



# The Battalion Runner

2016 – Number 1 – February 2016

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



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## SPECIAL NOTES

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. Battalion Runners are also posted on our website and on the two different pages for 2/9 on Facebook. Previous Battalion Runners going back to 2014 are archived on the website for viewing. **Special Note:** I have received rejected emails from several men who have their email protected and ask me to request permission to send them email. I do not have the time to do that. If you are one of those men and want the Battalion Runner and other special notices sent you will need to add me to your accepted list of email addresses and send me a note so I can put your email address back on the distribution lists.

## **23rd ANNUAL REUNION RESULTS**

### **8-12 November 2015**

**What an outstanding reunion! We had over 200 people at the Birthday dinner and more than 230 people in total show up at various times during the reunion. Of those 230 plus over 100 of them were 2/9 Marines.**

**This reunion included our observance of 2/9's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary deployment to Vietnam and undoubtedly contributed to the great attendance. We were also observing the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mayaguez/Koh Tang Island operation. This year's Battalion Toast at the Birthday Dinner was in memory of the 2/9 Marines left behind on Koh Tang Island. It is my hope that this year's reunion will be just as well attended or even bigger. Preliminary information on this year's reunion will follow after this report.**

**To begin, we booked 65 rooms at the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA, in our original contract with them. To make a long story short we ended up renting out more than 100 rooms there AND several more at the Marriott Courtroom Rosslyn a couple of blocks away because there were no rooms left at the Residence Inn. We also got an outstanding dinner deal at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel. We could not have been treated better and our thanks go out to Debbie Crist for doing yeoman's (yeowoman's?) work to make this all possible.**

**The Residence Inn went all out to show us ultimate hospitality. We basically had everything in the building full of 2/9 Marines, their families, and friends. We had the**

hospitality room 24/7 during the entire reunion. Despite our large numbers we had plenty of room for the group, including tables set up for our raffle items, 2/9 items for sale for fund raising (golf shirts, covers, long sleeved t-shirts, etc.) and still plenty of room for social gatherings (bullshit sessions?) Here's a photo of one of many gatherings, some of which went on well into the wee hours:



For the first time in many years the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Iwo Jima War Memorial was plagued by rain. 2/9 represented at least two thirds of the people attending. The Commandant certainly noticed and promptly acknowledged our presence. He also joined us for the group collage photo shown below that only includes about 60% of the members present in the top half of the photo (one of our "glitches" I'll discuss below). The other 40% are shown in the bottom half of the photo, taken at the Birthday Dinner.





As mentioned previously, we held our reunion dinner on The Birthday at the Marriott Key Bridge Hotel. What an amazing evening that was. Henry Ostaszewski and I commented to each other what a great sight it was to look out over that enormous room and see so many of our fellow 2/9 members and their guests filling it up. The rain and fog dissipated at exactly the right time for us to have a glorious view right out the dining room windows on the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument and Capitol Building. Beverages of all types flowed freely, the food was excellent, and the hotel staff treated us with greatest respect. We could not have asked for more. Dave Garner was our featured speaker, Bob Ramsey (in his outstanding evening dress uniform), officiated our cake cutting ceremony, with Bill Cote our oldest and Zach Crist our youngest Marine, and we held our raffle after dinner.





**Corporal Zach Crist and Colonel Bill Cote**

**Henry and I also made some very special announcements during the dinner. Henry introduced Reverend Dean Crist as the official 2/9 Network Chaplain and I pronounced Mrs. Debbie Crist an honorary Marine of the 2/9 Network. Debbie and Dean are husband and wife and their son Zach was our youngest Marine. They have outdone themselves in assisting us in preparing for the reunion for several years, including making hotel arrangements, providing shuttle services to several points during the reunion, and serving as our unofficial chaplain during reunion events. They are also the son-in-law, daughter, and grandson of Ramon Nieto, a fixture at 2/9 reunions since the first one was held, who lost his fight with cancer last year. I would be remiss in not noting that Mary Nieto, Ramon's wife, has been a driving force behind what these young (relatively speaking) people do for us. Mary was also in attendance along with most of Ramon's family.**

**While it was an excellent reunion we did have two glitches I feel must be mentioned here, and I hope to get feedback from 2/9 men who attended the reunion.**

