



Spearhead NEWS

"Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue"

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of the 5TH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION

**70TH ANNUAL REUNION - NEW ORLEANS, LA
OCTOBER 21 - 27, 2019**

SAVE THE DATE

Opportunity to get together at heart of reunion

By Vanessa Faurie

It seems if you just bring everyone together in one place and provide a big enough hospitality room, you will have a successful Fifth Marine Division Association reunion. After all, the opportunity to get together, swap stories, reminisce, share a meal, make new connections, and honor heroes and patriots now gone is really at the heart of each year's gathering.

This time, it was downtown Champaign in the heart of Illinois that got to welcome veterans and families of the Fifth Marine Division Association in mid-October. There were 14 Fifth Division veterans—12 Iwo Jima and two Vietnam—and nearly 100 family members and friends checked into the just-right Hyatt Place hotel.

The management and staff were genuinely thrilled and honored to have the group make its home at the hotel for those five days. When employees' shifts are over, but they still hang around to make sure everybody's happy



Twelve Iwo Jima veterans attended the 2018 FMDA Reunion in Champaign, Ill. Left to right in the back row are: T. Fred Harvey, Jim Kelly, Ben Bellefeuille, Duane Tunnyhill, Billy Cawthron, Sam Weldon, Al Nelson, Monroe Ozment and Ivan Hammond. Seated in front from left are: Samuel Jones, Del Treichler and George Boutwell.

(Photo by Jimmie Watson)

and has what they need, you know they really care.

The modesty of the medium-sized Midwestern town does not necessarily overflow with tourist attractions and activities from which to choose. So

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RAY ELLIOTT
 Secretary
 Fifth Marine Division Assn.
 2609 N. High Cross Rd.
 Urbana, IL 61802
 (217) 840-2121
 talespress@talespress.com

THE SPEARHEAD NEWS

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

EDITOR

Ray Elliott
 2609 N. High Cross Rd., Urbana, IL 61802
 (217) 840-2121; talespress@talespress.com

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NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

The Fifth Marine Division Association has a ways to go to maintain and preserve the legacy of the division and the sacrifices it and the men made to help win the war in the Pacific and secure our freedoms.

The FMDA is at a crucial stage about how to keep the association going. As it is, the next reunion is scheduled for New Orleans in October 2019, at which time members will determine the future of the Association. In the interim, President Kathy Painton has sent out a survey in the annual holiday letter that addresses the thought of the entire membership. Please fill out the survey and return it to Kathy.

Most members I talk with and hear from would like to see the Association continue as it has for the past 69 years. With the age of the Iwo Jima veterans and their diminishing ranks, the legacy members are going to have to take the reins, as past President John Butler (who has done so much for the Association in the four years of his tenure) and current President Kathy Painton (who is spearheading the Camp Tarawa Museum on the Big Island) have done. Kathy is ably assisted by Jimmie Watson, Bonnie Arnold-Haynes, Bruce Hammond, Pennie Pauletto, Karen Campbell and a host of other trustees, legacy members and history buffs.

How can others help? Great question.

Annual members can start by paying their dues on Jan. 1. Membership renewals are due at this time every year.

We also need to add new members. Sometimes when a veteran dies, the survivors opt to not become members. That is their right, of course, but it would be better if they would pay dues and support the Association. Past issues of *Spearhead* are archived at <http://www.talespress.com/archive.html>. A membership application is on the back page of every issue.

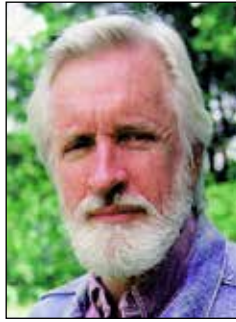
Another good source of new members is the Vietnam veterans who served in the Fifth Division. We have a few, but to help ensure the future of the Association, we need to build their membership. Bill Baumann, who served with 1-26, attended the reunion in Champaign, Ill., this past October and is representative of the Vietnam veterans we need.

Please 1) complete the survey and return to the president, 2) pay your dues, 3) make a contribution for the museum and 4) recruit at least one new member.

— Ray Elliott, Secretary

THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Ray Elliott



'The Oath': A new film about Sgt Michael Strank

Marine Sgt Michael Strank was born on Nov. 10, 1919, in Jarabina, Slovakia, the former Czechoslovakia. He was killed in action at age 25 on 1 March 1945, on Iwo Jima, part of the Ogasawara Subprefecture of Tokyo. He left his mark in life during those short years. But even after having been one of the six Marines in Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marines who raised the second flag on Mount Suribachi on 23 February 1945, he fades into the ages as the World War II generation moves on.

Slovakian director Dusan Hudec didn't want Mike Strank to be forgotten. In "The Oath," an outstanding documentary that depicts his leadership and courage, Hudec has captured the man and Marine who immigrated to the United States with his parents at age 3.

"Strank and his generation of Marines could be an inspiration for us more than any time before because they personalize men of integrity, honesty, fidelity and self-sacrifice," Hudec said and hopes it will inspire young Slovaks to think about patriotism, which he thinks has been destroyed because of the lack of genuine role models with whom they can identify and be proud of in his country.

When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939 at the tail end of the Depression, Strank enlisted in the Marine Corps, thinking he would return to the land of his birth and fight the Nazis. But as a Marine Raider, he fought on Bougainville. And when the Raiders were disbanded, Strank was assigned to the Fifth Marine Division and landed on Iwo Jima on D-Day, 19 February 1945, for what would be the first time in the war that the Americans would land on Japanese soil.

Hudec spent nearly four years on the documentary that was shown at the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C., this past Nov. 8 because he also thought the story of the Slovakian immigrant and what

he brought to the American way of life was something worth preserving and remembering.

The film was then shown in Youngstown, Ohio, on Nov. 10, Strank's birthday and the Marine Corps' 243rd birthday, and in Johnstown, Pa., where Strank grew up and his sister, Mary Strank Pero, who was interviewed for the film, still lives.

"(Mike) Strank in a certain sense represents the nameless heroes," Hudec said, "the young men who disappeared without a trace in the whirlwind of war, which would probably have happened to him as well, but the fate decided differently. The fate chose him to participate in the raising of the American flag at the top of Mount Suribachi. By the time this happened, thousands of soldiers had to die in the battles."

A total of 405,000 American men and women died in the war before the Germans and Japanese surrendered.

Hudec completed the film in Slovakia in 2017, and it was broadcast on Slovakian Radio and Television on May 2, 2017. About 50 people were in attendance at the Embassy for the showing of the English version. Hudec talked about the film and answered questions afterward.

I knew little about Strank's time with the Raiders, but the film includes interviews with Marines who served with Strank there and fought together on Bougainville and then others who fought with him on Iwo Jima. They looked up to him as a leader, as a Marine and as a man.

Battle footage and interviews were used effectively together to support what the men were saying about Strank and to document the combat experiences they shared. There was also a bit of black humor among the Marines for what was facing them once they hit the beach as one man spoke about getting ready for the landing:

"On the ship," he said, "they'd feed you a big breakfast; what they called a dead man's breakfast, like it was your last meal."

Which it was for many Marines. Of the 6,821 Americans to die on Iwo Jima, nearly 6000 of them were Marines. And another 19,000 Americans were wounded.

One Marine Iwo Jima veteran FMDA member interviewed was Ralph "Peewee" Griffiths, of Girard, Ohio, and a member of E/2/28 who was with Strank and Harlon Block, another of the Marines who raised

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THE EDITOR'S DESK

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the second flag, when both men were killed on March 1, a week after the flag raisings. Griffiths was badly wounded.

The men who knew Strank brought him to life through their stories for how he treated his men and how they respected him. I knew that he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, but I didn't know he was the only person buried there who was born in Slovakia. I did know that his old Easy Company commander on Iwo Jima, Col Dave Severance, thought he was a very good Marine.

"He was a Marine the men would listen to and follow wherever he led them," the colonel said.

Battalion Commander LtCol Chandler Johnson had secured a larger flag from LST-779 and told Severance to have it

raised on the mountain, that the first flag would stay with them. Severance had selected Strank to take three members of his rifle squad—Cpl Harlon Block and Pvts Franklin Sousley and Ira Hayes—up Mount Suribachi to string wire, and they later helped raise the second flag. In addition to Strank's and Block's deaths, Sousley was also killed soon after the second flag was raised.

Easy Company runner Rene Gagnon was taking some radio batteries up the mountain to Lt Harold Schrier, leader of the 40-man patrol that went up earlier. So Severance told him to take the flag to Lt Schrier.

The Marines who served with Strank on Bougainville who were interviewed are Cuifford H. Szukalski, William A. Campbell, Charles J. Kundert and Milton D. "Red" Cronk. And several Marines who served with Strank on Iwo Jima who were also interviewed are James E. Taylor, Ralph K. Griffiths

(mentioned above), Robert E. Radenbaugh, Jack First and Robert S. Galloway.

In interview after interview, the men who served with Strank complimented him and his leadership. One story that didn't appear in the film that captured

the essence of Strank for me: When the Raiders were looking for supplies, Szukalski said, "The Army was reluctant to give us anything at the time. They said there was nothing but rations. When we got the notice that there was on the beach a stock of supplies, well, the first night we hit that thing. Everybody was down there, boy, and there was nobody there, so to speak, so we helped ourselves, and we took everything we could carry. ... It wasn't long before they had a ring of guards around that thing. We couldn't get any more, but we had a good supply by then.

