



# Spearhead NEWS

"Uncommon Valor was a Common Virtue"

OFFICIAL  
PUBLICATION  
of the  
5TH MARINE  
DIVISION  
ASSOCIATION

**61ST ANNUAL REUNION - BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI  
OCTOBER 17 - 21, 2010  
IP CASINO RESORT AND SPA**

## New IJAA board sets direction, priorities

By Shayne A. Jarosz

The day after the funeral of the Iwo Jima Association of America (IJAA) founder and president, Maj-Gen. Fred Haynes, USMC (Ret.), on July 22 at Arlington National Cemetery, the association held an organizational meeting to elect officers and board members and outline the direction that IJAA plans to take in the upcoming year.

LtGen. Lawrence Snowden USMC (Ret.), opened the proceedings as chairman. Gen. Snowden introduced the new president, LtGen. H.C. "Hank" Stackpole, USMC (Ret.), who lives in Honolulu, Hawaii, and brings with him 36 years of Marine Corps service and many years of experience in the business world.

An election was then held and the following individuals were elected: LtGen. Earl Hailston, USMC (Ret.), vice president; Col. Warren Wiedhahn, USMC (Ret.), executive vice president and Shayne Jarosz, executive director; Doug Meny, treasurer; LtCol. Robert Lindholm, USMC (Ret.), secretary. New board members elected at the meeting were Col. Bill Rockey, USMC (Ret.), Bonnie Haynes, Diane Kuebler and John Butler.

The primary discussion during the board meeting was about education and inclusion. The IJAA board be-

lieves that the veterans of World War II should be remembered and celebrated. In order to achieve this goal, members must first and foremost make sure that IJAA works FOR the veterans of Iwo Jima.

Also, the IJAA board believes it must provide an arena for "legacy" members to exchange stories, pictures and make contacts with others who can fill in the blanks. Legacy members are family members and friends of Iwo Jima veterans. As Iwo Jima veterans' associations start to wind down, IJAA's goal is to welcome all interested participants from said associations and place them under the umbrella of IJAA.

IJAA will continue to organize and operate the Iwo Jima Symposium in February, the "Reunion of Honor" tour to Iwo Jima in March, but will also add an additional tour each year that will educate participants about the War in the Pacific. Starting in July 2011, an educational tour will be offered yearly to members and friends of the IJAA that will examine World War II. The first tour will examine the start of the war in the Pacific with the attack on Pearl Harbor and will include Kaneohe Marine base, as well as Camp Tarawa on the big island of Hawaii.

*Continued on page 2*



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# Important details about 61st reunion

## **Deadline Extended to Oct. 2**

The cutoff date for reservations was originally Sept. 25. However, Liz Gilliam, sales manager of IP Casino Resort Spa, has extended that deadline to Oct. 2.

## **Airport Assistance Available**

If you have difficulty getting around (wheelchair or disability) and need assistance upon arrival at the Gulfport-Biloxi Regional Airport, help will be available to you. Contact Leonard or Celine Nederveld at (228) 255-5732 or Morey Butler at (228) 832-7342. Give your name, telephone number, flight number, date and time of arrival, and any other information you feel is needed to properly handle your specific needs.

## **Free Parking for Cars and Vans**

All people arriving by air will be picked up at Gulfport International Airport on arrival. We will have a rented van for this use.

## **Shrimping Trip is On**

Also, please note that the Department of Marine Resources reopened all Mississippi territorial waters to shrimp fishing and consumption. The proposed shrimping trip is a go.

## **IJAA**

*Continued from page 1*

In addition to the organizational agenda, two representatives of the Fifth Marine Division Association, Ivan Hammond and John Huffhines, discussed the memorial statue to be dedicated at the Museum of the Marine Corps in February 2011. The "BAR on the Beach" statue has the full support of IJAA, and it was mutually agreed that IJAA will help in any way possible.

More information about membership and educational trips will be posted on the IJAA website at [www.IwoJimaAssociation.org](http://www.IwoJimaAssociation.org). If you are interested in joining the association to help preserve the memory of the iconic battle of Iwo Jima, please visit the website. You may also contact IJAA Executive Director Shayne Jarosz at (703) 212-8128 or [Director@IwoJimaAssociation.org](mailto:Director@IwoJimaAssociation.org).

