



2nd Battalion, 9th Marines

THE BATTALION RUNNER

HOLIDAY EDITION

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Opening Remarks

With Christmas nearly upon us as I write this note I want to personally convey **Merry Christmas** and **Happy New Year** to all our 2/9 Network members. Happy Holidays to those of different persuasions. In this issue I'll discuss the results of our 30th Anniversary Reunion held in Arlington, VA, from 8-12 November, the loss of one more stalwart member of our Network (Retired

LtCol Bob Driver), and one or two other notes to our membership.

30th Anniversary Reunion

Our reunion in November was one of the best we've ever had. Despite too many ongoing losses of our Vietnam Veterans as we all age, the turnout was outstanding. We had 130 people at our Marine Corps Birthday Dinner. That is the largest number we've had in several years. Along with that we had more Marines, and their friends and families, who were attending their first reunion than I can remember since taking over the reunions over a decade ago.

The only downside of the entire time frame was the weather on The Birthday. With rain most of the day the USMC Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial), was drastically curtailed and most of our first time attendees did not get to experience the President's Own, Commandant's Own, and 8th and I Passing In Review that most of us have every year. It is an experience that never gets old to remember all those who have gone before.



Holding the cane in the center of the photo is 2/9 Medal of Honor recipient Barney Barnum. Next to him in the dark overcoat is Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro.

Our Jam Session with the Gallatin Canyon Band was another great success. Attendance was outstanding and the band was again great in performing at no cost to the 2/9 Network. Ben Hernandez and the band travel up from Charlottesville, VA, at their own cost to perform in memory of Ben's Dad, Dan Hernandez, a 2/9 Marine now in our Last Patrol.



The Gallatin Canyon Band

At our Birthday Dinner we were blessed with two outstanding speakers. Both Retired SgtMaj Bryan Battaglia, the former SEAC (Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs), and Retired Colonel Barney Barnum (2/9 Medal of Honor Recipient), were outstanding. It is worth noting for those not in the know that Barney now has his name on a Navy Destroyer, the USS Harvey C Barnum, Jr. (DDG-124).



SgtMaj Bryan Battaglia



Colonel Barney Barnum

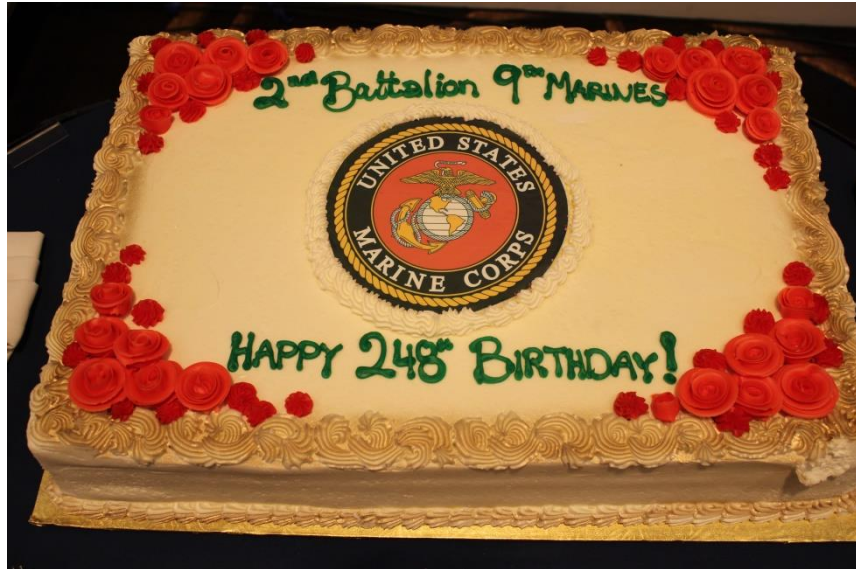
As has become a tradition at our Birthday Dinners retired Colonel Dave Garner officiated our Youngest/Oldest Marine ceremony. Dave read General Lejeune's original Birthday message and that of the acting Commandant. He than officiated at the cutting of the cake for the youngest and oldest Marines.



