

STRIKING

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## Searching for Pfc. John Quinn

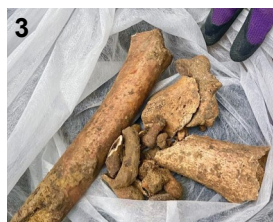
by Carroll McGowan

In the battle for Okinawa, the Japanese concealed themselves in underground tunnels and caves dug deep into the terrain. Thousands of Japanese soldiers died in those caves when American forces attacked. Sadly, the caves also became the final resting place for hundreds of American Marines. One of these was Pfc. John B. Quinn Jr.

The oldest of seven children, John grew up in Brooklyn, NY. He was called "Pop Quinn" because he was always helping people. Earnings from his job helped to support the family. That job made John eligible for a deferment, but he wanted to be a Marine and he wanted to fight. He finally got his chance as a replacement with the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Sixth Marine Division in June 1945.

A week after the battle ended, a few Marines including John entered a cave that had supposedly been cleared. They were hoping to find Japanese weapons and gear. Instead, they were ambushed by Japanese soldiers. Pvt John Hartman pulled one wounded Marine out and rushed back in to get John. Eyewitnesses heard gun shots. Then...silence. With the aid of an interpreter, the Marines tried to convince the Japanese soldiers to come out and surrender. When they refused, the Marines sealed the cave with explosives, and it became a tomb. John was just 19.

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- 1) volunteers search for John Quinn's remains in Okinawa cave
- 2) Pfc. John Quinn
- 3) bones found in cave

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# Searching for Pfc. John Quinn

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In 1951, investigators with the American Graves Registration Service searched the site with the aim of bringing the Marines' remains home. Their search yielded 19 sets of skeletal remains, but they were all Japanese. Pfc. John B. Quinn Jr. was declared non-recoverable. Subsequent searches by Japanese investigators in 1977 yielded the remains of 100 additional Japanese soldiers, but still no Americans.



John Quinn's dog tag

Fifteen years later, something else was recovered – a dog tag bearing the name John B. Quinn Jr. It had surfaced near the cave where John met his end and found its way to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Kerry J. Quinn. His sergeant major delivered it to him, thinking John might be a relation of his. He was not, but Kerry held onto the dog tag hoping that someday he could find out who it belonged to. That someday was to come 18 years later.

In the meantime, John Quinn's nephew, Larry Paleno, an electrician from Kings Park, NY, began researching his uncle in 2006 after watching the film *Saving Private Ryan*. He intensified his efforts after another uncle, Gerald Quinn (John's brother and fellow Marine), arranged a memorial Mass for John a year later. Searching the internet, Larry stumbled upon our Sixth Marine Division website and reached out to Bill Pierce (29<sup>th</sup> Mar-Weapons), who was the Public Relations Officer at the time. Bill helped Larry request John's service record and

casualty file from the National Archives. In those files were the coordinates for the cave on Okinawa. With the help of Chris Majewski, a Marine Corps civilian tour guide on Okinawa, they were able to narrow the search area.

In 2011, Kerry Quinn started thinking seriously about the dog tag he got in Okinawa. He googled the name John B. Quinn Jr. and came across our Sixth Marine Division website. Larry had posted on the Forum requesting information about his uncle John. Kerry called Larry to tell him he had John's dog tag. "It really shocked us," said Larry. "I can't fathom how his dog tag survived." Several members of the family, including Larry, John's brother Gerald, and John's sister Audrey Donzio, met Kerry in Washington DC to thank him for returning John's dog tag to the family.

Several years went by and one day on the subway, Larry googled John Quinn. He was shocked to discover someone else was searching for his uncle.

KUENTAI-USA is a non-profit organization dedicated to retrieving American soldiers who died on the battlefields in the Pacific theater. KUENTAI's founder Usan Kurata and secretary general Yukari Akatsuka were perplexed that neither John Quinn nor John Hartman's remains had been found. They were determined to do more. After securing the necessary permissions and recruiting volunteers, they began digging.

Once he discovered KUENTAI-USA was searching for his uncle, Larry reached out to Yukari and began planning a trip to Okinawa. Then the pandemic intervened.