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*Jarosz is executive director of the Iwo Jima Association of America, Inc.*

## **SPEARHEAD NEWS**

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### **EDITOR**

Ray Elliott

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### **HONORARY PRESIDENT**

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President ..... Leonard Nederveld  
Vice President ..... (Vacant)  
Secretary ..... Ted Overgard  
Treasurer ..... James G. Shriver  
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MC Council ..... (Vacant)  
Chaplain ..... Paul Merriman

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## THE EDITOR'S DESK

By Ray Elliott



### Those honored for service to country deserve no less

It was an honor to attend the funeral service for MajGen. Fred E. Haynes in the chapel at Ft. Myers, Md., this past July and then the burial ceremony in Arlington Cemetery. Working with students at the Washington Journalism Conference several years ago, I'd passed by a few ceremonies in progress but had never personally attended a service and was quite impressed with how the Marine Corps, friends and family say goodbye there to those who have served our country so honorably.

Gen. Haynes was quite deserving of that honor for his nearly 35 years of Marine Corps service in three wars. The general's widow, Bonnie Arnold-Haynes, wrote to *Spearhead*, saying, "It was a beautiful ceremony. We thank all of our Fifth Marine Division friends for their support and love."

Which is pretty much the way most families feel about the support of their friends and military units when they come together to pay respects for those men and women who give their lives for our freedom or spent a lifetime serving their country.

I recall with childhood clarity when the remains of soldiers and Marines from my small rural southern Illinois community who had been killed in World War II started coming home for burial in local cemeteries in 1948. The first one I remember was Carl Vaughn, the only child of a local farmer and a Fourth Marine Division infantryman who was seriously wounded on Iwo Jima, transported to Saipan on a hospital ship, died and was buried there until the remains were reclaimed and sent home.

The body of Bill Bline, a soldier killed in Germany near the end of the war and a neighbor kid who had worked for my father before leaving for the Army, came home about the same time. The entire community turned out for the funerals — many of

them veterans themselves in their early 20s, falling out in uniforms that no longer fit their military figures. But they were there to pay their respects, pained looks on their faces, remembering the cost with memories that I couldn't imagine at the time.

Bill's beautiful young fiancée, who'd also worked for my parents, had gone on with life but looked much older and more serious than I'd remembered her. She and Bill, who looked like one of the movie stars I saw at the free shows on the screen up at the general store on Saturday nights, had been my favorites, kidding me, taking time to play with me and talk to me.

Several of the returning servicemen went to work driving trucks for my father until they were able to find more permanent jobs in town with a better future. My cousin Bruce, who had landed on Normandy with the 741st Tank Battalion on D-Day was the last to go, leaving in 1954 to take a job with a utility company where he worked until his service-connected injury left him on complete disability.

In constant pain and despondent, he spent June 5, 1982, cleaning out his personal effects, burning what he didn't want left behind, got up on the D-Day anniversary the next day and took his own life. Several of the surviving members of his company came from surrounding states to pay their respects, saluted at the casket and said, "So long, Sarge."

Another neighbor, Oral "Ben" Correll, who served with A/1/28 on Iwo Jima, had died of a heart attack a few years before at 60 years old. He'd told me once that after being wounded at the foot of Mt. Suribachi on the evening of Feb. 22, 1945, he'd looked back over his shoulder as he was being hoisted up the side of the hospital ship and saw "Old Glory flying on The Rock."

"I'll never see anything like it again," he said, a tear sliding quietly down each cheek. "I've had a lot of bonus years since then."

At the end of his bonus years, it was an honor for me to help carry him to his grave. I'd been to other funerals of friends and neighbors who had been touched by their service, including Larry "Joe" Willis who had been killed on a hot LZ with the First Air Calvary in Vietnam in December 1966.

And I've watched or heard about hundreds of other funerals from our recent hostilities and war, mostly impressed by the dignity and honor we give our veterans. The exception to that is the revolting group

*Continued on page 12*

## Readers appreciate spring issue of newsletter

The *Spearhead* is another good one.

— Bill Madden, E/2/27  
South Bend, IN  
[WBPM1836@aol.com](mailto:WBPM1836@aol.com)

That Spring issue of *Spearhead* was excellent. It is in my greatest. Many thanks and Semper Fi.

— Cy O'Brien  
Combat Correspondent  
Silver Springs, MD  
[cjobie@verizon.net](mailto:cjobie@verizon.net)

Great issue! (John) Hyndman (B/1/28) was a classmate of mine. Thanks for doing such a great job.

