



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

To open I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and those of another persuasion Happy Holidays!

It's been quite a year for the 2/9 Network and turned out to be outstanding. I begged for money earlier this year because we were nearly flat broke. I was astonished and deeply grateful for the unbelievable response. We have gone from being nearly broke in early 2024 to being in good shape financially, at least for now. My heartfelt thank you to all those who were so generous, and not only with mail-in donations, but from the overly generous contributions from those who attended our 2024 reunion in November.

## 2024 Reunion

Our 2024 reunion in Arlington turned out to be a great success. As has been the case far too often in the past several years, HQMC threw another curve ball at us less than two weeks before the reunion. I was aware that when The Birthday falls on a Sunday the Corps usually holds the official Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima), on the 9<sup>th</sup>. My contact at HQMC finally confirmed that the ceremony was NOT going to be on the 9<sup>th</sup>, but on the 8<sup>th</sup> this year. I had to send a special email to everyone on our electronic distribution listing to pass that along. Unfortunately some had travel plans locked in and missed the ceremony on the 8<sup>th</sup>. We had to adjust our reunion agenda to account for that last minute change. Our Jam Session at the Residence Inn had to be changed from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup>

and we were lucky that the band was able to accommodate that change. More on my feelings about HQMC and Corps traditions will follow later in this newsletter.

Despite these forced changes we had an excellent reunion. The Jam Session has become a mainstay of our reunion, was well attended, and everyone had a great time. The Gallatin Canyon Band, as usual, gave an impressive performance and we cannot thank them enough. Our Birthday Dinner had over 125 people attend and our keynote speaker, Colonel Charles “Chuck” Anklam gave an outstanding speech. Colonel Anklam commanded Echo and Weapons Company on two tours in Afghanistan.



Our “Hot Damn” ceremony remembering all our lost brothers from Vietnam and Iraq/Afghanistan during a break at our Jam Session on 09 November

As we do every year after our Birthday Dinner, many of us traveled to The Wall to say hello to our brothers there. That’s a special moment for us Vietnam Vets and is a mainstay of every reunion.

The weather for the Wreath Laying ceremony was excellent and despite what I consider some serious flaws (more later), was the same special time remembering all those who went before us. Seeing and hearing the Marine Corps Band, the Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, and 8<sup>th</sup> & I marching in review, to remember lost brothers, never gets old.



**Our group photo at the Iwo Jima Memorial taken after completion of the official USMC Wreath Laying Ceremony**



The hospitality room is always hopping!



Our original banner, from 1993, semi-retired, but on display in the hospitality room

## **Preparation for our 2025 Reunion Our 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Reunion The 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday of our Marine Corps**

While it is obviously too early to provide any details for next year's reunion, there are some things that are for sure. First, we will again be staying at the Marriott Residence Inn Rosslyn, in Arlington, VA. 2025 will be our 12<sup>th</sup> years at the Residence Inn and we are treated with great respect by the staff and management. We could not ask for better service. Second, our official reunion agenda items, including at least our Jam Session, Birthday Dinner, and Wreath Laying Ceremony, will be at no charge to anyone. Transportation will also be provided to outside locations for those events. The only thing you have to pay for is transportation to and from Arlington, your room with our special rate, and parking at the hotel if you travel by private vehicle. Third, the

reunion will be held from 08-12 November with our contract allowing folks to get the special room rate before or after the reunion dates if you desire to come early or stay later. Details will be provided as soon as we have negotiated contracts for everything.

Mark your calendars folks, this will be a very special occasion, celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday of our Marine Corps in addition to paying tribute to those gone before at the Iwo Jima Memorial. If you have ever considered attending a reunion but haven't made it do it next year. Those of us that are Vietnam Vets are not getting any younger and the saddest, and worst, thing I have to do every year is add more and more of our brothers to the Last Patrol on our website.

