



# Spearhead NEWS

"Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue"

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of the 5TH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

**OCTOBER 22 - 25, 2020**  
**71ST ANNUAL REUNION**  
**DALLAS, TEXAS**

## Sons of Iwo vets take the helm of FMDA

Bruce Hammond and Tom Huffhines, both native Texans and sons of Iwo Jima veterans who previously served as Association presidents and reunion hosts, were selected to lead the Fifth Marine Division Association as president and vice president, respectively, for the next year.



**President Bruce Hammond and Vice President Tom Huffhines**

Additionally, lifetime FMDA member, Army helicopter pilot and Vietnam veteran John Powell volunteered to host the next FMDA reunion from Oct. 22-25, 2020, in Dallas.

Hammond's father, Ivan (5th JASCO), hosted the 2016 reunion in San Antonio, Texas, when John Butler was president, and in Houston, Texas, in 2009 when he was president himself.

Huffhines' father, John (HS 2/3), hosted the 2006 reunion in Irving, Texas, when he was president. Both veterans worked on establishing the Bar on the Beach

statue in Semper Fi Memorial Park at the Marine Corps War Museum at Quantico, (Triangle) Va., and had long worked with the FMDA.

Continuing his father's work with the Association, President Bruce Hammond said, "It is important that we channel our passion, move forward and focus on our mission for our Marine veterans."

Vice President John Huffhines agreed and said, "Communication with the membership, as good and as often as possible, is extremely key to its existence. Stronger fundraising ideas and efforts should be the main thing on each of our agendas."

Hammond graduated from the University of Texas, Austin, in 1989 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. He worked for 24 years as a well-site drilling-fluids engineer (mud man) on land, in offshore and inland



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**THE SPEARHEAD NEWS**

*Published two times annually in the interest  
 of the Fifth Marine Division Association*

**EDITOR**

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**SECRETARY’S NOTE**

After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and the United States entered World War II, young men and women volunteered for all five branches of the military. The war couldn’t have been won without their selfless service and sacrifices.

But the people at home also served and sacrificed and were just as important to the war effort as those who were in the armed forces. Iwo Jima veteran Jim Kelly (5th Serv), who turned 98 years old on Dec. 29, always says that the war would never have been won without the people at home supporting the needs of the military.

The FMDA has been supported by the veterans since former Iwo Jima Fifth Marine Division commanding general, MajGen Keller Rockey, formed the Association in 1949, and it was always supported by their families. With the number of Iwo Jima veterans/members dwindling and Vietnam veterans/members less engaged, the FMDA finds itself in a position where the home folks are going to have to pick up the slack if the Association is to continue for any length of time.

Members of the Fourth Marine Division Association chose to close down, but the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution are still going long after that war.

A reunion is being planned for Dallas next Oct. 22-25; former President Kathy Painton and Nicole Garcia are continuing to work on the Camp Tarawa Museum that opened recently through the University of Hawaii, Hilo; and the *Spearhead News* is still scheduled to be published twice a year.

And that’s where the home front comes in. President Bruce Hammond’s year-end letter provided an opportunity to make a donation. And this issue of *Spearhead* includes two more ways to contribute.

Fundraising and adding new members are key to the continuation of the Association. John Powell, who just paid for four lifetime memberships, suggested that everybody add a new member in the coming year.

Great idea. Annual memberships and renewals for \$25 are due Jan. 1. The FMDA membership form is on the last page of *Spearhead*. And let us know about any ideas you have for helping preserve the memory of the Fifth Marine Division, securing new members, raising funds, contributing to the FMDA website at 5thmardiv-assoc.org or the FMDA Facebook page, or contributing memorabilia for the Camp Tarawa Museum.

Looking forward to hearing from you to keep the communications going and the Association moving forward.

— Ray Elliott, Secretary

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Ray Elliott



### 'The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' and a little kindness along the way

2ndLt Robert E. Schuelzky landed on Iwo Jima on 19 February 1945 with Easy Company, Second Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment, the company whose members raised the flag on Mount Suribachi. The lieutenant became Easy Company commanding officer Capt Dave Severance's executive officer, then was killed on 17 March and buried in the Fifth Marine Division Cemetery near the base of Mount Suribachi.

Two months later, Robert E. Schuelzky Jr. was born to the deceased lieutenant's wife, Margaret (Mitchell). Like so many other young children of Iwo Jima fathers, and children of all fathers who die in war, Robert Jr. grew up without his father and felt alone.

His mother remarried. He says she never talked much about him, "just saying my father was killed in the war." His grandparents were devastated and would take the young boy to the cemetery after they had their son's remains brought back and buried in the Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

"I felt I was lost," Bob says today, "and didn't know about him. That's the way it was. It really changed me over the years. I felt I was in the background. So what could I ask about my father?"

Bob grew up, went to college, earned a degree, married, worked for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and had one daughter. There had never been any closure.

When his mother died, he had to go to court in 1973 to get his father's box of pictures and personal things his stepfather had in the attic. Bob also got some photos from his grandparents and his father's footlocker from their attic.

Fast forward to November 2018 when military historian Brent Westemeyer called, saying he was looking for information about Bob's father to put a name to the face of the last unidentified Marine in the "Gung Ho photo" on Mount Suribachi.

"My father sure has the features that match the

person's face," Bob said. "But it's still not decided who he is."

Going through the footlocker, Bob learned more about his father. And he sent for his military records from St. Louis in the National Personnel Records Center that told him more about his father.

Feeling he never had closure, a memorial service was held at the gravesite in March 2019 with 100 people in attendance, and a granite bench was donated by friends.

Then at a 2019 Memorial Day service, Bob met FMDA member and Iwo Jima veteran Duane Tunnyhill (I-3-28) from Omaha, Neb. He told Bob about the FMDA, *Spearhead* and the New Orleans reunion. Bob joined the Association, and he and wife Evelyn attended the reunion, hoping, as many do, to meet one person who knew his father. That didn't happen.

"The reunion was wonderful," Bob said. "God gave me many news friends from the reunion."

After learning that his father's commanding officer was still living, Bob hoped to talk to him. When Bob had gone through his father's footlocker, he found a letter then-Capt Severance had written his mother—a typed, single-spaced letter of a little more than a page—after the company got back to Camp Tarawa after Iwo Jima was declared over and the division was preparing for the invasion of Japan.

"Capt Severance knew my mother was pregnant with me," Bob said, aware that the captain's wife had also given birth to a son not long before, "and that my father would never see me."

"The letter to my mother showed so much compassion. It was overwhelming to have a captain that showed that he cared about my mother and me. I was born 62 days after my father's death."

Bob said he read the letter over and over that the captain had written to his mother. Then when the colonel called a few days after the reunion, Bob said, "I was in shock and had to take a second breath."

For the next few minutes, Col Severance, USMC (Ret.), told Bob about his dad, whom he always called "Ski," and they talked about each other's families.

With that, Bob said, "God gave me what I needed. The call really meant so much to me."

Those are the kind of stories that make the FMDA so great: Three men with connections from a battle 75 years ago, meeting at a memorial service, going to a reunion, talking on the phone and sharing the experiences that have shaped lives and have helped the healing process.



# TRIBUTE OF HONOR



## Fifth Marine Division Association MEMORIAL DONATION

Honor the memory of someone special  
through a Memorial Donation to the Fifth Marine Division Association General Fund.  
The names of Memorial Honorees will be published in a future edition of *The Spearhead News*.

Please prepare this form, along with your donation payable to FMDA,  
and mail it to the FMDA Secretary, c/o 2609 N. High Cross Road, Urbana, IL 61802.

A designated acknowledgment of your gift can be sent  
(without indicating the amount of the donation), and you will receive a copy.

The Fifth Marine Division Association is a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Enclosed is my Memorial Donation of \$** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(payable to FMDA)*

**in Memory of** \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please send acknowledgment to:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Honored Deceased (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_



## IWO SONS

Continued from page 1

waters. He also worked in Kuwait in wild well fire-fighting efforts and for eight years as a drilling fluid technology trainer and curriculum developer at the Houston corporate headquarters.

Huffhines graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in 1974. He worked 40 years in construction and consulting engineering before retiring in 2014, following 30 years with Dunaway Association (the final 10 years as president).

John Powell, a graduate of Georgia Tech University,



Powell

is a retired Army lieutenant colonel, was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam with numerous awards for valor, is president of Military Historical Tours with numerous experiences with political and service organizations, coordinating everything from battlefield tours throughout the Pacific and Europe to reunions for large military groups and other associations.

Together, these three men hope to continue to make the Association something that the children and grandchildren of Iwo Jima and Vietnam veterans who served with the Fifth Marine Division and others want to join the organization and help preserve what service and sacrifices these men made to the Fifth Marine Division and the country where we still live in freedom.

