



Volume 2, Issue 1 \* 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, March 2010  
The newsletter for Marines of the C-1-23<sup>rd</sup> of the Fourth Marine Division Association of WWII

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**MARINE TESTIMONIAL, by Thomas C. Farrell, MD,  
U.S. Navy (Captain)**

For the uninformed, Captain Farrell had this to say when asked, "WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE UNITED STATES MARINES?"

Ask a Marine and his answer would be "esprit de corps", an unhelpful French phrase that means exactly what it looks like - the spirit of the Corps... But what is that spirit? And where does it come from?

The Marine Corps is the only branch of the Armed Forces that recruits people specifically to fight. The Army emphasizes development (An Army of One), the Navy promises fun (Let the journey begin), the Air Force offers security (It's a great way of life).

Missing from the advertisements is the hard fact that a soldier's life is to suffer and perhaps to die for his people and take lives at risk of his/her own.

Even the thematic music of the services reflects this evasion.

- The Army's Caisson Song describes a pleasant country outing. "Over hill and dale" lacking only the picnic basket.

- Anchors Away... The Navy's celebration of the joys of sailing could have been penned by Jimmy Buffet.

- The Air Force song is a lyric poem of blue skies and engine thrust. All is joyful and invigorating and

safe. There are no land mines in the dales nor snipers in the hills, no submarines or cruise missiles threaten the ocean jaunt, no bandits are lurking in the wild blue yonder.

- The Marines' Hymn by contrast, is all about combat. "We fight our Country's battles," "First to fight for right and freedom," "We have fought in every clime and place where we could take a gun," "In many a strife we have fought for life and never lost our nerve." The choice is made clear. You may join the Army to go to adventure training, or join the Navy to go to Bangkok, or join the Air Force to go to computer school.

You join the Marine Corps to go to War! But the mere act of signing the enlistment contract confers no status in the Corps. The Army recruit is told from his first minute in uniform that "You're in the Army now, Soldier". The Navy and the Air Force enlistees are sailors or airmen as soon as they get off the bus at the training center. The new arrival at Marine Corps boot camp is called a recruit or worse, (a lot worse), but never a MARINE. Not yet, maybe never. He or she must earn the right to claim the title of UNITED STATES MARINE, and failure returns you to civilian life without hesitation or ceremony.

Recruit Platoon 2210 at San Diego, California trained from October through December of 1968. In Vietnam the Marines were taking two hundred casualties a week and the major rainy season and

Operation Meade River had not even begun yet. Drill Instructors had no qualms about winnowing out almost a quarter of the 112 recruits, graduating 81. Not that this was post enlistment attrition. Every one of those 31 who were dropped had been passed by the recruiters as fit for service. But they failed the test of Boot Camp! Not necessarily for physical reasons.

At least two were outstanding high school athletes for whom the calisthenics and running were child's play. The cause of their failure was not in the biceps nor the legs, but the spirit. They had lacked the will to endure the mental and emotional strain so they would not be Marines. Heavy commitments and high casualties notwithstanding; the Corps reserves the right to pick and choose.

History classes in boot camp? Stop a soldier on the street and ask him to name a battle of World War I. Pick a sailor at random and ask for a description of the epic fight of the Bon Homme Richard. Ask an airman who Major Thomas McGuire was and what is named after him. I am not carping and there is no sheer in this criticism. All of the services have glorious traditions but no one teaches the young soldier, sailor or airman what his uniform means and why he should be proud of it.

But ... Ask a Marine about World War I and you will hear of the wheat field at Belleau Wood and the courage of the Fourth Marine Brigade comprised of the Fifth and Sixth Marines. Faced with an enemy of superior numbers entrenched in tangled forest undergrowth the Marines received the order to attack that even the charitable cannot call ill-advised. It was insane. Artillery support was absent and air support had not been invented yet. Even so the Brigade charged German machine guns with only bayonets, grenades and an indomitable fighting spirit. A bandy-legged little barrel of a Gunnery Sergeant, Daniel J. Daly, rallied his company with a shout, "Come on you sons of bitches, do you want to live forever?" He took out three machine guns himself.

French liaison-officers hardened though they were by four years of trench bound slaughter were

shocked as the Marines charged across the open wheat field under a blazing sun directly into the teeth on enemy fire. Their action was so anachronistic on the twentieth-century field of battle that they might as well have been swinging cutlasses. But the enemy was only human. The Boche (slang for German in WWI & WWII) could not stand up to the onslaught.