"Mike was with us; he was the ringleader. He was

the head guy. He basically ignored officers. We always, all of us, looked up to Mike. Nobody would even have tried to oppose him. He was a forceful guy, a thorough guy, never took advantage of anybody, and you wanted to listen to Mike because Mike knew his business. I'm sure I'm a better guy, a better Marine anyway, because of my association with him."

It's another good Iwo Jima documentary worth seeing. What stuck with me was not just remembering Sgt Michael Strank, his leadership and his part in the second flag raising, but remembering what Hudec said about Strank representing heroes, "... the young men who disappeared without a trace in the whirlwind of war."

Thousands and thousands of them. And those men all raised the flag on Mount Suribachi—they just didn't happen to be there to actually put their hands on the pole and make the picture seen round the world. But they made it possible.



From left to right: Slovak Republic ambassador to the U.S. Ivan Korčok, Elliott, director Dusan Hudec and FMDA treasurer Doug Meny.

Message from the new president

I am honored to accept the position as the first female, Gold Star legacy member to be elected president of the Fifth Marine Division Association.

John Butler has done an exemplary job these past four years as the first legacy president of the Association. He has set a high standard of performance in guiding the FMDA into a more legacy-directed Association. While I cannot begin to fill his shoes, I will do my best to meet the expectations of the FMDA members.

Since attending my first FMDA reunion in 2010, I have noticed that the children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other relatives of Fifth Marine Division veterans have formed a close bond of friendship. We are all extremely grateful for the sacrifices made by our family members and desire to memorialize them.

Therefore, my first priority is to address the future of the FMDA, and I will assess the responses from Association members to a survey that was recently distributed. If you haven't returned your survey, please

do so ASAP so that we may move forward.

If members of the FMDA wish to disband the Association at the 2019 reunion, we will make the necessary arrangements to do so. If the membership decides to keep the FMDA as a functioning legacy-directed Association—which I hope will be the consensus—I will form a committee to update the by-laws to reflect that transition.

Leonard Isacks and Jimmie Watson, who both lost a family member during the battle on Iwo Jima, will be hosting the 2019 reunion in New Orleans. We are looking at possible hotel sites and planning the reunion events, and will make the reunion dates available to you as soon as the negotiations are finalized. I hope you will all make an effort to attend this reunion.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have about the Association. My home phone number is 808-880-9880 and my email address is kathypainton@hotmail.com.

— Kathy Painton
President

FINAL MUSTER (*"Roll Call of the Reef"*)

BETTAG, Kenneth F. **HQ-3-27** 9/23/2018
BLASE, Eugene **5THJASCO** 1/25/2017
CARLSEN, Theodore C. **B-1-27** 4/25/2018
COLTRANE, John **L-4-13** 12/5/2018
CRAWLEY, Fred S. **D-2-13** 3/4/2018
CULMER, Earl A. **A-1-26** 10/23/2015
DICKEY, Charles D. Jr. **HQBN** 12/9/2012
DiGIACOMO, Anthony F. **26th** 6/28/2018
ELLISON, Jerome M. **F-2-27** 3/19/2011
EUTSEY, Al C. **C-1-28** 6/14/2018
FAURIE, Fredrick J. **5TH SERV** 3/15/2015
GARICH, Russell L. **A-1-28** 9/12/2008
HOLLIDAY, Samuel T. **Navajo Code Talker**
6/11/2018
JANIAK, Edmund A. **5TH PION** 9/25/2015

KELLY, Hugh L. **5TH MT** 10/4/2007
KROSCHEL, Donald R. **HQ-1-27** 9/15/2007
LANSOU, David **5TH SIG** 11/11/2016
LEPORE, Louis R. **A-1-27** 11/6/2018
LUCE, James R. **F-2-27** 8/19/2016
MAXWELL, James "Doc" **CORPSMAN**
1/9/2018
McLEOD, Walker R. **HS-2-28** 3/15/2011
MONGILLO, Phil **HQ-1-28** 11/29/2012
REA, Clarence **C-1-27** 10/3/2018
SCOTT, Henry V. **C-1-27** 1/16/1997
STEPHENS, Doyle C. **27th** 6/1/2018
TORTORELLI, Frank A. **H-3-13** 6/1/2016
WHITING, Robert B. **26th** 8/3/2018



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

REUNION

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it was a little surprising when an eager band of 10 happy travelers hopped aboard Amtrak's City of New Orleans at its southern namesake city and arrived at the Champaign train station a day early, where they were greeted by FMDA secretary/editor-turned-reunion-host Ray Elliott.

But soon the reunion was in full swing, as people came from as far away as California, Hawaii, Florida, New York, Texas, Virginia, etc. Additional labor was much appreciated by Kathy Painton, Jimmie Watson,

Bonnie Arnold-Haynes, Karen Campbell and Morey Butler. Participants brought uniforms, books and other memorabilia to display and share, and Florence and Ginger Curnutt kindly brought commemorative LED flashlights for everyone to help mark the occasion.

Among the highlights was an informative Wednesday morning session of presentations about the progress in curating a virtual Camp Tarawa Museum through the good work of graduate student Nicole Garcia of the University of Hawaii-Hilo. The Heritage Center at the North Hawaii Education and Research Center in Honoka'a has agreed to be the appropriate repository for collected artifacts and other materials.

Then CMDR Joe Rank, USN (Ret.), provided a history lesson of the University of Illinois' military legacy, followed by CAPT Anthony Capori's program about the current Naval ROTC and how today's college students train as officers and prepare for active duty after graduation.

The group heard a local radio preview of Saturday's free public showing of the Arnold Shapiro documentary, "Return to Iwo Jima." The filmmaker and Elliott were part of a live interview with broadcaster Brian Barnhart, who would later stop by the hospitality room to visit with more reunion attendees in person.

The day's scheduled programming concluded with local Marine veteran Dustin Lange, associate director of the university's Chez Center for Wounded Veterans in Higher Education. He described the facility housing one of the most modern programs in the country that provides residential and non-residential support services to empower military-connected college students.

On Thursday, attendees boarded a bus to the Vermilion County War Museum in Danville, where they were welcomed with a flag line from the Patriot Guard Riders, a veterans' volunteer group. The two-story museum includes exhibits and items from the Revolutionary War through to



Florence and Ginger Curnutt (Photo by Bruce Hammond)



At the Vermilion County War Museum in Danville, from left to right, are Ben Bellefeuille, Duane Tunnyhill, George Boutwell, Billy Cawthron, Ivan Hammond and Monroe Ozment.

(Photo by Jimmie Watson)

Documentary, panel offers rare opportunity

Showing director Arnold Shapiro's 1985 "Return to Iwo Jima" documentary that initiated the annual Reunion of Honor to Iwo Jima hosted by the Military Historical Tours in conjunction with the Iwo Jima Association of America was the icing on the cake, as it were, for the 69th annual FMDA reunion held in Champaign, Ill. Shapiro graciously made the film available at no charge, and traveled with his wife, Karen, from California to introduce it.

No admission was charged, although the audience was generous and made contributions, and the community attendance was very good after some good publicity.

The Richard L. Pittman Marine Corps League (named for the local Marine KIA on 21 February 1945) presented the colors, and the line of colors were again presented by the Patriot Guard Riders.

Shapiro looked out at the audience and said, "Not a bad audience for a 40-year-old film on a Saturday afternoon." And he later offered to go to New Orleans next year and take his 2015 PBS documentary, "From Combatants to Comrades," about the annual visit in peace to Iwo Jima by both the Americans and the Japanese to continue remembering and honoring the sacrifices of men on both sides.



Filmmaker Arnold Shapiro, left, is on stage with several Iwo Jima veterans at the Virginia Theatre to answer audience questions after the showing of the documentary, "Return to Iwo Jima."
(Photo by Bruce Hammond)

Several people commented about how much they appreciated the movie that was shown in the historic 1921 Virginia Theatre, where the annual Roger Ebert Film Festival is held each April. But FMDA treasurer Doug Meny summed it up by saying that "Saturday for me at least at the old theater with the vets and Arnold Shapiro was a 'magical experience,' something I will always remember."

Many of the 500-some members of the audience will also no doubt remember the rare opportunity to see a moving documentary about one of the most memorable battles in history, helped to attain that status by Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo of the second flag raising on Mount Suribachi.

– Ray Elliott

the present day. After lunch at the Danville American Legion, the group continued on to Dana, Ind., to explore the Ernie Pyle World War II Museum in the hometown of the famed war correspondent. Former SSgt Jeff Wakeland of the Richard L. Pittman Marine Corps League in Urbana met the group there in dress blue uniform to offer his salute and to meet with visitors.

Each night back at the hotel, the hospitality room bustled with conversation amid a variety of beverages and snacks, including pizza donated from local favorite Papa Del's and sandwiches donated from Jimmy Johns. Immediate Past President John Butler arranged for the

perennial bread and olive oil for dipping.

On Friday, the group was bound for the state's capital of Springfield to visit various sites associated with 16th U.S. president Abraham Lincoln—his family's home during his days as a circuit lawyer, his solemn tomb, and the impressive Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

The traditional activities for Saturday included the morning business meeting and memorial service, for which local Korean War veteran Ted Sandwell played Taps. Then it was soon time for the group to make their

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Duane Tunnyhill



Del Treichler



George Boutwell



Monroe Ozment

way a few blocks to the Virginia Theatre, a historical landmark in the community, for a public showing of Arnold Shapiro’s documentary, “Return to Iwo Jima.” (See sidebar.)