— Craig Leman, H/3/26  
Corvallis, OR  
[Leman@onid.oregonstate.edu](mailto:Leman@onid.oregonstate.edu)

**Editor's Note:** *Dr. Leman copied the following e-mail he had sent to Lois Hyndman about the book (A Marine in World War II — From Notre Dame to Iwo Jima and Beyond) he ordered from her after it was reviewed in the last issue of Spearhead:*

Thank you so much for the book. It arrived today, and I have been enjoying it for hours. You have done a wonderful job. As a surgeon, I was fascinated by the medical reports in the back of the book. John's recovery was just wonderful. What splendid use he made of the rest of his life! The pictures of your family are inspiring and heartening. What a road from that one-room schoolhouse in Depression-ridden Kansas!

The book you sent is in good condition, and I am proud to have it. I salute you, and, once again, I salute John.

Craig Leman

*The book may be ordered by sending \$15, plus \$3 for postage, by check to Lois Hyndman, 2626 Locinvar Lane, Bryant, TX 77802.*

## Fifth Division Association means more than reunions

I see from Ted Overgard's "Secretary's Corner" (Winter 2009/2010 issue) that the old chestnut, "If we don't have reunions, we don't have an association" has raised its ugly head again. Am I the only one that feels

that our Fifth Marine Division Association is more than just reunions?

Many issues ago, I addressed this thing about reunions being just a small segment of the worth of our association. I won't go into what I said in that past issue, but I feel very strongly that — at the very least — our association remains a vital pipeline of information to and for all the members, both regular and associate. There remains no better way to keep in touch with our comrades-in-arms than through our 5th Marine Division Association.

Once and for all, let's drop what I feel is a ridiculous notion. We will have an association until I'm the Last Marine Standing. At that time, I will then proclaim the association is closed.

God bless and Semper Fi.

— Ralph C. Simoneau, D/2/27  
USMC 1943/1946  
Germantown, WI

## Thoughts on depicting Marine atrocities in *The Pacific*

**Editor's Note:** *During and after the Tom Hanks-Steven Spielberg HBO 10-part series, The Pacific, I received some e-mails and phone calls and heard or participated in a number discussions about the series. Almost to a man — and a few women — everyone appreciated the fact that the series featured the war in the Pacific as Band of Brothers had featured the war in Europe. The biggest criticism, however, was lack of historical accuracy in some areas: the language, which some said was more representative of the Vietnam era than of World War II, the death of John Basilone by arms fire rather than a mortar round, the confusion of introducing characters for the first couple of episodes, and by far, the most often mentioned, was the gratuitous sense of Marines pulling the teeth of Japanese soldiers. There is no question that there were atrocities in the Pacific War, as there undoubtedly is in any war. Most comments I received or heard said it was not as prevalent as it was portrayed in the series. Maybe; maybe not. But it seems worthy of discussion. So I've selected the following comment to share from a man whose father lost his life on Iwo Jima and a man who lost a father.*

I met a Marine veteran of Iwo Jima when I went to a Fifth Marine Division reunion in Bixoi, Miss.,

nearly 20 years ago who was quite different from the other veterans. Instead of being full of life, buoyant and vibrant, he wore a cloak of dread and pain. His quiet, depressed demeanor caught my attention immediately because it stood out in sharp contrast to the gaiety and camaraderie of the group.

He had that thousand-yard stare and was quite obviously back there on the front line. Although we had not spoken, he turned to me and started talking directly to me. He said that his buddies had more than earned the right to be proud of their Iwo experience, but he couldn't bring himself to feel that way. Without an exchange of words, he told me the reason why: In the killing-or-be-killed mayhem of battle, he had pried gold teeth from the mouths of dead Jap soldiers.

As if talking to himself, he said, "I don't know why I did it, and to this day and the next, I regret it."

To me, this poor veteran had a cancer that would eat at his soul until his last breath. No amount of remorse would ever cleanse his spirit. He was paying the ultimate price of living with his regret, and no one and no words could heal him. The agony was there in his physical makeup also. He had gaunt, sunken facial features mounted on a frail, emaciated body. In my view, he has been dead since the day he awoke from his nightmare to find that it was true.

For those of us who would think that justice was being served, you only need to imagine what the horror

of close-engagement battle must be like. Suffice to say that all normalcy flees. Some recover, some don't. Is it fair to diminish the worth of those who fall victim? Is it fair and "unbalanced" reporting to depict those isolated instances in war movies based on historical fact?

If you say yes, then I don't understand your point. I agree that atrocities committed against anyone, even your enemy, are not honorable acts. Why then focus on the dishonorable events? They represent an infinitesimal amount of the whole scene. And then I would ask you how would you have fared in a situation where retribution and despair are soulmates in your heart?

