

Summer 2008



# Spearhead NEWS



"Uncommon Valor was A Common Virtue"

OFFICIAL  
PUBLICATION  
of the  
5TH MARINE  
DIVISION  
ASSOCIATION

**59TH ANNUAL REUNION - WASHINGTON, D.C.  
AUGUST 27 - 31, 2008  
MARRIOTT-REAGAN NATIONAL AIRPORT**



This Col. Charles Waterhouse sketch of the Iwo Jima seabag is reprinted with permission of the artist and The Waterhouse Museum in Toms River, N.J. Much of this issue contains letters and memoirs of Iwo Jima veterans and survivors to preserve for posterity the memories of Iwo Jima veterans.



**TED OVERGARD**  
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**SPEARHEAD NEWS**

Editor - Ray Elliott

*Published three times annually in the interest  
of the 5th Marine Division Association*

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Looking forward to 59th reunion  
in Washington, D.C.**

Plans for our 59th Annual Reunion in Washington, D.C., are going great. If you have not made your reservations, please do so as soon as you can. We are limited to 270 people at the banquet where the Commandant of the Marine Corps will address us, and we are limited to 200 people at 8th & I. Tickets are on a first-come basis. For those who would like to attend the reunion, there are plenty of rooms left at the hotel.

Due to the limited amount of parking in the Washington, D.C., area, we were not able to arrange for free parking at the hotel. There have been complaints, but there is nothing that can be done about it. We are trying to keep the costs under control in other areas.

I would like to thank everyone for their phone calls and e-mails about the Bar on the Beach statue and for the many contributions that were made in support of it so far. A special thank you to those that are on limited income and cannot make a contribution but feel that the association should support it.

Our good friend, Sgt.-at-Arms Marshall Martin passed away a few months ago; he will be missed. I am making an appointment for Phillip Wade to be our new Sgt.-at-Arms. I know he will serve the association well.

Cige and I look forward to seeing you in Washington, D.C. We are planning an exciting four days.

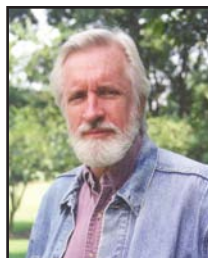
Semper Fi.

**- Ken Watterson  
President**

**IMPORTANT: Only a limited number of reservations for rooms at the Crystal City Marriott Hotel for the reunion rate of \$99 were still available at the time of publication. Rates will jump substantially when the number of rooms President Ken Watterson was able to reserve for the reunion in August are gone. Reservations can be made by calling 800-228-9290. And parking rates of \$18 per day will be charged for those who drive and need parking.**

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Ray Elliott



Not long after the Spring issue of *Spearhead* came out in March, I received a call from a Vietnam Marine veteran of the Khe Sanh siege who expressed his dismay because the Fifth Marine Division Association had, by and large, ignored Vietnam veterans in the newsletter, particularly noting that 2008 is the 40th anniversary of the siege and there was no mention of it in the newsletter.

The man said he understood the emphasis on the Iwo Jima campaign, but wished there would be some coverage of Vietnam service for Fifth Division Marines. Khe Sanh wasn't Iwo Jima, he said, but in some respects it was "the Iwo Jima of Vietnam" and worthy of coverage.

I'd have to agree with him.

The siege continued for three months with the Marines surrounded by two Viet Cong divisions and cut off from replacements, supplies and ammunition that only came in by air when needed. Both aircraft and men were lost from mortar fire directed by the surrounding superior Viet Cong firepower.

I was a bit surprised by the call, having just taken over as editor of the newsletter from long-time editor and Iwo Jima veteran Bert Clayton and concentrating on the material at hand. At the time I agreed to take on the editor position, there had been some talk of the Washington reunion being the last one and the association shutting down as the Iwo Jima veterans were getting to the age and stage of life that it was no longer practical to hold reunions or to publish the newsletter.

And quite frankly, although current president Ken Watterson is a Vietnam veteran who served with the Fifth Division, I hadn't given much thought to material from the Vietnam War. But the man had a point, I thought, and I began looking into the situation.

Bob Harrison, a Marine Khe Sanh veteran from Philo, Ill., brought his Fourth Marine Division Iwo Jima veteran father-in-law to a coffee meeting one morning of the Richard L. Pittman Marine Corps League I belong to in Urbana, Ill. I knew Bob had served with the 26th Marines, so I cornered him and asked about serving with the Fifth Division at Khe Sanh.

"I wasn't in the Fifth Division," he said. "I was in the Third."

I was confused. Bob was in the 26th Marines. Which was the Fifth Division.

"I wrote enough letters with my return address on them and got enough that were addressed to the Third Division that I know what division I was in," he said. "I came from the Third in Okinawa and was in the Third in Vietnam and at Khe Sanh."

Still confused, I e-mailed Ken Watterson and other officers of the Fifth Marine Division Association for clarification.

Ken asked Col. John Ripley (USMC, retired) Vietnam veteran, Navy Cross recipient and Marine Corps historian, who saw much action in the "Leatherneck Square" area of Dong Ha, Con Tien, Khe Sanh during 1966-67.

Col. Ripley cleared my confusion with his reply.

"The 26th Marines were the only 5th Div. Regiment to be posted to Vietnam in 1966," he wrote in an e-mail. "The Division CP remained at Camp Pendleton commanded then by Maj. Gen. Cushman, later CMC Cushman. The regiment would be assigned OpCon and AdCon, that is fully attached, to the 3rd Marine Division which occupied the northernmost section of I Corps (Eye Corps) – Quang Tri, Dong Ha, DMZ & Route 9 all the way to Khe Sanh to the Laotian Border.

"In April of 1967, as I recall, the 26th Marines were sent in total to Khe Sanh. I was part of that operation. My company (L/3/3) opened and secured the road from Ca Lu all the way to Khe Sanh – one hell of a chore."

I was unaware of the number of association members who had served in Vietnam but thought there are a good number of them who might be interested in membership. And while I have nothing on the subject for this issue except this column and the piece Association Trustee Mike Dietz has sent about the reactivation of the Fifth Division (see p. 22), I would welcome material for coming issues that highlights the contributions of Fifth Division Marines in Vietnam. So how about some photos, first-person pieces or other articles about division activities in Vietnam?

For your information, the Khe Sanh Veterans Web site is [www.khesanh.com](http://www.khesanh.com). Another is [www.vietnam-war.info/battles/siege\\_of\\_khe\\_sanh.php](http://www.vietnam-war.info/battles/siege_of_khe_sanh.php).

With a declining membership in the association due to the natural attrition of Iwo Jima veterans, it seems that there is a potential for current Fifth Marine

*Continued on page 4*

## Ideas for sustaining 5th Marine Division Association

For several years now, there has been talk about disbanding the 5th Division Association. All this talk seems to be predicated on the fact that it has become increasingly more difficult to find someone to host the reunions. I, for one, do not believe that the Association cannot stand alone; it does not need reunions to continue to serve the members as it has for 59 years.

Our Association has a great deal more to offer than just reunions. I won't go into the entire litany, but just to name a few, our *Spearhead News* keeps us informed about our members and their families. In addition, the updates on the many different issues that affect us all help to keep us on top of things. Also, it gives all a forum for beating our gums and passing on "scuttlebutt," etc.

I believe that there are other options:

1) Maybe we should have reunions every other year.

2) There are businesses out there that plan, organize and run entire reunions. There are costs involved, but I don't think they are out of line. It costs nothing to look into this.

3) Should our board look into opening a dialogue with the other Iwo Jima divisions (3rd and 4th) with the goal of combining the three divisions into one, with guarantees that each division would not lose its identity? They could hold a unified reunion, which would give us the opportunity to meet new Marines and to swap stories (an important part of the reunions). Administration, printing, office and other costs connected with running an association would be reduced.

I'm sure other members could come up with many other options that would save our Association from extinction.

– Ralph C. Simoneau, D/2/27  
Germantown, WI

### The Editor's Desk

*Continued from page 3*

Division Association members or new members to continue remembering and maintaining the legacy of the Fifth Division. I'm told there are currently some 50 Vietnam veterans in the association. Besides Ken Watterson, the current association president, the 2008 reunion committee has two other Vietnam veteran members: Treasurer Billy Martin and Steve Gaston.

Next year's association president Ivan Hammond will be hosting the 2009 reunion in Houston. And I understand someone else has stepped up, offering to host the reunion in 2010. By adding Vietnam Fifth Division Marines to the membership and covering their service, the association doesn't have to close up.

Does it?

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### Appreciation for editor's efforts

This humble life member of the 5th Marine Division Association has now read and re-read your first issue [as editor] of the *Spearhead*. It is a work of art and a perfect reflection of a guy who sincerely lives for his work.

Bert Clayton (and wife) has fulfilled the editor's job these many years as if it was the only job he ever wanted. Perhaps it was (but I doubt it)!

The "big shoes" you describe in your first column will be there-and-waiting whenever the need arises. God bless you and the job you have ahead of you.

– Aaron J. Fadem, K/3/26  
St. Louis, MO

### 'Welcome aboard'

I read and enjoyed your article in the recent *Spearhead* magazine. Welcome aboard.

– Helen M. McKay  
Pinellas Park, FL

### Clarification

The photo of five Marines that appeared on page 22 of the Spring 2008 issue was identified by Roger Emery and Howard Taylor as being taken at Camp Tarawa after the battle of Iwo Jima.

### **... about Rex, the war dog**

On board the ship that took my unit (1st Plt., Co. A, 5th Eng.) to Iwo Jima, there was also a mortar platoon. I believe they were part of 1st Btn, 26th Reg. They had somehow gotten permission to take their German Shepard mascot named Rex along on the ship. This was a rarity because pets were not usually allowed to travel with the troops, but I think an exception was made because he had been fitted with a saddle bag with four pockets that held bottles of blood plasma.

After the day (D+2) I assume his handlers were killed, I didn't see him again until later in the battle. A Jeep ambulance passed us on the road, and Rex was on one of the stretchers in the back with a blooded bandage around his chest. I don't know any more about him or whether he survived.

If I can get more information about this dog, I will try to contact the family of Marine Cpl. Dustin J. Lee, who was killed in Iraq late last year. His bomb-sniffing dog, Lex, survived, and Lee's family was able to secure the dog's release from the Corps and adopt him. This story was carried on Fox News on Dec. 13, 2007, and I will contact them to try and get this story to Lee's family.

– John Osborne, A/1/5th ENG  
196-a Bulls Bridge Road, South Kent, CT 06785  
*nevins28@charter.net*

### **... about Louis H. Keigley**

I have been gathering information about the military service of 2nd Lt. Louis H. Keigley, who lost his life in service to his country on March 1, 1945, at Hill 362A. He was a member of the 5th Div., 28th Reg., 2nd Btn., D Co., 1st Plt.

The National Archives lists Lt. Keigley as an officer serving with E Company at the time of his death. D Company's three rifle platoons were shot up pretty badly in the battle for Mt. Suribachi, so it's possible that Lt. Keigley's platoon may have been combined with one of E Company's for the push north to Hill 362A.

If anyone who was fighting at Hill 362A on March 1, 1945, remembers Lt. Keigley and would like to talk about what happened there, I would appreciate it.

– Steve Keigley  
P.O. Box 140274, Austin, TX 78714  
*steve4511@hotmail.com*



### **... about Lenard Arnout**

I never served in the armed forces, but through my father, I have much respect for those who have – especially Marines. My father, Lenard Arnout, served in the 5th Marine Division, H&S Platoon. He landed on Iwo Jima on one of the first four waves, and he talked of no shooting going on, and then all hell breaking loose.

My dad is my hero. He earned two Purple Hearts on Iwo Jima. I am enclosing a picture of him (above) in Hawaii I think before they landed on Iwo.

