



2nd Battalion, 9th Marines

The Battalion Runner

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General

As we move forward into 2020 our 2/9 Network has seen some changes, both good and bad, during 2019.

Part of the bad is the continuing loss of more and more brothers from the Vietnam war era. We are losing our fellow warriors at an increasing pace as we age. As I've stated before, the worst part of running this Network is reporting on the men I've had to move to the Last Patrol section of the member listings. Those of you who follow the Network and/or reunion information closely will be saddened to hear of the loss of two of our well known members: Mary Nieto, widow of 2/9 member Ray Nieto, and mother of honorary 2/9 member Debbie Crist, passed on 12 December and will join Ray in Arlington National Cemetery during calendar year 2020. Keith Fay, one of our four members responsible for the 2/9 Memorial Plaque now on display in Semper Fidelis Memorial Park at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, VA, passed away on 22 December after a more than two year battle with cancer. Keith was visited by several members at the Washington VA Hospital during our reunion last year held 7-12 November, and I can tell you he never stopped loving being a 2/9 Marine! More reports on our lost brothers follows below in this newsletter.

Issues with the 2/9 Network website continue to concern me. Unfortunately a major upgrade, including the possibility of a completely new web site, would cost more money than we have available. Most of the issues are beyond my control. I have tried to continue updating the site as I receive information from our membership. At this point I now post a note about updates on the Home page and indicate where you can go to see those updates. Some are Last Patrol notifications, some involve the Reunion page, and occasionally some on other pages of the website.

Several new members have sent me their personal information via email for registration as new members. Since I had to remove the automated new member registration several months ago this is now the only way I can get your information so I can add you to our company member rosters. See the new member registration page on the website if you are a new member and want to join.

The Contact Us page continues to be available if you want to ask a question, send a concern, or want to update your information. This is important to use if you have a change of email address so I can update our databases and make sure you continue to receive this newsletter and other emails I send to the entire membership on special occasions. A great example of the use of this page happened just in the past two weeks. The brother of a World War II 2/9 Marine KIA on Iwo Jima communicated with me several times. He never met his older

brother since he was born after his death on Iwo. He was wondering if I could help him contact someone who might have known him or how he died. Sadly there are so few WWII vets alive, and very few from 2/9, that I could not help. I directed him to Larry Kirby's book, "Stories from the Pacific, the Island War 1942-1945". He immediately purchased it through the web and read it in one day. He emailed me and thanked me for the suggestion. He also mentioned while he now realizes there is likely no one out there who can help directly he understands the conditions 2/9 faced during that terrible battle. I love it when we can help out someone like that. I continue to receive spam messages through the Contact Us automated web page, but it is something I can control thus far. Please continue to use it for address, email, phone number, etc., changes and any requests or concerns you have about anything involving 2/9.

You can also email directly for any reason with our 2/9 email address: twoninencoic@aol.com.

There is good news. Our 27th Annual Reunion held 07-12 November 2019 was a great success. As you will see in the separate section below we have made some strides toward getting more involvement from our post-Vietnam members, assisted greatly by several current, active duty 2/9 senior officers.

Our 2/9 legacy for all eras and our permanent remembrance of our founder and inspiration, Red Hill, were both completed during 2019. The 2/9 Memorial Plaque and Red Hill's Memorial Plaque were both installed and are available for viewing in Semper Fidelis Memorial Park at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, VA.

REUNION 2020

8-12 NOVEMBER

We are still in the process of negotiating with our reunion hotel for this year's 28th Annual Reunion. What we do know is that the reunion hotel will once again be the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn in Arlington, VA, and the dates will be either 08-12 November or 07-12 November 2020. See my report on the 2019 reunion below for an explanation of the possible different dates. I am also very hopeful that the Marriott Key Bridge Hotel in Arlington will once again host us for our 2020 Marine Corps Birthday dinner on 10 November. Rather than wait for the next Battalion Runner Newsletter to be issued I will send you a separate email with all pertinent information for both events once contracts are finalized. That same information will be prominently displayed on the Reunion web page of our website.