— Son of a Fifth Division Marine lost on Iwo Jima who has observed aged and surviving veterans and warriors of World War II over the last 20-plus years and objects to the sensationalism in the various teeth-pulling scenes shown in HBO's *The Pacific* as a distortion of their true legacy

*Another man wrote:* "Teeth pulling of dead and even live Japanese soldiers was repeatedly shown in HBO's *The Pacific*. What is worse is they put a name to the teeth puller, even though (Eugene) Sledge did not do so when accounting for this activity in his book (*With the Old Breed*). (Tom) Hanks, (Stephen) Spielberg and the scriptwriter (Bruce McKenna) for *The Pacific* clearly overreached on this.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,  
talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?  
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There's nothing enlightening about shrinking  
so that other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We were born to make manifest the glory of  
God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously  
give other people permission to do the same.

— Nelson Mandela, quoting Marianne Williamson  
1985 Inaugural Address



# Last Iwo Jima chaplain dies

By Benjamin Bell

*The Boston Herald*

In the bloodiest days of Iwo Jima, he spoke the last words over fallen Marines and Navy corpsmen as they were buried in the island's black sand. On 20 May 2010, Marines, sailors and soldiers returned the favor to the late Rev. E. Gage Hotaling of Agawam, Mass., sending the old Navy chaplain on to join his comrades with military honors.

The Rev. Hotaling was the last surviving chaplain who served ashore with the Marines at Iwo. He joined the Chaplain Corps at age 28 in 1944 because he didn't feel he could preach to the World War II generation unless he knew what they had endured, so he found himself with the Fourth Marine Division on Iwo Jima. Some of his experiences on Iwo Jima are included in the book, *Flags of Our Fathers*, which tells the stories of the men who raised the American flag during the battle of February 1945.

Hotaling's first sermon was delivered at a Manton, R.I., church on Nov. 19, 1933. At that time the country was in the depths of the Great Depression. Hotaling was 17 years old and had promised his father, who was dying of cancer, that he would carry on the work of ministry.

Hotaling, 94, died Sunday 16 May 2010 in a Springfield hospital, 65 years after the iconic battle for the Pacific island. In a 2007 documentary, he talked about the grim task he faced as Marines fell in bitter

combat against the dug-in Japanese enemy. Of the 6,821 Americans killed, Hotaling believed he buried about 1,800.

"We would have four Marines with a flag over each grave. And while they were kneeling with the flag, I would stand up and I would give the committal words for each one," he told the filmmakers.

He said he took up smoking to overcome the stench of decay.

"I did it not as a Protestant, Catholic or a Jew, but as a Marine," the Baptist minister said. "Every man was buried as a Marine. And so I gave the same committal to each one."

A Marine Corps honor guard stood by as family members and other veterans paid their respects at Massachusetts Veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Agawam.

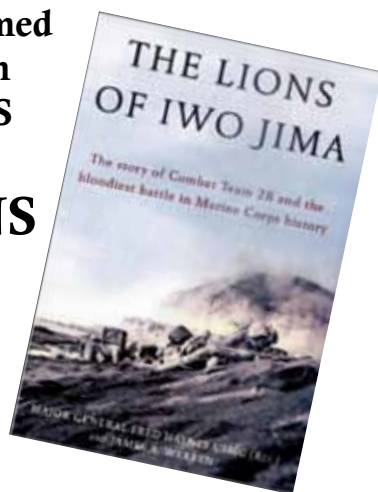
"He was a man of God, a man who comforted people and a shepherd to his flock," his son Kerry, 57, of Ludlow said. "He brought comfort to the fighting Marines who were on the island."

Thanks should go to Massachusetts State Trooper Mike Cutone, an Army veteran, who was on a prisoner watch at Mercy Hospital when he learned from an old Marine that the Hotaling was dying down the hall. Cutone made some calls and saw to it that the Rev. Hotaling was attended at his bedside by Marines in dress blues in his last days, just as he had tended to them in theirs in dirty, blood-stained dungarees.

Read the acclaimed  
book by MajGen  
FRED HAYNES

**THE LIONS  
OF IWO  
LIMA**

Available at  
**Amazon.com** or  
through your local bookstore.



