



# The Battalion Runner

2017 – Number 3 – December 2017

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines**



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**MERRY CHRISTMAS MARINES!!!**



**And – Happy New Year!**



This Battalion Runner edition is an abbreviated version I wanted to get out to everyone before Christmas. It includes a report of our 2017 25<sup>th</sup> annual reunion in Arlington and a link to hundreds of great photos from that event. Normal portions of the Runner, like new members, notes from the mailbox, etc., are NOT included in this edition. I have had a lot going on and simply do not have the time during this holiday season to do things the correct way. I promise to catch up in the first 2018 edition. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year everyone, and to those of a different religious persuasion enjoy this holiday season.

Danny

## **2017 Reunion Report**

### **08-12 November 2017**

Unless people are lying to me many of our members have told me this may have been the best reunion we've ever had, despite one real headache I'll describe later in this report. With more than 175 members, their families, and friends attending we couldn't have asked for a better turnout. As has been the case for several years now we were treated as royalty at the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA, and the folks at our dinner site, the Marriott Key Bridge in Arlington. They go above and beyond to make us comfortable and welcomed. Here is one photo from our Birthday Dinner to indicate the level of attendance:



**Our keynote speaker at the dinner this year was Mr. Tim Tetz, Director of Outreach for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. He was in a word, outstanding, explaining the details behind the new Education Center to be built in connection with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The Wall). We held our Youngest (Sgt. Zach Crist, son of our chaplain, Dean Crist, and his mother, Debbie Crist, the son-in-law and daughter of Ray and Mary Nieto), and Oldest (Bob Driver, Echo, 1965-66) Marines ceremony conducted by Dave Garner. He's a hard charger!!!**





**We also had our annual "Hot Damn" celebration (if you haven't been to a reunion you wouldn't understand!). It is a tradition of the Stander family brought to the 2/9 Reunion by lost Marine Stan Stander's wife Barbara to remember all our lost brothers. Our Marines can certainly sing, as we sang "The Hymn" in their honor, and one of these days I'll remember ALL the words.**



**The raffle, as always, was outstanding and a lot of people went away winners. Thanks to some very young and enthusiastic volunteers delivering winning items to the crowd, we were able to conduct the raffle in a timely manner for the first time.**



**After the dinner we made our annual pilgrimage to The Wall to visit our Brothers and lay a wreath in their memory. This year, despite unbelievably cold weather, we had the largest group ever travel to The Wall near midnight of the 10<sup>th</sup>.**





**On Veteran's Day, the 11<sup>th</sup>, over 100 2/9 members attended the Veteran's Day Ceremonies at The Wall, with prime, reserved, seating dead smack in the middle of the crowd thanks to Tim Tetz. Note the small print on the empty seats, and they were quickly filled.**



**I mentioned one headache earlier in this treatise. That was the official USMC Wreath Laying Ceremony. To make a long story somewhat shorter:**

**1 – It was not at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial), due to renovation work and we did not find that out until well into September when a couple of notes from 2/9 Members informed me it was at the World War II Memorial this year.**

**2 – After MANY inquiries to both the National Park Service office responsible for the Iwo Jima Memorial and HQMC, I finally garnered the information that the ceremony would indeed be at the WWII Memorial at 1000 hours on the Birthday (the 10<sup>th</sup>).**

**3 – Just days before the reunion began I was informed the start time had been changed to 0800 hours. Now we had to figure out how to get our Marines to the ceremony. Thanks to donations (more later about this), we were able to hire a full sized bus and three large minivans that made round trips from the Residence Inn, transporting nearly 150 people to the WWII Memorial. That was expensive. We did not get official confirmation of this change in time until the DAY before the actual ceremony, when the announcement suddenly appeared on the 8<sup>th</sup> & I website Homepage.**

**4 – It was COLD!!!! We got to the WWII Memorial, received our agenda from 8<sup>th</sup> & I Marines and settled in for the ceremony. If you were 15 minutes late you missed it! Over and done in 15, maybe 20 minutes. No Marine Corps Band, no Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, no 8<sup>th</sup> & I passing in review and former Commandant Al Gray limited to less than 5 minutes to speak. Less than two platoons from 8<sup>th</sup> & I were present and possibly 18 or so members of the band.**