— Ray Elliott

## FINAL MUSTER

*("Roll Call of the Reef")*

BATES, Wesley C. <b>C-1-28</b> 11/19/2005	LAURIELLO, John P. <b>HS-27</b> 11/26/2019
BELLEFEUILLE, Ben <b>H-3-26</b> 9/9/2019	LEMON, James D. "Jim" 8/7/2019
BERGEVIN, Claro E. <b>5TH TANK</b> 4/2/2019	LONG Jr., Jesse E. <b>5TH ENG</b> 3/4/2012
BEVIS, LTCOL Clyde E. <b>HQ-1-26</b> 1/30/2016	MALONEY, George <b>E-2-26</b> 8/12/2010
BRISCOE, Charles E. <b>L-4-13</b> 6/16/2019	MILLER, Gerald <b>H-3-27</b> 3/19/2019
CAPLAN, Mort. <b>HS-27</b> 8/21/2018	MOON, John <b>E-2-26</b> 10/29/2019
COOK, COL Richard M. <b>26TH MAR</b> 10/7/2019	MORENO, Antonio F. "Tony" <b>E-2-27</b> 4/10/2019
DEISE Jr., Louis V. <b>31ST REP BTN</b> 9/13/2018	MUELLER, Rudolph T. <b>F-2-26</b> 5/27/2019
DUDLEY, Rimmel H. <b>F-2-13</b> 2/19/2010	NEDERVELD, Leonard <b>E-2-27</b> 1/7/2020
FACCENDA, Remuldo M. <b>E-2-13</b> 2/1/2015	NOLKEMPER, Frank B. <b>F-2-27</b> 3/22/2013
GAFFNEY, Francis E. <b>HQ-1-28</b> 11/13/2005	ONSPAUGH, Robert J. "Bob" <b>C-1-13</b> 9/18/2017
GASCHE, Bob <b>26TH MAR</b> 7/30/2019	ORSLAND, Alvin B. <b>H-3-26</b> 9/10/2019
GIRASUOLO, Samuel S. <b>8TH FIELD DEP</b> 7/26/2018	PEDERSEN, Harold L. <b>5TH RAIDERS</b> 9/7/2019
GRAY, Grant H. <b>5TH PION</b> 10/29/2013	ROMAKER, Robert F. <b>HS-2-13</b> 7/20/2019
HANSON, Robert B. <b>5TH PION</b> 10/6/2017	SCHMITT, Darwin N. <b>5TH TANK</b> 12/1/2005
HEADMAN, Sidney E. <b>F-2-26</b> 4/13/2018	SCOTELLA, James J. <b>HS-28</b> 1/16/2019
HEARRING, James <b>11AMPH</b> 4/25/2019	STEPHENS, Doyle C. <b>27TH MAR</b> 6/1/2018
HOLMES, Dave <b>H-2-27</b> 6/8/2018	STILSON, Robert <b>HS-28</b> 6/29/2019
JACKSON, Francis W. <b>HQ-3-27</b> 12/5/2019	VALENTI, Carlo <b>B-1-28</b> 5/16/2019
JOHNSON, Gunner O. <b>B-1-27</b> 7/13/2019	WARRING, John B. <b>F-2-26</b> 11/23/2017
KING, Harrison R. <b>B-1-28</b> 8/20/2016	WILSON, Adolph "Al" <b>I-3-28</b> 8/7/2019
LANKFORD, Raymond <b>HS-28</b> 2/1/2010	WINTERS, Dean <b>E-2-28</b> 6/8/2008
	YOUNG, Gerald E. <b>5TH ENG</b> 1/17/2003



Send Final Muster notices (including name, unit and date of death) by email to [talespress@talespress.com](mailto:talespress@talespress.com), by USPS to Association Secretary Ray Elliott, 2609 N. High Cross Rd., Urbana, IL 61802, or by calling 217-840-2121.

# 2019 reunion attendees 'pass a good time' in New Orleans

Right: Eleven Iwo Jima veterans of the Fifth Marine Division became their own guest attraction during a visit to the National WWII Museum, which included an entertaining stop at the Stage Door Canteen for lunch and a musical program by the Victory Belles, a trio in the tradition of the Andrews Sisters. Veterans who attended this year were George Boutwell, William Braddock Jr., Ivan Hammond, Al Nelson, Monroe Ozment, George Puterbaugh, Jim Blaine, Ralph Simoneau, Del Treichler, Duane Tunnyhill and George Vouros.

The reunion culminated in a Saturday banquet with dance music provided by a full big-band orchestra.



Above: Ivan Hammond (5th JASCO) and reunion co-host Leonard Isacks

Right: Banquet keynote speaker and author Dan King

Far right: Reunion host Jimmie Hyde-Watson worked tirelessly to organize a memorable week of speakers, hospitality, the annual memorial service and banquet at the Higgins Hotel prior to its public opening.



*Photos by Leonardo Flores*





Above: The Victory Belles make a special stop to the Hospitality Suite to entertain with a few songs of the WWII era.

Right: Morey Butler, left, dances at the banquet with Kathy Tinsley, Cheryl Mach, Claudia Brown and Lynn Payton.



## FMDA to sponsor performances of ‘The American Soldier’ in Texas

The Fifth Marine Division Association is proud to sponsor two live performances of “The American Soldier” Aug. 27 and 28 at the Granbury Live Theater in Granbury, Texas, which is 25 miles southwest of Fort Worth. The actor and author of this one-man play, Douglas Taurel of Hoboken, N.J., has performed the work coast-to-coast myriad times at venues from the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., to Modesto and Stockton, Calif.

“The American Soldier” is based on actual letters written by veterans and their family members from the American Revolution through to the war in Afghanistan. It has been nominated for an Amnesty International Award and featured in The Washington Post, The Huffington Post, Time Out New York, Washington Times and Military Times, among other publications.

“The play touches on many aspects of war and explores the bravery our veterans and families face day-to-day as they return home from combat,” Taurel says. “It brings awareness for the sacrifices our veterans and their families have made for our country



and, more importantly, it says thank you to them.”

Taurel has even staged the play at the invitation of another FMDA member, Cynthia Robotham, last Nov. 11 for the Cape and Islands Veterans Outreach Center in Hyannis, Mass. Robotham’s father, Joseph Blackburn (5th ENGR), and his wartime letters home in envelopes depicting drawings of military life were featured in the Spring/Summer 2019 issue of *Spearhead News*.

“Full house, standing ovation! Amazing!” was Robotham’s report after Taurel’s Cape Cod performance.

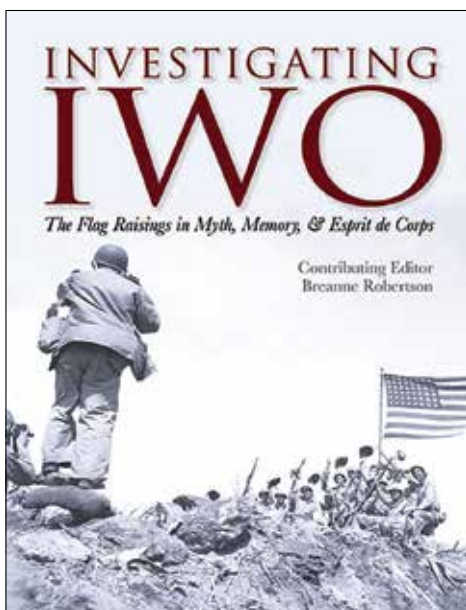
Advance tickets for the Granbury, Texas, shows will go on sale in June, and more information will be available this spring at the Granbury Live and “American Soldier” websites: <https://the-newgranburylive.com> and <https://www.theamericansoldiersoloshow.com>.

Immediately following each of the performances, Taurel will host a question-and-answer period with the audience. The Texas native has also performed in numerous films and such television shows as “Mr. Robot,” “Blue Bloods” and “Person of Interest.”

## USMC History Division issues new book, 'Investigating Iwo'

On Feb. 23, 1945, Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal snapped a photograph of six Marines raising the American flag during the Battle of Iwo Jima. The moment has been, since the beginning, a subject of intense popular interest and scholarly debate. How many flags did the Marines plant that day? Where did the flags come from, and why did they swap them out? What qualifies an individual as a flag raiser? And what does our continuing fascination with the raising say about our identity, our values, and our evolving relationship with the past?

Representing years of accumulated research across a range of academic and professional disciplines, "Investigating Iwo: The Flag-Raisings in Myth, Memory, and Esprit de Corps," edited by Breanne Robertson, presents a collection of 14 essays that fundamentally reconsider the impact of Rosenthal's iconic image on



American culture both at the time of conflict and in the years since.

Precipitated by the 2016 Huly Panel and 2019 Bowers Board investigations, the Marine Corps History Division partnered with military historians, archivists, curators and independent researchers in this important undertaking.