**First, the group photo and our photographer (Classic Imaging and Photography). Henry and I had originally planned to have the group photo taken in front of the Iwo Jima War Memorial. However, when we awoke to rain we had Debbie contact the hotel to see if they had a space where we could take the group photo prior to dinner. They said they did. However, immediately after the Wreath Laying Ceremony concluded Henry informed me the hotel had a "recalcitrant" group who refused to vacate the room we were to use in time for us to take the photo. That ended that with the hotel photo. We proceeded to take the group photo at the War Memorial, but nearly 40% of our Marines had left the area and were not aware plans had changed. Our photographer for the event agreed to take a second group photo just of the men who missed the photo at the War Memorial, thus the collage photo you see above. It worked out in the end.**

Hopefully, all of you who ordered one have by now received the photo album you purchased at the reunion. I would like feedback on how you feel about the album and whether or not we should employ the same organization for the reunion this year. I have had comments both good and bad from some. One Marine was very happy to have the album with all the posed photos identifying everyone by name. It is nice to be able to put a face with a name when there is such a large contingent. On the other hand one Marine complained that there were name misspellings and the photos were not of great quality. I must say we did not expect an unforgettable photo album for the \$25 paid for the album but would like as much feedback as possible so we can gauge how most feel about bringing Classic Imaging back this year. Email me at [ditson35@verizon.net](mailto:ditson35@verizon.net) with any comments.

Our second glitch was far more serious. As we explained before the reunion our deal with the Marriott Key Bridge was to pay \$30 for the dinner, and that included EVERYTHING, including tips and taxes. Thanks to some generous donations from Network members we were able to offset some of the cost and agreed to pay \$5.00 toward every dinner ordered. I made it clear in a couple of Battalion Runners and in separate Reunion emails that we intended to depend upon the honor system and not have people pay until they got to the reunion or dinner. The Network had to have final numbers two days ahead of the dinner and pay for them. While we expected, and got, some last minute cancellations they were offset by the expected last minute requests to attend the dinner. We paid for 230 dinners at a cost to the network of \$6,900. Unfortunately, we had 20 no shows. That cost us \$600.00, and does not include those who informed us ahead of the dinner that they would not or could not attend. That was disappointing to say the least. As I'm sure just about all of you know the Network depends 100% upon donations to operate the website and run the reunion. Losing that \$600 hurt. We intend to hold a dinner again this year but have to take that into account when we decide how we will ask people to reserve places for dinner.

Two other quick notes. This year we had far more first time attendees than ever before. I believe all of them had a good time and renewed old friendships or made new ones. Many of them saw postings in Leatherneck Magazine, the DAV magazine, or the VFW magazine about the reunion and never knew we have been holding reunions, much less that we had a website. Several of these Marines do not use the internet and do not have email addresses. If any of you on the email distribution listings I have established to send out the Battalion Runner and other important information on occasion, and know of some 2/9 member who does not have internet access, please try to pass information along to them. I do not have the time nor the money to send hard copies of items to people in this situation. I will, of course, post reunion notices in all those magazines again this year, but spreading the word to those you know are in this situation is the best way to get the word to them. Thanks in advance to any who can do that.

Secondly, our trip to The Wall for our 2/9 Wreath Laying ceremony took place after dinner this year, as it always does. We had more men and guests go along this year than in all the years I have been attending the reunions. It was a solemn tribute to our lost



brothers and something I hope we can build upon in future years. Obviously emotions run high any time you visit those who are forever young. Those who were there with us last November will know what I mean when I say I will do everything in my power to insure there are never again any misunderstandings at that sacred place.

## REUNION 2016



The site for the reunion is once again the **Marriott Residence Inn in Arlington, VA, 1651 N Oak St, Arlington, VA, 22209**. Click here to visit their website to view photos of the hotel: <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/hotel-information/travel/wasrr-residence-inn-arlington-rosslyn/>

We are in the process of negotiating our contract for this year, but some things are already decided. Barring an unforeseen disaster, we WILL be at the Residence Inn again and hope to have an initial booking of 100 rooms. None of this is finalized at this point, except the dates. The reunion will once again be from 8-12 November. Our group rates and other details will be announced in the next Battalion Runner or a special email notification.

We will once again do everything in our power to have a beautiful Birthday dinner on the evening of 10 November.

The Marriott Residence Inn is half a block from Clarendon Blvd and a block and a half from Wilson Blvd where there are many restaurants, a Safeway, and a drugstore. It is a 10-15 minute walk to the Marine Corps (Iwo Jima) Memorial. Everything else is within easy walking distance.

I expect to issue either a special Battalion Runner or a special notice containing all details once our contract is finalized and we have more information.



