

Arizona, Here We Come...

“Big “warm” hello to all of our Sixth Marine Division Warriors, lineal descendants, friends, and family! Bill and I are so very excited to be planning an entertaining and memorable reunion for you here in the Scottsdale-Phoenix area of ARIZONA! So, welcome to “God’s Country!” We want to see you all here in August!

Here are some super updates for you with some of the items we have planned. We have been so fortunate to have procured an awesome guest speaker for the evening of our Grand Banquet. LtGen James B. Laster, who currently serves as the Director Marine Corps Staff, has graciously cleared his schedule to come be with all of us for that event. Please see his official bio on page 17.

WOW -- do we have amazing entertainment in the wings! Wait until you see and hear who we have lined up for the Thursday Buffet Dinner held at the hotel. Say welcome to Pam Barker and Bruce Rudolph of the "Rockin' Memories" -- guaranteed to delight everyone with Pam’s unique powerful vocals. All music arranged and performed by Bruce on drums and keyboard. This couple so loves America, our Veterans, and our active duty military; they are huge and generous supporters of them, as well. And, for a real thrilling experience and more background on these true American patriots, PLEASE see their website: www.bruцерudolph.com. You do NOT want to miss their performance.

Semper Fi, Bill and Jean Steed



Summer 2017

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Hinomaru Yosegaki: Japanese Good Luck Flags

by Garent Gunther, USMC 1968-70

Recently, I have been researching the service career of Corporal Robert G. Sproul of the Sixth Engineer Battalion, Sixth Marine Division. Among Corporal Sproul's souvenirs was a Japanese good luck flag (pictured below).

The good luck flag was a traditional gift given to Japanese soldiers as they prepared to go to war, particularly during World War II. They were intended to be good luck charms to provide for the safe return of the soldiers. The flags were made of cotton, silk, or rayon and had handwritten characters radiating out from a red sun in the center. They were often folded a certain way and worn around the abdomen under battle clothing.

The Japanese called the flags hinomaru yosegaki, which means to write sideways around the red sun. Family members, neighbors, teachers and friends signed the flags, offering messages of good luck and exhortations to be brave in battle. The sayings and slogans were usually patriotic and included wishes for a safe return from battle.

During the war in the Pacific, these good luck flags became prime souvenirs for US Marines. Often they were pierced by bullets or shrapnel and

soaked with blood, sometimes from just-killed Japanese soldiers.

My brother-in-law, Terry, sent photos of Corporal Sproul's flag to his cousin, Ikuko, who is a doctor in Japan. She was able to identify the Japanese soldier and where he lived in Japan, as well as translate the writings.

The soldier's name was Sei-ichi Miyagawa. He was from Qingdao on Aoshima Island, the 17th district. Japan was occupying some Chinese territory taken before World War II at the time. After the war, the Japanese families returned to Japan, and the occupied land was returned to China.

Sayings on the flag include the following:

- Good luck forever on the battlefield.
- Success in combat with good fortune to continue for a long time.
- Continuous good luck for you, your officers, and fellow soldiers.
- Wishes for a safe return.
- Good wishes for being sent off to the war.
- Unfailing devotion to your country.

Unfortunately for many of the Japanese soldiers (but surely fortuitous for our guys), the magic of the good luck flags didn't always provide protection from a Marine's rifle.

Many of the soldiers and their flags never returned home.

Japanese good luck flag belonging to Corporal Robert Sproul





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Striking Sixth Newsletter

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REUNION DEADLINE:

JULY 14

to make hotel reservations and send in your Registration Form

Letters to the editor, materials for publication, suggestions, and feedback can be sent to:

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My Time as a Marine — The Battle of Chosin Reservoir

SEVENTH & FINAL OF A SERIES BY WATSON CRUMBIE (29th MAR-1-C)

The Star Over Koto-ri

The Marines at Koto-ri had been holding since the Chinese surrounded it ten days earlier. However, the Chinese started coming in greater strength, and if Koto-ri fell to the Chinese, the entire division would be hopelessly trapped! The Marines depended heavily on the Marine Corsairs (fighter planes) to help defend Koto-ri. The Chinese feared the Corsairs because those planes could fire rockets at them, machine gun them, and drop napalm or bombs on them. They hid from the Corsairs in daytime.

We had mostly clear weather for air support, but then it began to snow heavily and visibility was limited. The Marines knew that if it did not stop snowing by morning, allowing the Marine Corsairs to fly, the Chinese would likely overrun Koto-ri. We prayed that night for the skies to clear. Just before dawn, a faint lone star appeared through the clouds in the east. The Marines cheered — they knew their prayers had been answered! That star, known as “the Star over Koto-ri,” is the symbol of The Chosin Few. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Corsair pilots who took off and landed on ice-coated carrier decks in a blowing blizzard to provide us with protection.

We were unable to bring out our

dead. I watched from my howitzer at Koto-ri as the stiff, frozen bodies of 117 Marines were buried after their dog tags were retrieved. The site was recorded in hopes that someday their remains could be retrieved.

We found more howitzer ammunition, and the remaining howitzers were placed back into action, firing most of the night in the direction we would be attack-



Marines marching from Funchilin Pass to Chinhung-ri

ing the next day. To keep from cratering the road with high explosive ammunition, we used proximity fuses or air bursts. We had to clear the howitzer breach by hand wearing a heavy mitten to scrape out burning embers to prevent a powder bag from premature igniting. I was very proud of my gun crew's performance under such adverse conditions.

The night we left Koto-ri our meteorologist reported the tempera-

ture at midnight was 60 degrees below zero. South of Koto-ri we came upon 50 Chinese frozen to death as they waited to ambush us.

Bridging the Gap

At Funchilin Pass, a concrete bridge spanned a 2,000-foot chasm with four large pipes that carried water from the reservoir down the mountain to a hydroelectric plant. The Chinese had

blown out the bridge, leaving a 29-foot gap. With the pump house on the left and a steep drop on the right, there was no way to bypass it. It looked as if we would have to abandon tanks, trucks, bulldozers, guns, everything!

The ingenuity of our Marine engineers saved the day. Eight portable Treadway bridge sections about 2,500 pounds each were air dropped in

by C-119 flying boxcars. One was damaged and another fell into Chinese territory. The rest landed intact, and our engineers erected four of them over the chasm. The bridge was brilliantly built: just narrow enough for a jeep and wide enough for a truck or tank. I walked across one side in the middle of the night, which was good as I could not see how far down it was!

Below Koto-ri, the road descend-

(continued on next page)

My Time as a Marine

(continued from previous page)

ed 4,000 feet from the plateau to Chinhung-ni where the 3rd Army Division was holding the perimeter around the port of Hungnam. The battleships in Hungnam harbor, including the USS Missouri, were firing day and night in support of our withdrawal.

After the battle, I asked an atheist if he still did not believe in God. He replied that it was God who saved him! Nine Marines from North Texas became ordained Ministers.

Evacuation

On 11 December, totally exhausted after having walked 76 miles in thirteen days with little in the way of food, water or sleep, I reached the port of Hungnam where the Navy was waiting to evacuate us. On 12 December, I boarded the USS General E. T. Collins, which was designed to carry 2,000 troops. With 6,000 aboard it was severely crowded, but it was like paradise to be out of the cold. We received penicillin shots as we all had walking pneumonia. We sailed to Pusan at the southern tip of the Korean peninsula along with almost 100,000 civilian refugees in our convoy.

We had not been able to write home since Thanksgiving. One Dallas Morning News headline read "Entire Marine Division Surrounded," giving cause for our families to worry and pray. They spent Christmas 1950 not knowing if any of the 1st Marine

Division still existed as all news had been blacked out during the evacuation. A "National Day of Prayer" was declared while the nation waited.

It was 20 December before we could write our first letters home. My letter arrived the day after Christmas. It was hard to write and tell my family about those from Dallas who had been killed. Unfortunately, in some cases the Navy had not yet informed the next of kin. My family, while talking on the telephone to other families, could not reveal that they knew their son was one of those killed.

