

January 2022



# The Spearhead News

Official Newsletter of the Fifth Marine Division Association  
Co- Editors: Tom Huffhines and Kath Butler  
Website - <https://5thmarinedivision.org>  
Social Media - <https://www.facebook.com/SpearheadDivision>



## REUNION DATES - MAY 11-15, 2022

### Reunion Host - Kathy Tinsley

Julie, Brillo, and I are thrilled to welcome you to San Diego and the 72<sup>nd</sup> Fifth Marine Division Association Reunion!

*(See the Registration Form in the back of this newsletter, on page 35; Contact information also provided there)*

We have chosen not only a fabulous location for a reunion but a fabulous location for a vacation. Paradise Point Resort & Spa is located on Mission Bay, twenty minutes from San Diego International Airport. We are sure you will find everything and more when you check-in. Julie has accomplished an incredible room rate (more than 50% off) and all bungalows are single story and all rooms will be in the same area.

We have generous sponsors who will provide dinners on Thursday and Friday nights. On both the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> catered meals will be served in the Hospitality Room. Also, our Hospitality Room will be stocked with continental breakfast items, snacks and beverages. On arrival day, Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup>, there will be Welcome refreshments at registration.

Two tours will be available for you to enjoy. On Thursday (tour 1) we travel to Alpine to visit Terry Ulmer's Mopar Ranch Museum, a tribute to Pearl Harbor Survivors and the Greatest Generation. *(See <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/alpine-man-makes-navy-tribute-museum-his-passion-project/2024872/>)* On Friday (tour 2) we attend the graduation ceremony at the Marine Corp Recruit Depot and have lunch with the Marines. We will meet the General and men and women graduates, and enjoy VIP seating for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Recruiting Depot. For those who do not choose to go on the tours, the Hospitality Room will be open.

Other activities include a marshmallow roast on the beach. and a book signing. The book, *Travels with a Gypsy Lotus*, is about member Jimmie Watson and her travels in India.

Be sure to register for the Saturday night banquet. The banquet hall will be transformed into a 1940's Canteen. Pack your favorite 40's outfit! All those attending the May 14th banquet, please provide a military photo of your Marine. My excitement is building as I write!!!! Contact me with any questions!!





**Elected Officers**

President - Tom Huffhines - [thuffhines74@gmail.com](mailto:thuffhines74@gmail.com)  
 Vice Pres - Skip Werthmuller - [usnskip1@aol.com](mailto:usnskip1@aol.com)

**Appointed Positions**

Secretary	Karen Campbell
Treasurer	Tom Huffhines, acting
Database Manager	Terrie Williams
Sgt-at-Arms	Morey Butler
Parliamentarian	Hal Campbell
Chaplain	Billy Joe Cawthron
Legal Officer	James Sargent
Historian	John Butler
Membership	Kathy Tinsley
Fund Raiser	TBD
Co-Editors Newsletter	T.Huffhines / K.Butler
Facebook Administrator	Craig Painton
Website Developer	James Dalman
Photographer	Leonardo Flores
War Souvenirs Return	Dan King
Reunion Journal/Program	Kath Butler
Reunion Publicity/Advertising	Ray Elliott

**Board of Directors**

Bill Rockey, Bonnie Haynes, John Butler, George Boutwell,  
 Bill Baumann, Valerie Leman, Bruce Hammond

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**TRIBUTE OF HONOR**  
**FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION**  
**MEMORIAL DONATION**



Honor the memory of someone special through a Memorial Donation to the Fifth Marine Division Association General Fund. The names of Memorial Honorees will be published in a future edition of *The Spearhead News*.

Please prepare this form, along with your donation of any amount, payable to FMDA, and mail to  
 FMDA, P.O. Box 728,  
 Weatherford, Texas 76086

FMDA is a 501c3, not-for-profit organization. An acknowledgment of your gift will be sent to you at your address listed below.

Please check here  if you would like an additional letter sent to the Honoree or his family without the dollar amount included. Please provide that address on the back of this copied form.

**Your name** \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**In Memory of:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Rank \_\_\_\_\_

War served \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

KIA date or DOD if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of donation \_\_\_\_\_

# President Tom Huffhines's Message

Howdy FMDA! By the time you receive this issue of the *Spearhead News* it will more than likely be 2022. Before leaving 2021 behind here are a couple of final thoughts about this very interesting year. After a year and a half postponement from the 2019 New Orleans Reunion, the 2021 FMDA Reunion was held in Arlington, Texas, and it was a very successful gathering in which our membership caught up on its many friendships. Five Iwo Jima veterans were able to attend, and in total about 60 attendees. Though we did not travel as group to any local venues we certainly had highly entertaining and informative speakers on a wide array of topics. 2021 saw the FMDA say goodbye to eight Final Muster Marines and several additional FMDA members.



On July 1 and 2 in Granbury, Texas, the FMDA sponsored The American Soldier (a professional play by New York writer/actor Douglas Taurel). These presentations put several thousand much needed dollars into the FMDA General Fund.

The forthcoming 72<sup>nd</sup> Reunion is scheduled for 11-15 May in San Diego, CA. Our Reunion host is longtime member Kathy Tinsley and generously aided by Julie and Brillo Licari who became new members at the Arlington Reunion. The venue is Paradise Point is located in the Mission Bay area of northwestern San Diego. Please refer herein to additional information including the registration form. As early as possible registration is extremely helpful to the host in order to have a more successful reunion, so please give this your utmost attention.

Our new website can be found at <https://5thmarinedivision.org>. The FMDA's newest Honorary member, James Dalman, a professional web designer, has refurbished the old website into a much more user-friendly and informational historical tool than what previously existed. Please check it out and contact us with any new data or information that may need clarification.

As we all set off into 2022 and to see what it brings, here is wishing and hoping everyone in our membership a very safe and successful year, and for now a goodbye until we meet again in San Diego in May for the 72<sup>nd</sup> FMDA Reunion. ❖

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## TRIBUTE OF HONOR MEMORIAL HONOREE



**KENT DOZARK**  
**Exceptional Military Historian**

(Honored by John Butler)



## *Attention All Members*

Let's make this Reunion, being held near where the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was formed and initially trained, one with a large attendance. We encourage you not only to come to the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Reunion yourself, but to help us ramp up participation.

The final meeting in 2020 of the Iwo Jima Commemorative Committee group had 28 Iwo Jima veterans at that 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary event. Many live in the California area. If you know any Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, or Airmen who served on Iwo, let's make a special effort to honor them at our reunion banquet.

**STRONG MEMBERSHIP = STRONG FMDA**

Annual memberships are due for renewal by Dec. 31 each year. If you have not renewed your membership, please send in your \$25 dues today.



•  
Double your impact by finding a new member to join, too!

Use the Membership Form on the back page of this issue.

## Welcome New Members

### *Life*

Walter Monroe - Lake Helen FL  
Toni Emery – Boynton Beach, FL  
Jarvis Lynch – Tampa, FL  
James Dalman – Bethany, OK

### *Annual*

Amanda Jordan - Braselton GA

## *New Honorary Members*

### Major General Jarvis D Lynch, USMC (Ret)

General Jarvis Lynch completed a distinguished 32 year career in the United States Marine Corps following his graduating from the US Naval Academy in 1956. In 1968/69 he served as operations officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion 26<sup>th</sup> Marines and with Special Landing Force Alpha in Vietnam. During his service with 2/26 he was instrumental in its surviving an intense attack by NVA troops in operation LZ Margo. An account of that action was published in the *US Naval Proceedings*. Also published in that prestigious magazine was Gen Lynch's account of his coordination, as Chief of Staff for FMFPAC, with Reverend Tzunezo Wachi for the 1985 Reunion of Honor on Iwo Jima. Both of these articles were reprinted in the *Spearhead News*. In 1995 General Lynch was named "Distinguished Author of the Year" by the Naval Institute. General Lynch was the featured speaker at the 2014 Tampa FMDA Reunion banquet. His account of LZ Margo was stirring and emphasized the Marines of 2/26 in Vietnam were well aware of the legacy this unit had established on Iwo Jima and were proud to carry on its tradition. ❖

### James Dalman, Web Designer, eCommerce and Online Business Advisor

James Dalman, a professional web designer, has graciously volunteered to set up a website for the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association pro-bono. This is a huge contribution as at this point the Association's finances do not permit the high cost that paying for site development would cost. James has spent the past 30 years in the marketing and advertising industry, partnering with both Fortune 500 companies and small businesses across the globe. He has volunteered to assist other Military Non-profits as well, including the famed USAR 95<sup>th</sup> Training Division in Ft Sill, Oklahoma. James is honored to have served in the U.S. Army Reserves and Oklahoma National Guard as an 11 Bravo Infantryman and is extremely passionate about preserving the legacies of our WWII Veterans. Currently James is traveling full-time with his wife Donetta and is working from wherever he happens to be visiting on the road which now is in Nevada. ❖



# Update on Hawaii's Camp Tarawa Museum

*Submitted by Nicole Garcia, Recently Appointed Director of the Honoka'a Heritage Center*



In late 2020, a group of four individuals, including myself, started a non-profit dedicated to the heritage of North Hawai'i. We opened the Honoka'a Heritage Center, in downtown Honoka'a, in response to the closure of the Heritage Center at Kō Education Center. We have had more than triple the number of visitors compared to the same time period pre-pandemic at the old location. The new Honoka'a Heritage Center has been open since June 21st and has had over 1,250 visitors to date (June 21-November 21).

The North Hawai'i During WWII/Camp Tarawa section is very popular. In our visitor information area, we share the Historypin.org site, directions to the Camp Tarawa Memorial, and information for the "Boots on the Ground" tour given by Kathy Painton.

We are scanning images and and have continued to add them to Historypin.org. This project will be a continuing effort. We will be organizing additional items in the Camp Tarawa collection, and continue to work together with the Camp Tarawa Foundation and the Fifth Marine Division Association to promote the collection, and most importantly, the heritage of the valiant Marines who trained on Hawai'i Island during World War II.

The Honoka'a Heritage Center website was completed in late October. The site has information on North Hawai'i during World War II, a link to the Camp Tarawa page @Historypin.org, and information on the collection. The site can be found at <https://honokaaheritagecenter.org>.



For anyone interested in becoming a member of the non-profit (EIN 85-3860052) Honoka'a Heritage Center, information is available at the our website ([honokaaheritagecenter.org](http://honokaaheritagecenter.org)) or by contacting me, Nicole Garcia, @ (808)-437-1927. Our address is 45-3490 Mamane Street Suite C, Honoka'a, HI 96727. Because we are no longer a part of the University of Hawaii system we depend on grants, donations, and purchases of merchandise from our small gift shop to keep the center open. ❖



*(left: Doug Meny last November on the Big Island of Hawaii by the monument at the entrance of WWII's Camp Tarawa main gate).*

Doug reports that the FMDA financed refurbishings of the Monuments two years ago still look pristine. For many years, the Association has supported the Camp Tarawa Foundation and assisted with the Fifth Marine Division's section of the Camp Tarawa Museum. It has been a long and circuitous route, with many proposals that did not materialize, but the newly established Honoka'a Heritage Center will at last make available the many artifacts, photographs, and writings that have been donated by 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division veterans and their families. The Marines' presence on the Big Island during the war made a great impact on the local community, and local families warmly welcomed the Marines into their homes. ❖

# Member News

## *Walter O'Malley Honored by Red Sox*

*(Telegram & Gazette, telegram.com, Aug 8, 2021; photo Kate Foults)*

FMDA's Walter O'Malley, shown wearing his 5<sup>th</sup> Division cap, was honored before a Worcester Red Sox game as part of their "In Debt to a Vet" program. He is pictured here with his grandson Brendon O'Malley and his great-granddaughter Avery O'Malley.

Walt was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon of E-2-27 as a BAR man on Iwo Jima. In 2019 the Clinton, Massachusetts, Veterans of Foreign Wars hall was rededicated as the Walter P. "Miz" O'Malley VFW Post 523.