THE FIRST REUNION, NOVEMBER 10TH, 1993



WAR MEMORIAL
NOVEMBER 10, 1993

Row 1

Doc Woody Woodruff
Dave Bigler
Rafael C. Renteria
Marty Corona
Ken Elliott
Patrick A. Pearce
Peter M. McClaine
Ed Gorman
Okla C. Spence
Bill Ambrose
Ed Rogers
Kathy Upchurch
Frank Zimmario

Row 2

Don Truesdale
Michael "Mike" Neely
Barry Yeakle
Keith Johnson
Mike DuPas
Tim Blinn-Flag
Gus Ebbinger
Rich Centi
John Kasparian
David Garner
Bill Corbett
Ray Nieto
Bruce Dean
Roger Spurr
Richard (Red) Hill
Henry P. Ostaszewski

27th Annual Reunion, 07-12 November 2019

Our reunion last November was a great success. Several members who have been at multiple reunions approached me toward the end and said it was the best reunion they had ever attended. We had the largest attendance since my first reunion in 2000, including the largest number to attend our Birthday Dinner on The Birthday on 10 November. This was despite the Marine Corps' bewildering, to us anyway, decision to hold the official Marine Corps Birthday Wreath Laying ceremony on 08 November instead of the traditional date of 10 November. This was the 3rd consecutive year we, as a group, did not find out until well into the year that the wreath laying ceremony was either not on The Birthday or not at the traditional time. At least this year the Corps held the entire ceremony, with participation by the President's Own, the Commandant's Own, and Marine Barracks 8th & I passing in review. The one downside other than the date is that there was no guest speaker.

A side note here. After the ceremony was over Wayne Lanning and I were standing off to the side as the new Commandant, General David Berger, spoke to some of our members and posed for photos (he also posed with us in our group photo later). The new Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sgt.Maj. Troy Black, was standing near us. Wayne approached him and, much to my surprise, announced that I wanted to speak to him. If you know Wayne Lanning he is not someone easily dissuaded. Thus, Sgt.Maj. Black came over to talk to me. You

know how the saying goes, “in for a dime, in for a dollar”? Well, I proceeded, somewhat warily, to bitch about the 08 November date for the Wreath Laying Ceremony and explained how to the huge majority of Marines 08 November does not carry much importance and how Marines expect HQMC to remember those that have made the ultimate sacrifice on what is arguably the most hallowed day of the year to them, the Marine Corps Birthday on 10 November. I also explained to him that in 2018, when the ceremony was held on 09 November, that a member of 1st Battalion, 4th Marines had told us that more than 70 of them had shown up at the Marine Corps War Memorial on 10 November to participate in the ceremony and no one was there. The other part of this problem is that HQMC does not do a very good job of conveying these date changes to all Marines. Last year I at least had a direct contact at HQMC but the previous two years we did not know about changes until days before the actual event, and other Marines had no idea. Sgt.Maj. Black was most attentive and remarked he was going to take that message back to General Berger. Let’s hope that has the desired result. I must say that the Wreath Laying, when conducted in the traditional manner as it was last year, is a truly impressive ceremony and one that every Marine should see at least once. I admit that some of this complaint is self-serving for 2/9 Network members attending the reunion since we schedule it every year around the official Wreath Laying Ceremony, but that does not change the fact that things have been really screwy for the last three years. Thank Wayne when you see him if the ceremony goes back to 10 November next year!

PS A couple of other Marines who I think might carry some influence at HQMC also know this story and may mention it to others with influence.

The entire staff at the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA, once again was outstanding in their support as our reunion hotel. Last year we invited several members of the staff to our Marine Corps Birthday dinner as one way of thanking them for their efforts in support of the reunion. Several of them attended.

Our traditional trip to The Wall after our Marine Corps Birthday dinner to visit, pay our respects, and lay a memorial wreath to our lost brothers included the largest group we’ve ever had. As always, this was a somber and quiet trip with emotional comments from several of our 2/9 Network members.