The annual banquet was a fitting time for Elliott to recognize John Butler for his tremendous service as president of the FMDA for the past four years, to acknowledge the Vietnam veterans of the Division, and to thank sponsors and donors who provided great support for the reunion—including Andrew Murray Vineyards and former Marine Capt Harvey Firestone for the Jarhead Reserve wine on all the tables. FMDA Chaplain Billy Cawthron (B-1-27) and the Rev. Bob Rasmus had provided just the right words of faith and thanksgiving for the occasion.

Elliott also introduced and presented a commemorative knife to special guest Art Leenerman as one of 14 surviving members of the USS Indianapolis, which was torpedoed and sunk during the war. (Morey Butler offers his thoughts about the horrific aftermath of that tragedy in this issue.) Leenerman was accompanied to the banquet by Peggy McCall Campo, secretary of the USS Indianapolis Survivors Association, whose father, Don McCall, was a surviving member of its crew.

Marine veteran Sgt Paul Lewis was the keynote speaker for the evening, relating his experiences and life’s lessons from having spent 444 days in captivity in Iran as one of the Americans held hostage during the student revolution there during 1979-81. Lewis noted that keeping in mind the service and sacrifices of Iwo Jima Marines helped keep his spirit strong during some particularly challenging days.

Clearly, all those associated with the reunion appreciated the privilege of spending time with the Fifth Division veterans in attendance. And clearly, there are



Marine veteran Sgt Paul Lewis was the keynote speaker for the banquet. He talked about his experiences as a prisoner in Iran for 444 days during the student revolution there in 1979-81. President Ronald Reagan presented him with the Defense Meritorious Seervice Award in 1981 after his release.

(Photo by Barbara Hanson Hafrris)

fewer of them who are able to travel to the gatherings as each year passes. But the curiosity to know more about the Division’s history and the camaraderie forming among the families seems only to grow. And the memories endure because the generations continue to reunite and carry on.

Museum project adds digital feature

By Kathy Painton

I have been trying to work out an agreement with Parker Ranch Trustees to acquire a small parcel of ranch land on which to establish a small museum since 2009. Thus far, my efforts have been futile so now I am proposing a new plan for the Camp Tarawa Museum project.

Since January of this year, Nicole Garcia, a graduate student from the University of Hawai'i - Hilo campus, has been assisting me in cataloging materials for the museum. Nicole is working on her master's program, under the direction of Momi Naughton, PhD, director of the Heritage Center at the North Hawaii Education and Research Center (NHERC) in Honoka'a.

The Heritage Center is dedicated to preserving, making available for research and displaying the history of the Hamakua Coast and North Hawai'i. Dr. Naughton has agreed to have the Heritage Center act as a repository for the Camp Tarawa collection.

Honoka'a is about 15 miles east of where Camp Tarawa was located and served as a place for Marines to go for liberty during breaks in their training, so it is only natural for Camp Tarawa photographs, documents and artifacts to be included in the materials available for researchers.

Nicole accompanied me to the 2018 reunion and made a presentation, which outlined a proposal to utilize the facilities at NHERC to implement a virtual online museum rather than to create a physical structure for the Camp Tarawa Museum.

You can access the Past Perfect Online program on your computer at <http://www.pastperfect-online.com> to get an overview of what the program offers.



Willey Verstappen of New Orleans, La., presented FMDA President Kathy Painton with a \$1,000 contribution to support the Camp Tarawa Museum project efforts. (Photo by Jimmie Watson)

I think this is the most cost efficient way to preserve the items we have in the Camp Tarawa Museum collection and to provide easy access for anyone (throughout the world) who may be interested in viewing the Fifth Marine Division materials.

Reunion attendees voted unanimously to grant the Camp Tarawa Foundation \$5,000 in start-up funds so we can go forward with the new direction in the Camp Tarawa Museum project.



Book about Boots Thomas published for kids

The inspiring story of Sgt Ernest "Boots" Thomas has been published in a new book especially for young readers: "Invisible Hero: Two Boys and an Exciting Tale of Honor and Valor," by R.A. Sheats and recommended for readers ages 10-16. The soft-cover, 175-page book is available via the Boots Thomas memorial website.

"Invisible Hero" captures the dramatic story of the friendship between Thomas and Jim Sledge growing up in rural Florida in the shadow of the Great Depression. During World War II, Sledge enlisted in the Army Air Corps, and Thomas joined the Marine Corps and later died on Iwo Jima at the age of 20. Since then, it has been Sledge's solemn duty to honor the memory of his fallen friend and preserve his notable history and legacy.

www.bootsthomas.com

USS Indianapolis reminds us of tremendous sacrifices, survival endured in WWII

By Morey Butler

Reunion host and master of ceremonies this year for the traditional banquet Ray Elliott provided me the opportunity to sit with a very special invited guest. The aged gentleman in a wheelchair got my attention immediately because I knew he was Art Leenerman, 94 years old and a survivor from the tragic sinking of the USS Indianapolis.

Accompanying Art was Peggy Campo, the daughter of Don McCall, also a survivor who only recently was deceased. Peggy is currently the secretary of the USS Indianapolis Survivors Association. She told me that Art and her father had become close friends after meeting at one of their reunions.

Art spoke very little about his experience other than he knew that there were so many bodies on the floor of the PBY (the Navy two-engine seaplane referred to as a Dumbo) that they would not have room for him. He remembered waking up on a ship, wrapped in canvas. I didn't press him for any further details.

When the festivities concluded, I assisted Peggy in securing Art in her car for the short ride to his home in Mahomet, Ill. After I placed his wheelchair in the car trunk, Peggy bent over and picked up a book and handed it to me.

Emboldened in inch-high white letters was the word, "INDIANAPOLIS." Just above it, the following appeared: "The True Story of the Worst Sea Disaster in U.S. Naval History and the 50-Year Fight to Exonerate an Innocent Man."

That book is the skilled effort of its two female authors, Lynn Vincent and Sara Vladic, who spent more than a decade talking to over 100 survivors. They painstakingly researched mountains of Naval records and documents pertaining to every aspect of its sinking and defamation of its captain by courts martial. They also identified the human factors that abetted and prolonged this disaster.

The book in its first print tells the whole story. Read it. It is a true story attesting to the depths of human will to stay alive. It also describes the frailty that exists in many of us and our inability to experience pure hell and see the next sunrise.

The following narrative is my feeble attempt to relate what our Greatest Generation sacrificed and

overcame to keep us free. It is for Art and the spirit of men like him.

The USS Indianapolis was a storied World War II warship with a record of numerous Western Pacific campaigns. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had once graced her decks with other dignitaries as his ship of State. ADM Spruance had designated her as his flag ship.

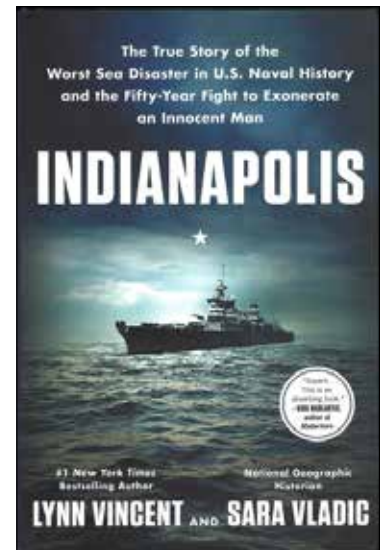
Severely damaged by a Kamikaze attack 31 March 1945, she limped back to Mare Island, Calif. Repaired and refitted, she departed her berth 16 July 1945 at flank speed, 31 knots, for a small coral island in the Northern Marianas Islands called Tinian.

Her crew, including her captain, had no idea her secret cargo would become an instrument that would ultimately hasten the surrender of Japan and save thousands upon thousands of American servicemen's lives. She arrived and departed Tinian 26 July 1945 for a short stay in Apra Harbor, Guam, to secure passage and routing to Leyte. On 28 July 1945, she weighed anchor and began her voyage across the vast Philippine Sea.

Just after midnight on 30 July 1945, about half way to her assigned destination, plowing through moderate seas on a dark overcast night, with occasional glimpses of a slivered moon, disaster overtook her. Two torpedoes slammed into her starboard side. The first hit disemboweled her bow. The second struck her midship and created a huge fireball that went through many of her passageways. All communication and electrical systems were instantly wiped out. She had but just 12 minutes of life left in her as she began listing rapidly to starboard.

The men killed in the initial explosions and those trapped below would never experience the horror of what was unfolding for their shipmates. Their suffering was over or about to be over. For the estimated 900 that were about to go into the dark, rough sea, theirs was just beginning. Abandon ship passed by word of mouth. Those that hesitated soon found themselves washed overboard as the warship's list rapidly increased to 90 degrees. In the space of a few minutes, she made the plunge to her watery grave 17,000 feet below.

Many of those who escaped went without life-saving devices. They had two major concerns: how to stay afloat and avoid the suction of their sinking ship.



Secretary of the USS Indianapolis Survivors Association Peggy McCall Campo, left, (whose father, Don, was a surviving member of its crew) and survivor Art Leenerman were honored guests at the 2018 FMDA Reunion in Champaign, Ill.

(Photo by Bruce Hammond)

Survival, for the moment, hinged on their swimming skills. Sadly, there were men who had never learned to swim. U.S. Navy policy at that time did not require crew members to be skilled swimmers. Their end came mercifully quick. For those floundering in the 10- to 12-foot swells, fate dealt them opportunity for reprieve from drowning. It also dealt them a sinister health burden that would impact their ability to stay alive.

