



Spearhead NEWS

"Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue"

OFFICIAL
PUBLICATION
of the
5TH MARINE
DIVISION
ASSOCIATION

**61ST ANNUAL REUNION - BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI
OCTOBER 18 - 22, 2010
IMPERIAL PALACE HOTEL & CASINO**

Meet the Association's new president

Editor's Note: A retired public accountant and an E/2/27 Marine who was wounded on Iwo Jima, Leonard Nederveld is the new president of the Fifth Marine Division Association and will host the 2010 reunion in Biloxi, Miss., Oct. 18-22. His personal statement follows:

By Leonard Nederveld

I was born on Oct. 23, 1925, in Poplarville, Miss., enlisted in the Marine Corps on my 18th birthday and was sent to San Diego on Nov. 10, 1943. We arrived at boot camp from New Orleans on a train that traveled through Texas and on to California.

We found out that we were all the same rank, even lower than a boot. Everyone was a private as our DI explained this in certain terms and loud enough for all to hear. We were explained the workings of the Corps, and if we did as we were told, our lives would be much easier.

After about two weeks of double timing at whatever we did, we were sent to the rifle range. We spent two



Leonard and Celine Nederveld

weeks learning how to shoot, clean and carry our weapons and care for them. We were also shown other weapons and taught to shoot them as well. The firing range was run by noncommissioned officers and overseen by range officers. During the two weeks that we spent at the range, we were able to live a little better and with no double timing.

Upon returning to San Diego for further training, it appeared to be much easier as we now knew what we were to do and how to act. We were still boots until we graduated. I volunteered with two friends to join the Raiders after we

graduated and was sent to San Clemente for training. This is where I got my BAR and carried it up and down the hills. In Raider camp we trained on all our weapons – machine guns, pistols, bazookas and demolitions.

After a couple of months we were ordered to get ready to ship out and to pack all our gear and equipment



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**General thanks
Fifth Marine Division**

I just wanted to drop you a note to thank you for your help in obtaining the signatures of the 5th Marine Division on the poster, “Iwo Jima, the First Flag,” donated to the National Museum of the Pacific War by Steven Campbell. It is, indeed a very fine gift from the true heroes who fought at Iwo Jima. I, and the National Museum of the Pacific War, am deeply honored to have it as a part of our collection. Please feel free to publish my thanks in the *Spearhead* newsletter in an upcoming newsletter.

Without a doubt, the battle for Iwo Jima was one of the three 20th-century battles that directly shaped the great Marine Corps we have today. The beautiful signed print not only captures the essence of this important battle, but also memorializes the significant role played by the Marine Corps of the 5th Division.

You may also wish to include the following information in your newsletter. On 7 December 2009 we’ll celebrate the grand opening of the expansion of the George H.W. Bush Gallery at the National Museum of the Pacific War. There will be a special preview of the museum on Saturday, Dec. 5, for World War II veterans. I am enclosing a copy of our recent newsletter for you to learn all the details. I hope you will be able to attend. It will be a great event with former President George H.W. Bush and General James Conway, 34th CMC on the program.

– Gen. Michael W. Hagee, USMC (Ret.)
President and CEO
Admiral Nimitz Foundation



A memorial marker in honor of the Fifth Marine Division is located at Colfax and West Sixth Avenue in Golden, Colo. Al Jennings (1/3/26) and other Fifth Division Marines dedicated it on Veterans Day 2004.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Ray Elliott



'It couldn't have been luck'

GREELEY, Colo. – Like thousands of other young men across the United States, Kent F. Stegner joined the Marine Corps just as soon as he was old enough in the months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Originally from Tulsa, Okla., Stegner enlisted in September 1942.

Following boot camp, he was trained as a paratrooper and was assigned to the First Marine Parachute Regiment and soon found himself in the Pacific Theater, first on Guadalcanal, then on Vella-La-Vella and Bougainville before the regiment was shipped back to the States and disbanded.

Many of these combat veterans from the disbanded paramarines and Raider battalions were assigned to other divisions preparing for campaigns yet to come in the island-hopping battles on the way up the Pacific for the eventual invasion of Japan. Stegner was assigned to the Fifth Marine Division that was just forming at Camp Pendleton in early 1944.

And he shipped out with the new division to Camp Tarawa in Waimea on the island of Hawaii to train as an infantryman with A/1/28 for an invasion of what turned out to be Iwo Jima.

When I started editing *Spearhead News* in spring 2008, I wrote about Oral "Ben" Correll, who had also served with A/1/28 on Iwo Jima, and what he'd told me about his Iwo Jima experience before he died at age 60 in 1978. It wasn't long before I got a letter from Stegner, then talked to him on the phone and received a copy of "Iwo Jima Memories, 61 Years Later, You Never Forget," a booklet he'd written at the request of his family that has provided some of the material for this column.

Kent didn't remember Ben for sure but did remember a Marine they called "Smokey," and didn't recognize the picture I'd run in the *Spearhead*. But he did remember signing his name to a copy of the *Spearhead Magazine* that Ben (Smokey) had had members of the company sign, probably during the Occupation of Japan.

They knew the same men, though. Ben had told me about riding in on the same amphibious tractor with

John Capehart, another man from southern Illinois. Kent remembered him, too.

"John was quite a singer," Kent told me. "He could really sing 'The Wabash Cannonball.' I don't remember, but I guess I could have been on the same tractor. I really liked old John."

So when I was in Colorado for a reunion of Marines who had served in the Philippines at Subic Bay and Sangley Point, I stopped by Kent's house and spent some time with him. His wife, Fran, who had served as a nurse during World War II, had died in 2002. Since then, Kent, who has three daughters and is retired from a career in the cattle business, maintains his family home, works with the Greeley Chapter of the Marine Corps League, volunteers at the Denver Veterans' Administration Hospital and watches New York Yankees baseball games and Denver Broncos football games.

World War II and the Iwo Jima campaign are still clear in his mind. He says the Navy coxswain didn't even get up on shore at Green Beach before dropping the back ramp and "telling us to get the hell off." While he laughs about it now, he said the coxswain got a good cussing from everybody at the time.

"We all got soaked in about four to five feet of water," he said. "But we were lucky that the surf wasn't rough that day – just lapping at the shoreline – and we all got ashore.