So the Marine took Belleau Wood. The Germans, those that survived, thereafter referred to the Marines as Tuefel Hunden (Devil Dogs) and the French in tribute renamed the woods "Bois de la Brigade de Marine" (Woods of the Brigade of Marines).

Every Marine knows this story and dozens more. They are taught them in boot camp as a regular part of the curriculum. Every Marine will always be taught them! You can learn to don a gas mask anytime, even on the plane in route to the war zone, but before you can wear the Eagle, Globe and Anchor and claim the title United States Marine, you must first know about the Marines who made the emblem and title meaningful. So long as you can march and shoot and revere the legacy of the Corps you can take your place in line.

And that line is as unified in spirit as in purpose. A soldier wears branch of service insignia on his collar, metal shoulder pins and cloth sleeve patches to identify his unit. Sailors wear a rating badge that identifies what they do for the Navy; Marines wear only the Eagle, Globe and Anchor together with personal ribbons and their CHERISHED marksmanship badges. They know why the uniforms are the colors they are and what each color means. There is nothing on a Marine's uniform to indicate what he or she does or what unit the Marine belongs to. You cannot tell by looking at a Marine whether you are seeing a truck driver, a computer programmer, a machine gunner, a cook or a baker. The Marine is amorphous, even anonymous, by conscious design. The Marine is a Marine.

Every Marine is a rifleman first and foremost, A Marine first, last and Always! You may serve a four

**A TREASURE THAT SHOULD BE IN THE LIBRARY OF  
EVERY C123RD MARINE**

year enlistment or even a twenty plus year career without seeing action but if the word is given you'll charge across that wheat field! Whether a Marine has been schooled in automated supply or automotive mechanics or aviation electronics or whatever is immaterial.

Those are secondary -- the Corps does them because it must. The modern battle requires the technical appliances and since the enemy has them so do we. But no Marine boasts mastery of them. Our pride is in our marksmanship, our discipline and our membership in a fraternity of courage and sacrifice. "For the honor of the fallen, for the glory of the dead". Edgar Guest wrote of Belleau Wood, "The living line of courage kept the faith and moved ahead".

They are all gone now, those Marines who made a French farmer's little wheat field into one of the most enduring of Marine Corps legends. Many of them did not survive the day and eight long decades have claimed the rest. But their actions are immortal. The Corps remembers them and honors what they did and so they live forever. Dan Daly's shouted challenge takes on its true- if you lie in the trenches you may survive for now, but someday you may die and no one will care. If you charge the guns you may die in the next two minutes, but you will be one of the immortals.

All Marines die in either the red flash of battle or the white cold of the nursing home. In the vigor of youth or the infirmity of age all will eventually but the Marine Corps lives on. Every Marine who ever lived is living still, in the Marines who claim the title today.

It is that sense of belonging to something that will outlive our own mortality, which gives people a light to live by and a flame to mark their passing. Passed on to a Marine from another Marine!

SEMPER FIDELIS Orv

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I am here to tell you about a book, published recently by Gail Chatfield, an associate member of the 3rd Marine Division Association. This book is the memories of service men of WWII from all services but especially Marines of the 3rd and 4th Marine Divisions. Gail realized that a good percentage of these men had not shared their war experiences with their families. It was considered past history to many, the night mares they wanted to forget. They could not begin to write it down even though some had attempted it a few times and put it out of their head. But Gail learned after talking with several, they would answer her questions and she would record or take notes during their visits.

This book is the combined war stories of 52, mostly Marine vets who had been convinced HIS story was his living history and they would be buried along with him. But Gail was able to change many minds and together they produced for the families and heirs their personal history in their own words and expressions of these old fighting men. Had she not succeeded there would be nowhere the heirs could find or learn what their hero lived through while many buddies gave their lives without a chance to tell the country what they did or saw. Gail was able to extract those long hidden experiences.

Experiences among Marines, while in different units, their perspective of the actions differ in degree from any other and, taken together creates a clearer picture of what took place on Iwo or Saipan. In creating a broader view Gail interviewed sailors from the ships transporting the troops. Stories of Seabees that participated in the same campaign helped in broadening the picture further. Frogmen who did their work during predawn to clear minefields on land and in the surf; Chaplains, Corpsmen and Pilots who made emergency landings on airstrips that were not yet safe but served a good purpose along with stories of Coast Guardsmen, U.S. Army and others.