**This was a major disappointment. We all wondered how in the world HQMC and/or 8<sup>th</sup> & I, could possibly not spread the word to ALL Marines that such a time and venue change was happening on what is arguably the biggest day of the year for United States Marines? Our Commandant, General Robert Neller, and I had a conversation after the conclusion of the ceremony. I explained what we went through just to find out**

where the ceremony was being held. He was, in his words, embarrassed and apologized. He told me that he had wondered for several days if people knew what was going on. When I told him we had no official word until the 9<sup>th</sup> of November his comment was "That's probably because I finally said something". This did not change my opinion of General Neller. I think he's a great Commandant and a hell of a Marine. I also do not think this was his fault. He's got a great deal more to worry about than check every detail about every event he is involved with. It DOES, in my humble opinion, reflect poorly on both those at HQMC and 8<sup>th</sup> & I responsible for The Wreath Laying Ceremony. I told the General that. Here is a photo of something I've never done before and probably won't ever do again – giving the Commandant of the Marine Corps hell!!!



Don't get too upset about this! We also gave him a rousing "Oh-Rah" sendoff!





I cannot end the reunion discussion without a personal note about a critical person on our 2/9 Network Team. Debbie Crist, named an honorary 2/9 Marine two years ago, negotiates our hotel rates for the reunion and for our reunion dinner. The amazingly low rates we obtain don't happen by magic. She also arranges all our transportation, especially for those who cannot get around easily. This year, with the SNAFU involving the Wreath Laying Ceremony, she had to completely rearrange all our transportation vehicles just prior to the reunion, including finding that full sized bus we needed. She is a godsend and I don't know what we'd do without her! Thanks Debbie, and Semper Fi.

## **DONATIONS**

I'm usually begging here. No need to go more deep than that. However, this time I am happy to make the following report. Donations, between the time of the last Battalion Runner issued in September and the reunion in November, were outstanding! Not just from those attending the reunion, but from across the entire membership of the 2/9 Network. My NCOIC, Henry Ostaszewski (don't get pissed Henry – YOU gave me the OIC shirt), and I sat down before the dinner and discussed our financial situation. We had, in all likelihood, more money in the bank than the 2/9 Network has ever seen since the database was established back in 2005. We both agreed we did not think it right to just let that money sit in the bank when we could do something good with it if it turned out our estimates were correct. We decided to hold a short business meeting of Network members at the Birthday Dinner. We asked the members to vote on whether or not we should use excess funds to make a 2/9 donation to worthwhile charity organizations. The membership voted unanimously to do that. As it turned out, we had that excess we expected. As a result, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has received and acknowledged receipt of, a \$3,000.00 donation from the 2/9 Network in memory of our brothers on The Wall, and will be using it as part of the funding necessary to build the Education Center at The Wall. Additionally, work continues by some of our fellow members to complete plans to have a memorial plaque for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines (all eras), placed at the Marine Corps Museum in Quantico. Once those plans are finalized and cost determined we still have some funding we will be donating toward the cost of the plaque (estimated now to be somewhere in the vicinity of \$10,000). We certainly cannot fund that entire cost but it looks like we can help out at the 2/9 Network level. What this means is that we will be back where we started financially and still dependent upon the membership to support the Network in 2018. Still, it is with great pride that I finish this paragraph in the Runner. Marines, especially 2/9 Marines, are the best!!!!

## **REUNION PHOTOS**

Several members who attended the reunion have asked if reunion photos would be available. Well, they are. As you have noticed throughout this Runner I have used a bunch of reunion photos to accompany my narrative. They are a TINY portion of more than 400 photos from the reunion I have posted on the web in Photobucket. Members can access those photos individually at the URL link below, and individual photos can be downloaded for personal use. There are some really excellent pictures, so don't hesitate to check them out. Even if you did not attend the reunion you might want to check them out. You never know when you might spot someone you served with! We all owe thanks to the following people who contributed the photos:

