

January 2024



The Spearhead News

Official Newsletter of the Fifth Marine Division Association
Website – <https://5thMarineDivision.org>
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SAN ANTONIO EVENT A BIG SUCCESS

Compiled by the Butler Brothers, John and Morey



*Two Vets: Left to Right:
Ken Brown, Ivan Hammond, Leighton Willhite*

Tom Huffhines, with new local help from Gunny Sergeant Cooke, did an outstanding job in organizing and affecting a most worthwhile reunion. It was great to see familiar faces that have become family-like members but it doesn't quite fill in the gap for those who were once with us that Father Time has claimed. Joy and sadness were definitely bedfellows for me, and I am sure for other folks as well.

The Menger Hotel facilities and service personnel were top notch, and I found a home like atmosphere in being there. Its history replicates values that we admire and in my view was a comfort den for the FMDA. Going back there next year for the 74th reunion is akin to winning the lottery, and I mean a big one.

As a historical note, Tom's parents, John and Mary Huffhines hosted the 57th Reunion in 2006 in Irving, Texas, in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metro-plex. The Commandant's journal message for that reunion was signed by M. W. Hagee.

San Antonio provided many close-by outings in addition to our group visit to the Alamo: a stroll on the River Walk; or boat ride on the river; a carriage ride downtown; eating lunch at the Tower of the Americas, which slowly rotates to give a primo view of the city.

Then to the events: A Marine platoon was ready to charge the stage to rescue our President Skip Werthmuller from the guillotine at the Magic Show. We appreciated the special attention given to our folks by the Alamo. Look for a repeat of the speech given by an Alamo official, comparing Iwo Jima and the Alamo, to be printed in the next issue of SHN. The group was entertained by both flamenco dancers and a Mariachi band. The flamenco dancers were exceptional, better than the ones I saw in Barcelona, Spain. The band added to our enjoyment as they took requests.

And not a single member was carried away by a Hotel ghost, although a certain friend from Wisconsin had a close encounter on the third floor!

Altogether a very successful and enjoyable 73th Reunion.



Elected Officers

President - Skip Werthmuller - usnskip1@aol.com
 Vice Pres - Bill Baumann - ecvbilly@yahoo.com

BOARD CONTACT thuffhines74@gmail.com

Appointed Positions/ Committee Chairs

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Secretary | Karen Campbell |
| Treasurer | Doug Meny |
| Database Manager | Tom Huffhines |
| Sergeant-at-Arms | Morey Butler |
| Parliamentarian | Hal Campbell |
| Chaplain | Billy Joe Cawthron |
| Legal Counsel | James Sargent |
| History Manager | John Butler |
| Membership Recruiting Manager | Valerie Leman Skip Werthmuller |
| Fund Raising/Donations Manager | Alfredo Cooke |
| Spearhead News Editor | Kath Butler |
| Website Manager | James Dalman Doug Meny |
| Association Photographer | Leonardo Flores |
| War Souvenirs Return Manager | Dan King |
| Association Videographer | John Whitten |
| Publicity Committee | Ray Elliott |
| Facebook/ Social Media Committee | Craig Painton Julie Licari |
| Reunion Raffle Committee | Cheryl Kozak |

Board of Directors

Bonnie Haynes, John Butler, Valerie Leman, Bruce Hammond, Tom Huffhines

Honorary Trustees: Bill Rockey, Ken Brown, Ivan Hammond, Al Jennings, Leighton Willhite

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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 _____ to veteran

Amount of donation _____



Attending

Iwo Jima vets sitting: Left to right

Ken Brown, Ivan Hammond,
Leighton Willhite

Attending

Vietnam vets standing: Left to right

John Butler, Brillo Licari, John
Scatchell, Charles del Castillo, Peter
Geraghty, Skip Werthmuller, Bill
Baumann, Hal Campbell, Morey
Butler.

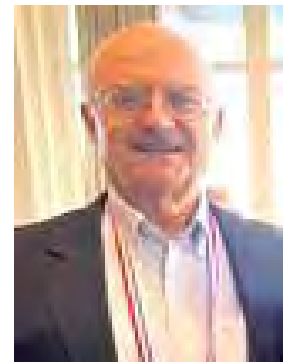
Missing from photo: John Powell

President's Message

Greetings!

I hope you and your families have enjoyed good health and happiness this Fall!

We had a great 73rd FMDA reunion in San Antonio, Texas, this past October. Among the Highlights were our keynote speaker, General Mike Hagee USMC (ret), the 33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps; Kenneth Brown's reading of Gittlelsohn's 1945 eulogy in honor of 5th Division Marines who gave their lives in combat on Iwo Jima; and a special visit to the Alamo.



My sincere thanks go out to all of you, led by Tom Huffhines who contributed time, energy and resources to make this such a success!

We look forward to our next reunion in San Antonio, Texas, 16-20 October 2024, which will include a visit to the National Museum of the Pacific War. My thanks go to Alfredo Cooke and Tom Huffhines and for organizing this forthcoming reunion. We will continue to meet as friends to strengthen our mutual bonds in honor of the memory of heroic sacrifice by 5th Marine Division veterans and by the never to be forgotten legacy they provided us during service in WWII and Vietnam. My thanks also go to Bill Baumann, Alfredo Cooke and all who are helping us to expand our membership in furtherance of this goal.

Skip Werthmuller, Captain USN (ret)



Thanks to those members who helped with the reunion.

All were invaluable for the 73rd being a great success, by making their special contributions.

