



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines The Battalion Runner (Christmas Edition)

2021 – Number 3 – December 2021



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**Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and  
Happy Holidays to all our Marines, Corpsmen,  
Family and Friends**

# NEVER FORGET!!!



**Arlington National Cemetery courtesy of Wreaths Across America**



**Remembering those who paid the  
ultimate sacrifice**

# Reunion 2021

Well, our 2021 29<sup>th</sup> reunion is history. Considering all the negatives involved since the virus hit in 2020 and the loss of so many of our Marines and family members, this year's reunion was a tremendous success. Honestly speaking our 2/9 Network Team of myself, Henry Ostaszewski, and Debbie Crist had no idea how things would work out this year. In the end we had a smaller crowd than expected. However we still had a strong contingent with nearly 110 people at our Marine Corps Birthday Dinner on 10 November. More on that later as I recount the events and successes we encountered along the way.

On 08 November, the Nieto/Crist family, joined by a contingent of 2/9 Network friends, laid Mary Nieto to rest at her interment ceremony alongside her husband and long time 2/9 Network member Ray Nieto. Ray was the epitome of a 2/9 Marine and he and Mary are finally together again at Arlington National Cemetery. It was a somber beginning to the reunion but one that serves to remind us what the Marine brotherhood is all about.



## Gallatin Canyon Band and the 2/9 Network Jam Session

On the 9<sup>th</sup> we held our first 2/9 Network Jam Session at our reunion hotel, the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA. The Gallatin Canyon Band, led by Ben Hernandez from Charlottesville, VA, came up to Arlington at their own expense to perform in honor of Ben's Dad and 2/9 member Dan Hernandez. This was a first for us and we did not know what to expect. We should not have been worried. What an outstanding success! Virtually everyone I talked to stated it was a great time. The band primarily plays bluegrass music but chimes in with other types of music on occasion. They were scheduled to play from 14:00-17:00 (2 –5 p.m. for those who have forgotten military time), and wound up playing until 18:00. We had light food, free beer, soft drinks and water, excellent cooperation from the hotel staff, and held our now traditional 2/9 Network Hot Damn ceremony in honor of lost brothers. Even the weather cooperated so we could gather on the outside patio between band set breaks. To top it all off Ben and the band members all stated a specific desire to return for next year's reunion and a repeat performance, hopefully making this a new 2/9 Network tradition! I'm not going to let them off the hook for that promise.



Ben

## United States Marine Corps Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial)

At 1000 hours on 10 November we attended the official HQMC Wreath Laying Ceremony honoring the legacy of all those who have gone before us. For the first time in several years we had great weather and the entire traditional ceremony was back. The President's Own (Marine Band), Commandant's Own (Marine Drum and Bugle Corps), 8<sup>th</sup> and I Marines marching in review, General Berger, Sergeant Major Black and the Secretary of the Navy all participated. This is something that never gets old, and brings chills and tears to all of us. General Berger and SgtMaj Black joined us after the ceremonies concluded for group photos. General Berger and SgtMaj Black were most gracious and spent a good deal of time with us.





**Front, L-R: Barney Barnum, Dave Garner, General Berger  
Back, L-R: Mick Smith, Danny Schuster, John Klemm**

## **2021 2/9 USMC Birthday Dinner and Celebration**

For the first time in several years we could not hold our Birthday Dinner on the 10<sup>th</sup> at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel. The Key Bridge was undergoing extensive renovations and was closed during our reunion. Thanks to Debbie Crist and her hard work we found another outstanding venue for our dinner. We were hosted by the Marriott Pentagon City Hotel and their staff and management were just as supportive and enthusiastic as we could have hoped.



I have to admit to a dirty deed here. Just a few days before the reunion began I found out we had lost our keynote speaker. The panic button was just about all the way down. At the interment ceremony for Mary Nieto I was having a conversation with 2/9's retired LtCol Jim Murphy. Jim is a long time and dedicated supporter of the 2/9 Network. I casually asked Jim if he ever did any public speaking. He mentioned he did on occasion if he could properly prepare. I asked him if he could prepare in two days. He knew he was caught but accepted the challenge and took on that role for us. As it turned out Jim was an excellent choice! Thank you for the bailout Jim! I might add something here I did not know, and probably should have. West Point graduates have a choice to go on to the Army or the Marine Corps. Jim chose the Corps. A great choice Jim! Following Jim's speech retired Col Dave Garner took over to conduct our youngest/oldest Marine ceremony and present the Commandant's Birthday messages. Dave followed up Jim's talk with some great ad-libbing prior to the beginning of the ceremony, putting the finishing touches on two great speeches. Thanks to both of them! My partner in crime, Henry Ostaszewski, served as the official cake cutter this year for our oldest Marine, John Kasparian, and youngest Marine, Sgt Daniel Hicks. Sgt Hicks and his wife Mary not only attended our dinner but seemed to thoroughly enjoy our jam session! Thanks go out to Pastor Dean Crist, our 2/9 Network chaplain, for providing our Invocation and Benediction.





LtCol Jim Murphy



Dave gestures as Henry presents John with his slice of cake.





Sgt. Daniel and Chloe Hicks



The Cake!!!



The Rodriguez Clan

## Our Trip to The Wall

Following dinner we returned to our reunion hotel, gathered, and made our annual trip to The Wall to pay our respects to our lost brothers and lay our wreath. The Wall is always special to Vietnam Vets but there is something more when you are there in the peaceful setting of the night, when no crowds are around, it is quiet, and it is just you and the guys. This year we had a special event honoring our lost brother, Keith Fay, who joined his brothers in arms and will be with them forever. Keith is one of our four members responsible for the 2/9 Memorial Plaque on permanent display in Semper Fidelis Memorial Park on the grounds of the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, VA. We lost Keith not long after our 2019 reunion.