There are personal stories here also of Marines you knew or know who they are, such as Lt. General, Larry Snowden; Sergeant Major "Iron Mike"

Mervosh; Henry Koellein, who was elected to preside over the Association through 2009 but died suddenly shortly after his election and before he served as our President; and the Rev. W. Charles Goe 4th Marine Division Association Chaplain for many years before his death. The title of the book, [By Dammit, We're Marines!](#) is attributed to Iron Mike. I have read the book and hated to lay it down and so will you. You can read more about the book at [www.bydammitweremarines.com](http://www.bydammitweremarines.com)

### **MAIL CALL**

#### **1) Concerning: PISgt Lloyd Wheaton and 1st Lt. Howard "Smiley" Johnson**

From: Jeffrey Williams - [skydancer506@gmail.com](mailto:skydancer506@gmail.com)  
Greetings:

By any chance do any of you have any memories of PI Sgt. Lloyd Wheaton? He was a member of C-1-23 who was wounded at Tinian. His son is my best friend and I officiated at his Nov. 1, 2005 funeral. His family still would like any recollections from those who served with him. Also, do you know of anyone who might have known 1st Lt. Howard "Smiley" Johnson of I-3-23? He was killed in action Feb. 19, 1945 at Iwo. Lt. Johnson played football at the University of Georgia in the 1930s and Guard and Linebacker for the Green Bay Packers in the 1940 and 1941 seasons before joining the Marines in January 1942. Of the 32 Green Bay Packers to serve in World War II, Johnson was the only combat-death. I'm currently working with the Green Bay Packers football club public relations department to write the Lieutenant's biography. I realize that you are with "C" company and that the 23rd is a big outfit, but if you have any contacts with India company Marines that I can interview, it would be most helpful.

Best wishes! Jeffrey S. Williams - Formerly 506 AEG/PA, USAF - Kirkuk Regional Air Base, Iraq - 26 Oct 2003 - 7 Mar 2004

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#### **2) Concerning: Address and phone number for Larry L. Anderson (Son of George L. Anderson, Sgt C123rd)**

From: James W. Manning - [jmanning27@aol.com](mailto:jmanning27@aol.com)  
(son of C123rd) Jim Manning - 27 Salem Dr, Whippany, NJ - 973-887-7775

Hi,

In the last newsletter there was a note from Larry L. Anderson about the "Redbook". I need to get his and not his father's phone number which is in it. I lost my copy and I thought I remember his son's name and number being in the list of people attached to the back.

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#### **3) Concerning: Welcome a call or email from you anytime.**

From: Earl J. McRoberts B123rd:  
[mckash22@cox.net](mailto:mckash22@cox.net) 619-297-7379

I am an 87 year old Marine from WW2. I was a machine gunner, PFC, in B123rd, not C. I was transferred as a machine gunner from the original "D" Company. In my faulty memory, I think of C Company as being wiped out during the battle of Saipan. Personally, I am a wheelchair bound victim of Multiple Sclerosis and Diabetes, but am in fairly good shape for my age. I live in San Diego, CA and would like to have a call or E-mail from you anytime.

Earl J. McRoberts

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#### **4) From Rod Rodriquez**

Dear Orvel,

It pains me to tell you about the beautiful lady in the picture with me that I have enclosed I have been taking care of her for six years, as her Care Giver, and now I cannot do it any longer. She is a very sick lady and her son, Kurk Hall, is now her Care Provider. I continue to help her son caring for her as much as I can, because Kurk himself is not well. So by helping him I am also helping Betty. Betty Hall is her name.

We had planned to be married but her health problems kept us from getting married. I lost my beautiful wife, Nel Rodriquez, ten years ago and now I'm losing Betty.

At this time everything is on hold. Your friend, Rod



You did a fine job with my story on Iwo Jima and also my Design Concept, Harnessing the Ocean. Thanks for all you do. By the way I hope you had a Happy New Year. Semper Fi, Rod.

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### **5) Telephone visit with C123rd Member Richard W. Cooper**

Like so many others Richard was wounded on Iwo Jima and had his wound sanitized and bandaged, sent to an Aid Station and due to the many needing their wounds diagnosed and treated were sent to one of the many ships equipped and staffed by Navy doctors. Even though in his case his wounds were not life threatening, he was taken to one of these ships for treatment. While he was aboard the ship receiving treatment, the ship departed from the waters around Iwo. Richard's wound wasn't so serious that he should have been relieved from combat duty. But he was aboard heading for the hospital on Saipan and told he would be heading home as soon as his condition warranted.

