

In an awards ceremony at the National Museum of the Marine Corps on April 29, Buzz was pre-

In his letter notifying Buzz of the award, MajGen James Lukeman USMC (Ret), President and CEO of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, cited Buzz for profoundly communicating the experience and importance of the Marine Corps and for preserving a rich history that the Corps and our nation should never forget.

## Congratulations, Buzz!



Buzz Bissinger receives the General Wallace M. Green Jr. Award at the National Museum of the Marine Corps on April 29, 2023

## Chaplain Harry McKnight Passes Away at Age 96

*See pages 14-15*



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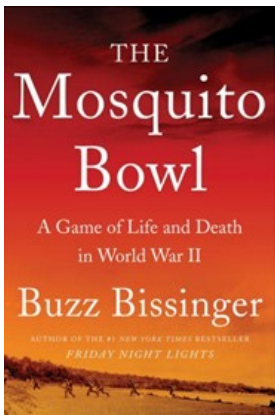


Buzz Bissinger confers with Neal McCallum at the awards ceremony. *The Mosquito Bowl* was dedicated to Neal.



Phuong Riles and Sallie Garrett Shepherd

## More Photos from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation Awards Ceremony at the National Museum of the Marine Corps



***The Mosquito Bowl*  
comes out  
in paperback  
in September!**



Sallie Shepherd poses with a brandy flask used by her grandfather, then-Captain Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., during World War I. The flask is displayed at the museum.



Lisa Smith and Neal McCallum



Lisa Smith with husband, Buzz Bissinger



# My Grandpa's War

by John R. Legg, grandson of Willard D. Legg (22nd Mar-3-L)

I laid awake in the spare bedroom of my grandparents' house, staring at the dark ceiling above my head. In the next room over, my Grandpa Willard abruptly woke up with a ghastly-sounding scream. He was laying in a hospital bed, ill, nearly blind, and missing limbs from his prolonged fight with diabetes. The rattling of the bed rails echoed down the hallway. Without hesitation, my grandma rushed into his room and calmed him down.

I could tell it wasn't the phantom limb pain causing him issues that night. Whatever woke him up was deep in his soul. I closed my eyes and attempted to fall back asleep as I heard Grandpa's muffled weeping coming through the walls next to me.

The following morning, I walked past the bedroom door. Grandpa called out my name as I walked by and asked me to sit beside him. He asked, "Did you hear me last night, John?" A true sadness washed over his face when I said yes. "I think it's time for me to tell you about what makes me so scared at night." I pulled up a chair beside his bed, and Grandpa Willard began to tell me about his experiences fighting on Okinawa—something he rarely spoke of, even with his wife and children. That morning, as I held

his hand, I learned of his bravery, his dedication, and his nightmares. I vividly remember the first words of his story: "It was like Hell on Earth."

Tears rushed down his face as his mind transported him back to 1945. Evocative memories came to life, and he recounted stories with his eyes closed and his fists clenched. I could tell he had been holding on to these memories for a lifetime.



A collage of objects that memorialize Willard D. Legg, including postcard images from Okinawa, the Sixth Marine Division patch, a portrait of Willard taken in 1943, and his Purple Heart

Before I share his stories, I would like to introduce you to my Grandpa. Born in 1925 and the oldest of seven children, Willard Darrell Legg grew up in Fola, a small community in Clay County, West Virginia. Like other places around the nation, Clay County sent many young men off to World War II. From my family, Charles (Army), Clyde (Navy), and Henry (Navy), to name a few, participated in some of the bloodiest battles of

the war. Willard enlisted in the USMC as a private in 1943 at eighteen years old. By September 1944, he and his fellow Marines of the 22nd Regiment had moved to Guadalcanal, where his unit joined the newly formed 6th Marine Division.

On April 1, 1945, Willard landed on the shores of Okinawa. Over the next month, he and his 22nd Marines trekked through the muddy countryside of the island.

Sometime in late April, he and his unit bedded down for the night in a rice paddy field during their advance toward the Shuri Line. Grandpa told me that those moments are what haunted him the most. "You never knew when they would attack," he told me, "One moment, it was quiet, and the next, an entire Japanese company would charge at our position, or artillery shells would explode around

us." Willard and one of his fellow Marines hunkered down in a fighting hole. His buddy told him to get some rest and that he would be on watch for the next few hours. As they settled in the fighting hole, both Marines dozed off out of sheer exhaustion. A short time later, Willard's intuition woke him up. He never understood what caught his attention but was glad something woke him up.