We spent the month of January at Masan on the southern tip of Korea. It was cold, but we had sleeping bags and stoves that burned diesel fuel in our tents. We still had walking pneumonia, but we were gradually regaining our health. Our fingers and faces had turned black and had no feeling. I could pick up a burning hot stove top and hear the sizzling and smell the burning flesh, but I felt nothing.

Back Into Battle

After a brief respite, it was time for the 1st Marine Division to re-enter the war and for me to earn my fifth Korean War Battle Star. We received new howitzers and replacements to bring us back up to strength. In February, we moved by truck to an airfield at Pohang on the east coast where we fought a gorilla type war with

the North Koreans.

General Matthew Ridgeway was now the Far East commander, and he was determined to kill as many Chinese as possible in conventional warfare. Artillery is known as the most devastating weapon for this purpose. During a twenty-hour fire mission of massed artillery, we were credited with killing 10,000 Chinese.

The Chinese had massed more than a million men for an all-out attack across the peninsula; their intent was to drive all UN forces into the sea. At dawn, the Chinese were all over the hillside in front of us firing their submachine guns with the intent to kill the gun crews. My howitzer had an earthen protection created by a bulldozer so we were in no danger from bullets. A couple of Army mobile howitzers fired point blank into the hillside, and then Marines attacked to clear them out.

The Chinese lost so many men in the all-out assault that it led to truce talks and a two-year stalemate. It became trench warfare with seesaw battles trying to establish a truce line if an armistice should be reached. After more than two years of talks, an armistice was signed by the military commanders on 27 July 1953. A peace treaty was never signed, and technically, a state of war still exists between North and South Korea.

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My Time as a Marine

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Border between North and South Korea today

The Chosin Few

Whatever we were in that frozen land long ago, and whatever we are now, we are bound as one for life in an exclusive fraternity of honor. The only way into our ranks is to have paid the dues of duty, sacrifice and valor by being there. The cost of joining, in short, is beyond all earthly wealth.

Because the battle took place around a reservoir named “Chosin” and because we suffered a large number of casualties, we are known today as “The Chosin Few.” We served in the coldest temperature ever endured by the United States forces. We served against the most insurmountable odds. And we participated in the longest fighting retreat and the greatest sea evacuation in United States history.

The 15,000 Marines of the 1st Marine Division, suffered 12,000 casualties both from enemy ac-

tion and cold weather injury.

The Army on the east side of the reservoir originally numbered 3,100. They suffered more than 1,200 killed or missing and more than 1,500 wounded. There were only 385 combat-able survivors.

The 120,000 Chinese Communist Forces had been ordered to annihilate the UN forces to the last man. But the Chinese themselves were virtually annihilated.

A total of seventeen Medals of Honor and seven Navy Crosses were awarded, the most for a single battle in U.S. history.

Welcome Home

After serving nine months in Korea, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant. I left the war in May 1951. I was flown from near the 38th parallel to Pusan and then sailed onboard the USNS General W. F. Hase to Treasure Island in San Francisco. We were the largest group to return home

from the Korean War. The newspaper headline read “WELCOME HOME MARINES.” The citizens of San Francisco welcomed us with open arms; while on liberty, they bought us drinks and meals. It was the opposite from the reception the Vietnam veterans later received.

I got a ten-day furlough and returned to my bride of ten days. My next orders were to report to Camp Pendleton. I fully expected to be sent back to Korea after a few months of stateside duty. But at Camp Pendleton, I was told that I had been released from active duty. I returned home but still had time remaining on my enlistment when a directive from the Commandant of the Marine Corps stated that those who had served in World War II and the Korean War could request a discharge. I wasted no time in doing so.

Conclusion

I have known the thrill of victory in seeing our flag raised and the agony of defeat at Chosin. I earned seven battle stars for action in World War II and Korea. My units received four U.S. Presidential Unit Citations – one for Okinawa and three for Korea, plus two Korean Presidential Unit Citations. I have the equivalent of more than five months of front line combat, and I fought every battle I was in

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My Time as a Marine

(continued from previous page)

from invasion to end. This is a record very few Marines attain. The wars cost me the opportunity to get a college education as I had a Mother to support and no income.

Combat is indescribable. It is Hell beyond belief; you fight each day watching others being killed or wounded. At night you sleep in a shallow grave called a foxhole. You sleep – if you can – in two hour shifts or whenever you can. If an attack is expected, no one sleeps. Days became weeks at Chosin during which we could not sleep.

You live day and night in every type of weather. You wear the same clothes and underwear for months. You live on rations for months. You do not shower or shave. You do not have toothpaste or deodorant. You become hardened to death and the smell of death. You accept the fact that you may be the next one killed or wounded, and you pray to God constantly for deliverance if killed. I served in seven such battles.

In Saipan, the 1st Battalion, 29th Marines suffered eighty percent casualties. In Okinawa, the 29th Regiment suffered eighty percent casualties. At Chosin, the 1st Marine Division suffered eighty percent casualties. What are the odds that one Marine could survive

three battles that each had eighty percent casualties? Was this fate? Good luck? Or are prayers really answered?

Many Marines were buried on the islands where they died. Later, the remains were relocated, some to the Philippines, others to the family plot at home. Many were re-interred in the National Cemetery of the Pacific known as “The Punchbowl” which is an extinct volcano in Honolulu, Hawaii. I found twenty-eight headstones of Marines that I served with in World War II at the Punchbowl. Unfortunately, we had to bury many of those killed in North Korea in enemy territory. They may never be recovered, but for as long as I live they will

not be forgotten.

At the Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, along the memorial walk is a monument to The Chosin Few, which was my project from conception to completion. Everyone in the North Texas Chapter of The Chosin Few donated the funds. “The Star Over Koto-ri” is visible to anyone approaching from either direction.

Since 1990, I have attended many reunions with those that I served with from both World War II and Korea. Most of them are gone now, and those of us who still attend, shake hands knowing it may be for the last time.

At a reunion in Las Vegas in 1990, our Regimental Commander, Major McReynolds, told me that my howitzer was recaptured in April 1952. It was identified by the serial number.

I give thanks to God every day. Only he and I know what I went through that created the bond I have with him. In combat death is inevitable. I do not believe that God has anything to do with who lives and who dies. I was prepared to die and prayed for deliverance. That has not changed.

~Watson Crumbie
June 2012 - June 2013



Watson and Margaret Crumbie with Oliver North,
March 2015

Jangjin (Chosin) Reservoir Battle Monument Dedicated on May 3



Pictured above is my grandson Lance Corporal Micah Crumbie with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, four star General Joseph Dunford. The photo was taken at the dedication of The Chosin Reservoir Battle Monument at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, VA on 3 May 2017. (I was the chairman of this project.)

Watson Crumbie (29th Mar-1-C)

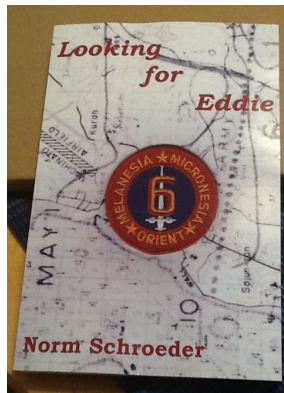
Editor's Note: Pictured below is a detail from the monument. It shows one of the eight bronze plaques on the octagon-shaped monument that describe each phase of the battle. This picture ran in the spring edition of the newsletter, but unfortunately a printing problem caused most of the picture to be blacked out.



Book About CPL Edward J. Couchon Jr. (22nd Mar-1-C) Wins Award

Hi Connie and Carroll,

A while back you were kind enough to let the membership know I'd published *Looking for Eddie*. I wanted to share with you the good news that the book has been named a Finalist in the Military Category of the 2017 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. It means a nice dose of



publicity at a big publishers trade association expo in NYC later this year. There's even an awards ceremony

at the Harvard Club in New York. Imagine that!

Anyway, since you gave the book a mention where it matters most -- with the members of the Association -- I thought you would like to know.

Regards,
Norm Schroeder

Editor's Note: Of course we would like to know!

Congratulations, Norm!