Another special note to our post-Vietnam 2/9 Marines. Please considering attending our reunion this year. We need you to carry on 2/9's legacy. We'd welcome you with open arms and you can get to know other Marines who are really good at telling lies and war stories. Our Hospitality Room is a hotspot for that and there is great fun to be had in addition to the more formal events we schedule. Come on out to this very special year in Marine Corps history and join us.

We are trying to include something special for next year in honor of the 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Given financial considerations and figuring out what we may be able to do are major factors but if we get something going we'll tell you ASAP. See you there!!!

## **Donations**

We are doing fairly well financially thanks to the generosity of our members this past summer and fall. As I have said before any donation, for any amount, goes a long way to keeping us financially stable in coming years. Please consider helping out. Send checks made out to me at 21 Moseley St., Billerica, MA 01821

## Donations received since our 2024 Reunion

Doc Tom Keenan  
Erin and Scotty Whelan

# Conclusion

**What is going on with our Marine Corps? I'm not even going to get into a discussion about Force 2030 (or whatever they are calling it these days), nor a discussion about what is going on in recruit training with men and women together in the same platoon. I think those things speak for themselves. My discussion here, a personal rant, is about what is NOT going on with what I consider sacred Marine Corps traditions, specifically how HQMC is treating the Marine Corps Birthday and the official Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Iwo Jima Memorial. This year we had excellent weather and were really looking forward to the ceremony. We always show up in force for that special event and with the exception of those trapped by travel considerations due to the Corps changing things at the last minute, did so again this year. The complaint is the boss, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, was a no show. The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps was a no show. The guest speaker on the agenda passed out (SecNav), was a no show. Conversations with a LtCol who was an aide to the LtGen who did speak, revealed the boss wasn't there because he was at Camp Lejeune receiving accolades from the Commanding General there. I suspect the SgtMaj was with him. I am still steaming about the idea that our boss would consider it more important for him to be receiving personal accolades at a MCB that is there 365 days a year rather than attend what many, and probably almost all, Marines consider the most sacred day of the year for Marines, and presiding over the official Wreath Laying Ceremony remembering the sacrifices of the tens of thousands of Marines who have given the ultimate sacrifice.**

**This wasn't the first time either. Going back to General Neller the Corps has begun, IMHO, treating the Wreath Laying Ceremony almost as an afterthought. Under General Neller there was one year when there had been rain for two days before The Birthday. When our vans started arriving dropping people off for the Wreath Laying, no one was there. Luckily my partner in crime for the 2/9 Network, Henry Ostaszewsky, noticed some activity behind the Memorial. It turned out that the ceremony was being held behind the Memorial. As aide on that day told me it was being done that way because the Corps didn't want the Marine Band getting their shoes and trousers wet marching on the wet grounds. It would have been too expensive to get them fixed. I've been going to that ceremony every year since 2000 and been in rain, sleet, snow and cold weather, but the ceremony went on. No more evidently. No Band, no Drum and Bugle Corps, and no 8<sup>th</sup> & I.**

**Next came the year that the Iwo Jima Memorial was under renovations and the ceremony was held at the WWII Memorial. We booked to full sized buses to take our folks to that ceremony. It was a cold day but we went nearly 100 strong. The ceremony lasted 18 minutes. Now passed General Al Gray was the guest speaker on that day. When he was passed the microphone he announced that he had been told to keep his remarks short. It was patently obvious that he was pissed. He said Happy Birthday Marines and stormed away. The wreath was laying and that was it. To make matters worse I found out from one of our 2/9 Marines with contacts in Washington that the ceremony was being held at 0800 hours, not the traditional 1000 hours, because there was another ceremony following that forced the Corps to move the time to 0800. We had to scramble like hell to reschedule the buses so our folks could get there. Thanks to the bus company's cooperation that got done. We found out at the ceremony from one of the park service maintenance guys that there was no ceremony following ours. Go figure. It took us three times as long as the ceremony lasted just to transport our folks to and from the WWII Memorial.**