Listed alphabetically

Gracious cash donations from:

❖ **Dave Boosinger** ❖ **Morey Butler** ❖ **Al Jennings** ❖ **Dorothy Jillson** ❖ **Penny Pauletto** ❖ **John Powell**

- 1 **Bill Baumann** for recruiting new Vietnam veteran membership for the reunion.
- 2 **Claudia Brown** for helping her sister run the upstairs Hospitality Room, including picking up the food.
- 3 **Rita Christiansen** for manning the registration table, and making corrections to the database.
- 4 **Gy Sgt Alfredo Cooke** who has helped with the preparations in many ways: among them, arranging airport transportation, securing the color guard, chaplain, and photographer.
- 5 **Ginger Curnutt** for contributing the souvenirs in memory of her mother.
6. **Willy Dillon** for leading Airport Detail, giving transport to members arriving by air from the airport to the Hotel
- 7 **Ray Elliott** for publicizing the reunion in military magazines.
- 8 **Bruce Hammond** for obtaining paper goods for the Hospitality Rooms, and additional photographs.
- 9 **Tom Huffhines** - Our Reunion mastermind.
- 10 **Cheryl Kozak** for handling the raffle start to finish, and making some of the raffle items, including our rotating quilt, as well as making our reunion tags.
- 11 **Valerie Leman** for organizing the member contacts to increase reunion attendance.
- 12 **Brillo Licari** for volunteering to M.C. the Banquet again.
- 13 **Cheryl Mach** for donating the Silent Auction articles, and managing the event.
- 14 **Sabre Middlekauff** for the journal, information bags, assisting at registration, and making meal tags.
- 15 **Lynn Payton and her son Corey** for not only obtaining food donations for the Hospitality room. and managing the pick-ups, but for manned the Babe Ruth Room each day, along with her sister, a huge benefit to attending members.
- 16 **Mary Virginia Pittmann** who has been invaluable in obtaining out guest speaker, and getting media coverage.
- 17 **John Whitten** for photographing of events and people at the reunion and providing them for FMDA use.

.....And of course we gratefully thank our **Iwo Jima vets: Ken Brown, Leighton Willhite, and Ivan Hammond** for attending with their families. We very much missed **Al Jennings**, who had a last minute medical issue.

.....To our ever increasing membership of **Vietnam vets** attending.

.....And thanks to all members who attended to honor and remember our 5th Division brethren from Iwo Jima and Vietnam, and all U.S. Marines in all wars. Semper Fi !



Remembering Iwo Jima

By Steve Lopardo

Three Iwo Vets, yes, the numbers dwindle.

But two thoughts come to mind.

First, I recollect on the hundreds of Iwo vets I was fortunate enough to know and talk to, and many I interviewed at a very deep level. Everyone would say they were simply grateful they walked off that island alive, and every day after March 26, 1945 was a gift. They would not bemoan the dwindling ranks as we approach 2024 seventy-nine years later.

And second, I've sometimes thought about the similarities between Iwo reunions and those held after the Civil War. Many reunions were held for battalions and Divisions, and indeed even joint reunions combining both the Blue and the Grey. They of course dwindled in ranks as time went by. It's life. It's God's plan.

I think the important thing is just that like the Civil War vets, the Iwo vets and supporters have demonstrated the magnitude of their respect and affection by continuing their reunions as long as possible. This, as much as anything, demonstrates commitment, and respect for what the Iwo Jima vets went through. ❖

TRIBUTE OF HONOR MEMORIAL HONOREE



**TOM HUFFHINES & the SAN ANTONIO
73rd REUNION COMMITTEE**



(Honored by Valerie Leman, Board Member)

Reunions:

The program booklet for the Association's first annual Convention held August 5th and 6th, 1949, in Philadelphia, stated, "We, former members of the 5th Marine Division and attached units, of the Fleet Marine Force, U.S. Marine Corps, have established a permanent organization in order that we may be of greater service to our Country and to one another, to promote the interest and welfare of former members of the Division, and in order to perpetuate the name, glory, and spirit of the 5th Marine Division."

"Our association remains a vital pipeline of information to and for all the members, both regular and associate. There remains no better way to keep in touch with our comrades-in-arms than through our 5th Marine Division Association." (Written by Ralph Simoneau D-2-27 for Spearhead News)

Military reunions are more than just re-living old times — they also are a chance to gather needed strength from each other. Despite all the resources now available to our veterans, we were missing the one thing we needed most: each other. (by Thomas E. Ricks, Foreign Policy Newsletter)

73rd FMDA General Business Meeting

San Antonio, TX - October 7 , 2023

The business meeting of FMDA was called to order by Skip Werthmuller, President at 11:15 AM. Vice President Bill Baumann led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chuck Jarvis, FMDA member, gave the Invocation.

A motion was made, seconded, and accepted to approve the 2022 secretary's minutes by Tom Huffhines.

1. Officers' Reports

a. Treasurer's Report

The Financial Report sheets were passed out to members while Tom Huffhines explained the activities and that our coffers have slowly declined over the last several years.

There also was discussion over money set aside for the Hawaii Virtual Museum and the status of it. Many questions arose which need to be explored and investigated as to the proper procedure and usage. The FMDA Board will look into the situation. Cheryl Mach also offered to help.

b. Data Base and Membership

Tom Huffhines worked very hard on updating the Data Base and Membership

Total 593, Life Members 460, Annual Members 129, Memorial Members 163, Honorary Members 20, Iwo Jima Veterans 93, Vietnam Veterans 77

Vice President Bill Baumann continues to try to increase our Vietnam 5th Division membership.

We are encouraging our Annual members to catch up on payment of their dues.

It would also help other record keeping if there are changes such as address, email, etc. Please report it.

c. Newsletter and Website

Kathy Butler is always delighted to receive stories about Iwo Jima, our veterans, and pictures for the newsletter.

The website will be worked on for some updating. (*editor's note: At the Directors' meeting Friday night Doug Meny volunteered to do that.*)

2. New Business

a. Skip Wertmuller was nominated and elected to continue as President for 2023-2024

Bill Baumann was nominated and elected to continue as Vice President for 2023-2024

b. A motion was made, seconded to have the 2024 FMDA reunion in San Antonio in October. Motion carried.

c. IJAA and FMDA have agreed to work together and publicize each other's information.

IJAA will have their reunion in Washington, DC on February 15-18, 2024. The flight to Iwo Jima is in March.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the FMDA meeting at 12:30 PM.

Submitted by Karen Cozzi Campbell, Secretary



**Annual Members: Please
mail your 2024 renewals to:**

FMDA
P.O. Box 728
Weatherford, TX
76086

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.



We Can Do It!

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

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

Volcano Erupts off Iwo Jima



An undersea volcano erupted half a mile off the southern coast of Iwo Jima in a series of eruptions starting October 21, 2023. Within 10 days, volcanic ash and rocks piled up on the shallow seabed, its tip rising above the sea surface. By early November, it became a new island about 328 feet in diameter and as high as 66 feet above the sea.