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# My Grandpa's War

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As he opened his eyes, Willard noticed a short Japanese soldier diving down at him. The Japanese soldier had killed his comrade. Screaming profusely, the Japanese soldier had his sharp bayonet in his hand and was ready to pierce Willard in the chest. Luckily, Willard evaded the stabbing and began to fight with the soldier in the fighting hole. He recounted the trauma of this moment and said he exited his position and ran back further behind American lines. He screamed as loud as he could, "This is Legg; get number two, SHOOT THE SECOND MAN, SHOOT THE SECOND MAN!" A few moments later, a Marine shot the Japanese soldier, and Willard could stop running. He was out of breath, shaking from adrenaline and fear. Willard never blamed his mate, who fell asleep beside him; he was just glad he made it out alive.

Willard returned to his fighting hole, with several traumatic moments through the coming days and weeks, especially a night when he killed a Japanese officer during a full-on bonzai charge. Memories of the battlefield carnage also remained deep in his conscious: seeing Okinawan civilians hurl themselves off cliffs to escape the terror induced by the Japanese soldiers, friends dying, loud concussive explosions, bullets whizzing by his helmet.

Willard continued to hold my hand as he recounted his traumatic memories from the war.

With each squeeze, I felt more and more attached to his experiences on Okinawa.

Near the end of the conversation, Willard asked me to look in a box next to his bedstand and told me that he was giving me its contents. I opened the container to find several postcards, a uniform patch, a portrait of him taken in 1943, and a maroon-colored box filled with his Purple Heart medal. He asked me to look through the postcards and find one with the name "Sugar Loaf Hill" on it. I found the picture and saw a barren hill in the middle of the frame. An "x" was hand-drawn on the image with an annotation nearby, which read, "Where the hardest fight was fought. I was hit here." Grandpa pointed to the "x" and said, "This is where I was wounded." I listened intently, absorbing every detail. He told me about Sugar Loaf Hill and how the Marines sent several advances toward the heavily defended Japanese position. I have learned since that day that the struggle to control this small position was one of the costliest for the Marines, especially those of the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Division.

On May 16, 1945, Willard and his buddies in the 22nd Marines charged up Sugar Loaf Hill. A Japanese grenade exploded behind him and sent shrapnel into his back. He fell, finding respite from the carnage happening in front of him. A Navy Corpsman rushed and mended his wounds, and stretchers took him back

back toward safety once the fighting calmed down.

After Okinawa, Willard recovered from his wounds on Guam, ironically in the same hospital where his younger brother, Clyde, recovered from a bout of malaria. He returned to duty and prepared for the invasion of Honshū. After the Japanese surrender, Willard spent time as a guard in Tsingtao, China between 1945 and 1946. I never heard much about his time there. My Uncle Dave, however, told me that "their basic job was to repatriate Japanese troops" that surrendered in China at the end of the war. "Some of his company was loaned out to the army briefly in Nagasaki," my Uncle Dave continued to tell me, and "Dad described it as 'clean up,' but he wouldn't say anything about it."

Willard returned to West Virginia after the war and worked in the coal mines. He married my grandma Ethel, or Mickey as we called her, and they had five sons.

Willard was a lifelong advocate for those suffering from black lung disease, even though he only worked in the mines for a few years. During a strike, a union buster shot one of the miners, quickly inspiring Willard to leave West Virginia and search for a new life in Michigan. He worked in the automotive industry for many years before becoming a Baptist preacher.

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# My Grandpa's War

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Willard passed away in 2004, just two years after he shared his war stories with me.

Grandpa brought back war trophies that he kept hidden for many years. My dad, as a child, saw a sword and a Japanese flag in the storage space of the Fola, West Virginia home in the 1950s. By then, the flag had started to deteriorate from dry rot. Grandpa passed the sword to my uncle, who passed it on to his son, where it remains in his collection today.

Grandpa also brought home things from the war he couldn't share with those he loved. His buddies died next to him in the fighting holes, on Sugar Loaf Hill, and all the way until the Japanese surrendered, yet he escaped Okinawa with only a few wounds that eventually healed. In addition to the PTSD from horrifying combat, Willard also suffered from survivor's guilt.

I am thankful Grandpa Willard gave me the material objects that memorialized his time on Okinawa. Yet, it was his stories that have stuck with me all of these years. Listening to stories allows us to understand personal experiences from the past. Typical history books focus on the published record: newspaper reports, governmental documents, letters, photos, and maps, to name a few. However, individual stories garner a deeper understanding of how people experienced certain events or lived through challenging times.

Listening to Grandpa Willard's stories inspired me to become a historian, where I routinely center these perspectives in my work. While I am not a World War II historian (I write on Native American history during the Civil War era), what I learned from my Grandpa and the time I spent reliving his experiences influences my work. Scholars studying the Civil War have generally ignored or overlooked Native voices and perspectives.