The mission resumed in 2022 with more than 100 volunteers, including U.S. service members from nearby bases and members of the Japan Self-Defense Force. They recovered ten bags of wartime artifacts and two bags of human remains in April. The effort accelerated in July and resulted in the discovery of teeth, American coins, vials of morphine, watches, bullets, and a grenade. On Sep-

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# Searching for Pfc. John Quinn

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tember 5, they were able to clear a giant rock that had caved in over the years. That's when someone discovered an American-made rubber boot sole. Volunteers began digging near the sole and discovered another one of John Quinn's dog tags, a Marine Corps ring, a belt buckle, and a Marine Corps button, along with more teeth and bones. They paused digging, cordoned off the area, and called Larry to tell him about their discoveries, which they believed included his uncle's remains. Larry dropped everything to fly to Okinawa, and he arrived at the site on September 10. He crawled through the cave entrance and was led to the site where the artifacts were found. John's siblings, Gerald and Audrey, were brought in via video call so they could be there with Larry. Japanese television reporters were on the scene as well. It was an emotional moment for Larry. "Very surreal. Wow," he said with tears in his eyes. "All these volunteers; it's unbelievable, all the work they've done in that cave to find him."

After an American military chaplain blessed the remains, Larry and representatives of KUENTAI-USA delivered them to the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial in Mabuni. Larry flew home with the dog tag, ring and coin wrapped in a handkerchief in a small wooden box.

Are the remains that were found that of John Quinn? Only DNA testing can tell for sure, but there is strong circumstantial evidence. Besides the dog tag, there is a Marine Corps ring that could be John's boot camp graduation ring. Also, a 1926 U.S. Liberty quarter was found in the cave. That was the year John Quinn was born, and his parents had given him a 1926 quarter to carry as a good luck charm. It didn't bring luck to John, but it did bring hope to his family that they will finally be able to bring him home.

**Editor's Note:** Larry Paleno requested that I express his and his family's immense gratitude to Bill Pierce and all the members of the Association for their help in supplying him with vital information and support.



John Quinn's nephew, Larry Paleno, in Okinawa cave

## Sources:

"Kings Park Man Goes to Japan in Search of WWII Marine Uncle's Remains" by Nicolas Spangler, *Newsday*, October 19, 2022.

"'That's Him': Nephew of WWII Marine Casualty Witnesses Remains Recovery on Okinawa" by Matthew M. Burke, *Stars and Stripes*, September 14, 2022.

"It's Our Job to Find Them" by Matthew M. Burke, *Stars and Stripes*, July 18, 2022.

"The Cave: Bringing Pfc. John Quinn Home" by Charlie Maib, *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, June 23, 2022.

"Dog Tags Make it Home After 66 Years" by Lance Cpl. Chelsea Anderson, *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, May 19, 2012.



Marine Corps ring found in cave

# A Cloud of Dust on Flat Top Hill

by Jim White (29th Mar-3-G)

Memories of long ago happenings are often stronger than things that took place last week. Some incidents of June 7, 1945 are tattooed into my memory. On that date, the Third Platoon of G-3-29 (a Marine rifle company) took a hill on Oroku Peninsula, located south of the city of Naha on the island of Okinawa. The platoon encountered machine gun fire from some distance away but dug in on the hill with no one being hit.

G-3-29 had landed on Okinawa on April 1, 1945. On that date, the Third Platoon of G Company had 43 Marines and (possibly as many as) two Navy Medical Corpsmen. By June 7, after receiving replacements the day before, the platoon had just 15 Marines and one Navy Corpsman.

The platoon leader on June 7, 1945 was Gunnery Sergeant John Quattrone. (Gunnery sergeants are known as “Gunny” in the Marine Corps.) Gunny Quattrone was the seventh platoon leader of the Third Platoon since April 1 and the fourth in the three days since the platoon landed behind the Japanese lines on Oroku Peninsula on June 4. On June 9, Gunny Quattrone was wounded within a minute after I was hit by a rifle bullet, most likely by the same Japanese rifleman.

Also with the platoon was a lieutenant from the 15<sup>th</sup> Marines, which was the artillery regiment for the Sixth Marine Division. The lieutenant was a Forward Observer, usually called an “FO.” His function was to spot

for possible artillery targets and call in corrections to put the shells on target. He was equipped with a “walky-talky” radio to communicate with the Marines firing the artillery.

Using his binoculars, the FO scanned the area surrounding our hill. Off to our left, on the Japanese side of the front lines, the FO spotted three Japanese soldiers lying almost side by side on a flat-topped hill about the same height as the hill we had taken. The flat-topped hill became known to us as “Flat Top.” According to the FO’s map, the Japanese were about 600 yards from our hill. They might have been the Japanese equivalent of Forward Observers, or they might have been officers. Regardless, eliminating them would undoubtedly save Marine lives.



We knew that if the FO called for a fire mission and the first artillery shells missed, the three Japanese would be long gone from Flat Top.