## **NEW MEMBERS: WELCOME ABOARD!**

BEHNER, Bruce **ASSOC**  
CUNNINGHAM, James J. **ASSOC**

### **Life Members**

GRINDE, Paul A. **ASSOC**  
MENY, Doug **ASSOC**

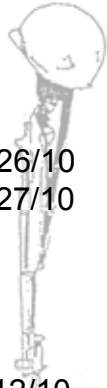
### **Annual-to-Life Members**

DABROWSKI, Stanley **C-5TH MED**  
LARRIMORE, Francis E. **5TH MT**  
OLSON, Leo J. **C-1-27**  
RUSSELL, Col. Gerald F. **HQ-I-27**  
WAGSTAFF, John P. **F-2-26**

## FINAL MUSTER

(“Roll Call of the Reef”)

BRISTOL III, William **A-1-13** 08/18/09  
CUNNINGHAM, James J. **B-1-26** 03/26/10  
DOERING, Lawrence T. **5TH SIG** 02/27/10  
LOTZ, Albert H. **B-1-27** 05/22/10  
MORICI, Joseph **HQ-2-28** 02/07/09  
PESDAN, James **5TH SIG** 06/04/10  
ROMAN, Anthony J. **HS-13** Unknown  
SWANSON, Richard E. **01-03-26** 06/12/10



## Ladies Auxiliary reminds to bring auction items

The ladies of the Silent Auction Committee want to remind both the ladies and the gentlemen to bring your items for the auction. Remember that all proceeds from the auction go to The Wounded Marine Semper Fi Fund, so we really need your very generous support.

– Pat McGruder  
Auxiliary Correspondent

## Secretary’s Corner

We do not yet have an officially approved location for a reunion in 2011. We would like to have someone come forward with an offer to handle one. You do not need to be an Iwo Jima veteran to do so. Any strong-minded man or woman will be fine. Feel free to make an offer to hold the reunion in 2011; if we want our Association to continue, we need someone to step up to the plate. Actually, we need to have this done soon so that we can get the approval for next year’s location at the Biloxi Reunion.

We are pleased that many of you are sending your change-of-address to us in a timely manner. Also, if you have any notice of a final muster, please let us know and be sure to include the date of death. We send those notices to be included in the next issue of the Spearhead News. We are finding that we often need to contact an individual, and it is very helpful to have your phone number.

Thank you.

– Ted Overgard  
Secretary



## South Pacific vets gather

Nineteen Marines who served in the South Pacific with Eugene Sledge, Robert Leckie and John Basilone, whose stories and experiences from Guadalcanal to Okinawa inspired the HBO miniseries, “The Pacific,” attended a dinner in their honor at the Strategic Air and Space Museum near Ashland, Neb., on May 21-22. The men signed autographs and answered questions about their experiences. Clarence Rea (second from right in the first row), who served with GySgt. John Basilone on Iwo Jima, submitted the photo. “The Pacific” author Hugh Ambrose is third from the right in the back row.

# Honoring a fallen Marine

## *No amount of gratitude can ever be enough*

**By Colleen M. Getz**

*The Washington Times - Aug. 23, 2010*

Marine Lance Cpl. Justin Wilson was buried at Arlington Cemetery on July 12 with all the ceremony due a Marine killed in Afghanistan. I was honored to be there. But for me, the events leading up to the ceremony at Arlington honored Cpl. Wilson as much as did the ceremony itself because they came from his fellow citizens, who recognized his service and sacrifice on their behalf.

This was not the case when I first encountered Cpl. Wilson and his family in March. I never knew him in life, and when I wrote about him in this newspaper on Memorial Day, I had yet to meet his family. I wrote only about how I had witnessed the last of a series of painful events to which they had been subjected in making the trip to Dover, Del., to meet his casket as it returned home. A long day of overbooked flights and insensitive U.S. Air employees culminated in a scene at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, where an airline representative, with the grief-stricken family on full public display beside her, begged indifferent passengers for volunteers to give up their seats for the family of a young man who had died for his country. I wrote that I thought it demonstrated our national detachment from the human cost of our current wars and how we need to recognize and respect the Cpl. Wilsons who serve our country.

I never dreamed the story of the Wilsons and my plea for support for our troops and their families would spark such an overwhelming response. Among the many remarkable actions it inspired, a retired Air Force and Southwest Airlines pilot sent it to the chairman of Southwest, who disseminated it through his company to make sure no military family suffers a similar indignity. If you are one of the scores of people who posted my article on your blog or your Facebook page or wrote to me to share that you felt the same way, please know that you also did good far more immediate and personal than simply sharing the message. You provided support to the Wilsons at another milestone in their grief.