"The first dead man I saw was a spread-eagled Navy frogman lying face down in his wet suit, bobbing up and down at the shoreline. The next one was a Marine, located a little up a steep terrace, lying in a prone position with his arm stretched out on his M1 ahead of him, face toward me, looking as if he was asleep. There was a hole in his helmet."

Before Stegner left the island at the end of the campaign, he saw many more dead and wounded men. But he was never wounded.

"Oh, one day I got what I call a 'John Kerry' wound," he said, chuckling. "Just a tiny shrapnel wound on my right wrist. It didn't hardly bleed, and none of our men would have ever considered a Purple Heart for something like that. That was my only wound during the 36-day campaign. I was truly blessed."

And blessed is the only way he ever explains how he stayed alive. The Fifth Marine Division's – and Stegner's company's mission – was to secure the area located closest to Mt. Suribachi at the narrowest part of the island the first day. That took two days under constant fire with heavy casualties.

"There were a lot of men in a small area, and we

Continued on next page

THE EDITOR'S DESK

Continued from previous page

got badly disorganized,” Stegner said. “It was the second day when we finally got our squads and companies back in order. Just before it became completely dark, mortar shells from the slopes and top of Suribachi came in on us like rain. I lost a third of my squad the night ... direct hits into a lot of foxholes.”

The next morning, Stegner said the company “saddled up” and started to take the narrow area on the west side of Suribachi and, he says he thought, scale it to the top on that side. They never made it. Two destroyer escorts raced almost up to shore “at flank speed” and apparently thinking the men were Japanese, “bombed us with 20 mm shells from pom-pom guns on the foredeck.”

Stegner has wondered to this day if the plan was to send A Company to the top of Mt. Suribachi from the west side of the island. Whatever the plan was, “friendly fire” caused many casualties that day. It was that day or the next day that Ben had told me years ago that he got hit by shrapnel from the ships off shore that ended his “Iwo deal.”

What was left of A Company made it to the top of Suribachi on the fourth day, D+4. “The flag was up,” Stegner said, “and off shore, we could hear a lot of noise from our ships. It was a wonderful moment, amidst a lot of terror, death and destruction – and a lot more to come for us – as the worst was yet to come on the way north to Kitano Point.”

Another thing Stegner has wondered through the years is why Sgt. Sherman Watson of F/2/28 and his small reconnaissance patrol haven't been given more credit for being the first men to reach the top of Suribachi on the morning of Feb. 23 when they were sent up at 8 a.m. to look for enemy troops and check out the top.

According to Stegner and other sources, Watson and his men, Cpls White and Mercer and Pfc. Louis Charlo, encountered no resistance and saw no enemy. When the men started back down and Watson signaled that the mountain was clear, Lt. Shirvier led his 40-man patrol from E/2/28 up the side of Mt. Suribachi and planted the first flag there at about 10 a.m. The famous Joe Rosenthal photo of the second flag raising was taken a couple of hours later.

For the next five weeks, until the end of the campaign on the 36th day, Stegner said it was combat both day and night. “We would advance a little and get pinned down under enemy fire,” he said. “We'd call in our 60mm and 81mm mortars, as well as strikes from our 105 and 155

batteries of artillery. Each time we gained a little, we lost a few more men. We'd call in mortars and artillery strikes head of us, advance a little, find cover and tried to hold the ground.”

One morning they advanced over a long, level area and “got hit from all directions,” Stegner said. “Pete Hansen went down on my left, Tony Stein (later awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions on D-Day) on my right and Ben Green a little farther to my right. Earl Dent dragged Ben to a shell hole for cover. A corpsman had Pete, and I had Tony. He was alive, but not for long. He died in my arms.”

At the end of the 36-day campaign, Stegner said they “gathered their gear and started the long walk back to the south end of the island. A few of our men found a ride on the back of a 6x6 truck. One of them got shot and killed by a sniper. After 36 days of combat, to be killed by a sniper after the island was supposedly secured, that was really bad luck.”

By then Stegner said only three men were left who landed with A Company on D-Day: Merritt “Doc” Savage, who received the Navy Cross, Lloyd Gossell and himself. And they were amazed when they got back to the south end of the island.

“All three division cemeteries looked as if they were almost completed — crosses, archways and all. It tore me up. Rear echelon men and Seabees were applauding and taking pictures. We sure enough looked like ‘the ragged-assed Marines’ — whiskers, tattered clothing, long hair, filthy, stinking. When we got to the bivouac area, some of the men went back to the Fifth Division Cemetery to see if they could find their buddies' graves. I couldn't do it. ... I never went to the cemetery. I still remember most of them as they were.

“I was the most dejected I've ever been. When I came off the island, it seemed like all my friends were gone. I was so down. I never have forgotten on the deck of that ship that took us out of there, back to Camp Tarawa, being all by myself. The only ones I knew on there were Lloyd Gossell and Doc Savage. The rest of my buddies were gone, injured or killed.

“I just felt terrible. I felt all alone and felt guilty – why the heck am I still alive? I felt guilty, and I still wonder why. It couldn't have been luck when they go down on all sides of you all the time and you don't.

“I've gotten more religious that I ever was in the last few years. I think maybe it was the grace of God. It sure couldn't be luck. You couldn't have enough luck.”

NEW PRESIDENT

Continued from page 1

in March 1944. The next day our orders were changed, and we were sent to Camp Pendleton for training with the Fifth Marine Division. This was a good deal as we were in better barracks, but after a few months we were ordered to pack up again and we landed in Hilo, Hawaii.

In Hilo we were put in tents in a camp with only cold showers and hot showers once a week. This is where I got my first stripe, Pfc. This is the place where we learned to live off the land as we did our own cooking after we landed from the boats. We carried all our own rations and water on another island.

We got word that we were to ship out to fight the Japs but did not know where we were going. They got all of us on some sugar cane cars on the railroad to go to Honolulu to get supplies and ammo.

We were given a few hours to see the town but had to be back before dark. We were assigned to our sleeping quarters aboard the ship. We were told that we would be going to the island of Guam in the Pacific.