– Mark Arnout  
6794 E. Hwy 36, Preston, ID 83263  
208-852-3833

### **... about Duane S. Jackson**

I am searching for information about my uncle, Pvt. Duane Sheldon Jackson, who was a member of the 27th Replacement (Battalion), 5th Div. His service records are missing the date he disembarked from the U.S.S. Dickens (APA-161) and landed on Iwo Jima. He

*Continued on page 7*

# Woman continues father's legacy of reconciliation

By John Butler

On March 12, 2005, my brother, Clinton, and I traveled to Iwo Jima for the 60th anniversary Reunion of Honor. Travelling with us as part of the Military Historical Tours was Iwo veterans, their families, military historians, writers and media representatives with an interest in Iwo Jima. A brief account of this event appeared in the winter edition of the 2005 Spearhead newsletter.

The Japanese delegation attending the 60th Reunion of Honor included some surviving Japanese veterans but mostly family members of those lost, including a grandson of Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi – who was one of the speakers at the joint honor ceremony. Among the Japanese delegation was the daughter of Imperial Navy Captain Tsunezo Wachi, who was the first Japanese garrison commander of Iwo Jima before the arrival of General Kuribayashi.

Wachi returned to Japan following Kuribayashi's arrival and was assigned as commander for a fleet of suicide boats in preparation for the expected American invasion, which, fortunately, never occurred.

At war's end, Wachi was briefly imprisoned as a war crime suspect because of his spying activities as an attaché in Mexico just before the Pearl Harbor attack. On discharge from his naval service and just prior to his brief imprisonment, he became a Buddhist monk and dedicated his life recovering the remains of Japanese dead buried in the caves of Iwo Jima. In that endeavor he came to know and develop friendships with some Iwo Jima Marines, including the late John Pasannen, who served as the 5th Marine Division Association chaplain. Wachi was also an honorary chaplain of the 4th Marine Division Association and attended one of their reunions at Camp Pendleton.

Wachi, who founded the Japanese Association of Iwo Jima, was instrumental in organizing the first joint



**Rosa Ogawa, on right, and Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi's daughter-in-law at the Japanese memorial on top of Mt. Suribachi at the 60th Anniversary Reunion of Honor in 2005.**

ceremony held in 1985 with surviving veterans and families of both sides in attendance. The event in 1985 was followed by others, including the 50th, which saw more than 1,000 Iwo Marines and their families in attendance, and it is now an annual event supported by Military Historical Tours, which provides the transportation and lodging for U.S. attendees.

In 1990 Wachi passed away at age 89 and his daughter, Rosa Ogawa, carried on his legacy of reconciliation by traveling to the Iwo reunions,

communicating with his old friends, and fostering the spirit of reconciliation and peace her father had spent his life nurturing. She also found new Marine friends her father did not know. One of those Marines was Chuck Tatum (B-1-27), who corresponded with Rosa while writing his book, "Red Blood, Black Sand."

I first met Chuck at the New Orleans 1990 reunion which I attended with my mother and my uncles. My father, Lt. Col. John A. Butler, was a native of New Orleans, and this reunion was as a special event for the Butler family. Chuck and I have corresponded since, and when I told him of my intention to attend the 60th reunion scheduled for March 12, 2005, he wrote to Rosa and introduced me.

As a result, Rosa and I began a correspondence that continues to this day. In the first letter, she told me she would be at the reunion with the Japanese delegation and could be identified by a white 50th Anniversary Reunion cap given to her by Col. Warren Wiedhahn, who is the director of Military Historical Tours. Following the ceremony, my brother Clint and I, along with his wife, Leigh, managed to spot Rosa by her white hat and had a brief and most warm first meeting and greeting before we departed on separate scheduled battlefield tours. At that meeting, Cliff Hadley, the son of a 4th Division Marine, also met Rosa. He presented her with

Continued from page 5

a Japanese sailor's jacket his father had found in a cave. That jacket had the sailor's name and later, with assistance from the Japanese Association of Iwo Jima, Rosa was able to locate the bereaved family members in order to return the relic of their loved one.

The accompanying photos are representative of the legacy left by her father.

Every correspondence from Rosa Ogawa, including her letters to Chuck Tatum, always ends with:

Love, Peace & Prayers.

Rosa Ogawa

*Butler is the son of Lt. Col. John A. Butler, CO 1/27, who was killed in action on 5 Mar 1945.*



John and Clint Butler meet Ogawa on Iwo Jima in 2005.



Cliff Hadley, at left, son of a 4th Division Marine, presents Ogawa with a Japanese sailor's jacket, which had been found in a cave on Iwo Jima by his father.

was KIA March 9, 1945. Duane was a farm boy from a little town called Pharr, Texas, in the lower Rio Grande Valley. He was a fine Christian and loved playing high school football.

– Bonnie Myers

1520 S. Ware Rd. LOT 1A, McAllen, TX 78501

*Boobare351@yahoo.com*

956-605-1774



### ... about Maynard M. Sass

I have enclosed a picture (above) of my dad, Maynard M. Sass, with another man I do not know that was taken while my dad was in the Marine Corps. Ray Dooley helped me find out quite a lot about my father, but since my dad never talked about Iwo Jima, I don't know too much. I was wondering if anyone knew my father. I know he was a paratrooper – one of the few trained at Camp Pendleton. He also was from Iowa. He joined up after high school.

– Marilyn M. Sass

P.O. Box 3436, La Mesa, CA 91944

# THE LIONS OF IWO JIMA

The story of Combat Team 28 and the  
bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history



MAJOR GENERAL FRED HAYNES USMC (RET.)  
AND JAMES A. WARREN

Henry Holt and Company is pleased to announce the  
August 2008 publication of

## THE LIONS OF IWO JIMA

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bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history

by Major General Fred Haynes USMC (Ret.)  
and James A. Warren

This book tells the fascinating story of one of the greatest Marine units ever sent into battle. CT-28's four thousand brave warriors landed on the black sands of Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945, and raised the American flag atop Mount Suribachi after four days of ferocious combat. Haynes and Warren portray the Suribachi assault in riveting detail, as well as the team's subsequent struggle to break through the main Japanese defensive belt to the north and to destroy the final pocket of resistance in Bloody Gorge. Haynes, a veteran of three wars, commanded the Second and Third Marine Divisions, and was directly involved in the training and operations of at least a dozen combat teams in addition to CT-28. Co-author James A. Warren, a distinguished historian, is the author of the highly acclaimed book about combat Marines, *American Spartans*.

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To arrange an interview with General Haynes or Mr. Warren, or to request a review copy, please contact:



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### **2008 BATTLEFIELD TOURS**

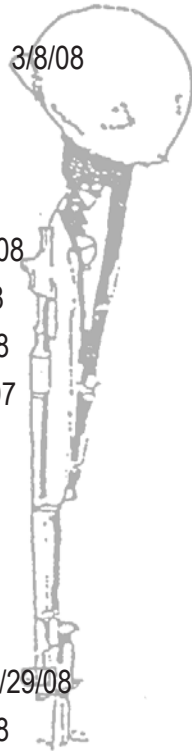
- 12 - 19 Sep WWII 64<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Battle of Peleliu
  - 7 - 20 Sep I Corps VN CAPs & Combat Engineers
  - 18 - 26 Sep WWII England "Airfields of the Eighth"
  - 28 Sep - 7 Oct WWII "Battle of the Bulge"
  - 12 - 25 Oct VN USMC Snipers & Recon in I Corps
  - 13 - 26 Oct WWII "China Marines" Return
  - 18 - 29 Oct WWII Italy "No Soft Underbelly"
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  - 14 - 27 Feb VN Hue City & Tet Offensive
  - 8 - 17 Mar VN Op Frequent Wind - Saigon
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## FINAL MUSTER ("Roll Call of the Reef")

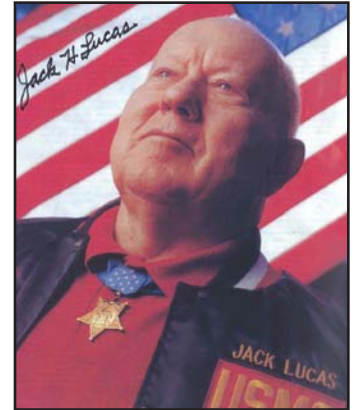
BROWN, Frank **E-2-28** 9/21/07  
 CHIASSON, Roland M. **B/1/26** Unknown  
 COMPTON, Joe **A-5THENGR** 5/2/08  
 COUGHENOUR, Dale **A-1-26** 12/12/07  
 DIMMICK, Earl "Mike" **HQ-3-26** 4/10/07  
 GIBSON, Charles **5THSIG** 3/14/08  
 HOLSAPPLE, Penn S. **A-5THPION** 3/8/08  
 JONES, William R. **F-2-26** Unknown  
 KLOSE, Walter H. **C-1-28** 2/3/08  
 LUCAS, Jacklyn H. **C-1-26** 6/5/08  
 MERRIFIELD, Charles **H-3-28** 3/15/08  
 OWENS, Edgar G. **HQ-3-26** 1/29/08  
 PLISKA, Edward P. **HQ-3-26** 3/22/08  
 SHEAHAN, Horace B. **HQ-13** 5/17/07  
 SHUMAN, John **I-3-28** 1/29/08  
 SMART, Jeff **I-3-28** 3/30/08  
 STONE, Alfred R. **D-2-27** 1/26/08  
 SWAGER, Frank L. **5THSIG** 2/5/08  
 WALKER, Dale R. **HQ-3-26** 2/5/08  
 WILLIAMSON, Thomas W. **D-2-27** 4/29/08  
 WILSON, Ted Wilbert **C-1-28** 3/15/08  
 YOUNG, Thomas H. **I-3-28** 3/15/08



## Medal of Honor recipient Jack Lucas dies

Jack Lucas was the youngest Marine to receive the Medal of Honor. In memoriam, his award citation follows:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, 5th Marine Division, during action against enemy Japanese forces on Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 20 February 1945.



"While creeping through a treacherous, twisting ravine which ran in close proximity to a fluid and uncertain frontline on D-plus-1 day, Pfc. Lucas and three other men were suddenly ambushed by a hostile patrol which savagely attacked with rifle fire and grenades. Quick to act when the lives of the small group were endangered by two grenades which landed directly in front of them, Pfc. Lucas unhesitatingly hurled himself over his comrades upon one grenade and pulled the other under him, absorbing the whole blasting forces of the explosions in his own body in order to shield his companions from the concussion and murderous flying fragments.

"By his inspiring action and valiant spirit of self-sacrifice, he not only protected his comrades from certain injury or possible death but also enabled them to rout the Japanese patrol and continue the advance. His exceptionally courageous initiative and loyalty reflect the highest credit upon Pfc. Lucas and the U.S. Naval Service.

## Secretary's Corner

The deadline for payment of the 2007 dues has been extended to Aug. 1. Although well over 100 members sent \$10 (pays only through 2008), there are approximately 180 members who have not paid.

If we had kept the May 1 deadline, there would be 180 of you who would not have received this issue of *Spearhead News*. Please look at your address on the back of this issue. If your 2007 dues have not been paid, you WILL BE DROPPED from the membership database as of Aug. 1. Be prepared to pay the 2007

and 2008 dues if you are behind. Also, be sure that your mailing address is correct.

The good news is that the 2009 reunion will be held in Houston, Texas, in October, and if all works out as hoped, the 2010 reunion will be held in Biloxi, Miss. Would someone consider hosting a 2011 reunion? If so, please let us know.

If you have any questions about the reunion in August, contact current President Ken Watterson at 214-808-7144. We hope to see you at the reunion.