## *Al Jennings and Coopers Troopers*

*(from a Prime Time for Seniors article By Grady Birdsong; Photos by Sabre Middlekauff)*

Coopers Troopers is a monthly Denver area luncheon group made up of Marine Corps veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East Wars and all in-



between conflicts. Formed by Marine S/Sgt, and later police officer, Edward Cooper in the '90s, FMDA's Al Jennings became luncheon leader when his friend Ed passed. The monthly gatherings at Legion Post #161 in Arvada, Colorado include fellowship, camaraderie, and remembering friends lost in battle, along with a guest speaker, and home cooked meals. Al was with 3/26 on Iwo and attends Cooper Troopers regularly with his son Randy.



## *Weddings – Congratulations to ...*



*(left: **Joyce Johns and Jennings Bunn** were married July 2, 2021. Bunn is an Air Force veteran who worked on Guam for the government. During his time on Guam he led tours for the Military Historical Tours and developed close ties with Marines. Bunn has traveled to Iwo Jima 5 times and Peleliu 3 times and has taken part in Guam Liberation ceremonies. Currently living in the Florida panhandle, he and Joyce faithfully help maintain the hometown gravesite of Iwo hero Boots Thomas, and bring flowers and a flag on patriotic holidays.)*



*(right: *Come Now the Angels* Author **Susan Kummernes and Geoff Warnock**, a Nuclear Submariner, were married on July 31, 2021)*



**The National Museum of the Marine Corps** is a lasting tribute to U.S. Marines--past, present, and future. Located in Triangle, VA, just outside the gates of Quantico, the Museum's soaring design evokes the image of the flag-raisers of Iwo Jima.

The Museum opened on the Marine Corps birthday in 2006. Over half a million people visit annually. In 2011 the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association dedicated the BAR on the Beach statue in Semper Fidelis Memorial Park, part of the Museum's grounds. The statue is based on a Charles Waterhouse painting, and the drive to create and fund the statue was spearheaded by FMDA's John Huffhines, Ivan Hammond, and Bert Clayton. ❖

## Marine Close Air Support

The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing deployed early to Vietnam with a massive force of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, and stayed to the end. Wing commander MajGen Keith McCutcheon, who had refined close air support in the Pacific War and pioneered helicopter use in Korea, ensured immediate assistance to ground Marines under attack, even under dangerous flying conditions.

In support of their comrades on the ground, the Marine fliers repeatedly demonstrated the unique and dramatic advantages of the integrated air-ground team that always has been a Marine trademark. ❖

## Art Sifuentes Found his Bird at the Marine Museum



Art, pictured at left, with his daughter, standing in front of the H-34 Helicopter that is on display at The National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Art says, " I flew this aircraft on my very first flight after arriving from Okinawa on the LPH2 USS Iwo Jima. We took our first load to Phu Bai... and ended up with hits in the tail pylon going in and coming back to the ship for another load. I flew that bird from time to time for the entire tour...all over I-Corps. "

NO.	DATE	TIME	TYPE	STATUS	REMARKS
1	12/23/57	1700	UH-1H	OK	
2	12/23/57	1800	UH-1H	OK	
3	12/23/57	1900	UH-1H	OK	
4	12/23/57	2000	UH-1H	OK	
5	12/23/57	2100	UH-1H	OK	
6	12/23/57	2200	UH-1H	OK	
7	12/23/57	2300	UH-1H	OK	
8	12/23/57	2400	UH-1H	OK	
9	12/23/57	2500	UH-1H	OK	
10	12/23/57	2600	UH-1H	OK	
11	12/23/57	2700	UH-1H	OK	
12	12/23/57	2800	UH-1H	OK	
13	12/23/57	2900	UH-1H	OK	
14	12/23/57	3000	UH-1H	OK	
15	12/23/57	3100	UH-1H	OK	
16	12/23/57	3200	UH-1H	OK	
17	12/23/57	3300	UH-1H	OK	
18	12/23/57	3400	UH-1H	OK	
19	12/23/57	3500	UH-1H	OK	
20	12/23/57	3600	UH-1H	OK	
21	12/23/57	3700	UH-1H	OK	
22	12/23/57	3800	UH-1H	OK	
23	12/23/57	3900	UH-1H	OK	
24	12/23/57	4000	UH-1H	OK	
25	12/23/57	4100	UH-1H	OK	
26	12/23/57	4200	UH-1H	OK	
27	12/23/57	4300	UH-1H	OK	
28	12/23/57	4400	UH-1H	OK	
29	12/23/57	4500	UH-1H	OK	
30	12/23/57	4600	UH-1H	OK	
31	12/23/57	4700	UH-1H	OK	
32	12/23/57	4800	UH-1H	OK	
33	12/23/57	4900	UH-1H	OK	
34	12/23/57	5000	UH-1H	OK	
35	12/23/57	5100	UH-1H	OK	
36	12/23/57	5200	UH-1H	OK	
37	12/23/57	5300	UH-1H	OK	
38	12/23/57	5400	UH-1H	OK	
39	12/23/57	5500	UH-1H	OK	
40	12/23/57	5600	UH-1H	OK	
41	12/23/57	5700	UH-1H	OK	
42	12/23/57	5800	UH-1H	OK	
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44	12/23/57	6000	UH-1H	OK	
45	12/23/57	6100	UH-1H	OK	
46	12/23/57	6200	UH-1H	OK	
47	12/23/57	6300	UH-1H	OK	
48	12/23/57	6400	UH-1H	OK	
49	12/23/57	6500	UH-1H	OK	
50	12/23/57	6600	UH-1H	OK	
51	12/23/57	6700	UH-1H	OK	
52	12/23/57	6800	UH-1H	OK	
53	12/23/57	6900	UH-1H	OK	
54	12/23/57	7000	UH-1H	OK	
55	12/23/57	7100	UH-1H	OK	
56	12/23/57	7200	UH-1H	OK	
57	12/23/57	7300	UH-1H	OK	
58	12/23/57	7400	UH-1H	OK	
59	12/23/57	7500	UH-1H	OK	
60	12/23/57	7600	UH-1H	OK	
61	12/23/57	7700	UH-1H	OK	
62	12/23/57	7800	UH-1H	OK	
63	12/23/57	7900	UH-1H	OK	
64	12/23/57	8000	UH-1H	OK	
65	12/23/57	8100	UH-1H	OK	
66	12/23/57	8200	UH-1H	OK	
67	12/23/57	8300	UH-1H	OK	
68	12/23/57	8400	UH-1H	OK	
69	12/23/57	8500	UH-1H	OK	
70	12/23/57	8600	UH-1H	OK	
71	12/23/57	8700	UH-1H	OK	
72	12/23/57	8800	UH-1H	OK	
73	12/23/57	8900	UH-1H	OK	
74	12/23/57	9000	UH-1H	OK	
75	12/23/57	9100	UH-1H	OK	
76	12/23/57	9200	UH-1H	OK	
77	12/23/57	9300	UH-1H	OK	
78	12/23/57	9400	UH-1H	OK	
79	12/23/57	9500	UH-1H	OK	
80	12/23/57	9600	UH-1H	OK	
81	12/23/57	9700	UH-1H	OK	
82	12/23/57	9800	UH-1H	OK	
83	12/23/57	9900	UH-1H	OK	
84	12/23/57	10000	UH-1H	OK	

The aircraft bureau number 150750, matching Art's log book entry, is located at the base of the tail, underneath the letter "M" in MARINES.



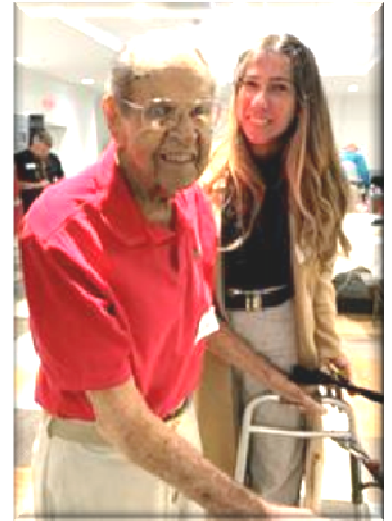
# Happy 246<sup>th</sup> Birthday USMC



**Ray Holzwart, USMC Corsair Pilot in WWII on Okinawa, was again the oldest Marine at the Tampa, Florida, USMC Birthday luncheon**

*(Pictured here with the youngest Marine at the event).*

The Marine Corps was formed on 10 November 1775, but it was not until 1921 that the Corps began celebrating that historic day officially, by order of then Commandant John Lejeune.



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## Stu Hedley, Pearl Harbor Survivor, R.I.P.

*(Abridged from The San Diego Union-Tribune • August 5, 2021, by John Wilkens)*

**A friend of many FMDA members in the San Diego area, as well as the Iwo Sisters Group**



Stu Hedley, a Pearl Harbor survivor and 20 year Navy veteran who spent decades carrying the torch and stoking the flames of remembrance about that pivotal moment in American history, died in August 2021. He was 99. He never wanted what happened at Pearl Harbor to be forgotten. He was passionate about making sure we remembered the courage of those who were there that day. More than 100 of his shipmates aboard the battleship West Virginia died at Pearl Harbor during the Dec. 7, 1941, attack. Hedley narrowly escaped death several times as the ship was hit by torpedoes and bombs. Escaping to shore meant swimming around and under flaming oil, sucking in breaths of scorching air. Like many

World War II veterans, he hadn't talked much about his experiences. But he began opening up when he joined the San Diego chapter of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. Now defunct, but once 30,000-members strong, the association had a two-sentence motto — "Remember Pearl Harbor, Keep America Alert" ❖

### **MY DEAR FRIEND** *By Kathy Tinsley, FMDA 2022 Reunion Host*

Stu and I met about twenty years ago and I knew I had a new best friend. But what I later learned was that Stu treated everyone like you were his best friend! All hellos and goodbyes included a tight hug so you knew you were loved. And every telephone conversation ended with "God Bless". A very Christian man, everything he agreed with got the response of "Amen". Stu decided many years ago that the story of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor, should never be forgotten so he began telling his story to anyone that would listen. He was a frequent speaker at schools and service organizations. He even carried around props to make the story more visual.

After a few years of volunteering for the San Diego Pearl Harbor Survivors Chapter, I became an honorary member and then became treasurer which I've held the position for a dozen years. Since Stu was the president he would always introduce me as "this is my treasurer"! I miss you Stu but I know you are where you always wanted to be, with our Lord. I'll remember the good times at Chapter events and trips to Hawaii to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup>, the 69<sup>th</sup> and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. I'll remember the times you sat in my back yard surrounded by people wanting to hear your stories. But most of all I'll remember the man that everyone loved because of your commitment to "Remember Pearl Harbor – Keep America Alert".

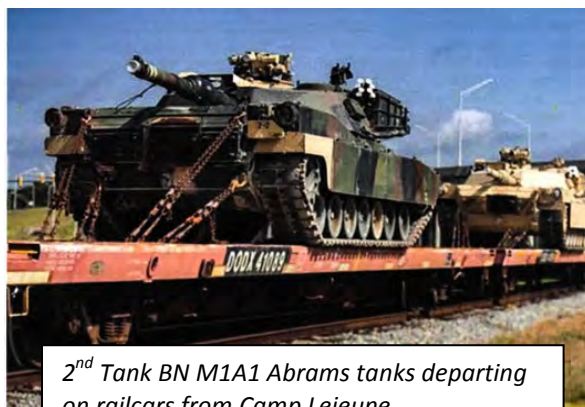
Love, Your Treasurer ❖





# Goodbye Tankers

**Commandant Gen. David Berger's sweeping modernization plan that envisions a "more agile force for the future" quickly eliminated all three Marine Corps Tank Battalions, victims to the future redesign of the Corps.**



*(Below: abridged from Marine Corps Tanker Association Newsletter, Issue#2,2020 President Steve Chamber's Report)*

## Expiration Date

Who among us would have ever thought the Marine Corps would so quickly eliminate Tanks/Tankers and the related MOS fields entirely. ... As Marines, we walk a difficult line. We don't publicly or disrespectfully challenge the Commandant or the Marine Corps. Mindful of that, I must confess that I cannot understand this course and I think it diminished the combat power we are known for. A careful read of the CMC Guidance only raised more questions for me. So drastic a change, done so quickly, and from what I can tell, without substantial input from people with tank experience, I find wrong. I must say, the rapid elimination seems done with inexplicable secrecy.