Volcanic activity has increased near Iwo Jima, and similar undersea eruptions have occurred in recent years, but the formation of a new island is a significant development.



There was another eruption near the island's coast on November 27, which threw debris on the landing beach.

Final Muster - Roll Call of the Reef

| Name | City | Unit | DOD |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Sgt Major George Boutwell | Pell City, Alabama | 5 th Med | 8-1-23 |
| Charles Luhan, Jr | Chicago, Illinois | 11 th Eng | 2-1-23 |
| James M Martin, Jr | Brookings, South Dakota | B-1-27 | 9-24-23 |



New Members – Annual

| Name | City | Unit |
|--------------------------|------------------|---|
| Roberto Barrera | Robstown, TX | HQ-3-27 - Vietnam |
| LtCol Timothy F. Riemann | Tampa, FL | Active Duty - 4 th Assault Amphibian Battalion |
| Melissa Starr | Ormond Beach, FL | Grandfather: Iwo Jima 5 th Tanks – Lester E. Koher |

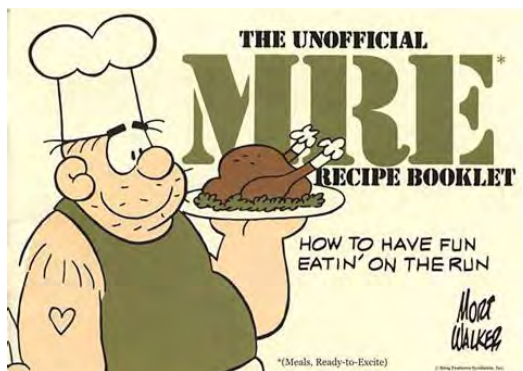
New Members – Lifetime

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|--|
| Penny Pauletto | Prescott, AZ | Daughter Col. Ernie De Fazio – 3 war Veteran |
|----------------|--------------|--|

Financials

☞ The post-reunion Financials will be printed in the July 2024 *Spearhead News* ☞

C Rations in Vietnam *by Bill Baumann*



I consider myself somewhat of an expert on C Rations because we definitely ate plenty of them.

The meals came in B1, B2 and B3 units. Each had components that enhanced your nutritional intake. The accessory pack included a plastic spoon, salt and pepper, chicklets gum (used to brush your teeth with your finger), a tiny roll of toilet paper that was woefully inadequate, and a pack of 5 cigarettes, (Camels, Viceroy, and Lucky Strike). The older ones had the "V" for victory on the pack (WW2 vintage). There were also little blue heat tabs that acted like tear gas. We used C4 when available to heat meals. Often times we just ate them cold.

The meals were labeled with names like "ham, sliced, water added" and the like. My favorite was a B3 meal named "beef steak, potatoes, gravy."

B1 units had fruit like peaches, apricots and fruit salad. The B2 units had crackers, peanut butter and little tins of various cheeses and chocolate wafers that were actually laxatives. The B3 units had "bread, white" that were hard rolls with a very chemical smell and powdered chocolate.

The favorite meals were "spaghetti" and "beans and weenies." The least favorite was the infamous ham and limas. Most guys opened the bottom to get to the ham. There was "eggs, scrambled" that were dry and somewhat green.

There were a total of 12 meals in the carton, each in cardboard containers. We would turn the large carton upside down so no one could see the labels. We found that the most useful characteristic of the M16 was the open flash suppressor used to pop the wire wrapped around the box.

We made little stoves by taking an empty can and cutting slits along the bottom edges for ventilation. The heat tabs or C4 was lit inside. We also were pretty innovative about mismatching the meals to create unique recipes. They can be found in an unofficial pamphlet written by a Marine entitled something like "C Ration Cooking for Grunts." I used to have a very tattered copy. The combinations were endless.

I actually began to like them. Funny how a Marine can adapt. ❖

TRIBUTE OF HONOR MEMORIAL HONOREE



Cpl MATTHEW 'AL' COZZI

Paramarine Bougainville & B-1-28-5th Iwo Jima



(Honored by Karen Cozzi Campbell, Daughter)

TRIBUTE OF HONOR MEMORIAL HONOREE



Cpl JOHN F. HUFFHINES

HS-3-13 5th Division Iwo Jima



(Honored by Tom Huffhines, Son)

The 73rd Reunion = San Antonio

Opportunity to get together at heart of reunion *By Vanessa Faurie*

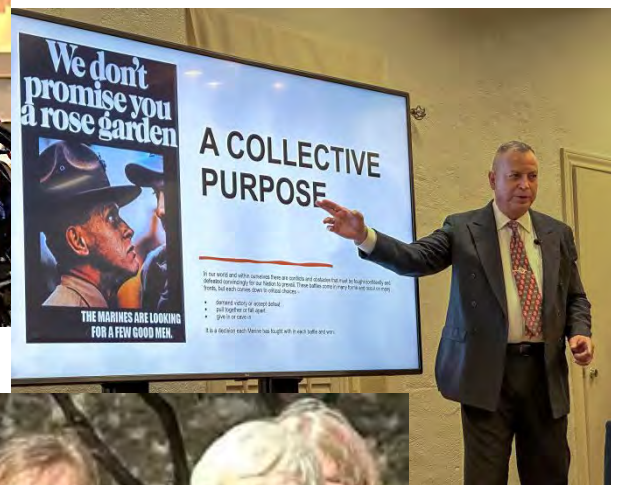
It seems if you just bring everyone together in one place and provide a big enough hospitality room, you will have a successful 5th Marine Division Association reunion. After all, the opportunity to get together, swap stories, reminisce, share a meal, make new connections, and honor heroes and patriots now gone is really at the heart of each year's gathering.







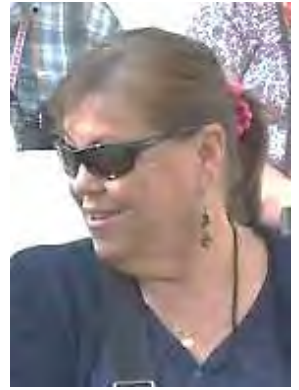
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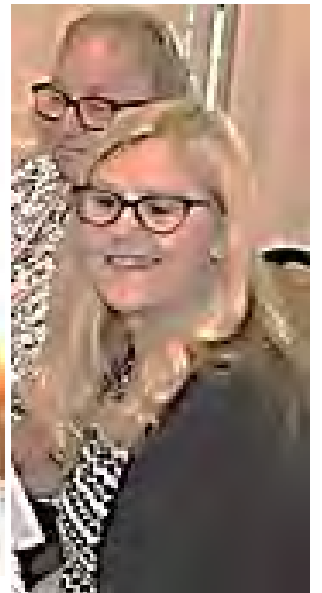














“Hey, it’s YOUR check-ride, deal with it!”