Next was the year it did rain on The Birthday. Again the ceremony was behind the Memorial. No Band, no Drum and Bugle Corps, no 8th & I, and no Commandant. That was also the year that one of our 2/9 Marines noticed that the flag on the Iwo Jima Memorial was tattered. He told one of the aides there and he did nothing. He then told a senior enlisted Marine (don't remember if it was a Gunny or higher). He moved immediately. Less than 10 minutes before the ceremony was to commence people were scrambling like hell to get a new flag on the Memorial. My wife's cousin is a retired Marine Colonel whose last duty station was as the Base Commander at Quantico MCB. It turns out one of his duties was as the boss of those responsible for the Memorial being properly maintained. I spoke to him later that very day and when he heard there was a tattered flag on the Memorial he went ballistic. Turns out there are Marines whose specific duties include checking that flag every single day to insure that never happened. Obviously someone screwed up bigtime. And by the way, I have pictures to prove this happened. Never did find out why the Commandant was not there that year. The ceremony itself was almost a joke. The LtGen who spoke that year didn't even have a microphone. You couldn't hear a thing he said. The guest speaker was SecNav (the same SecNav who didn't show this year), and when the LtGen walked away signifying the end of the ceremony without introducing him, he jumped in and said a few words anyway. He literally shouted so we could hear him. The ceremony that year was over in 17 minutes.

One more bitch and then I'll shut up. Finding out from HQMC what is happening on the Birthday, where it is happening, and why is like pulling teeth. There is little to no notice anywhere on the HQMC website that speaks to The Birthday nor the Wreath Laying Ceremony. I have managed to get a fairly reliable source in the Commandants office to get some information, but not all. As I said earlier in this rant I have been attending our reunions since 2000. Up until several years ago there would be at least 1,000, maybe 2,000 or more, at the Wreath Laying Ceremony. This year I don't think there were 500 people there. I know that the 3rd Marines were having their reunion there the year they

**moved the ceremony to the WWII Memorial. They had more than 100 people planning on attending the Wreath Laying on the Birthday, the 10<sup>th</sup> at the Iwo Jima Memorial. A group of us happened to be having dinner at a local restaurant in Arlington when a couple of those 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine men stopped by to say hello and Happy Birthday to us. As a result we were able to inform them that the Wreath Laying was at the WWII Memorial. I've always wondered how many Marines, family, and friends have shown up at the Iwo Jima Memorial on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November at 1000 hours, the traditional time and place, only to find no one there. I think this whole mess lately is a disgrace to our Corps and an insult to those we go to honor on The Birthday. Okay, I'm done.**

**As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, I met with Heather Bizewsky, daughter of 2/9 Marine Bob Slattery, at the reunion about the possibility of her building us a new website. My biggest fears about that turned out to be right. With the limited access to background files on the website it would take a huge effort to basically completely rebuild the most labor intensive pages on the website. So, we are stuck with what we have. I try to keep the site updated as much as possible and will continue to do so. You may have noticed there is no "From the Mailbox" section in this newsletter. That's because there isn't anything to put in there. If you have some interesting stories, inquiries or other news you'd like me to include in future newsletters please send me a note at my email, [twoninencoic@aol.com](mailto:twoninencoic@aol.com).**

**I also feel a responsibility to thank some people. I will only include first names, but they know who they are. These folks go a long way to help make our reunions more special and I want to thank them here. I know there are probably others I should mention and I apologize in advance if I forgot. Here goes:**

**Marcy, Yvonne, Rueben, Ricky, Misty, Kris, Gary and Patti, Debbie and Dean. Thanks for all you do!!!**

**Finally if you are waiting to see photos from this year's reunion please keep an eye out on our website at**

[www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org](http://www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org). I hope to have a link to those photos there before Christmas and if not very shortly thereafter. I'll post an update note on the homepage and on the photo link on the left side of the homepage.

## **SEMPER FIDELIS**

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