John Klemm and Jim Tiner say goodbye to Keith Fay, as Keith joins his brothers on The Wall.

## Reunion Photos and the Marines Hymn

There are nearly 400 photos of the reunion at the URL listed here. If you cannot just click on it to view them copy and paste the link into your browser to view them. They are on the internet in Photobucket. You might scroll down to around the 80<sup>th</sup> frame or so to see a video of one of the finest renditions of the Marines Hymn you'll ever want to hear!!! There are also photos from many other Reunions you can view in Photobucket once you get to this link.

<https://photobucket.com/u/fasst1/a/2b08508b-c783-44da-8bc6-c0189ba8ffca>

# NEXT YEAR

We've already begun preparations for next year's reunion. Same time, same place. 08-12 November 2022, at the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA. This is one you don't want to miss. Our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion since Red Hill began this all in 1993. I'll be providing details as they become available. This one is going to be special.

I cannot move on with this reunion report without mentioning what a great host we have at our reunion hotel. The management and staff at the Residence Inn have shown us such respect and gratitude that I cannot ever foresee us leaving that venue as our annual reunion headquarters. Thank you Flavia, Jan'nelle and all the staff for your great support! It was extremely disappointing to miss seeing Jan'nelle this year as she was down with an illness that prevented her from being with us. Next year Jan'nelle!!!

## FROM THE MAILBOX

The Mailbox has been extremely quiet the last few months.

Received the following request from Jimmie Wingard on 25 November:

Former LCPL Jimmie Wingard served with Hotel in 1968 and is looking for a copy of the Meritorious Unit Commendation Hotel received for their support of 3/4 during the battle of Mike's Hill on 29 January 1968. If you can help Jimmy out with a copy of that MUC he would greatly appreciate it. He can be reached at email: [wingard@suddenlink.net](mailto:wingard@suddenlink.net) or phone: 972-333-7807

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any information, questions, change of address/email addresses, lost brothers, etc. I will do my best to fully respond to anything I receive. You can email me any time at [twoninencoic@aol.com](mailto:twoninencoic@aol.com).

## DONATIONS

Below is the list of people who donated to the 2/9 Network since our last Newsletter. These donations, and those received at the reunion from many others, helped us over the top this year to provide all our agenda activities at no charge to those attending. I again apologize in advance if I managed to screw up and forget someone!

Received in Memory of Our Lost Brother – John “Sugarbear” Burch:

Carol and Carrie Burch  
Henry Ostaszewski  
Javier “Taco” Salas

## **Other Donations :**

**Kenneth Bruch  
Richard Centi  
Bruce Collison  
James Corfits  
Tom Fenerty  
Dave Garner  
Ed Gorman  
Gary Griffis  
Kevin Jewers  
James Joyce  
John Kasperian  
Jay Langford  
Larry Noon  
Mary Minnis  
Jim Murphy  
Glenn Siegler  
Robert Slattery  
Kathy Upchurch  
Scott Whelan**

**Thank you everyone. If you want to send a donation please make a check out to “Danny Schuster”, and mail it to me at 21 Moseley Street, Billerica, MA 01821. Thanks for anything you can do.**

## **NETWORK NOTES**

**As we move into 2022 and head for our 30th reunion next November, those of us who are Vietnam veterans have, for most of us, reached the stage of our lives where we are at, near, or beyond the average life span of all Americans. We are losing more and more of our members like Ray Nieto, John “Sugarbear” Burch, and others. The ravages of aging do not stop for anyone or anything. Mary Nieto’s interment ceremony was a somber beginning to our reunion that should remind everyone what it means to gather with those with whom you served, no matter the circumstances. My personal experiences with our reunions began in 2000 and I have never regretted making the trek every year since. I was scared to death, not knowing what might happen at that first reunion, and how people would react to me or me to them. I shouldn’t have worried. It was a great experience. This photo was taken minutes after I checked into the reunion in November 2020. It is of Lou Damiano and myself. We had not seen each other in more than 30 years and it speaks for itself:**



In 2001 I insisted my wife, Nancy, accompany me. One of the moments I most remember and will never forget, and that stands out as a major event in our marriage, is what Nancy said, out of the blue, as we traveled on the New Jersey Turnpike on the way home after her first reunion in 2001. She looked over at me and said “I didn’t know there were any other people like you”. Leaving all details aside, that statement had a major positive influence on our already near 30 year relationship, and it happened because of our reunions. She is now as much a part of running this outfit as I am. If you are among those “younger” post-Vietnam Marines who are members of the 2/9 Network I can guarantee that if you have not already, the day will be coming when you will yearn to meet up again with those you served with. It makes little difference if you were in a combat unit or served during peacetime. I did not know Red Hill when he began his quest to reunite with those with whom he served back in the 1980s, but as Jim Murphy stated so well during his speech at our Birthday Dinner this year, this Network would not exist if not for Red. Notice Red did not begin his quest until nearly 20 years after serving with 2/9. After getting to know him his one major regret was that he did not do it sooner. Too many of his fellow warriors were already gone. I urge all our younger Marines to consider that entire story. You can find a lot more details of how this all started simply by visiting our website at [www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org](http://www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org), reading the Home Page, and exploring all the other historical information out there. If you are a member of 2/9 please consider one of our reunions. You will not regret it once you experience it and will be welcomed with open arms!

**As always, if you have questions or issues please do not hesitate to contact me.**

**SEMPER FIDELIS**

**DANNY SCHUSTER**

**2/9 NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR AND REUNION COORDINATOR**

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