On board the ship we went over maps and different terrain signs. After a few days we were shown a map and a diagram of the island of Iwo Jima. We also had a make-up model of the island on a large table. Each company took turns studying the terrain and our assigned areas after we hit the beach and moved inland.

During our days on the ship we spent the time taking care of our equipment. We also had a contest to see who could disassemble or assemble our firearms to pass the time, and I won first place blindfolded.

We landed on the beach at Iwo Jima at 9:01 a.m. on Feb. 19, 1945. We had to jump off the landing craft and started following our schedule of crossing the island, which we did and stopped to regroup on the other side along and above the beach.

We were getting ready to move out when a pillbox was sighted and we had the demo team go around and

drop a charge into it. Then we started to move out along the beach and made preparations for our overnight stay. We kept on firing and destroying the pillboxes and moving as fast as possible.

Then we were told to go back and rest so we could get food and supplies. The next morning our sister regiment (28th Marines) raised the flag on the mountain, and everyone cheered. We were instructed to move up to the front lines and keep guard for a retaliation to the flag raising. We dug in for the night.

The next day we advanced some and ran into a pillbox and needed to throw a grenade to destroy it. No one but me had one left, and no one would take it to throw. So I threw the grenade, and the pillbox was full of Jap ammo, which blew up and, of course, blew me with it.

The corpsman could not feel a pulse, so I was left for dead. The next day I woke up and hurt all over and knew something was wrong when I tried to move. I found I had a good arm and hand and got my pack off and cut the straps and got some sulphur powder packets out and spread this over my body as much as possible.

I tried to find some eats and found my jaw was broken. I also realized that I was hurting, and I knew I should try crawling as I heard digging – digging foxholes for the night. So I started crawling and moved very slowly. Our foxholes would fill up during the night because the shelling shifted the sand.

After some time as I got closer to the digging, our company of Marines saw me and dragged me to the lines and sent me down to the beach aid station. The doc said, “Get him on the hospital ship. I can’t care for him here.”

I wound up in the Navy hospital for seven months and was discharged from the Navy hospital in San Diego. I returned home and was able to finish my schooling and became a public accountant and auditor.

See you in Biloxi in October 2010.

Thanks for successful auction, raffle

The auxiliary committee wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the Silent Auction and Raffle. Your contributions of time, talent and generous bids made this year’s auction and raffle one of our most successful in recent years.

We especially want to thank Florence Curnutt for her donation of a week at the Hawaii condo and Ralph Simoneau for his woodcuts. We made \$1,000 from the auction and \$300 from the raffle. We also made \$665 from the very

generous donations from the Ladies of the Auxiliary for the upkeep of “Matt.”

Because of everyone’s generosity, we were able to increase our donation to the wounded Marine Semper Fi Fund. We hope that next year’s auction will be as successful. We are seeking your donations again for the 2010 reunion in Biloxi, Miss. Thank you all again. Without your donations and bids, we would not be so successful.

– Pat McGruder
Auxiliary Correspondent

Clarification

It was recently reported that because of illness, Trustee Mike Dietz had resigned his position. As Mark Twain once said about a premature report of his death, Mike called to report that both his illness and his resignation was greatly exaggerated. He's still kicking and still on board.

Correction

George E. Wahlen was not in the 27th Marines, as reported on page 13 of the Summer 2009 issue. Rather, he served with Dean F. Keeley in the 1st platoon of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines, Keeley reports. When the Fifth Division was based at Camp Tarawa, he says the two shared a tent, along with four other jarheads, and that they were close friends until Wahlen's death.

Camp Tarawa museum looking for items to display

I am currently community affairs officer and past commandant of the Camp Tarawa Detachment of the Marine Corps League on the Big Island of Hawaii. Our detachment's main mission is to keep alive the history of the 55,000 Marines and Navy corpsmen of the 2nd and 5th Marine Divisions who trained at Camp Tarawa during World War II.

We have in the planning stage a 20,000-square-foot museum and educational center dedicated to keeping this history alive here on the Big Island. We have started collecting items relating to this period to be used at the museum. If you have anything you would like to donate, please contact me at home or by e-mail.

For more information on our detachment, check out the Web site at www.camptarawamcl.com. If you go to the foundation page on the Web site, you will see a picture of the color rendering of the museum and the museum floor plan.

– Jim Browne
(808) 883-0069

Barefoot.one@hawaiiantel.net

Reunion photos posted online

Here is the Web site link that has the pictures we took during the week of the reunion: 5thmarinereunion.weebly.com/index.html.

I'd appreciate it if you could post it in the *Spearhead News* so those who were unable to attend

and those for whom I didn't get e-mail addresses can take a look, too. Thanks very much!

– Kim Johnson-Hammond
Kimberrann@gmail.com

Information sought about memorial flagstaff on Iwo

Since June 2009 I've been searching for photographs and information about the concrete memorial on the island of Iwo Jima atop of Mt. Suribachi.

I sent an e-mail to the National Marine Corps Museum at Quantico, Va., which replied that it had nothing and referred me to the National Archives. The National Archives doesn't have anything, either. It was suggested that I check with the Marine Corps Museum and Leatherneck Magazine. Leatherneck checked its archives and reported that the only thing it had was a story run in 1952 about "Howlin' Mad" Smith visiting the memorial.

I sent an e-mail to Navy History and was told nothing was there.

I sent an e-mail to a site dedicated to the 31st USNCB "Sea Bees," who were the ones who built the memorial, and the reply was once again in the negative.

I happened onto the Fall 2008 issue of *Spearhead News*, archived on the Tales Press Web site at www.talespress.com, on the Internet and downloaded it to read. I was delighted to find the 4 November 1945 newspaper reprint on pages 14 and 15, because at the bottom left of page 14 was a small story entitled: "Memorial Flagstaff Raised On Suribachi."

A memorial flagstaff, designed and constructed by the 31st CBs on Iwo's Mount Suribachi, was dedicated Oct. 2 by Army Garrison Forces on the island. The flagstaff commemorates the raising of the American flag on Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945, by Marines of the 28th Regiment. It is located on the exact spot the original flag was put up.

The forward to the dedication program read: "This memorial is a tribute to the valor of the Americans who fought and died on Iwo Jima."