After a few days in the hospital, he and a new friend, also a Marine, felt they should be returned to C123rd on Iwo Jima and requested authorization to be returned to Iwo. Those in authority at the Saipan hospital told them, their fighting days were over and they'd be going home. That was not what they wanted but for the time being they were allowed to leave the hospital to move off hospital grounds to see some of Saipan. Their peers knew what they wanted and one suggested that they might find a way of getting back to Iwo Jima by visiting the air field. They were told that planes leaving Saipan to deliver blood plasma on a daily basis. So off they went to the airfield and asked around about a lift back to Iwo and sure enough they made the right contacts and were allowed to get aboard the next flight but without baggage or sufficient warm attire. Their accommodations were rough; they had to lie on top of the cargo that filled the compartment. The compartment for cargo is not heated and they were chilled to the bone, but they survived without freezing.

On arrival at Iwo, MPs met them and prepared to book them but both persuaded the

MPs to take them to their COs (C123rd), where they explained what had happened and asked to be allowed to rejoin the Company. Success. Rod and his new friend were given gear and supplies and stayed with C123rd until Iwo was secured. Finis.

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### **6) Concerning Saipan**

Hello, my name is Jose' Pinaula Castro Blunt, originally from San Roque Village, Saipan. I am trying to contact all USMC veterans who served during the Saipan D Day. I have already contacted Maj. Richard (Rick) T. Spooner. My goal is to thank all of them for liberating my island from the Japanese. My grandfather, Marceliano Diaz Castro was tortured by the Japanese Imperial Army. My father was almost buried alive by the Japanese Imperial Army. I served four years in the US Air Force; I had the privilege of deplaning Five Star General Ridgeway and Poe at Maxwell Air Force Base. I also de-planed Maj. General Tibbetts, late Senator Goldswater, Dr. Kissinger, PX Kelly, and other DV's in the Armed Forces. I saw a picture of Lt. Robert B. Sheeks and I would like to speak with him about his experienced with freeing the Chamorro people.

Respectfully,

Jose' P.C. Blunt - [jacblunt@aol.com](mailto:jacblunt@aol.com)

P.S. I am a native Chamorro and have several different ethnic backgrounds - Chamorro, Spanish, Filipino, and Chinese.

### **7) Looking for info on Father-in-Law**

Hello. My name is Ross Beisner. I am the son-in-law of Darwin Richards. I was extremely saddened by his death this past summer. I have always been an avid reader of non-fiction books about the wars and related stories our country has been involved in. I have read several that cover the Iwo Jima campaign. I cannot imagine the horrors that you marvelous Marines faced there and will always be inspired by and supremely grateful of your efforts and dedication to this great country. I have had the great fortune of being the right age and have missed the Viet Nam war (too young) and the gulf wars (too old). I have seen my share of tragedy however as a professional fire fighter in Sioux City, Iowa. So I understood why it was that Darwin would never talk of his war experiences. He, like so many others, could just not stand the pain of dredging up the memories. He

was so proud of being a Marine though. His personalized license plates read "Iwo J". In the thirteen years I knew him we came to love and respect each other dearly.

I have a question I hope you can answer for me. I assume that he served with the 123rd as he receives your newsletter. I have always wondered the date that Darwin landed on Iwo and the date he left. I know he was never wounded, although he does say that his canteen was a casualty once, so I assume that he was still on the island when hostilities ceased. Since his death, we have found no military paperwork or other items that would give me the information I seek. Are there any records that would provide me with this information? Maybe you have such dates or can refer me to a place where I can find them. In case any of you knew him, he was from the small town of Hinton, Iowa. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

I am so proud of Darwin and all the Marines and soldiers that fought and died so that I have the freedoms that I enjoy today.

May God Bless you all!!

Ross Beisner - [rbcooner@cablone.net](mailto:rbcooner@cablone.net)

### **CONTINUING TALES FROM EARLIER REPORTS**

#### **1) This is how Rod Rodriguez's Iwo Jima Campaign ended.**

In the Old Pro Style of Paul Harvey:

##### **What is left of Rod Rodriguez' last day on Iwo Jima story.**

We left you in the previous newsletter with Rod and his buddies near Hill 382, under yet another day of deadly harassing shelling by Japanese mortars. All Marines had scrambled for shelter wherever and however they could. Several of Rod's unit dove into shell holes and craters. Rod had seen too many of his comrades killed who crowded together in the deep craters and this morning he saw too many Marines in the nearby large crater. He was urged to join them. Instead he chose to take his chance laying on the shoulder of crater rather than down inside and there, laying on his back with one knee elevated to balance. He had seen the pattern of traversing shells caused by the gunner dialing his aiming a notch or two to move the impact area with each round fired so as to avoid dropping a succeeding round into a hole that had already been targeted. He was not

concentrating on any pattern of impacts because it was obvious several guns were involved in this barrage.