CORRECTION --- The Real Dan MacDougall

Editor's Note: The spring edition of the Striking Sixth included a picture in Mail Call (shown at the bottom of the column below) that was mislabeled as Dan MacDougall. We don't know who it was, but it is NOT Dan MacDougall. I sincerely apologize for the error.

Below is a picture of the real Dan MacDougall taken in August 1943.



Dan MacDougall, August 1943



Not sure who this is, but it's NOT Dan MacDougall

MAIL CALL

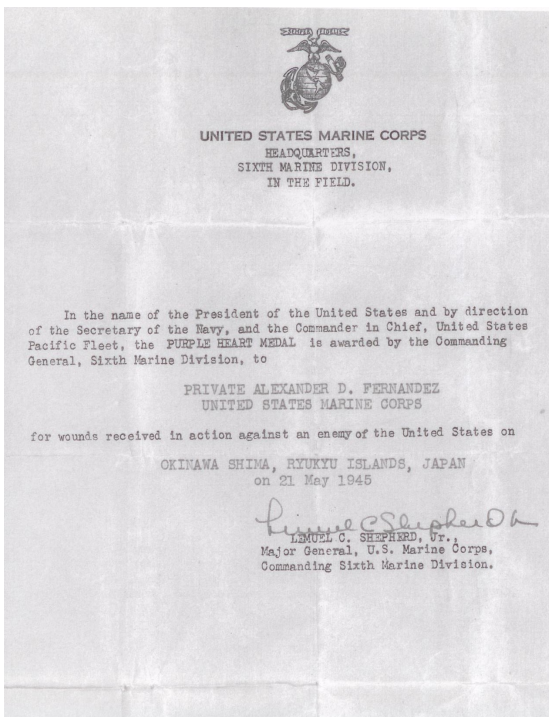


Purple Heart Medal Earned by Alexander D. Fernandez

I am the Veterans' Service Officer for the Town of Maynard, MA. A few weeks ago, a gentleman walked into my office and handed me a Purple Heart Medal in its original box. He informed me that he found it amongst his father's possessions after his father passed away.

He said the medal did not belong to his father and he did not know why his father had it.

Underneath the medal, in the box, was the citation/letter pictured below. The information on the citation does not include the recipient's service number and DOB, which are important when trying to find someone. Here is what it does provide:



Recipient: Private Alexander D. Fernandez USMC

Awarded for: wounds received in action against the enemy on Okinawa Shima, Ryukyu Islands, Japan on 21 May 1945

I am trying to track down the veteran or his family in order to return the medal to its rightful owner. My contact number is (978) 886-7528.

Thank You,
Wayne Stanley
MSgt, USAF (Ret)

Hello from Santa Ana!

Hello Flo,

Enclosed is a check for two years subscription to the newsletter and a donation for the Operating Fund. Sure would like to be in Scottsdale being it is so close to me – but I just can't get there.

Will be waiting for a good report and fun pictures to come. So much to see and enjoy.

Fond memories – the Best to All,
Jayne Alice Hoag
12341 Rebecca Lane
Santa Ana, CA 92705



**And when he gets to Heaven,
Saint Peter he will tell:
"Another Marine reporting, sir —
I've served my time in Hell!"**

One More Time

Editor's Note: The spring edition of the Striking Sixth included a picture in TAPS (shown at right) that was partially blacked out due to a printing problem. We are reprinting it here because it's a great picture of two great guys, and we wanted to make sure everyone got to see it.

Harry and Don go way back to 29th Mar-3-I, and they enjoyed getting together at many annual reunions. They are shown at right at the Columbus reunion in 2015. Sadly, they passed away just eight days apart earlier this year.



Harry Bertram and Don Honis, Columbus 2015

MAIL CALL ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

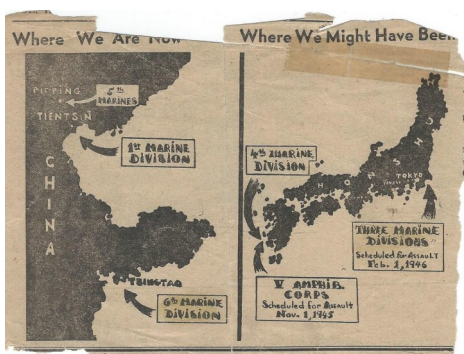
China Marines: Bob Sproul and Harry Stanifer

Hi Carroll,

Thanks for including the 1945 Tsingtao Thanksgiving menu for the Sixth Marine Division's 6th Bn Pioneer and Engineers in the fall 2016 newsletter. You'll recall I came across it while researching Corporal Robert Sproul of the Sixth.



Corporal Robert Sproul with Chinese sailors after the war ended



Newspaper clipping about the potential invasion of Japan: left - Where We Are and right - Where We Might Have Been

I don't know how to express the profound impact of receiving a call from a living Sixth Division Marine -- Harry Stanifer -- who personally knew Corporal Sproul. His signature and hometown are visible on the Thanksgiving menu.

Mr. Stanifer is 93 years old. He joined the Marines when he was 17 and therefore didn't finish high school, but he was awarded his diploma after his service. I found him to be a bright, experienced and successful man. He has authored several books of poetry that have been published.

Mr. Stanifer served with Bob Sproul in China right after the War ended, and he offered to answer any questions I had about Corporal Sproul. It seemed like it was finally time for him to tell somebody the things he saw at the end the war.

I am attaching some photos Mr. Stanifer sent me. The newspaper clipping is kind of interesting as it shows the anxiety of the Marines about invading Japan.

Sincerely yours,
Garent Gunther, USMC 1968-70
cassadycup@yahoo.com



Looking for Info on Martin Kelly

Ms. McGowan,

I am the grandson of a Sixth Marine Division veteran. My grandfather was Martin Kelly from Nashua, NH. He was in the 3rd battalion, 15th Marines. I have attached a few pictures of his (see right column) that I recently came across. There are no names attached. I would like to hear from anyone who knew him or can identify who is in the photos.

Thank you,
Kieran Kelly
kierankelly1981@gmail.com

Photos below are from Kieran Kelly



Striking Sixth

Chaplain's Report



It really is sad when good friends pass to their final assignment. We all will follow at some time.

This might help: We all will be raised to perfect health. Not a hair will be lost. Our spirits come from God and cannot die nor age. At the time of death many see relatives as young who have come to greet them. I have talked to wives who told me and Barb of this.

A good book to read about these cases is *The Biology of Belief* by Dr. Bruce H. Lipton. He has researched many near death cases.

So my message is the same: Keep the commandments, say your prayers, plan to have a good time, and don't do or say dumb things.

Your friendly Chaplain,
Harry McKnight

New Membership Directory

It's taken longer than expected, but Joe L. Kite (son of Joe W. Kite, 29th Mar-HQ) is close to finishing the new Sixth Marine Division Association directory in electronic format.

If you want to receive the new directory, please send your email address to Joe Kite at :

JLK1621@juno.com

Message from the President



With our reunion just around the corner, the time is getting closer to renewing friendships and making new ones. Thank yous are extended ahead of time to our gracious hosts Bill and Jean Steed.

I would like to encourage the "elders" to suggest their offspring

join our Sixth family to perpetuate the memory of your heroic acts of patriotism -- made without hesitation to protect our freedoms as we know them today.

I so look forward to seeing you all at the reunion.

Semper Fi,
Connie

From the Editor



We're a little early with the summer edition this year. We wanted to get it out in time to remind everyone that **the deadline for signing up -- and making hotel reservations -- for the 2017 Reunion is July 14.**

All the details about the reunion were in our spring edition, which you can find on our website. In this edition, you'll find the schedule and Registration Form along with the guest speaker's bio on pages 14-17.

I have been in frequent contact with Jean Steed, and I can tell you she and Bill have been working tirelessly to plan a wonderful

reunion. They are even planning to welcome us in their home for lunch one day -- and give us a peak at Bill's private Marine Corps museum. Can't wait!

But most of all, I can't wait to see who comes. Sadly, there are a few more who will be missing this year. But their memory will stay with me forever.