Unbeknownst to us, my column and your responses

appeared at exactly the time when Justin should have returned home, a date for which the Wilsons had lived for months but that now brought only another reminder of their loss. Mrs. Wilson says we will never know how much we helped her.

I was honored to be the intermediary between the Wilsons and those who reached out to them. Many missives, like this one from a retired Marine, surpassed anything I could write: "When I think of the Marine Corps, it's not of the Birthday Ball and everyone in their dress blues and medals. It's of a tired, dirty lance corporal trudging up a hill, doing what he has been told to do by his corporal, sergeant, or lieutenant, knowing that they are looking out for him, because they're Marines too, and that's what we do. And he probably wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I didn't know Justin, but I have known many like him. He's the Marine Corps, past, present, and future. And he is now in the best of company. That is small comfort, I know. But no man or woman can have finer friends nor family than Marines, this I know for certain. And if the worst happens, he or she was with friends and family when it happened."

As uplifting as this is, it is not the end of the story. In June, the Wilsons decided that Justin's remains should be interred in Arlington National Cemetery, where he would be "in the best of company."

The Wilsons had never been to Washington, so I volunteered to help with arrangements. I knew it could not be a happy occasion, but I hoped it could be a good one. I had an idea of what would be best, but I thought it likely that most of my ideas would prove infeasible, with such short lead time, at the height of the tourist season.

I have never been so grateful to be proved wrong. I never did more than ask for information, but everyone responded by volunteering assistance, and their help transformed the event. It began when I asked to rent the guest apartment in my building for the Wilsons, only to learn that it had just been closed permanently. The management not only reopened the apartment, but offered it at no cost for as long as the Wilsons needed it.



This generosity was matched by the extraordinary hospitality a hotel across the street extended to Cpl. Wilson's widow and her family and, on the day of the burial, to everyone who attended the ceremony.

Cpl. Wilson eloped with his fiancée, Hannah, just before he deployed to Afghanistan. Now, at age 20, she is a widow. The current wars have created several thousand young widows. If you would console yourself with the idea that these young women were married such a short time and have so much life still ahead of them, that the loss they feel is somehow mitigated, you should meet Hannah McVeigh-Wilson. She was brave enough to marry a Marine headed for combat who told her he didn't want to wait until he returned because, in case he didn't come home, he wanted to know he'd had all the experiences he could have in life, and one of the most important was to marry her. It tears at the heart to see her living with that legacy and loss.

The staff of the Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City understood this and not only made their hotel affordable for her extended family so she was surrounded by support, but also made innumerable extra gestures of hospitality — which they also extended to her in-laws. Remarkably, the three Ritz employees most involved attended the ceremony at Arlington.

Furthermore, the hotel made a very generous offer for a luncheon after the ceremony, without which there would have been no gathering. The number of guests started small, and as the number gradually increased until it had quadrupled, the hotel never changed the terms, instead only increasing its generosity in ways large and small. The event manager explained, "We looked at each other and said, 'How can we not do this?' " Consequently, after the service, 80 people — including members of Cpl. Wilson's unit, just back from Afghanistan — celebrated his life together at an elegant banquet.

This wonderful fellowship of family and friends was the most appropriate culmination of seeing Justin to his final resting place. But other special events preceded it. A number of people — none of whom

would wish public recognition — expended great effort to get his family special White House, Capitol and Pentagon tours along with coveted VIP tickets for the Friday night ceremony at the Marine Barracks. The gunnery sergeant in charge of Marine burials at Arlington, among others, always took the time to answer my innumerable questions — questions that a civilian, nonfamily member normally would not be asking, but because the family asked me, I asked for them. No one questioned my role, as well they might have; they just helped.

Do not draw the wrong conclusion, that any of this it took any special connections or institutional influence, that the situation was fundamentally any different from

the one when volunteers did not step forward to help the Wilsons at the airport. Someone commented to me, "Look at the difference one person can make." Not true, it took many individuals stepping forward, individuals who had no thought of profit or recognition, many of whom still have not met

the Wilsons or McVeighs. But we received the only reward we might have sought: Afterward, Mrs. Wilson said that though it was a sad event, it was also the most enjoyable time the family had had since the day Justin died.