In her descent to the ocean floor, Indianapolis sent an unexpected gift to the surface: a large flotsam of rafts, life preservers, flotation nets, gun powder cans, furniture and vegetable crates. It would offer salvation to many. But that salvation was tendered with the morass of fuel oil that encompassed just about everything. Very shortly after the torpedo strikes, an unknown shipmate took the self-appointed initiative to pump fuel oil overboard on the starboard side to counter the ship's list in that direction. Its scourge would kill many and also play a major factor in the rescue of those still alive. Their nightmare would last for five nights and four days.

Despair would overcome many and they would simply swim away from huddled groups that had congregated together on rafts of debris. Others would sink into the depths, dehydrated from constant retching caused from swallowing fuel oil. Many would succumb to lacerations and broken bones. Sharks, some as long as 15 to 20 feet, would arrive in packs and begin their indiscriminant and impersonalized feeding frenzy on the living as well as the dead. Their presence would drive those on the edge of insanity into horrible acts

of aggression against their own shipmates. Those who could not accommodate their incessant thirst for water drank the very liquid they floated in and assigned themselves a guaranteed death sentence. Amid all this horror were men who would survive to tell their tales.

A Ventura bomber, out on war patrol, would accidentally spot an oil slick in the afternoon on Aug. 2. At low altitude, it would identify the remnants of what appeared to be a large shipwreck and request rescue support. As ships sped to the scene, Dumbo aircraft (PBYS) began dropping life rafts and survival supplies on the human carnage and debris that stretched out over a distance of more than 40 miles.

A PBY pilot, overcome by what he was witnessing, violated the forbidden rule of landing in open ocean and put his aircraft down in 10- to 12-foot swells. His crew stayed doubly busy caulking leaks and hauling emaciated and barely alive sailors aboard. One sailor on a life raft and presumed dead was tethered to the aircraft door with the hope that his body could be returned to his family.

The following day, Aug. 3, those rescued alive from the air-unworthy, damaged PBY were transferred to a naval ship. The last one to be hoisted aboard in a canvas bag was the man who had spent the night tied to the aircraft. Art Leenerman, age 21, a radarman, shocked everyone when he woke up and found himself wrapped in a canvas bag. Of the 316 who survived out of a complement of 1,195 sailors aboard the Indianapolis that fateful night more than 73 years ago, Art is one of 14 still living.

Immediate past president reflects on FMDA reunions

By John Butler

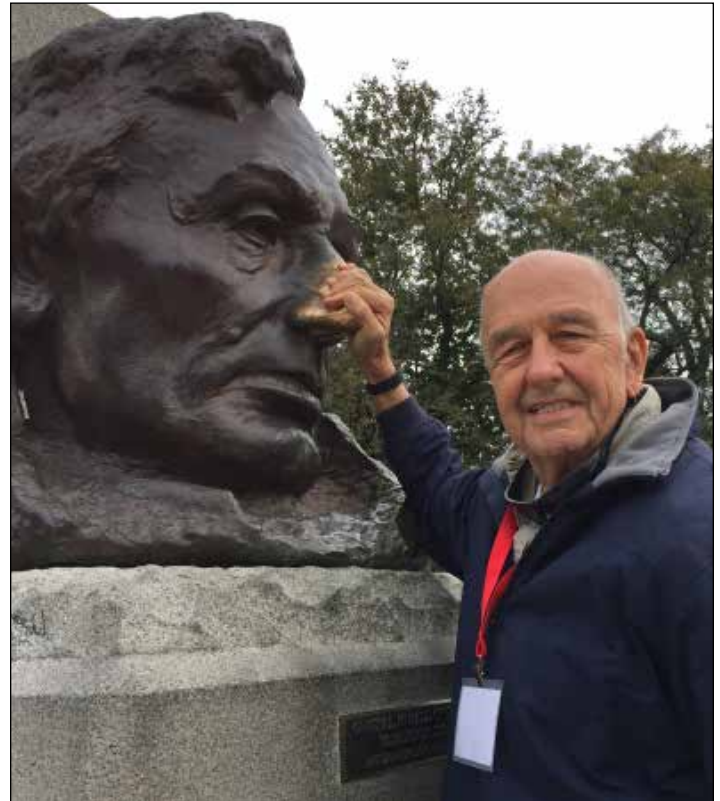
The Champaign-Urbana Reunion of the Fifth Marine Division, the 69th since Fifth Marine Division Commanding Gen Keller E. Rockey formed the Association and convened and hosted the first reunion of the Division way back in 1949, was a dandy, as were each of the reunions since the 65th in Tampa four years ago where I accepted the honor and privilege of serving as your president.

As our surviving veteran base has shrunk, so has the numbers of Iwo Jima veterans attending our reunions, which are now largely sustained and attended by family members (sons, daughters, wives and even grandchildren) of those who stormed ashore on Iwo Jima more than 73 year ago. They were mostly teenagers then, and we are blessed to still have a number of them with us. Twelve joined us in Champaign. One came with 14 members of his family, including his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, one as young as 2 years old. This surely put a stamp on the family aspect of FMDA, and indeed FMDA is a family.

Ray Elliott and his family, Vanessa and their girls, Jessica and Caitlin, were formidable hosts, and as Ray said, he couldn't have done it without them.

The Fifth Marine Division has been huge in my life since the age of 5 when I watched my dad and the men of his battalion board ship for the Pacific war in August 1944. Over the years, I knew and read much about the Fifth Marine Division, but I did not attend any reunions until the one in New Orleans in 1990. This was a special event as New Orleans was my dad's hometown, and I brought my mom. There were a number of 1/27 survivors attending, and my uncles (my dad's brothers) joined us. My brother, Morey, came from Gulfport, Miss., and we had a nice group photo made. I then attended the 1992 reunion in Philadelphia and met the sisters of John Basilone. They joined in a group photograph with a number of then-surviving 27th Marines, including our forever-young Walt O'Malley.

I next attended the 2006 reunion in West Palm Beach, Fla., with my son and grandson, and then the 2008 reunion in Washington, D.C. Then there was the 2011 reunion in Biloxi, Miss., where brother Morey stepped in to help Leonard and Celine Nederveld pull off a memorable event. I believe the Nedervelds



Immediate Past President John Butler visits Abraham Lincoln sites in Springfield, Ill., during the 2018 FMDA Reunion, including this sculpture at the tomb of the 16th president. Rubbing the nose for luck is a long-standing tradition. Good luck, John!

(Photo provided by Jimmie Watson)

adopted Morey—or he them—but for sure they became family, and Morey visits them to this day.

Then in 2014, Ivan Hammond called to tell me that I was to host the Tampa reunion. This was an honor and privilege I could not refuse, and fortunately I had help from Kath, my bride of 50-plus years, before the reunion and help from so many during the reunion. I also accepted the presidency, which I have been honored to continue for the past four years before passing it to Kathy Painton, our vice president and last year's Hawaii reunion hostess. With the great Hawaii reunion we had an accompanying keepsake, the 314-page reunion journal prepared by Kath Butler.

Though married to me for 50-plus years and while I was young a Marine officer on the go, Kath was no stranger to the Marine Corps. As a young girl attending a rural school in then-frontier Florida, Kath heard and sang the Marines' Hymn with schoolmates, and her favorite first cousin was an outstanding Marine

who trained officer candidates at Quantico and later was wounded in Vietnam while leading a platoon of Marines. He was special to me, also.

And then came Jimmie Watson, who shows up at the Tampa reunion. Jimmie, who is a native of New Orleans, lost her older brother at Hill 362A as a member of my dad's battalion. It was an easy, on-the-spot decision for me to adopt Jimmie as Big Sis, and she has been filling that role quite well since. She also has not missed a reunion and is co-hosting our 70th reunion in New Orleans.

The other co-host will be Leonard Isacks, who lost his New Orleans grandfather on D-Day at Red Beach 2. I met Leonard and his younger brother, Fletcher, on my 2005 trip to Iwo Jima. Coincidentally, his grandfather and my father were the same age, and Leonard's father was my age when he lost his dad.

Before going to Champaign by train from New Orleans, just after a family meal at Mandina's Restaurant, we all gathered at the Isacks family tomb in a New Orleans cemetery to pay tribute and pray for our lost family members, which included Leonard's dad. Joining us was Kathy Painton who prayed for her dad. Could there have been a more reverent and meaningful

family event?

I might add that on my trip to Iwo Jima in 2005, I met and bonded with Ray Elliott, and what a Marine brother he has become. Ray's connection to Iwo Jima was his hometown barber who served and survived Iwo Jima as a member of A-1-28, and Ray's own service as a Marine. This and his instincts as a writer and patriot have prompted Ray to give us his energy and writing skills, which have extended the life of the Association with *Spearhead News*. Ray has also extended his friendship to many individuals in the Association, particularly our aged veterans. Thank you, Ray. Thank you so much.

On a personal basis, I have a potential third round with a brain surgeon.

I was always best in the third round while boxing when I was at the Naval Academy, so with the help of my family, I've decided to have the surgery, which is scheduled for Dec. 21.

Therefore, I will be optimistic and anticipate joining my FMDA family in 'Nawlins next year. You can't top the food there, nor the local charm—just ask my Big Sis, Jimmie Watson. She will guarantee the charm.

**Iron Mike Belleau
Wood, France**

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Interest in who did what on Mount Suribachi continues ...