– Ted Overgard  
Secretary

# *Pencil To Paper*

## *Wounded Marines recall the cataclysm of combat*

**Editor's Note:** *The following article was written for Illinois Alumni, the publication of the University of Illinois Alumni Association (and is reprinted here with permission), when I had secured a number of letters written by wounded Iwo Jima Marines after the battle when they were under the care of a Navy doctor, Commander Luther Lorance, in the hospital in Hawaii. The doctor had his nurses distribute pencils and paper to those who were able to write about their experiences to occupy their time and ease their stress. After Dr. Lorance's death, his family donated the letters to the Rare Book and Special Collections Library at the University of Illinois, preserving for posterity the thoughts and experiences of these wounded Marines from all three divisions involved in the campaign.*

*Following this article, there are some additional memoirs by veterans with the hope that these remembrances and subsequent others will find their way to similar repositories. Besides library collections and other appropriate repositories, there is the Washington, D.C.-based Legacy Project and Florida State University's history department, which supervises The Institute on World War II and Human Experience to collect and preserve material from America's wars. Wherever these remembrances and written accounts reside, it is important that they be preserved.*

---

### **By Ray Elliott**

With World War II veterans now dying at a rate of more than a thousand a day, family members and friends are finding these veterans' old letters, written in faraway places and on a hundred battlefields, stashed away in foot lockers, folders and cardboard boxes that have been sitting in the garage or hidden away in attics for nearly 60 years.

In recent years, repositories for such documents have been established in various places — most notably the Washington-based Legacy Project that collects and preserves letters from America's wars. Florida State University's history department supervises The Institute on World War II and the Human Experience for that purpose. Despite such efforts, undoubtedly many letters have already ended up in the trash bin, the thoughts and experiences lost forever.

Two summers ago, I received an e-mail from Larry Lowrance of Nashville, Tenn., telling me how a relative

of his had initiated the writing of some letters from a group of wounded Marines from Iwo Jima in 1945.

According to Lowrance, Luther Lorance (same family, different spelling) was a Navy commander in the medical corps working in a hospital in Pearl Harbor at the time.

Shortly after the Marines started landing on Iwo Jima near the end of the Allied island-hopping campaign from Guadalcanal to Japan, the wounded were taken to hospital ships bound for Saipan or Guam and eventually flown on to Pearl Harbor. The steady stream of wounded was comprised of young men not long out of high school or who'd enlisted in the Marine Corps to escape the Depression. One in three Marines was killed or wounded in the battle of Iwo Jima, which claimed more Marine casualties than any other battle of the war. More than 6,800 U.S. troops and 20,000 Japanese were killed in the 36-day campaign.

Back at the Pearl Harbor hospital, Dr. Lorance "was concerned about the mental state of those waiting for aid," according to Larry Lowrance. To ease their stress, the physician instructed the nurses to take pencil and paper to those who were able and ask them to write about their experiences on Iwo Jima.

Lowrance remembered hearing stories about the documents when he was growing up near Robinson, Ill. Dr. Lorance, who practiced medicine in Chicago until his death in November 1984, used to visit in the summer months to refurbish his family's nearby homestead. The younger Lowrance recalled the written accounts as being "awesome, spooky and somewhat surprising because none I can remember has any reference to fear."

That's true, to an extent. But one young private wrote, "I was scared, but I had plenty of company. Everyone else was scared, too."

Most of the comments are rather matter-of-fact. Not all of the Marines and Navy corpsmen who wrote the letters were on the first few waves, but they all hit the beach early on and quickly came under fire from mortars, machine guns and artillery barrages.

The Marines universally praised the corpsmen for risking their own lives to treat the wounded promptly. The Marines also wrote about how and where they were wounded.

One of the most revealing narratives of the 50 or

so that were eventually recovered among Dr. Lorance's belongings is one from Sgt. William D. Norman, who landed with the 24th Marines in the first wave of the reserve regiment on Feb. 19, 1945: D-Day on Iwo Jima.

The sergeant, a veteran of three previous island campaigns, said he "experienced the nervousness just as much as the newest recruit in my boat. The Japs were throwing 77 mm shells at the landing craft, but fortunately they were landing approximately 150 yards to our left. But they were effective when they did strike.

"The sight that met my eyes, as I set foot on the beach, is one that I shall never forget. Dead Marines were so thick that we had to sidestep them in order to move forward. I have withstood heavy enemy bombardments that lasted all night on Saipan, but never have I seen men who had died more violently. Men were blown to pieces, one leg here, an arm there, and strings of guts that were several feet long. These men had scarcely set foot on the beach. But to us, this was a reminder that we would have to fight, and pay in human lives and blood, for each foot of this barren island.

"... My regiment was to be in reserve for our division — so the plans said. But as I inched my machine-gun section forward from shell hole to shell hole, I suddenly realized that there were no front lines. A shell landed in front of Lt. Magumna (sic), a former enlisted man and platoon leader of the rifle platoon to which I was attached, blowing both legs of the man in front of him off, and the concussion knocked [Lt. Magumna] out. (He was evacuated and voluntarily returned to the front lines, where he was later killed by mortar fire on March 4.) I would like to mention that it was men of his caliber that eventually led to the American flag being flown over Iwo, for he was a great man and a natural-born leader."

The sergeant continued writing about his experiences for the two weeks after D-Day: moving forward, fighting, taking casualties, some days making a 200-yard gain in territory, going back in reserve, coming back on the line, fighting some more, taking more casualties, going back on reserve. ...

Finally, after being pinned down for two days, "a big push" was made on the gun emplacement that was holding them back. The sergeant was directing an attack from the back of a tank. That attack on the morning of D+14 included a flame thrower, which he said drew attention because of the smoke it produced. A mortar shell landed near the tank and hit him in the left flank.

"Fortunately it was only lodged in the pelvis bone instead of going through," he wrote of the shell that wounded him. "I was treated by a corpsman (given morphine) and evacuated to the Bn. aid area where the doctor checked my wounds. From there, they evacuated me to the 4th Medical, where I was promptly put on the operating table.

"The doctor probed and tried to locate the shrapnel, but his cutting to find it was unsuccessful as it was too deep. When they told me that I was to be evacuated by plane to Guam, I was so happy that tears came into my eyes, for truthfully I didn't think that I'd ever live to tell about this one."

Now, some 58 (at the time) years later, the collection of letters noting this man's combat experiences and those of many other Marine veterans is housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign — a gift of the family of Dr. Lorance. The preservation of these firsthand accounts helps ensure that future generations will know what these men lived through and sacrificed in the historic battle for Iwo Jima.

Barbara Jones, the former head of the UI Rare Book Room who secured the acquisition, said documents like these from the wounded Iwo Jima Marines "build on an already strong collection of correspondence from other wars" and are available to researchers, veterans and anyone who is interested.

"This particular set of letters just radiate with what I call 'immediacy,'" she said. "They are written with pencil, on yellowed paper — the readily available tools at that hospital. They were written just days after one of the most important battles of World War II. So they have a special importance because we get an immediate, firsthand glimpse from those who were 'there.' They are uncensored, sincere."

When that same wounded sergeant wrote about being evacuated to Hawaii on a large C-54 transport, along with many other wounded Marines, he noted the care and dedication of their nurse, 2nd Lt. D.L. Benidick of St. Paul, Minn.

"She was an inspiration to each man," he wrote, "for she spent every minute of those eight and one-half hours playing cards with the men, talking, doing everything in her power to make them forget."

But "it will be a long time before they will forget," the sergeant added, who then, for reasons unknown, erased that last line of the 12-page account of his experience.



# *Memories of Iwo Jima*

*Editor's Note: The following are excerpts from a memoir by Bill Montgomery, HQ/2/26*

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**By Bill Montgomery**

## **Life Aboard a Troop Ship**

... Obviously, being a Marine aboard a troop ship, especially during wartime, was a different life from being the Navy crew on the ship. There is not a lot for the Marines to do on the ship – organized calisthenics for 45 minutes or an hour most days, some briefings before the Iwo Jima landing. Other than that, boredom. So we had to innovate.

Some of my troop ships had small libraries that usually were available to the Marines. Many of us got in a little reading, which helped to soften the monotony. However, on one voyage, the popular pastime was making rings! Someone started this process, and most of us picked up on it – at least those who could find the necessary raw materials.

We would take a quarter or a half dollar (nearly solid silver in those days), hold it on edge against the steel deck, take our mess gear large spoon and concave the coin. The edge of the coin would begin to flatten out, with a slightly rounded edge. We would tap away on these coins for hours at a time. Eventually, the coin would pound down to the size we wanted. Then we would take our big Ka-Bar knives and start drilling a hole in the middle of the coin and keep on drilling with the knife until the inside of the coin was gone, leaving a beautiful silver ring band! The lettering on the coin could usually still be seen on the inside of the band.

So on this particular voyage, from early morning to Taps, everyone on the ship could hear constant pings all over the ship. ...

## **The Push North**

“Was anyone else hit?” Sgt. Rasmussen turned his head and looked at us, the two other men with him on the battalion forward observation post.

“No,” I said, “Are you hit?”

“I think my rear end (or words to that effect) is full of shrapnel.”

The three of us were lying side by side on an embankment overlooking the second airfield on Iwo

Jima. It was D+4. We had landed on Iwo Jima, Feb. 19, five days earlier. On our left, the rest of our battalion was spread out for several hundred yards waiting for the word to “jump off,” move forward toward the north. On our right, elements of the 3rd Marine Division, which had just come ashore, were beginning to move out forward; and I could see them dropping one after another from the heavy shelling and bullet fire. Artillery shells, mortars, machine gun and rifle fire were also raining down on our sector with increasing ferocity.

Iwo Jima is an ugly island. It's shaped like a pork chop, about 5 miles long, 2 miles wide at its widest point in the north; and its narrow neck is only 800 yards wide just above the bottom end where Mt. Suribachi rises 556 feet. The part north of the narrow neck starts rising gradually to Hill 382 (382 ft.), then to both Hills 362 where the terrain tapers down and drops off to the sea. Japs were always looking down on the Marines from Suribachi and from the northern part of the island.

Our second battalion of the 26th Marines, 5th Division, landed on D-Day at about noon on the eastern beach. The 28th Marines and most of the 27th had landed and were cutting across the neck trying to get to the other side of the island. The 4th Division landed on the north half (right flank) of the beach near the first airfield. ...

... Shortly before Rasmussen was hit, I noticed about 300 yards off to my left, puffs of smoke coming out of a cave opening. A Jap machine gun! Most of them we couldn't see, and we seldom knew where the fire was coming from. I fired off several clips of ammunition; and since I had clips with tracer shells every third round or so, I could see the bullets going into the cave entrance. The puffs of smoke stopped; but the Japs may have seen the tracers also and the artillery and mortar shells raining down on us seemed to become even heavier than the intensive fire we had been going through already.

Sgt. Rasmussen seemed to be bleeding pretty badly. He said he better get back to the aid station to get taken care of; so he started making his way to the rear. I didn't think he would make it back. Shells were dropping near him constantly until he was out of sight. The next time I saw him was back at our base camp in Hawaii. Rasmussen had gotten to the aid station,

was taken to the beach and evacuated to a ship for more extensive medical treatment. A few days later, without authorization, he caught a boat back to shore and rejoined the 2nd Battalion. He was put to work somewhere else, and I didn't run across him for the rest of the operation.

The other man next to me (I don't remember his name) was nicked by shrapnel and left for the aid station. Enemy fire was so heavy that the 3rd Division advance was bogged down, and our battalion – our 26th Regiment – just had to dig in for the rest of the day.

Around mid-morning, I happened to turn around to glance back at Mt. Suribachi. I had wondered how the 28th Marines were doing with their push to the top. *Then on the top, I could see an American flag waving in the breeze!* Other Marines were looking also. What a great sight for all Marines and for sailors aboard ships off shore! At least the Japs would stop firing at us from the highest spot in the island. Little did we know then that this carnage would continue for more than another month! ...

### Dante's Inferno

In Dante's "Divine Comedy," he writes about hell – known as "Dante's Inferno" – and says, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." This typifies the atmosphere on Iwo Jima.