Oral history and storytelling reframe certain events and paint a more vivid portrait of our collective past. Listening to my

I am not sure why he wanted to share his stories with me. I was only twelve years old, and I want to believe that he saw a passion inside me that would carry forward and honor his place in history. He knew that I'd forever remember his legacy after he passed on. This experience taught me that history needs empathy.

As I left my Grandpa's bedside, holding his Purple Heart and the weight of his stories, I realized that his bravery and sacrifice would be forever etched in my memory.



Willard's postcard of Sugar Loaf Hill with the line "Where the hardest fight was fought. I was hit here."

Grandpa's storytelling fascinated me, and his personal experiences influenced my understanding of the past. Stories from the 6th Marine Division demonstrate how the fight did not end in 1945 but continued throughout the rest of their lives.





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# Message from the President



Hi All,

I have been reflecting on my involvement with the Sixth Marine Division Association.

This includes promising my father (Pat Haynes, 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar-3-HQ) that I would attend the reunions in his honor, making sure the “original” veterans were taken care of at the reunions and hopefully beyond, and serving as your President for the last several years. As I have said many times, it is my personal intent to make sure the Sixth’s legacy and service is perpetuated in time.

Recently, I ran across an article in a newsletter dated September 1983 regarding the reunion held that year in Cherry Hill, NJ. I quote,

“The First Reunion Committee of the present Sixth Marine Division Association held its first meeting in Atlantic City, NJ in March 1970. The association was incorporated two months later. The association was organized primarily to perpetuate the memories of wartime experiences and honor those who gave their lives in the Pacific campaigns of World War II, including those buddies who passed on subsequent

to the disbanding of the division.”

Imagine – all these years later, the sons and daughters of the Sixth Division Marines (now known as the Lineal Descendants) have demonstrated the same intent.

As I said, just reflecting on my association with this wonderful organization.

I hope this finds everyone safe and healthy.

Until we meet again,  
Connie Houseweart

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## Editor’s Note



Like many of you, I miss our reunions. So you can imagine my excitement when I found out Buzz Bissinger was

coming to Pittsburgh to give a talk on *The Mosquito Bowl*. It turned out to be a mini-reunion as Neal McCallum, Phuong Riles, Connie Houseweart, David Hilner, and Buzz’s wife Lisa Smith also came to town. Buzz would never forgive me if I didn’t mention that Sasha, “the wonder dog” as Buzz calls her, was also at the presentation. And a wonder she is! She was the most well-behaved dog ever. We didn’t hear a peep out of her.

We did hear from Buzz though, as he gave a wonderful presentation about his book and the Sixth Marine Division. I wish

every person in America could hear it. He spoke movingly about what the Sixth Marine Division accomplished on Okinawa and the debt our country owes them. I urge you to listen to the recording. There’s a link on the homepage of our website: [www.sixthmarinedivision.com](http://www.sixthmarinedivision.com).

As you know, *The Mosquito Bowl* is dedicated to Neal McCallum, who is one of the most interesting people I’ve ever met. Also one of the smartest and nicest. Don’t miss the article about his fascinating post-Marine Corps career on pages 8-11.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I note the passing of our Chaplain Harry McKnight. He was one of the first Sixth Division Marines I met. He and his wife Barbara took me under their wing and made me feel

welcome when I began attending the reunions a dozen years ago. In addition to his many virtues and talents, which you can read about on pages 14-15, I so appreciate that he never missed a deadline for his messages in this newsletter. Thanks, Harry!

~Carroll McGowan

**Donations —  
Thank You!**

**Newsletter Fund**

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Checking account balance  
@ 6/30/23 = \$12,646

# From World War II to US Customs, Neal McCallum's 46 Years Dedicated to Uncle Sam

by Matt Fratus, *Coffee or Die Magazine*, August 13, 2022

Neal McCallum [29th-2-F] once crossed the Atlantic Ocean alone in a small sailboat. The stakes were high then, but marginal compared with the undercover anti-smuggling assignment he volunteered for in the summer of 1974.

By the 1970s, Miami, Florida, held the reputation as the “marijuana capital of the world.” The billion-dollar illegal drug trade involved a mix of criminal personalities, from hardcore drug kingpins to CIA-trained Cuban exiles from the failed Bay of Pigs invasion to recreational anglers. All had a hand in the trafficking of thousands of pounds of contraband from Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, and Colombia into the southern tip of Florida. As a result, US Customs Service agents scrambled to crack down on the flow of drugs with anti-smuggling interdiction cases.