A limited number of free books are available for order from the USMC History Division as part of its outreach mission. Visit <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Publishing/History-Division-Publications/Shopping-Cart/>. Once those copies run out, readers can order a copy through the Government Printing

Office for \$49.

The book is also available to read online at [https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Investigating%20Iwo\\_WEB2.pdf](https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Investigating%20Iwo_WEB2.pdf).



## Estate Gifts to the Fifth Marine Division Association

A bequest of a gift of cash or property, or the percentage of the remainder of an estate or asset, can be made to the Fifth Marine Division Association to help perpetuate its mission and to honor the service and sacrifice of those who served in the Fifth Marine Division.

To make an unrestricted gift that can be used where the need is greatest, share the following bequest language with your estate-planning attorney to include in your will or living trust:

***I give to the FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION, INC., a non-profit 501(c)3 organization headquartered in Tampa, Florida, organized and existing under the laws of the State of Florida, EIN 23-7371335, the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ [or \_\_\_\_\_ % of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate or a description of the specific asset] to be used for the Association's general purpose.***

The Fifth Marine Division Association, Inc., was established in 1949 by those who served in the Fifth Marine Division and attached units of the Fleet Marine Force, U.S. Marine Corps, in part to perpetuate the name, glory and spirit of the Fifth Marine Division. For information regarding tax deductibility of any contribution to the FMDA, please consult your tax advisor.



*Please inform the FMDA of your gift for acknowledgment.*



# WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

## LIFE MEMBERS

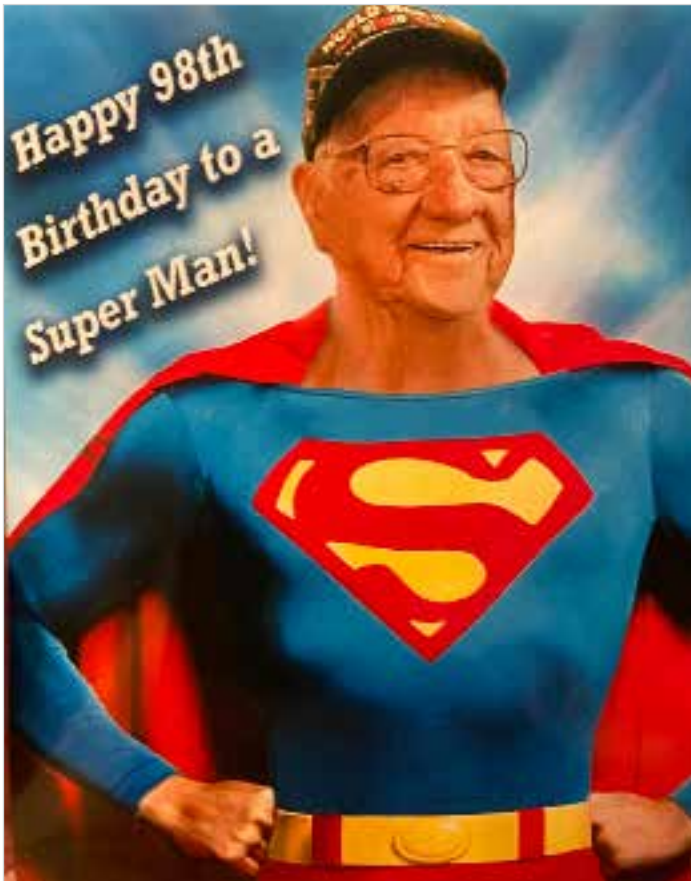
BARNES, Anneli – Alexandria, VA  
BERNSTEIN, Howard – Stoughton, Mass.  
DA, Andrew (Honorary) – Bothell, WA  
DIETZ, Laura B. – Corona Del Mar, CA  
FAURIE, Vanessa – Urbana, IL  
FEMINO, Placido J. **A-5** North Smithfield, RI  
HILLIARD, Darrell G. – Savannah, GA  
HUFFHINES, Terri – Weatherford, TX  
HUFFHINES, Tom – Weatherford, TX  
MELLO, Susan Griffith – Antioch, CA  
SCHUELZKY, Robert E. – Council Bluffs, IA  
SWENSON, Anne – Dallas, TX  
YODER, COL Richard (USMC, Ret.) – Wood-  
bridge, VA

## MEMORIAL MEMBERS

COLTRANE, Allene – Siler City, NC  
HEARRING, Patricia – Decatur, IL  
MILLER, Lila – Manchester, NJ  
MUELLER, Jeanne G. – Masonic Home, KY

## ANNUAL MEMBERS

AUMAN, Jonathan – Siler City, NC  
CLARK, Kenneth J. **L-3-28** Glenside, PA  
DORSETT, Valerie Coltrane – Siler City, NC  
DOSSETT, O. Dewey **HQ-1-13** Van Buren, AR  
FLETCHER, Carmella – Lyndhurst, OH  
MIDDLEKAUFF, Sabre – Loveland, CO  
SCHAEFER, Jack – Huntington Beach, IN  
ZEPEDA Jr., Daniel – Ontario, CA  
ZUCCHERO, Timothy – Warren, MI



### **Super way to celebrate a birthday**

Friends and family gathered at the local VFW in Urbana, Ill., Dec. 29 to celebrate the 98th birthday of Jim Kelly (5th SERV), who spent 36 days on Iwo Jima. This image was displayed good-naturedly around the venue.

*(Photo art by Kit Donahue)*

### **STRONG MEMBERSHIP = STRONG FMDA**

Annual memberships are due for renewal by Dec. 31 each year. If you have not renewed



your membership, please send in your \$25 dues today.

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

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

# From the Range to the Airwaves



*Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from Ivan Hammond's upcoming memoir, "Footsteps Through the Sands of Time to Iwo Jima" and has been adapted for Spearhead. The historical photo above depicts Tail-end Charlie on D+2 on Iwo Jima.*

**By Sgt Ivan Hammond**

*USMC, Fifth Division, 3-28, Air Liaison Party No. 13*

**As told to Bruce Hammond**

As a young boy, I read about the historic WWI battle at Belleau Wood. It was a shocking, awe-inspiring story, where Sgt Dan Daly led Marines who overran fortified German machine gun nests. The famous rally cry attributed to Sgt Daly is, "Come on, you sons-of-bitches! Do you want to live forever?" Other notable words, in the Germans' own action report, spawned a new Marine nickname: Devil Dogs. The nickname stuck. This story quickly went viral, reverberating for years, inspiring me in the early 1930s.

When I was 7, I was presented with a .22 single-shot rifle. After brief instruction in aiming and firearms safety, I hunted small game for our table. We could not afford practice ammo, so I did my best to, "Shoot 'em in the eye, so you don't waste the meat." My keen vision was a great help. Being quite fond of reading, I also learned to assemble \$3 radio kits from a new company called Heathkit.

Before enlisting in the Marines, I attended a San Antonio radio school with my lifelong friend, Sam Mooreland. Sam, a few months older at 18, became a radioman on a B-24 Liberator in Europe. A combination of being only 17, and some catch-22 caused me to get pushed out of the program after graduation. I was working in a Houston radio store when I enlisted in the Marines.

From the start of my USMC tour, I witnessed little abuse. In boot camp, instructors trained us in a practical, no-nonsense manner. After boot camp, we rehearsed battle scenarios continually. Officers planning our operation wanted us to have every possible advantage when invading Iwo Jima. Our regiments were replete with battle-seasoned veterans. My lieutenant did an excellent job of looking out for our Air Liaison Party (No. 13) team; other superiors did the same for their men. Looking back, it seems as if a higher power somehow guided me to my best destination.

Speaking of higher powers—some say a Marine gunnery sergeant is the closest thing to being God in the Marine Corps. Others say the gunny *is* God. Marines were trained to be capable riflemen first, no matter what their specialty. The path to rifleman was on the rifle range, the gunny's turf. Standout shooting puts you in the gunny's sights. And the gunny would soon notice me.

Our week on the rifle range came. Shooting was quite natural to me, and my shooting impressed the gunny. He looked my way, saying, "I've got my eye on you, boy. You are shooting damn good!" Being a good shot earned me the privilege of bussing the spent brass after shooting ended. The gunny liked me, and it appeared I could be destined for the infantry.

When I got to the mess hall, it was dark. Filling my cup and mess kit, I walked to a bench to take a seat,

misjudging its location. Wham! My knee slammed into the bench so hard, that I passed out—somehow, I managed to plop my cup and mess kit on the table before I went down. Waking up, I ate and went to my bunk. The next morning, my knee was swollen to twice its normal size.

Boot camp was almost over. Reporting to sick bay would mean being assigned to another group. Marines bond in their boot camps, so usually, no one wants to be reassigned. It delays their deployment, and they have to bond with a new group. I thought I would be OK if I just toughed it out. As scheduled, I reported to the rifle range.