By Ray Elliott

Joe Rosenthal's iconic photograph of the second flag raising by the Marines on Mount Suribachi is a good example how the same thing can have different meanings for different people. To the Marines who were fighting on Iwo Jima, the first flag was the one that had meaning for them: That the battle was over. Which it wasn't. For the rest of the country, it was a symbol of victory; but for the government, it was a boon to the war effort that meant billions of dollars to support the cost of war in dollars and cents. To many people today, it is still a symbol of victory as the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery among the thousands of veterans buried there.

Days after the flag went up and the photo appeared in newspapers across the country, it became important to identify the Marines who raised the flag in Joe Rosenthal's photo (and Marine photographer Sgt Bill Genaust's motion picture film of it) to go back and travel around the country and make appearances to raise money to support the war. Three of the men were already killed in action: Franklin Sousley, Mike Strank and Harlon Block. And Block was initially misidentified as Hank Hansen, who was one of the Marines who raised the first flag and was also killed. Ira Hayes later hitchhiked to Texas in 1946 after the war and told Block's mother her son was one of the flag raisers before it was finally and officially corrected in 1947.

Flag raiser Rene Gagnon reportedly identified the other five men, and Corpsman John Bradley, Hayes and he went back to the States for the bond-raising tour. Hayes didn't want to go and reportedly had threatened Gagnon if he identified him (Hayes) as a flag raiser. Gagnon eventually was coerced into identifying him, though, and Hayes joined Gagnon and Bradley for the bond tour that began in New York City on May 11, 1945, and ended in Washington, D.C., on July 4. Hayes was sent back to Camp Tarawa from Indianapolis, Ind., to rejoin E-2-28 on May 24 because of drinking that later became more serious and helped claim his life at 32. It wasn't until more than 70 years later that photographic detective work proved that Marine Harold Scholtz was the flag raiser who had been identified as Corpsman John Bradley.

And even after more than 70 years, when many Marines who were there don't want to talk about it any more, the obsession concerning the identity of the flag raisers drags on. Last summer, I learned that the Marine Corps History Division still had questions about "gaps" in the Iwo Jima flag raisings. Col David Severance, USMC (Ret.), CO of E-2-28 that raised both flags was being sought to provide information about that, although he'd provided information for years and told me he was through talking about it but would talk to me. They wanted to know if he had any details about a Dog Company reconnaissance mission up Mount Suribachi on the morning of 23 February. And they wanted to know why Rene Gagnon was asked to



Severance



Mueller

provide initial identifications of the flag raisers.

I'd talked previously with both Col Severance and Bob Mueller, a member of the Dog Company patrol about both questions and other aspects of that day. So I offered to go to their homes in California, interview them and provide a tape of the interviews. That wasn't acceptable, so I went on my own for this article.

Bob Mueller, a feisty former Paramarine who was on Guadalcanal, Vella LaVella and Bougainville and then with D-2-28 in the Fifth Marine Division on Iwo Jima, had told me a few years ago about the Dog Company patrol that went up the eastern slope of the mountain. Col Severance, also a former Paramarine, had said he didn't know anything about it. Col Walt Ford, then editor of Leatherneck Magazine told me he didn't know anything about it, either. Mueller said he thought there was an article about it in a September 1945 Stars & Stripes, but I never found it there.

What he was apparently referring to was a 8 September 1945 Marine Corps Chevron article, "Heroes of Iwo Jima' Issue Still Rages" about the patrol that went up the east side of Mount Suribachi on the morning of 23 February. That article was referring to a letter from Pfc Wilson K. Lythgoe of the Office of Public Information at Camp Pendleton who wrote about the patrol and mainly about Cpl John Wieland, who was in the U.S. Naval Hospital at Santa Margarita Ranch and had told Lythgoe about the patrol. Among other things, the piece says Weiland received the Silver Star for leading the patrol. He did receive the Silver Star, but not for leading the patrol. See Wieland's perspective of the three Marine's steep climb up the east side of Mount Suribachi as reported by Lythgoe at <http://historicperiodicals.princeton.edu/historic/cgi-bin/historic?a=d&d=MarineCorpsChevron19450908-01.2.15&e=-----en-20--1--txt-IN----->.

Mueller said the patrol was initially led by former Raiders Sgt James (J.D.) Mulligan (who'd been a member of the New York Giants football team and weighed about 250 pounds), Cpl John Weiland, Pfc Fred M. Ferentz and himself. Because of Mulligan's size and weight, he had to drop out of the climb but was not mentioned in Weiland's account.

"Mulligan was ahead of us, and every time he took a step, rock and dirt would fall back on us," Mueller said. "We told him to get the hell out of the way. He dropped out and Weiland took charge, and we finished the climb."

The article had indicated this patrol of the three of them "were the first American troops to reach the

summit of that vital enemy position."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Mueller said. "But I don't know. I wasn't looking to see whether we were first. I was looking to see if there were any Japs shooting at us, which there wasn't, not running a race to see who was first. We were all three there when both flags were raised."

The 40-man patrol from Easy Company went up the hill with little resistance other than the steep climb, too, found a pole, attached the flag to it and raised it. A Japanese officer and a couple of soldiers reportedly came racing out of an opening to register their complaint and were shot. The flag was to signal that the mountain had been captured. Marines down below thought it signaled the battle had been won in just the record time they were told it would take to secure the island.

Because the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, who had come ashore when the first flag was raised and wanted it as a souvenir, a larger flag was brought in from LST-779 to be taken up Mount Suribachi and the first flag taken back to Second Battalion Commander LtCol Chandler Johnson, who said the first flag belonged to the 28th Marines. I'd talked to Col Severance and a host of others about this.

Easy Company runner Rene Gagnon was taking batteries to Lt Harold Schrier and was given the flag and accompanied Mike Strank (who is the subject of a documentary written about in this issue), Ira Hayes, Franklin Sousley and Harlon Block up Mount Suribachi to string wire.

"I gave Gagnon some batteries to take up to Lt (Harold) Schrier for his radio," Col Severance said. "I wouldn't know why Gagnon was designated to initially identify the flag raisers. It was two or three weeks afterwards that they wanted them to go back. Gagnon was about the only one besides (Ira) Hayes to be alive who was there. The whole flag thing wasn't important to us. We didn't think anything about it."

Harold Schultz spent a lifetime not talking about it and has only been reported as saying anything about being one of the flag raisers when a step-daughter recalled to a reporter that Schultz mentioned it over dinner one day years later when the subject came up: "I was one of those flag raisers," she reported he said.

"Harold, you are a hero," she said she told him.

"Not really," he said. "I was a Marine."

Which says a great deal about the significance of who raised the flag.

The early days of Khe Sanh

By William J. Baumann, USMC 1965-1969

We got to Khe Sanh at the end of the Hill Fights. Some of our guys, I believe Charlie Company, participated in the last days of that battle. The rest of us arrived via convoy on Route 9. The base, which had been a relatively unknown airstrip designed for Special Forces operations, was nothing but a landing strip surrounded by a tent city. No sandbags were visible other than over the command bunker and a few small trench-like holes covered by tarmac.

H&S Company settled into tents at the south side of the strip that were open-sided and without protection. We

thought something was up when we began to fill sandbags and dig in. Of course, there was no sand at Khe Sanh (which was a French coffee plantation)—just the red clay that became our namesake: The Red Men. You could

always tell a Khe Sanh guy by the red crud embedded in his skin.

The line companies manned the perimeter and adjacent hills. We had a mess hall and a small area known as “The Ponderosa” where beer and sodas were rationed out. There was very little going on. I did radio watch at the command bunker for the most part during that initial time frame.

Contact with the enemy was sporadic and rare. We ran a few resupply convoys to the Special Forces compound at Lang Vei over by Laos, which was only 10 or so miles from the base. I was a radio operator for a couple of those trips.

I was briefly assigned to Hill 950, a radio relay station overlooking the base. It was manned by Marines from Comm, Security Platoon and Recon. Luckily for me, I was brought from that hill before the fight, which occurred on June 6, 1967. The Hill was assaulted by an

estimated 100 NVA. The Marines fought off the attack, but 18 Marines from Bravo Company, 1/26, were killed the next day. A radio operator was heard calling in an artillery fire mission on his own position because he felt that all was lost. Fortunately, the mission was never fired, and I still know him.

During the assault on Hill 950, the NVA fired a number of 122 rockets into the base. I believe that

one of our wiremen was killed. I am not certain as to any other casualties.

The area in and around Con Thien, which was at the DMZ northeast of Khe Sanh, was a hotbed of action. I believe 3/26 and 1/9 were the involved units. Battles were also fought at other areas along the DMZ in Quang Tri Province.

The relative quiet in the Khe Sanh area changed drastically in late

1967, and we became embroiled in one of the most written about battles of the Vietnam War. It was the beginning of the gradual escalation of activity that led to the TET Offensive of 1968.

I merely want to bring to light the events of our early involvement. Of course, 2/3, 1/9 and other units suffered many casualties during the Hill Fights on the adjacent hills just prior to our arrival. It was Iwo Jima-like fighting. The malfunctions of our newly issued M16 rifles led to some of our KIAs. But that’s another story.