McCallum, a 47-year-old Marine veteran and criminal investigator of the US Customs Service, went undercover to infiltrate a gang in Pinellas County, Florida. To cripple its operations and shut down the international smuggling ring, however, McCallum had to go directly to



Neal McCallum served with 6th Marine Division at Okinawa during World War II and later continued living a life of great adventure courtesy of Uncle Sam. Adobe stock photo and photo courtesy of Neal McCallum. Composite by Coffee or Die Magazine.

the source: the gang's base of Santa Marta, Colombia. The gang's “Colombian bud” plantation reigned supreme in the busy port city.

McCallum, joined by two pre-screened parolees, rented a sailboat with enough compartment space to carry a significant load of dope. To help him maintain his cover, he acquired an off-the-books revolver from a colleague. Getting caught with a department-issued firearm could threaten future anti-smuggling cases in the region. McCallum also wore the standard disguise of contrabandistas he'd encountered in the past: shorts, sunglasses, and a short-sleeved shirt. If one were going to infiltrate a foreign country and sur-

reptitiously meet a dope dealer without getting compromised, one had to look and act the part.

The team of three launched their sailboat from Clearwater, Florida, and sailed some 1,200 miles by way of the Windward Passage northeast of Cuba to reach Santa Marta's harbor. For several days, the team motored nonstop against the current and prevailing winds. When they arrived at night, the gang's scouts arranged a meeting on the water. Their leader — assuming McCallum was another experienced drug runner — volunteered to complete the maritime exchange. The gang loaded the prized Colombian bud into

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# Neal McCallum

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McCallum's boat and a vessel of their own.

Having done similar exchanges hundreds of times before, the gang members didn't suspect a mole in their midst. The two boats motored some four or five days at sea, and right before reaching Clearwater, McCallum contacted authorities, who clandestinely positioned arrest squads near the beach.

"About 2 miles off Clearwater Pass, the bad guys came around with their boat to unload the marijuana," McCallum told *The Forward Observer*. "I'm on a VHF radio, a sequestered channel, talking to US Customs agents and a local sheriff on land. There had to be 50 different police agencies there to arrest this guy because he was a big target."

The seizure confiscated about a ton of contraband and disrupted one of the boldest marijuana smuggling rings in the war on drugs. For all its danger, the mission didn't rattle McCallum, who said he didn't have much to fear after his experiences in combat during World War II.

## Okinawa

McCallum was born on March 10, 1927, and raised on his family's 28-acre pine forest farm in Candor, North Carolina. When he was only 14 years old, he took his horse to confront a group of men on the edge of their pasture in the woods. He found the men in fatigues huddled around an

Army blanket, throwing dice. They were soldiers from the 29th Infantry Division training in the Carolina Maneuvers alongside soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division — the "Big Red One" — before they were shipped off to France to conduct the historic amphibious landings at Normandy.

McCallum's four older brothers participated in the invasion of Normandy, arriving in France just after D-Day. His brother Allen S. McCallum was later killed in action in Germany. In

Division to practice assaults in tandem with machine-gun teams and flamethrower operators before landing on Okinawa.

In the early morning hours of Easter Sunday, 1945, battleships and destroyers pounded the Japanese island with naval gunfire until daybreak. McCallum arrived on shore around 10 a.m. and helped capture Yontan Airfield.

"On the second, third, and fourth of April, big swarms of kamikazes came over [the island]," McCallum told *TFO*. "The Japa-



Neal McCallum pictured alongside eight other US service members receiving the Purple Heart medal in Virginia for wounds suffered during World War II. Notably, the newspaper clipping spelled McCallum's name wrong. Composite by Coffee or Die Magazine.

1944, at 17, McCallum followed his brothers into the military but was sent to Guadalcanal in the Pacific rather than to Europe. For seven months, he received arduous training as a mortarman with the 6th Marine

nese called them 'Floating Chrysanthemums.' I have since read there can be up to 350 planes."

The Marines' landing in Okinawa was largely uncontested. The

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# Neal McCallum

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real fight occurred inland, including the isolated Battle of Sugar Loaf Hill. It was a brutal assault over mountainous terrain that lasted eight days. One night, while McCallum was hiding behind dead bodies for cover from artillery fire, he had a moment of reflection.

“I remember thinking that there had to be a better way to settle disputes than this,” he said.

In May — just as his unit was being relieved by fresh troops — McCallum was wounded by shrapnel.

“It was a 150mm shell,” McCallum said. “The Japanese took these guns off of navy ships and put them into the Shuri Castle cliffs, which was only one-and-two-tenths miles from where I was. By the way, where we were was the Japanese artillery practice range.”