~ Carroll McGowan

We'll keep you entertained at the reunion this summer! Look for a powerful performance by Rockin' Memories at the Thursday Night Buffet!



Their Chairs Are Empty, but We Know What Their Sacrifice Was For

LIVING WITH THE MEMORY OF FALLEN COMRADES

by M.L. Cavanaugh, *Wall Street Journal*, May 27, 2017

I didn't even know I was crying until half my face was wet. It was Memorial Day 2004, and I had just returned from a year of fighting as a cavalry officer in Iraq. I was sitting in a sea of parishioners at my parents' church for a holiday-themed Sunday, complete with tiny flags and people thanking me for my service. It was all very nice until the minister's voice trailed off and an enormous screen showed images of American soldiers recently lost.

Then I saw him. No, it wasn't him, exactly, but the guy on the screen looked enough like one of the soldiers under my command who had been killed that I was overwhelmed by tears. I pushed my way down the pew, ran to a bathroom and stayed there until the storm passed.

Like so many others, my wars have been marked by the distinct cruelty of rapid, random and repeated death of young soldiers. There was the tank driver who drowned in the desert. The experienced leader who accidentally discharged his weapon, killing a nearby squad mate. The lieutenant who had written two years earlier as a cadet that his favorite time of day was when "Taps" played: "One day it will play at my funeral and when it does, I pray that I am deserving enough of that honor." He was.

They're all still with me. Every one. When memories pool, they create a riptide that can pull a new veteran under. Most find that speaking about this never-ending ache feels like torture, and the sting strikes at the strangest moments. For me it's often while running, on a darkened track or in the last mile of a marathon, that I see their faces and lose my breath for a moment. A few years ago I was at a destination wedding and realized it was the precise 10-year anniversary of a West Point classmate's death, drowning out the marriage celebration.

I hear the voices of these fallen: The faint final orders given by my newly assigned troop commander, an older West Point graduate I genuinely looked up to, before he was hit by one of the war's first roadside bombs. The one memory I can't get away from? A friend's widow attempted suicide in tragedy's wake. Terrible questions rush in behind waves of melancholy: Why not me? Why was my

family spared? Could I have done something? Why didn't I do more?

Sometime after that church service, I discovered a song that seemed to represent my grief, trauma and regret. The stage version of "Les Misérables" includes a number called "Empty Chairs at Empty Tables," a title that matches the military tradition at formal events of leaving an honorary open seat. The song describes, stanza by stanza, the pain a young veteran feels at having lost his fellow fighters—mirroring my own saddest sentiments.

The music gains momentum and reaches a crescendo: "Oh my friends, my friends, don't ask me what your sacrifice was for." This is where art stops imitating life, the song's tide turns, and my tears subside. We know—defiantly and with clear eyes—that some great good has come from some horrible bad. We do know what their sacrifice was for.

Every society requires warriors to defend its version of civilization. "If none of us is prepared to die for freedom," the Yale historian Timothy Snyder recently wrote, "then all of us will die under tyranny." These willing citizens we call soldiers don't choose what their war will demand, or where or when they will be asked to fight, but they knowingly accept these conditions nonetheless.

The Continental Army's surgeon general, Benjamin Rush, once recorded that his life's aim was "to spend and be spent for the good of mankind." This patriot's principle has been carried forward in many military mottos: "Free the Oppressed"; "That Others May Live"; "Not for Self, but for Country." It also lives on in the solemn pride expressed, only this month, by the son of a U.S. soldier killed in Afghanistan: "His life was not taken: It was given, to his country."

On this Memorial Day, I think how pleased my fallen comrades would be to see their country still safe, still free, still strong, still not satisfied, still thirsting for the next stage of good—an American table full of blessings. While their chairs may be empty, their spirit is present.

Maj. Cavanaugh is a U.S. Army strategist and a fellow with the Modern War Institute at West Point.

John Eason (4th Mar-3-K) Honored by North Iowa Detachment No. 859 Marine Corps League for His Service in World War II

by Ashley Miller, *Globe Gazette*, November 10, 2016

John Eason recalls April 1, 1945, as if it were yesterday.

As “Easter Parade” played on that Easter Sunday, Eason, an 18-year-old bugler from Sanborn, was stepping off an amphibious vehicle on to Okinawa, Japan.

He was supposed to be in the third wave, but was among the first to land on the beach. The first and second waves had stopped, waiting on naval bombardment.

Faced with a smokescreen, Eason said the beams his division had only shone a few hundred yards.

“We were looking at a good thousand yards of terrain,” said Eason, 90. “All I could think of, the dang rifle won’t shoot that far.

“We fanned out like we were supposed to, then came the first wave out of the smokescreen. I have never been so happy in my life to see the amphibs hit the beach.”

During the Battle of Okinawa, Eason’s division took the northern end of the island, later moving south to break the main defensive line. He was a company runner during combat and was responsible for relaying messages.

From that point on, Eason said, he was involved in “real heavy combat.”

“I can still remember at Sugar Loaf Hill, there were so many dead Japs and American boys on the ground, you couldn’t touch the ground,” he said. “You were crawling over bodies.”

Taking that 50-foot tall, 300-yard-long mound resulted in the death of 1,656 Marines and another 7,429 being wounded, according to the Marine

Corps Association. It was among a triangle of strong points to delay Americans.

The nearly three-month fight – regarded as the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War – resulted in more than 82,000 U.S. casualties.



John Eason, 2016

“If I wasn’t scared, I should have been,” Eason said.

In August, he was loaded on to a ship to invade Japan. Dressed in full combat gear, his outfit landed at the naval base near the south end of the Tokyo Bay.

“Here we came ashore loaded with hot ammunition, not knowing what to expect, and I was dumbfounded,” he said. “The whole town was in their best clothes and the fire trucks were there.

“They were not ready for combat, period.”

With a million or more casualties estimated if the U.S. invaded Japan, Eason said he’s glad the Japanese surrendered.

He returned home on Memorial Day weekend after two years in the Marines. Eason later taught at the high school and collegiate level, teaching geography, history and ecology at North Iowa Area Community College for 18 years.

Although his time in the Marines was short, Eason said he’s still part of a strong brotherhood.

“When I went into the service, I was told, ‘Once a Marine, always a Marine,’” he said. “I thought that was a bunch of crock, but when I came out, I knew they had told me the truth.

“It changed my life.”

Sixth Marine Division Association 2017 Reunion

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, August 15

Cost per person

6:00-9:00 am	Free Breakfast at hotel for each hotel guest	
8:00 am-10:00 pm	6thMarDiv Hospitality Room (open all day)	
10:00 am-10:00 pm	Registration (Hospitality Room)	
5:30-7:30 pm	Free Happy Hour at hotel for each hotel guest	
6:30-8:30 pm	Re-Unite! "Hello Arizona" Reception with hors d'oeuvres, music & catching up!	\$10.00

Wednesday, August 16

6:00-9:00 am	Free Breakfast at hotel for each hotel guest	
8:00 am-10:00 pm	6thMarDiv Hospitality Room (open all day)	
10:00 am-10:00 pm	Registration (Hospitality Room)	
9:15 am-3:00 pm	Tour of the world-class Musical Instrument Museum followed by lunch at the home of Bill & Jean Steed Includes Bill's Marine Corps collection and bus transportation	adults \$40.00 teens \$35.00 kids (4-12) \$30.00
11:00 am-3:00 pm	- or - Lunch at Steeds only, with bus transportation	lunch/bus only \$20.00
5:30-7:30 pm	Free Happy Hour at hotel for each hotel guest	
7:30 pm-9:00 pm	Executive Board Meeting, Hotel	

Thursday, August 17

6:00-9:00 am	Free Breakfast at hotel for each hotel guest	
8:00 am-10:00 pm	6thMarDiv Hospitality Room (open all day)	
10:00 am-10:00 pm	Registration (Hospitality Room)	
9:15 am-3:00 pm	Tour of the amazing new OdySea Aquarium Includes bus transportation but lunch is on your own at one of several restaurants	seniors (62+) \$49.00 adults \$51.00 kids (3-12) \$41.00
5:30-7:30 pm	Free Happy Hour at hotel for each hotel guest	
6:30-8:30 pm	Dinner Buffet at the hotel plus "Rock'n Memories" with Pam and Bruce performing oldies but goodies	\$25.00

Friday, August 18

6:00-9:00 am	Free Breakfast at hotel for each hotel guest	
8:00 am-10:00 pm	6thMarDiv Hospitality Room (open all day)	
9:15 am-2:00 pm & 2:15-5:00 pm	Casino Arizona -- 2 trips -- slots, blackjack, keno & more! Includes bus transportation, but lunch is on your own	\$20.00
12 noon-2:00 pm	Ladies Luncheon	\$25.00
5:30-7:30 pm	Free Happy Hour at hotel for each hotel guest	
7:00-10:00 pm	General Meeting & Amazing Action-Packed Annual Auction!	