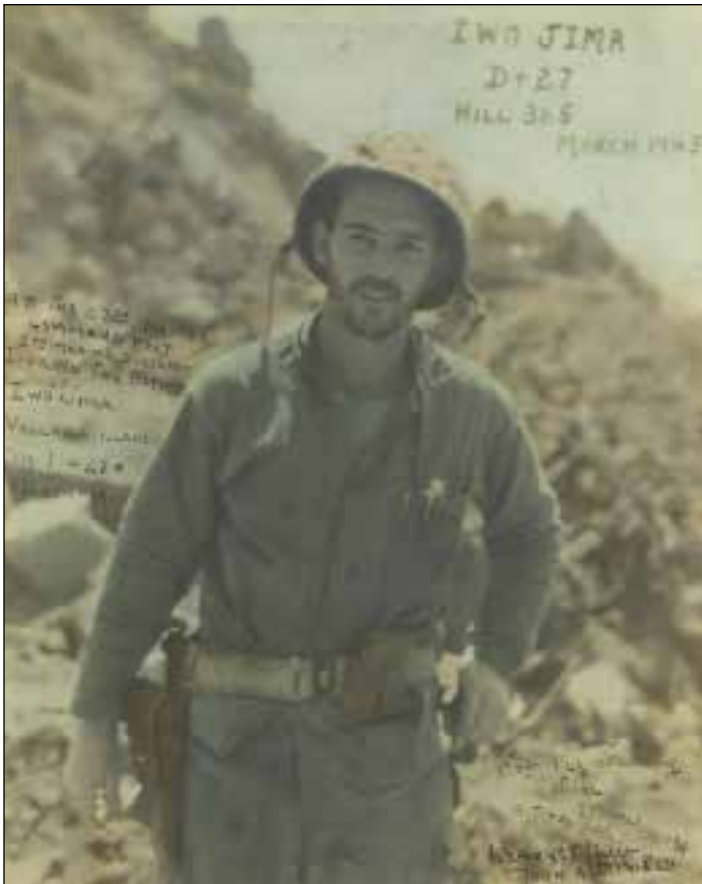
History shows that the North Vietnamese had been soundly pounded during the Hill Fights. They began to build up their forces for what was to come. Old Ho Chi Minh wanted to defeat us at Khe Sanh like he did to the French in 1954.

As we say in one of our Khe Vet Association mottos, “Sorry, Charlie.”

The other is, “Home is where you dug it.”



The base at Khe Sanh was relatively unfortified. The pointed hill on the right is Hill 1015, and to the left is Hill 950, where the battle took place on June 6, 1967. (Photo courtesy of Bill Baumann)



ABOVE: Actor John Wayne (left) poses for a photo with John A. “Danny” Daniels, who was a technical adviser for the film, “The Sands of Iwo Jima.” The movie was filmed partly at Camp Del Mar (Camp Pendleton), Oceanside, Calif. Enlisted personnel were reportedly not permitted to be given screen credit for assisting with the film at that time. Therefore, there was no mention of his name in the credits. However, if you watch closely, his name does appear on the back of the tank driver in the film.

LEFT: CWO Daniels is pictured on Hill 365 at the 27th Marines Command Post, Fifth Marine Division, on Iwo Jima D+27 in March 1945.

Dad wrote more than talked about the war

By Nora Daniels Gardiner

My dad, John A. “Danny” Daniels, HQ-27, wrote a lot more than he talked about the war on Iwo, but I have little time to plow through so much of his Marine Corps history right now. There is a poem my dad wrote, titled the same as this narrative (below). He wrote some wonderful poems, which I will publish one day soon.

Forever Young The Warrior

By John A. Daniels

It was a time to leave. The rattle of the anchor chain and the chugging of the steam winch signaled that the ship was getting underway.

I walked up to the bow, not consciously knowing why. I stopped on the port side and leaned on the rail, my eyes drawn toward the island. The ship moved slowly, the beat of the screws steadily increasing, the rush of the sea gaining momentum. The sharp, salt, tang of the freshening wind hurried in from the open sea. The transport began a graceful sweep to port. Halfway through the turn, that for which I’d been looking appeared.

Beginning as a small portion, unfolding to an

ever-enlarging panorama until it filled the whole eye. The land seemed to be sewn with white crosses, row upon row, marching steadily toward Suribachi, straight and relentless, as if they and those who lay beneath them would once again storm and conquer those black heights.

I saw the cemetery gate and in my mind, the posted list of those who slept within. I could clearly see the new tiny moving figures of a hundred of the living, searching for the markers of a thousand comrades, searching and bidding farewell, as I had a few days past. I just stood, watching, stone-faced.

In that bloody, hallowed ground lay my good friends, Joe Grant, Al Hafey, Jack Shelby, Rube Goldman, Col John Butler, Stan Holmes, John Basilone, Bob Garland, Jack Chevigny, Claude Looney, Ira Goldberg, Al Hafner, Young Georgie Baxter, Jovonovich, Van Buest, Jovanek and a host of kids who’d come to me, the Gunner, when they’d gotten into trouble and needed help. Kids who would be Forever Young.

There were 3,000 and more under the crosses and stars of David “whose uncommon valor was a common virtue,” so said ADM (Chester) Nimitz.

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Ambush on Bougainville

By Col Dave Severance, USMC (Ret.)

On 3 December 1943 the First Marine Parachute Regiment, minus the First and Second Battalions, boarded LCIs and LSTs at Vella Lavella and sailed for Bougainville. Except for a night attack on the convoy by Japanese fighter-bombers, the trip was almost uneventful. Destroyers escorting the convoy downed all three attacking planes.

After a night in the IMAC bivouac area, the paratroopers were ordered to move out beyond the Corps' perimeter, secure and occupy Hill 1000. Intelligence had reported that a large enemy force from the north was en route to the Hill 1000 area, a key terrain feature overlooking the Ninth Marines' sector of the perimeter. The Regiment (minus) was divided into two battalions ... the Third Battalion, minus Company I, was designated as the "Third Battalion;" and Regimental H&S Company, Weapons Company and Company I formed into the "Provisional Battalion."

The paratrooper force moved out at 1130 with a strength of 935 men, slushed along the East-West Trail to a point opposite Hill 1000. At that point, a 90-degree left turn was made and shortly troops were climbing the steep slopes of the destination. Positions were taken with the Third Battalion on the right and the Provisional Battalion on the left. Patrols were dispatched to the front with no enemy troops contacted. The next several days were spent digging in and manhandling supplies up the hill to increase the number of units of fire and rations. On 8 December, a patrol reconnoitering the Torokina River area was ambushed by a Japanese platoon and returned with one man missing. A second patrol sent to look for the missing man made contact and suffered three casualties.

I was a first lieutenant in command of the First Platoon, Company I. On 9 December, I was ordered to take my platoon, skirt the left end of the ridge opposite to Hill 1000 (later named "Hellzapoppin Ridge"), cross behind the ridge to the Torokina River, right along the river and back to Hill 1000. The "mission" was to determine if any Japanese had arrived in the area to occupy positions on Hellzapoppin Ridge. Prior to departure, it was decided to attach a machine gun squad from Weapons Company to patrol (an extremely wise decision). The squad was carrying two light .30 caliber Browning machine guns, mounted on their tripods, with



An artist's rendition of Col Dave Severance, USMC (Ret.), at the time of his retirement in 1968 after 30 years in the Marine Corps. He also served with the Colorado National Guard from 1934-37.

50-round belts in the receivers. Capt Jack Shedaker, commanding Weapons Company, wanted to go with the patrol and automatically became the patrol leader.

As we descended down a ravine toward the left flank of Hellzapoppin Ridge, I stumbled and drove my M-1 rifle into the mud. Not wanting to delay the progress of the patrol, I found a thin twig and reamed the mud out of the barrel. Rapid progress was made until we were behind the center of the ridge. We were moving on a trail with the ridge on our right and a swamp on our immediate left. We had flankers out on the right, but not in the swamp. Suddenly the point man signaled "halt." Capt Shedaker, who was moving with the first squad, moved up to where the point man was taking cover. There, just around a curve in the trail, were two Japanese setting up a Nambu machine gun. Capt Shedaker aimed his carbine and downed both of the machine gunners.

This served as a signal for the main body of the Japanese ambush to open fire ... they were in some high swamp grass immediately to the left of the second squad, the center unit in our patrol. The Japanese fire killed Cpl Robert F. Butler, our “getaway man” who trailed the patrol by about 20-30 yards.

As was the case of other paratroop units, we had trained to counter ambushes such as this. Remember the “football signals”? Cpl Herbert Maguire, who had the third squad, yelled to his squad: “Left end run!”—meaning he wanted his unit to move into the swamp to envelope the hidden Japanese. A Japanese round bounced off his helmet put a stop to any more verbal commands. I was traveling with the second squad ... we were within 5-10 yards of the ambush party when they opened fire. The Weapons Company machine gun squad was just ahead of the second squad. They immediately fell to the ground and started pouring fire into the large clump of swamp grass. I circled up the slope of the ridge above the center of the ambush position where we could fire down into the Japanese. As one of the hidden Japanese started firing at me, chipping bark off of a tree near me, I raised my M-1 to fire and found my front and rear sights were full of mud. Since there was no time to clean sights, I just lined up the two mud balls and fired. PltSgt Banks Tucker had been with the third squad and moved to his right up on the slope of the ridge. Shortly after the firing started, he observed a Japanese officer running like hell down the slope of the ridge toward his ambushing troops. Banks had a carbine with a “custom” magazine (two magazines welded together to hold 30 rounds). He pumped all 30 rounds into the moving Japanese officer before he fell.

I would guess the Japanese had not figured on encountering two machine guns pouring fire into their

position at extremely close range, and they started pulling out. Cpl Mort Mills, who was on the slope a few feet from me, had a perfect sighting of a gap in the swamp grass across which the Japs had to withdraw. He later equated it to a “shooting gallery” as the Japs attempted to leap across the opening and Mort sat picking them off. The next man down the slope had a Johnson light machine gun, and Mills yelled to him to pass him the Johnson. With the Johnson, Mills had a chance to get more than one at a time as the Japs started rushing their retreat. Following the action, we estimated we had killed a minimum of 16 Japanese.