McCallum survived the artillery attack and took a transport ship from Guam to San Francisco, and eventually Virginia to recover. In the years after the war, McCallum left the Marines, went to college, and began working for the government.

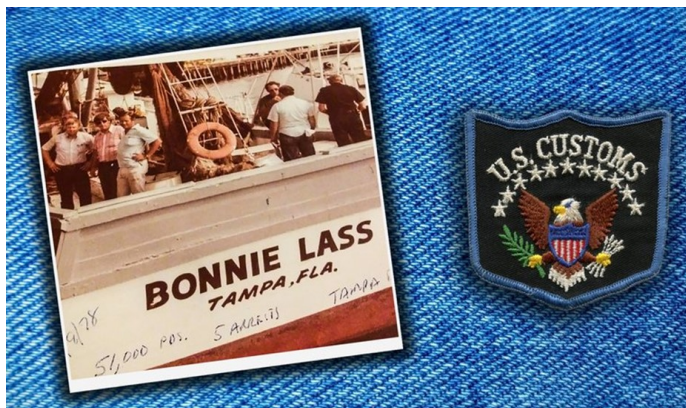
## An Original Sky Marshal

In 1971, the World War II veteran entered federal law enforcement in a brand-new unit implemented under President Richard Nixon’s administration. In response to a series of plane hijackings, Nixon established international anti-piracy laws, and

McCallum became one of the first sky marshals to enforce the new rules of the air. He flew domestic flights, working on board Delta Airlines 747s in teams of three. According to McCallum, the job was boring most of the time, except for one unruly passenger who made a run for the cockpit.

“When you came on board, on your right hand were first-class seats and a staircase that led to the cockpit and the lounge,” McCallum said. “This area was off-limits. As we were taking off, a passenger ran up the stairs, and we ran up and tackled him to the ground.”

The passenger freaked out and nervously explained he had raced up the stairs to access the bathroom. Although the man was unarmed, a little embarrassed, and no longer a threat, the sky marshals still took every precaution on the off chance he was a hijacker attempting to take control of the plane. Between 1968 and 1972, “sky-jackers” who wanted to fly to communist Cuba, or to be paid a ransom, or even to vent some rage, hijacked more than 130 airplanes, according to *Wired*.



Neal McCallum stands with his left hand on his hip while working the Bonnie Lass case, in which 50,000 pounds of marijuana were seized. Composite by Coffee or Die Magazine.

Coinciding with the growing threat of hijackings was the arrival of the war on drugs, in which federal law enforcement agents cracked down on illegal marijuana smuggling and cocaine trafficking.

In the early 1930s, marijuana was considered a legal import — the major smuggling problems then revolved around Prohibition-era alcohol and drugs like opium and heroin. In 1931, contrabandista-turned-US Customs agent Al Scharff started a sort of rogue air brigade. The most famous arrest of the unit’s tenure involved agents chasing rumrunner and former World War I ace William Thomas Ponder 200 miles from the Mexican border to San Antonio, Texas. The landmark case marked “the first airplane seizure where both the government and the hunted craft were in the air,” according to US Customs and Border Protection.

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# Neal McCallum

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Despite increased drama in the sky, the most frequented drug highways in Florida were still at sea. McCallum left the sky marshals in 1973 in pursuit of a more exciting career as a criminal investigator in Tampa, where he had a front-row seat to anti-smuggling operations until the late 1980s.

## The Bonnie Lass Seizure

Four years after McCallum's undercover assignment in Colombia, the criminal investigator helped seize an enormous amount of marijuana stashed in a shrimp boat. Marijuana smugglers frequently disguised their vessels as fishing ships to slip past law enforcement.

In previous takedowns, McCallum explained, marijuana smugglers had had lobster nets, traps, and ice coolers for their "lobster boats." However, there are few lobsters in Tampa — most Florida lobsters are caught farther south, toward the Keys. Noticing little details like that is what separates the amateurs from the pros

On the night of June 8, 1978, agents from McCallum's team used night vision devices to spot a 65-foot-long shrimp vessel with the name Bonnie Lass. Prime shrimp catching occurs at night, when shrimp migrate to shallower waters, so the Bonnie Lass idling near Apollo Beach — a popular residential area with a marina where small boats anchored — wasn't anything unusual.

However, the lack of required red and navigational lights on the vessel raised eyebrows. The Bonnie Lass drew immediate attention from the US Customs agents patrolling nearby when it failed to respond to repetitive flashing signals from nearby boats. The agents from McCallum's team continued to monitor the suspicious vessel from roughly a mile away.