Saturday, August 19

6:00-9:00 am	Free Breakfast at hotel for each hotel guest	
10:00 am	Annual Memorial Service with color guard, singer & bag piper followed by group and family photos	
5:30-6:30 pm	Reception/Social Hour (cash bar)	
6:30-10:00 pm	Grand Banquet — dinner, guest speaker, installation of officers & great entertainment	\$47.00

Sixth Marine Division Association 2017 Reunion

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Please Return This Form by July 14!

Name _____ Spouse/Guest Name _____

If Lineal Descendant, of Whom _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (____) _____ Cell phone (____) _____ Email _____

Company _____ Battalion _____ Regiment _____

Check all that apply to you:

_____ Attending my 1st Reunion

_____ Use Cane or Walker

_____ Use Motorized Wheelchair

_____ Wheelchair Bound

_____ Will take Wheelchair on field trips

_____ Special Needs: (please specify)

_____ Special Dietary Needs: (please specify) _____

_____ Will bring auction item _____ Willing to help clean up hospitality room one night

_____ Willing to help as needed

YOUR TRAVEL PLANS (for our information)

Will be arriving in Phoenix by _____ on _____
(Mode of Transportation) (Arrival Date)

For Sixth Division Marines, wives and widows who are traveling with no family members only:

Do you want us to pick you up at the airport? _____ We would be happy to do so!

Note: Please be sure you fly into Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX)

Please provide your airline, flight # and arrival time & date:

Please provide your airline, flight # and departure time & date for your flight home:

Cell phone # while traveling: (_____) _____

For all other guests: We regret that we are not able to assist you with getting to and from the airport. Please plan to take a taxi (approximately \$42) or reserve a shuttle (approximately \$25) such as SuperShuttle -- www.supershuttle.com.

If you are interested in sharing a room, please call Jean and she will try to match you with someone. (same sex only!)

REUNION REGISTRATION FORM, Page 2

Tuesday, August 15

10:00 am-10:00 pm **Registration**
6th Division Veteran: \$25 (spouse free) # 6th veterans _____ x \$25 = \$ _____
6th Division Assn Members & Guests: # others _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

6:30-8:30 pm **"Hello Arizona" Reception** (hotel) --
hors d'oeuvres, music and socializing # attending _____ x \$10 = \$ _____

Wednesday, August 16

9:15 am-3:00 pm **Tour of Musical Instrument Museum** -- # adults _____ x \$40 = \$ _____
includes lunch at the Steeds (no charge) # teens _____ x \$35 = \$ _____
and bus transportation # kids (4-12) _____ x \$30 = \$ _____

11:00 am-3:00 pm **- or - Lunch at Steeds only**
(includes bus transportation, but lunch is free) # _____ x \$20 = \$ _____

Thursday, August 17

9:15 am-3:00 pm **Tour of OdySea Aquarium** -- # seniors (62+) _____ x \$49 = \$ _____
lunch is on your own, but price includes # adults _____ x \$51 = \$ _____
bus transportation # kids (3-12) _____ x \$41 = \$ _____

6:30-8:30 pm **Dinner Buffet** (hotel)
Entertainment by Pam and Bruce # _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

Friday, August 18

9:15 am-2:00 pm **Casino Arizona -- 2 trips** -- lunch is on your own; # _____ x \$20 = \$ _____
2:15-5:00 pm price is for bus transportation

12:00 noon-2:00 pm **Ladies Luncheon** (hotel) # _____ x \$25 = \$ _____

7:00-10:00 pm **General Meeting & Auction** (Hospitality Room) # _____ (for planning purposes)

Saturday, August 19

10:00 am **Memorial Service** (hotel) # _____ (for planning purposes)

5:30-6:30 pm **Reception/Social Hour** (hotel, cash bar)

6:30-10:00 pm **Grand Banquet** (hotel)
Please indicate # and choice:

Beef	# _____	x \$47 = \$ _____
Chicken	# _____	x \$47 = \$ _____
Vegetarian	# _____	x \$47 = \$ _____

Total due for all events: \$ _____

Make check payable to: 6th Marine Division Assn. 2017 Reunion

Please complete both pages of this form and mail with your check by July 14 to:

**Jean Steed
7507 East Roy Rogers Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85266**

Jean's cell: (480) 518-0077, e-mail: jean.steed@azmoves.com Bill's cell: (480) 518-0088

Lieutenant General James B. Laster

DIRECTOR, MARINE CORPS STAFF; TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT 2017 REUNION

Lieutenant General James B. Laster assumed his current position as the Director, Marine Corps Staff in December 2014.



LtGen James Laster

Lieutenant General Laster is a native of Dallas, Texas, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1978 through the Platoon

Leaders Course Program. Upon completion of The Basic School, he reported to 3d Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, where he served as a rifle platoon commander and rifle company executive officer. In January 1981, Lieutenant General Laster transferred to Marine Barracks, Washington, DC where he served as a platoon commander, company executive officer, and White House Social Aide.

In November 1983, Lieutenant General Laster was assigned to 7th Marines and served two years as a rifle company commander, one year as weapons company commander in 3d Battalion, 7th Marines and completed his tour as the regimental assistant operations officer.

In December 1987, he attended the Army Airborne School and Advanced Infantry Officers Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, and was a Distinguished Graduate. Lieutenant General Laster transferred to 25th Marines in September 1989 and assumed duties as Inspector Instructor for Company A, 1stBn, 25th Marines, and served as the

I-I Operations Officer for 25th Marine Regiment. In May 1991, Lieutenant General Laster was assigned as Aide-de-Camp to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General C. E. Mundy, Jr. He subsequently attended Marine Corps Command and Staff College and graduated with distinction.

Returning to the Fleet Marine Force in June 1993, he commanded Headquarters and Service Company, I MEF, and Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Group. In January 1995, he assumed duties as Executive Officer, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines and deployed to the Arabian Gulf with the 15th MEU (SOC). During this assignment he also served as Commander, Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF), 15th MEU (SOC). In August 1996, he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and assumed duties as Operations Officer and deployed again to the Arabian Gulf/CENTCOM AOR. In November 1997, he was assigned as Deputy AC/S G-7 and Inspector, 1st Marine Division. During the period January to March 1998, Lieutenant General Laster deployed to Africa as J-3 of Joint Task Force Kenya in support of Operation Noble Response, Humanitarian Relief operations in Kenya, East Africa. Lieutenant General Laster assumed command of 3d Battalion, 4th Marines in May 1998 and moved the battalion to Twentynine Palms, California. He relinquished command in June 2000 and was transferred to the National War College.

Upon completion of the National War College in June 2001, he was promoted to Colonel, and was assigned to the Joint Staff as Chief of War Plans, J-7. Following the events of September 11th, he assumed duties in the Joint Staff J-3 as Assistant Chief, Future Operations Group. From 2003 to 2005, Lieutenant General Laster commanded The Basic School, and then assumed duties as Chief of Staff, Training and Education Command.

Lieutenant General Laster commanded Training Command during May 2006 to November 2007, and served as Commanding General of Training and Education Command during December 2007 to May 2008. He assumed command of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina and Eastern Recruiting Region on 30 May 2008. In August 2009, Lieutenant General Laster assumed command of 3d Marine Division. Lieutenant General Laster served during March 2011 to March 2012 in Afghanistan as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Joint Operations, IS-AF Joint Command. In June 2012, Lieutenant General Laster assumed duties as Chief of Staff of U.S. Special Operations Command.

