

A New Generation of Tunnel Rats Explores Okinawa!

Many Sixth Division Marines and their families worry that the memory of the Division and its accomplishments will be lost over time. Our Historian. Laura Lacey, reports that a new generation is keeping the flame alive.

As a young woman living on Okinawa with her Marine husband, Laura spent many hours exploring tunnels and other sites in her effort to learn more about the battle. That on-theground research turned Laura into a self-described tunnel rat. She became a highly-regarded expert on the battle and the Sixth Marine Division. In 2007, she published a book, *Stay Off* the Skyline: The Sixth Marine Division on Okinawa – An Oral History.

Recently, Stephanie ("Steph") Pawelski read Stav Off the Sky- the word about what happened *line* and contacted Laura. Steph in the Battle of Okinawa. In is living on Okinawa with her Marine husband, Chief Warrant Officer 4, Jeff Pawelski. They are on their second tour on Okinawa. During their first tour from 2013 to 2019, they began exploring the island and learned to appreciate its unique history. Steph told Laura that

some of her favorite dates with Jeff are exploring the caves and sites of the Battle of Okinawa. There are new tunnel rats on Okinawa!

Steph's interest in the Sixth Division comes from her grandfather, Joseph Sierocinski, who served with the 6th Pioneer Bn-C on Okinawa. She says he spent many weeks in wet places hiding from and fighting Japanese soldiers. When he finally took off his boots and socks, layers of skin peeled away. Although the skin eventually grew back, he was always in pain. He also suffered from flashbacks. From her grandfather's experiences, Steph developed a strong desire to understand the place that had such a big impact on his life.

Like Laura, Steph is spreading 2022, she started a Facebook page – Okinawa Battle Sites – where she posts pictures of the interesting places she and Jeff visit. She describes the current condition of the sites and writes about what happened there

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Jeff and Steph Pawelski on a battlefield "date" at Kakazu Ridge in Okinawa

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Tunnel Rats

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during the war. Laura says Steph's research and insights are stellar. Others must agree because the site has almost three thousand followers.

Laura encourages everyone to check out Okinawa Battle Sites on Facebook. There are an amazing number of photos and observations about Okinawa. Below is a post from Steph in January. Laura says it expresses some of the feelings she had when she was there.

"Sometimes the actual site doesn't compare to the experiences Jeff and I have when searching for them. We took off from work this past Friday in hopes of checking out a few Okinawa battle sites.

We went to a hill in search of a mortar trench. We searched the southside of the hill, then the northside. It didn't appear to have been prepared for the Japanese military to fight the United States, even though entrances to caves and tunnels may have been destroyed in 1945 or has collapsed since then. Vegetation quickly grows over top of these areas making it nearly impossible to locate. We didn't find a thing.

We took a break after three hours of searching and enjoyed lunch at Jolly Pasta! Jeff wanted to go back.

We searched another part of the hill. This ground is soft, the vegetation is thick, and the grass is tall; it was impossible to walk through. Our arms, sickles, and backpacks got tangled, and we had to fight the whole way through. The mosquitos simply created more annoyance.

After two hours Jeff found an opening; the hole was no larger than our backpacks. We squeezed in. It led to a gentle 15-foot slope that transitioned into a small storage room; we could barely stand up in it. Jeff found opening #2 by falling into it; large elephant ear leaves grew out of the entrance camouflaging the hole. This hole led to another slope

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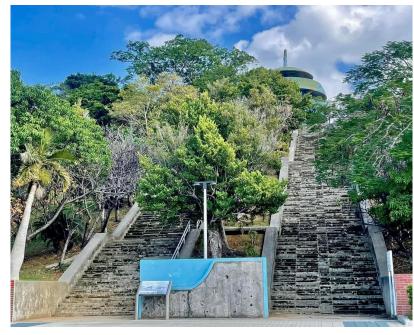




Jeff Pawelski



above: Kakazu Ridge about 80 years ago below: Kakazutakadai Park today



Tunnel Rats

(continued from the prior page)

with a tiny room. In between these two trenches is a mortar pit that shells were launched from. We were done exploring for the day."