By Art “Mad Mex” Sifuentes (LtCol USMC ret)

heavily practiced from day one in helicopters. And fortunately, the UH-34 was very forgiving and could be landed easily and successfully from a relatively low altitude of 300 feet. Landing in water was challenging as once in the water, the top-heavy aircraft would roll to the side, the rotor blades would strike the water and eventually stop, allowing for egress from the stricken aircraft.

And so it was... the flight overwater experienced an engine failure. Reportedly, in a high-pitched voice filled with anxiety, John reported the engine failure to the Ops Officer, with the idea that the highly experienced Ops Officer would take control of this dire emergency, perform the proper emergency procedures and put the aircraft in the water..... As it was reported, the Ops Officer simply folded his arms, turned to John and announced, “this is your check-ride, your aircraft, so deal with it”. After the initial and momentary period of anxiety, John did just that...a textbook autorotation to the water.

Upon exiting the aircraft, the Ops Officer kicked off his boots, released his pistol belt and awaited a nearby Vietnamese fisherman to pick them up. Upon pickup by an elderly fisherman and his wife it was unknown whether the elderly rescuers were friendly or enemy. The Ops Officer was void of any weapons whereupon requested John to use his .38 to hold their rescuers at bay until US forces were contacted. It was never reported whether or not John relinquished his .38. But it was reported the little fishing couple were cowering, terrified of their new passengers.

John received an “up” passing grade for his check-ride and weeks later during a flight of several aircraft, John experienced a second engine failure. Upon receiving his report of an engine failure, we strongly suggested he autorotate to a large secure field with US forces nearby. For unknown reasons John elected another nearby unsecured site and landed with a controlled crash, and fortunately, no injuries.

We labeled John as a bit of a cowboy during his Vietnam tour. His skill as a combat aviator stood him well as he pursued a career as a commercial pilot following his military career. ❖

Our Maintenance Officer was the best there was. Hard-charging, hard-nosed, but fair in all things. We respected him and liked him. He was also one of the best UH-34 pilots. To that end it was no surprise he conducted most the HAC (Helicopter Aircraft Commander) check-rides.

Once a pilot had 500 total flight hours, he was deemed eligible for his aircraft commander’s check ride. Needless to say, in Viet Nam, operational necessity warranted the check-rides to be given forthwith upon reaching 500 flight hours. Such a check-ride was often conducted during operational flights which provided for many of the “boxes” to be checked in order to evaluate the candidate’s ability to accept the very large responsibility to be an aircraft commander responsible for your aircraft, crew, mission and everything attached accordingly. And, of course, one could depend on the evaluator to spice up the check-ride with incidents that were not normally experienced during your check ride.

And so it was, that “John” reached the 500 flight-hour mark so Operations Officer scheduled a HAC check-flight. Now, to be fair, my information was passed to me by others after returning from my flights. I did not witness this particular flight.

So...John and the Ops officer depart on said flight in a UH-34 piston-driven, battle tried and battle-worn helicopter. Operational policy was to fly above small arms fire when over land, or a lower altitude when over water. Part of this particular flight’s route was just off-shore....and, as was not uncommon with our battle weary aircraft, this particular aircraft experienced an engine failure. The proper procedure for this emergency was to perform an autorotation. This maneuver was

Incident at the Train Station

By Pvt Kenneth Brown Nagasaki, Japan 27 December 1945



a warehouse platform and of course true to Marine Corps procedure, not a soul was around to meet us or tell us where to go. We stood out in the rain on that platform for something like four hours before some trucks finally came and took us to Kwassui School, formerly a Japanese Methodist girls school, where Division Headquarters is billeted.

I have a good set-up here, being in a rather large room with five other guys. Here at the school I work, eat, sleep, and go to movies and hardly ever need to leave the building. The food is the best yet. I sometimes go out with a Chaplain and men from Graves Registration to help locate and remove the bodies of U.S. airmen who were shot down over Japan during the war. The Japanese people took good care to see that any men killed were properly buried.

On the 1st of December I left the old Fifth Division and joined the Second here at Nagasaki. I was very fortunate in getting the same assignment here as I had with the Fifth. I am Division Chaplain's Assistant, 2nd Marine Division, The Chaplain is an old time Navy man named R. R. Marken. He is a real tough-looking old bird, and I was afraid of him at first; however, I have found him to be very Christian and a real-fine gentleman.

The trip to Nagasaki was quite an experience. First we climbed into the Ducks and went to the Sasebo railroad yards. We boarded a train, and what a train! It had board seats and flat wheels and they crowded us in like sardines. It was cold as blazes and I froze all the way down here. But the worst was yet to come. When we finally arrived at Nagasaki it was after dark and raining hard. They put about fifty of us off at

One time while on one of these trips I was with a Lieutenant and we had gone by train to this small village. When we got to the village and got off the train, as usual the platform was swarming with people waiting to catch trains. You can't imagine the crowds of Japanese and the way they crowd on those trains. They literally hang on all over the side and top of boxcars and everything else.

As we got off the train, we saw a woman lying on the platform who was giving birth to a baby. Right there on the platform she was having a baby! The people were just ignoring her and walking around her. She was crying loudly. The Lieutenant, who spoke Japanese, talked to her for a minute. Then he grabbed a couple of Japanese men, who of course were scared to death of us Americans. He ordered them to carry the woman into the small railroad station. The station was stacked with people until there was no space to move; it was just a small room. The Lieutenant took out his .45 pistol and fired a shot right up through the ceiling. You should have seen those people scatter. In nothing flat the place was empty.

He then went outside and grabbed a couple of women and shoved them in. He apparently told them to stay with the woman until she was all right and if they didn't, he would come back and shoot them dead. The Lieutenant told me that the woman was a Korean, and of course the Japanese have no use for the Koreans.