I believe the story gives the dedication date of the memorial. Information also included mentions that the Army Garrison Forces dedicated the memorial and that there was a dedication program.

I'm thinking that if the Army took the time to

have a dedication program printed up, surely they had a photographer or two on hand to make photos.

I've sent an e-mail to Carlisle Army Barracks in Pennsylvania, since it is a repository for Army history, and hopefully there will be copies of the dedication program, photos, etc.

Aside from the dedication photos and information, I would like to know if anyone has information about the memorial's construction, blueprints, construction photos, etc., and photos made of the memorial through the years. The reason I'd like to have photos of the memorial through the years is to document the changes that have occurred. The earliest images I have were made in May or June of 1946 and sent to me by a former Army Ordinance Company sergeant who was stationed on Iwo 1946-47.

If any SMDA members have information about the construction and dedication, dates, etc. and photos from 1945 to the present, and are willing to scan and/or send copies, I'd be most appreciative of their assistance. My quest is a personal historical interest and the lack of "official" information has only served to intensify that interest.

– Ken B. Harper
US Navy 1979-83, US Army 1985-89
MCL Detachment #1310 Honorary Member 2009
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Humor him

I would appreciate any funny stories from your Fifth Division days while at Pendleton and Hawaii, prior to Iwo.

– Robert C. Strome
7090 E. Mescal St., Apt. 236
Scottsdale, AZ 85254

Seeking information about Sonny Lein

I'm looking for information on Pfc. Milan C. "Sonny" Lein. Sonny was my Grandpa Larson's nephew – my second cousin. He was killed in action on Feb. 19, 1945, on Iwo Jima.

From my research, Sonny was with C Company, First Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment, Fifth Marine Division. So he landed on Green Beach.

Sonny is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn.

I would like to know if someone from Sonny's unit knew him. If so, I would love to hear from you.

I would like to know more about his death. Maybe someone saw him on the opening day of the invasion.

You can reach me at (763) 389-4002. Please leave a message. If I'm not around, I'll get back to you.

I would like to thank the men of the United States Marine Corps for your service during World War II. I don't want Sonny and the other Marines who gave their lives on Iwo Jima to be forgotten.

– Bruce Russell Anderson
406 6th Ave. South
Princeton, MN 55371-2023

Service record acquired

I was fortunate to receive my cousin (for whom I'd been searching information about prior to the reunion in Houston) Pvt. Murdock A. Campbell's service record showing he was a member of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines.

I hope you can forward this to Easy Company members you know or send me their contact information, as I would like to see if anyone remembers him.

(Editor's Note: Col. Dave Severance was the commanding officer of Easy Company on Iwo Jima, the company that took the first flag to the top of Mt. Suribachi on 28 February, and might be able to help.)

Here is what is in the record:

He enlisted 25 March 1944 in San Diego, transferred to Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines on 27 May 1944. (Lt. George G. Wells was the CO) and trained in San Diego thru January 1945. The Fifth Division moved to Hawaii for further training until leaving for Iwo Jima via Eniwetok Atoll. Easy Company was transported on the USS Missoula to Atoll, then LST 481 to Iwo Jima, and 1st Lt George G. Wells was the commanding officer for Easy Company and then battalion adjutant on Iwo. His signature is on all the records.

Easy Company landed on 19 February, and my cousin's records show he was KIA on 8 March 1945 from gunshot wounds to the chest. He was a BAR man. If anyone can hook me up with someone who might recall him, that would be great.

– Steven Campbell
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Shared moments mark memorial talk at reunion

Editor's note: Paul Merriman, former Pfc. originally from Pittsburgh who has lived the last 40 years in Houston, was the memorial speaker at the Sept. 21-27 reunion. He joined the Marine Corps on his 17th birthday, went to boot camp on Parris Island, landed on Iwo Jima with the 31st Replacement Draft, then joined F/2/28 and was wounded on March 10. After recovering from his wound, he returned to Camp Tarawa and went to Japan during the Occupation. He returned to the States as a member of the 1946 Pacific Marine Rifle Team. Merriman is the founder and retired president of HISCO, a national electronics distributor, and holds the patents for the covering that American troops wear today on their body armor.

By Paul Merriman

Fellow Iwo veterans:

Recently, Rev. Pate, and before Rev. Pate, Rev. John Passenen 26th Marines — Shirley — we can all recall his annual remembrances and his “Return to Iwo” prayers. He was truly a good man — maybe a great man — and one of us — the Few.

He said he'd try to wear something about the Marine Corps every day — tie pin, belt buckle, lapel pin — I copied him today. I'm wearing the whole darn uniform.

John said he would always raise a glass — every Feb 19th— and spoke of presiding at more and more Marine funerals at his church. The families did not know.

I do not have the credentials — nor the skills — to take his place, but I want to try. Thank you to Ivan Hammond and the committee for letting me be up here.

We here have all seen the movies about Iwo Jima. A lot of us have all the cassettes, the DVDs. We've watched the HBO shows, the History Channel shows —

some of us have a brick at the new Iwo-shaped Marine museum at Quantico. Most of us have seen “Sands of Iwo Jima,” “Flags of Our Fathers,” even “Letters from Iwo Jima” — all good movies.

But we here — you and me — WE WERE THERE! Everybody in the world has seen the picture of the flag raising, the most copied photograph of all time. But you and me — We LOOKED UP.

You will surely remember (and never forget) that things weren't going good on that D+4 day, no matter where you were on Iwo. Front and rear, we were dug in deep, getting hit with everything the Japs had in artillery, mortars and rifles. We were gaining costly inches at the front, and they shelled ALL the guys on the island, especially incoming reinforcements. There

were no safe places.

And then, suddenly, there it was. The flag. And as you know, we all shot our guns. All the ships rang their bells and fired their guns straight up. We yelled. We were so-o-o happy. *Our* Marines were up there. They had the hill. We had no idea they were that close. I think we all became real Marines at that moment.

The Few — The Proud — You're one of us.

I know you remember. It was such good news. By God, we were winning! Our guys were up there. No more

shots would come at us from that mountain. I think we all got so enthused that this battle was going to end soon ... our guys were on that damn mountain. We were so-o-o proud.