At first, I shot even better than the day before, with six bullseyes. Shooting was easy from the prone position. Then came time to shoot from kneeling position, and my pain was profound! I tried my best but my bullets strayed far from the bullseye. Suddenly, the gunny would not give me the time of day, nor would he so much as look in my direction! Glancing towards the gunny, I saw his neck twisted away from me, with his nose in the air. Fortunately, we did not march in formation for the rest of the week. Perhaps there was a power higher than the gunny.

So it was, I became available for the Joint Assault Signal Company, aka JASCO. Being promoted to sergeant, I became team leader of Air Liaison Party No. 13 (ALP No. 13). We communicated via radio with naval gunfire teams and coordinated close air support for the infantry. At Iwo Jima, Col Vernon Megee was our air commander. Megee had flown in the banana wars of the late 1920s and helped develop the Marine doctrine of close air support. We all had radio code names. My code name was Duplex; Megee's code name was Dandy. I had the privilege of meeting Dandy one day, while our battle raged on.

On Iwo Jima, I had some experiences I call “guardian angel” moments. After the war, comrades at many Marine reunions spoke of such moments. Some may remember Lt Warren Musch, of HQ-3-28, saying he had two guardian angels—one on each shoulder, implying multiple close calls. In the heat of battle, our rigorous training took over, and we conquered each objective, one at a time—angels were the farthest thing from our minds. Today, though, many Marines say they survived close calls, and they have no idea how or why. Over time, some came to believe they were protected by a guardian angel or preserved for some higher purpose.

My most vivid memory involves a mistake my men

made one night. Our battalion CO, LtCol Shepard, always used auxiliary troops like Air Liaison to help protect his command post. As team leader, I would ask if we had air support scheduled the following morning. For five days, the 3-28 had been about 120 yards south of Nishi Village. Late in the evening, I checked if air support was scheduled the next day. LtCol Chandler Johnson said no, so I returned to our location. I had to climb a slight incline 2 to 3 feet up where we were camped out.

When I reached level ground, I found myself silhouetted by a blazing fire. Rino Bertoncello had built a large fire to make hot chocolate from Hershey bars. I managed to get the words out: “Rino, what the hell are you doing?” Then, somehow, I tripped and stutter-stepped, moving my left foot about 3 inches forward, then my right foot 3 inches forward and stopping, making my head tilt downward.

Just as my head tilted downward, three Japanese Nambu\* bullets whizzed by, just behind my neck, one of them singing my skin with the heat. If you take your right hand and make a circle with your thumb and forefinger, all three bullets would have fit inside the circle, maybe 3/4-inch apart. The sniper was far enough away that I did not hear the rifle report. After that, the sniper shot at Rino and Bob, missing. Dodging bullets, they ran, knocking over the hot water and chocolate mix, putting out the fire. At that point, I chewed them out with a number of choice words from the Marine dictionary. Later, I knelt down and thanked my guardian angel for looking after me.

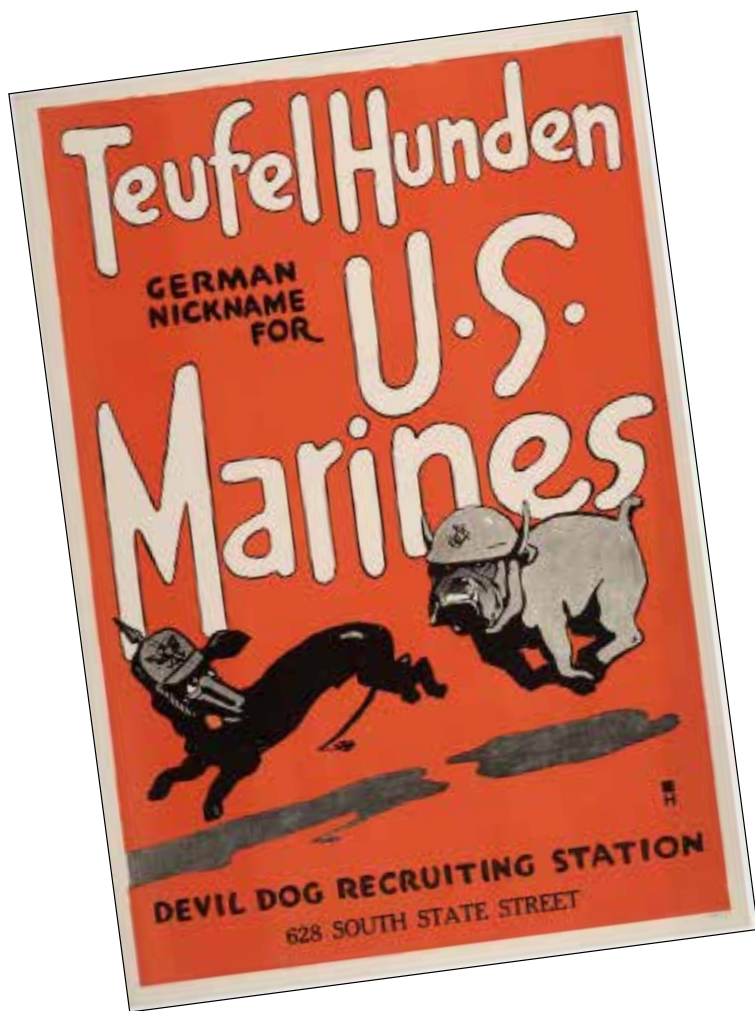
This guardian angel moment was far from being my first. Even before landing on Iwo Jima, we encountered artillery shells that exploded too close for comfort. We were supposed to land on the upper end of Green Beach, but there were too many wrecked Higgins boats, Jeeps, and other gear blocking our way. As the coxswain kept moving our boat further down the beach, closer to Mount Suribachi, I feared he would run out of landing beach. Finding a clearing in the wreckage, the coxswain took our boat to shore, lowering the ramp.

Bill Trompeter, a private in our unit, moved our Jeep up the ramp far enough that we could hook our trailer up. A minute after we landed, the first shell came in about 8 feet from our boat. The explosion went

---

\* LtGen Kijiro Nambu founded Nambu Arms Manufacturing Co. and designed many of the firearms used by Japanese troops, including the Arisaka rifle which fired at Ivan Hammond and his team members.





enfilading machine gun fire. With bullets coming from two directions, six to twelve inches above the ground, there is no way to run through them. While we were waiting, my Lt Johnson came up (He had stayed with our battalion CO, LtCol Charles Shephard), telling us to stay put until the fire lifted. We told him, “Oh, no. We’re not going anywhere.” Then, he told us that a few minutes before, the entire 3rd Battalion staff was in a big shell hole when a shell came in. IT WAS A DUD! Had it detonated, it would have wiped out our entire staff.

After a few hours, the machine gun fire on our right side ceased—someone had taken it out with a satchel charge. Not long after that, a 2-28 BAR man, tired of laying in the sand with his head down, stood up and placed his BAR up to his shoulder. He took out the machine gun nest on the left.\*\*

With the machine gun fire eliminated, our ALP No.

*\*\* Pfc Charles Waterhouse, a wounded demolition man, witnessed this Marine’s action. He recreated this scene 30 years later, as the USMC’s official artist, in a painting he called “The BAR Man.” A memorial statue now stands on the Semper Fi Trail, next to the new Marine Museum at Quantico, Va. The Iwo Jima Association of America helped FMDA dedicate this monument to Marines of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions, and to all the services who fought at Iwo Jima.*

13 team started across the 700 yards above the second terrace, going towards the other side of the island. Everyone walked. Reaching the spot we thought our 3-28 Command Post (CP) should be, we set up our radio in a Japanese Tank Trap. As I faced Mt. Suribachi, I saw a mortar shell come off the top and land 30 yards to my left, in line with our position. A couple of minutes later, a second shell landed some 30 yards to our right. Protocol required us to place our equipment in the bags when moving—no way! We snatched up our bags and five pieces of equipment, heading north, to our left.

When we reached the Battalion CP, our lieutenant was not there. Later, I found out he had observed us with his binoculars while he circled around in the opposite direction. When he returned, we called in some strafing runs on Mount Suribachi’s upper face. The next morning he told us, “You made a good move yesterday.” We asked him how big the hole was, and he told us, “About as big as a Jeep.” The lieutenant was also fortunate in his timing; had he circled around a bit earlier, the mortar would have hit him.

Sometimes, as we advanced, we had to dodge mortar or artillery shells. Dodging mortar shells one day, darting to the left seemed to be the way to go; but I changed, dodging to the right, for some reason—and it saved me. There was no way to predict where every incoming shell would land. There was no way to predict who would be a casualty. Did not being assigned to infantry keep me alive? We all had so many close calls, who knows?