But the American Lieutenant proved that Christianity still lives. ❖



USS Joe Rosenthal UPDATE for USMCCCA

by Ray Elliott (Abridged)

The Joe Rosenthal Chapter of the USMC Combat Correspondents Association (a group of retired military and civilian photographers, videographers and journalists) has petitioned Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro to name a ship the USS Joe Rosenthal to honor him for his historic image that became a national symbol of American spirit and determination. It is fitting, and long overdue, to honor Rosenthal in this way, and efforts are gaining real traction.

Rosenthal wasn't a Marine or a sailor, but the AP combat photographer was right there with the Marines and other American combat troops in the Pacific Theater. The only weapon he carried on those island campaigns was his bulky Speed Graphic camera that proved to be invaluable to victory and to history.

Rosenthal's photograph became a motivating symbol for the war and was helpful in raising \$26.3 billion on the last war-bond drive, which was instrumental in helping the United States to continue on to victory against the Japanese. Now, it has become as much a symbol of the Marine Corps as the Eagle, Globe and Anchor.

It's time for the USS Joe Rosenthal.





Craig B. Leman (1923-2014; 2d Lt. USMCR, H-3-26) was a longtime member of the Fifth Marine Division Association and a frequent contributor to its *Spearhead* newsletter. His daughter Valerie is a history buff who writes periodic articles about Craig's service from 1943-1946 as a Marine at Camp Tarawa, on Iwo Jima, in the occupation of Japan, and on Palau. Leman started out as a 19-year-old volunteer in college who began officer training in the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve, and began active duty in July 1943. After months of training, he was assigned to the Fifth Marine Division as a replacement officer going to the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima. Here's a snapshot he wrote about an incident in his 1946 Palau service.

The Day the Admiral Came To Koror

By Craig Leman (date unknown)—From
Valerie Leman

Of the South Sea islands that Americans fought over in WWII, few match the Palau islands for beauty or for bloodshed. The battle of Peleliu secured United States control of the archipelago, isolating 30,000 Japanese soldiers in the northern islands where they held out until the end of the war. Our Marine battalion was then sent there to help supervise their repatriation.

We found the Northern Palaus a verdant paradise scarred everywhere by signs of savage air assault. Our headquarters moved into the Japanese command-post on reef-bound Koror. We stationed a company on Malakal, a nearby island with a deep-water harbor. The bridge connecting the two islands had been destroyed by bombing; communication was by boat across half-a-mile of coral-studded deep green lagoon.

As battalion operations officer I made a daily visit to Malakal as the Colonel's representative to the island commander, Captain Gerald Averill, a task I enjoyed as we were close friends and I felt proud of the taut efficient way he ran his little island. Instead of making the ride in

the boat under the tropical sun, I rode by aquaplane, stowing my uniform in the boat to keep it dry. Making the trip naked seemed safe enough, for there were no women within miles. Besides, aquaplaning is fun, and I was 22.

At the Koror dock one sunny morning, I carefully stowed my uniform and pistol in the landing craft, dove in and got on the aquaplane, and followed the Higgins boat into the bay. At once, I was surprised to see a larger craft, an LCM, leaving Malakal and heading in our direction.

As the boats drew closer, I saw that the intruder's wake would be a formidable barrier to the frail aquaplane. As the gap rapidly closed and the boats passed about 40 feet apart, my concentration on the waves just ahead was encouraged by my vivid recollection of the way the sharks that infested the bay had devoured some spoiled beef a few days before.



A last glance at the other boat left me dumbfounded. Lined up along the gunwale, some of them waving and cheering, were about 20 people in Navy uniform, a few of them unmistakably women. Before I had time to reflect on this unexpected development or to choose between my embarrassment or the sharks, the aquaplane struck the wake and bounced into the air, the tow-rope taut. Landing squarely athwart the next wave, it disintegrated. As the boards split, I saw the metal eye that held the tow-rope tear out of the splintering wood. A second later I was being dragged through the water. The tow-rope tore out of my hands, and then I was free. I surfaced to see the LCM with its precious cargo moving steadily toward Koror. The coxswain circled back, cursing, and took me and the remnants of the aquaplane aboard.

When we reached Malakal, Averill congratulated me on my performance and told me that the party included a three-star admiral, his staff, and some Navy nurses who had come from Guam to see the Japanese installations. The Malakal-Koror phone was not working, and no one at headquarters knew they were arriving.

Although I knew that I ought to alert the Colonel to the presence of his unexpected guests, I wanted to return by a different route, hoping that, although I had apparently been thoroughly inspected, I might escape recognition. After a wild jeep-ride, I threaded my way through the wreckage of the bombed out bridge and shortly appeared, properly attired, at the Koror dock to help the Marine sentry load the Admiral and his party into jeeps and escort them to headquarters. There, while the Colonel drove the Admiral and his immediate staff around the island, the more enterprising battalion officers invited the nurses to lunch. I found myself with the younger men in the party.

It was clear that they were nearly all desk men who had been far from combat and were eager for a whiff of danger. Having spent enough time in foxholes to be unsympathetic with their attitude, I welcomed their request to see the fortifications.

Under the command post was a deep system of tunnels used as an air raid shelter by the Japanese. Through the dank maze I led the way with a flashlight, smothering my mirth at the anguished curses from the darkness behind me as low beams and jutting timbers barked scalps and shins alike and mud pelted down on gold-braided caps and into open collars. When they emerged from the blackness of the tunnel, it was obvious that they had really been through something they could tell their grandchildren about.

At the dock when he was leaving, the Admiral told us that he had seen a man fall into the water that morning and feared he might have been injured. The Colonel knew nothing about it and turned to me for an explanation. Trying to make my bandaged palms as inconspicuous as possible while standing at attention, I assured them that I knew about the accident, that the man was not injured, and that I would see to it that he was more careful in the future. The Admiral nodded. For a moment I was afraid he would say more. However, he glanced at the Colonel's stern face, then back to me, smiled, and said nothing. ❖



The Last War Patrol

By Captain Roy W. F. Werthmuller (USN ret/USNA 1942)



This is a summary of my last WWII submarine war patrol aboard USS Torsk (SS-423) on which I was Executive Officer (XO) and Navigator.