We had no machine guns, but we did have Browning Automatic Rifles. Those weapons, familiarly called BARs, weighed about 20 pounds and were able to shoot full power .30 Caliber ammuni-

tion at a slow rate of automatic fire, like a slow machine gun.

The gunny was armed with a carbine, as was I. My normal weapon was an M1 rifle. Two days before, I had been hit in the first joint of my right thumb by a shell fragment from a Japanese 47 MM gun. A Corpsman bandaged my thumb. Also wounded were the platoon leader, Lieutenant McNulty, and the three Marines behind me. McNulty had been hit in the left forearm, and his left hand was partially paralyzed. Before he was evacuated, I bummed his carbine off of him.

One of my functions in the platoon was as a platoon runner. Walky-talky radios were delicate, if not fragile. They used vacuum tube technology and were easily damaged by strong knocks and by becoming wet, occurrences which were common in front line platoons. They also ate batteries. So instead, Sound Power telephones were used for communication with front line units, and they provided good service. However, before phone wires could be strung to recently taken positions, runners were used for carrying messages.

The platoon would take an objective, usually a hill. Then, if needed or if possible, a runner — usually me — was sent back. I normally carried my rifle with my right hand at the balance point. With my injured right thumb, it was easier to handle a carbine, which was a light rifle that fired a pistol cartridge.

*(continued on next page)*

# A Cloud of Dust on Flat Top Hill

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The Gunny and I borrowed BARs. One reason why the men armed with the BARs did not use them was that they were replacements who had not been with the platoon very long. Also, the Gunny was the best rifle shot in G Company. Modesty deters me from discussing my own ability to shoot rifles.



The rear sights of the BARs were set for about 200 yards. The Gunny and I zeroed the BARs for the 600-yard distance to the three Japanese. The BARs had no bipods. The Gunny and I each used a prone position with a loop sling, like on a rifle range. We fired at objects on the front of the flat-topped hill, out of sight of the three Japanese but at about the same distance away. At what we were shooting, I don't recall — rocks, clods, brown spots.

The FO spotted for us with his binoculars. I made two sight adjustments. My second burst was dead on point of aim. I was zeroed, and I was sure that the Gunny was also. At that point in time, I believed that Marine gunnery sergeants could walk on water. The three Japanese were too far away for us to see them, but there were still some bushes

on the top of Flat Top. The FO told us how to aim with respect to one of the bushes.

We got in position. The FO made sure we were ready, then said something like, "Shoot." I remember firing three bursts. We raised a cloud of dust on top of Flat Top. The FO said to stop firing. He could see the body of one Japanese still laying there.

Fifty years later, almost to the day, I was with Don Honis at a Sixth Marine Division reunion in Orlando, Florida. Don and I had been in Tsingtao, China after the war and had walked guard posts together several times. We had come back to the United States from China on the same ship around the first of August in 1946. We pitched a liberty together in San Diego.

While sitting at a table with Don at the reunion, he mentioned Flat Top. My ears perked up. I thought that only members of my Third Platoon had known the hill by that name. I asked Don if he had been on Flat Top, and he said his Company, I-3-29, had taken that hill. I asked him if he had seen a dead Japanese on top of the hill. Don said there were three dead Japanese on the top of Flat Top.

The Gunny and I had killed all three — from a distance of about 600 yards.

Don had retrieved a canteen from one of the dead Japanese, and he still had it. I was able to see and hold that canteen in September 2008 at the Sixth Marine Division reunion in Oklahoma City.

Don had been wounded in the left leg by a bullet from a Nam-bu machine gun on May, 16, 1945. He must have been back with I Company as early as June 8. His bullet wound was still bandaged and not completely healed. The Marine Corps was a tough outfit in those days.

I think it still is.



Jim White in 2015

## Editors Note:

We asked Jim where he learned to fire a rifle so well. He told us:

"Each member of my high school ROTC unit was required to qualify with a rifle once each semester. In the basement of the school was a 50-foot, 10 firing point rifle range. Along one wall were racks with .22 caliber target rifles. These were the early Model 52 Winchester, furnished by the Army.

The same rifles were used by a junior rifle club to which I belonged. We shot for NRA awards. The range officer/instructor was a former Army infantryman who had fought in France in WWI."



# VMI Presents the General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Sixth Marine Division Awards and Scholarship to Three Praiseworthy Cadets

by Sallie Garrett Shepherd

In honor of Commanding General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., the Sixth Marine Division Association established a scholarship and two awards at his alma mater, the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in 1989. General Shepherd graduated from VMI in 1917.