**Why have reunions? I couldn't explain it better than the note I received from Bob Driver some time ago. See the next page.**



## **The Marines Reunion**

Autumn leaves rustling, together at the appointed place, the old warriors come.

Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.  
Where they meet is not important anymore. They meet and that's enough for now.

Greetings echo across the lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close. Embraces, that  
as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.

But deep within these Indian Summer days, they have reached a greater understanding  
of life and love.

The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous, remembering.

On a table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection. And friendly laughter echoes  
at shocks of hair gone grey or white, or merely gone.

The rugged slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength. Some are  
now sustained by one of "medicines miracles," and even in this fact they manage to find humor.

The women, all those who waited, all those who loved them, have watched the changes take place.  
Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other, as glad to be together as the men.

Talk turns to war and battles and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again, reweaving  
the threadbare fabric of the past.

Mending one more time the banner of their youth. They hear the guns, the snarl of shrapnel tearing  
through the air, the chatter of the machine guns and the hissing of the grenade. They can feel  
again the agony and pain of wounds that are now stripes and gouges across their limbs.

They can feel again the comradeship that comes with sharing the last few drops  
of water in a canteen.

Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move  
silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.  
Each in his own way may wonder who will be absent in another year.

The room grows quiet for a time. Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns. The  
talk may turn to other wars and other men, and of many remember when's.

So this is how it goes. The past is so much present. In the ceremonies, the allegiances, the  
speeches and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the deep eternal love of country and Corps  
they will share forever.

Finally, it is time to leave. Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday,  
but the past cannot be held too long, for it is fragile.

They say "Farewells"..."See you another year, God willing."

And as always each keeps a little of the others with him forever.

Semper Fidelis  
(Adolf P. Sgambelluri)

## NEW MEMBERS SINCE BATTALION RUNNER 15-4

Name	City	State	Company	Years
Bridges, Michael	Kingston	GA	Weapons	09-11
Mesmer, Jeff	Aurora	CO	Echo	83-85
Hernandez, Armando W.	Fredericksburg	VA	Golf	06-09
Chittenden, Howard "Doc Chit"	Stuart	FL	Echo	66-67
Bezek, Al "Beez"	Oswego	IL	Echo	66-67
Myers, Andrew N.	Colonial Beach	VA	Unk	08-11
Knoebel, Larry "Special K"	Las Vegas	NV	Wpns	87-89
Harness, Ed	Santa Fe	TX	Fox	68-69
Clark. Charles	East Brunswick	NJ	Fox	73-74
Quadland, Zachary	Bronx	NY	Fox	08-11
Curry, Michael R. "Mike"	Fishers	IN	Fox	66-67
Booth, Paul	Hornell	NY	UNK	No year
Stamper, James "Stamp"	Irondale	AL	Fox	72
Bailey, Alexander	Arlington	VA	Wpns	11-13
Dugan, Michael	Warminster	PA	Fox	Not given
Goodwin. John P.	Scottown	OH	Golf	69
Eizenga, Victor "Vic"	Sherman	TX	Hotel	65-66

## FROM THE MAILBOX (received since Battalion Runner 15-4, Oct 2015)

Received from Pete Gonzales on 1/29/16: Two Marines I served with in H&S Comm Section passed away some time ago: For further confirmation, you may also contact Dan Refvik, who also served with them and is very knowledgeable. • Sodorff, James "Jim", Endicott WA 66-67 • Spangler, Joe "Fang", Houston TX 66-67. We truly miss them. S/F Pete M. Gonzales, Jr. 66-67

**Cecil Beverly, Fox, 1966, passes. The below was posted on Facebook by Cecil's nurse at the Veteran's Administration:**

Hello this is Mr. Beverly's VA Nurse. His son asked me to post the following. I am sad to say that Mr Beverly passed away yesterday. His family is looking for pictures of him in his Marine uniform. Please send photos to his son Patrick M Beverly. His son will post funeral arrangements on his page once they have been made. I will post to his 2/9 Marine group also. Mr B was one of our favorite patients and Marines, and everyone will miss him. He went through a lot for his country. NOTE: I do NOT have an address or email address from Patrick Beverly. If anyone has that info please let me know. Danny

**FOX COMPANY REUNION - FROM Bill Taylor**

Just a reminder, Fox 2/9 has our 6th annual Reunion!  
Getting bigger and better with each year!  
Asking EVERYONE to attend, no matter what Company or unit you were with. Last Year we had the pleasure of having Mr. Peter MacDonald Sr., one of the last Navajo Marine Code Talkers to be with us. Don't know how to top that one.  
If you CAN come, let me know and I'll give you the dates and place....