Lieutenant General Laster is a graduate of New Mexico Military Institute and Southwest Texas State University and holds a Master of Science degree in National Strategy from the National War College. He was awarded the Leftwich Trophy in 1989 for outstanding leadership.

David Guido (22nd Mar-2-E) Reflects on Love and War

by George McMasters, Watertown TAB, March 30, 2017

There are fewer and fewer living veterans of World War II. According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs statistics, only 620,000 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II were alive in 2016. Watertown resident and World War II Veteran David Guido is one of these survivors. Aside from serving in the Great War, Guido has lived a full life, and shared some of the many great stories, including reconnecting with his current wife decades after they first met.

As a combat veteran of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I looked forward to meeting a veteran of World War II, and as I pulled up to Guido's house with American and Marine Corps flags flying proudly out front, I knew I had arrived.

After climbing a narrow back staircase to the second floor of the two-family home in Watertown, David's wife Mary, a spry 90-year old, opened the door.

Inside the home, pictures of their life together hung on the walls; knickknacks and collectibles were neatly arranged on shelves. In the living room through the archway, Guido, 92, could be seen sitting in his armchair.

For the two nonagenarians it was love delayed. The Guido's said they first met when her brother Celio Sperandio, who was also a Marine, brought David home on leave for one weekend in 1942.

"He was my first love. I was 16, he was 18. I wrote to him for two and a half years. He was wounded three times and ended up in the hospital. He met the woman who became his first wife and dumped me," Mary said.

"She never lets me forget it," he said.

According to the family, each lived their lives, married to other people, in separate towns -- miles apart.

David retired after 30 years as a letter carrier in New London, Connecticut, and she was a housewife in Watertown, Massachusetts. He was married for 48 years, she was married for 42 years. Both of their spouses died in the same year, and shortly after he came looking for her.

"I couldn't believe it," she said.

David Guido was born on May 30, 1924. In his hometown of Indiana in Pennsylvania, young men either worked for the railroad or in the coal mines. Neither job appealed to him.

He was inspired to join the Marines at 17 when he saw a Marine in a dress uniform.

"I wanted one of those uniforms," he said. "So off I went to boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina on November 26, 1941."

Two weeks later Pearl Harbor was attacked.

After graduation from boot camp, his platoon was sent to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in New Hampshire, but he was held back at Parris Island as a junior drill instructor. At age 17, he became one of the youngest drill instructors in Marine Corps history, Guido said. After training new recruits for two years, Guido volunteered to go overseas. He was ordered to the Pacific island of Samoa in July 1942 and assigned to a weapons company as the platoon sergeant. At the age of 18 he was the senior enlisted man in charge of 42 men, he said.

"Everyone in the platoon was under 20, except the commanding officer, who at 25 was considered an old man," he said.

After 16 months of training, the men were ready for combat.

Guido with the men of Echo company, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Marine Regiment saw action against the enemy for the first time in the battle of Eniwetok Atoll on February 18, 1943. He said the Japanese were excellent fighters. The Japanese owned the night, but the Marines owned the day. The regiment successfully captured the three main islands of Engebi, Eniwetok and Parry in six days of heavy fighting.

"You know nobody understands combat unless you have experienced it yourself. I tell Mary and my friends, when I was watching the picture *Saving Private Ryan*, it looked like combat. The one thing that was missing was the smell, the smell of dead people," Guido said.

(continued on next page)

Striking Sixth

David Guido

(continued from previous page)

Guido was wounded for the first time on Parry Island.

“A sniper got me in the left leg. After three weeks I rejoined the company.”

After he rejoined his unit, the 22nd Marine regiment proceeded to take Kwajalien and Roi-Namur from March 7 to April 5, 1944.

Once the battle was over, the regiment embarked on ships and sailed for the island of Guadalcanal for rest and resupply. After training new replacements and practicing new squad and fire team tactics, David Guido and his men boarded ship and set sail, their destination unknown.

On July 21, 1944, after a heavy naval bombardment, Guido and his men attacked Guam, the largest of the Mariana Islands. He was in the wave landing on Yellow Beach 2. The enemy defenses consisted of numerous machine-gun nests and pillboxes. All of the positions were well camouflaged and dug into the coral cliffs.

“We had 26 amphibious vehicles leading us in, 23 were knocked out by artillery fire,” Guido said.

According to *History of the Sixth Marine Division* (Washington, 1946), 14, edited by B. G. Cass, “Later on Yellow Beach 2 alone, the bodies of 75 Marines were counted.”

Guido said that just a few days later on July 26 the Japanese attacked their lines three times during the night.

“The Japanese were yelling, screaming and cursing,” he said. “The Marines artillery fired 15,000 rounds of ammunition in their defense.” In the morning he was checking the Japanese dead with another Marine named Benny to see if they were still alive.

He said there was no following the rules of the Geneva Convention on the islands, neither side showed any mercy.

“I said to Benny, ‘Here’s a live one,’ and I was getting ready to stick him with my bayonet, and bingo a mortar round came down. You can always tell; artillery makes a swishy noise, a mortar round you don’t hear them. They come down and explode,” Guido said.



Battle of Eniwetok, February 1944

“Benny got a big hunk out of his back; I had shrapnel go through my right arm, and it busted my leg. I don’t remember crawling back to the front lines, but they said I did crawl back. I ended up in the hospital with a cast on my leg and a cast on my body,” Guido said.

Guido was sent to Bethesda Naval Hospital, now known as the Walter Reed National Medical Center for 18 months of recovery. In the hospital he met his first wife.

Mary Guido’s brother, Sperandio, who first introduced the two so long ago, fought as a flame thrower man in the battle of Iwo Jima for 37 days until he was wounded.

“It was the most dangerous job in the military,” Guido said. “He never wanted to talk about it.”

“I was scared, but when you’re scared it makes you aware of what is happening and your training takes over. We had good training. When I gave orders to my men to follow me, they followed me. They didn’t ask no questions. There was no UN debate,” he said.

“I was a good Marine,” he added.

Mary Guido said her brother never liked to talk about the war, but her husband just loves it so much. He was young. He reads about it all the time. The Guidos have been married for 20 years.

“The good Lord said not then, but later on in life,” Mary Guido said.

Maurice Vail (29th Mar-3-I) Fought in Bloody Battle for Okinawa

by Brian Albrecht, *The Plain Dealer*, September 29, 2016

While en route to Okinawa in 1945 to fight the last and bloodiest battle of the Pacific during World War II, Maurice "Moe" Vail's troopship passed the USS Franklin, a U.S. carrier crippled by a Japanese dive bomber attack.

More than 800 crewmen were killed aboard the Franklin, and smoke wafted from the ship as Vail and his fellow 6th Division Marines soberly regarded their future combat initiation.

In a voice choked with emotion, Vail, 90, of Bay Village, recalled, "It was still burning and you could still smell the bodies. We never saw anything like that before."

The Marines were cruising into their own corner of hell for the invasion of Okinawa, a battle that would ultimately cost 82,000 casualties on both sides.

Vail's regiment started the campaign with 3,512 Marines. Some 2,812 would be killed or wounded, including Vail, who was awarded two Purple Hearts.

Yet the young Marine from Little Falls, New York, wasn't nervous as he watched the pre-invasion bombardment of the island where the Japanese awaited in well-fortified caves, bunkers and underground passages.

"I wasn't really nervous throughout the whole thing," he said. "You kind of felt like, you know that you could get hit or wounded, or die at any time be-

cause there's just so much stuff flying around. After a while you just go on like natural.

"You figure if your time is up, it's up," he added. "If you're going to get hit, you're going to get hit. You got used to it."



Maurice Vail during basic training on Paris Island

The Japanese allowed the Marines and U.S. Army forces to land with little opposition, waiting for them to approach their inland fortifications.