But ultimately there was one person who did make all the difference: Lance Cpl. Wilson. When the Wilsons thanked me, I replied, "No thanks necessary; you earned this." Hannah corrected me. "No," she said, "Justin earned it." This brings me to my favorite of all the messages I received, from the director of the Army Wounded Warrior Program, who wrote, "I think Corporal Wilson would have been proud of your words, your actions and your generosity." I hope he's right; I hope I am the kind of citizen the Lance Cpl. Wilsons of our country would be proud of. I hope we all are, always.

***'No man or woman  
can have finer friends nor  
family than Marines,  
this I know for certain.  
And if the worst happens,  
he or she was with friends  
and family when it happened.'***

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*Colleen M. Getz works in the NATO policy office of the Department of Defense. Washington Times (washingtontimes.com) Permission granted.*

# On VJ Day, new generations remember

**By Mark Yost**

WARWICK, R.I. — We've long known that our World War II veterans were dying at an alarming rate. Some estimates put the figure at 1,000 a day. With them go important personal stories that will no longer be told, along with photo albums, scrapbooks and mementos.

But as [the] 65th anniversary of VJ Day (*Editor's note: Japan's surrender was on Aug. 15, 1945, there, Aug. 14 in the United States*) approaches, I'm happy to report that for all the talk about the dwindling numbers of "the Greatest Generation," there are new generations stepping up to keep their memory alive. Namely, the veterans' children and grandchildren.

In late June, I attended the last-ever official reunion for the men who served aboard the World War II-era PT boats. The "PT" stands for "Patrol, Torpedo" boat, and there were three different makes of the boat for the U.S. Navy: Elco, Higgins and Huckins. They were between 70-80 feet long and made almost entirely of wood.

Movies like *PT 109* (based on John F. Kennedy's book about the boat he commanded) and "They Were Expendable" made the PT boats famous for their successes in the Pacific. What few people know is that they were in service in every theater of World War II, including Alaska.

I know much of this history because I grew up with Sam Makitra, whose father, Steve Makitra, served in Ron 30 (PT boats were organized into squadrons, but the PT boaters typically shorten squadron to just "Ron"). Today, Sam is part of the small cadre of "splinters" the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of PT Boaters — who are working to preserve their parents' legacy. And they have much to tell.

For instance, thanks to Steve Makitra, I grew up knowing about "the Leopoldville disaster." A Belgian-flagged troop transport ship, the Leopoldville set out for France across the English Channel on Christmas Eve 1944, ferrying fresh troops to the Battle of the Bulge. She was torpedoed about five miles off Cherbourg. Shortly after receiving her distress signal, PT Ron 30 was dispatched to pick up survivors. When they arrived, they could hardly believe what they saw.

Instead of staying behind to help the troops into life boats, most of the Belgian crew had abandoned ship. Ultimately, more than 500 soldiers went down with the ship; another 248 died from injuries or drowned.

As Steve Makitra's PT boat pulled up, the Belgian crew was already in a motor transport, ready to leave the trapped troops behind. Steve and his crew immediately recognized what was happening, locked and loaded their .50-caliber machine guns, and were ready to blow the fleeing Belgians out of the water. Their commanding officer stopped them.

Steve's son Sam has worked to make sure what happened that night will never be forgotten. Until his father died two years ago, Sam often went to the PT boat reunions, where he met his father's shipmates, and became part of the splinter family. Thanks to a Ron 30 website, a crew from ZDF, the German television station, found Steve Makitra and came to America to interview him for a documentary on the Leopoldville disaster.

Sam isn't alone. Of the more than 500 attendees at this year's reunion, nearly 300 were splinters. Like Alyce Guthrie of Germantown, Tenn. Her father, James Newberry, was a chief bosun in Ron 9 and founded PT Boats, Inc., the unofficial PT boat archive that has collected a warehouse full of diaries, photographs, captured flags and weapons.

"This is our legacy," said Mrs. Guthrie, whose daughter and granddaughter were also at the 2010 reunion. "We can't let it go."

Unfortunately, that is just what they're up against. This year was the last reunion because so many of the veterans have died or are too weak to attend. Some splinters felt it was their duty to keep the reunions going, even without their parents. Others felt this should be the last.

"I wouldn't come without Grandpa," said Beth Bubolz, 28, the granddaughter of Bill Pytleski, 85, who served in Ron 36. Her family set the record this year — 15 family members over four generations attended, including her grandfather, who still gets up every morning with the sun and works the family dairy farm in northern Wisconsin.



(Getty Images)

**PT boats in action near the Panama Canal in 1943.**

Despite the debate, it was clear that the splinters are united in their desire to keep their parents' memories alive. They're also still very moved—after all these years — by their parents' service and sacrifice.