On 09 November a sizeable contingent of our reunion attendees made a trip to the National Museum of the Marine Corps and Semper Fidelis Memorial Park. We visited the museum and made the trip around the park to see both the official 2/9 Memorial Plaque and Red Hill’s Memorial Plaque. The committee responsible for the plaque placed a memorial wreath in honor of the men represented by that plaque.



Thanks to John Klemm, Jim Tiner, and Keith Fay

MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY DINNER, 10 NOVEMBER 2019

Our Birthday Dinner was attended by the largest number of Marines, family, and friends ever. While our dinner is part of our reunion every year it does NOT preclude 2/9 Network members from the Washington, D.C., area from attending if they are not present for the entire reunion. This year we finally made strides in involving more of our younger, post-Vietnam, Marines in our activities. In total we had nearly a dozen attend dinner. All pledged to spread the word to fellow warriors and I sincerely hope we not only get more of them to the dinner this year but also attend the full reunion. This didn't happen by chance. One of the people most responsible for this is Lieutenant General Brian Beaudreault, current Commanding General of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Lejeune. General Beaudreault was the CO of Golf Company in Somalia in the early 1990s and is a huge 2/9 Network supporter. He spread the word to others and it worked! The photo below identifies the five currently active duty officers who attended the dinner. All are former 2/9 Marines. There were also several other post-Vietnam men who attended and if their remarks are any indication efforts will be redoubled to involve more from their era this year. General Beaudreault was our keynote speaker. It was an outstanding evening of camaraderie and recognizing the heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Something else new happened this year. We were joined at dinner by all 537 of

our fellow warriors from 2/9 on The Wall or KIA in Iraq and Afghanistan. We lost 518 men in Vietnam and 19 in Iraq and Afghanistan.



L-R: Henry Ostaszewski, Colonel James Fullwood, Lieutenant General Brian Beaudreault, Lieutenant Colonel Charles "Chuck" Anklam III, Sergeant Jose Rodriguez (our youngest Marine from Marine Security Battalion), Danny Schuster, Major Patrick Heiny, Colonel Mike Styskal.



Our fellow warriors who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. Those lost in Iraq and Afghanistan are in the lower right of the photo. We have decided to make it a traditional part of our Birthday Dinner and Reunion to have these men with us every year. The photo is blurred, but you can find a far better version of these listings on our 2/9 Network website – www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org.

NOTE TO POST-VIETNAM 2/9 MARINES

As I mentioned above, last year we made significant strides in getting more Marines from your era involved in our reunion and/or Marine Corps Birthday Dinner. It is my continuing hope more of you will make your presence known at this year's reunion. We Vietnam veterans are getting old, and our numbers are, sadly, shrinking more rapidly every year. Your future support is the only way we are going to keep the 2/9 Network, and our heritage, alive and well in coming years. The reunion is free. All you have to do is get yourself there and pay for your room and parking. Free snacks and beverages, including beer, are provided in our hospitality room. The Birthday Dinner has a charge but if donations are strong the 2/9 Network chips in to cover a substantial portion of the cost.

DONATIONS

Our 2/9 Network website, our reunion, and our Birthday Dinner depend solely on voluntary donations from our members. The reunion alone costs more than \$10,000 every year. Please help if you can. Every dollar helps. Make checks payable to Danny Schuster, and send them to me at 21 Moseley Street, Billerica, MA 01821. Checks must be made out to me because we cannot afford the time or money to incorporate as an official non-profit. The paperwork alone for that action would be a nightmare.

ATTENTION VIETNAM VETS!

I have free Vietnam logo decals available. All you need to do is send me a self-addressed stamped envelope and I'll ship one to you. This is thanks to retired Master Sergeant Ken Rooker and his son-in-law Brian McGuire. Brian is a graphic artist by profession and created the decals at no charge.



The photo really does not do the decal justice. They are much nicer than this and are cut to form.

PS Previously I announced we had post-9/11 2/9 decals (2nd Marine Division). Unfortunately those are now gone.