While I never felt destined to die, no one could predict the future. Statistically, it was unlikely to be one of three out of 10 men unwounded on Iwo Jima. But I was, and so was my friend, John Huffhines. John, a 6’6” wireman, strung EE8 wire from artillery battery G to their forward observers – how likely is it that such a tall target would be unscathed by enemy fire? Even so, John came home completely intact.

Plans were made to invade Japan’s mainland. Those plans were canceled after the A bombs were dropped. Had I been in the planned invasion, I would not have come home. While many of us were addressed as heroes upon our return, a frequent reply was, “The heroes are the ones who didn’t come back home.”

Many of us made good careers, reared families, and regard every single child as a miracle baby. We were not sure we would come home. We solemnly remember our fallen comrades, thanking them daily for their ultimate sacrifice, so that we continue to live in liberty. More than anything, we were all just glad to come home.

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# A History of the FMDA

By John Butler

## Fifth Marine Division in WWII

The Fifth Marine Division had a short and remarkable history in WWII. In the two eventful years from January 1944, when it began organizing with both new recruits and highly trained combat veterans, mostly from disbanded Marine Raiders and ParaMarine battalions until it disbanded in January 1946, the division fought and prevailed in the battle of Iwo Jima and conducted stellar occupation duties in a defeated Japan. The performance of this yet-untried division, commanded and prepared for battle by MajGen Keller Rockey, was by any measure most historic and outstanding. It was truly a division of Marines extremely well trained for amphibious assault that will forever be remembered as the Spearhead Division.

The capture of Mount Suribachi and the subsequent flag raising by men of this division, captured by AP photographer Joe Rosenthal, is memorialized by Felix de Weldon's flag-raising monument in our nation's capital. This monument is also known as the Marine Corps War Memorial. Of the 27 Medals of Honor awarded on Iwo Jima in 36 days of combat, 17 went to men of the Fifth Marine Division.

## Fifth Marine Division Association

Also remarkable is the history of the Fifth Marine Division Association, still going on 70 years since its formation in 1949 by Gen Rockey. It remains the only active Marine division association of the three Marine divisions that were formed during the war and deactivated after the war that still continues as an active association. Both the Fourth and Sixth Marine Division Associations retired their colors several years ago.

Let's take a look back. ...



Gen Keller Rockey

## The First Annual Reunion in 1949

The program booklet for the Association's first annual convention, held Aug. 5 and 6, 1949, in Philadelphia stated:

"We, former members of the Fifth Marine Division and attached units, of the Fleet Marine Force, U.S. Marine Corps, have established a permanent organization in order that we may be of greater service to our country and to one another, to promote the interest and welfare of former members of the division, and in order to perpetuate the name, glory, and spirit of the Fifth Marine Division."

Gen Rockey, first president of the FMDA and one-time commander of the Fifth Marine Division, said in his welcoming message, "I am inspired to realize that the bonds forged amongst the fighting men of the Fifth Marine Division have not dissolved, though you now are spread far and wide following a thousand different pursuits far afield from camps and training, combat, transports, and occupation duty.

"I look forward to this group aiding, nay more, leading the way, in fulfilling their obligations and responsibilities to country, home and family, and trust that this Association shall be as strong and successful in peace as the division was in war.

"May the attainment of all our hopes follow this reunion, and let us meet year after year to perpetuate the thoughts and feelings that have brought us together now."

## So, who are we and what is our purpose?

The Fifth Marine Division Association was established in 1949 by Gen Rockey, division commander, in order to honor those who fought and died in the battle of Iwo Jima. It has, in its annual reunions, given these men and their families an opportunity to



reconnect and to commemorate those who did not come back. New friendships are also formed, particularly among the legacy (family) members.

Original members of the Association were primarily the surviving Iwo Jima veterans of the Fifth and their families, but also grew to include parents, wives, sons, daughters and other relatives of those lost in that horrific battle. Also included were men and families of attached units of the Navy, Army, Army Air Corps and Marines attached to the Fifth Amphibious Corps, and those such as journalists and historians who had a strong interest or other compelling reasons to be a member of the Association.

Later, the men of Fifth Marine Division regiments activated for Vietnam were invited to join the Association. However, many of these men connect more closely with the divisions to which they were attached. The 26th and 27th Marines and elements of the 13th Marines (artillery) were activated and sent to Vietnam, but did not fight as units of the Fifth Division. The 26th was initially attached to the Third Division, and the 27th was attached to the First Division. The 28th remained at Camp Pendleton. Members of the 13th Artillery Regiment were attached to both the First and Third Divisions. Nevertheless, the spirit of Iwo Jima lived on at Khe Sanh and DaNang, and Vietnam veterans of those Fifth Division regiments that served in Vietnam will be welcomed to join us as long as we exist.

Today, the Association has just under 1,000 members. Also included in this number are a few veterans of Iwo Jima from other divisions whose associations have been disbanded.

A number of Fifth Marine veterans and their families are also members of the Iwo Jima Association of America and attend the yearly symposia in Washington, D.C. Some FMDA members and their families have made at least

one return trip to Iwo Jima for the joint “Reunions of Honor” with the Japanese, established in 1985 and held annually since 1995. Some of the Iwo survivors had 15 years earlier, in 1970, attended the very first joint American and Japanese peace ceremony and reunion held on Iwo Jima for the 25th anniversary of the landing. This first meeting of the former enemies set the tone for reconciliation.

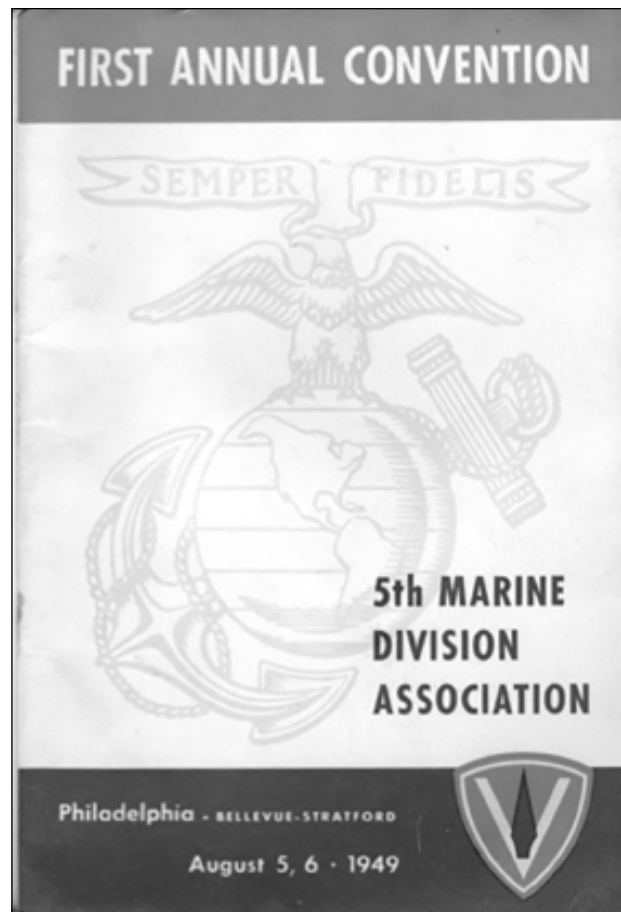
Iwo Jima survivors and their families have been able to meet and renew old friendships, share memories and support one another through the venue of the annual FMDA reunions. Increasingly, sons, daughters and other relatives of Iwo vets join the Association looking for more details of their loved ones’ time on Iwo and hoping to meet other Marines who knew them. These legacy members are taking an increased role in the Association and in keeping the history of Iwo Jima alive.

### **What have we accomplished since 1949?**

1. First, FMDA has held a total of 70 annual reunions all over the nation since 1949—every year except for 1950 because of the outbreak of the Korean War.

The late Bernie Fletcher, the Grand Lady of FMDA reunions, attended 61 consecutive reunions, mostly with her husband, Charles, a machine gunner in the 26th Marines, and every reunion since his passing in 2003. Her last reunion was Monroe Ozment’s Virginia Beach reunion held in 2015. A page dedicated to Bernie Fletcher was in the 68th Hawaii reunion journal.

Reunions since the Tampa reunion in 2014 have mustered an average of 100 attendees, including up to 12-20 Iwo veterans, usually with accompanying children and grandchildren. They have all been great and special reunions, as have all the previous reunions held over the years. Some of the early reunions had thousands of attendees. But whether



in larger or smaller numbers, there has always been the camaraderie, old friendships renewed and new friendships made. This has been at the heart of every reunion—including the last one in New Orleans.

2. In addition to annual reunions held around the country, in 1970 the Association, under the leadership of Charles Early, a former Pfc rifleman, organized and hosted a groundbreaking “Reunion of Peace” on the island of Iwo Jima in concert with a few surviving Japanese soldiers. This was the first and most significant event between two former enemies.