By the end of 1944, much of the Japanese merchant ship fleet had been

sunk, primarily by U.S. submarines and naval air forces. The Japanese merchant fleet remained important though until the end of the war in supplying Japan with oil and other materials of war, especially in the Sea of Japan.

The Sea of Japan was the only place that their merchant ships could operate with little fear of opposition. Japan was receiving significant support from China and Korea via the Sea of Japan. Since there were only two entrances to this sea and both were guarded by extensive mine fields, it was not initially feasible for allied warships to enter.

The U. S. submarine force commander, VADM Lockwood, heard in 1943 that a mine detecting sonar had been developed for the mine force, but it was judged not suitable for minesweeping due to reliability and false echo issues. Initially, he saw no use for that sonar in submarines, however developmental work on this system continued in 1943 and 1944. By mid-1944 the admiral saw this anti-mine sonar as a possible key to enter the Sea of Japan through the guarded minefields and he had this sonar system installed on a submarine for testing. Several U.S. submarines had been sunk by mines by then and intelligence reports indicated the Japanese had installed extensive minefields to protect the Sea of Japan. Testing of this sonar was completed over several months off the coasts of Hawaii and Guam.

USS Torsk was outfitted with the new sonar in early 1945. We trained using it off of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in a dummy minefield. Most of the time, we got a 3000 yard range in the clear waters off Hawaii, but it was erratic on occasion. Once, we hit

a dummy mine, which after surfacing, we found wrapped around the port bow plane even though we had a cable between the bow and the outer edge of the bow planes to deflect mine cables. That taught us to keep the bow planes rigged in while transiting minefields. We then transited to Guam, where Admiral Lockwood himself checked us out using a dummy minefield off of that island.

In early August we departed Guam on our last war patrol and entered the Japanese minefields in Tsushima Strait on 10 August. There were four lines of mines indicated by intelligence (captured documents). The mines were the type that were moored such that they would be effective against both submarines and surface ships. The ranges we got on this newest sonar were shorter than expected due to heavy kelp growth in the ocean and bad water conditions - not more than 200 yards. The mines were about 45 feet apart and most were 45 feet deep, with the deepest being about 75 feet. We entered the minefield at 4:20 AM and it took us approximately 16 1/2 hours to transit the field. We went through it at 150 feet depth with a 5 degree up angle (the sonar was on the bottom of the bow so the up angle gave us a longer range). One of the previous entering submarines scraped a mine cable down its side, but fortunately we transited the minefield without that happening and we successfully avoided the mines.

Unfortunately, one of the submarines which transited with us was sunk by a Japanese destroyer after it torpedoed a Japanese merchant ship.

The morning after entering the Sea of Japan and while at periscope depth we sighted something strange on the horizon. We could not figure out what it was until coming up higher in the water. Then several Japanese men were observed clinging to a small boat and floating debris. It turned out that their ship had been sunk by an American plane. We decided to take the men on board, even though Torsk was deep in enemy territory and would be very vulnerable on the surface with our hatches open. Six of the men immediately cooperated and came aboard, but the seventh swam away. Once he saw that his shipmates were being given good treatment, however, he too cooperated and was rescued. He was so weak that

our crew had to pick him up and carry him below. The crew was having breakfast at the time and they tried to give the prisoners pancakes, but the survivors were intelligent enough to mainly drink the syrup, which was probably best for them in their starving condition.

The problem now was how to best ensure that the prisoners would not cause security problems or impede operations. It was decided to put three of the prisoners in the forward torpedo compartment, three in the aft torpedo compartment and the seventh in the galley to help the cooks. The one assigned to the galley was only in his teens and had been a cook on the Japanese merchant ship that was sunk several days earlier. He indicated, via sign language, that he was a cook on two previous ships that had been sunk. This boy became the favorite of the crew and learned some English before he left the ship. There was always someone on watch in the compartments where the prisoners were located. Therefore, the watch schedule did not change and operations were not hindered. Fortunately, the prisoners accepted their condition and were very cooperative. They were not restrained, but the watches in the torpedo rooms were armed.

The second morning after entering the Sea of Japan, while patrolling off an island in the southern part of the Sea of Japan, Torsk sank a merchant ship. The next day 12 August 1945, we sank another merchant ship. The following day we had some very tense moments ... in the morning, we sank another freighter and about 7PM we saw yet another freighter transiting close to the coast and escorted by a frigate. We decided to make a run on the freighter after dark. When we surfaced we found ourselves in the middle of a fleet of fishing boats which had very powerful lights to attract the fish. We commenced closing the freighter after surfacing. As Executive Officer, I ran the attack from the conning tower and the Captain was on the bridge weaving in and out of the fishing boats. When we got a mile or so from the target, we saw the frigate closing us and had to submerge quickly. While submerging, we fired six torpedoes, at least one of which hit.

The following day, 14 August (which turned out to be the last day of WWII) was also hectic. Early that day, we saw a freighter, escorted by a frigate heading down the coast and very close to the coast. We decided to sink the frigate first with a new type of acoustic torpedo that homed in on a target's screw noises. Torsk was one of the first

submarines to get this new secret Mk 28 torpedo. We fired one torpedo that we saw hit the frigates stern and lift it up 45 degrees. A number of lifeboats were seen picking up survivors and luckily for them they were only a few miles from shore.

We then chased the freighter while submerged, but it entered a nearby port. We fired four torpedoes, one of which appeared to hit. We were about to surface and finish off the target with gunfire when we noticed an aircraft overhead through the periscope. We then went deep. About an hour later we heard sonar pinging and a Japanese frigate appeared to be heading directly towards us. The aircraft apparently saw Torsk and called in the second frigate. The frigate saw our periscope and when it was about 2000 yards away we fired one of our last torpedoes and then headed deep. After what seemed like an eternity, a loud explosion occurred very close to us, accompanied by breaking up noises. If it had missed we would have been in very serious trouble as they would have started dropping many depth charges. They did send another frigate out to search for us and it dropped many depth charges, which fortunately weren't very close to us.



While at silent running to evade the frigate, one of the cooks dropped a pan, which made a big noise, and Tanaka, the young prisoner in the mess room, made a signal to keep quiet. He knew there would be trouble if the enemy ship heard us.