Around 2 a.m., the crew of the Bonnie Lass loitered alongside various smaller boats before becoming spooked and flooring it for deeper waters in the Gulf of Mexico. McCallum's team immediately called for helicopter assistance with FLIR thermal imaging capability to track the boat through the darkness.

Before the Bonnie Lass could escape, McCallum's team pulled their cigarette boat alongside and swarmed the disguised ves-

sel. Before the five suspects on board had time to react, two US Customs agents had hopped aboard and identified themselves.

The agents uncovered approximately 50,000 pounds of marijuana organized into 1,312 bales. According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, the going rate for marijuana then was \$400 per pound, so the street value was \$20 million, which amounts to more than \$89 million today.

"Including my military service and other government work, I have 46 years of dedicated service," McCallum, now 95, reflected. "I only took three days of sick leave. It truly was a great adventure."

*This article first appeared in the Summer 2022 print edition of The Forward Observer, a special publication from Coffee or Die Magazine, as "The Great Adventure."*



Neal McCallum (along with 42 other WWII veterans) before departing for Normandy, France on a trip sponsored by the Best Defense Foundation, May 30, 2023

## Sixth Division Marines: Zack Wolf Wants to Hear Your Story

I enjoy interviewing veterans as a hobby so their stories are never forgotten. I am trying to interview as many 6th Marine Division veterans as I can. It would be a true honor.

If any 6th Marine Division veterans would like to talk with me, please contact me at the phone number or email address below.

Thank you,  
Zack Wolf  
(301) 992-5744  
zackwolf1977@gmail.com

Editor's note: Zack has spoken with several Sixth Division Marines so far.



## Book Review: 1945 M1 Garand Rifle Inspires WWII Servicemen, Including Joseph Drago (22nd Mar-3-I), To Tell Their Wartime Stories

Thanks to Laura Mason, daughter of Joseph (Joe) Drago, for bringing two new books to our attention: *The Rifle* by Andrew Biggio and a sequel: *The Rifle 2*.

Andrew Biggio is a Boston policeman and former U.S. Marine Corps infantry sergeant who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is also president of a New England charity that supports wounded service men and women.

Several years ago, Andrew purchased a 1945 M1 Garand Rifle in honor of his great uncle who fought the Germans during World War II and died on an unknown hill in Italy. He showed the gun to his neighbor, Sixth Division Marine Joe Drago (22nd Mar-3-I). Holding that rifle brought back a rush of war-time memories.

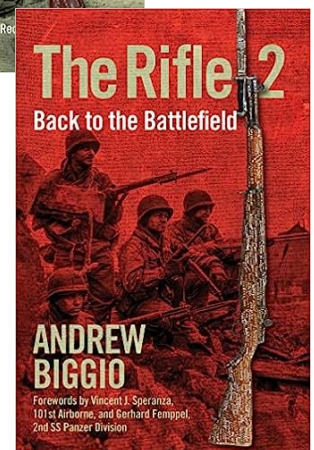
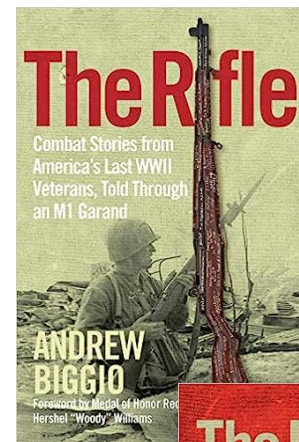
Seeing Joe energized by the rifle, an idea popped into Andrew's head. He asked Joe to sign the rifle. Thus began a two-year mission to find World War II veterans to sign the rifle and tell their stories. That journey — and his interviews with the veterans — are documented in *The Rifle*, which was published in 2021.

Joseph Drago's story is in the book's first chapter. Sadly, he

passed away in 2018 and never got to read it.

The book found a receptive audience. There are 1,739 ratings on Amazon, and 91% of them give the book 5 stars.

A sequel, *The Rifle 2*, includes more stories from WWII veterans. Look for it September 19.



## 2023 VMI Scholarships Announced

Sallie Garrett Shepherd, granddaughter of Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., Commanding General of the Sixth Marine Division, reports that three scholarships named in honor of her grandfather and funded by the Sixth Marine Division Association were awarded to deserving cadets in May 2023:

**Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Award** — A wooden footlocker containing books to help the cadets start a library. Presented to the top two Marine graduates in the Naval ROTC program:

- **Cameron Boxley '23**
- **Angeline Castagna '23**

**Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Scholarship Award** — A \$2,000 scholarship. Presented to a rising first classman:

- **Jeffrey McBeth '24**

*We will hear from the winners in this and the next two newsletters. See the next page for Jeffrey McBeth's note of thanks.*



## A Note from VMI Scholarship Winner Jeffrey McBeth

I just want to say thank you for selecting me to be a recipient of the Gen. Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Scholarship Award. It means a lot to my family and me. I'm very grateful for moments like these, and I try not to take them for granted.



