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By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

All last week Cleveland hosted Marine Week and Marines from all over theUnited Statescame to the city to participate. But beyond the week long festivities, a Clevelander and former Marine has been invited to the White House.

Samuel Wade (no relation) is one of the many invitees and is looking forward to meeting the president. Wade was in the service in the early 40's and was stationed at Montford Point in North Carolina.

Now over sixty-five years after the Montford Point Camp closed, Congress passed a bill marking a major milestone in American history. On November 23, 2011, President Barack Obama signed into law the bill awarding the Congressional Gold Medal--the highest honor civilians can receive--to the Montford Point Marines for their bravery and unceasing commitment to the

Corps and our country.

So next week, Wade, along with others, will receive this special recognition and respect as Marines. These men and all Montford Point Marines left a significant and lasting impact on the Corps, one that has paved the way for successive generations of African American Marines serving with honor and distinction.

Wade, who was married for over 60 years, wishes his wife was still alive to share this honor with him. Due to limited seating, each living Montford Point Marine and one escort/family member/caregiver only will be invited to the award ceremony.

Wade has one daughter, Portia Morgan, but he plans on taking his granddaughter Patrice Morgan toWashingtonD.C.on Tuesday, June 26, to see the president. “I am so proud of my father and the way he dedicated his life to helping others,” said Morgan.

Mumford Point was place they sent all Black Marines at that time. While sitting with him, he shared the largely untold story of the nation’s first African American Marines and the problems they encountered.

More than 20,000 African Americans trained in this segregated facility between 1942 and 1949 at Montford Point, NC., as the first African Americans to serve in the United States Marine Corps.

It is clear that those days were full of prejudice and discrimination towards Blacks, and until 1942, African Americans, American Indians, and other minorities were not recruited by the Marine Corps.

The Fair Employment Practices Commission by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, despite objections from its leadership, forced the Corps to begin recruiting African American Marines in 1942.

The segregated Montford Point Base adjacent to Camp Lejeune, NC served as the Marines' first Black recruits basic training grounds, and continued to do so until 1949. Wade was discharged in 1947.

"Becoming a Marine was a life-changing decision that molded me to do the work I did," said Wade.

Wade, who became an extraordinary person, went on to become an educated man who helped people all overOhio. Wade attended Kentucky State University and then worked for the NAACP in Chillicothe, Ohio, fighting for Black teachers to be hired.

Entering the education field, he taught at various schools and then worked as the Affirmative Action Specialist at the University of Cincinnati.

"I'm proud of the work I have done over the years," said Wade.

The Black Marines in those early years seem to have been treated like the Tuskegee Airman without the same results. Wade, along with other servicemen, never saw any combat action.

Their honor, courage, and commitment played a critical role, not only in integrating the Marine Corps, but also in some of our nation's greatest battles. "I am glad they are finally recognizing us," said Wade.