The most moving part of this year's reunion was the annual splinter meeting, which begins with each person standing, one at a time, and telling who they are, who their parents were, and what unit they were with.

"I'm Gene Soboleski," said the man next to me. "My dad was Gene Soboleski, Ron 8."

And so it went for nearly an hour, many of their voices cracking at the mere mention of their father's or grandfather's name.

"I used to be apatriotic. Now I fly a flag every day," said Bob Sherertz of Winston-Salem, N.C., whose dad, Jack Sherertz, served in Ron 1. "It's powerful stuff."

The PT boaters aren't alone. Military museums and archives across the country are finding that their best sources of new materials today are the children and

grandchildren of veterans.

After his parents died, Scott Greasamar of Bakersville, N.C. found a box in the family barn containing more than 100 letters that his father, E.E. Greasamar, had written home while serving in England as a B-17 co-pilot. With the help of retired Army Col. C. W. Watson, the letters were organized by date and bound. Mr. Greasamar plans to send a copy to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah, Ga.

With VJ Day approaching, it's nice to know about these children and grandchildren who are stepping into the void left by their parents and grandparents to make sure that we don't ever forget what they did. Thanks to them, I don't think we will.

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*Yost is a writer in Chicago. His father, Capt. George F. Yost, was a thoracic surgeon in a MASH unit in Korea. Dow Jones & Co. — permission granted.*

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

*Continued from page 3*

from Kansas that goes around the country, protesting at the funerals of those killed in action with signs like “Semper Fi, fags,” “Thank God for dead soldiers.”

Thank God those people, using the free speech rights the military has long fought to preserve, are in the minority. More of them are the kind of people the Urbana-Champaign (Ill.) Richard L. Pittman Marine Corps League #1231, named for a local Marine from the 28th Marines killed at the foot of Mt. Suribachi on Feb. 21, 1945, have attended with a color guard and shown appreciation for service well given.

Edgar R. Barstow, who served in the Marine Corps for more than five years (October 1940-December 1945) with JASCO (Joint Assault Signal Company) with the Fourth Marine Division in four campaigns, Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima, died on Feb. 19, 2010. Already honored with his name for the Marine of the Year Award, his name has been added to a scholarship for local high school students with Pittman and Lawrence “Slats” Trower, another Fourth Division Marine wounded on Iwo Jima, who died on June 30, 2010.

Before he was wounded, Slats said he made a promise that if he survived the campaign, he would return to Arthur, Ill., a small central Illinois town in the midst of a large Amish settlement, never leave and be the best man he possible could. Among the ways he made good on that promise — he never left after he got home in December 1945 — was that he became a stellar member of the community. For many years, for example, he made a garden in an empty lot across from his house, teaching grade school students how to garden, and would set the fresh produce on a table in his front yard, asking people to take what they wanted and leave what they could. Over the years, he gave scholarships through the VFW to students in two high schools. When he died, there was more than \$12,000 in the bank for future scholarships.

At the visitation at the funeral home, a steady stream of mourners went through the line for five hours to offer condolences to his wife of 62 years and their three daughters. After the rifle salute by the detachment color guard and the flag was folded by two active duty Marines in dress blues, a local banker had brought a bottle of Crown Royale to pass around to drink a shot for Slats, who was tossed the first shot.



*(Ray Elliott Photo)*

**Lawrence “Slats” Trower, (foreground) an Iwo Jima survivor of the Fourth Marine Division from Arthur, Ill., met fellow veteran and former Sen. Bob Dole at the National WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C., as part of the Honor Flight program. Trower passed away in June.**

“I can’t tell you how much we appreciated the Marine Corps League at Dad’s visitation and at his funeral,” one of his daughters wrote later. “The ceremony at the grave was awesome. Dad had to be smiling down.

Slats and these men weren’t buried in Arlington National Cemetery with Gen. Haynes and the rest of those honored there. But they were honored accordingly, nonetheless. And Slats did happen to venture out of his hometown just a few months before he died. He participated in an Honor Flight, which included a visit to Arlington Cemetery and to the National WWII Memorial, where he had his photo taken with Sen. Bob Dole.

Honor and respect are earned. There was no question that these individuals — and those like them — be given their rightful due.







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Monday October 18	1:30 p.m.	Shrimping Trip	\$15.00		\$
Tuesday October 19	9:30 a.m.	Trip to Stennis Space Center (Need minimum of 30 sign-ups)	\$30.00		\$
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