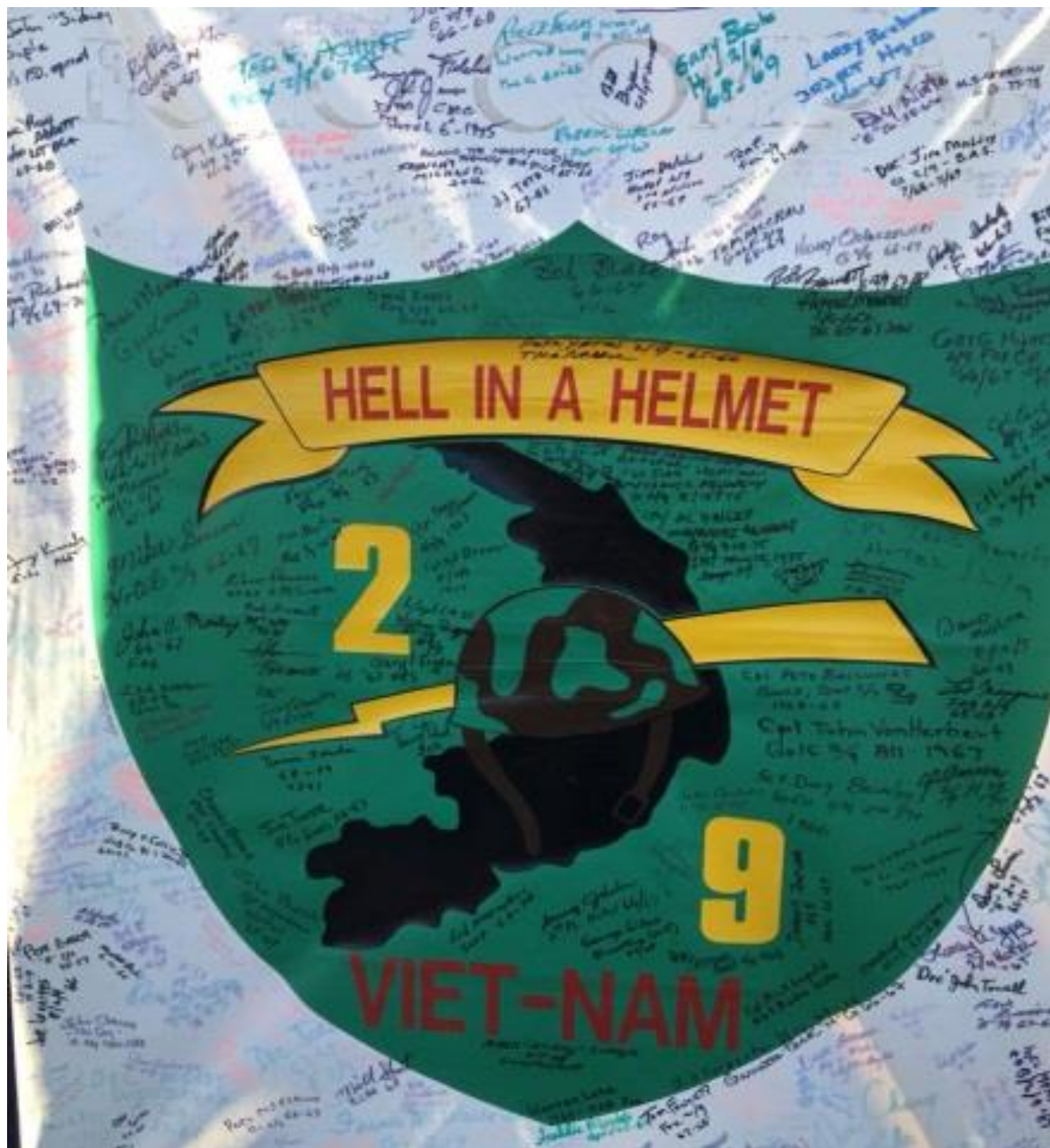
Marcy Rodriquez and her able assistant, Yvonne Martinez.  
Dave Garner  
Tom Fenerty  
Larry Noon

Thank you!

Incidentally, you can also find 10-12 photo albums from prior reunions on my Photobucket page.

<http://smg.photobucket.com/user/fasst1/library/2-9%2025th%20Reunion%202017?sort=2&page=1>







## Composite Group Photo for Reunion 2017





Finally, if you are reading this Battalion Runner and you did NOT receive it from me via email there are only two possible reasons for that. I do not have a valid email address for you or you are not registered on the 2/9 Network website at [www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org](http://www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org). If you send me an email at [ditson35@verizon.net](mailto:ditson35@verizon.net) or, if not registered on the website, go there and click on the "Member Registration" button on the left side of the screen, fill out the information and submit it. I will get an email with your information and promptly register you and add you to our email distribution lists.

As always, anyone is invited to email me at [ditson35@verizon.net](mailto:ditson35@verizon.net) with comments, questions, current items affecting our members, or recommendations. Stories are excellent ideas for inclusion in future Runners. Unfortunately I am the sole arbiter of what becomes published and what does not. If you are going to send me something you'd like to see posted make sure it is relevant to our brotherhood of Marines and in good taste.

**SEMPER FIDELIS,**  
**Danny Schuster**  
**2/9 Network Administrator and Reunion Coordinator**  
**Echo, 1967**

**CHEERS!**