Unfortunately, the 1970 event, although widely publicized at the time, was almost lost to history. It was overshadowed by the named “Reunions of Honor” first held in 1985 and then in 1995 and each year thereafter.

Fortunately, however, due to the remarkable input from Association members and Iwo survivor Marty Connor (who attended that first Iwo Jima reunion) and the efforts of a few others, the 1970 event has again been publicized. And deservedly so, as it was a full-fledged memorial event with all associated ceremonies attended by both Japanese and American Marine survivors of the battle of Iwo Jima; head Japanese dignitaries, including the Rev. Tsunezo Wachi, a Buddhist monk who devoted his life to returning home the remains and artifacts of Japanese soldiers lost in the battle; Third Division commander BGen William Jones, who was the commandant’s official representative; John Rich, NBC’s lead Asian correspondent; and in continuing ceremonies in Japan, by the widows of the leading Japanese commanders on Iwo, including Gen Tadamichi Kuribayashi and Baron Takeichi Nishi.

3. For many years, the Association maintained a college scholarship fund for children of Fifth Division men killed in battle on Iwo Jima and then later provided annual funds to the broader Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation.

4. And in recent years there have been a number of other important accomplishments: A hallmark Fifth Marine Division Association contribution to the forever legacy of the Spearhead Division is the BAR on the Beach statue which stands in the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park at the Marine Corps Heritage Center in Quantico. The project of producing the statue spanned five years and took an enormous amount of work in planning, coordinating and fundraising to bring about its completion. This



**BAR on the Beach statue in Quantico, Va.**

task was credited to an ad hoc committee of the Fifth Marine Division Association, led by John Huffhines, Ivan Hammond and Bert Clayton. The statue, dedicated in February 2011, is based on a Charles Waterhouse painting. Waterhouse, a young Pfc on Iwo, witnessed a Marine rifleman rise up with his BAR firing from the shoulder to silence a Japanese machine gun nest. The scene was forever etched in Waterhouse’s memory.

5. One of the Fifth’s first flag raisers and a posthumous Navy Cross recipient, Sgt Ernest “Boots” Thomas, had errors on his original gravestone and memorial marker. These errors were corrected with a new marker and slab provided by the Association. FMDA officers and FMDA members Jennings Bunn, Kent Dozark, Kathy Tinsley and Barb Allen, who spearheaded the drive for correction, all were present at the well-publicized and well-attended re-dedication ceremony in Monticello, Fla., in October 2015. Boots’ boyhood friend, Dr. James Sledge, a distant cousin of another Marine combat veteran, author Eugene Sledge, was also present.

6. Eighteen-year-old Pvt Samuel L Brock, a member of the 31st Replacement Battalion was KIA on 362A. His burial flag, Purple Heart and other memos were found in a warehouse at Foley, Ala., by a young AFROTC member who turned them in to his ROTC instructor who called on the USMC for assistance. FMDA was called. In the spring of 2015, Morey Butler, a FMDA family legacy member, accompanied by Iwo vet Leonard Nederveld (E-2-27), attended the ceremony representing FMDA as the flag, Purple Heart and other mementos were delivered to the only surviving member of Brock’s

family, his younger and very grateful brother, Lonnie.

7. Because the original colors and streamers of the deactivated Fifth Marine Division are stored in the Marine History Museum warehouse in Quantico, a replica of the colors and streamers was purchased by FMDA. They were displayed first at the Tampa reunion in 2014, and each reunion since, and will continue to be displayed until they are retired in the Camp Tarawa Museum and Educational Center on the Big Island of Hawaii.

8. Following the 2016 reunion in San Antonio, at the suggestion of Iwo veteran Ivan Hammond and his son, Bruce, current FMDA president, FMDA authorized the preparation of two plaques bearing the words of Chaplain Roland Gittlelsohn's famous eulogy given at Iwo's Fifth Marine Division Cemetery. One of these plaques will go in the University of Hawaii Cultural Center and Museum and be available on the virtual museum website. The other was in possession of the Hammonds and was available at the 2019 reunion and will be donated to the National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

9. The Fifth Marine Division Museum and Educational Center project, which will house mementos and history of the men of the Fifth Marine Division, has been a work in progress for almost a decade and now has become a reality, thanks to FMDA former Vice President and President Kathy Painton, who lives on the Big Island.

A virtual museum has been created, and all donated and found items will be available online worldwide for research and viewing. The physical artifacts will be housed and made available for display at the Heritage Center at the North Hawaii Education and Research Center in Honoka'a. The Heritage Center is dedicated to preserving, making available for research, and displaying the history of the Hamakua Coast and North Hawai'i. Honoka'a is about 15 miles east of where Camp Tarawa was located and served as a place for Marines to go for liberty during breaks in their training, so it is only natural for Camp Tarawa photographs, documents, and artifacts to be included in the Heritage Center materials available for researchers.

Nicole Garcia, a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i, Hilo campus, under the direction of NHERC's Dr. Eileen Naughton, has been cataloguing the material that has been collected thus far. This includes the extensive core collection of oral history and photographic and videographic documentation gathered by Sefton "Bee" and Alice Clark to recapture

the history between the U.S. military and the people of Hawaii during and immediately following the end of World War II. The Clarks also were instrumental in creating the three-panel rock and granite Camp Tarawa memorial just outside of Waimea. FMDA refurbished the monument, dulled with age and weather, prior to the 2017 Reunion held in Kona, Hawaii, that year.

10. *Spearhead News*, produced for a number of years by the Association and continued by current editor Ray Elliott, has helped educate all on the story of the Fifth and communicating with the veterans and family members. This publication is, and has been, second to none among other division associations' publications.

11. The Association is launching its own official website to document Fifth Division and Association history, and to keep members apprised of news of events affecting the Association and important news of our members. This website is being set up by a young legacy member, Dean Laubach. Ray Elliott is posting to the *Spearhead* Facebook page to inform members and the general public through social media about the issues important to the Association. All the issues of *Spearhead News* from 2008 to the present are currently archived at <http://www.talespress.com>.

### **The Future**

No one can predict the future, but the Fifth Marine Division Association, with the current leadership, is positioned for continued life, assuming a sound financial posture is maintained as it has been for the past years, thanks to our current treasurer, Doug Meny, CPA.

FMDA hopefully will be able to produce an affordable *Spearhead News*, conduct affordable annual reunions, and maintain correspondence with its members through *Spearhead News* and the new website, as well as social media postings.

For sure, the primary ingredients of friendship and respect among its membership must prevail. Divided houses do not last very long nor do good things.

If FMDA ceases operations today or several years from now, the Association will leave a legacy of service to the nation, to the Marine Corps, to all its combat veterans of WWII and Vietnam, to the families of these veterans, and to those lost in battle.

Gen Rockey would be proud of the Association he formed in 1949, as he was of the remarkable Fifth Marine Division he trained and commanded in battle.



# Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima

## *A Triumph Arising from Tragedy*

**Editor's Note:** In June 2019, Andrew Da of Northshore Junior High School in Bothell, Wash., won second place honors nationwide in the Junior Division of the National History Day Contest for his essay on Iwo Jima. More than a half-million students entered the competition, and just over 3,000 of them advanced through the local, state and affiliate rounds to earn their place in the national contest addressing topics related to the theme, *Triumph & Tragedy in History*.

Da had contacted members of the Fifth Marine Division Association as part of his research and wrote afterward: "I wanted to thank you again for all your support and encouragement in the last few months. Without all of your help, I would not be able to do so well. Learning the Iwo stories from you and the veterans is a great experience that I will never forget!"

Below is his winning essay, without footnotes. It is also available to read in its entirety online at <https://www.nhd.org/sites/default/files/DaJrPaper.pdf>

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**By Andrew Da**

*"Among the men who fought on Iwo Jima, uncommon valor was a common virtue."*

— Fleet Adm Chester W. Nimitz, 1945

Seventy-four years ago, on February 23, 1945, in the Western Pacific Ocean, six U.S Marines strained forward in unity, firmly planting a large American flag atop Mount Suribachi, the highest point of the Japanese island of Iwo Jima. Joe Rosenthal, an Associated Press photographer, captured this historic moment on film—a photo that ultimately became one of the most recognizable images in American history.

Raising a flag over another country's land is commonly considered a sign of victory, marking the conclusion of a conflict. However, underneath the triumph depicted in Rosenthal's image, there was also tragedy: in just five days, American casualties climbed to 6,000 while Japanese resistance remained fierce. For the next 31 days, more than 70,000 American forces landed on the unrelenting hell known as Iwo Jima, and more than 20,000 of them would be injured or killed. The heroic raising of the flag during this tragic onslaught framed Rosenthal's photo into an inspiring triumph. The flag-raising not only sparked American morale during a difficult period of war, but also shaped the Marine Corps' core values and eventually became an iconic symbol of American patriotism and heroism.