And that's what we have — you and me — that no one else can ever understand — that feeling when we saw that flag. How our *esprit de corps* just exploded. What a moment for us to have!

We have a furniture salesman here in Houston,



Merriman speaks at the reunion in Houston.

a really good guy, who is on radio and TV night and day, selling his furniture shouting, “Buy it today, get it tonight.” He’s a generous, community-minded, decent businessman.

He usually wears a shirt made from the American flag. It bothers me.

I used to run marathons – the Marine Corps Marathon twice – and runners go by me (everybody goes by me) with little shorts made from American flags around their little buns.

They all want to look patriotic.

They will never know the reverence that WE feel to that flag. What a small American flag meant to a bunch of Marines 64 years ago.

I was 31st Replacement Draft at Iwo. We were assigned to the Fifth Pioneers – stay at the beach and unload stuff from the supply boats coming in, and load the wounded on those same boats and send them back out to the ships. Our guys were like the 5th regulars, in that we were a mix of older and young Marines, except not trained nearly as well. Or nearly as long.

We worked the shore line until it was jammed with damaged and broached boats. Then we started to carry the ammo and water and stuff up to the front guys, and we’d bring back the dead Marines and help the wounded get back to the beach. We carried the dead Marines back in their own poncho. They were laid side-by-side in a trench at the beach. The burial guys took their dog tags, watches and personal things. We piled their weapons, cartridge belts, helmets, canteens and ammo in little piles.

We dug in the sand with bayonets, looking for mines so a road could begin up the beach. We stacked the Fifth ammo dump at the beach that all blew up one night.

Then we were sent up in little groups to join a line outfit while they were in reserve. I met our new squad leader, Cpl. Unger and listened real close to everything he said. We spent some time closing caves with C2 dynamite bags. One day, we went swimming off the west coast.

Then we went into the line.

On March 10, I got my million-dollar wound, a piece of an American hand grenade some brave Jap threw back. (I didn’t throw it.) I recovered in Honolulu with a lot of you and rejoined F/2/28 back at Camp Tarawa, and then with many of you, on to Japan – and later, into the Second Marine Division.

So I’m like you – a lot of moments on Iwo that stay in your head.

Of course, [you remember] all the close calls, the noise, the friends and the strangers that die around you – violently — the helpless feelings, and yes, praying.

We were in a tight place – pinned down, couldn’t move – and the yell comes, “Marine coming through!”

And then a guy slides into our hole. He’s white as a ghost and clean and he’s got a box. He opens the box, and there are hot apple turnovers to give us! He’s from the cooks, somewhere in the back; they want to help, and they risk themselves to bring US something. I was 17. I was impressed. I cry when I think about it. Semper Fidelis –Always a Marine.

I still love apple turnovers. And we all remember the little bottles of brandy.

As you know so well, Iwo was a very costly battle for our Fifth Division. Unlike today’s “actions,” we were in a real war. Both sides had uniforms, both sides had discipline, both sides had leadership and plenty of ammunition. Both had helmets, tanks, artillery and strong motivation. It was “in-your-face, take-no-prisoners” combat – from 9 a.m. on D-Day, Feb. 19, until the end – and then some. You were the best America had, and they were the best Japan had – and you took it to them and you beat ’em!

And it was terrible – almost 30,000 dead guys in 36 days.

We, here, who have survived, have some wonderful, and some very sad, memories. We have each other: the Fifth Marine Division Association. We have the great – the greatest – photo by Joe Rosenthal. We have the magnificent Marine Monument in Washington, D.C., by Felix De Weldon. And we have the sacred dedication by Rabbi Roland Gittlesohn at our Fifth Division Cemetery.

But we also have the combat man’s curse: Why me? Why him? It doesn’t go away. We know it could have gone either way. And we are here. Still here.

Now we read that Iwo Jima today is empty; no one is on that little island. Uncle Sam used it for a weather station for a while, then GAVE it back to Japan. And it’s empty – empty. We just GAVE IT BACK. What about the 20,000 Japanese soldiers who fought to death trying to hold on to it — and what about our 6,800 dead Marines — who died to take it away from them? It does

Continued on next page

SHARED MOMENTS

Continued from previous page

not seem right, but now we are just a few lines in the history books.

How do we cope with the vicious and fickle Fate? How can we not remember the horror they endured? We here know the preciousness of their lives. We send messages to their spirits, and we never get answers. Still, we are urgently charged to remember and honor each of them, our Marine buddies. Thankfully, the United States Marine Corps teaches every new recruit what we did. They will tell you that they stand on your shoulders.

Above all, we know, that what we – and they – did on Iwo Jima was the right thing to do.

I'll start to close now. Please allow me to recall again Pfc. Rev. John Passenen and an eloquent memorial he presented to us, I think, in Scottsdale, Ariz., a few years ago. He told us about our religions – many of our faiths, Christian, Jewish, Buddhism, Muslim, our own American Indians, all the ancient worshippers had a way to honor, and they took the time to respect their fallen warriors.

There have been a lot of Memorial Days – and memorial ways. Remembering those who died on the battlefield.

And many of these ceremonies had to do with our names. We each have a name – everyone has a name. You have your name; I have my name. Our parents gave us our names at our birth, or at our baptism or a child-birth celebration. You ARE your name. That's you. Rev. Passenen told us that when a person's name is said out loud we can easily recall that person, dead or alive. I say Bert Clayton and we can see him. I say Bob Hope, and he is here in our head. I say Jesus Christ, and he is back – crucified but not gone – because we say His name. When you just think about someone who is not here, and you recall their name, they are here, in your head, even if they are in the ground.

So to think of someone and to speak their name is to keep them with us, not forgotten, not gone to dust yet.

John Passenen said so. He said we are Marines and all the Marines who ever lived are alive through us today.

And then Rev. John Passenen asked us bring back our fellow Marines who were killed on Iwo Jima – bring them here for a moment for us to honor them and

thank them and let them know we have not forgotten.

He asked us then, and so I ask us now – stop, think and respect our dead Marines as WE say THEIR names. We say them out loud – or quietly to yourself – or in your head.

And John told us that if we forget, or a name comes to us later today, that's OK – we will have accomplished our purpose here this morning.