Since April, Steph has been doing a rough timeline of the battle and posting about major events that took place. Here's an example – a post about the fight for Kakazu Ridge:

"The fight for Kakazu Ridge began on April 9, 1945. This small chunk of rock did not look diffi-

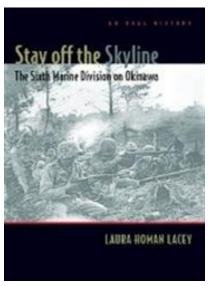
cult to the U.S. military. Little action occurred since landing on Okinawa a week prior, but things were about to change. Kakazu Ridge was the first of numerous outer defense positions used to protect the Japanese army's headquarters five miles away.

Kakazutakadai Park today is a beautiful outdoor attraction that is fun for the whole family. It is a great area for a picnic with a newer playground. This area is well-maintained. Several battle-related sites include an observation deck, a pill box, an underground bunker, and a portion of a wall with bullet damage. All these sites saw action during the fight for Kakazu Ridge."

Laura could not be happier that the tunnel rat tradition continues. She says that with the dedication of new historians like Steph and her husband Jeff, the Battle of Okinawa will not be forgotten.

Many thanks to Laura Lacey and Steph Pawelski for contributing to this story.

See more about Steph on the next page.



Stay Off the Skyline, available on Amazon



Steph's grandfather, Joseph Sierocinski (6th Pioneer Bn-C)



Laura Lacey at right on Okinawa in 1996. Laura was the first woman involved in a dig, and they named it the Mother's Day Dig in her honor. Her children are pictured with her.



Joseph Sierocinski with a buddy

The Life of a Tunnel Rat

by Stephanie (Steph) Pawelski

I enjoy researching, exploring, and writing stories that bring to light the lesser-known history of the Battle of Okinawa. Jeff and I continue to find sites and docu-

ment our adventures in the jungles of Okinawa.

Even though many hills are less prominent, there are numerous openings that lead to tunnels and caves. Unfortunately, the thick jungles provide excellent camouflage that makes finding these openings difficult and exhausting. We must be careful of bobby traps;

they are openings that drop straight down. Many areas are covered by rocks of every size. They shift as we walk over them. Vines trap our feet, making our movement slow and painful. Other times, we need to climb up cliffs, scale limestone walls, straddle rocks, and struggle through walls of thick grass. It is exhausting, but Jeff and I stay close to one another or use our walkie-talkies if we get separated.

Jeff and I often find artifacts and relics, dog tags, unexploded ordnance, and human bones throughout our adventures in the jungles! I have found numerous U.S. dog tags throughout Okinawa. I send pictures of each to individuals with the same last name through social media, and I ask if this person is someone they know. I have only received one message back, and that was from Karl Kleinebreil, who cur-



rently lives in Arizona. He told me, "That is my uncle. I would love to have it, show it to my dad who is with me, and return it to his children. I am speechless. I am grateful. Thank you." I sent Karl and his family a box of Japanese Kit Kats, origami, and, of course, his uncle's dog tag. Since then, Karl returned the dog tag to his uncle's children. He told me, "This helped to create a bond with my cousins that was never developed until now." Karl and his cousins, now, talk regularly.

We sometimes come across pieces of leather pouches, soles to Japanese soldiers' boots, buttons, and other small objects. We leave these where we find them. Jeff and I also found a metal canteen with "U.S. Vollpat,

1944" engraved on the bottom, as well as a United States Army Medical Corps mug from 1961. I kept these two items.

> Reading is a huge part of this adventure; it helps to fill in the missing information on many sites. I have access to books about the battle that are no longer published, and I continuously collect pamphlets from museums and buy books about the battle from bookstores in town. Reading information from the Japanese perspective furthers my research on the

Battle of Okinawa even more. I have developed a clearer insight through researching and exploring the battle while living on this island. The more I read, the more I realize there is still so much more to learn about the Japanese and Americans fighting in the battle for Okinawa.





From Our Historian: Memorials to the Sixth Marine Division Are Everywhere!

If you are vigilant, you can find memorials to the Sixth Marine Division.

My son was at a conference in Camp Pendleton this winter and came across the memorial shown at left in a community center. Then my husband and I were in a winery in Grapevine, Texas and saw the bottles of wine shown at right.