### **The War in the Pacific**

On Dec. 7, 1941, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor initiated war in the Pacific Theater. While Japanese forces continued rapid expansion in the Pacific, the United States began accelerating vessel production to meet the threat. In early June 1942,

the U.S. Navy won its first major victory over Japan at the Battle of Midway. This turning point allowed the United States to halt the Japanese offense in the Pacific, enabling the U.S. to start weakening Japanese superiority in the air and sea. The U.S military launched the "Island Hopping" campaign to take control of key Pacific islands that were occupied by Japanese forces until American bombers could reach the Japanese mainland. Island hopping also allowed the Americans to cut off Japanese supply lines to neighboring islands, leaving them to wither. This strategy heavily relied on the Marines' ability to sail to those islands and launch frontal amphibious assaults. By 1945, the Marines had already taken a series of Pacific islands, leaving Iwo Jima in the center of America's crosshairs.

### **Impregnable Fortress**

Located 750 miles south of Tokyo, Iwo Jima, an eight-square-mile volcanic island, held strategic importance to both the Americans and the Japanese. Prior to the invasion of Iwo Jima, the Japanese had built three airfields, using them to harass American naval forces and alert nearby islands of incoming planes. Capturing Iwo Jima would allow Americans to eliminate enemy early warning systems, protect the operation of B-29s, and provide an emergency landing field for damaged bombers. In order to get closer to the Japanese mainland, taking Iwo Jima was a must. Also recognizing the value of the island, the Japanese Imperial Headquarters assigned LtGen Tadamichi Kuribayashi, a samurai descendant, to lead over 22,000 men in defending the island. Learning from the prior battles of Tarawa, Saipan and Guam, Kuribayashi knew that the traditional frontal beach defense without air and naval support would be ineffective against a stronger military force with hundreds of naval guns and aircraft.

Kuribayashi implemented a new plan: Instead of defending on Iwo Jima, the Japanese would defend from inside the island. Since June 1944, Kuribayashi had selected the best Japanese mining engineers to design underground fortifications. In just six months, using solid rocks and concrete, the Japanese built a 16-mile-long system of tunnels and caves that linked bunkers, pillboxes and gun emplacements across Iwo Jima, transforming the tiny island into an impregnable fortress.

### **A Defense of Desperation**

In addition to the invulnerable underground network, the Japanese warrior's philosophy of fighting to death without surrender is another reason that made Iwo Jima such a fierce and tragic battle. Well aware that his troops would hopelessly fight alone with no support, Kuribayashi aimed to prolong the American advancement and inflict as many casualties as possible. To ensure mental preparedness and determination for the upcoming battle, he announced "Courageous Battle Vows" for his men to abide by:

- We shall infiltrate the enemy and slaughter them.
- We shall kill the enemy with a one-shot, one-kill approach.
- We shall not die until we killed 10 of the enemy.
- We shall harass the enemy with guerrilla tactics until the last man.

Additionally, Kuribayashi ordered his men to refrain from large-scale suicidal banzai charges executed in previous battles. Both physically and mentally, the Japanese were ready for the American invasion.

### **The Landing**

While Kuribayashi and his men were busy underground fortifying their defensive positions, the U.S. military also prepared for the invasion in full swing. Ten weeks prior to the invasion, Army Air Forces bombed Iwo Jima daily to make the Marines' landing easier. However, hidden deep in their tunnels, the Japanese suffered little from the bombings. To the Americans, it seemed like no one on the island could possibly survive the raids. On top of this incorrect assumption,



**Andrew Da of Bothell, Wash., won second place in the Junior Division of the National History Day Contest for his essay on Iwo Jima. Da had contacted the Fifth Marine Division Association for information when he was researching his paper.**

*(Photo provided)*

U.S. planners underestimated Japanese defense and overestimated American technological and manpower superiority, believing Iwo Jima would fall in just a few days.

On the morning of Feb. 19, 1945, 30,000 Marines—many of whom had not reached 20 years of age—began landing on Iwo Jima, with the Fourth Division on the right, the Fifth Division on the left, and the Third Division in corps reserve. The Fourth Division attempted to seize the first Japanese airfield and advance to the northeast, while the Fifth Division focused on taking Mount Suribachi at the southwest end of the island.

As the first waves of Marines landed on the sandy terrain of Iwo Jima, the Japanese, with guns ready, silently hid in their tunnels and observed the Marines assembling on the beaches. Thousands of Marines crowded the lower beaches, completely exposed to their enemies. The initial lack of enemy resistance falsely implied a "fairly easy" landing. Suddenly, a barrage of deadly ordnance and bullets rained down on American forces from camouflaged positions of Mount Suribachi and other high areas of the island. In just a few minutes, the beachhead became choked with damaged vehicles and cluttered with dead bodies.

"At that time, I guess the best way to describe it was all hell broke loose," Warren Musch, a retired first lieutenant reflected. "My first impression when I hit the beach on the island, I could reach out and touch a dead Marine with my left hand, another with my right hand."

With nowhere to take cover, the Marines were pinned down by mortar fire and artillery from invisible enemies. By the end of the first day, 562 Marines were dead or missing, and 1,963 were wounded. Every 35 seconds on Iwo Jima, one Marine was injured or killed.

### **The Flag-raising**

The Americans learned that the fight against the Japanese was not going to be as easy as previously presumed. Kuribayashi's resourceful defense forced the Marines to move in closer to take out Japanese

*Continued on next page*

## TRIUMPH

*Continued from previous page*

positions. Mount Suribachi, a key defensive point that gave the Japanese the advantage to look over the entire island and perform precise mortar attacks, became the most critical position to take. While Japanese resistance grew more aggressive, the 28th Marine Regiment slowly advanced to the base of the volcanic mountain at a rate of 200 yards per day, utilizing flamethrowers and grenades against enemies hidden in pillboxes and bunkers. On Feb. 23, Lt Col Chandler Johnson, commander of the 28th Regiment, ordered a platoon of 40 Marines, accompanied by Leatherneck magazine photographer Sgt Louis Lowery, to secure the summit of Suribachi and raise an American flag atop it. At about 10:30 a.m., the Stars and Stripes fluttered over the volcano.

“The flag’s up! The flag’s up!” the Marines down below started to cheer, while the ships anchored off the island blared their horns and whistles. In Coast Guardsman Chet Hack’s words: “Talk about patriotism! The uproar almost shook the sky.”

This emotional moment was captured by Lowery with his camera. With the flag flying over the mountain, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal said to the commander of the assault, Gen Holland Smith: “Holland, the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.”

However, Johnson wanted a larger banner to replace the first flag so everybody on the island could see it. A few hours later, six Marines — Michael Strank, Harlon Block, Franklin Sousley, Ira Hayes, Rene Gagnon [Harold Keller has since replaced Gagnon] and Harold Schultz — hoisted up the larger flag on top of Suribachi; this time, Joe Rosenthal pressed the shutter and snapped the most famous photo of World War II.

The two American flags raised on Mount Suribachi each had their own unique significance. Although not as well-known as the second one, the first flag-raising held significant emotional value to the Marines on Iwo Jima. It meant that Suribachi, one of the most threatening enemy positions, was finally in American hands. The flag-raising represented gratitude and honor to the Marines who had sacrificed their lives to destroy a pillbox, rescue a comrade or inch closer to the enemy’s position. It gave an immeasurable morale boost to the Americans still fighting, igniting their hope for victory. Gen Smith wrote: “This vision of triumph had an electrifying effect on all our forces ashore and

afloat. We were in a mood for victory and this glorious spectacle was the spark.”

The second flag-raising, however, continues to have a lasting legacy, defining Marine Corps values and inspiring the American public. Rosenthal’s photo won the Pulitzer Prize and has become one of the most legendary photographs of all time.

### **After the Flag-raising**

The capture of Mount Suribachi represented a breakthrough for the Americans—the sight of the flag on the mountain implied that the entire island would soon be taken. However, it was only “the end of the beginning.” The fierce resistance driven by the Japanese tradition of “fighting to death” and “no surrender” tenaciously continued. The brutal battle raged on for another month, while all three Marine divisions unrelentingly pushed through to the north.

“Every cave, every pillbox, every bunker was an individual battle, where Japanese and Marines fought hand to hand to the death,” Gen Smith recalled.

No matter how miserable the conditions were, neither side would give up. Even though the Marines encountered massive challenges with the Japanese terrain and defense, they still held advantages, such as a plentiful amount of supplies and continuous air and sea support. On the other hand, with no outside aid, the Japanese struggled underground with shortages of ammunition, water and food. Additionally, living conditions inside the caves were inhuman—cockroaches and flies swarmed the soldiers, and temperatures reached up to 140 degrees. On March 18, in a letter sent to neighboring island Chichi Jima, Kuribayashi declared: “Overwhelmed by material superiority, we have fought with little more than our empty hands. ... There is no more ammunition and no more water.”