Youngest Marine Sgt. Ramon Garcia and oldest Marine retired LtCol John Kasparian



Reunion partner in crime Henry Ostaszewski cutting the Birthday Cake



After awarding the winners of our annual raffle items and 50/50 raffle (thanks to Kris Bigler Suders for returning her winning 50/50 raffle \$\$\$!!), we all returned to the Residence Inn to gather for our annual late night visit to The Wall to say hello to our brothers.



Our trip to The Wall was well attended and as always, we got to say hello to our lost Marine brothers in a quiet and somber setting without the bustle normally associated with daytime visits. We like it that way.



Our hospitality room was the gathering spot for many of us during lulls between official reunion events and a good time was had by all. Some of us had too much fun and were up wayyyy too late!!!





PICTURES!

There are hundreds of outstanding photos of the reunion linked on our website at www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org. Go to the Home Page and click on the button on the lower left side of the home page titled "Photo Links Updated.....". There are three albums linked there. One is of the portraits taken by Dean and Debbie Crist at the Residence Inn, another set of portraits taken by them, a little more formal, at The Birthday Dinner, and the final one all the candid shots taken by our California crew, the Rodriguez and Salas clans. Please note that any of the photos can be downloaded individually if you would like copies. Enjoy!!!



NEVER FORGET OUR HOT DAMN CEREMONY. REST IN PEACE STAN STANDER, JOHN "SUGARBEAR" BURCH, WAYNE LANNING AND ALL OUR BROTHERS IN THE LAST PATROL!



We've Lost Another Stalwart Member of the 2/9 Network

Retired LtCol Bob Driver, a good friend of many of us, and a constant presence at our reunions for decades before health issues struck, finally lost his long battle with cancer and passed away on 15 October 2023 at the age of 90. Bob was a prolific author, primarily books involving the history of the civil war. However, he had one other book written several years ago titled "More Than A Few Good Men". That book undoubtedly contains the most detailed and significant history of 2/9 in Vietnam. Bob interviewed dozens of 2/9 members during his research and a significant portion of that book is devoted to actions undertaken by units and individuals of 2/9 Marines in Vietnam. The book also details Bob's career in the Marine Corps. Semper Fi Bob!



**Bob Driver, at right, preparing to cut the cake during our Youngest/Oldest Marine ceremony at our reunion in 2016.
10 November 2016.**

Donations

Thanks to the following who graciously have donated to our cause since the last newsletter in September 2023

**Ed Gorman
Roger Fogus
John Kasparian
Dave Garner
Richard Brungardt
Javier "Taco" Salas
Scott Whelan
Glenn Siegler
Rich LoDolce
Adolph Novello
Bertrand Cottam
Michael Quinn**

I hope I did NOT forget anyone. If I did I apologize. Besides these I cannot forget all the people who bought raffle tickets, 2/9 hats/shirt/sweatshirts, 50/50 raffle tickets, and simply gave cash donations at the reunion this year. If you can help out any amount contributed would be greatly appreciated as we begin planning for our 2024 reunion. Checks should be made out to me and mailed to 21 Moseley Street, Billerica, MA 01821.

CONCLUSION

That's it for this Battalion Runner with a couple of additional notes. I am going to continue recommending strongly to our post-Vietnam 2/9 members to consider joining us at our annual reunions in Arlington, VA. I know many of you have families,

jobs, and financial considerations, but if you ever show up I am certain you will NOT be disappointed. We try to keep expenses to an absolute minimum for everyone. In fact, even though our Vietnam Vet numbers are beginning to decline more rapidly (sucks getting old), we still hope to provide everything free of charge at our reunions. The only expenses would be getting there and home, and paying for your rooms and parking. That depends on donations, since that is the only income we have to cover reunions and the website expenses.

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

SEMPER FIDELIS

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