There was nothing about Iwo Jima that anyone could like. The name of the three-island group was Volcano Islands; and Iwo Jima was the Japanese name for Sulphur Island. These names are hints enough of what this island was like.

Iwo Jima has an extinct volcano which pops up above the ocean surface. Suribachiyama (Mt. Suribachi) rises 556 feet above sea level. On Suribachi's top is a large cone from which volcanic eruptions spewed long ago.

Before the war, sulphur was mined commercially on Iwo Jima by Japan. Much of the island consisted of hot soil and rocks and sulphur fumes, which were

overpowering. There was virtually no foliage on Iwo, at least while we were there. The upper half was all rocky hills, caves and rocky soil and the stinking sulphur fumes and mists. The lower half of the island was all volcanic soil, hard to dig foxholes in because as you dug down, the sides caved in. It was like digging in a big sandbox.

In some areas the hot sulphur seeping from the ground would create a heavy mass of hot steam vapors rising upwards. And in the early light of day, Marines would be silhouetted, crouched over walking or running through the vapor clouds like Dante visualized the Devil's imps moving through hell, "Dante's Inferno" – a surreal image!

***We would dig into rocky soil  
for an hour or so trying to  
make an adequate foxhole;  
and if we ever got it deep  
enough, the bottom would  
be so hot we had to fold our  
ponchos, place them on the  
bottom to sit or kneel on.  
Otherwise, it was like sitting  
on a hot plate!***

When we were there, February and March, the weather was lousy most of the time – a lot of cold, dirty rain. We had ponchos which helped prevent too many soakings. We had been issued a wool shirt, a sweatshirt, and we all had our dungaree tops. Then when it was cooler, we wore our light field jackets. And, of course, we kept our steel helmets on 99 percent of the time. In fact, when we occasionally took off our helmet to scratch our head or whatever, we would

feel "lightheaded."

I may have had a pair of clean socks in my pack; I really don't remember. But I do remember that other than socks, I, and most of the other Marines, didn't change clothes or take a shower for longer than a month. We were a scrungy bunch!

In most areas in the northern half of the island (the hot areas) we would dig into rocky soil for an hour or so trying to make an adequate foxhole; and if we ever got it deep enough, the bottom would be so hot we had to fold our ponchos, place them on the bottom to sit or kneel on. Otherwise, it was like sitting on a hot plate! There were two advantages to this, however. When the weather was cold, we had nice heated foxholes. Another advantage was that we could fix hot chow. Just bury your C ration cans in your foxhole for a few minutes

and bingo! Hot beans! What better meals could anyone want?

For longer than a month, we ate only C rations or K rations. K rations were not very satisfying. They were in a box about the size of a Crackerjack box; and they usually included a small tin of eggs or potted meat and perhaps a stale piece of chocolate and a couple of small crackers. We lived mostly off C rations. There were three C ration menus: beans, most people's favorite; stew, the second most popular; and the third was hash. Most tried to avoid the hash, but sometimes, hash was the only can of rations available, so we made do with hash. Each can had a "dog biscuit" just under the lid. These were hard and not very tasty, just like dog biscuits.

And if the weather and terrain were not enough to make us miserable, having 21,000 Japs trying to kill us didn't improve our impression of little Iwo Jima.

It's amazing that most people can adapt to almost any condition and circumstance. Some couldn't, but most of us did. Most of us ate regularly. Usually we had enough water, although it was heavily chlorinated. We did our jobs as best we could; and a few of us even made it off the island in one piece.

### **Land Mines**

Green limped by my hole, heading toward the rear. He had a bloody bandage around his leg above the knee, and he was using his rifle as a walking stick. I shouted, "Green, what happened?" He said, "I caught a bullet in my leg!"

I said, "Well, good luck. See you later!"

Green said, "Yeah, Monty, maybe later."

Green was assigned to a Fox (F) Company as an intelligence-scout in the Battalion "Two" Section. I had the same job in Easy (E) Company. I had transferred from the "Two Section" forward observation unit to E Company early during the campaign to replace Bledsoe, who had been killed.

Green hobbled off toward the aid station. I actually envied Green. He was wounded but apparently not fatally; and if he made it to the aid station and the beach, he would get off the island alive. Actually, I heard much later that his wound was worse than it appeared. He spent six months or so recovering in a Navy hospital on the West Coast.

It seemed that Green had been gone only a few minutes when there was a huge explosion nearby. I instinctively ducked down in my hole and then popped back up to see about 30 feet away a cloud of smoke

boiling up from the ground. Through the smoke staggered a Marine *on the stumps of his legs!* He had stepped on a land mine, probably an anti-tank mine, and both legs were blown off above the knees. After a couple of seconds, he toppled over; and out of nowhere a Navy medical corpsman ran over to give him aid. He probably didn't survive, however. Those big Japanese anti-tank mines were designed to blow the treads off of tanks; and they were devastating when a man stepped on one.

Later on, about a week or so before we left the island, I saw a big "six-by-six" truck crawling along nearby with a load of dead Marine bodies. The driver and his partner apparently were with the cemetery burial detail and were out gathering up dead Marines to haul to the cemetery area.

While I was watching, the truck hit a land mine, apparently another anti-tank mine. Bodies bounced around the truck, several draped over the truck side. The front left tire had blown off and the rim was badly bent. I remember the driver and his partner getting out – both appeared a little dazed – looking at the wheel and then getting back in the truck and slowly driving away, thumping along on the badly bent wheel rim and with several bodies draped over the sides of the truck.

### **V-Mail**

During the war, military people overseas were encouraged to write their letters on V-Mail forms, but I don't think many did unless necessary. The V-Mail letters were one page only. The government or post office made a reduced-sized photocopy of the letter and sent it on to the addressee. V-Mails were supposed to arrive quicker, although I don't think they did. On Iwo, V-Mail was the only choice we had.

A few years ago, I discovered that my mother had saved all the letters I had written home while I was in the Marine Corps. When I saw them, I sat down and read them all – most of them were boring – and I pulled out the four V-Mail letters I had written from Iwo Jima:

28 February 1945

Dearest Family,

I guess you know by now from reading the papers that our outfit is fighting on Iwo Jima. I hope that by the time you receive this letter we will be off this Godforsaken rock. This is entirely a Marine campaign and no "doggies" are fighting here. After we secure the isle, though, the Army comes on and sets up a defense.

You don't know how thankful and lucky I am to be writing this. Many was the time when I thought I wouldn't see the night again. There is still a lot more fighting to do, and it will be a happy day for us all when we are able to stand up straight without fear of being shot or of a shell dropping near us. Our best friend, next to our rifle, is our entrenching shovel. Here we learn to dig foxholes deep and narrow.

So far, I am unscathed and am well. The worst thing here is not the snipers, machine gun fire, mortars or artillery, but seeing dead Marines lying around.

I love you all more than I can say. I have your pictures here with me here in my pack.

Much love, Bill

~ ~ ~

6 March 1945

Dearest Family,

Here it is the 16th day of fighting on little Iwo Jima (it doesn't seem so little to me), and we still haven't secured the island. They treat us pretty good. The guys get plenty of cigarettes and candy and rations. For the last few days, we have been getting some hot coffee. One of the best things is the mail situation. I have gotten about 20 letters. The last one dated Feb. 20. I really enjoyed them, too. I am still alive and unhurt (I'm knocking on wood), but lots of guys are still getting killed. The Japs are really dug in. There are caves and dugouts chiseled of solid rock all over this north part of the island. They are getting low on water. Last night one was shot here in our area trying to steal water. A few days ago, three Nips were killed at daybreak right in our C.P. when they dug out of a cave which we had sealed the entrance to. They dug all night and when they broke out, they were cut down like rabbits. I thank God every night for letting me live though the day. I love you all more than you know and think of you always.

Love, Bill

~ ~ ~

14 March 1945

Dearest Family,

Here it is the fourth week of fighting on Iwo and I'm still alive and unhurt. I don't have any idea how long it will take to secure the island. The northern part is the hottest spot on the whole rock.

I hope you are all feeling well and everything is OK back home. Thanks a lot for the 25 bucks for my birthday.

You ask about sending boxes. You don't have to have any word from me and can send whatever you want whenever you want.

I was standing in a shallow foxhole the other day with about 5 or 6 other fellows, all standing close together when a machine gun opened up on us. The man standing next to me got hit through the upper part of his arm. Luckily, no one else was hurt. That's one of the many close calls I've had. Many guys have had much closer ones. Some, bullets through clothes or helmets only grazing their skin or skulls. Too many haven't been so lucky.

Love to all and don't worry.

Bill

(Footnote: I have forgotten the name of the Marine who got hit in the arm, but I do remember that when he caught the bullet, we all dropped down in the hole. We foolishly had been standing exposed about waist high when the machine gun cut loose.

We didn't see a Navy medical corpsman in the area, so I somehow cut his sleeve off to his shoulder. He had been hit between the shoulder and elbow. And it was a bad wound – looked as if the bone was shattered.

Each Marine carried battle dressing kits, which consisted of a large dressing pad with gauze ties to attach it. There was some sulfanilamide powder to sprinkle on the wound; and there was a small tube syringe of morphine to inject for some pain relief.

I got him patched up as best I could. Soon he climbed out of the hole and made his way back to the aid station. I never saw him again, so I suppose he made it out OK.)

~ ~ ~

21 March 1945

Dearest Family,

The whole isle of Iwo Jima is almost secured and here it is the second month of fighting. This has been a pretty rugged month, too. I am pretty lucky to be alive now.

The 5th Division Cemetery was dedicated this morning. There were a lot of little white crosses there and more to be set up. They had church services afterwards.

There are just a few of the fellows that went through scout-sniper camp with me that came in this outfit who haven't been wounded or killed.

I hope we get off this rock soon. It ought to be over in a few days.

I hope you all haven't worried too much about me. I've written several times since being here. I'm still in good health. I really do love you all more than you realize.

Bill

### **The P-51 Mustang**

About a year ago, I saw an ad in the Leatherneck magazine for a book published by the crew of a World War II troop ship. This ship had been all over the Pacific during the war and had brought Marines to Iwo Jima.

The ad said that for Iwo Jima veterans, the book price was cut 50 percent if the book order included an anecdote of one of his Iwo experiences.

This is what I submitted:

It seems that as we approach the twilight years, we old fellows are more willing to discuss combat experiences which occurred many years ago – whether they be “sea stories” or actual, horrifying, heart-rending events. As a teen-aged Marine (I celebrated my 19th birthday on Iwo Jima), I went ashore on D-Day (Feb. 19, 1945) with the 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines, 5th Marine Division.

I was never hit, but I had many “near misses.” (I've estimated about 1,800 or so “near misses” from artillery fire, mortars, machine guns, rifle and pistol fire, rockets, hand grenades, land mines and bombs.) But one near miss, which is somewhat humorous, I guess, occurred around the middle of March towards the upper end of the island. Forward troops were supposed to use red cloth panels spread out on the ground at the “front lines” to enable fighter pilots to spot a point beyond which they could bomb and strafe the Japs. Well, after a couple of weeks, we became a little less conscientious with keeping the panels laid out – most of them seemed to have become misplaced, along with gas masks and other “non-essential” items of gear.

I was in a foxhole alone one afternoon when I noticed that an Army Air Corps P-51 Mustang fighter plane started diving toward (I thought) the enemy area in front of me. About 100 feet above the ground, he pulled up after releasing a bomb – a 500-pounder, I think. It hit right next to my hole! Fortunately, it did not explode; and it ricocheted into the enemy lines where it did explode.

I was somewhat shocked and very indignant at the audacity of one of our own pilots dropping a bomb on

me; so I swung my rifle up and fired off a couple of rounds in his direction as he pulled away.

If I had shot him down, I really would have been embarrassed!