So keep your eyes open!

~Laura Lacey



A Note from VMI Award Winner Sebastian M. Ramirez

Each year VMI awards one scholarship and two awards to Cadets who are pursuing a Marine Corps Commission through VMI's Naval ROTC program. Sebastian Ramirez received a wooden footlocker containing books.

The awards and scholarships are funded by the Sixth Marine Division Association in honor of Commanding General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. General Shepherd's granddaughter, Sallie Garrett Shepherd, is the Association's liaison with VMI, and we thank her for reaching out to this year's awardees.

At this time I'm on active duty at NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach on a temporary assignment with 3 other USMC 2nd Lieutenants. We are working for Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic as OPS Assistants for the summer prior to our TBS report-in.

I'm a Virginia native having grown up mostly in Richmond and attended high school in Williamsburg. I've been largely inspired to pursue a career of service by my mother and father who serve in the community as a nurse and police officer, respectively. When it was time for me to look at college, I knew that I wanted to commission into a branch of the military.

VMI was the only college I applied to. After experiencing an openhouse, I was easily convinced to pursue an intense lifestyle where I could grow and develop alongside like-minded individuals. During my four years at VMI, I developed beyond what I ever thought was possible, and I made lifelong friends. On top of this, I discovered and achieved my dream of becoming a United States Marine.



2nd Lt. Ramirez with his parents

Upon entering VMI, I was on a path for commissioning into the USAF, but after two years of underwhelming training, I wanted something different. That's when I made the switch to the Marine Corps program, allowing me to attend OCS and now serve as a 2nd Lieutenant.

Having received an award on behalf of the Sixth Marine Division and in the name of General Shepherd, I am profoundly humbled and honored. My peers and I understand the legacy which we must uphold, and General Shepherd himself upheld that legacy.

Semper Fi & Rah Virginia Mil.

With gratitude, 2nd Lieutenant Sebastian M. Ramirez



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Striking Sixth Newsletter

This newsletter is an official publication of the Sixth Marine Division Association and is published three times each year: March, July and November.

Subscriptions are \$10 per calendar year.

Subscription checks, address changes, donations and death notices should be mailed or emailed to:

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Message from the President



I have been going through things I have accumulated over the years from the Sixth Marine Division Association, and it has prompted

me to submit an article for the newsletter. It's been a while.

I am going to start by copying most of an article that I wrote in the summer of 2011. It begins:

"Hi All, I was asked to tell you a little bit about myself. As you all know I've been hanging around for a little while now. I think I'll start when I was growing up.

I can remember my father (Pat Haynes Headquarters Co., 3rd Bn, 22nd Marines) talking about the Marine Corps and visiting some of his "buddies" as well as them visiting us over the years. For years and years, I sent his Christmas cards to those that were close to him in the Corps, so I feel as if I have known some you pretty much all my life.

Then the Association started to have their reunions that my mother would attend with my father until her passing in 1990. He continued to come to the reunions. My sister and I started to attend a few with him. He lived for the reunions to renew old acquaintances and possibly make new friends. The year he passed I promised myself that I would try to attend the reunions in his honor. He has been gone since 2006 and I'm still here. I have two daughters that live in the Pittsburgh area and a

son that is stationed at Fort Bragg, NC. I've been active in the Women's Auxiliary for the past three or four years, two of them as Vice President. I want to tell you that I am completely in awe and totally honored to have been chosen to be your President Elect. My hope and dream is to be able to perpetuate the Sixth Marine Division Association through the Lineal Descendants. I also hope that this will let other Lineal Descendants know that their Marine doesn't have to be present for them to keep their interest and participation in the program."

It is now 2024 and I have been either President or President Elect since 2011. It all began with my "mission" which was to perpetuate the memory of the Sixth Marine Division men who so honorably fought in World War II. And...it is still my mission to do so. I am deeply humbled by this great group of Warriors, past and present. They all became my adoptive fathers when mine passed. Thank you to Ed Marsalek, Marty Essex, Sam Petriello, Andy Sinatra, Neal McCallum, Doc Wells and many others for believing in the Lineal Descendants.