At first, "we got a lot of sniper fire, but we didn't run into any big army or anything like that," Vail said. "Then we ran into a Japanese ambush, and we had 53 guys get either killed or wounded."

Two Marines disappeared during that ambush, and Vail was sent out with other men to search for the missing riflemen. He found one Marine who was wounded, hiding under a bush, holding a grenade with the arming pin pulled.

"He said if the Japanese found

him, he was just going to blow himself up," Vail recalled. "I put the pin back in, stuck the grenade in my pocket, and we carried him out."

Vail never knew what happened to the man until 30 years later, when they again met at a reunion and became good friends.

After securing their objectives in the northern part of the island, the Marines joined Army troops in heavy fighting to the south.

In time, the heat, noise and stench of death was overpowering, according to Vail. "Guys who would get killed, if you went out the next day to get them, they were half eaten by maggots," he said. "It was total disaster."

Vail was wounded twice. The first time he didn't even notice that a bit of shrapnel, or a bullet, had nicked his ear until a buddy pointed out that the side of his head was covered in blood.

The second time was at a small rise the Marines named "Sugar Loaf Hill." The elevation was heavily defended. (For this action and others on Okinawa, the division would be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.)

"We went up about 13 or 14 times up this one hill to try to take it from the Japanese, and you know, we finally succeeded, but we lost around 2,000 guys doing that," Vail said.

(continued on next page)

Striking Sixth

Marine Fought in Bloody Battle for Okinawa

(continued from previous page)

He remembered, "I was in a shell hole and I signaled the guys to come back, and the first guy to run back to the shell hole was shot in the stomach. So he was laying out there, so I went out to get him and pulled him back.

"I had him almost in the shell hole when I got hit in the leg. I got shot. There were five gunshot wounds. It was a machine gun. They all hit at the same time, almost. So two of us were in the shell hole, wounded, and the other couple of guys made it back OK."

Vail was evacuated to a hospital ship where a doctor told him not to get out of his bed, fitted with clean sheets, because his wounds were infected. As soon as the doctor left, Vail limped to a nearby shower.

"I was there (on Okinawa) like a month and a half without a shower," he said, then added with a grin, "You get pretty crummy."

Vail was out for the remaining duration of the war, a situation he greeted with thanks because his unit was slated for the invasion of Japan, until two atomic bombs were dropped, forcing Japan's surrender.

"They had us marked down for the invasion to invade Tokyo Bay, so we figured we'd last probably about 15 minutes, maybe, because the Japanese, they fought until you killed them or they killed you, one

way or the other," he said.

After the war he used the GI Bill to attend Rider University in New Jersey, where his prowess on the mound resulted in an offer to try out for the Philadelphia Athletics baseball team.

"At that time I had been broke my whole life," Vail said. He figured that if he accepted the offer, "I wouldn't have completed college, and your chances of making it (in baseball) are limited anyway, and I got tired of being broke. So I said ah, the heck with it. I'm just going to go to work and see what happens, and I've done pretty well."



Maurice "Moe" Vail, 2016

Vail entered a management trainee program for the John A. Roebling Steel Co., and came to Cleveland to work in its sales office here.

He and his wife, Mary, have been married 60 years, and have a daughter, a son and three grandchildren.

Yet the war lingered in his life.

Vail said his wife told him that sometimes while they slept, he'd take a swing at her.

"Or jumping around the bed, or something like that. So yeah, it has affected me that way," he said. "Every once in a while that still happens."

But the nightmares may be offset by the benefits of his time in the Marines.

"When I was in the service, I really enjoyed it," Vail said. "It made me, I think, more mature, to think about the future a little bit more."

Additionally, "I kind of learned that you're not alone in this world, that there are always people that you would help and they would help you," he added.

And his duty is still recognized to this day.

"I have more people come up to me today and say thank you for your service, it's amazing to me," Vail said. "It really surprises me."

It's a sense of pride and patriotism that Vail said could be found on Okinawa, where he never had any doubts as to the outcome of the battle or the war.

"I always thought we would win," he said. "But it was tough."

From the Historian's Corner

COASTWATCHERS, OR AS ADMIRAL HALSEY PUT IT...

When one thinks of the Rogers and Hammerstein movie *South Pacific*, what comes to mind? Probably the beautiful love story and the classic song "Some Enchanted Evening." However, the movie also tells the story of Lt. Cable and Emile being recruited as Coastwatchers. So who were the Coast Watchers?

About 400 individuals served as Coastwatchers during World War II. They included servicemen (like Lt. Cable), planters (like Emile), missionaries, downed pilots, and escaped prisoners of war. And they played a pivotal role in saving the Pacific. In 1945, Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, USN, said "The Coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the Pacific."¹

The idea of forming a group to watch coastal activity was devised by the Australians in 1919, and in 1922 the group was attached to the Australian Naval Intelligence Division. Originally designed to protect Australia, after war broke out in the Pacific in 1939 it was expanded to New Guinea and to the Solomon Islands. Lieutenant Commander Eric Feldt, based in Townsville, Queensland, led the Australian coastwatching organization during much of World War II. Coastwatchers became particularly important in monitoring Japanese activity in the roughly one thousand islands that make up the Solomon Islands.

Feldt code-named his organiza-

tion "Ferdinand," taking the name from *The Story of Ferdinand*, a popular children's book about a bull named Ferdinand. He explained this by saying, "Ferdinand...did not fight but sat under a tree and just smelled the flowers. It was meant as a reminder to Coastwatchers' that it was not their duty to fight and so draw attention to themselves, but to sit circumspectly and unobtrusively, gathering information. Of course, like their titular prototype, they could fight if they were stung."²



Coastwatchers Memorial Lighthouse in Madang, Papua New Guinea

New Zealand also formed a coastwatching program in the 1930s. From the outbreak of war, the New Zealand Naval Board controlled the coastwatching stations located around the New Zealand coastline and in the eastern Pacific. Stations were in place in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, Tokelau, Samoa, Fanning Island, the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Fiji. Having this organization already in place before World War II would be invaluable.

The Coastwatchers was a top secret organization involved in at least 182 secret missions, many unknown until recently. "In the vast Pacific Theater, vital intelligence on the movement of Japanese ships, planes and troops came from a band of civilians known as Coastwatchers."³ Organized under military intelligence, they remained behind enemy lines to spy, conduct guerilla operations, help the islanders and foreigners who were stuck there for the duration of the war, and rescue downed pilots or crews of lost ships. The work of the regular military was tremendously aided by the Coastwatchers, especially early in the war in the Solomons Campaign.³

For example, in 1942 two Coastwatchers on Bougainville Island radioed early warning of Japanese warship and air movement (citing the numbers, type, and speed of enemy units) to the US Navy. Coastwatcher reports allowed US forces to launch aircraft in time to engage the attackers. Knowing about the enemy movements gave the Allies a true advantage.

Interestingly, Coastwatchers were paid a bounty for each rescued Allied or captured Japanese pilot they delivered. Donald Kennedy of New Georgia was paid more than \$1 million



(continued on next page)

Striking Sixth

Admiral Halsey

(continued from previous page)

for delivering 20 Allied and 20 Japanese pilots in August 1943.

One of the most highly decorated Coastwatchers was Sergeant Major Sir Jacob C. Vouza, who retired from the local constabulary in 1941 and volunteered for Coastwatcher duty. He was captured and interrogated brutally, but escaped to make contact with US Marines, warning them of an impending Japanese attack. After recovering from his wounds, he continued to scout for the Marines. For his efforts, he was awarded the Silver Star and Legion of Merit by the United States, and later was knighted and became a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

Although being a Coastwatcher may have been heroic and even lucrative, it came with horrible risks! Those who were caught faced interrogation and captivity, perhaps even being "a guest of the emperor" for the rest of the war, which essentially meant slavery. When the Japanese overran the Gilbert Islands in 1942, seventeen New Zealand Coastwatchers were captured. They were imprisoned on Tarawa and executed by the Japanese in October 1942 following an American air raid.

Life on the Pacific islands was tough with extreme tropical weather and the accompanying diseases, remote living conditions, and always being on the run. At first they had to rely on gracious gifts from the locals. Later, submarines brought in supplies, and eventually

planes not only brought in provisions, but also took out those needing to be removed.