Then, the very thing Rod feared might happen, did. An enemy shell flew into the crater and there exploded among his friends. Rod was covered with dirt falling on top partially covering him and a fairly good sized piece of shrapnel impaling itself in his inner thigh. He attempted to clear himself of the dirt and at the same time grabbed at the hot piece of iron, pulled it free and let it drop.

A corpsman was suddenly there to assist him by cutting away his pant leg to reveal the wound, sprinkle sulfa powder on it and proceeded in taking Rod's first aid bandage from his belt and began wrapping his wound. The shrapnel had apparently severed an important vein and it was bleeding freely. Morphine was administered and the Corpsman's Wound Report was marked to show what he had been able to do, he assisted Rod to get onto his feet, pointed him toward the nearest Aid Station and sent him on his way.

Another Corpsman at the Aid Station saw Rod approaching and met him part way, observing the free spreading blood stained bandage and told Rod to head for the Beach where a landing craft awaited because under the continuing shelling he could be better served aboard ship if they managed to get to it. They succeeded in getting away without additional damages and were brought aboard, expecting to have the wound stitched and return to join his fire team.

As the stitching got under way, Rod sensed the ship was moving and he told those attending him to hurry because he was needed back on Iwo. Ship's duties prevailed; he was on his way HOME.

**2) As reported Raymond L. "Zeke" Secules got married.** But he failed to introduce us to his Bride. In our last newsletter I suggested each member of C123rd send A Wedding Greeting to the Bride and Groom. I did and here is what Zeke added to his earlier announcement.

Dear Orvel,

In regard to your postcard, my wife's name is Janet L. Secules. Janet was born, June 6, 1931 in the state of Pennsylvania. The color of her hair is gray and she has beautiful hazel eyes.  
Happy New Year "Zeke" Secules.

**C123rd ROSTER CHANGES**

If you are interested in keeping your C123rd Roster up to date, these changes became known after your current copy was updated. Oh, if you are contemplating an address change, send your new address to me, Orvel Johnson and to John Stone, Editor of The Fighting Fourth of WWII. You will find both addresses on the respective newsletters.

- 1) Joe Bright's new address –  
224 N. Michigan Ave.  
Bradley, IL 60915
- 2) Elaine Burns' new address –  
16745 S.E. Division St., #31  
Portland, OR 97236-1490
- 3) Fred Schmidt's new address –  
3015 16th Street SW, Apt 206  
Minot, ND 58701
- 4) Raymond Daley's new address –  
1464 Madera Road N.  
Simi Valley CA 93065-3063

**LEST WE FORGET**

- 1) Darvin Richards has died.
- 2) Dorothy Tobin has died. (Wife of deceased C Company Exec Officer Marshall and Mariana Islands)
- 3) Michael Carrera  
Mike enlisted in the Marines and proudly served during World War II in Company C-1-23rd of the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division. He achieved the status of expert rifleman during training. Mike was in combat on the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima during the famous raising of the US flag on Mount Suribachi. On Saipan, he is credited with saving the life of a fellow Marine. Mike was wounded on Saipan and was awarded the Purple Heart. In addition, he was awarded several campaign medals including the American Defense Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic Pacific

Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal and the Presidential Unit Citation. After his military service, he became a lifetime member of VFW Post 6528 where he previously served as Commander. He participated annually in Memorial Day salutes to fallen servicemen. He never forgot the men with whom he fought and he continued to honor the ultimate sacrifice they made for this country.

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Government surveyors came to Ole's farm in the fall and asked if they could do some surveying. Ole agreed and Lena even served them a nice meal at noontime. The next spring, the two surveyors stopped by and told Ole, "Because you were so kind to us, we wanted to give you this bad news in person instead of by letter. Ole replied, "What's the bad news? The surveyors stated, "Well, after our work we discovered your farm is not in Minnesota , but is actually in South Dakota !" Ole looked at Lena and said, " That's the best news I have heard in a long time, why I just told Lena this morning, I don't think I can take another winter in Minnesota."

Ya know, --- I have to agree wid Ole. Orv

## CEMETERY ESCORT DUTY

I just wanted to get the day over with and go down to Smokey's for a few cold ones. Sneaking a look at my watch, I saw the time, 1655. Five minutes to go before the cemetery gates are closed for the day. Full dress was hot in the August sun. Oklahoma summertime was as bad as ever — the heat and humidity at the same level — both too high. I saw the car pull into the drive, '69 or '70 model Cadillac Deville, looked factory-new. It pulled into the parking lot at a snail's pace.