So, what now? Though it may seem so, the world has not ended. Marines improvise, adapt, and overcome. As Marines, our only path is to accept the decision, carry out orders, and carry on. There has never been a time where the mission of the MCTA has been more relevant. We must stand together and maintain the camaraderie we have always held so important. .. We need to get together, probably do some serious "bad mouthing", try to put this behind us and decide how we will manage our future. Looks like we now have an expiration date. ❖



## 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion on IwoJima

The 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, with 31 of its 50 tanks in operation, stayed in front of the infantry and brought its superior fire power to bear on the Japanese.

Tanks have always given the advantage of staying with the troops, providing shield in advance-ments and maneuvers, and being immediately available to hit specific targets in a wide range of weather conditions and terrain.

To the Marine infantry, the Sherman M4A3 medium tank equipped with the Navy Mark I flame thrower seemed to be the most valuable ground weapon employed in the battle of Iwo Jima. The division's final action report stated that the flame tank was "the one weapon that caused the Japs to leave their caves and rock crevices and run."

Tanks were "agile" enough to come ashore in the quagmire that was the soft volcanic sand of Iwo Jima. A short five years later in the Korean War they were "agile" enough to be brought ashore in the 30 foot tidal flow of Inchon.

The Marine Corps' six WWII tank battalions saw combat in some of the most varied and extreme conditions of the Pacific theater. Tanks were flexible enough to fight on small coral atolls such as Tarawa, in fetid jungles such as Guadalcanal, on lush islands such as Guam, and on volcanic deserts such as Iwo Jima. Tank Battalions adapted both in terms of technical and tactical innovations for the numerous types of island landings, including developing novel landing equipment.

Tanks proved invaluable to the Corps for eight decades, in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. ❖

# Leighton Willhite

## Authenticates Iwo Jima Sherman Tank at Battlefield Vegas



Battlefield Vegas, with a twenty-five acre desert outdoor shooting range as well as an indoor shooting range and military museum, is located off the Las Vegas Strip. It owns a collection of about 750 firearms which can be rented to fire under the supervision of veteran employees. The Battlefield also purchased a rare WWII Sherman Tank and meticulously restored it. Anxious to find out more about their piece of living history, which was a “rust bucket” when it was brought into the collection, the owners reached out to WWII tankers and invited them to come to Vegas to view and drive the renovated Sherman.

FMDA’s Leighton Willhite came from his home in Indiana with his son Chad, and was pleasantly surprised to find he had actually driven that exact tank, serial #3063045, on Iwo Jima. No one currently knows how this one tank came back from Iwo,

because after the Occupation of Japan, 52 tanks remaining from the final battles of the war had been dumped at sea. Those in command ordered the tanks would no longer be needed and would be more expense to ship home than they were worth.



When the 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion landed on Green Beach at the base of Mt Suribachi, Willhite’s tank was second in line as his battalion’s tanks drove up the black volcanic sand terraces. A direct hit on the turret by a hidden Japanese weapon knocked the first tank out of commission. It could still drive but had no firing capability. The crew was stunned by the concussion, and Willhite had to jump out of his tank and drive the disabled tank out of the way so the line could proceed. Later photos with exact battle scars matching the damage from the incident, as well as the serial number from After-action reports, confirm that the tank at Battlefield Vegas was that

exact Sherman. Willhite and another tanker signed the side of the tank and authenticated it. Specific modifications by each tank battalion made by young mechanics at Camp Tarawa in Hawaii, based on knowledge gained from earlier island battles, had confirmed Battlefield’s Sherman to be from the 5<sup>th</sup> Tank BN. ❖



## Tank Modifications

Some wrecked tanks are still on Iwo Jima, but the M4A3 Sherman tank at Battlefield Vegas is the only working Iwo Jima battle tank known. Its five man crew consisted of a Commander, gunner, loader, driver, and a co-driver. These Marines were responsible for keeping the tank running, which meant constant attention of daily maintenance. Because of the experience on Peleliu, where the enemy placed magnetic mines to blow hatches off, specific modifications to 5<sup>th</sup> BN tanks were made, with nails welded on the hatches so that an air space would dissipate

the force of an explosion. Also, sides were covered with wood to keep the Japanese kamikaze from swarming the tank and attaching charges to blow tracks off. Sandbags were put on top to absorb mortar shell force. ❖

## Bronze Star at Hill 362-A

Cpl Leighton Willhite was awarded a Bronze Star for bravery for helping defend the evacuation of crew members from another disabled tank. His citation describes his “indomitable fighting spirit and daring aggressiveness” that helped force the enemy to retreat to caves and enabled the tank crew to evacuate to safety.



Working to clear Hill 362-A of Japanese holed up in a cave near the hill's base, Willhite and another tank crew in his platoon tried to maneuver in a way that would flush the hiding enemy. What they didn't see until too late was a hidden pit before the cave's entrance that nearly swallowed the only other tank left in Willhite's platoon. “Japanese came pouring out of everywhere when that happened,” Willhite said. “The lieutenant got a lot of them with the .30 caliber machine gun, but some were hiding on the other side of the tank. So he asked for two volunteers to pull our guys out of the disabled tank. I grabbed my .45 pistol. We headed for the disabled tank where the lieutenant extricated the crew and I stood guard, shooting Japanese who came out of nowhere with their rifles and bayonets.” ❖

*Just before leaving the island, Willhite remembers visiting the 5th Marine Division cemetery where so many of his friends were laid to rest. But when he'd look on the field of small white crosses, it wasn't the names of the men he'd see. “We went to say goodbye to our buddies, the ones who weren't coming home. But when I'd read a name, it wasn't the name I'd see, it was a face. Every time. “After we were about through with our last visit, a general told us this, ‘I don't just see heroes out there, but every Marine standing here is a hero too.’” ❖*



## Returning to Iwo 65 Years Later

*(left: Leighton Willhite and son Chad with a Reunion of Honor Tour in 2010)*

“I'm anxious to return,” Marine Corp veteran Leighton Willhite said. “You go back to the same thing that made the greatest impression in your lifetime, and there's no doubt that Iwo Jima did that to me... The days spent there are forever etched in my memory” In WWII he was a 19 year old Sherman tank driver with the 5<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division.

Willhite remembers landing at Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945. “It was scary as hell. They dumped us out in about 4 feet of water. I worried my tank would be swamped and we would drown before ever reaching the black volcanic sands of the beaches. I was the driver, and I could see wrecks of landing craft that had been hit. When we hit the beach, there was a world of land mines there. Many of the other tanks were hitting them. I was fortunate. That night, the surviving tanks remained together on guard duty. It was lit with flares all night. It never got dark. We stayed in the tank, two of us, and the rest of the crew got under the tank. We got hit five times that night by mortars. We didn't sleep any. We didn't have anything to eat or drink because we had not taken anything with us. We were told it would only be a one-or two-day operation.”

The tanks were on the front lines every day. “The infantry couldn't move without us. And we carried drums of water on the back so troops could stay hydrated. We provided cover for the infantry but we did draw fire. The Japanese hated most the flamethrowers and the tanks.” While trying to stay optimistic, “I did not think I would leave there alive,” he said. To survive, “You try to think positive all the way through. .. And God helped me through it because I did a lot of praying.” ❖

# Marine Helicopters in Vietnam

By LtCol Raul 'Art' Sifuentes

*Below: Then-Lt Sifuentes, right, in I-Corps, early '67)*



It was requested that, as a retired Vietnam aviator, I write a little something about aviation in Viet Nam...

That said, there is so much about which one could write concerning the many facets of aviation combat, whether it be rotary-wing or fixed-wing in support of the ground forces. Some people call them “grunts,” I prefer to call them “Earth People”.

Firstly, understand the ONLY purpose of Marine aviation is to support the “earth people”...PERIOD!...and I am most thankful for having had the honor of supporting my earth-bound brethren in combat. The helicopter mission is the most satisfying mission in aviation ... supporting the troops with sorely needed ammo, water, chow, reinforcing with more troops when needed or getting them out of harm's way through medevacs or recon extractions. All those missions can be extremely hair-raising, satisfying and cause one to utter expressions not fit for children's ears.



My first of three tours to VietNam was the most challenging, flying the old piston-driven Sikorsky UH-34 single-engine, single-rotor helicopter. It was slow, cumbersome, limited in capacity and capability when compared to the turbine-engine, tandem-rotor Boeing CH-46 Sea Knight that came into VietNam in 1966/ 67

The “Frog” as it was affectionately called, could carry double the capacity than the old '34.

I loved my slow old bird. In times of extremis, it nearly always got me “home”. For combat and for my money, it was very maneuverable, could take hard landings and absorb considerable enemy fire as compared to other aircraft. The big radial R-1820 engine in the front was good protection for the pilots as it could take multiple hits and still get you out of the zone.

Our missions at that time for HMM 163 (Helicopter Marine Medium-163), was traditional support and much varied. Whatever the mission or Fragmentary Order (Frag) called for, you executed... troop lifts, reconnaissance team inserts and extracts, reconnaissance over-flights, day medevac, night medevac, VIP transport, administrative flights.... and if one were a PMIP (Post Maintenance Inspection Pilot).....one flew maintenance flights (limited, of course to autorotative distance to the airfield) ...

Given the UH-34 were “very mature aircraft,” it was not uncommon for the maintenance chief to request an “evaluation flight”...”uh.. Lieutenant, this bird is doing ok, but it is reported the engine seems to be popping and missing at times”.. so the Maintenance Chief would request the aircraft be taken for a test flight and see what could be discerned...a PMIP soon became highly skilled in autorotation (engine-out) landings.

Missions or “Frag” were transmitted to squadron operations from Marine Air Group headquarters every evening; you normally never knew what your missions would be until the flight schedule was finally published, usually very late. You normally got one day a week off (unless if you were a PMIP).

HMM 163 operated in the northern and northeastern part of South Vietnam known as I-Corps, basically everything north of Hue', but occasionally we operated south toward Marble Mountain/Da Nang area. We were intimately familiar with the DMZ, Mutter Ridge, Dong Ha, Khe Sanh, the Rockpile, Gio Linh, Con Thien, Lang Vei, Cam Lo, the Street Without Joy, and of course, A Shau Valley. We knew the area so well that if you gave us 6-digit coordinates over the air, we needed no map to get there.

Many stories are tragic, humorous, uplifting, sad... flying was never boring. Some missions we will never forget, some missions we wish we could. We flew into “hot Zones”, flew on night emergency “must-go” medevac and recon extract missions on the proverbial “dark and stormy nights” with no navigational aids other than a

wet compass, dead-reckoning. The Tactical Air Navigational Aid (TACAN) was often inoperative. The flying conditions were such that only those who have been there can relate, and those today who have been in combat with today's technology reflect disbelief of how we flew in our now-antiquated aircraft with no night-vision goggles, no GPS, two radios, often flying day and night missions via dead-reckoning. You never went single aircraft on such missions as the second aircraft was the back-up in the event of loss of lead aircraft due to enemy action or aircraft mishap. For night missions we flew with navigational lights off lest you attract enemy fire. The enemy would often fire in the air hoping for a hit.

Flying with no lights at night, of course, could be problematic when the weather was below minimums in crappy rainy weather and low ceilings and reduced visibility. In these conditions at night and as a flight of two, you could not lose sight of one another lest you have a mid-air collision... needless to say, there was always a pucker-factor. A section (flight of two) leader, perhaps a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt or Captain, was responsible for the mission inclusive of both aircraft and crews, and control of any supporting aircraft (gunships). It was not uncommon for a night mission to have the landing zone marked by a minimally observable zippo lighter or small can of "sterno" to a tight landing zone. So on these night missions, with a young Marine to talk you into the zone for the pickup, it was all eyeballs and heartrate. Moreover, if inbound to the pickup zone on an emergency mission, the young Marine talking to you on the radio was whispering, the pucker-factor doubled, cuz he was whispering due to the nearby enemy....Do you believe me yet??