Cadet Jeffrey McBeth

About me: I am a rising first classman at Virginia Military Institute. I'm a psychology major, and I'm from Norfolk,

Virginia. My interests include working out (primarily lifting and running), playing piano, playing soccer, and watching "Jeopardy!" with my family.

This summer, I will be attending Officer Candidate School in Quantico. My main goals right now are to graduate from Officer Candidate School, commission into the United States Marine Corps, graduate from VMI, and attend The Basic School. I chose to go to VMI for the structure and discipline that the school instills in its cadets. I yearned for a challenge and wanted to pursue a college experience that would be unique, productive, and gratifying.

Thank you for this award! Take care and God bless!

Very Respectfully,  
Cadet Jeffrey McBeth, VMI '24

## Nambu Bullet Wounds

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

On May 10, 1945, on a rise south of the Asa Kawa Estuary on Southern Okinawa, a Japanese machine gun sat beside the dead body of the Japanese soldier who had lately been firing it. The gun was a Nambu 6.5 millimeter. The cartridge it fired had a bullet that weighed 156 grams, which was heavy for 6.5 millimeter. The bullet was round nosed with a flat base. That shape caused the bullet to lose velocity quickly. The gun's maximum effective range was 600 yards, but a Nambu bullet could travel many times that distance. At long range, unless the bullet hit bone, it created a wound channel that closed quickly.

On May 16, 1945, PVT (later CPL) Don Honis, with three other Marines, was carrying a badly wounded Marine from Half Moon Hill. Don was hit by a single Nambu bullet, fired from either Half Moon or Sugar Loaf Hill. The bullet hit, back to front, on the outside of his left thigh. His stay in the Sixth Medical Battalion field hospital lasted three weeks. Then he returned to his unit, I Company, 3rd Battalion, 29th Marines.

On May 29, 1945, PFC Bill Pierce was on a guard detail at a causeway connected to a Japanese occupied island when he was hit by a single Nambu bullet fired from some distance away.

He was hit on the back of his neck. While in the Sixth Medical Battalion field hospital, he had feelings of guilt because many of the Marines in the hospital had wounds that were much worse than his. After two days he voluntarily left the hospital and returned to his unit, Weapons Company of the 29th Marines.

Captain William Tomasello was the commander of G Company, 3rd Battalion, 29th Marines. I was a rifleman in his Company. The captain came to see me

while we were on the Hospital Ship RELIEF. It was the third day after he was wounded. On June 9, 1945, on Oroku Peninsula, the captain had been hit by a Nambu bullet fired from long range. The bullet that wounded the captain hit the right side of his neck and exited the left side.

Where the bullet had left his neck was like a small pimple. Where the bullet had entered his neck there was a barely visible lesion.

I had been wounded on that same afternoon of June 9, 1945. By contrast, the bullet that wounded my lower legs was fired from a 7.7 millimeter Arisaka rifle from about 75 yards. The bullet tumbled in my right calf and left a hole the size of a half dollar.



Jim White (29th Mar-3-G)



# 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.

Anderson, Harvey W.	6th Medical BN-E	05/09/23
McKnight, Harry T.	29th Mar-3-H	06/11/23
Stidham, James M.	29th Marines	05/29/23
Strand, Carol V.	6th JASCO	12/01/18

## Reporting Deaths

Please report deaths as soon as possible to:

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

## Parker Brauer: Man of Honor and Integrity

It is with great sadness that we report Parker Brauer passed away from heart disease on March 3. Parker was the wife of Mary Brauer and the son-in-law of the late Edward "Jeff" Willauer (22nd Mar-H&S) and Joan Willauer.

Mary and Parker were regular attendees at our reunions. Unfailingly kind and friendly, they were always ready to lend a helping hand.

Parker never drew attention to himself. Instead, he quietly went about doing the right thing. He was honest, fair, and hard-working, and he was a wonderful role model for his four sons and eleven grandchildren.

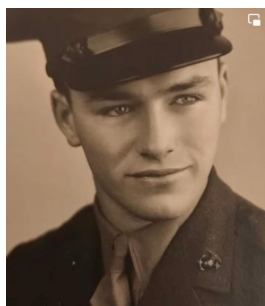
We were blessed to know Parker, and we offer Mary and their family our sincere condolences.