The scholarship and awards are made to cadets who are pursuing a Marine Corps commission through the Naval ROTC program (NROTC).

Congratulations to this year's winners!

## Scholarship Recipient

The Sixth Marine Division's 2021-22 financial scholarship (\$3,000) was awarded to **Derek Shockey '22**, an International Studies major from Lovettsville, VA. Notably, Cadet Shockey also received the Chesty Puller Award, First Marine Division that is given to the commissioning 2nd Class Marine Option who exhibits the highest qualities of leadership that exemplify the VMI Spirit and those espoused by LTG Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, Class of 1921. Upon graduation, Cadet Shockey commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in USMC, carrying on a family legacy. (His uncle and brother

were also in the USMC.) In October 2022, he began Basic School in Quantico, VA.



Derek Shockey (right) taking the Oath of Office. On the left is his older brother, Dylan Shockey, who was his first salute. The Commissioning Officer is 1st LT. Virts (center), a long-time family friend.

## Award Recipients

The General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Sixth Marine Division Awards were presented to **Kasey G. Meredith '22** and **Nathan E. Martin '22**, the top two Marine 1<sup>st</sup> Class cadets in the NROTC program at VMI.

The Association should take notable pride that Kasey Meredith was recognized by her peers as VMI's First Captain and first female Regimental Commander (RCO), the highest ranking position a cadet can earn at VMI. Cadet Meredith wanted to enlist

in the U.S. Marine Corps after high school, but her mother, a Navy veteran, asked her to delay her service for a few years and obtain a college degree. Kasey did just that at VMI, majoring in International Studies.

Nathan E. Martin, from Culpepper, VA, graduated with a degree in Biology. Lt. Shockey described Lt. Martin thus, "I think very highly of Nathan, and I believe the audience of the Sixth Marine Division newsletter should know about the resounding character of Nathan as he begins his

journey as a USMC 2nd LT. During his time at OCS in the summer of 2021, Nathan exhibited the virtuous qualities of leadership that every Marine officer should embody. Because of his outstanding performance at OCS, Nathan was recognized as the Honor Grad and was awarded the Commandants Cup."

The General Shepherd award consists of a footlocker with several books selected by NROTC, consistent with the original

*(continued on next page)*

# VMI Awards and Scholarship

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Kasey Meredith (right) with her friend Alexandra Sassaman (left) in front of the General Shepherd Memorial at VMI.

intention of the fund to assist the cadets with starting their own library. To personalize the history of the Sixth Division Marines, I donated copies of Laura Homan Lacey's *Stay off the Skyline: The Sixth Marine Division on Okinawa – An Oral History* for inclusion in this year's footlockers.

These three stellar VMI cadets were recognized at the annual Institute Awards ceremony, which was held on May 15, 2022. (<https://www.vmi.edu/cadet-life/events-and-traditions/graduation/institute-awards/>)

## Endowment Update: Keeping the Legacy of the Striking Sixth Going at VMI

The General Shepherd scholarship and awards were initially funded by an endowment that was supplemented for years by proceeds from the Last Man Bottle auction at the Association's annual reunions. (See story on [www.sixthmarine-division.com](http://www.sixthmarine-division.com), under "6<sup>th</sup> Div Marines" then "Division News & Updates.")

The current balance of the endowment is roughly \$30,000. This has generally been sufficient to fund the two annual awards plus a modest scholar-

ship, but the balance fluctuates and additional funding is needed to insure the awards continue.

To honor ALL members of the Sixth Marine Division and their families, I personally make annual donations to VMI, designated to the General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Fund.

If you would like to make a donation to this fund in memory of your loved ones' service in the Sixth Marine Division, you can do so online. You will find the link to the donation page on the Sixth Marine Division website: [www.sixthmarine-division.com](http://www.sixthmarine-division.com). Click on "More" in the red banner, then click on "Links to More Info," then click on "VMI Donations" in the left column under Sixth Marine Division. If you prefer to mail a check to VMI, be sure to include a note saying the donation is for the General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Sixth Marine Division Fund.