FROM THE MAILBOX (INCLUDING THE LAST PATROL NOTIFICATIONS)

UPDATE 27 DECEMBER 2019: The 2/9 Network lost a great member on 23 December when Marine Keith Fay went on his Last Patrol while staying at the Washington, D.C. VA Hospital. Keith was a huge 2/9 Network supporter and one of the four members responsible for the 2/9 Memorial Plaque currently on display in the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, VA. He had been battling cancer for more than 2 years before finally losing the battle just before Christmas. He was also a personal friend and will be greatly missed. He was a devoted 2/9 Marine to the end. If you are in the Long Island, NY, area Keith's memorial services are scheduled to be held at 1830 on 25 January at the Massapequa Marine Corps League, 99 New York Ave., Massapequa, NY. Semper Fi Keith!



LtGen Beaudreault w/Keith on 11/11/19



2/9 Network members visiting Keith on 11/10/19



A healthy Keith with our 2/9 Network founder, Red Hill



More 2/9 Network members visiting Keith 11/10/19

Danny

UPDATE 17 DECEMBER 2019: I was notified via email on 16 December that **Otis Ford, who served with Fox in 1967-68, passed away on 10 December 2019.** Rest in peace Otis, and Semper Fi.

UPDATE 16 DECEMBER 2019: I received sad news from Debbie Crist that her mother, **Mary Nieto, passed away on Thursday, 12 November. Mary was a devoted 2/9 Marine wife of Ray Nieto, who predeceased Mary.** Mary was another personal friend, strong 2/9 Network supporter, and will be greatly missed. She will be laid to rest with Ray in Arlington National Cemetery in 2020. Rest in peace Mary.



Mary and daughter Debbie Crist at our 2012 Reunion

UPDATE 16 DECEMBER 2019: I received more sad news from Bob Mumper that **retired Everette "Glen" Orick passed away in Knoxville, TN, on November 24th at the age of 82.** Glen was a retired Master Sergeant and member of H&S company in Vietnam in 1966-67. Semper Fi, Glen!

UPDATE 24 NOVEMBER 2019: Received a note from Ken Kohutek, a former Navy Seabee who was involved heavily with 2/9 in 1968. I'm sure Ken would love to hear from anyone who might have met him or was there during the action described.

NAME: Ken Kohutek
EMAIL: kekohutek@yahoo.com
STREET: 310 Whitechurch Lane
CITY: Victoria
STATE: TX
ZIPCODE: 77904

COMMENTS: I was/am a Viet Nam era Seabee. It's taken me a long time to find the right way to do this (not technology savvy) but at last I have found the 2/9. I wanted to pay my deepest thanks and gratitude to you, my Brothers, for probably saving my life and the lives of my fireteam in July of 1968. My fireteam, which was detached from MCB 74 Detail Victor, was assigned security on the Cam Lo river where our unit was quarrying rock to be crushed and used in that area of I Corp. We were just yards down stream from the Khe Gio bridge when a Recon patrol spotted a large NVA force approaching our position. My standing orders were to pull all personnel from the river and move to the bridge and help support the Marines at the bridge. The arty units started pounding the area just across the river and then planes started dropping napalm. Ultimately the 2/9 swept across the mountain side and pushed them towards Con Thien. Years later on one of the Viet Nam veteran sites I connected with one of your Marines by the name of **Enrique Cordero (?)** who was involved in that battle and he gave me some of the details. Sorry for being so long but as I am writing this I'm re-living that day again. My fireteam and I were there from May 68 until December 68. Again, with my deepest gratitude "Thank you" please pass this along to any Marine that was there during that time because there were other incidents during that time. Semper Fi and may God Bless the Marines.