So let us do so quietly. Let's bow our heads ... Joe Messina, Alfred Ciccocelli, Max Mills, Rufus King. ...

Amen.

Now one last request: On Iwo, as I said earlier, we Pioneers – Replacements – landed and stayed at the beach to unload incoming supplies. On the first day, after most assault troops were ashore, the Japanese began to bomb and shell the beach, hoping to annihilate us all. Fortunately, you – the guys in the assault waves – kept moving up, attacking in the black sand and moving forward, like Marines do.

As we unloaded supplies, we could see the shells coming in a pattern. The beach had been gridded out, and the shelling was walking up and down the whole beach. We worked until we saw the shells coming toward us, then we ducked for cover. We covered our heads and waited for "our" shell to hit.

I was passing boxes and cartons to the next guy in the chain line – it was Joe Messina. At roll call every morning, we stood beside each other – alphabetical, I'm Merriman, he is Messina – when we saw that the next shell would be landing near us, we said, "Time to duck."

Joe went that way, and I went this way. We dove in with other guys in a depression in that black sand. We covered our heads and waited, and I heard Joe: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come –"

And it hit. The shell landed right in the hole with Joe.

They were all killed. Just like that. Gone.

Killed. Dead.

Would you please take this time now, and we'll finish the Lord's Prayer for Joe Messina and ALL of YOUR friends who died. Pray with me out loud.

"... thy will be done, on earth ..."

"... Forever and ever. For Thine is ..."

Amen.

Semper Fidelis.

Thank you, guys.

NEW MEMBERS: WELCOME ABOARD!

BEHNKE, Lynda **ASSOCIATE**, Knotts Island, NC
FOWLER, Deborah **ASSOCIATE**, North Olmstead, OH
FROST, Leota K. **ASSOCIATE**, Garden City, MI
GHASTER, Lon **F-2-27**, Sun City, AZ
LEMON, Clyde **3RD COMBAT ENGR**, Houston, TX
PAINTON, Kathy **ASSOCIATE**, Kamuela, HI
SULLIVAN, Julia **ASSOCIATE**, Saratoga, CA

ANNUAL TO LIFE MEMBERS:

AMOS, Ruth **ASSOCIATE**, Bentleyville, PA
ANTONELLIS, Donato **L-4-13**, Riverdale, NJ
BARONE, Nick **H-3-26**, Uniontown, PA
CORLEY, Sgt. Maj. J.K. **D-2-28**, Walnut Creek, CA
GUNDER, Robert **G-3-28**, Homosassa, FL
MANLEY, Maurice **CBMU-620 CB**, Florence, SC
NAUGHTON, James **H-3-28**, Geneva, IL
RONDERO, Peter **F-2-27**, Clovis, CA
VOIGHT, Virgil **1ST MARINE**, Plainfield, IN

Minutes of the FMDA Business Meeting September 26, 2009

Ivan Hammond called the meeting of the Fifth Marine Division Association to order at 12:30 p.m. Minutes of the 2008 meeting held in Arlington, Va., were read by Joyce Overgard. Before the approval of the minutes, Tony De Santis asked that the minutes show that the president segregated the Associates out from other members, and at this point Aline Hammond was granted permission to speak. She said that at the 2008 meeting, the Associates were asked to sit in the back of the room and shut up.

A motion was made and seconded that all paid-up Associates be allowed to vote at Business Meetings. Vote was 39 For; 7 Against. Motion carried.

Ted Overgard stated that our treasurer, Jim Shriver, had told him that we had more than \$146,000 in the checking account, plus \$35,000 in a CD due to mature in February 2010.

He then mentioned that the treasurer found the 16-page financial report on the

2008 reunion from Ken Watterson impossible to decipher. There was no indication as to the amount of dollars received, nor of how it was dispersed. There was no indication as to whether we made or lost money. However, Ted Overgard stated that he had given \$3,000 to Ken Watterson, and it had not been returned. There was at least that much lost. Also in Ken Watterson's report, there was a \$1,500 outlay for travel expenses. These kinds of expenses are never allowed without the prior approval of the trustees. Mr. Watterson did not have prior approval.

Ted Overgard moved that Clyde Lemon look further into this to get a better accounting. John Madill seconded. Motion passed. Clyde Lemon agreed.

Walter O'Malley suggested that a new directory be printed to replace the one printed in 2004. Joyce Overgard said she would look into the cost.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

– Ted Overgard
Secretary

FINAL MUSTER

(“Roll Call of the Reef”)

ARMSTRONG, Edwin R. **D-2-28** 7/22/09
BEHNKE, Christian **G-3-13** 8/26/09
BUSHNELL, Harold **A-1-28** Aug 2009
ENOCH, James H. **H-3-26** 7/18/09
JOHNSON, Donald E. **E-2-27** 8/11/09
JOHNSON, J.B. **C-1-13** 6/11/09
LAWS, Sgt. James **11 AMPH** 7/25/09
MASON, Leo B. **5TH TANK** 2/20/09
MOODY, Fred **COMM-3-26** 9/7/09
REED, Harry K. **B-1-26** 9/3/09
SHOCK, William H. **5TH PIONEER** 4/19/09
ST. AUBIN, Gerald D. (Jerry) **I-3-28** 7/11/09
THOMAS, Nick **I-3-26** 7/28/09
VERBER, Robert **H-3-26** 7/5/09



Secretary's Corner

For scholarship information, contact the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation directly, and do so before December 2009.

Their application forms will be ready for 2010 some time in December. You must contact them at this address: Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 3008, Princeton, N.J., 08543-3008. Telephone: 800-292-7777.

We need people to step forward to do reunions. It has been suggested that the Ho Chunk Hotel and Casino in Southern Wisconsin would be a good location. Who will look into that one?

Rapid City, S.D., would be a good reunion location. We have Mt. Rushmore and the Crazy Horse monuments to visit. To keep our Association going, we need your help.

The 2010 dues should be paid by Jan. 1. If you haven't paid this by March 31, 2010, you will be dropped from our membership rolls.

NEW ITEM! All paid-up Associates can now vote at future business meetings of our Association. Plan to attend business meetings and let your voice be heard!