Nathan Martin '22 (right) gives his first salute after commissioning into the Marine Corps. Source: Kelly Nye, [vmi.edu](http://vmi.edu)



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### Striking Sixth Newsletter

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**Send in your newsletter dues  
to Patty Payne by year end  
to enjoy another year  
of the Striking Sixth!**

**Letters to the editor, materials for publication, suggestions, and feedback can be sent to:**  
Carroll McGowan, chm1423@aol.com, 1423 Pueblo Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15228, (412) 303-2906



## Chaplain's Report



As I watched the OSU vs Iowa football game, I was thinking of Buss Bissinger's new book, *The Mosquito Bowl*. I

wanted to go to his book tour in Cleveland last month but didn't make it. I did purchase three books, one for each of our two sons and one for myself. I am just getting started on reading it, and I am amazed by the hundreds of sources Buzz used in researching the book. No wonder he is a best selling author. The sons and daughters and other family members of our Sixth Division Marines can learn a lot about what their heroes experienced during the war, especially if their Marine had a difficult time sharing his story or if their Marine did not come home.

The "Mosquito Bowl" game also made me think of the "Rice Bowl" football game I played in when some of us were in China after the Japanese surrender to make sure the Japs were out of China. The "Rice Bowl" was

played on 10 November 1945 in Tsingtao, China and featured the 22nd vs. the 29th Marines. The final score of the game was 13 - 7 with the 29th the winner.

Ever since Buzz said he was going to write about "The Mosquito Bowl," I have wondered if some of the players from that game also played in the "Rice Bowl." Many of the Marines who were in that game were college football players or became college and professional football players or coaches. If any of you who are reading this know that your Marine played in the "Rice Bowl" football game, I would love to hear from you. I only had contact with one team member after the war — Jim Reeder, who was from Columbus. We played against each other in high school.

Pray for the United States of America to keep our freedoms and to stay strong among all the problems of the world today.

Your humble Chaplain,  
Harry McKnight

## Message from the President



We have no message from Connie for this issue as she is recuperating from major back surgery. We are happy to report that Connie is vertical and straighter than she has been in

years. After just one week at home, she was able to walk without a walker. As you might expect, she is very happy to have this surgery behind her!

Good luck to you, Connie! We wish you a speedy recovery!

## Editor's Note



As I write this note, I am staring out the window at the most brilliant orangey-red tree you can imagine.

We've been having a beautiful fall in Pittsburgh this year.

Fall has always been my favorite season, and October is my favorite month. It has the prettiest leaves, Halloween, and my birthday. (Yes I still celebrate it!) But November has a lot to recommend it too. There's the Marine Corps Birthday, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and my husband Bob's birthday. That's a pretty good lineup, wouldn't you say?

One quick note — the Board of Directors met in September, and I am happy to report, the Association is in good financial health. (See the summary of the meeting on page 13.) There isn't a lot for us to do any more, but one of our priorities is to make sure our funds last long enough to publish this newsletter for the Sixth Division Marines who want to read it. Which is a good segue into this reminder — Please send in your newsletter dues by year end if you want to continue receiving the Striking Sixth next year. (See the preceding page for how to do this.)

Wishing you a happy Marine Corps Birthday, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving! And Happy Birthday to Bob!

~Carroll McGowan

## Raymond J. Kelly Jr.

My Dad, Raymond J. Kelly Jr., was in the 6th Marine Division. He was in Naha, Okinawa where he was wounded and awarded three purple hearts. I would love to know if anyone might recall hearing his name.

Dad passed away 18 years ago after a courageous battle with Parkinson's. He was always a Marine at heart. I have often wondered if the shrapnel that stayed in his body contributed to his illness. He was 100% disabled/service connected. .

Beginning in the 1970s, he and his friend and fellow Veteran, Vinny Ryan, worked to help other Veterans receive their benefits. I was always proud of my Dad for his efforts in helping others. Theirs was a great generation of strength, courage and honor that truly set the tone for our country at that time.

I have a beautiful memory box with his medals and picture. [See pictures at top right.] I was blessed to have him as my Dad.

Sincerely,  
Arlene Kelly  
leney716@icloud.com  
203-521-6677



## Warren Hood (29th Mar-3-I)

My grandfather was Pvt Warren Hood, 29th Mar-3-I. He was a full-blooded Shawnee Indian. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who knew him.

Ross Hood  
rosshood@verizon.net  
817-658-4006



Raymond J. Kelly Jr.



Arlene Kelly's memory box

## Cornelius "Red" Veldhuis (4th Mar-2-G)

The Marine mentioned in the clipping below is my father, Cornelius "Red" Veldhuis. He was in the Sixth Marine Division and was wounded at Okinawa. He was 19 years of age at the time and was listed as MIA for several months. He was hit by hand grenade shrapnel, and more than 200 pieces remained in his body.