An old woman got out so slow I thought she was paralyzed. She had a cane and a sheaf of flowers, about four or five bunches as best I could tell. I couldn't help myself. The thought came unwanted, and left a slightly bitter taste: "She's going to spend an hour, and for this old Marine my hip hurts like hell and I'm ready to get out of here right now!" But for this day my duty was to assist anyone coming in. Kevin would lock the "In" gate and if I could hurry the old biddy along, we might make the last half of happy hour at Smokey's. I broke Post Attention. My hip made gritty noises when I took the first step and the pain went up a notch. I must have made a real military sight; middle-aged man with a small pot-gut and half a limp, in Marine Full Dress Uniform, which had lost its razor crease about 30 minutes after I began the watch at the cemetery.

I stopped in front of her, halfway up the walk. She looked up at me with an old woman's squint. "Ma'am, may I assist you in any way?" She took long enough to answer. "Yes, son. Can you carry these flowers? I seem to be moving a tad slow these days." "My pleasure Ma'am." Well, it wasn't too much of a lie. She looked again. "Marine, where were you stationed?" "Vietnam, Ma'am. Ground-pounder. '69 to '71." She looked at me closer. "Wounded in action, I see. Well done, Marine. I'll be as quick as I can." I lied a little bigger "No hurry, Ma'am." She smiled, and winked at me. "Son, I'm 85-years old and I can tell a lie from a long way off. Let's get this done. Might be the last time I can do this. My name's Joanne Wieserman, and I've a few Marines I'd like to see one more time." "Yes, Ma'am. At your service." She headed for the World War I section, stopping at a stone. She picked one of the bunches out of my arm and laid it on top of the stone. She murmured something I couldn't quite make out. The name on the marble was Donald S. Davidson, USMC, France 1918. She turned away and made a straight line for the World War II section, stopping at one stone. I saw a tear slowly tracking its way down her cheek.

She put a bunch on a stone; the name was Stephen X. Davidson, USMC, 1943. She went up the row a ways and laid another bunch on a stone, Stanley J. Wieserman USMC, 1944. She paused for a second, "Two more, son, and we'll be done." I almost didn't say anything, but, "Yes,

Ma'am. Take your time." She looked confused. "Where's the Vietnam section, son? I seem to have lost my way." I pointed with my chin. "That way, Ma'am." "Oh!" she chuckled quietly. "Son, me and old age ain't too friendly." She headed down the walk I'd pointed at. She stopped at a couple of stones before she found the ones she wanted. She placed a bunch on Larry Wieserman USMC, 1968, and the last on Darrel Wieserman USMC, 1970. She stood there and murmured a few words I still couldn't make out. "OK, son, I'm finished. Get me back to my car and you can go home." "Yes, Ma'am. If I may ask, were those your kinfolk?" She paused. "Yes, Donald Davidson was my father; Stephen was my uncle; Stanley was my husband; Larry and Darrel were our sons. All killed in action, all Marines."

She stopped, whether she had finished, or couldn't finish, I don't know. She made her way to her car, slowly, and painfully. I waited for a polite distance to come between us and then double-timed it over to Kevin waiting by the car. "Get to the 'Out'-gate quick. I have something I've got to do." Kevin started to say something but saw the look I gave him. He broke the rules to get us there down the service road. We beat her. She hadn't made it around the rotunda yet. "Kevin, stand at attention next to the gate post. Follow my lead." I humped it across the drive to the other post.

When the Cadillac came pattering around from the hedges and began the short straight traverse to the gate, I called in my best gunny's voice: "TehenHut! Present Haaaarms!" I have to hand it to Kevin; he never blinked an eye; full dress attention and a salute that would make his DI proud. She drove through that gate with two old worn-out Marines giving her a send off she deserved, for service rendered to her country, and for knowing Duty, Honor and Sacrifice. I am not sure, but I think I saw a salute returned from that Cadillac.

Instead of "The End"....just think of "Taps".

As a final thought on my part, let me share a favorite prayer: 'Lord, keep our servicemen and women safe, whether they serve at home or overseas. Hold them in your loving hands and protect them as they protect us.' Let's all keep those currently serving and those who have gone before in our thoughts. They are the reason for the many freedoms we enjoy. 'In God We Trust.'



*Don Johnson*