As we regrouped, mortar fire started falling in the area ahead of us. Since we had determined that the Japanese were on the ridge (our mission), we withdrew and returned to our lines. There we discovered our units on Hill 1000 had been heavily engaged with a strong Japanese force on the ridge opposite our positions. The probing units suffered a number of casualties and had to withdraw. We determined that the “mortar fire” we had believed to be Japanese was actually fire from a newly manufactured (locally) fat trajectory 60 mm mortar that had been firing at trees on the ridge to remove snipers. Some of the rounds that did not hit a branch had traveled over the ridge to the reverse slopes where we were located.

Hellzapoppin Ridge became a major objective, the capture of which would require a larger force than the paratroopers could muster, and the 21st Marines fought until 25 December to capture it.

Used with permission of the colonel and Leatherneck to reprint the article that ran in the December 2003 issue of the magazine. Col Severance was CO of Easy Company, Second Battalion, 28th Marines on Iwo Jima.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

LIFE MEMBERS

ALLEN, Peter R. **H&S-2-27** (Vietnam)
St. Charles, IL
BAUMANN, William J. **H&S-1-26** (Vietnam)
San Bernardino, CA
CHAMPAGNE, Leo E. **D-2-13** The Villages, FL
CRENSHAW, Carlton B. **H&S-3-26** (Vietnam)
Palmyra, VA
DIX, Richard J. **H&S-5-SHORE PARTY**
(Vietnam) Toston, MT

GARDINER, Nora K. – Carlsbad, CA
GARICH, Ann Marie – Arlington Heights, IL
HANSON, Gerald “Jerry” – Raleigh, NC
ORZECZOWSKI, Robert D. – Reading, PA
SCOTT, Patrick E. – Vancouver, WA

ANNUAL MEMBERS

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JARVIS, Chuck H&S-1-28 Camby, IN
MAZZELLA, Peter P. Jr. – Rapid City, SD

Remembering Louis Lepore

By Jimmie Hyde Watson

LtCol Louis R. Lepore, USMCR (Ret.) passed away Nov. 6, 2018, at the age of 95. He lived alone, was very healthy and played golf four days a week until last July when he suffered a mild heat stroke on the golf course in 96-degree temperatures.

His cousins, Rita and Teryl, gave him excellent care at their home for several weeks; then he went home alone for several more weeks before his death.

For years he had hung the American flag out at daylight and took it down before sundown. His neighbor noticed the flag still out after dark. When he went to investigate, he found Louie in bed dead.

I had called Louie that afternoon to say hi and to see how he was feeling. He thanked me for thinking of him and how he'd enjoyed the card I'd sent a few days before. He said some things that he'd not said before—how much he appreciated my caring of him. When our time has come, we do have feelings of the end. ...

In 2015, I asked FMDA Secretary and *Spearhead* Editor Ray Elliott if he could send me some contacts from A-1-27—the same unit my brother, Pfc Harrydale Hyde, was in when he was KIA on Iwo Jima, Hill 362A, on Feb. 28, 1945. Ray sent me five names, but I was only able to reach one. That was Louis Lepore—a replacement for A-1-27 on Iwo Jima, Hill 362A, on Feb. 28, 1945.

He was willing and happy to converse with me about Iwo Jima and my brother. I met Louis in 2016 at the FMDA reunion at the Carlsbad by the Sea Hotel in Oceanside, Calif. He lived about 30 minutes away and brought pictures of Camp Tarawa and other memorabilia he had from Iwo Jima and Camp Pendleton. Even his



Lepore (left) spent time visiting with Watson at the 2018 Iwo Jima banquet at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Their friendship grew out of a unique connection to her brother, who died on Iwo Jima. (Photo provided by Jimmie Watson)

car license plate had A-1-27.

He also connected me with Billy Bowmen's family, who was his Iwo Jima friend until his death in 2010. Bowmen was my brother's platoon leader who witnessed his KIA and recommended him for the Bronze Star. However, Gen "Howlin' Mad" Smith awarded the Silver Star after reading the report.

I went to Ontario, Calif., and met Bowmen's wife, daughters and son in 2017. They gave me a picture I had never seen of the men of A-1-27 in 1944 just before they left

San Diego. It was probably the last picture taken of my brother.

I would often talk with Louie on the phone. FMDA Vice President Kathy Painton (now current president) and I had to work very hard to convince him to attend the February 2017 banquet at Camp Pendleton that Gail Chatfield organizes so wonderfully. His excuse was that he didn't know anyone any more and all his Iwo friends were gone. But he did attend, and everyone enjoyed his company. He even came to the 2018 banquet, as well.

When the October 2017 FMDA reunion in Hawaii was coming up, his excuse was the same. Kathy and I insisted he come and I would not leave him alone. He did attend and enjoyed it very much. All who met him were so impressed by his gentlemanly ways and manners. He even registered to attend the 2018 reunion in Illinois this past October, but had to cancel the week before. He had come to think of us as his new Iwo Jima friends, and he wanted to join us.

Back in 2014 when I met FMDA Treasurer Doug Meny in Guam on the way to Iwo Jima, I found out that I could obtain my brother's Marine records. In January 2018, I finally received the 100 pages-plus records of my brother. I stayed up all night to read and reread each

page—it was so interesting. Near the end, there was a page of his belongings inventory that was conducted on May 24, 1945, at Camp Tarawa. It was a list of personal things in his sea bag—the things he left behind when they shipped off in December 1944 for the Iwo Jima battle. The document was signed by Louis R. Lepore Jr. I couldn't believe what I was reading and got cold chills!

Needless to say, I went to the phone and called Louie straight away. He answered the phone and I mentioned what I had found. He said he was glad I wasn't there in person because I got him out of the shower and he was wringing wet and would call me in a little while.

It was a half hour or more when he called back and told me that he had had a good cry because it brought back memories of the saddest day of his life. He was given the job of inventorying 63 sea bags of A Company KIA Marines. It was indeed Louis' name on that document; he signed it on his 22nd birthday. Then

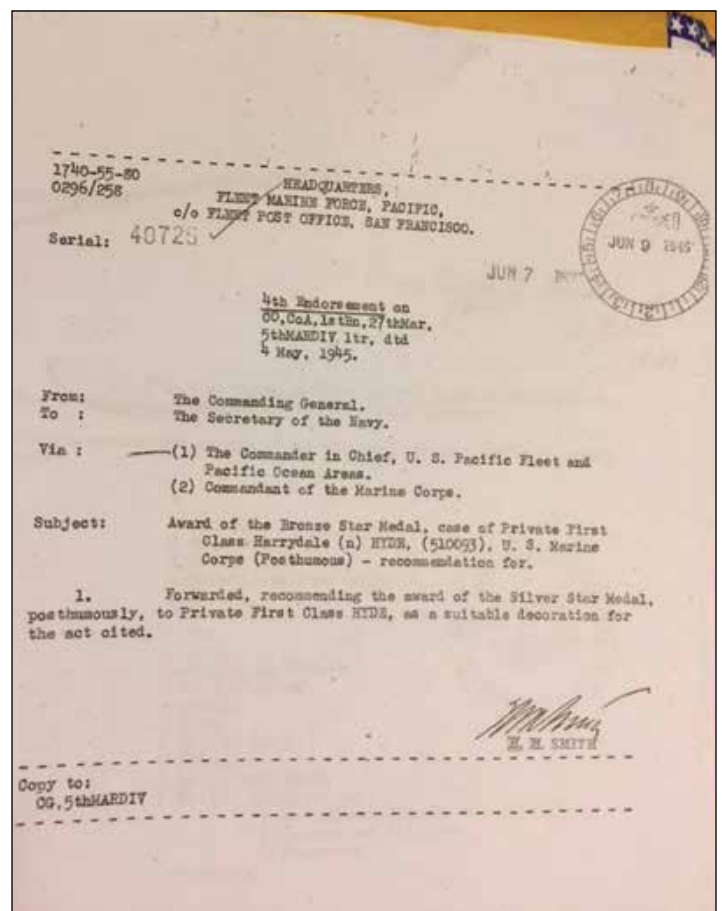
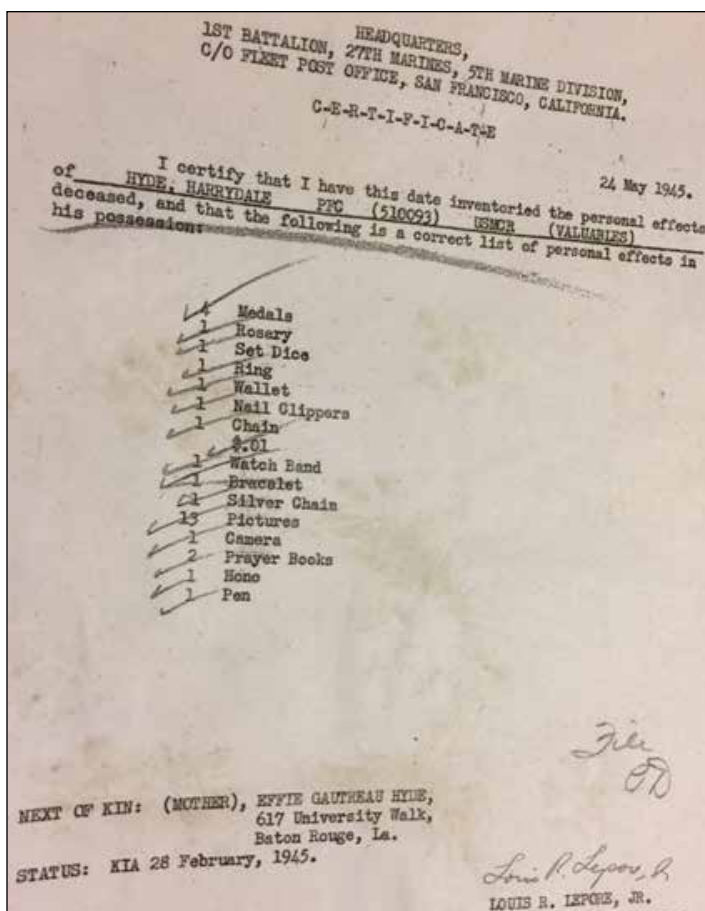
we both had a good cry on the phone.