I have a shell necklace Dad made when hospitalized in the Philippines, as well as a small wooden plaque with the Sixth

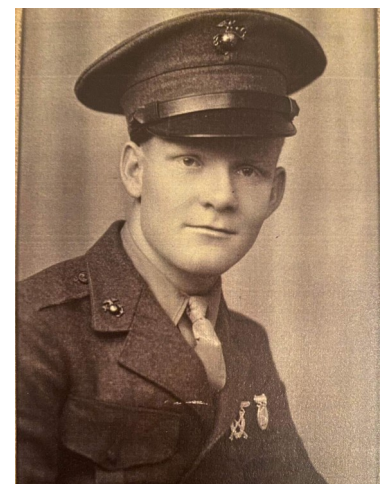
Marine Division insignia that he painted as part of his therapy to regain the use of his arm.

Dad went on to college and excelled in sports, despite his injuries. He was even scouted by Major League Baseball. He obtained his degree in education and became a teacher, principal and school superintendent. He passed away September 16, 1996.

Suzanne Henley

In a letter written by his buddy, word has been received by Mr. and Mrs. Gerben Veldhuis that their son Cornelius "Red" Veldhuis of the U. S. Marines has been wounded in the right arm and side. This injury made it impossible for him to write. The letter states that he was on a hospital ship coming this way for hospitalization.

Newspaper notice from 1945



Cornelius "Red" Veldhuis



# MAIL CALL



## Harry Stanifer (6th Eng Bn-C)

For the last six years, I have been in communication with Harry Stanifer, Corporal, 6th Engineers/6th Marine Division in China. We have been communicating via phone and mail since he lived in Hartwell, GA. Recently he moved to Pennsylvania at the bequest of his son who wanted him to be closer while he waits to be promoted to Sergeant for being the last WWII Vet. I am kidding here, but Harry has a subtle and good sense of humor.

My wife and I recently visited Harry at his new home in PA. My heart was touched to meet this Marine who still radiates Marine Corps presence and pride. It was emotional for me, but since we are both Marines

we weren't authorized to have emotions. We spent wonderful time with him.

Harry is sharp, knowledgeable, and interesting in any conversation. Mostly I just keep asking him questions, which he never fails to answer even while complaining about his memory, which is real good.

I am attaching a photo of Harry and myself.

The 2nd Marine Division is my parent Division, to whom I am always faithful. However, I became involved with researching some 6th Division Marines and have become attached to you guys, partly due to my connection with Harry Stanifer.

Garent Gunther, USMC 68-70



Garent Gunther and Harry Stanifer

## Sixth Marine Division Grave Markets Are Available

If you would like a grave marker for the headstone of a Sixth Division Marine, please contact Bob McGowan and he will send you one. He can be reached at 412-580-7473 or [chmcg11@aol.com](mailto:chmcg11@aol.com).

Bob reports there are approximately ten large brass markers and twenty small square markers remaining.



Fall 2022

**We Wish a  
Very Happy Birthday  
to Marvin Skeath!  
He turned 101  
on October 20!**



## Donations - Thank You!

### Newsletter Fund

Mrs. Lee Roy Wainwright in memory of Lee Roy Wainwright (4th Mar-3-G)

### General Operating Fund

Jack R. Nuckols



## Sixth Marine Division Association

Checking account balance  
@ 10/22/22 = \$13,067



# A Fallen and Forgotten Doughboy's Legacy

by M.L. Cavanaugh, *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 2018

The closest I came to getting killed in Iraq was during the summer of 2005. I spotted an enemy fighter firing a rocket-propelled grenade right at my Humvee. Somehow he missed, but for a moment I was sure I wasn't going home.

Whenever something like that happened, afterwards came a mental flash. In my mind's eye, I'd see my funeral or look down on my corpse. Soldiers think about mortality more than most. I still do. We also think—especially over Memorial Day weekend—about those who died on other battlefields.

Last year I found myself wondering about a statue of a World War I “doughboy” in Manitou Springs, CO, where I now live. I found no marker or plaque, only questions. Who was he? Where did he fight?

Anonymous sacrifice, I worried, was essentially forgotten sacrifice. If Americans had forgotten this doughboy, what chance does a soldier today—especially one who dies on an obscure battlefield like Niger—have to be remembered?

I started digging into records of the local historical society, old newspapers, genealogy databases. Eventually I discovered that the statue honors Marine Pvt. George Eber Duclo, born in 1893. Eber, as he was known,

was an only child who moved to Manitou Springs at age 4. He was the second-best hitter on his high-school baseball team. He won a box of cigars in a speed-walking contest.