UPDATES 14 OCTOBER 2019; 2/9 Marine in Chicago looking for information on **2/9 Marine KIA in May-July 1967 timeframe nicknamed "Scrapperhand"**. I received the following note from Brooke Long:

Hello, My name is Brooke and I am a student therapist in Chicago. I am currently working with a Veteran of the Vietnam War who served as a Marine in Vietnam in 1967. We have been talking about a friend he served with, whom he believes was in the 2-9, and we are looking for some information. This Marine would have been approximately 20 years old, African American, is believed to have been from Kentucky, and went by the nickname "Scrapperhand". He completed bootcamp in California, My client remembers being with his unit in Dong Ha when the 2-9 stopped on their way to conduct an offensive near the DMZ (he believes around May/June 1967 and he thinks they were going to Con Thien) and this was the last time he saw Scrapperhand until his body was recovered by a supply convoy and brought back to Dong Ha for processing. Would you happen to have any information that could help us on our search? Thank you in advance! -Brooke

You can contact Brooke via email: brooke.elizabeth.long@gmail.com

UPDATE 14 OCTOBER 2019: Received the following note from Steve Pay, **cousin of Marine Corporal Wayne Clark Harmon, KIA 19 May 1967:**

EMAIL: spay@occourts.org

PHONE: 714-349-7542

STREET: 10031 Kukui Drive

CITY: Huntington Beach

STATE: Ca

ZIPCODE: 92646

COMMENTS: My cousin, Corporal Wayne Clark Harmon, was killed on 19 May, 1967, while serving with the 2nd Battalion - 9th Marines. I was just a little kid when Wayne was killed, but not a day goes by that I don't think of him. He was my hero. I named my youngest son after him. I would be most appreciative if any one your members has any information about Wayne. Semper Fi. Steve Pay

Danny

UPDATE 29 September 2019: **Sgt. Raymond Schneider, Vietnam, Operation Buffalo**

I got the following note from **Jason Nauman, Dep. Dir. of Veterans Affairs, Berks County PA**, concerning Sgt. Schneider. If anyone can help by providing information regarding Schneider's tour in Vietnam please contact Jason. Sgt. Schneider is a candidate for the Berks County Hall of Fame but didn't make it this year. You'll see why in Jason's note. Jason can be reached at jnauman@widener.edu.

Danny

I am the Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs for Berks County, Pennsylvania. There is a Marine who served with 2/9 during Operations Buffalo and was awarded the NAM with "V" device. His name was Sgt. Raymond Schmieder. He was nominated for the Berks County Hall of Fame and appears to meet the criteria, however the panel wanted more details into his actions and tabled his nomination until next year. Those on the board were comprised of members from other branches of the service who do not understand the weight of the award. As a Marine based on what was presented, I would like to see him get approved for next years HOF inductees. **Please feel free to contact me at jnauman@widener.edu or 610-504-7661. Respectfully, Jason G. Nauman**

UPDATE 23 September 2019: **Loss of Walter Edward Cuchine**

Received an email from Brian Cuchine, or Deer Lodge, Montana informing me of the passing of his father, Walter Edward Cuchine, who served with Echo Company in 1969-70. See Brian's note and contact information below. He is looking for anyone who may have known Walter.

Danny

NAME: Brian Cuchine

EMAIL: elkhntng101@yahoo.com

PHONE: 4062024308

My father **Walter Edward Cuchine** served with 2/9 3d Div. He served in Vietnam 1969-1970 I believe. Not for sure on those dates. He was with Echo Co. He passed away on Sept. 8, 2019. I was wondering if he could be added and was

wondering if anyone remembered him. I remember one story he told my brother and I about him getting busted because he and some friends were playing catch but because no baseball or football was available they used a hand grenade. Not sure if that will help jog anyone's memories. I hope to hear back from anyone. Thank you, Brian Cuchine

THE NOTES ABOVE HAVE BEEN ON THE 2/9 NETWORK WEBSITE SINCE THE LAST BATTALION RUNNER AND WILL BE REMOVED ONCE THIS NEWSLETTER IS RELEASED. THE ITEMS WILL ALL STILL BE AVAILABLE BY VIEWING THE BATTALION RUNNER NEWSLETTER ARCHIVES ON THE WEBSITE.

As always, if you have questions or issues please do not hesitate to contact me at twoninencoic@aol.com or call me at 978-667-4762.

SEMPER FIDELIS

DANNY SCHUSTER

2/9 NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR AND REUNION COORDINATOR

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