Such was a typical, surreal day during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

### **Nearly 50 Years Later**

... I remember [my state of mind during that time in my life]:

- The terror of the intensive mortar and artillery barrages. (Being not quite 19 years old helped this terror evolve to a sense of fatalism, rather than debilitating fear.)

- That the enemy was always looking down our throats; we were looking uphill at them.

- The hatred and bitterness toward the Japs for their killing of Marines, especially our buddies.

- The hatred toward the hellish Iwo island, its terrain and its ugliness.

- The frustration at the land surface too loose to dig foxholes in one area and too hot and rocky in others.

- The cold, miserable weather much of the time.

- The beautiful parachute flares and star shells fired continuously (usually) at night – otherwise, certain Jap infiltration.

- The Jap practice of pulling back their dead so most of the dead we saw were Marines – especially in the early days.

- The eventual ability to identify the caliber and type of all artillery, mortar and small arms fire, both enemy and friendly.

- Accepting the inevitability of getting hit, hopefully not fatally.

- Being envious of those Marines who did get hit – non-life threatening.

- Admiration for those wounded Marines who refused to be evacuated or who “jumped ship” to rejoin their units.

- The embarrassment and sympathy for those Marines who “cracked up.”

- The irony of celebrating my 19th birthday on Iwo (3/23/45), realizing that I just might be lucky enough to finish out the operation intact (later remembering than even after 3/23, several more in my outfit were killed by sniper and machine gun fire).

- The exhilaration of leaving that Godforsaken island on March 27 after 37 days in hell.





# *Eulogy for Jay Rebstock — April 28, 2004*

*Editor's Note: Jay Rebstock (E/2/27) of New Orleans died in 2004. Much of his considerable Iwo Jima memorabilia was lost at the time of Hurricane Katrina, but his daughter, Corky Rebstock of Houston, Texas, recently submitted the eulogy she gave at Jay's funeral.*

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## **By Corky Rebstock**

Everyone knows that my daddy was a Marine. What some of you don't know is that when he joined up, he first tried the Army, the Navy and the Coast Guard.

He was rejected by all because of a football injury to his knee. When he went for his Marine physical, he failed again. He started crying. The doctor said, "Son, if you want to be a Marine that bad, you're in."

So in April of 1943, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps, had basic training in San Diego and on Feb. 19, 1945, he landed on a tiny island in the Pacific, Iwo Jima. He served in the 5th Marine Division, E Company, 2nd Battalion, 27th Marines. His company had 350 men, including replacements, and only 32 of them walked off the island on March 28, 1945.

And I am pleased and proud that five of the men in his company are here today: Mr. Leonard Nederveld, Mr. Leland Young, Mr. Hank Hernandez, Mr. Albert Pagoaga and Mr. Leahmon McElveen Jr.

Dad was wounded and spent three days in an Army hospital and subsequently received the Purple Heart. He returned to Hawaii and then served seven months in Japan. When he was discharged in California, he and four other Marines hailed a cab, and when the cabbie asked them, "Where to?" they said, "New Orleans, La." The cabbie said, "Hop in, I've always wanted to see New Orleans," and charged them \$35 each. Dad drove the cab most of the way, and they made it in four and one-half days.

In 1947, he was flying a small plane over Grand Isle, La., and buzzed the boat a lady Marine, Nitsy Rhodes, was fishing in. She thought he was very obnoxious, and six months later they married, and it was a marriage that lasted 57 years. They moved to Fort Worth and then to Houma, La., and had three daughters, Deborah, Corky and Rhett and finally, two boys, Jeff and John. Mom and Dad also have three wonderful grandsons and a beautiful granddaughter. I will say, all of our lives, we thought everyone had the "raising of the flag" in every room of their house. We thought everyone had fishing

boats named "Gung Ho" and "Semper Fi." Growing up, we all knew the words to the "Marine Corps Hymn."

Dad was an oilman his entire life. We moved to New Orleans in 1967. Dad started Rebstock Drilling Co. in 1971 and retired in 1985. Retirement for Dad meant he could really have fun. The History Channel played in our den non-stop at a rather high volume. That was occasionally replaced with "All in the Family" or "Seinfeld" or any movie that John Wayne ever made.

Dad volunteered at City Park, working in the gardens. He became a wood worker. He also began to collect LGB trains and built a raised track in the front and back yards of his home, where he ran the trains every Christmas for all the kids in the neighborhood. Last December, he donated all of his trains to his beloved City Park. He decorated the yard with yard art, which was so overdone, it was comical and the sad thing is it actually began to look good.

He began talking to high school kids about Iwo Jima. He offhandedly mentioned to my mother that some reporter had interviewed him. He didn't make a big deal out of it, and it wasn't until she opened the Times-Picayune that she saw his picture in color on the front page with a two-page article about his experiences on Iwo. He was featured in three books, a magazine and numerous other articles. He was one of the main speakers representing the Marines in the Pacific when the National D-Day Museum opened in New Orleans. He talked daily on the phone to all of his lifelong friends and his Marine buddies, attending every Marine reunion. He lunched with his buddies, was post commander of the American Legion and traveled on his bi-yearly European trips to visit the battle sites and graveyards of World War I and World War II with "The Happy Few." In fact, just four weeks ago, Dad returned from Europe from an eight-day trip with "The Happy Few," much to the amazement of his doctors who thought he couldn't go. I am certain they didn't realize just how gung-ho Dad was!

Least you think Dad was perfect, he wasn't. But near enough. And when he screwed up, he made us all laugh. Once, Deborah cooked him some veal and she asked him how it was. He replied, "Deborah, I fought Japs on Iwo that weren't as tough as this veal."

When he found out he was ill, I took him to see his oncologist. First, he had to attend an American

*Continued on page 21*



# Nightmare

## By Bert Clayton

Soon after landing on Iwo Jima, I longed for my old M1 Garand rifle that had some punch to it. They had issued Sig. Co., Hq. Bn. personnel the M1 Carbine rifle instead, figuring any targets we had would be at close range.

When we had tested them on rapid fire back at Camp Tarawa Rifle Range, my particular piece would throw its operating handle after six or seven rounds.

I never trusted it thereafter.

I noticed, too, that it had “Underwood” stamped across the back of the receiver. I suppose the typewriter company was now supporting the war effort by making rifles. (I never liked their damned typewriters, either.)

Throughout the next several days, after Suribachi was secured and the action pushed on north, several of us went looking for abandoned Garands and the clips of eight rounds that would fit them. There were plenty lying about among the many Marine and Japanese corpses who had fallen during the first days of the assault.

I soon found a Garand to suit me, along with clips of ammunitions.

After it was well cleaned and oiled, I felt I had located an old friend. We couldn't ditch our Carbines, though, since their particular serial numbers were checked out to us individually, and we would be held responsible for their return. (A friend of mine, a Marine veteran of Korea, suggested with a grin, “Hell, you shoulda just told 'em you lost yours in the surf when you landed.” Now, why didn't I think of that?) Anyway, my loaded Garand was the one that was slung over my shoulder when I went anywhere.

Bodies from both sides, or in many cases, what was left of them, were strewn around and about Motoyama Airfield No. 1 like so many broken and discarded toy soldiers. The eyes, if still open, were no longer bright. Instead, the normally glistening conjunctiva was covered with a sort of gray, smoky film.

After a week or 10 days, the infantry action was well over a mile or more north of our Command Post position dug in at the southern end of the airfield. This made us what the infantry guys would call “Hollywood Marines,” virtually non-combatants. The demands for our radio services soon dwindled. Time began to hang

heavily on our hands and now boredom became our enemy.

Major Conner, our C.O., sent word through Signal company ranks warning us that we were not to go souvenir hunting. It was bad enough to die in actual combat without falling victim to some damned booby-trapped trinket. Anyone discovered in this activity was threatened with a transfer to a front-line infantry unit. One of our Motor Transport truck drivers was caught a few days later and was immediately transferred north. Within just a short time, word came back that he'd been killed — a bullet to the head. Japanese soldiers were not all half blind, despite what American propaganda would have us believe early in the war. They took their time, were patient, and many a curious Marine popping his head up behind an obstacle died from a head shot.

It was in this environment, about March 1, 1945, that Bob Barry, one of our Sig. Co. telephone wiremen, was looking for someone to go north with him. The idea was just to have a look around while there was still some action going on. (Heavy action continued for another 25 days.) Our infantry guys were pushing the enemy toward the upper end of the island, but it was slow, grueling work, taking its grisly toll on both sides.

Just after noon chow, and being relieved from any radio duty for a couple of hours, I jumped at the chance. I grabbed my trusty M1 and a couple of clips of ammo. Bob had his rifle, ammo and a hand grenade he'd found somewhere. Sig. Co. people in Headquarters were normally not issued grenades.

Off we went — he with his 6'2" frame and me at 5'8" — a real pair of Mutts and Jeffs. We headed up the east side of the island, through the area where the 4th Division had caught so much hell during the early days.

A mile or so north, we must have run into the area known as “The Amphitheater,” a huge scooped-out bowl with some higher ground around it that was reminiscent of a barren moonscape. We spotted a few guys who were dug in around the perimeter, peering cautiously at the elevated ground ahead. There was an occasional crack of rifle fire and a ricocheted “ping” from time to time to time.

We crouched down and slid in next to one of the men. He looked us up and down, eyed our dungarees that were much cleaner than his and probably tagged us as replacements or tourists.

“Stay low. We don’t want you guys drawin’ any fire.”

Sounded like a good idea to us. We hung around for a few minutes longer, figured the area wasn’t healthy and decided to move on westward, then head back to our C.P. via the far west side of the island.

I was relieved when we left the frontal area and headed toward territory that we knew must be “secure.” We slung our rifles over our right shoulders and trudged off.

We circled a large, high, craggy area, then turned back south into a small piece of very flat terrain. Bob was trailing me by 10 yards or so.

Suddenly, I spotted what looked like a Japanese rifle lying on the ground straight ahead of me, in plain sight, its muzzle pointed toward me. It appeared to be unusually clean.

“Hey, Barry! A Jap rifle!”

I’d always wanted one.

I ran up to it, looked it over, making certain I couldn’t see wires or anything attached to it, stooped over and grasped it gingerly by the business end. Whatever caused me to glance up from my crouched position, I’ll never know.

My eyes focused on what looked like a small bomb crater or large shell hole 10 yards or so straight ahead of me. I’d seen numerous dozens of dead Japanese on the island before, often in these positions, lying against the sloping sides of such holes, dead. This one contained two of them, but they appeared different somehow.

Both men were unmoving, staring straight at me. My mind and vision focused on the one on the right who was clad in an unusually clean uniform and could have been a young officer. Our eyes were locked on each other. His glinting eyes never left mine, and he showed no fear. My shocked mind took in the information quickly and came to a chilling conclusion, but there had been that split-second moment of paralysis.

(“In battle, they say, the worst thing is paralysis.” — “About Face,” Col. David H. Hackworth, Simon & Schuster, 1989.)

All in one motion, I dropped the Jap rifle muzzle, stood partly erect and swung the M1 off my right shoulder. My next words are burned indelibly in my mind. Without looking for Barry behind me, I yelled, “Barry! The sons-a-bitches are alive!”

Instinctively, I brought my rifle up to the firing position, with my eyes still glued to the pair, and attempted to snap the safety off.

The “officer” waited no longer, but in what seemed to me to be in slow motion, deliberately, he sat more

erect, coolly reached into his tunic and pulled out what I was sure was a grenade. (He sure as hell wasn’t going to offer me a cigarette.) He never took his eyes from me.

I didn’t have to see his next movement. I knew he would pop the grenade’s cap atop his steel helmet, but I had already turned about 45 degrees and was making tracks for a shallow terrace I’d spotted off to my right.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Barry heading for the safety of the terrace to his right. Holding tight to my rifle, I dove headlong over the shallow edge.