Bill Taylor (email: Uncle\_b\_t@yahoo.com)  
FOX 2/9  
M-60 guns  
67-68

Received from Larry Fulkerson on 1/7/2016 via email: I am trying to get info about how my buddy Dennis Earl Brown E-2, Echo Co,2nd Battalion,9th Marines was killed on 7-29-1967 while involved in Operation Kingfisher near the DMZ. Denny was a tough little blond haired Marine that turned 21 just 7 days before he was killed. Denny and I were great buds growing up in The Dalles Oregon. Any info would be appreciated. Thanks for your service. Larry's email address is landcflkrnsn@gmail.com, or he can be reached at phone 541-977-8988.

Received from CDR Curtis Jenkins via email 1/1/2016: I'm a PAO (Public Affairs Officer), and received a query from a guy with a newspaper back in England. They're working up a feature story on a guy named Stuart J. Wood who was with the 2B/9M (Wood was with Golf), and died in combat in Vietnam on 7/20/68. Wood had immigrated to the US and lived in Granite Falls, WA. He signed up to serve his new country - and died in combat about four months after arriving in Vietnam. The paper is hoping to find someone who knew him and/or served with him whom they can quote in the story. Please give me a call to discuss. Thanks. -- CDR Curtis Jenkins, 719-554-4905. CDR Jenkins email is curtis.jenkins@navy.mil. I have had a couple of extensive phone conversations with CDR Jenkins and will personally vouch for the authenticity of this request.

From Mel and Carolyn Horowitz via email: Chaplain Dean Chasteen, passed away on 15 December. Dean was able to attend a final Southern California get-together recently but has passed and been very sadly moved to our Last Patrol section. Semper Fi Dean!

From Randy Ware via email: Jeffrey M. Fee, Golf 68-69, recently passed away and is now a member of our Last Patrol. Semper Fi Jeff!

Keep those emails coming folks! You can notify me of members passing away, special requests for contacting old friends, notices of special recognition of any of our members, and other information/actions you'd like to see published on the website. I try to update the "Recent Items" section as often as possible with that information. I will also try to publish photos you may like to see posted to the website. Each time I issue a Battalion Runner I will move all the recent items from the website to that Battalion Runner and remove them from the website. Old Battalion Runners are posted on the Network and the "Recent Items" section will be used to publish information received between those newsletters. You can email me directly at [ditson35@verzion.net](mailto:ditson35@verzion.net) or use the "Contact Us for Info and Updates" button on the Network website at [www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org](http://www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org). I will receive an email if you use that button.

## Personal Note for Post-Vietnam 2/9 Members

A few weeks ago I posted some information in both 2/9 Facebook groups. In one of them I received a harsh response from a Gulf War veteran of 2/9 who, in a couple of exchanges he initiated, accused me, and by association all Vietnam Veterans in 2/9, of excluding everyone who is not a Vietnam vet from activities, particularly our reunion. In my first response I tried to explain that we have been trying to get younger, post-Vietnam Marines more involved with us for some time. His response was more of the same.

Any of you that understand the treatment and ridicule heaped on Vietnam Veterans upon our return to the United States know that many were spurned by major veteran's organizations. There were American Legion, VFW, and even Marine Corps League posts that shunned us. It didn't happen universally and fortunately I was welcomed with open arms by my home town VFW post. However, it was widespread enough to become common knowledge among Vietnam Vets that there were veteran's organizations where we were not welcome. For a United States Marine 2/9 combat veteran to insinuate publicly that we Vietnam Vets are now following that same path is, in my personal opinion, pure bullshit!

Let me make something perfectly clear. The 2/9 Network is first and foremost a Vietnam Veterans organization. Red Hill started everything well over 20 years ago by starting out to look for a small number of the men he served with in Vietnam. That initial search for a few Marines has resulted in today's Network where we now have more than 2,600 members. Unfortunately a few hundred of those members are now in our Last Patrol. But, we have reached the point now where we have nearly 400 members who are post-Vietnam 2/9 veterans. You ARE welcome! We want your input. We want you to consider attending our reunions. We want to sit down and get to know you, tell war stories and lies to each other, and partake of beverages of all types with you. We cannot do that if you choose not to attend. I also understand the demographics involved with younger people. You have jobs and families and probably financial limitations that prevent you from spending the money required to attend a 4 or 5 day reunion in Arlington, VA. That is a fact of life. However, if there are those of you out there that don't attend because you feel we will mistreat you I have one suggestion. Try it, you might like it.