Throw this one in if you can relate.....As I said, at night, crappy weather and you could not lose sight of one another, so it was incumbent on the wingman to stay close to the leader. Keep in mind, we are talking helicopters. Therefore, the procedure at night, was for both aircraft to fly with no external lights on. The wingman (#2 aircraft) flew with a 10-foot step up (10 feet above the lead aircraft), back at about a 40 degree angle so the pilot in command of the #2 aircraft, sitting in the right hand seat, could look slightly down and use the lead aircraft's co-pilot's instrument panel lights as reference to maintain visual contact. It does test the author's credibility, I know... but the emergency mission was just that, which meant a life/death situation, so you simply went and did it...

Keep in mind both aircraft commanders were the squadron's most skilled pilots (not necessarily senior in

rank) for these missions. If the mission was especially challenging, the copilots might be just as well qualified as the pilots in command.

Yup, we did "one-wheely landings" on pinnacles, dove off cliffs overloaded hoping to get translational lift before the ground smote us... and we took our hits, but survived... We lost our brothers, to whom I will never forget, commemorate annually, and dearly miss to this day.



*(Painting "Recon Team Extract" by USMC Combat Artist Mike Leahy)*

**But not all was dreary...there were lighter moments of missions and camaraderie. We all have many stories.**

## "The Meanest Duck in the Valley"

Just before I came home in October of 1967, we were flying missions in Khe Sanh supporting the Marines. I received a "frag" for a recon team extract of "5 Marines plus one" near Hill 881. Now keep in mind, I had an old H-34 that had power limitations of weight and density altitude, ie., how much the aircraft could lift given the temperature and altitude of the zone. The higher the zone and temperature, the less power available and lift capability. Anyway, I lamented I could not lift (limited in power available) the requested 5 combat loaded Marines plus one, at the altitude of that particular zone. We reasoned the "plus one" was a prisoner... Luckily, another Marine aviator offered that he could perform that mission with no problem with one of the CH-46 turbine-powered twin engine aircraft recently brought into theater. So off he went, soon to return.

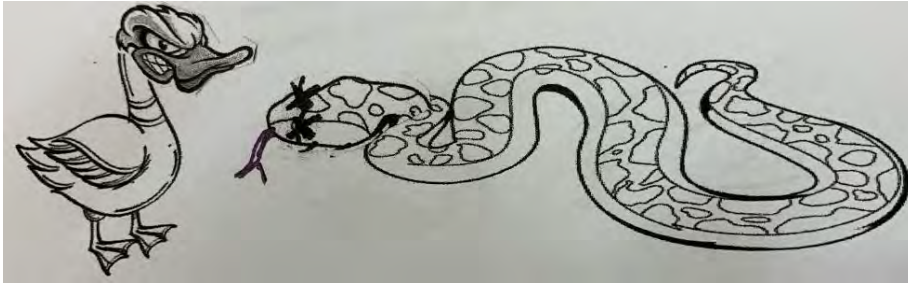
*(continued on the next page)*

(Continued from page 15)

The Recon Team off-loaded, including “the one”, which was not a prisoner, but a very large long 15 foot snake, probably a python. When asked what use the team had for it, they proudly announced that since Recon guys were often referred to as “Snake-eaters” this specimen would be their mascot... It was to be kept in a pit on Khe Sanh for the time being... But now, what to feed it?

One of the more enterprising members of the recon team went to the nearby ‘ville and returned with a scrawny duck, missing most of its feathers, seemingly happily quacking with no idea of its fate. It was getting dark, so the duck was thrown into the pit with full confidence the snake would have a nice duck dinner.

Early the next morning we sauntered out to view the new mascot.... It had succumbed during the night and was missing both eyes! Meanwhile, the duck was walking and quacking around the pit. The Recon team surmised the duck had somehow vanquished the snake, and was hereby adopted as the new Recon Team mascot. He was dubbed “The Meanest Duck in the Valley” complete with appropriate sign around its scrawny featherless neck. That is the truth, my story and I’m sticking to it!!! ❖



Recon Team's New Mascot  
From “Snake Eaters”  
To “The Meanest Duck in the  
Valley”

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## Vietnam Combat Artist Mike Leahy

FMDA member and 3-tour Vietnam Helicopter pilot, Art Sifuentes said that the combat art of Michael Leahy captured the essence of the heart-stopping missions in ‘Nam that he experienced and wrote about in the article printed above.



Mike Leahy had himself served two periods of active duty with the United States Marine Corps. During the Korean War period as a helicopter crew chief and pilot, and in the Vietnam War primarily as a combat artist. As executive officer for the Marine Corps Combat Art Program (1967-1969) Leahy completed two extended assignments to Vietnam to administer the program and produce combat art. Incidentally he also flew 73 missions as a helicopter machine gunner and was awarded the Combat Action Ribbon and the Bronze Star with Combat ‘V.’

His paintings have been displayed in military museums nationwide, and printed in military magazines. He was selected as Combat Artist of the Year 1969 by the Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association.

***A full range of Leahy’s prints can be viewed at <http://thehootch.com>, and purchased through contact with his son Jim Leahy at [jleahyart@gmail.com](mailto:jleahyart@gmail.com) or by order form from the artist’s website***

*(The Leahy family has graciously given Spearhead News permission to reproduce their father’s art work.)*

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### **During World War II more than 100 U.S. servicemen and civilians served as 'combat artists'.**

They depicted the war as they experienced it with their paintbrushes and pens. Some of the artists were part of the military, serving in the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps. Some worked for Life Magazine or other organizations. All accompanied troops in the thick of battle.

**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**SGT TED OVERGARD  
HS-13 Iwo Survivor  
And Past FMDA Officer**

(Honored by Todd Overgard, son)



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**JOYCE OVERGARD  
Wife of Ted Overgard**

(Honored by Todd Overgard, son)



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**2<sup>nd</sup> LT JOHN S. HYNDMAN, Sr  
1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, B Company, 1stBN, 28<sup>th</sup> Reg  
Iwo Survivor**

(Honored by Lois Hyndman, wife)



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**JAYNE OVERGARD  
Daughter of Ted Overgard**

(Honored by Todd Overgard, brother )



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**PFC WILLARD MARTIN BERKEY  
E-2-28, Iwo Survivor  
(Honored by his three daughters  
Marsha Hunter, Kaye Stone, Susan Stotler)**



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**Cpl. HARRY L. SANDOSKY  
1st Platoon, B Company 5<sup>th</sup> Pioneer BN  
Iwo Survivor  
(Honored by Katuria Springer, wife)**



# The Navajo Code Talkers

*(Sources used: azcentral, Reporter Shondiin Silversmith, <https://nativenewsonline.net>, The San Diego Union-Tribune, Carl Prine ) (Below: Code Talkers Thomas Begay (left) & Peter McDonald (right) being honored at the White House in 2017 for their WW2 service)*



In WWII, an estimated 375 to 420 young Navajos served as code talkers. These men, many still teenagers, first qualified as Marines. Their innate strength, ingenuity, scouting and tracking ability, keen senses, Spartan lifestyle, and utter disregard for hardships, made them an asset to all six Marine Divisions in the Pacific. These brave men fought in battles that included Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Guadalcanal, Saipan, Guam, and Tarawa.

Trained in Communications and taught to use and repair radios, string wires, and other radiomen jobs, their main, and secret, mission was to devise a code based on their native language, and to directly send and receive messages in seconds and minutes instead of the much lengthier times it would have taken to encode and decode an English Language-based cryptogram. The enormous contribution of the Code Talkers in the fight against the Japanese was vital to victory.

At the beginning of the War, Japanese cryptographers were amazingly adept at breaking top secret military codes. As a result, American battle plans became known to the enemy almost

immediately, often before they had become operational. The result was an appalling loss of American lives.

There were several reasons the Navajo Code Talkers were so greatly successful, sending and receiving over 800 messages with no errors on the first two days after the landing on Iwo Jima alone. First, the syntax and grammar of the Navajo language were elaborate, and the vocabulary included a number of words that could be spoken with varying inflections to produce totally different meanings. The unique tonal qualities of the language, along with the fact it had no written form, made the Navajo language almost impossible for a non-Navajo to learn or understand.

Due to the lack of direct equivalents in Navajo of many technical and military English terms, the Navajo themselves developed word substitution and also Navajo words to stand for the English alphabet to enable spelling out and transmitting messages. This code initially consisted of 260 words, but was expanded to 600 terms by the end of the war. This developing of a military code within a code, deciding which words in nature to stand for military objects and commands, and using the alphabet to spell out other terms, resulted in the Japanese never being able to break the code. To add another layer of complexity, the Code Talkers had several Navajo words to symbolize the same alphabet letter so the enemy could not rely of deciphering words by patterns of occurrence, especially with vowels.

Additionally, the way Navajos at the time learned oral history through storytelling at an early age of about 3 or 4 years old, helped them become successful Code Talkers. Around the age of 10, Navajo children were learning longer stories and Navajo songs and prayers. Education was storytelling. There were no books. Navajos learned these stories because one evening they would be told a story, and the next they had to repeat that story word for word. Each song, creation story, and prayer was memorized through repetition. That fine-tuned and implanted extraordinary



memory skills that helped make transmission of the Navajo Code very successful.

Because the Navajo had the largest population of Native American they offered the best possibility for recruitment. The tribe's seclusion also made the Navajo a culturally and linguistically autonomous people compared with other native groups. The Navajo reservation, which was located largely in Arizona but which comprised portions of New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado, totaled an area of 25,000 square miles of isolated and sparsely populated land that was largely inaccessible due to unimproved roads and trails. Many Navajo children attended government established schools on the reservation that taught English grammar.

**But a salient reason for the success of the program was the extreme dedication, patriotism, and loyalty of the young Navajo Marines themselves. ❖**

## Thomas Begay was one of the first, now one of the last, Navajo Code Talkers

When Begay and his fellow Code Talkers seamlessly stitched the letters and words together in radio traffic, it boggled Japanese code crackers but allowed American commanders to openly communicate through their Navajo translators in real time, with no delays, thus allowing for quick effective action against the enemy. It was so successful on Iwo Jima that for two decades past the war Begay and his fellow code talkers weren't allowed to divulge the classified program's existence, a promise they kept but one that delayed widespread acclaim for their role in helping to win the war.

Begay speaks of his eternal pride in being a Marine, and marveled at the sacrifices he saw on Iwo Jima.

In WWII Begay was in the 5th Marine Division Signal Company and in the Radio Section of the H & S Company, 27th Marines. He learned to use and

repair two types of radio transmitters, one was battery operated and the other was powered by a hand crank generator. And he learned how to hook up a telephone line by climbing up a pole and running the wire across. Begay was also taught Morse code.

He remembers being sent to a hill to send messages using blinkers. If they needed to signal planes, they would use panels.

Begay never quit serving his country. A year after his discharge from the Marines, he enlisted in the Army. In Korea, he was in the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and was in constant combat for nine months. He is a survivor of the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir.

All four of Begay's children, including retired Army Lt Colonel Ronald, below with his father, served in the military. *(At right, Thomas Begay who enlisted as a Marine at 16.)*



He continued to interpret for various US Congressional dignitaries, tribal leaders and officials, During his retirement, he and his wife of 68 years continued to travel around the world, and participated in various national and community events/conferences, chapter meetings, and traditional ceremonies as well as participate in Song in Dance across the Navajo Nation. In 2013, his wife passed away in Gallup, NM.

Thomas H. Begay continues to travel, participate in various parades, military functions and speaking engagements. We are honored to have him attend the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual FMDA reunion. ❖

# Stories from a Photograph and More

by Valerie Leman, daughter of Craig B. Leman (H-3-26).