I curled into a ball and waited for the explosion that was sure to follow and the pain of shrapnel that would be ripping into me. With my heart in my throat and the blood pounding in my ears, my mind didn’t register any blast. I peered cautiously over the edge of my low, two-foot high terrace, but could see neither of the enemy’s heads above the rim of their deep shell hole. I looked down at my rifle, knowing that there was a clip in it and a round in the chamber, but mentally began kicking my ass. The safety had been off all along. I’d make a hell of a lousy infantryman.

I squeezed off several rounds slowly at the upper edge of their shell hole, intent on keeping their heads down until I could get my mind unscrambled. Eventually, I heard the distinct metal “clank” as the empty clip popped out of the receiver, warning me that

***I curled into a ball and waited for the explosion that was sure to follow and the pain of shrapnel that would be ripping into me. With my heart in my throat and the blood pounding in my ears, my mind didn’t register any blast.***

the eighth and final round was on its way. I grabbed my other clip, quickly jammed it into the receiver and sent the bolt home.

Before I could bring my rifle up again, I saw, in my peripheral vision to my left, Bob's tall, lanky frame legging it toward the shell hole. He was not carrying his rifle, but was grasping his only hand grenade with both hands. I was struck dumb with awe.

Barry ran up to within just a few yards of the enemy's position, pulled the pin on his grenade, tossed it in, spun around and headed back toward his place of cover. I didn't count to five — just ducked my head and waited for a reassuring explosion.

Again, although I have virtually a photographic memory, I have no recollection of hearing the grenade go off. Was the enemy able to grab it and pitch it out? I'll never know. I was staying low and still couldn't see the Japs within the shell hole.

For the moment, I felt a release of tension until something caught my eye from above, atop the high ridge to my right. Two or three helmet tops appeared above the ridge. My heart sank. I said to myself, "You are a dead man."

It seemed obvious to me that the two Japanese might have infiltrated the area during the night, perhaps with the intent of attempting to blow up one of our ammunition dumps nearby. The sight of these new helmets led me to believe that they had reinforcements with them, who, looking down on us, could easily dispatch us at their leisure.

But as more helmets became visible, I recognized that they belonged to our guys. They probably heard the firing from the other side of the ridge and wondered what the hell was going on. This was supposed to be friendly territory, but they weren't taking any chances.

One waved to me. I waved back, then pointed furiously at the shell hole. The Marines looked over the ledge to get a better view. Soon, two or three grenades arced from the ridge toward the shell hole.

I ducked again, awaiting the satisfying blasts. Again, my mind recorded no explosions. I let out a long sigh, 20 | Spearhead | Summer 2008

and my heart left my throat. A few deep breaths and I almost felt human again. Finally, one of the Marines on the ridge yelled down at me.

"Hey! Is that your buddy over there?"

"Yeah, sure," I replied, relieved that we'd both made it.

"Well, you better check him out. I think he may be hit."

I jumped up and bounded over to where Barry lay. He had not quite made it back to his place of cover. He was laying supine, head toward the shell hole, but maybe 20 yards from it.

I knelt beside him. His helmet was a few feet away. Clotting blood was matting his eyes shut. There was a vicious circular hole at his crown, toward the rear, about the size of a silver dollar.

"Barry!"

His response came slowly, words spoken haltingly, as if in a drunken stupor.

"Yeah. ... Buddy. ... O ... Kay. O ... Kay. ..."

The Marines were down off the ridge, running toward us.

"We'll send for a stretcher. There's a battalion aid station just over the ridge not far from the other side."

"Oh, Jesus!" was all I could

muster. I fumbled for the first aid pouch at my web belt, broke open the sulfa packet and sprinkled some powder onto the head wound. What the hell else could I do? I never felt so heartsick in my life.

The stretcher bearers arrived shortly. We loaded Barry gently and made our way the hundred yards or so back over the rugged terrain to the aid station.

To me it was an endlessly long trip. When we arrived, they began working on my buddy immediately. They were quiet and seemed pretty grim. As for me, I was numb but kept asking, "Is he going to make it?" for I was positive that I had recognized exposed brain tissue through that wound.

They didn't answer, just kept working.

One of the doctors said they would have to evacuate him as soon as possible. They got him stabilized, hooked him up to some IVs, loaded him onto jeep



Bert Clayton

ambulance and sped off as fast as the uneven terrain would permit.

A young officer came over to where I was sitting in a state of semi-shock. He put a hand on my shoulder and said, "I'm a chaplain. Let's pray for your buddy." (My God! Was it that bad? And yet I knew it was.)

As we prayed together, my mind was a million miles away.

It was getting late in the afternoon as I stumbled my way back to our C.P. I sought out Tech Sergeant John Wagner, who was one of the main noncoms in Barry's Wire Platoon. He must have read the anguish on my face. He listened intently, quietly, with understanding, as I related our story, leaving nothing out. He said he would report the incident to our C.O., Maj. Conner. I returned to our radio crew, Art Esser and Harry Sisson, but I doubt if I was worth much for several days.

I waited for the ax to fall. Surely, Conner would transfer me to a front-line outfit as he had the other man. I steeled myself to face his same fate. But days on end went by and nothing further was said. The matter was never brought to my attention again. Had the previous incident shaken our C.O. and given him pause? That's another of life's mysteries I'll never be able to solve.

Barry's fate was unknown to me. Information was simply not available. I was selected to attend a Navy V-12 college unit in the States after we returned to Hawaii and completely lost track of the old outfit except for a few buddies. The incident near the shell hole haunted me, though. Even after being discharged in 1946, I dreamed of it often. Guilt persisted. I could or should have handled my challenge much better, but you can't turn back the clock.

In 1948, I took a chance and wrote to the Veterans Administration to see if they knew whether Barry had survived. I was delighted and relieved to learn that, indeed, he had. He answered my letter and revealed that they had replaced the missing piece of his old noggin with a protective metal plate, one that wouldn't expand and contract with temperature changes. He experienced some nerve effects, but all in all, he had made it through in pretty good shape.

We ran into each other at a mini-reunion of our old Signal Company in San Diego in 1991. He told me he had married in California, had children and was successful in life only to suffer a head-on collision in his Volkswagen, an accident that took his wife, left him with a fractured pelvis and other injuries and put him in a coma for two weeks.

For a while, his survival was again in question, but

as before, this tough old Marine had beaten the odds. He wore a brace on his right ankle and, despite some numbness, he managed quite well and feisty as hell.

Bob had no recollection of our incident at all. They say the mind is very protective against traumatic memories and often blanks them out completely. The thing that really puzzles me is the cause for his wound. He had to have received it as he ran back from his grenade attack toward his place of cover. Jap officers usually carried side arms in a holster. Did he manage to get a few shots off at the fleeing Marine? Or did his companion? My memory recorded no revolver shots. Was Bob struck by a grenade fragment? Unlikely.

He told me proudly that he was the first Marine on Iwo to be airlifted off the island. That may have been what saved his lucky old ass.

We kept in touch, but he began deteriorating a few years ago. I eventually got word of his death, May 5, 2006.

Requiescat in pace, Old Comrade. ❖

## **Rebstock**

*Continued from page 17*

Legion luncheon, and when I went to pick him up, he was leaning against a column with that happy grin. So all the way there I was telling him it wasn't good to arrive at your cancer doctor "overserved." When we got to the doctor's office, he went in and immediately lay down on the table and started snoring. The doctor walked in — a 5-foot-2 woman who looks 14 and has a wonderful foreign accent, which Dad could not understand. She started talking directly to him, and he looked at me like she wasn't there and said, "What she's saying?" And I was trying to smile to the doctor as if everything was normal.

Finally, the last time Rhett took Dad to the hospital, he was very weak. Rhett very carefully asked him if he would like a wheelchair. He told her, "Rhett, a man always walks in like John Wayne."

On behalf of my mother and my sisters and brothers, I would like to thank all of the people who have been so kind to us in our time of sadness. I know Dad would be so proud to see all of his family and friends here. He was a Marine who fought in Iwo Jima, and that shaped his entire life. He was a hero to all, and he was our hero!

# Fifth Marine Division elements reactivated to make new history in Vietnam

*Editor's Note: After hearing some debate on whether the Fifth Marine Division was activated during the Vietnam War or if only certain units were called up, Mike Dietz did some research and sent two letters of inquiry to Headquarters Marine Corps. My column addresses the issue, and the following article is a result of Mike's efforts.*

After having left its mark in the history books for gallantry and courage in action at Iwo Jima in WWII, the Fifth Marine Division was reactivated as the Fifth Expeditionary Brigade on March 1, 1966, to meet the growing U.S. commitment in Vietnam. At the reactivation ceremonies and parade at Camp Pendleton, Lt. Gen. Lewis A. Walt, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps and parade reviewing officer, presented the colors of the new Fifth Brigade to Brig. Gen. Ross T. Dwyer, the brigade's commanding officer.

Immediately after its activation, "The New Fifth" undertook an intensive training cycle to achieve combat readiness, and on April 20, 1967, Regimental Landing Team 26 was moved to Vietnam, where it took part initially in numerous operations in "I" Corps.

Elements of the Fifth's 26th Marines participated in the memorable Battle of Khe Sanh as enemy forces began an all-out seven-week drive endeavoring to capture that strategic base. The outnumbered Leathernecks valiantly fought repeated North Vietnam onslaughts, inflicting heavy casualties on two attacking NVA Divisions.

The climatic battle came on Easter Sunday 1968 when the 3rd Battalion 26th Marines attacked the enemy's 881 North complex, their heavily fortified

key rocket base threatening our forces in Khe Sanh. It was defended by a strongly armed and entrenched NVA Battalion. But so well planned, executed and courageously carried out was the 26th's attack that by 1430 that day, the 881 North was secured and the NVA defenders who had not fled during the fierce fighting were either dead or captured.

The Marine Corps' official history, "Battle of Khe Sanh," refers to this fight as "the last battle of the great siege of Khe Sanh." For gallantry in action there, Regimental Landing Team 26 was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

Following Khe Sanh, the 26th Marines moved into the DaNang area, where they participated in a series of mobile operations which smashed enemy base camps.

Meanwhile, the 27th Marines, the Fifth Division's second infantry regiment to see action in Vietnam, was air-lifted into combat from Camp Pendleton on 48 hours' notice at the height of the 1968 Tet Offensive. Elements of the regiment saw action south of DaNang in the "Rocket Belt," while other elements took part in mop-up operations and subsequent defense of Hue City.

Two battalions of the 13th Marines, the Fifth's artillery regiment, also served in Vietnam. The 28th Regiment remained in Camp Pendleton as a ready unit and provided training for replacements of its sister divisions in Vietnam.

The famed Fifth Division passed into history once again at a formal deactivating ceremony and parade at Camp Pendleton on November 26, 1969.

## ***Update on 2009 Reunion in Houston***

In March, we met with some Houston 5th Division Marines to form a working group to plan the next reunion from Tuesday, Oct. 6 through Sunday, Oct. 11, 2009.

We are checking out tours to the Battleship Texas and, possibly, the San Jacinto Monument. They are next to each other. The Texas is the only ship left that was at Iwo Jima.

Another tour will be to the NASA Space Center. A trip to Galveston is also on the "check out" list.

We will definitely have a large Texas barbecue at the Walter Hall Park in League City. This will be catered by Marine Corps League #668 from Galveston at no charge. The MCL McClemore detachment will be assisting us in Houston.