Since the crew had very little sleep for the past few days, we submerged into deep water and rest for a day. The next morning there was a message that the war had ended and that there was a cease-fire. Everyone was very happy with the news, but spirits were somewhat dampened by a following message which said that Torsk would have to stay in the Sea of Japan until the mines had been swept from Tsushima Strait which took more than two weeks.

As you may imagine, after the hectic days before the cease-fire, it was quite a change to have nothing to do. The crew started to clean the ship, which had been neglected during the times at battle stations. The prisoners helped in this and because of their small size and agility cleaned places never cleaned before. Also, the prisoners had become quite acclimated to life on board.

Once when an engineman had difficulty closing a valve while diving, a prisoner jumped in and helped without being asked.

The crew started to teach the boy, Tanaka, English and he was a quick learner. The boy was so integrated into shipboard life that he was eventually not guarded at all. The prisoners enjoyed life on board and all gained weight and did not want to leave. Upon arrival in Guam 3 or 4 weeks later, they left the ship with candy and cigarettes as presents from the crew.

Torsk returned to the Submarine Base in New London via Pearl Harbor and Panama. No one knew until later that Torsk had sunk the last enemy warships.

USS Torsk was a great ship and I feel fortunate to have been a crew member. We are all fortunate that through the efforts of the Submarine Veterans of WWII, the City of Baltimore, and the Baltimore Maritime Museum, USS Torsk has been honored a monument ship. It is moored in Baltimore's Inner Harbor as a historical symbol of U.S. submarine forces in WWII. ❖



52 of 263 U.S. submarines were lost during the war to include 3,617 of the 16,000 crew members. With 1.6% of all Naval personnel, U.S. submarines sank over 55% of all Japanese ships sunk, including 60 percent of Japanese merchant ships and 30 percent of Japanese combatant ships (to include 8 aircraft carriers, 1 battleship and 11 cruisers). 22 percent of American WWII submariners were Killed in Action

Commissioned for the United States Navy on December 16, 1944, the USS Torsk was the only submarine out of its Tench Class fleet of ten to see service during World War II. Over eighty sailors lived aboard Torsk at particular times. In these very crowded conditions, the only way to pass someone was to turn sideways. After numerous war patrols and duties as a training boat after the war, the Torsk arrived in Baltimore to serve as a museum and memorial in 1972. The U.S. Submarine Torsk is a highlight of the Historic Ships collection.

Captain Roy W F Werthmuller Sr (ret) was awarded the Silver Star for his actions in combat aboard USS Torsk (SS-423). He went on to command a submarine (USS Spinax SS-489), a large amphibious surface ship (USS Yancey AKA-93, and a division of submarines (Submarine Division 33). His additional tours of duty included Chief of Staff to the first U.S. Admiral assigned as Commander Middle East Force (now named Commander Fifth Fleet) in the Arabian Gulf, acting Deputy Chief of Naval Intelligence, and diplomatic/attache assignments in Turkey and Portugal. He spoke Arabic, Turkish and Portuguese ... added by his son Roy W F "Skip" Werthmuller Jr (Captain USN ret)

Mission



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FUND**

Semper Fi & America's Fund cares for our nation's critically wounded, ill, and injured service members, veterans, and military families. Supporting all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, we provide one-on-one case management, connection, and lifetime support.

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Christmas in Vietnam *by Bill Baumann*

Christmas, 1966, found me on Hill 55, Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam. It was my first one away from home.

About a week before Christmas, I received a package from home. It felt like a large coffee can wrapped tightly in brown paper and sealed with tape. It was from my mother. She had written, "Do not open til Christmas," on the wrapping. Usually she would send cookies, but the contents seemed pretty light to be that. So I waited until Christmas Eve to open it.

When I peeled back the plastic lid of the Hills Bros can, I was surprised to see a small sprig from a fir tree decorated with tinsel. There were also miniature Christmas bulbs that had fallen off. I pulled the treasure from the can and saw that a base was affixed to the bottom. I re-attached the little bulbs and slid it back into the can. The aroma of the pine was a wonderful reminder of home.



I walked around Finger One of the hill and let the guys get a whiff of Christmas. That brought tears to a few eyes, including my own.

I took the little tree to our command bunker where it was placed on top of some empty ammo boxes. One of the guys fashioned a little star from some aluminum foil and placed it on the top of our tree. It looked beautiful.

Sadly the photos I took of the tree have somehow been lost. But the memory is indelibly fixed in my mind.

Merry Christmas!
Semper Fi!!!

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Amount ----- Thanks!!!

Member News



Left: Long time members **Bob and Carmella Fletcher, sister Debbi Fowler, and friends Phyllis, Jack, and Joe Schaefer (and Matt the Marine)** were unable to come to the FMDA Reunion this year, so had a mini-reunion the end of September. They live near the Ohio/ Indiana border.

Charles and Bernie Fletcher began attending the reunions in 1954 when it was held in Detroit, close to their home. They enjoyed the comradeship of that 4th annual meeting so much, Bernie continued, even after Charlie passed away, and her children often joined her. Charlie was president in 1963, and hosted the 14th reunion in Cleveland. Bernie was a shining star of Marine family members who continued to honor the legacy of Iwo Jima. She was great fun to be around and to share memories with.



(Left:: Bernie Fletcher with Kathy Painton, Virginia Beach, 2015)

(Right: Some of our members met in Fredericksburg to see the National Museum of the Pacific War, formerly the Nimitz Museum). Six members continued on to the 73rd FMDA reunion in San Antonio. The schedule for next year's 2024 reunion, includes a bus trip to Fredericksburg for all members.



Left: Ken Brown, World War II veteran of Iwo Jima, celebrated the occasion of his 100th birthday Saturday afternoon in The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints ward building.

Several generations of the family were on hand to honor Brown and observe the day as siblings, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren came from around the country to gather and share stories about their patriarch and enjoy his centennial birthday party.

He took some time with St. George News to explain his personal opinion on the secret to long life. "Keep having birthdays," he said.... A typical Ken Brown witty reply.

Ken is still going strong at age 100, doing his best every day to help maintain the Greatest Generation's legacy of service and patriotism. He recently spoke at FMDA's Memorial Service to share his Marine experiences and read Chaplain Gittelsohn's famous Eulogy.