**Craig B. Leman (1923-2014) said that his Marine experience was always with him.**

On Feb. 19, 1945, D-Day in the Battle of Iwo Jima, Leman landed on Red Beach 2 as leader of a shore party platoon. After spending the first 10 days on the beach, unloading landing craft and stowing gear and supplies, he was one of ten second lieutenants sent to exhausted Fifth Division rifle companies as replacement officers. Surviving a head wound from the battle, he was sent in early May 1945 to Camp Tarawa on the big island of Hawaii, to prepare for the next campaign, the invasion of Japan. Later, he served in the Occupation of Japan and on Palau.

Following the war, Leman became an active member of the FMDA and a regular contributor to the *Spearhead News*.

**Throughout his life, he worked hard to keep up his ties with the men with whom he served, and to educate others who wrote him to ask about Marines with whom he had served. ❖**



A friend who was a retired USMC master sergeant corresponded with Craig Leman about a picture they found, taken during the early days of the battle. It showed Major Richard Fagan and Captain Conrad Pearson of 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines as they studied aerial photos of Iwo Jima, probably on the morning of Feb 22, 1945.

*(Photographer D.G. Christian; Source, United States Navy Naval History and Heritage Command, Identification Code NH 104292; identifies Pearson as "Pierson".)*

Leman sent a copy of the photo to the surviving relatives of Captain Pearson, his commanding officer at Camp Tarawa. Captain Pearson had graduated from Harvard Law School in 1942 and then joined the Marines. Leman wrote the family that Maj. Fagan, the man on the left, was a career Marine officer who had gone to Dartmouth and served in Nicaragua, and on Iwo had responded to his emergency appointment with a competence that earned him a Navy Cross. He further explained: "The picture was sent to me by a retired Marine about thirty years younger than me, since he knew that I served in your dad's company. They misspelled your dad's name, and the date of the photo may be in error. February 22 was not a sunny day. I believe it was the same day when Fagan and your dad were transferred from Regimental headquarters to replace the commander and operations officer of Third battalion, 26th regiment, who had just been killed. Assuming that the date is correct, it was probably taken

in the morning before they got transferred, as the latter part of the day was so chaotic that it is hard to imagine they were able to find a safe time and place for such a photo.

“Anyway, the device they were using was almost certainly a stereoscopic three-dimensional camera. It suggests the difficulty in reading terrain off the composite maps they had put together. This device was a type of parallel lens you slide over each other to get a 3-D view and that's what they are using in that photo. It was brought along by the 5th Engineer Battalion and later distributed when they got in those ravines in the north. Maybe Fagan brought it on that day as he was working in Division.” The rest is history.

After Leman's WWII service ended, he returned to the University of Chicago to take pre-medical courses. He was motivated to do so by his experience on Iwo seeing half dead, grey Marines going into surgery and coming out pink and alive. Eventually, the G.I. Bill paid for two-and-a-half years of Harvard Medical School, and when that ran out, he worked three nights a week at the Boston City Hospital Morgue and participated in medical studies to pay the bills. He also wrote down a number of stories for possible publication, including a few about his Iwo Jima experiences.

***One of his handwritten drafts, entitled “Fagan Departs,” reads as follows:***

*“After the bitter campaign for Iwo, the Colonel of our Marine Corps battalion, a doughty warrior of many campaigns, became ill and was finally relieved of his command. All of us feared and some hated him, but those who had fought for him were sorry to see him go, as we respected his courage and we knew that his career as a fighting man meant everything to him.*

*“The day he left, the officers in the battalion filed through the office to bid him goodbye; behind his dark glasses we sensed tears of sorrow, and we were astonished at the gentle words of praise that the one-time tyrant had for us as he shook our hands and wished us good luck. Most of us just muttered a word or two and passed on.*

*“However, the last man in line was a replacement, a new second lieutenant fresh from OCS, whom the Colonel had never seen. He began a speech, a florid one about the outfit, its record, and how he hoped to carry on the tradition of the Corps. As the Colonel listened, his beetling brows contracted. Gone was the gentleness that had surprised us. The speech faltered and finally stopped. Back in character once more, the Colonel roared, ‘Who the hell are you? Take your damned hat off when you talk to me, you young pup!’” ❖*

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## Silver Star

On March 3rd 1945, Craig Leman went to the front lines with H Company, Third Battalion, 26th Marines, as leader of the first rifle platoon. This was a group of twenty-two men, down from an original forty-seven. They tried to move forward as ordered, but were too few to assault fortifications they couldn't see, that also housed an unrelenting enemy. For the next four days, the process of bombardment, attempted advance repeated until they attempted a surprise advance before a bombardment. Then moving forward towards a cave, there was a tremendous explosion that killed the majority of the platoon. Leman rallied and organized the men remaining in the area, and pressed forward in the attack despite the extreme conditions. He was shot in the head while leading an advance. With effort and the cover from his men, Leman made it back to a fox-hole, and despite his injury adamantly remained with his unit until his replacement came. For his courage, initiative, and leadership in battle Leman received a Silver Star Medal. ❖

# Gregory "Doc" Emery, Navy Corpsman

December 14, 1925- June 2, 2021



*(Adapted in part from Palm Beach Post article by Eliot Kleinberg and YouTube interview by friend and producer Larry Cappetto)*

*(Left: Corpsman "Doc" Emery, right on one knee, treats a wounded Marine during the Battle of Iwo Jima.)*

Like many combat veterans, Greg "Doc" Emery gave the same answer when he was asked if he thought about the buddies he lost. "Every day." "It was too big a part of a person's life to be forgotten."

He had dropped out of high school on his 17th birthday, in December 1942, and joined the Navy. Two brothers already had enlisted. He was trained as a medical corpsman and was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Medical Battalion on Iwo Jima.

February 1945, Emery, 19, came ashore at Iwo Jima in one of the first waves. "When that ramp went down, that meant your boyhood is over. "Once we set foot on the black sands, there were dead already there." As he reached the second terrace, it seemed every enemy gun on the island opened up. "There was no place to go. The sea was behind us." Five days later he watched the stirring sight of the flag raising. "It meant a lot to see that flag raised," Emery said. "It also meant safety. As long as Suribachi was in enemy hands, they were looking down our throats."

At that point, Emery said, most figured the battle was over. It wasn't. "We had to go north on the island to join the other regiments that had run into tremendous casualties," he said. "The battle was not going according to plan." In fact, at that north end, it was a bloodbath, Emery said.

"There were no good days at Iwo Jima. But I remember March 3 as one of the worst. Just one hell of a day, I'll tell you." All these years later, "Doc" does remember one particular pal who was killed on that bloody March 3 on Iwo Jima: Marine Corps Pvt. Anthony Scaramellino, his wife's brother. "My daughter Toni is named to honor him."

Emery couldn't say how many men he saved and how many lost. "I was hoping to save their life, but I believe that a higher power was going to save them or not save them," he said. "I just know that there's a lot of people you couldn't help. You'd do what you could. Not tell them how bad it was. Try to sound encouraging, even if you were going to lose them." He said every corpsman there would have worked on hundreds of wounded. Chaplains also gave solace to the wounded and dying. It was non-stop, going and going, around the clock.

He did remember getting wounded himself as he crawled forward towards Marines who had been hit by artillery. He refused to leave the island and instead was taken to a field hospital. He snuck out of bed the next morning and made his way back to his unit at the front. He'd be there the entire 36 days of the campaign.

He called the Marines "The greatest fighting force on the face of the earth. We never had any doubt about our ability to win the battle." "The island had to be taken. 7,000 Marines died to save 22,000 Air Corps airmen and their planes coming back from bombing raids over Japan. It was a trade-off for freedom." Emery also believed every corpsman who served with the Marines share their motto: "Semper Fidelis -Always Faithful"



After the war, Emery returned to his hometown of Peekskill, N.Y., 40 miles north of Manhattan along the Hudson. He would spend 9 years as a firefighter, then another 16 as the town's coordinator of public safety before retiring to Florida. For years at his home in New York State, and for years after he retired to South Florida, he'd join groups that, for Memorial Day, placed American flags on the graves of service members. If the veterans had been Marines, he added the Marine Corps flag as well.



(Above: Greg Emery with Norman Ostrowski, Mt Suribachi, Iwo Jima 1985)

Over the years, Doc was active in several veterans groups. He regularly would visit patients at the VA Medical Center. Emery was a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association, and attended the 2014 Annual Reunion when it was held that year in Tampa, Florida. In February 1985, the 40th anniversary of Iwo Jima, Emery had returned for a "Reunion of Honor." He called the event "overpowering."

Corpsman Greg Emery will be greatly missed by his Marine buddies. Rest in Peace ❖

**(Also See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXEzQNsRib0> "Tales from a 19year old WWII Navy Corpsman, Iwo Jima, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Div, What his eyes saw, Doc Emery" an exceptional & compelling 26 minute interview)**



While technically not a 'supporting arm,' the field medical support provided the assault Marines primarily by the Navy was a major contributor to victory in the prolonged battle. The practice of integrating surgeons, chaplains, and corpsmen within the Fleet Marine Force units continued to pay valuable dividends. In many cases company corpsmen were just as tough and combat-savvy as the Marines they accompanied. In all cases, a wounded Marine immediately knew "his" corpsman would move heaven and earth to reach him, bind his wounds, and start the long process of evacuation (Col Joseph Alexander) ❖

# Edward J Mahoney

## The Third Division on IWO JIMA *by Kent Dozark*

**Ed Mahoney fought with the Third Division on Iwo Jima alongside the Fifth Division.** *His assignment was on a 37mm Anti-Tank gun with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Weapons Company, 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division, which he manned in earlier battles on Bougainville and Guam. But on Iwo Jima his unit was used as infantry during the battle, and their 37mm guns were left near the landing beach.*

*Ed's unit had landed on Iwo Jima at approximately 10:30AM on D+5 at Red Beach 1. He spent a total of 42 days there and left when landing craft were finally available to remove his outfit. He had watched the famous first flag going up from the deck of his troop ship. No binoculars were necessary...the ship was close and he could see all the activity easily. There was cheering and the ships were blowing their horns. The second flag raising occurred several hours later without fanfare.*



**While the Third Division was on Guam,** after the main fighting was done, the Marines initiated mop-up operations. Ed's unit came across some dead Japanese soldiers in a cave. Ed retrieved a Japanese flag, maps, and other documents. The most interesting item was a postcard from the pocket of one of the Japanese soldiers. Seventy-six years later Ed still had the postcard. During one of our meetings, I let Ed know of FMDA's ability to return souvenirs back to Japan, if the vet so desired. Ed thought for a moment and said, "You're welcome to return it. I've held onto it long enough"



At the 71<sup>st</sup> FMDA reunion in Texas, Japanese linguist and consultant Dan King, on translating the Japanese writing on the card, reported that the postcard had never been mailed, and might very well still be delivered to the family for whom it was initially intended.

Dan has many times before personally helped locate family members to return belongings of Japanese soldiers KIA in the Pacific. Now, as a member of FMDA, he continues the Association's tradition that was begun in 1970 by Marty Conner in coordination with Buddhist monk The Rev Wachi, of returning war souvenirs to bereaved Japanese families.