Rather than surrendering in the final few days, the remaining Japanese either committed suicide or attempted a final counterattack. On March 26, 1945, the island of Iwo Jima was finally secured.

At the end of the battle, U.S. casualties included 6,140 men killed and nearly 18,000 wounded. The Japanese lost approximately 22,000 soldiers, while only 216 were taken prisoner. Nearly a third of all Marines who died in WWII lost their lives on Iwo Jima. The Battle of Iwo Jima was, by far, the deadliest battle in the history of the United States Marine Corps.

### **Legacy**

From the first day of landing, reports of the distressing battle dominated U.S. newspaper headlines.



The devastating casualties on the island horrified the American public, causing many to question the necessity of the battle and effectiveness of the military strategies. However, when Rosenthal's photo hit the Sunday newspapers on Feb. 25, 1945, the nation quickly responded by uniting in patriotism. The hope and optimism portrayed in the image were exactly what the Americans were longing for. Instantly, the photo became a media sensation. It was reprinted millions of times, emblazoned on postage stamps, and featured in Hollywood films. The Seventh War Bond Drive used the photograph in posters, collecting \$26 billion towards the war effort—the largest amount among the eight national war bonds and nearly double the projected total.

In November 1954, the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va., unveiled a 78-foot-tall bronze sculpture of the flag-raising to honor the Marines who sacrificed their lives for the country. Through this publicity, the Marine Corps gained tremendous public support and respect. This veneration helped the Marine Corps survive the post-war defense budget slash and elevated the Corps from the nation's smallest military branch to the most elite. In an interview, Rosenthal said that “[it was] the Marines [who] took Iwo Jima. It was the Marines who continued to move forward under the hail of enemy gunfire. It was the Marines who covered grenades with their bodies to save comrades' lives. It was *all* the Marines who raised the flags on Mount Suribachi.”

Rosenthal's photo represents fundamental Marine values: strength, bravery, sacrifice, teamwork and



**Hearalding Andrew Da's success at the 2019 reunion in New Orleans, FMDA Secretary and Editor Ray Elliott (left) and Trustee John Butler (right) hold up a photo of Da, with his second-place nationwide award, and Cathy Gorn, executive director of National History Day. The FMDA bestowed an Honorary Life Membership to Da, in recognition of his achievement and interest in perpetuating the historical significance of the Battle of Iwo Jima.**

*(Photo by Leonardo Flores)*

getting the job done. Iwo Jima proved “how the Marines did change and adapt to adverse and unknown conditions to finally win—never giving up.” Twenty-seven Congressional Medals of Honor, the country's most prestigious military decoration, were awarded for Iwo Jima—more than any other battle in history — with 22 medals going to Marines.

More than 70 years have passed since the conclusion of the Battle of Iwo Jima. As memories fade away and movies gradually dis-

appear, Rosenthal's flag-raising photograph remains an enduring icon. In his photo, the debris and rough terrain underneath the Marines' boots symbolize the cruelty and struggle of war, while the movement of the six Marines straining together to raise the Stars and Stripes epitomizes American hope and determination for victory.

The photo conveys the true experience of Iwo Jima: a frontal amphibious assault against an indestructible defense, a tragic loss of human lives to both sides, and an undeniable exhibit of Marine valor.

Despite being the deadliest conflict in Marine Corps history, the Battle of Iwo Jima was a remarkable triumph for the Marines and the American people. The flag-raising on Mount Suribachi transformed the initial public horror over casualties and the controversy over military planning errors into national pride and unity. By invigorating American morale to win the Pacific War, the photo has permanently become an icon for the Marine Corps. Today, this immortal image remains a symbol of American patriotism and heroism that continues to inspire the entire nation.



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MEMORIAL HONOREES**



**JOHN F. HUFFHINES**

**HS-3-13**

{Honored by Tom Huffhines}

*Memorial contributions to the Fifth Marine Division Association can be made in honor of designated individuals, the names of whom are then published in future editions of Spearhead News. For more information about honoring someone through a memorial donation, see page 4. Your gift is much appreciated.*

**Treasurer's note  
regarding financial statement**

Due to yet-incomplete information with closure and transfer of the Hawaii account, I was unable to submit a financial statement I was comfortable with by the due date for publication in *Spearhead News*. When I have it all sorted out and finalized, I will post the final statement on our FMDA website and related Facebook page, and include in the Spring/Summer 2020 issue of *Spearhead News*.

Also, I am also endeavoring to sort out funds earmarked for the museum but transferred to the Camp Tarawa Foundation, which is a separate entity than the museum. A conclusive clarification on the FMDA's commitment to these two entities will be provided in the next issue of *Spearhead*, as well.

— Doug Meny, Treasurer

**IWO JIMA ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (IJAA)**



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**FMDA Official Website**

[5thmardiv-assoc.org](http://5thmardiv-assoc.org)

**FMDA Official Facebook Page**

[www.facebook.com/SpearheadDivision/](http://www.facebook.com/SpearheadDivision/)

# FMDA Annual Business Meeting Minutes

October 26, 2019

The meeting was called to order by President Kathy Painton at 1030. Vice President Bruce Hammond led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Al Nelson (5th TANK) gave the invocation.

**Secretary's Report:** Secretary Ray Elliott read the minutes from the 2018 business meeting held at the FMDA reunion in Champaign, Ill., and later published in the Fall/Winter 2018 *Spearhead News*. Accordingly, a motion to accept the minutes was seconded and approved.

Secretary Elliott then reported that, as of mid-October, the Association has 896 total members. Of that, 526 are Life Members (59 percent); 199 are Memorial Members (22 percent); 140 are Annual Members (15.7 percent); 16 are Honorary Life Members (1.7 percent); and 15 receive complimentary memberships (1.6 percent). About half the total membership are Fifth Marine Division veterans—427 are Iwo Jima veterans (47.7 percent) and 39 are Vietnam veterans (4 percent). Of the 140 annual members, nearly 75 percent had not yet paid their dues for 2019 (which equates to \$2,600 in unrealized membership revenue.)

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Doug Meny reported on the current financial status of the Association and fielded numerous questions from the audience. Given the projected low cash balances expected by the 2019 year-end, much time was spent discussing both the current year's receipt and expense components, the projected financials of this year's and past historical reunions, and summarizing the amount and current disposition of the Camp Tarawa Virtual Museum donations collected since museum fundraising began in 2015. In addition, there was much discussion regarding how the 2010 grant of \$10,000 from FMDA to the Camp Tarawa Foundation was utilized, per details provided by President Painton. The disbursement of the remaining restricted funds held by FMSA for the museum will be determined as expenses are incurred and proper support provided to FMDA.

## Old Business

**Camp Tarawa Museum Project:** Nicole Garcia of the University of Hawaii-Hilo reported on the progress of expanding the virtual museum through the use of PastPerfect Museum software, which provides a database of artifacts, documents, photos and books, and History Pin, which is a user-generated archive for historical photos, videos, audio recordings and personal recollections. There is also a Camp Tarawa Shared Collections group on Facebook.

**Matt the Marine Doll:** Phyllis Schaefer gave a brief report on the history of this program that promotes awareness and support of veterans and raises money for the FMDA. Those in attendance gave Phyllis a well-deserved ovation for her efforts. A collection at the business meeting garnered more than \$800 in donations for the organization's general fund.

**President's Report:** President Kathy Painton acknowledged the efforts of 2019 reunion organizer Jimmie Hyde-Watson and others for planning a successful and memorable reunion in New Orleans. She also reported the results of the recent member survey that indicated a clear desire among those who answered the survey to continue the Association.

## New Business

**Bylaws:** Proposed changes to the Association's bylaws were discussed. A motion to table the proposal and revisit the bylaws at the next business meeting was seconded and passed.

**Officers:** Kathy Painton was nominated to continue as the Association's president. Another slate presented Bruce Hammond to serve as president and Tom Huffhines to serve as vice president. A vote by voice and show of hands duly elected Hammond and Huffhines as the next FMDA president and vice president, respectively. The presidential appointments of secretary and treasurer were not yet determined at the business meeting.

**Selection of 2020 reunion site:** It was proposed that the Iwo Jima Association of America assist the Association in administrating the 2020 FMDA Reunion, to be held next fall in Dallas, Texas. FMDA life member John Powell will serve as host. A motion to proceed was seconded and approved.

The meeting was adjourned.

— Submitted by Ray Elliott, Secretary



# FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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**TOTAL** ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*(Make checks payable to: 5th Marine Division Assn.)*