– Ted Overgard
Secretary

Spearhead Magazine reprints available

Do you remember your *Spearhead Magazines* from the 1940s? If you have misplaced any of your three copies and are interested in replacing them, we have just the solution for you. I have had copies made of all three issues, and you can still obtain copies if you want to replace the original ones. There are still a few sets left, and I do not intend to order more.

They are now in 8.5” x 11” format, printed on cardstock paper with a spiral binding and plastic covers. They will lay flat and are very easy to see and read. The copies are a great addition to your keepsakes and also a great gift for your children and grandchildren. Many of our members have bought copies for their loved ones.

This was the idea of Steve Vogelzang, nephew of Sam Zigmata, a member of the Pioneers, who wanted to honor his uncle. I agreed to take on the project, and all proceeds above the costs of printing and mailing will go to the Injured Marines Semper Fi Fund through the Ladies' Auxiliary. The auxiliary has been donating our funds to this group for several years because it helps our Marines.

Each copy is \$20, plus \$5 for mailing. (We can mail up to three copies for the \$5.)

The copies available are #1 “**Camp Pendleton**”; #2 “**Iwo Jima**”; and #3 “**Occupation of Japan**.” If you are interested in obtaining any of the copies please contact me.

– D.D. Dietz
(520) 622-2450
dddietz@cox.net



Another good man gone

Friend offers remarks at memorial service of Harold Bushnell

By Dr. Craig Leman, H/3/26

Harold and I have been friends for more than 50 years. I can't remember how we met, but we soon discovered we had both been in the 5th Marine Division and had been wounded in action at about the same time and same area on Iwo Jima.

Although we didn't know each other in 1945, I know enough about what he went through to tell you about it. Harold and I compared notes about the battle with other Iwo veterans, most of whom are now gone. I have seen a video interview he made for the WW II Veterans History project, telling his story in his usual modest, understated, honest way.

Harold was 15 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. He wanted to serve his country. Too young for the military, he volunteered to work at the Swan Island Kaiser Shipyards in Portland as a ship fitter, helping to build its first nine ships. As soon as he was old enough, he joined the Marine Corps, since he liked their uniforms, their reputation, their international mission and role overseas, and because he wanted to take action against the Japanese who had attacked our country.

He went through boot camp at San Diego, where he was a squad leader. After boot camp, he chose to join Carlson's Second Raider Battalion, an elite assault unit that had fought the Japanese behind their lines in the South Pacific islands, Makin and Guadalcanal. The Raiders had just returned to the U.S. and gave him advanced training in jungle warfare at Camp Pendleton. As the war in the Pacific gained momentum, the Marine Corps adapted by closing down its Raider and Parachute battalions, dispersing their highly trained veterans as cadre for the new divisions of green troops who would have to assault larger, heavily defended islands: Guam, Saipan, Peleliu, Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Harold joined the Fifth Marine Division at Camp Pendleton where he was assigned to Company A, 28th Regiment. He and Verla married, he underwent ever more intensive training, and he boxed in several service competitions before the division shipped to Hawaii in mid-1944.

Harold was chosen to be a runner, a Marine in company headquarters whose duty was to carry messages between the commander and his five platoon leaders to the units on either flank, and to the higher echelon at battalion headquarters. These Marines had to be intelligent, reliable, fast on their feet, and willing to risk their lives on each mission, moving through the front lines in a hail of fire. They were nearly always young, lean and smart. Field radios at that time were primitive and unreliable, field telephones were often cut by enemy fire, and runners were absolutely indispensable in combat.

At Iwo Jima, Harold landed from an amphibious tractor on the extreme left flank of the landing force at the foot of Mt. Suribachi in the first assault wave. Resistance was fierce. Many of his comrades were killed or wounded. He rendered first aid to them in addition to his usual duties, had many close calls, witnessed the use of flame throwers to overcome the entrenched enemy, and, on D-plus 4, was with the first party to scale Mt. Suribachi to raise the flag in the famous photo.

The enemy was determined to fight to the death, kill as many of us as possible in the hope that our bloodshed would discourage America and make us sue for peace.

It was like an enormous game of chicken. Harold's unit joined the long, bloody assault on the remaining Japanese at the other end of the tiny island. They fought on for another week until a shell from an enemy knee mortar exploded beside him, killed two of his comrades and wounded two more, blasting dozens of hot, jagged metal fragments into Harold's face and neck. He remembered losing a lot of blood, being carried by stretcher to an aid station where he was given plasma, then taken to the beach, to a ship, and to a hospital on Guam.

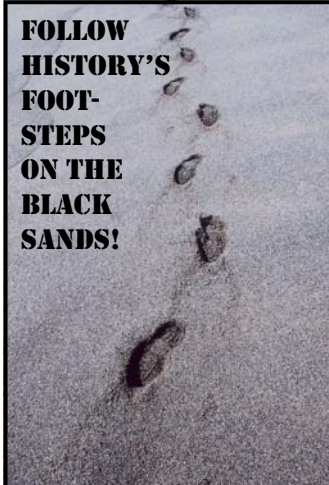
A hospital plane took him to Hawaii where X-rays revealed many fragments deep in his head. His doctor told him that this injury made it too dangerous to risk hemorrhage from more plane flights, so he was transferred by ship to San Francisco, by train to Chicago, and finally by train to a hospital at Oregon's Camp Adair where a neurosurgeon operated, removed the metal and repaired the damage from Harold's wound. The operation took many hours, but Harold's recovery was steady.

After months of treatment, he was discharged. He and Verla put their war experience behind them, made their home in Corvallis, Ore., and moved on with their lives without bitterness or complaint.

Looking back on his wartime service, Harold praised the U.S. Marine Corps: "They made it possible for me to do what I wanted to do. The only drawback to service is you are no longer your own boss. I wanted to be in the front lines. I did what I could as long as I could."

I salute Harold for his gallant service to his country. I am glad he and Verla were able to use the rest of their lives to create a home and a loving devoted family. I am honored to be Harold's friend and to be able to tell you of this early chapter in his admirable life.

The memorial service for Harold Bushnell, A/1/28, was held Aug. 11, 2009.