Probably the most long-reaching Coastwatcher mission was saving a president! Lt. JG John F. Kennedy and ten fellow crew members were shipwrecked when the boat PT-109 was sunk. An Australian Coastwatcher, Sub-Lt Arthur Reginald Evans, observed the explosion of PT-109 when it was rammed by a Japanese destroyer. Despite US Navy crews' giving up the downed crew as a complete loss, Evans dispatched Solomon Islander scouts Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana in a dugout canoe to search for survivors. After searching for five days, they found the men. Lacking paper, Kennedy scratched a message on a coconut describing the plight and position of his crew. Gasa and Kumana then paddled 38 miles through Japanese-held waters, at great personal risk, to deliver the message to Evans, who radioed the news to Kennedy's squadron commander. The future president was rescued, and 20 years later Evans was invited to the White House to meet then President Kennedy.

As Halsey commented, the Coastwatchers helped the Allies



Memorial to New Zealand Coastwatchers executed by the Japanese on Tarawa

win the war. These individuals, although not in uniform, created an environment that made the job of the Sixth Marine Division and other units easier. Some stories are well known; others not so much.

Whether Code Talkers, Coastwatchers or guerillas, it is now our job to seek out their stories and never forget what they did.

~Laura H. Lacey

Footnotes

¹ <http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/wwii/coast-watchers-in-the-solomons/>

² <http://www.gunplot.net/coastwatchers/coastwatchers.html>

³ http://olive-drab.com/od_history_ww2_stories_1942coastwatchers.php

Other Sources

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coastwatchers>

<http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/coastwatcher/>

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More Reading on this Topic

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Wikimedia Commons has media related to Coastwatchers.

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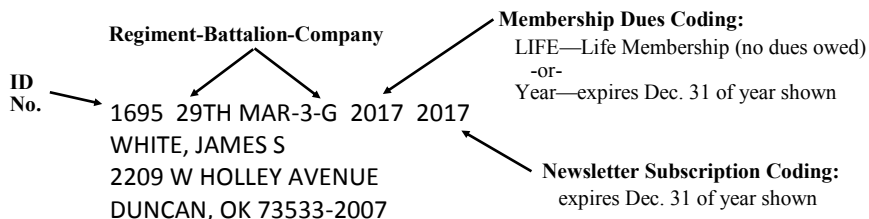
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TAPS

All of us in the Sixth Marine Division Association extend our sympathy to the family and friends of those listed below. May they rest in peace.

Baer, Marvin	22 nd Mar-3-I	01/08/1985
Benedetti, Alio J. (Al)	22 nd Mar-3-HQ	05/22/2017
Brownfield, Joe Alex	6 th Marine Division	03/29/2017
Bunting, Gerald (Jeff)	6 th Tank Bn-A	04/01/2017
Coughlin, Thomas	6 th Marine Division	02/27/2013
Ehrlinger, Andrew	15 th Mar-3-G	05/00/2017
Gromley, Marvin (Marty)	6 th Pioneer Bn-C	05/25/2017
Hart, Mildred M.	Widow of Robert Hart	03/02/2017
Holtzapple, Stanley N.	29 th Mar-2-F	12/23/2016
Huppert, James D.	29 th Mar-1-B	06/00/2008
Kirby, John	4 th Marines-3-K	03/08/2017
Lonergan, Thomas F.	6 th Marine Division	03/17/2013
Rinn, Alfred J.	22 nd Marines	04/16/2017
Sbalcio, Salvatore J.	6 th Joint Assault Signal Co.	09/25/1999
Swierzowski, Edmond S.	6 th Marine Division	06/11/2017
Ukrop, Sam	22 nd Mar-1-B	04/02/2017

right: The always beautifully dressed Emily & Sam Ukrop at the 2013 reunion in Quantico. We feel sure Sam is the best dressed guard at the gates of heaven! RIP, Marine.



Reporting Deaths

Deaths should be reported ASAP to:

Flo Dornan, Membership Manager
(817) 275-1552
sxthmardiv@sbcglobal.net

AND

Harry McKnight, Chaplain
(614) 866-3456
harrym1677@aol.com

Marty Gromley -- Undoubtedly Driving to the Pearly Gates

For the last few years, Marvin "Marty" Gromley was the oldest Marine at our reunions. At the 2013 reunion in Quantico, he was given a special gift (see picture at right) for being the oldest Marine in attendance. He was just a few days from celebrating his 95th birthday! But here's the amazing part: After the reunion, he drove by himself to Florida to visit his daughter. I remember him telling everyone, "She's planning a surprise 95th birthday party for me. She doesn't know that I know."

I was shocked -- and a little alarmed -- at the thought of him driving so far (plus all the way back to his home in PA) at age



95. But it was no big deal to Marty. He was in fantastic shape, and as you can see by the picture, he looked great too. We all thought he would live forever.

So, odd as it may sound, it was a shock to learn he passed away.

There will be a lot of tears when Marty's name is read at the Memorial Service in Phoenix. He was perhaps the sweetest man any of us ever met. He was unfailingly kind, friendly, and delighted to be with everyone. He always had a smile in his heart. He never failed to mention how happy he was to be alive and how grateful he was for everything he had been given in life.

Marty, thank you for enriching our lives. You were a true gentleman, and we will never forget you.

Al Benedetti: Dancer, Traveler, Husband, Father, Marine

Al was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1922, the youngest of seven children and son of Italian immigrants. At the age of nine, his father opened a tailor /dry cleaning shop, delivering the dry cleaning on a bicycle. His mother died when he was only 16 years old, and his father died in 1943 while he was fighting in the South Pacific.



Al Benedetti in World War II and in 2013



Al was an excellent athlete, avid roller skater, and dancer. In 1941, he graduated from Cleveland Heights

High and went to work in a machine shop briefly before enlisting in the Marines during World War II. After six weeks in boot camp, he was shipped out to the South Pacific and was posted to Pango Pango, Eniwetok, Kwajalein, Guadalcanal, Guam, and the Marshall Islands. He was in the message center, radio and a mortar platoon. In 1946 he was discharged and returned to Cleveland where he found work in another machine shop.

But Al was young and restless, and in 1947 he moved to Los Angeles to join his brother and sisters. For three years he corresponded with his future wife, Angela. They were married in 1950 and drove back to California, taking in the New Orleans' Mardi Gras along the way. Al worked for Pacific Bell and was co-owner of a hot dog stand where he and Angela served meatball sandwiches to Hollywood notables!

In 1952 they decided to move back to Cleveland. Al took the firemen's exam and was one of five men hired to start a full time Fire Department in South Euclid. He served for 23 years and ran a wall washing/painting business on his off days. He and Angela built the house they lived in for the their entire lives. He was married to Angela for 65 years until her death in 2015. They had four children and three grandchildren.

Al loved to travel and took his family on vacations all over the country. After he retired in 1975, he and Angela traveled extensively, taking trips to Europe and beyond. Al volunteered at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. He became an active member in the Knights of Columbus Gilmour Council #310, the Indian Hills Amateur Radio Club, and the American Legion Post 775. He loved music, especially Big Band and Italian American singers. He and Angela loved ballroom dancing and traveled to different cities each weekend to dance with like-minded friends. He spoke to people around the world with his ham radio after having made his first razor blade crystal set while serving in the South Pacific. He was a superb handyman and could talk to anyone.



Anita Benedetti, Al Benedetti, Melinda Benedetti, Angela Benedetti, Tiffany Woodhouse Leggett, and Lisa Benedetti at the National Museum of the Marine Corps during the 2014 Sixth Marine Division Reunion

Al reconnected with his Marine buddies when he joined the Sixth Marine Division Association and started attending their annual reunions. In 2011, the Benedetti family hosted a wonderful, fun-filled reunion, with daughters Anita, Melinda and Lisa doing the heavy lifting.

Many thanks to Al and the entire family for all their contributions to the Association and for exemplifying a loving and caring family.

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Summer 2017

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