I truly miss the reunions and all the friendships I made along the way. Who knows, maybe one day there may be another get together.

God Bless each one of you. Stay healthy and enjoy life to the fullest.

~Connie

Editor's Note



For years, Bob and I have talked about going to Okinawa to see the island that played such a huge role in his

father's life. We still hope we can get there someday. In the meantime, we are enjoying the photos and observations posted by Steph Pawelski on her Facebook page, Okinawa Battle Sites. If you are on Facebook, I urge you to check it out.

Bob and I are grateful to Laura Lacey for introducing us to Steph and Okinawa Battle Sites. It's fascinating – and fun! – to follow along with Steph and her husband, Jeff, as they explore the island's many battle sites. Like Laura, we are so pleased that they are introducing new generations to the Sixth Marine Division's accomplishments and sacrifices.

I really hope that we can visit Okinawa sometime, but one thing I can assure you – I will not be crawling into any caves. I am not fond of snakes and large bugs. Okay, terrified is a more accurate way to put it. I applaud Laura, Steph and Jeff for their bravery and willingness to encounter creepy crawling things in the pursuit of history. All I can say is, "Yikes!"

~Carroll McGowan



According to Steph, who found this bug in a cave, it's bigger than her hand!

MAIL CALL \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star

Raymond Kelly

My father, Raymond Kelly (pictured below) was part of the Sixth. I would love to touch base with anyone who knew him. He was originally part of the 2nd Marine Division.

David Kelly dckdavid65@gmail.com (203) 954-5770



above — Raymond Kelly below — his medals, etc.



Pvt. Joseph Julian Wioskowski KIA 5/15/45

I am looking for a photo of the 2nd Battalion of the 22nd Marines from before May 15, 1945. That was the day my uncle, Pvt. Joseph Julian Wioskowski (pictured at right), was KIA. He crossed the equator around Christmas 1944 and arrived in the Russell Islands on 29 December 1944. On 14 March 1945, he sailed from Guadalcanal aboard the USS Middleton, arriving on Okinawa on 1 April 1945.

Pvt. Wioskowski was from Detroit. His younger brother joined the Corps in 1946 and is still alive. We have researched his service and ships to get lots of information. Thank you!

BJ Wioskowski Bjbear717@chartermi.net (734) 639-9608



Clyde Hooper

I would like to hear from anyone who served with my father, Clyde Hooper, Chief Cook, of Hickman County, TN. I'm looking for stories and pictures.

Thanks, Dorothy Hooper Weberling dorweber@aol.com





above — Joseph Wioskowski below — his grave



Robert Ralph Rauh

I am interested if anyone knows any stories about my Poppy, Robert Ralph Rauh. I still have his copy of the Sixth Marine Division book and patch.

Melissa Rose Mrauh365@live.com





2nd Battalion 29th Marines

2nd Battalion 29th Marines

The photo above is of the 2nd Battalion 29th Marines. My grandfather is in the bottom right. I thought your readers might like to see it.

Sean Rodgers



Roger Armand Berard (22nd Mar-2-E)

My grandfather, Roger Armand Berard (pictured at right), was in the Sixth Marine Division. He never talked about his time on Guadalcanal and Okinawa, not even to his friends at the American Legion.

I am including a photo of him and his buddies that was taken when he first got to the Pacific. My

grandfather is the one kneeling in daughter. If anyone has any inthe front. While on Okinawa, he was bayoneted in the back of the neck and shot in the head. Amazingly, he survived, but his buddies in the picture were killed.

I'm proud of my grandfather, and I want to pass that on to my

formation about him, I would love to hear from them.

Raeanne Haas Pritchett Falloutgrrl@me.com (561) 704-7935





Roger Armand above left and with his buddies above right

Summer 2024



1st Lt Travis D. King

I would like to hear from anyone who knew my dad, 1st Lt. Travis D. King (pictured right). I am including a photo of the Tokyo Bay Occupation Force (TF31, above) in which he is circled, as well as a photo of his Task Force Thirty-One Certificate. The back of the certificate has signatures and addresses of some of his fellow Marines. They may be gone now, but maybe some family members might see them?