After 73 years, he told me, I was the only one from among those 63 families he ever met. ...

I couldn't attend the memorial service that was held Nov. 17 in Bonita, Calif., but I did go to the St. Louis Cathedral here in Jackson Square in New Orleans' French Quarter at the same time as the service and lit a candle for Louie.

May he rest in peace in heaven, with his other buddies. He already did his time in hell on Iwo Jima, as they all did so long ago in 1945. Let's never forget these men and women of the Greatest Generation.

When I go back to San Diego in March 2019, I will go to his gravesite at the Little Chapel of the Roses at Glen Abbey. It's where he got married in 1947 and is now buried there next to his wife. I will return a red rose that he gave me at the banquet, say a prayer and my goodbye.



At left is a signed certificate of the inventoried personal effects of Pfc Harrydale Hyde (A-1-27) of Baton Rouge, La., who died on Iwo Jima on Feb. 28, 1945—the same date Louis Lepore arrived on the island as a replacement for A-1-27. Almost three months later, on his 22nd birthday, Lepore had the sad duty of inventorying 63 sea bags of A Company Marines who had been killed, including the one that belonged to Hyde. More than 70 years later, Lepore was contacted by Hyde's sister, Jimmie Hyde Watson, and began to attend some of the reunion events. At right is the recommendation by Gen Holland "Howlin' Mad" Smith to award the Silver Star Medal to Hyde posthumously.

(Photos provided by Jimmie Watson)

FMDA Annual Business Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2018

The meeting was called to order by President John Butler at 0900. Vice President Kathy Painton led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. President Butler then introduced FMDA board members and trustees and the Iwo Jima Association of America Chairman/CEO who was attending the Association's 69th Annual Reunion in Urbana-Champaign, Ill.

Secretary's Report: Minutes from the 2017 Business Meeting at the FMDA reunion on the Big Island were published in the Fall/Winter 2017 *Spearhead*. Accordingly, a motion was made and seconded to waive the reading of the minutes. Motion approved.

Treasurer's Report: President Butler noted that, thanks to the strong fund-raising efforts of Kathy Painton during the Hawaii reunion last year, and Ray Elliott during the Urbana, Ill., reunion last month, and also thanks to the continuing donations of both current and new members, the FMDA bank balance of \$26,000 at end of 2016 has grown to approximately \$35,000 projected at the end of 2018. This will allow FMDA to continue funding the publication of two *Spearheads* each year, having the annual reunions, as well as furthering the mission of a Camp Tarawa museum/preservation project on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

Old Business:

FMDA Website: The FMDA website is up and running at <https://5thmardiv-assoc.org>. (Contact web developer and research assistant Dean Laubach through the website for more information.)

FMDA Facebook: The Facebook page is posted on occasionally, but like the website, an FMDA member is needed to post information on a regular basis to advertise events, etc., and keep the legacy of the Association alive. No volunteers were as yet identified.

Camp Tarawa Museum: Kathy Painton expounded on the new direction of the museum to a digital collection of the memorabilia and artifacts from the Fifth Marine Division to keep the legacy of the division alive and honor its sacrifices through a venue that people around the world will be able to experience through the internet. Materials will be appropriately stored and occasional displays will be possible. It was unanimously agreed to grant the Camp Tarawa Foundation \$5,000 in start-up funding to support this new work.

Fundraising to perpetuate the Fifth Marine Division's legacy: Doug Meny elaborated on the 501(c)3 tax-deductible organization of the FMDA to raise funds from members who would like to leave funds for the museum, publishing *Spearhead* or other projects.

New Business:

Officers: After four years at the helm of the FMDA, John Butler said he was resigning and stepping down from the presidency for health reasons. Kathy Painton was nominated to serve as the Association's president; Bruce Hammond, vice president, Douglas Meny, treasurer; and Ray Elliott, secretary. A motion to accept the nominations was seconded and approved unanimously.

Trustees: John Butler will serve as a trustee.

Selection of the 2019 reunion site, host and date: Details for the 2019 FMDA Reunion to be held in New Orleans are still in the planning stages. Jimmie Watson and Leonard Isacks, both New Orleans residents, will co-host, and Kathy Painton will assist by collecting registration forms when the reunion information is made available.

Future of the FMDA: While some seemed to think that the end of the Association was imminent, there was a general feeling that the Association should continue as usual, have the reunion in New Orleans and then determine the situation as to the future of the Association at the business meeting.

Matt the Doll: Phyllis Schaefer reported on Matt's activities these past two years and collected \$900 in donations for the FMDA general fund.

Gen Norman Smith, IJAA Chairman/CEO: Gen Smith gave a brief presentation about plans and the opportunity to travel to Iwo Jima for the 74th anniversary of the 1945 battle and the Reunion of Honor ceremony. For more information, contact IJAA Executive Director LtCol Raul "Art" Sifuentes at RSifuentes@IwoJimaAssociation.org.

The meeting was adjourned.

FIFTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION, INC. | Financial Statements
As of September 30, 2018 (Cash Basis)

Statement of Income and Expense:	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
INCOME									
Dues & Donations	-	4,995	8,416	8,931	4,234	2,343	2,600	3,709	6,096
Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	209
General Fund	3,320	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Membership Dues (Annual Basis)	1,250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Membership Dues (Lifetime Memberships)	1,650	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Camp Tarawa Museum	1,555	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spearhead Ads	500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reunion Additional Donations	8,470	15,977	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Reunion Journal	1,375	5,670	5,380	5,744	7,967	170	170	-	-
Reunion Registrations	16,425	32,917	9,294	5,069	7,650	7,099	-	1,782	5,403
Operating Income	34,545	59,559	23,090	19,744	19,851	9,612	2,770	5,491	11,709
Gain on sale of investment (gold) ¹	-	-	-	-	-	3,765	-	7,760	-
TOTAL INCOME	34,545	59,559	23,090	19,744	19,851	13,377	2,770	13,251	11,709
EXPENSES									
Spearhead (Production/Distribution) & Fund-Raising	4,921	5,113	6,134	5,394	6,059	8,868	9,537	10,645	4,764
Administrative Services	10,000	11,000	12,000	12,000	11,000	8,625	6,682	9,314	14,051
Office & Other Expenses	1,072	1,098	1,040	1,467	1,744	558	587	856	1,429
Reunion Expenses (non Journal), Estimate 2018	14,425	29,804	7,152	5,095	10,952	8,801	2,000	-	-
Reunion Journals (Oct 2017 final publication)	1,989	4,425	2,000	1,985	4,266	-	-	-	-
Iwo Famous Sermon Plaque (Jan 2018)	551	430	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Boots Thomas Memorial (see article in Spearhead)	-	-	189	4,849	-	-	-	-	-
Grants Paid - Camp Tarawa Foundation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,000
Grants Paid - Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25,000
Total Operating Expenses	32,959	51,870	28,516	30,790	34,021	26,853	18,806	20,815	55,245
TOTAL NET INCOME/(LOSS)	1,586	7,689	(5,426)	(11,046)	(14,170)	(13,476)	(16,036)	(7,563)	(43,536)
ASSETS (End of Period Shown)									
Bank Wells Fargo (Tampa Florida)	\$ 6,283	\$ 15,167	\$ 25,568	\$ 30,994	\$ 42,040	\$ 56,210	\$ 33,085	\$ 49,121	\$ 56,684
Bank First Hawaiian, Big Island (Oct-'17 Reunion)	\$ 18,089	\$ 18,089	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bank PNC, Urbana Illinois (Oct-'18 Reunion)	\$ 10,470	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Investment - Gold (at cost)	-	-	-	-	-	-	36,600	36,600	36,600
Total Assets	34,843	33,257	25,568	30,994	42,040	56,210	69,685	85,721	93,284
LIABILITIES									
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
NET WORTH	\$ 34,843	\$ 33,257	\$ 25,568	\$ 30,994	\$ 42,040	\$ 56,210	\$ 69,685	\$ 85,721	\$ 93,284

¹Gold proceeds sold on 8/16/2013 was \$40,365.

IWO JIMA ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (IJAA)

13 - 17 Feb '19
74th Reunion
 Hyatt Regency
 Arlington, VA



19 - 25 Mar '19
74th Reunion of Honor
 Iwo Jima

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IWO JIMA 75TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIONS



19 - 23 Feb '20
Reunion & Symposium
 Arlington, VA

17 - 23 Mar '20
Reunion of Honor—Iwo Jima & Symposium—
Guam Chartered
United Airlines Jet



For details: www.IwoJimaAssociation.org / rsifuentes@IwoJimaAssociation.org

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