Eber enlisted in the Marine Corps four months before the U.S. declared war in April 1917, which meant he was among the



Statue of Pvt. Eber Duclo — “Over the Top to Victory” — Manitou Springs, CO

first to go “over there.” He arrived in France that summer, trained for several months, and saw combat in 1918.

The Marines were so persistent that the Germans called them “Devil Dogs.” This disciplined spirit was probably with Eber when he was killed on June 15, 1918, likely as he attacked one of the last enemy machine-gun positions at Belleau Wood, France. A boy from Manitou Springs, known for its water, drew his last breath in a place named by joining the French

words “belle” and “eau,” meaning “good water.”

Eber was buried on the battlefield, but the government brought him home on Sept. 8, 1921. The funeral was “one of the largest ever held in Manitou,” according to a news report. The local American Legion post, named in Eber's honor, held dances and took donations to fund the 7-foot bronze statue—“Over the Top to Victory”—in his honor. They placed it on a 20-ton boulder of native granite in the town's Memorial Park. It rained at the dedication, on Memorial Day 1924.

Eber's parents thenceforth listed two addresses: the house where they actually lived, and Memorial Park, where their only son's memory lived on. Today the park is a place where artists create, people meet, and children play. In 2007, a woman writing in the local newspaper called it a place of “peace.”

I've learned that a soldier's sacrifice doesn't have to be known. Eber gave his life for something greater than himself. All Americans can appreciate this. When you need some solace from the rain or sun, you don't require a plaque to feel grateful for the tree or statue you sit beneath. One hundred years after his death, Eber's life and sacrifice still matter. I'm glad I found him.

*Maj. Cavanaugh is a nonresident fellow with the Modern War Institute at West Point.*



# 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.**

Charles E. Abernathy	29th Mar-2-F	07/28/06
William V. Bock	29th Mar-2-D	10/06/22
William L. Groves	4th Mar-1-C	07/02/20
Raymond J. Kelly Jr.	6th Marine Division	06/25/04
Harry Kizirian	22nd Mar-2-E	06/13/02
George J. McAfee Jr.	6th Jasco	08/24/22
Bryant Tripp	29th Mar-1-HQ	03/06/11
Cornelius "Red" Veldhuis	4th Mar-2-G	09/16/96
Edward Lee Roy Wainwright	4th Mar-3-G	12/09/09
Eugene F. Wilson	29th Mar-1-C	11/2016
Clyde H. Winn	4th Mar-2-G	02/15/13
James W. Wood	4th Mar-3-I	03/22/16
Jack C. Woodard	29th Mar-HQ	01/2005
John M. Woods	22nd Mar-3-M	04/26/13
Jay Wright	4th Mar-H&S	06/08/16
James Xindaris	CBMU515/USN	01/11/07
John M. Yaskevich	15th Mar-3	09/19/11
Richard A. Yokom	29th Mar-3-H	01/03/17
Vincent P. Youdis	3rd Amphib Corps	09/19/11
John Yunaites	22nd Mar-Wpns	08/02/03
Joseph S. Zaorski	6th Recon Co-HQ	02/07/22
John J. Zapf	22nd Mar-3-G	10/18/17
Gabriel J. Zeffiro	29th Mar-3-H	01/04/09

## Reporting Deaths

**Please report deaths  
as soon as possible to:**

**Patty Payne**  
Membership Chair  
(410) 978-2979  
pjpayne1984@verizon.net

**AND**

**Harry McKnight**  
Chaplain  
(614) 866-3456  
barbandht6321@aol.com

## Board of Directors Meet in September

With no reunions on the horizon, we can no longer hold annual meetings of the Association. However, the Board of Directors will meet annually, and they met via conference call in September. Following is a summary of the meeting:

Although we are no longer taking new members, Patty Payne will continue to maintain membership records. She and Watson Crumbie will re-search the Marines that remain on our membership roster in an effort to identify and remove deceased Marines from the roster and website.

We reviewed our bank balance and determined that we have enough money to continue the newsletter for at least five years. We will continue to

produce the newsletter as long as there are Marines subscribing to it.

When the newsletter stops publication, the website will be the main vehicle to communicate and preserve the memory of the Sixth Marine Division. The cost to maintain the website is fairly low. When we run out of funds we will explore new avenues for funding it. In the meantime, Connie Houseweart and Carroll McGowan will meet with our consultant, Robert Aydelotte, to explore ways to make the website more efficient and cost effective.

We will continue to gather all the records of the Association and move them to the archives.