Mary and Parker Brauer at the final reunion in Fredericksburg in 2021

Summer 2023

## 6MD Chaplain Harry McKnight: A Life of Faith, Family, and Fitness



At the age of 85, Harry McKnight started doing pushups during Ohio

State football games. He did one pushup for each point Ohio State scored. If you know anything about college football, you know Ohio State can score points, so Harry was doing a lot of pushups! His goal was to dot the "T" with a pushup at an Ohio State foot-

ball game when he reached the age of 100. We never doubted he could do it.

Unfortunately, that is one goal that will be left unmet. Harry passed away at age 96 on June 11. However, he achieved many other goals in his long and distinguished life.

Harry was an excellent athlete — he played football, did the pole vault and was a diver. After graduating from Ohio State after the war, he became a teacher and coach. With a friend, he started the Ohio Track Club and continued to compete in the pole vault, becoming one of the top five pole vaulters in the country.

Harry achieved national prominence as a track and field coach. He coached both the men and women's teams in the Pan Am games, and he coached the women's track team when they defeated the Soviets for the first time in



Harry McKnight with OSU ROTC cadets at Ohio State vs Army, 2017

*(continued on next page)*



# 6MD Chaplain Harry McKnight

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1973. In 1976, he coached both the men and women to victory in Russia. During his life, Harry earned many awards for his coaching prowess, including induction into the Ohio State Track Hall of Fame.

But there was a lot more to Harry than sports. When he attended Ohio State, he joined the Ohio Air National Guard, retiring in 1976 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. After he retired from teaching in 1986, he flew for Lane Aviation and Columbia Gas. There was no slowing him down.

His Christian faith was very important to Harry. He held many leadership positions in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including Sunday School President, Bishop, High Councilor and Mission President.

Family was another priority for Harry. He and his wife Barbara had two sons, eight grandchildren and eight great grandchildren, as well as one deceased. He loved spending time with them.

Finally, Harry honored his fellow Marines with his service to the Sixth Marine Division Association. As Chaplain, he penned a heartfelt note in each issue of the newsletter, and he presided over the Memorial Service at the annual reunions. With Barbara, he hosted a terrific reunion in Columbus, Ohio in 2016. We also note that Barbara was President of the Ladies Auxiliary for many years, so their love for the Sixth Division was truly a family affair.



Tim, Karen, Barbara, Liz and Tom McKnight with Harry McKnight at the final reunion in Fredericksburg in 2021

## Taps for an Older Marine

*by Harry McKnight (29th Mar-3-G)*

Many times we've heard those notes to signal "Day is done,"  
Or over hallowed ground where sleeps tearful mother's son  
Mid battles lull as shadows fell, we'd rest, but did not sleep,  
And prayed the battle quickly won, and loved ones never weep.

But when the war was over, our homes would have to wait,  
For then we sailed to China, and not the Golden Gate.  
It doesn't seem that long ago we walked those ancient streets,  
To give those hungry children some gum and candy treats.

With shaking hands and promises, we went our separate ways,  
And told our friends and family all about those trying days.  
That urgent call was shocking of your passing from our Corps,  
Now we join to honor you with family, friends and more.

Those solemn four and twenty notes now play again for you,  
As they have played so many times, for others brave and true.  
You lived a life of honor and you served your country well,  
Your friends who died in battle, of their stories you did tell.

For loved ones now you leave, of their future do not fret,  
For all their lives are guided by the standards you have set.  
A final "Semper Fi," my friend, and this I know will be,  
For you, Marine, a home above, for all eternity.



We thank Harry for his service to our country and his many contributions to the Association.

RIP

# Sixth Marine Division Association

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Striking Sixth Newsletter

Summer 2023

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## Buzz Gives Stirring Talk About the 6th Marine Division and Its Legacy

Everyone knows Buzz can write. We're here to tell you he can speak just as well. On April 12, he gave a very moving presentation about his new book and the legacy of the Sixth Marine Division at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. The talk was sponsored by the Veterans Breakfast Club, an organization headquartered in Pittsburgh that encourages veterans to tell their stories so they will never be forgotten.

**You'll find a link to Buzz's talk on the home-page of our website** ([www.sixthmarine-division.com](http://www.sixthmarine-division.com)). It's also on our Facebook page (posted on April 17). Buzz's speech begins around the 20 minute mark. **Don't miss it!**

Pictured at right:

- 1) David Hilner, Connie Houseweart, and Phuong Riles look on as Neal McCallum speaks with attendees after Buzz's talk
- 2) Buzz signs copies of *The Mosquito Bowl*
- 3) Phuong Riles and Neal McCallum with Todd DePastino, Executive Director of the Veterans Breakfast Club, who introduced Buzz
- 4) Buzz engages the crowd