Right and Below: FMDA Member **Ed Mahoney, 99**, was the oldest Marine at the Tampa 248th Marine Corps Birthday lunch. He and the Youngest Marine, 27, received the first pieces of the birthday cake. Ed served on a 37mm gun Weapons Company with the 3rd Division on Bougainville, Guam, and Iwo Jima. On Iwo, his unit was used as Infantry, and landed on the Southern tip on Red Beach 1.



Above right: GySgt **Alfredo Cooke**, has written a new book entitled *The Heroes Among Us: Stars that will Never Fade*. These hero warriors from Iwo Jima set the bar high for Marines and Sailors who fought in future wars – Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Their service and sacrifices on that tiny 8-square-mile island set the stage for future Marines in battle.

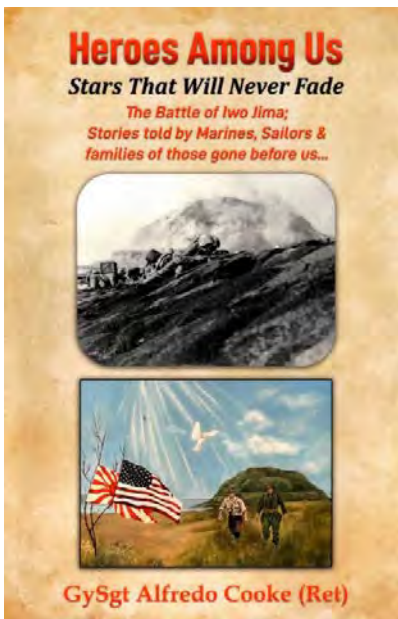


Above left: **Jennings Bunn**, an Air Force veteran who was a Department of Defense Archaeologist and previously lived on Guam, gave tours of the battle sites there for Military Historical Tours. He and his wife Joyce faithfully tend to Boots Thomas' gravesite in Monticello, Florida. They travel from Live Oak on a regular basis to keep the site weeded and embellished with fresh flowers and flags. Thomas' corrected marker was rededicated in 2015 by FMDA after members **Bunn, Kathy Tinsley, Barb Allen, and Kent Dozark** noted inaccuracies.



Left: **Robin Bentzan** writes about her father Captain Charles Menzies: I remember asking Dad one day what these curved pieces of metal were in his kit. He said that they were pieces of aluminum taken from a Japanese war plane shot down on Peleliu. Their leather watchbands had deteriorated due to jungle rot, so the Marines made replacement watchbands from pieces of the plane. Recycling and creative historical preservation all in one!

Heroes Among Us: Stars That Will Never Fade



by *GySgt Alfredo Cooke* 363 pages. Reviewed by *John Butler*

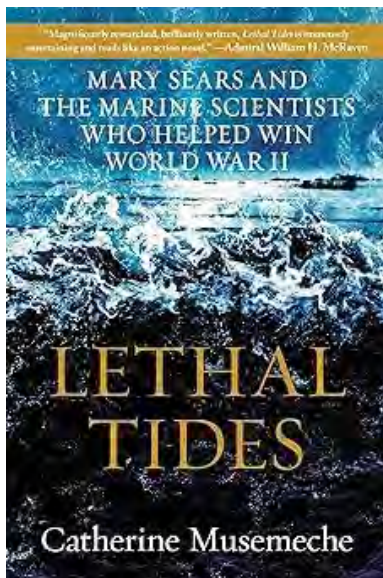
Heroes Among Us by Gunny Alfredo Cooke is not another battle history of Iwo Jima. It is much more. It is about the men and families of the men that fought this battle and came home, and more dramatically those that did not come home, listed by name on the final 188 pages.

This book has a message, **“Freedom is not free”**

I hope it will be read by young people, and be in every school library throughout the nation. It also should be read by Gunny Cooke’s fellow Fifth Marine Division Association members. ❖

Lethal Tides: Mary Sears and the Marine Scientists

Who Helped Win WWII



by *Catherine Musemeche* 320 pages

Lethal Tides tells the story Mary Sears, one of the first oceanographers of the Navy, whose groundbreaking oceanographic research helped lead the U.S. to victory in the Pacific theater during World War II.

In *Lethal Tides*, Catherine Musemeche weaves together science, biography, and military history in the compelling story of an unsung woman who had a dramatic effect on the U.S. Navy’s success against Japan in WWII, creating an intelligence-gathering juggernaut based on the new science of oceanography.

When World War II began, the U.S. Navy was unprepared to enact its island-hopping strategy to reach Japan. Anticipating tides, planning for coral reefs, and preparing for enemy fire was new ground for them, and with lives at stake

it was ground that had to be covered quickly.

The Sears team analyzed ocean currents, made wave and tide predictions, identified zones of bioluminescence, mapped deep-water levels where submarines could hide, and gathered information about the topography and surf conditions surrounding the Pacific islands and Japan. ❖

5th Marine Division Association - Membership Form

Mail to: 5th Marine Division Association, P.O. Box 728, Weatherford, TX 76086



Membership Types :

New - Annual or Life Membership () Renewal - Annual Membership ()

All Annual memberships expire on 31 December. Please renew on time.

Membership Categories :

5th Division Iwo Jima Vet () Platoon _____ Co. _____ Bn _____ Reg. _____

5th Division Vietnam Vet () Platoon _____ Co. _____ Bn _____ Reg. _____

Legacy - Relative of 5th Division Iwo Jima or Vietnam Veteran : ()

Name & rank of Veteran _____

Platoon _____ Co. _____ Bn _____ Reg. _____ *If known*

Your Relationship _____

Associate: ()

All other Vets, any Branch or Division: Iwo Jima () Korea () Vietnam () Desert Storm () Iraq () Afghanistan ()

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Dues (please check):

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

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Notice --- Please Consider

Future editions of *Spearhead News* will be sent electronically to all members who have an email address on file. Also all members will continue to have print newsletters mailed to them January and July if they do not opt-out. If you do not want to receive a paper copy mailed, please notify the database manager, Tom Huffhines.

Write "Opt-out" in the subject heading of an email and your full name and address in the body.

Tom Huffhines' email can be found in the first column of page two of this newsletter.



FMDA's 2024, 74TH REUNION

WILL BE HELD NEXT OCTOBER 16-20

IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS.

AT THE MENGER HOTEL