# Chinese Smoking Jacket Donated to the National Museum of the Marine Corps Has an Interesting Story to Tell

About 12 years ago at one of our reunions, Edith Hancock donated a beautiful Chinese smoking jacket for the auction. Her husband, George Hancock, had acquired it in China in the late 1930s.

The highest bidder was Watson Crumbie (29th Mar-1-C). In addition to fighting on Okinawa, Watson had been a China Marine, serving in Tsingtao and Chinwangtao (in far north China) from October 1945 to February 1946.

Fast forward to the 2021 reunion where Watson offered to donate the smoking jacket to the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Ten months later, Watson learned that his donation was approved by the Museum's Collections Committee. Jennifer Castro, Curator of Cultural and Material History at the Museum, wrote to Watson:

"Your donation was recently approved by the Museum's Collections Committee. The smoking jacket is a wonderful object and we appreciate your generosity in making this donation. I discovered some interesting elements to the jacket when I reviewed it and wanted to share some of my findings with you.

"George Hillman Hancock tried to enlist in the Navy in 1936, but was declined as quotas were filled at that time. The following year on July 26, 1937, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. In January 1938, Hancock deployed to Shanghai, China with 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, 2nd Marine Brigade, Fleet Marine Force. Hancock returned to San Diego with the Battalion in April 1938. He deployed again to Shanghai, China with 1st Battalion, 4th Marines in March 1939 and returned to the United States in the summer of 1941 before the start of World War II. Hancock's service in China during this time period earned him the title of 'China Marine.'

"During this time period, Marines started the practice of using Chinese dragons on official and unofficial logos and mast heads and on their personal souvenirs, documenting their service overseas.

"Decorative souvenir garments from China have been popular with Marines pre and post-World War II. A Marine's salary during this time period could translate to a remarkably extravagant lifestyle in China, where in the U.S. their money didn't go so far. Often Marines admired the work of local Chinese craftsmen and tailors who embroidered beautiful designs featuring animals, figures, dragons and patterns on clothing. Many designs and iconography became associated with a specific local tailor or region in China. This smoking jacket is illustrative of classic Shanghai needle work of the time period and is a tangible reminder of a special era in the cultural history of the Corps.

"During examination of the jacket, it was discovered that the letters 'USMC' in reverse could be seen on the back of the jacket at the waist. The jacket is made in part from a USMC standard issue olive drab colored blanket from the time period where 'USMC' was chain stitched on the blanket making an overlapping chain. The blanket was apparently dyed black, lined with blue fabric and made into this custom smoking jacket embroidered with dragons and the Marine Corps eagle, globe and anchor device — the iconic mark that declared this object to have been the personal property of a U.S. Marine.

"The smoking jacket documents the relatively lavish, exotic lifestyle and culture of Marines serving in China. This object also exemplifies the unique craftsmanship of Marine souvenirs from this time period. More importantly, from a cultural perspective, the artifact demonstrates the pride, flare and esprit de corps of U.S. Marines serving in what was considered one of the world's most exotic regions."

*(continued on next page)*



# Chinese Smoking Jacket Has Interesting Story to Tell

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- 1) Chinese smoking jacket donated by Watson Crumbie to the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Watson won the jacket at an auction at one of the Sixth Marine Division Association reunions.
- 2) Right side of a 1930s-era USMC standard issue olive drab blanket.
- 3) Wrong side of the blanket.
- 4) Close up of the donated jacket showing the USMC letters in reverse. The jacket was made by a Chinese tailor from a USMC blanket that was dyed black.

Send your newsletter dues by year end to  
continue receiving the Striking Sixth newsletter in 2023!  
(See instructions for mailing a check on page 8.)

# Sixth Marine Division Association

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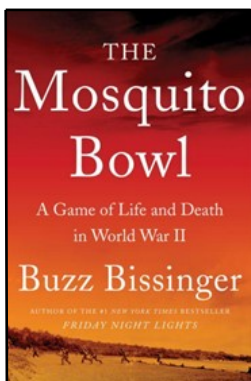


## Striking Sixth Newsletter

Fall 2022

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## Buzz Goes on Tour!

Buzz is currently on the road promoting *The Mosquito Bowl*, his new book about the Sixth Marine Division. It's a whirlwind schedule, so you can imagine his delight when he spots friends from the Sixth Marine Division Association in the crowd.



Sharon Woodhouse, Buzz Bissinger & Jeff Woodhouse in Portland, OR, September 20



Melinda Benedetti, Anita Benedetti, Buzz Bissinger & Lisa Benedetti in Cleveland, OH, September 22