**65TH
 IWO JIMA
 "REUNION
 OF
 HONOR"
 26 FEB -
 5 MAR 2010**

The Iwo Jima Association of America(IJAA) 65th "Reunion of Honor" is being organized by MajGen Fred Haynes, 5th Marine Division for a return to Iwo Jima 26 Feb - 5 Mar 2010. This historic reunion coordinated by Military Historical Tours for the IJAA and cohosted by the Pacific Aviation Museum will be headquartered at the Outrigger Resort Hotel on Guam. A chartered Continental Airline jet will take the veterans, their families, educators, and historians back to the "Black Sands" and the moving joint commemoration ceremony for the campaign's fallen warriors. As in past years, there will be a Iwo Jima Battle Symposium & Banquet on Guam before our return. Please join us for a stirring reunion with brethren and family.

MHT 2010 BATTLEFIELD TOURS

- 28 Jan - 11 Feb VN Hue City/Tet Offensive
- 22 Feb - 5 Mar WWII General Douglas MacArthur Foundation 65th Anniv PI Return
- 4 - 16 Mar VN 45th Anniv Red Beach Landing
- 4 - 16 Mar VN 3rd MarDiv Return
- 7 - 20 Mar VN Swift Boats & MRF Ops
- 12 - 23 Apr VN Advisors Return
- 18 - 26 Apr Battlefields of Israel
- 9 - 22 May VN 1st MarDiv Return
- 9 - 23 May VN "Saigon to the DMZ"
- 22 - 31 May WWI AEF Battlefields
- 31 May - 5 Jun WWII Battle of Midway
- 6 - 14 Jun WWII D-Day "Normandy to Paris"
- 4 - 17 Jun VN Reconnaissance Operations
- 18 - 24 Jun 65th Anniv Battle of Okinawa
- 16 - 27 Jul WWII Concentration Camps
- 12 - 25 Aug VN 45th Anniv of Op Starlite
- 27 Sep - 3 Oct Guadalcanal Return



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The Suicide Run

By William Styron

Random House, 194 pages

By Josiah Bunting III

The Wall Street Journal – October 3, 2009

Sixteen million young men served in the U.S. armed forces between 1941 and 1945, many millions of them volunteers who had no intention of “staying in” after World War II was over. They were interested in getting what they wanted rather than what the military wanted – they craved adventure and distinction of some sort. Among them were men who would go on to become some of the best writers and poets of their age: Randall Jarrell, Norman Mailer, James Jones, James Dickey. For them, war was human drama, tragedy, terrible testing, a fertile source for the literature of fact and imagination.

In a scrapbook, William Styron’s father labeled a photo of him: “1943 – 18 years young ... enlists in U.S. Marine Corps.”

They were fascinated, as was another of their number, William Styron, by “regulars,” the career officers who had joined the military in the 1920s and 1930s. These officers were a collection of oddments: mostly admirable, some seeking vocations of idealism and patriotism, others drawn to the promise of steady work and service. For a gifted novelist, they presented – as they still do – a rich lode of human character tested under difficult circumstances.

When Styron died in 2006, he left behind a long, unfinished novel titled “The Way of the Warrior.” Extracts from the manuscript have been gathered to make up “The Suicide Run: Five Tales of the Marine Corps.” These fragments of thinly fictionalized autobiographical narratives carry the hallmarks of outstanding mid-century American literature, not least in their blurring of fiction and fact, and in their sheer literary exuberance.

One section of the book, for example, offers a memorable scene when Styron finds himself in Manhattan, a Marine getting ready to be shipped to Korea in 1951 after being recalled to active service. He watches the passage of a parade honoring Gen. Douglas MacArthur, recently fired by the hated pipsqueak Truman. The general, “flanked by shoals of motorcycle outriders,” Styron writes, “fleetingly grimaced, gazing straight at me, and behind the raspberry-tinted sunglasses his eyes appeared as glassily opaque

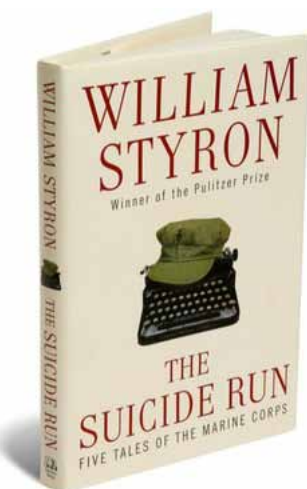
and mysterious as those of an old, sated lion pensively digesting a wildebeest.”

Styron was denied combat: He was in the Pacific in the summer of 1945, preparing for the invasion of the Japanese home islands, a second lieutenant whose division had been held in reserve during the long, bloody Okinawa campaign. Like any young man expecting combat, he was deeply preoccupied with his fear: whether he could master it, whether he could disguise it before his men. Inevitably he found himself wondering whether, even if he escaped death, he would be maimed. One of the longer tales in this book is an exploration of this eternal preoccupation.

The fragments that constitute “The Suicide Run” provide retrospective testimony to a writer’s literary gift. They are unsatisfying, however, as finished pieces. Styron’s novels were unhurried explorations of gigantic themes, their characters richly layered by means of slow accretion and revelation. “Lie Down in Darkness,” “The Confessions of Nat Turner,” “Sophie’s Choice” – these books were conceived and executed with sustained narrative power and exquisite control. They mark Styron as one of the half-dozen great novelists of his generation.

To read the present collection is to be reminded of his talent – but only reminded. The pieces draw attention to surfaces, to “fine” writing, powerful metaphors, literary allusions. At one point we read of a bumpkin evangelist whose “eyes could grow murky and his jaw set and grim. I imagined when the holy spirit of the evangel took a firm grip on his tailbone he could really get worked up into a frenzy.” These are the sorts of effects, Styron himself once told a friend, that should never cause the reader to pause and admire.

The wars of the present and of the 21st century future will be prosecuted by small armies of professionals; they are unlikely to attract a literary sensibility or genius like that of Styron. The writers of wartime imagination have been displaced by hard, edgy “nonfiction” scribes – for the most part people embedded with the professionals for a few months, writing for an audience estranged from military culture, combat and tests of physical courage. The Marines are still looking for a few good men – and finding just enough of them, but no more Styrons.



Bunting, the president of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation in New York, is completing a biography of George Marshall. © Dow Jones & Co., Permission Granted.

FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Ted Overgard, Secretary
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