We Vietnam Vets are getting old in a hurry. Most are approaching or are already in their 70s. One of the things I did not envision when I took over this website nearly two years ago were the number of men I'd have to report as passing on, many that I knew personally. It is the saddest part of what I do. Someone before a hell of a lot longer is going to have to get seriously involved to keep our 2/9 family together. Gulf, Iraq, and Afghanistan vets are those who will have to do it. I have no illusions that I have the answer to how we would ever



approach something like that but it's got to happen sooner or later. We are a Vietnam Veterans organization. There is no getting around that. However, there is room for everyone in the 2/9 family. I think I can confidently say that I believe I speak for the huge majority of 2/9 Vietnam Veterans when I say we care deeply about carrying on the traditions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Marines. In the coming years we'll all have to work together to make sure we keep those traditions alive. How we could accomplish that is a subject for another time.

I hope sincerely that no one takes this as an insult. That was not the intent of my rant here. The intent was to try to make younger 2/9 Marines KNOW that we would welcome you anytime, anywhere. I didn't do it just because of some comments on Facebook. We want post-Vietnam Marines to know we care about you and consider you brothers! And to that young Marine who made the Facebook posts about Vietnam Vets – I challenge you to attend a reunion and then report your experience. I'll even guarantee I'll publish it in a future Battalion Runner – good or bad. I would venture to say you might leave with a different attitude towards we nasty Vietnam Veterans!

NOTE: Jordan Glover, a Gulf War 2/9 Veteran, administers the most popular 2/9 Facebook page and has attended many of our reunions. Jordan responded to the Facebook page that prompted me to write this and disputed the idea that had been set forth. Thanks Jordan!!!

## **2/9 Network - Website Message Forums**

Any of you that visit our website know that we have a Forums button on the bottom left side of the home page. The forums are username and password secured. I have been puzzled because those forums are very lightly utilized. Maybe it's just because I'm an old fogey but I think the forums are an excellent method of communicating with brother Marines, whether you served in combat with them or met them through the Network somehow. I realize there are all types of other, more advanced, social media outlets out there, and maybe that is why there is so little traffic. Anyway, I wanted to offer anyone a chance who may be thinking about using them the opportunity to let me know so I can process your access. I have the usernames and passwords of most of you who have joined since I took over the website in April 2014, so just a quick note will get me moving. There are individual forums there for general posts, reunions (not just Network, but ANY Marine reunions), each Company, Gulf and Iraq/Afghanistan vets, and more. I cannot open the forums to everyone since there have been far too many times when I've left the access open been flooded with spam postings. If you want access just send me a note, and a username/password if you have not done that before now. Passwords must be at least 6 positions. The forums do allow postings of photos and certain attachments you may want to share with others.

## **DONATIONS**

I hate this section! As has been mentioned many times over the years we do not charge anyone a dime to join the 2/9 Network. Everything we do has to be paid via donations. In past years those contributions have been diminishing. However, there is really good news. Donations up to and including those made at the reunion were outstanding. We received enough money to pay for the website and as I noted in the reunion section above, offset some of the costs of the reunion dinner. I could not possibly name all the people who helped out. That number is probably in excess of a hundred, and some donated multiple times. All I can

hope is that you realize how much appreciation we have for those who donated! We have enough funding remaining after all reunion expenses to cover the website costs through 2016. If we receive anywhere near the number of donations received last year there is a great chance we will be able to further offset individual costs at the reunion this year. Any amount is welcomed. Just make sure you make a check out to me, and not to the 2/9 Network. I cannot cash checks made out to the Network. My address is 21 Moseley St. Billerica, MA 01821.

**One final note.** This year, for just the second time in the 15 reunions I have attended, an item on the display table in the hotel conference room was stolen. Both times were within the last 5-6 years and the items stolen belonged to the same 2/9 Marine. I have just one thing to say. Whoever did this is among the lowest of the low – a thief. We made an announcement at this year's Birthday dinner asking the person who "borrowed" the item, to return it. That did not happen. If I ever find out, or prove, who stole those items you will be banished from the 2/9 Network and never again invited to our reunion. Enough said.

As always, I am open to any suggestions, comments or recommendations. You can reach me via email at [ditson35@verizon.net](mailto:ditson35@verizon.net).

Semper Fidelis,  
Danny Schuster  
Echo, 1967