### Translation:

*"Greetings from the land of perpetual summer. I think of my family in Tokyo, and pray for your health." (The card was written by a naval man whose last name was "Abe" He wrote it to a man who is believed to be his brother, "Teijiro Abe" at this address: 1-23 Higashi Jujo, Oji-ward, Tokyo. In 1947 "Oji-ward" became Kita-Ward ). It is possible that the city hall in Kita-Ward could help find the brother, or his children. Dan has initiated a search.*

**A Poignant Memory from Iwo:** Ed's father had fought in the First World War. The first night on the island reminded him of the stories that his father had told him of the rolling artillery barrages. **"On Iwo the Japanese would shell in front of the lines. Then, rhythmically, the shells would move closer and closer to Marine positions, then right on top of, and on towards the rear. After five minutes of silence, the process would begin again...all night long."**





**Close call on Iwo Jima:** One night Ed's unit was positioned alongside the runway of Motoyama Airfield #2. The terrain was rocky and hilly. On this particular evening the moon was stunningly full and bright. It hung up in the sky to Ed's left. Ed's mission was to man a 30 caliber Browning machine gun covering a 500 yard long field of fire. His assistant gunner was to his right. Sitting, with a carbine in his lap, Ed scanned ahead for enemy movement. Navy star shells would be fired into the sky every 5 minutes. At one point, as one of the star shells descended, Ed's assistant noticed some legs moving in the distance and Ed fired. By the time the next star shell went up there was nothing to be seen. Time passed and the night wore on. Sensing something, Ed looked to his left and up....there, on top of the ridge standing in the center of the moon was the torso of a Japanese soldier aiming his rifle directly at Ed. In an instant, Ed fired his carbine from the hip and shot the Japanese soldier in the chest. Ed could clearly see the man drop his rifle and clutch his chest. Ed squeezed the trigger again and.....misfire .....the carbine had jammed!!! In the same moment, Ed's assistant gunner, to his right, fired his M1 Garand and knocked the Japanese soldier down. The Japanese soldier fell behind the ridge out of sight. Within seconds they heard him arm a grenade by hitting it on his helmet. He didn't throw it but instead used it to commit suicide. Ed spent the next 15 minutes picking fine bits flesh off of him. From that night forward, Ed only carried the more powerful M1 Garand.

**Another close call on Iwo:** Towards the end of operations on Iwo, Ed's outfit was ordered to execute a mopping-up operation. Using Japanese soldiers from the Philippines as interpreters, the Marines would attempt to get the holdouts to give up. Ed indicated that none of the Japanese soldiers they encountered surrendered. Repeatedly, after multiple attempts the Marines would simply shut the cave and hideout entrances, either with explosives or bulldozers. The normal day would start out at approximately 9AM with a preparatory 15 minute artillery barrage. On this particular day Ed's unit started a 300 yard assault on a downward slope. The Marines would run so far, hit the deck...get back up.....move forward and repeat...zig zagging all the way. Finally, their assault ended along a wall. Ed's position was unique, in that he had arrived where there was a vertical crack in the wall. Peering through, he observed a Japanese Type 92 7.7mm machine gun. Before he could sound the alarm his Sgt. ordered him to advance. Ed threw a grenade, waited a few seconds, and over the wall he went. He landed and immediately lay flat along the wall. Within seconds Japanese machine gun bullets were peppering the wall above him, showering him with wall fragments. Ed thought he was being hit with bullets and his days were over. Fortunately, for Ed, the Japanese gunner wasn't able to lower his machine gun low enough to hit him. The machine gun was wiped out and Ed's unit moved on. Ed remarked he wouldn't be able to go on as he was all "shot up" After a big laugh Ed cleaned all the concrete chips and dust off of him and moved forward.



*(Left: Ed looking at battle terrain map of Iwo Jima that was the personal map of LtCol John A Butler. It was found on the battlefield by a Marine in Col Butler's battalion and returned to his son 45 years later. Ed said he had not seen this type of map during his entire service in WWII)*

**Ed said he was able to emotionally handle Bougainville and Guam but Iwo really affected him. "On Iwo, combat was so intense and constant with no let-up and no rest. There was no relief between fighting like on the other islands, and little sleep. There were no front-lines. The enemy could come from any direction and pop up anywhere. That played on your mind" ❖**

# Full Circle... the return of Japanese battlefield souvenirs

by Cheryl Mach

Sugitani, Yoshiyuki, Keiji...these are the names of Japanese soldiers whose lives intersected with my father on the battlefields of the Solomons and Iwo Jima during WWII. My father, Cpl Edd Mach, USMC, never would have imagined 75 years after the war ended, and 30 years after his passing, that a process was begun to return personal items belonging to Sugitani, Yoshiyuki, and Keiji back to their families in Japan.

Yoshiyuki's Good Luck Flag started it all. One day, I decided to organize my father's WWII effects. I came upon an envelope that held two Japanese flags with writing on them. As I held one in my hands, a jolt of insight hit me, as I realized this item held the essence of a human being, a real person, who had a family, friends, a life, and although an enemy at the time, was also fighting for his country. A second Good Luck Flag, with the name "Sugitani" was also in the envelope. In putting pieces of the puzzle together, the acquisition of these Good Luck Flags possibly occurred sometime during USMC operations on Choiseul in the Solomon Islands, when it left these Japanese soldiers' possession and came into the possession of an American Marine, my father.

I also found a notebook. The flags and notebook were subsequently translated from Japanese into English where I learned the names of these individuals. The notebook was a diary written by a soldier on Iwo Jima named Keiji who missed his family, his child, and yet stoically went about his duties, intuitively knowing what was about to happen in the days to come. Four poignant excerpts of his diary are included in this article. Keiji, like most of his comrades, did not survive the fighting on Iwo Jima.

*These are excerpts from the diary:*

*"How is everyone doing? Nothing has really changed with me as I'm still fulfilling my military duties. The days and months are passing so quickly. When you're in the military, time seems to fly by. Even with that, it seems like just the other day when Shigenari was born. His eyes were so big and alert. I'm sure he's starting to say a few words now and bringing everyone so much joy. Be careful not to spoil him too much so that he turns out to be a weak child. Out here we are currently experiencing bitter hardships. I received a letter from Ritsuko the other day. We're going through so much not it would be worthless to ask you to send this or that. For now, letters from home are more important than anything else".*

*"Each night this week when it's been my turn to patrol, I've been rained on. It's pitch black here inside of our sleeping quarters, and all of my comrades are huddled together on the floor trying to get some sleep. This is the time when I need to get some important rest, but I can't sleep, so I'm sitting here discouraged waiting for the rain to stop. It's pitiful that I'm out here on the front line like this in the cold and shivering because the rain makes it even colder. Before long it will be time to get up."*



*"The guns from the battleships are more intense than usual. I made it through the first night trying to suppress the anxiety I feel in my chest. Early on the second morning, there were Grumman airplanes flying in the sky over the ships. We no longer own the airspace above or the waters around us. We will finally realize today all of the training we have received up to this point."*

*"As a soldier I must do my best with strong belief in victory. Even though I become the last soldier (to fight), I must show up my energy, devote myself, and take care of myself at the very end. Being united like an iron rock, we depart with strong belief in our captain, in strong unity, with attacking spirit. Keiji the soldier, will do his best efforts dead or alive."*

(above: Keiji's diary was returned to Japan and his family on July 30, 2020 at the Japanese Consulate in Denver.)



In addition, two Japanese flags from Iwo Jima (no names were on the flags) were finally properly rendered during a Shinto ceremony in Honolulu on December 10, 2021. (photo right : Kathy Tinsley, Cheryl Mach, Jimmie Watson, and Kathy Painton with Shinto Priest.)

(below: Cpl Edd Mach with Japanese flags)



Unfortunately, the two Good Luck Flags that started it all are still in the U.S. and have not been returned back to Japan. So far, the families/ descendants have not been located. We are still working through various Japanese organizations to find the families of Sugitani and Yoshiyuki, the original owners of the Good Luck Flags . ❖



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREES**



**RAY ELLIOTT & JOHN BUTLER**  
In honor of their Historical Contributions

(Honored by Valerie Leman)



**TRIBUTE OF HONOR  
MEMORIAL HONOREE**



**PFC HARRYDALE HYDE**  
A/1/27 5<sup>th</sup> Division KIA 2/28/45  
(Honored by Jimmie Hyde Watson, sister  
and Connie Hyde, Brother)



# Occupation in Saesbo and Nagasaki

Excerpts from *Private Brown's Diary* by Kenneth Brown,

Saesbo, Kyushu, Japan, Camp Ainoura— 3 Oct 1945 - I am now writing this in Japan

Well, we didn't have to go through another combat experience after all. Not hitting the beach or dodging mortar shells. The war, thank God, is over. I guess we of the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division are as lucky as anyone because we were headed for an invasion of Japan and certainly would have had hell to pay if they hadn't dropped the atomic bombs and brought an end to it all. It sure was nice to be able to walk down the gangplank instead of wading through death and destruction. After seeing the fortifications which the Japanese had built along the coast where we were to hit, they certainly could have made it hot for us if they had wanted to. Tunnels and gun emplacements were all over the place. All have been demolished by now by our demolition crews. Some of these tunnels were big enough to be supplied by railroad lines connected to them.....

We were the first occupation troops ashore on this island of Kyushu. Our ships came in near Sasebo harbor and anchored off shore. The first troops went in exactly as if they were expecting opposition. They went in on landing craft and hit the beach with full battle equipment. This was only about two weeks after the surrender and so they didn't know what to expect. The landing party met no opposition, but rather found officials waiting our arrival.....

The people here are starving to death. The ration now is about a cup of rice a day and the Japanese are so thickly populated as to be practically living on top of each other.... The Japanese people are very polite to us. They bow as we pass and do everything they can to stay out of our way.....

The next day we headed out for an old Japanese military base known as Sasebo Fortress. ...This was my first look at the bombed out city. Sasebo had been hit with 100 B-29 Superfortresses which had pretty much demolished this rather large city. Everywhere was rubble and ruin. However there were no Japanese civilians in sight anywhere...I learned later that the Japanese people had been told that the Marines were such awful monsters that they would surely kill everyone in sight even though there was supposed to be peace. They had all taken to the hills. In a few days they were to come straggling back, loaded with belongings....



Shortly after we moved to Camp Ainoura, I was called to drive a Colonel down to Nagasaki.... We came into Nagasaki about two weeks after the atomic bomb. ...As we drove through the atomic bowl where the bomb had exploded, we saw that it had virtually been swept clean; fires and heat had burned up everything...I saw the remains of a railroad track and a locomotive which had been thrown about three blocks away. The trees on the hills far away had been broken off as if some mighty hand had swept across them. Their splintered trunks stood bare like toothpicks. .

I have been reading in magazines sent from home that the "bomb sickness" so many of the Nagasaki Japanese are dying from is something called atomic radiation. It is supposed to be all around and in the air near the areas of Hiroshima and Nagasaki where the bombs dropped. I guess it is a good thing we Marines didn't hear about it when we were in Nagasaki or we might have caught radiation too. Sometimes it doesn't pay to know too much.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December I left the old Fifth Division and joined the Second. All of the old timers that I have known ever since leaving the states went back with the Division. I lack about fifteen points so I guess I'm due to stay out here for awhile. ❖

# REMEMBERING THE FIFTH MARINE DIVISION

January 1944 - January 1946



*By Michael T. Naya, Jr,*

The date was Sunday, December 7, 1941. Americans all over the United States were enjoying a time of relative peace and safety. World War II had engulfed Europe and much of the world although America remained neutral. Despite this neutrality America had been sending the European Allies supplies and it was known that should America ever enter the war which side they'd be on.

As Americans attended church services, gathered at relatives' homes for Sunday dinner, radio waves soon filled the air. It brought forth the news that American naval and air bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, had been attacked. Most Americans had never heard of Pearl Harbor. Those who had sons and daughters in the military may have known of the base if their relatives lived or were stationed there. The same could be said for parents of U.S. forces stationed in the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island, also hit by the Japanese in coordinated attacks shortly after Pearl Harbor. Panic filled newspaper headlines; mothers and fathers wept in the hope that their sons were safe but for many of them, they would never hear from their sons ever again.

On December 8, 1941, America entered the war. It looked grim and it looked as if their future was uncertain that they would win the war. On April 18, 1942, Colonel James Doolittle and his Doolittle Raiders bombed Tokyo, ultimately instilling in the American people that striking back against the enemy was possible. His raid was a morale booster, one that would go on to inspire countless Americans to enlist in the war effort. The inspiring raid was followed by an American naval victory at Midway on June 7, 1942, which turned the war effort in favor of the Allies.