**– Ivan Hammond, 5th JASCO  
Vice President/President-Elect**

## NEW MEMBERS: WELCOME ABOARD!

AMOS, Mrs. Kenneth **ASSOCIATE**

138 Smith St., Bentleyville, PA 15314-1024

BASS, Bo **ASSOCIATE**

9016 Courtenay St., Apt. 5307N, Richland Hills, TX  
76180

BYRD, William Wilson **D-2-28**

213 Bradford Place, Richland, MS 39218

CAROTHERS, Diane Foxhill **ASSOCIATE**

404 Burkwood Ct. W., Urbana, IL 61801

CLARK, Eleanore **ASSOCIATE**

4017 Edgewood, Hannibal, MO 63401-2434

DOLLAR, Scott T. **ASSOCIATE**

7524 David Dr. N., Richland Hills, TX 76180-6348

DROBNICK, Jennie **ASSOCIATE**

333 Jefferson St., East Greenville, PA 18041

DROBNICK, Joshua **ASSOCIATE**

394 Main St., Apt 1, East Greenville, PA 18041

LUCCHESI, Lory **HD-5**

11573 Norman Ave., Stockton, CA 95215

MARTIN, Mrs. Marshall **MM**

12128 Grant St. Overland Park, KS 66213-2507

RYAN, Anne **ASSOCIATE**

413 Belle Lane, Harleyville, PA 19438-1741

SPROWLS, Richard A. **B-1-28**

29200 S. Jones Loup Rd. #504

### **LIFE MEMBERS**

BACHTEL, H.C. **H&S-5TH TANK**

10121 Densmore Ave., North Hills, CA 21343-1404

BEHANA, William A. **H&S-28**

2131 Paseo Grande, El Cajon, CA 92019-3854

CLARK, Earl H. **HQ-28**

1700 S. LaCanada Dr., Sahuarita, AZ 85629

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### ***Marine stories part of new mini-series***

*The Pacific*, a 10-part TV mini-series from the creators of *Band of Brothers* telling the intertwined stories of three Marines during America's battle with the Japanese in the Pacific during World War II is currently in production and scheduled for release in 2009. Fifth Marine Division Association member Charles "Chuck" Tatum, B/1/27, and author of the book *Black Sand, Red Blood*, is portrayed as a character in the series.

For more information:  
<http://imdb.com/title/tt0374463>

## Iwo Jima

Kat-ZOON! Kat-ZOON!

"Incoming!" I cry,  
as fragments of mortars  
explode into clusters of troops who explode into  
fragments of flesh and sand and steel  
which zing past my ears as  
I dive like a fox for a hole.

Kat-ZOON again, and  
a tardy stray locates my lair  
and buries me there  
with pieces of rifle  
and shattered grenade;  
my buddy Al helps rob the grave  
of all but my ears  
left buried there,  
forever to listen for incoming calls.

My best friend Jim is shredded now;  
I sit on my helmet and grieve as he dies.  
Jim, my friend for life;  
Well, there is still Al;  
Yes, Al is still here.  
We are still three, aren't we?  
But no, not really three,  
Al and me,  
We're a ghost and two.

Jim is gone, mortar-blasted,  
Iwo blasted, evil-blasted;  
Just two survive, Al and me.

Then Al is gone.

The sniper chose Al, right next to me.  
How could this be? We were three;  
Now there's me,  
Just me.  
Why me?  
Why?

— Bill Madden, E/2/27  
5th Marine Division

# Eyewitness to a War Memorial

**By Ellen Posner**

*The Wall Street Journal – May 1, 2008*

WASHINGTON – In the course of my work as an architecture critic, I have been brought face to face with the complex issues of memorialization, including imagery, and sensitivity to who and what is being remembered: first in Germany as the government of that country prepared to move from Bonn back to Berlin, then at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and more recently at the World Trade Center site in New York. In writing and speaking about these issues, though, I had never had the opportunity to consider a memorial design in the company of someone who had been involved in the event being commemorated.

The National World War II Memorial, a tribute to the more than 400,000 Americans who died, as seen from atop the Washington Monument.

However, after the National World War II Memorial was dedicated on the National Mall in Washington, nearly 60 years after the war had ended, I realized I had a likely candidate to provide a witness's perspective in the person of my father, Charles Posner. In 1942, while a college sophomore, he was drafted into the United States Army. He served in South Pacific, including New Guinea and the Philippines, and, after the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan in 1945, in Osaka and Tokyo.

When I first asked him if he would accompany me to Washington to see the memorial, he was not enthusiastic. In fact, in the course of my subsequent invitations to him, his responses were (not necessarily in this order): "Too late," "Who cares?" "So many are dead" (with a shake of the head), and "The party's over." The difference this time is that I proposed a visit to the memorial that would be purposeful and that would culminate in me writing about our reactions for the Journal. He agreed, and so we boarded an Acela Express to Washington.

The memorial, designed by Friedrich St. Florian, an Austrian-born architect based in Rhode Island after a competition, is a hard-paved memorial with a water element at its center.

At the outset of our visit to the WWII Memorial, our roles had been clear. I was the architecture critic, he was the veteran -- and we would each do our jobs. We did, however, have the same reaction to the architecture of Friedrich St. Florian. "This looks like Hitler's Stadium,"

my father observed, "reminds me of Mussolini." And I concurred. The long rows of streamlined pillars, the scooped-out entrances to the pavilions, their ornamental wreaths and the huge sculptures of eagles that haunt their interiors create a toxic stew at this memorial -- something that should have been assiduously avoided.

On the way down, my father told me he was expecting the worst. "Everyone knows about the European war, but the Pacific war is a stepchild," he warned me as we headed south from New York. And then, more emphatically: "No, not a stepchild, an orphan," adding "even though there were more American soldiers in the Philippines than in all of France."

But as soon as we found ourselves standing at the entrance to the memorial, he found that his fears were unfounded. Both theaters are given equal emphasis as the words "ATLANTIC and PACIFIC" that are incised on the faces of the chunky white granite pavilions, one at each side of the amphitheater-like space.

"Sterile" was my father's first opinion as we walked down in to the memorial's paved, low-walled enclosure. We were not at odds about this. We looked straight ahead at the far end of the memorial at the 56 rectilinear white-granite pillars -- too short to be proper columns because they would then have obstructed the view across the Mall -- that are inscribed with the names of the U.S. states and territories. They're decorated with brass wreaths of oak and wheat to commemorate, as the architect had explained to me in a telephone interview before the visit, "the material wealth of the country."

My father was unimpressed. "I know the names of the states" he said. I assessed this phalanx of little pillars as trite and impoverished imagery but I could sense that to him, it was worse; it was an insult to the men who suffered and who had died -- in almost unimaginable circumstances. "There is no sign of any struggle," he said. "No passion, no suffering."

Unlike the nearby Vietnam Veterans Memorial for example, which includes every name of every person missing or dead, the World War II Memorial's "Freedom Wall is embedded with 4,000 gold stars to "commemorate," as the brochure explains, "the more that 400,000 who gave their lives in the war," as if to avoid the enormity of the war's human cost.

Later in our survey, my father informed me that it was unlikely that even 400,000 was an accurate total. "That's when they stopped counting," he said sharply. It





### National World War II Memorial

didn't make sense to me that the military did not know how many of their own had died and for a moment I sounded like a child asking why they couldn't count. "They didn't have sophisticated systems," he told me. "And you did not know what happened to some people." On New Guinea, he explained, "Some of the local inhabitants were cannibals and they would eat you. Once they ate you, there was nothing left."

This mingy display of 4,000 stars commemorating the dead and missing may have been the result of Mr. St. Florian's stated desire, as he related to me, to have the memorial seen as "joyful" and "a celebration of democracy." That was really lost on me. My father, more lenient, noted that "of course there were some results that were positive: democracy in Europe and in Japan," He did add, though, that "reflective" would have been a more appropriate goal for the memorial.

But the strangely inert quality continues in other elements of the memorial's clutter of imagery -- notably in the 24 bas-relief sculptures, 12 on each side of the low walls that limn the entry. To inspect these, we walked counterclockwise around the edge. Of one sanitized representation of a jungle, my father sarcastically noted: "They left out the mosquitoes." The horrifying attack on Pearl Harbor was represented by an image of a family, at home, listening to a radio. In another bas-relief, the prisoner of war being released looked pretty healthy, and is standing upright and ready for a handshake -- which even I know would be inconsistent with what is recorded about the Japanese military's treatment of prisoners of war. I was bewildered. My father was silent.

Although we were in agreement about the emptiness of the memorial and about the strangeness of

its emphasis, I could not imagine what it needed to give expression to how difficult it was to fight that war and what was sacrificed. My father thought about this and then said, "There could be a statue."

This issue, of course, arose with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in which compromises were made to satisfy an array of interests. I did not understand the yearning then. I had wondered what a statue could possibly add to a memorial that already had become important and meaningful to veterans and to the

bereaved. And I did not understand it now.

I asked what kind of statue he thought would be appropriate, of whom and how would it help. At that moment I realized the difficulty inherent in creating a memorial that is meaningful not for the ages, but for someone who was involved in the event and who mourns for others.

After a while, my father said, "It could be a statue of a soldier." "Which soldier?" I wanted to know. "Doing what?" It could be, he said, "a statue that would show what it was like to be a soldier at that time. If the soldier was in the South Pacific, he would not even be wearing a shirt -- just shorts and combat boots." There was no body armor at the time, he explained quietly, "And it was very hot."

My father noted one more curiosity. "There is no reference to the atomic bomb."

As we were leaving the memorial, I was still concerned about the rationale that led to the display of only 4,000 gold stars, but my father's mood had brightened. There we were on the National Mall. We could see the Washington Monument on one side and the Lincoln Memorial on the other, flags flying sharply, cars streaming by. "A+ for real estate," he announced, "Excellent site." And I realized what mattered most is that it is where it is -- a far more important consideration than the troubling imagery or the hissing, spurting water of the Rainbow Pool. My father had been able to pay his respects to the men who didn't make it.

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*Posner, an essayist and critic in New York, is a former architecture critic for the Journal. © Dow Jones & Co. – Permission Granted*

# Another BAR on the Beach Update

May 15, 2008 – Time to bring you a relatively current report as to our progress.

First of all, though, I apologize for an understandable oversight on my part. Being naturally focused, when I worked up the original notices on the BOTB Project, I neglected to anticipate the obvious questions that it might generate, like, “What the hell’s a BAR?”

After all, we have a wide audience of readers – widows and associates – who have never been exposed to that acronym and haven’t a clue as to what it means. One writer wondered if it referred to a bar in Tijuana. Wrong! Another wrote that in the illustrations we provided, it looked to him like an M1 Garand. Wrong again! Hence, the following instructions:

It simply refers to the Browning Automatic Rifle that numerous Marine riflemen carried into battle with them. Even most of us who carried the M1 Garand would, at a glance, recognize from the illustration and photo that the rifle the statue’s steely-eyed figure is aiming at an imaginary enemy target showed an ammunition clip which was inserted from underneath the weapon, and that the angular shape of its bottom gave it away as the BAR’s 20-round clip. A BAR clip won’t fit in an M1, anyway. Someone else offered, “It can’t be a BAR! Where’s its bi-pod?”

No, I won’t explain bi-pod except to add, BAR men have told me that “I lost the damned thing as soon as no one was looking. And when some new 2nd Lieutenant had a supply sergeant issue me another one, I ‘lost’ it, too, not long after hitting the beach at Iwo.” Besides, can you imagine how grotesque it would look to visitors if our statue at the museum had one of those gangly things dangling from the barrel? Besides, Waterhouse’s painting showed no bi-pod, so who am I to argue? But I digress. . . Where was I?

Our account runs \$34,947.59 now. We have over 160 contributors, which is about 10 percent of our total membership, considering that 200 delinquent members have been dropped since Raleigh. One interesting thing I’ve noticed is that one in every eight of our 160+ contributors is a widow of a 5th Marine Division Association member. I found that truly remarkable but don’t know why. God bless ’em!

It’s obvious that we’ll need additional support. I’m making contacts to a couple of organizations who

are known for their generous contributions to worthy causes. Trouble is, they have a right to know that at least half of our organization is in strong support of the project. That’s why I issue this plea to you:

The “flyer” mail-out we sent you back around mid-February had two purposes: a) to obtain contributions directly, and, b) to obtain your indications as to whether you 1) approve the BOTB Project, and/or 2) approve of the BOTB Project and feel the association should support it, or 3) you do not approve of the BOTB Project.

