined service and thoughtful education.

After retiring from the Corps, Tom had a second successful career with Toyota, where he was consistently recognized in the southeast PROS, Professional Retail Outstanding Salespeople. Many of his returning customers were Marines and their families — the same families Brenda had supported through the Camp Lejeune Dependent Schools. Their lives remained intertwined with the Marine Corps community they loved.

Today, we are honored to recognize Dr. Brenda Johnson’s significant contribution to the Carolina Museum of the Marine through the naming of our Catering Kitchen. From this kitchen will come the meals that accompany our celebrations, ceremonies, and community gatherings — a fitting tribute to a life devoted to service and connection.

As we look toward our June opening, we are deeply grateful for Dr. Johnson's generosity and for the enduring legacy of GySgt Thomas Moore. Their story reminds us that a good society is built not only by those who defend it, but also by those who educate and inspire it.