On January 21, 1944, the Fifth Marine Division was officially formed at Camp Pendleton, California. This new well-trained and well-led Division of Marines included highly experienced members of the recently disbanded elite ParaMarines and Marine Raiders. This gave the Division battle-wise men to prepare the new troops for combat. After training at Camp Pendleton, the Division sailed for the Big Island of Hawaii and further trained in the volcanic sands and terrain similar to what they would face in battle.

By January, 1945, the 5<sup>th</sup> Division Marines were on their way to the Invasion of the Japanese homeland island of Iwo Jima. On February 19, 1945, the division landed on beaches Red I, Red II and Green I at the base of Mount Suribachi. The division, pinned down, sustained heavy losses.

On February 23, 1945 the Fifth Marine Division distinguished themselves in the famed Iwo Jima flag raising photographed by Joe Rosenthal. The battle as a whole went on to live forever in the memory of those who served there much like those who remembered Belleau Wood in World War I. The battle had incorporated all aspects of the armed forces. Naval and US Marine aircraft from aircraft carriers roared overhead as they bombarded the beaches to soften the initial invasion, naval ships fired their cannons in hopes of destroying enemy fortifications.

*(continued page 26)*

*(continued from page 25)*

In total the island of Iwo Jima held two completed air fields and a third one under construction. The Japanese had used the Iwo airfields to launch harassing air attacks during the American operations against Saipan. However, after securing Saipan, US Air Corps B-24s conducting daily bombing raids from that island severely damaged the two Iwo airfields and made them unusable. If these airfields were to be taken by the Americans and repaired, they could be used as a base for P-51s to give fighter support and protection to the B-29 bombers and to give emergency landing strips for bombers shot up by anti-aircraft guns during their missions over Japan. In addition, by capturing the island and denying the enemy the radar station there, the Japanese were no longer able to alert Tokyo of incoming bombing raids as B-29s passed over the island in route to Japan.

The Fifth Division continued to fight at Iwo until March 26, where in total they lost 2,482 men who were killed in action, nineteen men missing in action, and a total of 6,128 men wounded in combat. After the battle of Iwo Jima, Naval Seabees, Army Air Corps, Army Signal Corps, Marines, among countless other personnel roamed the once Japanese controlled island. With the small volcanic island being claimed, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division began to look ahead. After 36 days of intense combat on Iwo Jima, the battered and casualty-depleted 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division returned to Camp Tarawa on the Big Island of Hawaii to rebuild, re-organize, and train for the planned invasion of Japan. As they sailed from Iwo Jima back to Hawaii, for the first time since the initial landing, the men were able to get a good night's sleep, to relax, and maybe even smile. After Japan surrendered in September 1945, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division went ashore in Sasebo, Kyushu, the southern island of Japan and conducted occupation duties until December 1945, when they returned to the United States and disbanded in January 1946, two years after being activated.

Today only a small number of veterans who took part in the battle of Iwo Jima are currently alive. This is

why we should remember the sacrifice made seventy-five years ago so that we may live in freedom today. We should take the time to learn, study, and honor the stories and the men of Iwo Jima who are now living or deceased. If we do not remember the past then we are condemned to repeat it. As the final men who served at Iwo Jima fade, I urge any of you reading this that you take the time to speak and interact with any such survivor of Iwo Jima. After all, they may be an old man sitting right next to you daily who is looking for someone to share a story with, but not just any story, his story, our history. ❖

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## 1<sup>st</sup> FLAG RAISER CPL CHARLES LINDBERG



*In 1995, he returned to Iwo Jima for the 50th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima. In 2006 he attended his last reunion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, E Co., 28<sup>th</sup> Marines, held in D.C.*

***“I have always felt it was a mistake to identify the Marines that raised the flag on Iwo Jima. Every man that went ashore at Iwo, and every man at sea, raised that flag — every one of us. We (28<sup>th</sup> Marines) carried it up there, and we had our hands on the pole, but all of you here raised it, and most of all, the men who didn't come back – they all raised it.”***

*Chuck Lindberg had been a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Raider Battalion, known as Carlson's Raiders, and saw combat during the “Long Patrol” on Guadalcanal and during the Bougainville Campaign. When the Raider units disbanded, he was re-assigned to the newly activated 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division as a flamethrower operator with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company E, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 28<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment. Lindberg was part of the 40-man combat patrol led by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Harold Schrier to climb up and capture the top of Mount Suribachi, and put up the first American flag. ❖*

# Boots Thomas, a first-flag raiser on Iwo Jima



*Since 2015, several times each year, FMDA members Jennings and Joyce Bunn have driven from their home in North Florida to the hometown of Iwo Jima Marine hero Boots Thomas to tend his gravesite, weeding the surrounding wall, placing fresh flowers and a new flag. This past October, Jennings and Joyce added a 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Flag in addition to the American Flag. He notes that the 5th MarDiv Flag was made in the USA!*



*(Left)  
Sgt Ernest "Boots" Thomas  
(foreground, facing front)  
after he helped raise the  
first flag on Mt Suribachi.*

Boots Thomas was studying aeronautical engineering at Tri-State University when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He wrote his childhood friend, Dr James Sledge, "I can't even study and want to join the Marine Corps." But he was colorblind and failed the vision test, and Sledge said Thomas "memorized the books then returned to retake the test. He knew by the cover what the numbers were and passed the test." Six months after Pearl Harbor, Thomas went to Parris Island for boot camp. Thomas so impressed his officers during his time in boot camp that they kept him on as a drill instructor. His expertise was in knife and bayonet combat. But he continued to request combat duty until he was transferred to the newly formed 5th Marine Division in California in November 1943 where he was assigned to Easy Company, Second Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment.

On Iwo Jima his leadership of his men continued to be exemplary, as was his bravery on the field of battle. He was posthumously awarded a Navy Cross for his actions just two days after the Marines landed, directing tank fire from exposed positions against the Japanese pillboxes which were retarding his platoon's advance

His Navy Cross citation read in part, "Under his aggressive leadership, the platoon killed all the enemy in the sector and contributed materially to the eventual capture of Mount Suribachi. His daring initiative, fearless leadership and unwavering devotion to duty were inspiring to those with whom he served." Thomas was killed by a sniper on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, just a week before his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

*Lt Gen Lawrence Snowden USMC stated, "Ernest Boots Thomas is the epitome of a national hero." In 2015 at the rededication of markers at Boots gravesite in his hometown of Monticello, FL, FMDA secretary Ray Elliott said, "He's right up there with those people who were true heroes in Marine Corps history. There's a lot of them there, but Boots is right up at the top." ❖*

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## The Iwo Jima Memorial

*The Marine Corps War Memorial, based on the famous photograph of Joe Rosenthal, was commissioned by Congress at the conclusion of the war in 1945. Sculptor Felix de Weldon constructed the iconic statue over a period of nine years. Dedicated on November 10, 1954, it stands a total height of 78 feet. The Marines depicted are 36 feet, and the flag that flies there 24 hours a day is 10 by 19 feet. It is the largest cast bronze statue in the world at 100 tons.*

*De Weldon was an Austrian-born American, who enlisted in the US Navy during WWII, and became a United States citizen in 1945. He was already a sculptor of international reputation when he came to this country in 1937. As much an engineer and architect as sculptor and artist, De Weldon has approximately 1,200 statues and monuments on every continent, even in Antarctica, where he has a bust of RAdm Richard Byrd at McMurdo Sound. ❖*



# Col. David E. Severance, CO of company that raised both flags on Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi, dies at 102

*(Abridged from an article by Ray Elliott)*



Col. David Elliott Severance, USMC (Ret.), who had just turned 102 on Feb. 4, passed away at his home in La Jolla, Calif., on Aug. 2, 2021. The colonel will be buried with military honors next to his wife at the cemetery adjacent to the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station on Sept. 15. He was a 26-year-old mustang (former enlisted Marine) captain and company commander of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Division, when they landed at Green Beach on Iwo Jima on Feb. 19, 1945. At the time, he had no idea of the fame the men from his company would attain for raising the flag on Mount Suribachi five days later.

The campaign was only going to last about that long, the troops were told. That's all it would take to secure the sulfuric island only about 8 square miles, 5 miles long, and 2.5 miles across at the widest point. Taking Iwo Jima was important because it was roughly half way between the Mariana Islands, where U.S. bombing raids on Japan originated, and the Japanese mainland. Radar warned the Japanese the bombers were coming, and Japanese fighter planes and mainland anti-aircraft guns were often instrumental in damaging planes returning to the Marianas, causing them to go down in the Pacific and losing entire crews.

For the first five days, the fighting on Iwo Jima was ferocious and casualties were high. "We had nearly 30 percent casualties those first few days," Severance said. The vantage from Suribachi and the fire from various spots there made it necessary to secure the mountain."

When battalion commander Lt.Col. Chandler Johnson told then-Capt. Severance to send a patrol up Mount Suribachi to secure and occupy it, he sent a 40-man patrol led by Lt. Harold "George" Schrier, along with an American flag the colonel wanted raised. The patrol found a pole, fastened the flag to it and raised it at about 10:30 a.m.

"That boosted our morale," Severance said. The Marines below the mountain cheered and hollered, and the ships at sea blasted horns and clanged bells and whistles, mistakenly thinking the battle was over that actually raged on for more than 30 days.



Soon afterward, because Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal wanted the flag, Lt.Col. Johnson ordered a larger flag in its place and the first one brought back for the battalion. That flag was later famously depicted in Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo and Marine photographer Sgt. Bill Genaust's moving picture film.

"We didn't think more about it until a couple of weeks later when they wanted the men identified from the second flag raising to take back for the bond tour," Severance said.

For much of the last 75 years, Severance was continuously asked about the famous flag raising and the 40-man patrol, including responding to a large number of claims from men (or their families) who said they were one of the flag raisers or were part of the 40-man patrol.

"If everybody who said they were on the mountain then were there, the whole mountain would have sunk into the ocean," he first said years ago, but in recent years no longer wanted to talk about the matter. "I'm fed up with the whole flag thing."



Col Severance with the author's wife and daughters

One set of facts has been clear and constant from the start: Col. David E. Severance's distinguished and storied career began when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1938, later received a commission, served with the 1st Parachute Battalion and fought on Bougainville. After the Paramarines were disbanded, he later joined the newly formed 5th Marine Division and received the Silver Cross on Iwo Jima, then became a Marine aviator and received the Distinguished Flying Cross in Korea, where he flew 69 missions. Well done, Marine. ❖

## More on Colonel Severance's Military Career *(Editor's note)*

☞ At Bougainville, Severance proved himself in battle by leading his cut off platoon out of a Japanese ambush with minimal casualties

☞ On Iwo Jima, Severance led Easy Company off the beach under heavy fire and played a role in helping to cut Mount Suribachi off from the rest of the island before the day was over. Severance continued leading Easy Company in the battle after the flag raising on D+5, advancing over the northeast end of the island. On March 1, Severance led his company in capturing a heavily defended ridge south of Nishi Village. He then held the ridge with his Marines despite a heavy barrage of enemy fire. For his actions that day, Severance was awarded the Silver Star.

☞ After the end of the war, he took part in occupation duty in Japan in late 1945 as the executive officer of 2/28.

☞ Severance attended flight training in April 1946. During the Korean War, as a Marine aviator, he flew the heavy fighter F7F-Tigercat-3P, a twin piston-engine aircraft used as a night fighter and attack aircraft and was awarded four Air Medals in addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross. Additionally, Severance flew all-weather Jet aircraft in Korea during his 69 missions.



☞ Severance also served during the Vietnam War before retiring from the Marines with the rank of colonel in May 1968

☞ In June 1996, Severance carried the Olympic torch from the Arlington National Cemetery to the steps of the Marine Corps War Memorial.

***☞In an interview on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, when asked his secret to long life, Col Severance said, "I look back, and I didn't die. As a matter of fact I didn't even get hit. I came close a couple of times. I made it through three wars."***

### TRIBUTE OF HONOR MEMORIAL HONOREE



**LtCol JOHN A BUTLER**  
**Battalion Commander 1/27**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division**  
**KIA 3/5/45**

Honored by Sabre Middlekauff, granddaughter



### Military Charities :

#### Semper Fi Fund & Tunnel to Towers Foundation

Among the many charitable organizations out there, two stand out as exceptional for their work with veterans. They use over 97% of donated money directly for their advertised services, with very little overhead or administrative expenses.