Contributions are important, of course, but just as important are your feelings about the project itself, whether you are in a position to contribute or not. I should have made that point clearer in my instructions.

We’ve received a few side notes without donations: “Undecided. Maybe later,” and “Sorry, can’t at this time,” but they at least completed the questionnaire portion and used a stamp to advise us as to their feelings about it. Only four or five of the 160+ indicated that they did not approve of the project. No response at all cannot automatically be counted as a vote against it. Members should indicate their views.

So, here’s my deal: If you decided not to fill out and return the questionnaire portion of the flyer you received in February because you couldn’t contribute at the time (or can’t contribute at all), don’t let that stop you. We need your completed questionnaires anyway. Check ’em off and mail to me.

Because of a printing overrun at the print shop, we still have numerous copies of the flyers left over. If you elected to not return your questionnaire, (for whatever reason), or have disposed of or lost it, I can provide you with another. Just let me know, whether by phone (870)741-8940, e-mail (baclayt@cox.net), postcard or letter (to 1714 Deer Run Dr., Harrison, AR 72601) or Pony Express (“Hi-yo, Silver!”).

If you contributed, but didn’t check off the questionnaire, I took the liberty of assuming that you are in support of the BOTB. (Duh!) A vote for both #1 & #2 is acceptable, of course. That’s legal. We have contributors’ first responses recorded.

Let’s hear from you. See you in D.C.! Semper Fidelis.

– Clayt

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Iwo Jima: World War II Veterans Remember the Greatest Battle of the Pacific*

More ink probably has been spilled about the battle for Iwo Jima in World War II than for any other piece of real estate the size (in square miles) of the sulfur island or for any other battle in the long history of warfare.

And now former *Parade* magazine managing editor and veteran reporter Larry Smith has taken a page out of author Studs Terkel's oral history work and written *Iwo Jima: World War II Veterans Remember the Greatest Battle of the Pacific*, based on interviews with Iwo Jima veterans who served in all aspects of the 36-day-long bloody battle.

Smith's book, released in May by W.W. Norton, certainly won't be the final book or word on the battle — Iwo Jima veteran and retired Marine Maj. Gen. Fred Haynes' book, *The Lions of Iwo Jima*, (to be reviewed in the winter issue of *Spearhead* and available from Gen. Haynes at the D.C. reunion Aug. 27-31) is due out from New York publisher Henry Holt in August.

But Smith's book lets the Iwo Jima veterans, including Haynes, tell their stories in their own words. He offers some introductory or explanatory remarks but then stays out of the way as each man's story unfolds.

As a young captain with Combat Team 28 for all 36 days of the campaign, Haynes went up Mt. Suribachi shortly after the first flag was raised. From the top of the mountain, he said, "We saw the mess on the beach and what we had ahead of us. You could see the real challenge was going to come once we got past the airfields, where we had one hell of a fight."

In all, Smith interviewed 22 Iwo Jima veterans, all of whom were never very far from "one hell of a fight" for the duration of the campaign. Among them were two Medal of Honor recipients, a Navajo code talker, the last surviving flag raiser from the first flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi who died shortly after he was interviewed, a war correspondent, and an African-American Marine who served in an ammo company and later became a Navy chaplain.

Thomas Haywood McPhatter was one of the black Montford Point Marines, still segregated from white Marines but served in a shore party battalion moving supplies and ammo to the beach and on to the troops;

code talker Samuel Tso worked in communications in the Navajo language the Japanese never broke, and couldn't buy a beer in a restaurant as he was hitchhiking home after his discharge when the war was over.

"No beer for this Indian," the owner told the man with whom Tso was riding.

Each man is able to personalize his story and show what it was like for them on the island and what it was like for them after the war. Some of the stories may be familiar.

But Richard Nummer tells one he didn't talk about for 40 years: shooting a hole in the flag that was flying over Mt. Suribachi when he cranked off a round, thinking he saw a Japanese soldier. The flag now resides in the Marine Corps Museum.

"Not too many people know there's a hole in the flag. It's right there in the second stripe. Here it's probably the most famous picture ever taken, and I stuck my little hole in it. I should have been court-martialed."

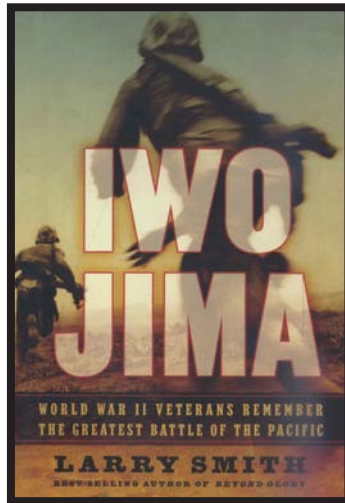
Smith also looks at the Japanese side, too, and the mystery of what happened to Japanese commander Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi through the eyes of Col. John Ripley, Marine Corps historian and Navy Cross recipient from Vietnam, who has long been a student of the Iwo Jima campaign.

Writers and historians will continue to study and document the iconic battle which killed 6,821 Americans, wounded nearly 20,000 more and killed more than 20,000 Japanese and capture the details for posterity. But Smith's work will rank with some of the best, primarily because he has followed the lead of the great oral historian Studs Terkel and let a wide range of regular Marines, sailors and airmen who did the fighting tell their stories in their own words.

These men give a clear historical perspective of what the campaign was like for those who fought and died there and why it was necessary to sustain such monumental losses of young Americans to invade and secure the island.

— Ray Elliott

*Iwo Jima: World War II Veterans Remember the Greatest Battle of the Pacific* (W.W. Norton & Company; \$26.95 hardcover)



## 2008 EVENT SCHEDULE

### • Wednesday, August 27 •

#### 6 p.m. – **Welcome Reception**

Wounded Marine Semper Fi Program and talk by Sgt. Maj. Gene Overstreet, 12th Sergeant Major of USMC.  
(Meal included.)

### • Thursday, August 28 •

#### 9 a.m. – **Marine Corps Museum, Quantico, Va.**

Buses leave hotel at 9 a.m. to arrive at the museum at 10:30 a.m. Two (2) choices of box lunch: Turkey or Ham.  
Speaker: Gen. Al Gray, 29th Commandant of USMC. Buses depart for hotel as filled, or by 2:30 p.m.

#### 6 p.m. – **Young Marine Program**

Featuring Col. Mike Kessler, national director of the Young Marine Program, and a young Marine who will speak about the Iwo Jima Monument.

#### **Iwo Jima Seminar and Discussion**

Led by Col. John Ripley, former USMC historian. (Meal included.)

### • Friday, August 29 •

#### 8:30 a.m. – **Washington Memorial Visits**

Buses leave hotel at 8:30 a.m. for Washington, D.C. **WWII Memorial** – Frank Wright to place the wreath and make comments. **Vietnam Memorial** – Asst. Under Sec. of Navy Barney Barnum to place wreath. **Iwo Jima Memorial** – Maj. Gen. Haynes to place wreath and make comments; 5th Division Assn. Chaplain Bill Pace will give prayer. Buses depart for hotel at noon.

#### 2 p.m. – **Executive Committee Meeting**

#### 6 p.m. – **USMC Sunset Parade at 8th & I, with Drum & Bugle Corps**

Buses leave hotel at 6 p.m. and board at 8th & I for return trip to hotel at 9 p.m., as they fill up.

### • Saturday, August 30 •

#### 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. – **Memorial Service**

#### 10:30 a.m. – **Business Meeting**

#### 3:30 p.m. – **Catholic Mass**

#### 6 p.m. – **Reception** (Cash bar)

#### 7 p.m. – **Banquet**

Speaker: Gen. Conway, Commandant of USMC

## 2008 REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are total registration, tour and meal cost for the reunion. Please enter how many attendees will be participating in each event and the total cost for each activity, and send a check or money order to the Fifth Marine Division Association. Phone or credit cards will NOT BE ACCEPTED. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 1, 2008. After that date registration will be accepted on a space-available basis only. We suggest you make a copy of your completed form prior to mailing.

### JULY 15, 2008, CUT-OFF DATE FOR REGISTRATION

<u>DAY</u>	<u>EVENT</u>		X	#OF PEOPLE	=	TOTAL
<b>REGISTRATION</b>	(MEMBERS ONLY)	\$15.00	X		=	\$15.00
WEDNESDAY (8-27)	REGISTRATION 1 p.m.					
WEDNESDAY (8-27) Meal served	Sgt. Maj. Gene Overstreet, 12th Sgt. Maj. Of USMC	\$25.00	X		=	
THURSDAY a.m. (8-28) Meal served	MARINE MUSEUM 29th Commandant USMC General Al Gray Ret.	\$25.00	X		=	
THURSDAY p.m. (8-28) Meal served	Col. Mike Kessler USMC Ret., Nat. Dir. Of Young Marines_ IWO JIMA SEMINAR led by Col. John Ripley USMC, former USMC Historian	\$25.00	X		=	
FRIDAY a.m. (8-29)	WWII MEMORIAL <b>VIETNAM MEMORIAL</b> IWO JIMA MEMORIAL	\$5.00	X		=	
FRIDAY 6 p.m. (8-29)	8th & I. USMC PARADE Drum & Bugle Corps	\$15.00	X		=	
SATURDAY a.m. (8-30)	MEMORIAL SERVICE		X		=	
SATURDAY a.m. (8-30)	BUSINESS MEETING					
SATURDAY p.m. (8-30)	BANQUET & DANCING (Beef or Chicken)	\$45.00	X		=	
	HOSPITALITY (EVERYONE PAYS)	\$20.00	X		=	
SATURDAY a.m. (8-30)	LADIES AUXILIARY DUES <i>(Note Corrected Amount)</i>	\$10.00	X		=	
<b>TOTAL PAYABLE</b>		<b>\$</b>				

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***5<sup>TH</sup> Marine Division Association***

*2008 Conference*

*Wed, August 27 – Sun, August 31, 2008*

*♪♪ Cut Off Date for Reservations ♪♪*

*Friday, August 1, 2008*

*Reservations: 800-228-9290*

***Hotel Guest Registration Form***

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ # in party: \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Standard*  
*2 Double Beds*  
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*All rooms are*  
***NON SMOKING***

Rates do not include applicable taxes, currently 10.25%. Complimentary Hospitality suites from August 27-31, 2008. Complimentary airport shuttle to and from DCA, Reagan National Airport. Shuttle services start at 6:10am and ends at 10:50pm, runs every 15-20 mins.

Credit Card Choice

\_\_\_ American Express \_\_\_ Master Card \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ Diner's Club \_\_\_ Discover

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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***To guarantee your reservation, we require first nights deposit either:***

1. Mail an advance deposit in the form of a check or money order covering the first nights room and tax (10.25%) payable to "Crystal City Marriott" along with a copy of this form.

OR

2. Include your credit card number card number. We accept Diners Club, American Express, Discover, Visa and Mastercard.

The Marriot Hotel regrets that it cannot hold your reservations after 6:00pm on the day of arrival without one of the above methods of payments.

Deposits will be refunded only if cancellation notification is given at least 24 hours prior to arrival. Please fill in the information requested above and return this to the attention of the Hotel Reservation Department

***\*\*Reservations requested after the cut off date are subject to rate and space availability\*\****

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To be published in conjunction with the Fifth Marine Division Association 59th Annual  
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- \* Distributed to all members of the Association, Major Marine Corps Commands and Solicitors.
- \* The Fifth Division Association is a tax-exempt organization. You're tax-deductible Ad in this historic 59th Reunion Journal will help our Scholarship Program to aid worthy children and grandchildren of these heroic Marines who served to gallantly at Iwo Jima and Viet Nam.
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