Each was given an A+/ 4-star rating. For details, see <https://www.charitynavigator.org/> or <https://www.charitywatch.org/>



# Gene Bell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division FMDA Iwo Vet, 1926-2021

(Adapted in part from RecordGazette article by Annette Tringham, and email from MCL Harry Armstrong)



Gene Bell enlisted in the Marine Corps February 19, 1944. While with the 3rd Marine Division he fought in the battles of Guam and Iwo Jima. He was just 17 years old when he landed on Guam. As a corporal in the 3rd Marines, Bell and his fellow Marines were the first replacement unit to come on shore after the invasion. After Guam he was transferred to 81mm Mortars for the Battle of Iwo Jima.

“I joined the Marine Corps because I loved America and I wanted to contribute to keeping America great,” said Bell. On September 9, 2021, he passed into glory at home with family, in Belgrade, Montana. A proud member of the local Marine Detachment, he planned to give a speech for the Marine Corps Birthday Ball in November. Gene was a long time member of FMDA, and enjoyed visiting with fellow Iwo Jima veterans of all Divisions.

After returning from the war to his native California, Gene had served on the Inglewood Police Department for 29 years, ending his Law Enforcement career with the Detective Bureau. Afterwards he became a seasonal Law Enforcement Ranger in Glacier National Park in Montana for 10 more years.

Mr. Bell was a walking talking Marine Corps advertisement in every clime and place. He returned with the Reunion of Honor annual visits to Iwo Jima as an Honorary Chairman of IJAA (Iwo Jima Association of America) and was a member of the Liberation Force of Guam. A few years ago he was their Grand Marshal at the Liberation Day Parade. He travelled the world as a representative of IJAA for more than 20 years, speaking at engagements and attending ceremonies, and spoke dozens of times each year at community and veterans organizations and at schools around the country. Bell asserted. “I am dedicated to the United States of America. I love our country and that’s why I keep doing this.”

Oohrah Cpl. Bell, thank you for your service, and Semper Fidelis ❖

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## Deadly “Friendly Fire” at Camp Tarawa

(by Walt O’Malley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, E Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division)

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1945, the 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment was undergoing a live ammo exercise at Camp Tarawa, Hawaii, and in the late morning we got the news that the Japs had surrendered.

At noon we took a break for lunch, C-rations. In our platoon, of 52 men, there were 12 Iwo vets, and four of us were very close, having played softball and touch football and partying together, and of course we’re wondering why we should continue with the live ammo exercise, now that the war was over?



I and my fire group had a close call that morning when our Company pulled back and we didn’t get the word!! We were in a ditch maybe 25-35 yards in front when there were bullets firing overhead and bouncing off rocks very close. I put my handkerchief over the tip of the M1 and started waving it, then we heard the word to cease fire!! (There is always 10% that don’t get the word)

After noon break we were informed that the live fire would continue. An hour or so later a short 75MM round fell amongst our platoon, killing a replacement from Houston, Texas, and severely damaging both legs of a vet from my squad on Iwo. He was sent back to the States and we never found out how bad he was injured, or if he lived. All of us always wondered why heavy live artillery was used in this training. A tragedy to survive 36 days on Iwo Jima and then get injured or killed in training after the war was over. ❖



# Last Muster

Never to be Forgotten



<b>Name</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>DOD</b>
ALDEN, George Jr	USAF	Dallas, TX	10-27-2021
BELL, Gene E	HQ 3-3 3rdMarDiv	Belgrade, MT	09-09-2021
CRABTREE, Luther	D-2-26	Columbus, OH	10-28-20
DANKO, Paul J	A-1-26	Alexandria, VA	09-22-2020
DITOMASSO, Anthony S.	31STREP	Providence, RI	05-25-16
EMERY, Greg ("Doc")	2-28 5 <sup>th</sup> Med	Plantation, FL	06-02-2021
FUTYMOSKI, Donald	HQ-2-28	Aurora, IL	07-19-17
GRALE (Graleski), Walter	H-3-26	Parma, OH	01-01-2021
GRECH, Alexander Jr	HQ-3-27	Port Jervis, NY	11-01-18
HOOD, William M, Jr	WPNS-28	Charlotte, NC	07-27-13
HUBBARD, Lawrence J, Jr	D-2-26	Lake Helen, FL	01-05-2013
LAIRD, Hendricks J.	5 <sup>th</sup> PION	Natchez, MS	12-26-12
LAURIELLO, John P	HS 27	Westmont, NJ	11-28-2019
McMANAMAN, Meryl	5 <sup>th</sup> SIG	Rotondo West, FL	03-31-14
MENZIES, Charles	B-1-26	Brentwood, TN	06-07-2020
OLIVER, Carl C.	HS-28	St Charles, MO	02-14-11
RADEBAUGH, Robert E.	E-2-28	Bartlesville, OK	11-23-2016
RAY, Robert L.	F-2-26	San Antonio, TX	01-01-2021
SEVERANCE, Dave	E-2-28	La Jolla, CA	08-02-2021
SMITH, Owen A.	M-4-13	Willowbrook, IL	02-01-13
STEELE, Cecil T.	E-2-28	Gouverneur, NY	06-02-2021
SULLIVAN, Arthur E.	5thMED	Buffalo, NY	05-24-09
TERRY, Deward G.	M-4-13	O'Fallon, MO	05-25-2021
TREICHLER, Delbert	L-4-13	Germantown, WI	10-30-21
WOLF, Raymond H.	HS-4-13	Barberton, OH	01-05-18
ZUCK, Lee	B-1-28	Houston, AR	01-23-12

# Notices



**To see more “Lest They Be Forgotten” oral history stories,** see Larry Cappetto’s website (<https://lcappetto.wixsite.com/honorstore>). Serving his country through the lens of a camera, the filmmaker and historian has documented and recorded the stark, graphic memories of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam veterans. Cappetto has interviewed over 1,000 surviving servicemen over the past 15 years. Among the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Marines Cappetto has interviewed in his Voices of History are Dave Severance, Chuck Lindberg, Doc Greg Emery, and Father Paul Francis Bradley.

**USS Joe petition:** In late September of 2021, the USMC Combat Correspondents Association opened a Rosenthal exhibit at the California State Library in Sacramento. Named **Joe Rosenthal and the Photo that Changed America**, the exhibit will be on view until February 28, 2022. A full video tour of the exhibit is available from the California State Library Foundation at <https://libraryca.libcal.com/reserve/exhibits> In the lobby is an introduction to the exhibit and its three parts: Joe Rosenthal and his iconic Iwo Jima flag-raising photo and its role in the successful War Loan tour that saved the country from bankruptcy; combat art and photography in Vietnam; and the work of political cartoonists Bill Mauldin and Theodor Seuss Geisel.



**Go to USSJOE.com to sign the petition to have a Navy warship named in honor of Rosenthal.**

**New FMDA website:** Oohrah!! On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, FMDA officially launched its new website **5thmarinedivision.org** James Dalman, professional web developer, and a veteran himself, constructed the site for the Association at no cost. It is a work in progress and is continually being added to and updated.

*In June, Memorial Member Mary Frances Johnson went to join her late husband, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Bill Johnson, 1/27, in the Marine Barracks in Heaven. She had attended FMDA reunions with Bill and had kept in touch with the son of Bill’s CO on Iwo, LtCol John A. Butler. Her last correspondence with him was to verify she had signed the USS Joe Rosenthal petition. Mary Frances’ smiling face and happy voice will be missed.*



## R E Q U E S T S   F O R   H E L P



**Anyone who served in the 26th Marines on Iwo Jima and knew PFC Robert Dwayne Swanger**, severely WIA on 9 March, 1945, please contact his cousin. He would greatly appreciate hearing from Bob’s former Marine friends. Please email Cliff Schroeder at [Schroeder111075@yahoo.com](mailto:Schroeder111075@yahoo.com) or phone at (651)-302-2966.

**Any Marine who served on Iwo Jima with Ray Rayniak, 5<sup>th</sup> Amph Trac BN, Co C**, please contact his Granddaughter Kate Schabot (919) 649-6939 or [katerschabot@email.com](mailto:katerschabot@email.com). Ray was originally from Schiller Park, IL

**Any Marine Aviator who flew in Korea or Vietnam with Col Dave Severance**, please contact Tom Huffhines at [thuffhines74@gmail.com](mailto:thuffhines74@gmail.com) *Spearhead News* is researching stories about this three-war hero post his flag-raising fame.

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Kilroy says, “See you in San Diego!!!!”



# Registration Form

FMDA 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Reunion May 11-15, 2022, San Diego, CA

Please print the following information as you would like it to appear on your ID Badge

1. Your Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your Address \_\_\_\_\_
3. City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_
4. Telephone Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_
5. Email \_\_\_\_\_
6. Names and relationships of guests accompanying you. \_\_\_\_\_

7. **Circle** if you are an Iwo Jima Vet a Vietnam Vet relative of Iwo Jima vet relative of Vietnam Vet

8. Vets: List Rank and Unit (Company, BN, Regiment) \_\_\_\_\_

9. Relative of vets: List name of vet, relationship, & all known rank & unit info  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. For logistical purposes, please *Circle* travel by car travel by airline - Flight #s \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival time \_\_\_\_\_ Departure \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Please list any disabilities or any dietary restricts below:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Cost Per Person:

Please fill in number of persons on each line:

1. **Registration** @ \$ 60 FMDA members \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ 70 non-members \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Banquet** @ \$ 70 \_\_\_\_\_

[# Steak filet \_\_\_\_\_] [# Fish \_\_\_\_\_] [# Vegetarian \_\_\_\_\_]

3. **Tour 1** – Mopar Ranch @ \$ 70  
(Transportation, tour, & lunch) \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Tour 2** – Marine Corps Recruit Depot @ \$ 70  
(Transportation, tour, & lunch) \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total** : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration Deadline is April 1, 2022. Mail Registration form and check payable to FMDA to Kathy Tinsley, 4657 4th St, La Mesa, CA 91941**

**Contact for questions: Email finally@cox.net Phone (619)770-0257**

**Hotel Accommodations: You may book your own room reservations by contacting Paradise Point Resort & Spa at (855) 463-3361 Ask for FMDA rate of \$ 199 (+taxes)**

**FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 728

WEATHERFORD, TEXAS 76086

**Forwarding Service Requested**

**All donations are tax deductible - 501(c)3 non-profit & all-volunteer organization**



**5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association - Membership and Donation Form**  
**Mail to: 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association, P.O. Box 728, Weatherford, TX 76086**

*All annual memberships expire on 31 December. Please renew on time.*

**New Annual or Life Membership ( ) or Renewal of Annual Membership ( )**

**Iwo Vet ( ) Vietnam Vet ( )** Div. \_\_\_\_\_ Platoon \_\_\_\_\_ Co. \_\_\_\_\_ Bn \_\_\_\_\_ Reg. \_\_\_\_\_

**Legacy ( )** Name & rank of Veteran \_\_\_\_\_

Vet's Div. \_\_\_\_\_ Co. \_\_\_\_\_ Bn. \_\_\_\_\_ Reg. \_\_\_\_\_ Your Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

**Associate ( )**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Dues (please check):**

- ( ) Annual ..... \$ 25
- ( ) New Lifetime (Age 64 & under)... \$150
- ( ) New Lifetime (Age 65-79) .....\$100
- ( ) New Lifetime (Age 80 & over).....\$ 50

**Donation:**

( ) General Fund .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

***(Please make checks payable to FMDA)***

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Vet's Div. \_\_\_\_\_ Co. \_\_\_\_\_ Bn. \_\_\_\_\_ Reg. \_\_\_\_\_ Your Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

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- ( ) New Lifetime (Age 80 & over).....\$ 50

**Donation:**

( ) General Fund .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

***(Please make checks payable to FMDA)***