Fay Smith <u>alb8ros@yahoo.com</u>

Editor's note: Task Force 31 was a US Navy task force with the United States Third Fleet that transported Marine Corps units to the Miura Peninsula of Japan for occupation duties.

Photos

top: Tokyo Bay Occupation Force

middle left: Travis King

middle right: Travis King's TF31

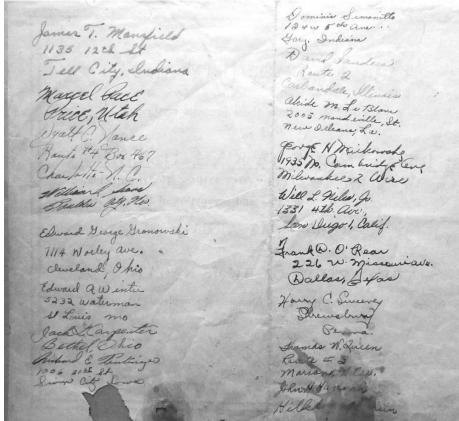
Certificate

bottom: signatures from the back of

the certificate







MAIL CALL \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star

PFC Anthony Orlando

Hello, I was hoping to find out if anyone knew or has any photos of my late grandfather, Private First Class Anthony Orlando. He was originally a member of Battery A, 75mm Pack Howitzer Battalion in the First Provisional Marine Brigade. Then he was a member of the Sixth Marine Division after the First Provisional Marine Brigade disbanded on Guadalcanal.

According to his service diary, he participated in campaigns in the Samoan Islands, New Zealand, Guam, New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, and on Okinawa, I am attaching a photo of a page from his diary listing some of his shipmates (see below). Maybe someone will recognize a name there.

Thank you, Dan Orlando danorlando8@gmail.com (330) 612-5649

Edward "Bud" Williams

I would like to hear from anyone who knew my uncle, Edward "Bud" Williams. He was in E Company, 29th Marines on Sugarloaf Hill on Okinawa.

Thank you, Jim Fitzpatrick jwfitzpatric@yahoo.com (513) 542-8879

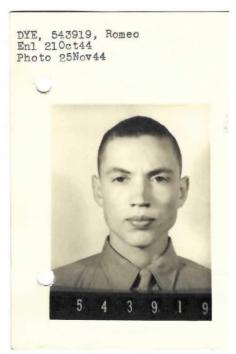


above: Edward "Bud" Williams below: Anthony Orlando's diary

Romeo Dye

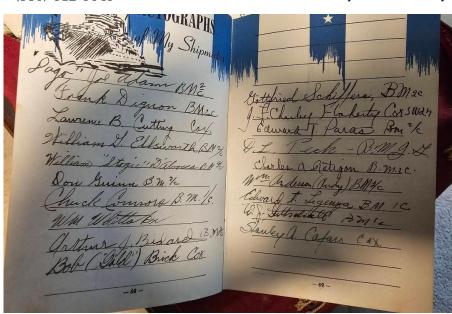
I would love to hear from anyone who knew my great uncle, Romeo Dye, KIA 6/21/45. His nickname was Chub.

Anthony Romeo (Tony) Dye <u>td0512@aol.com</u> (813) 477-7614



Romeo Dye (above and below)





MAIL CALL \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star \star

Roland Joseph Soucy

My dad, Roland Joseph Soucy, served as Quartermaster of the 6th Service Battalion/
Headquarters Co. from April 1945 to April 1946. Before that, he was in Quantico and Camp LeJeune. He also served in Guam and Tsingtao, China. I believe he was sent to the Sixth Division as part of the replenishment draft.

I have many photos from his scrapbook that I would love to share. Some seem like souvenir style photos, while others are of him and his friends in Guam, Tsingtao, and an unknown

location. I am wondering if anyone will recognize any of the people in the photos.

Jeannine Soucy Nash eibaseballwidow@ comcast.net

Editor's note: Some of the photos were labeled by Soucy, and those labels are shown below the photo.



Roland Joseph Soucy



top row: Dick Ziegler, Pop Hinkel bottom row: Joe, Roland Soucy









All of us in the Sixth Marine Division Association extend our sympathy to the family and friends of those listed below. May they rest in peace.

Cedergreen, Eldon	6th Tank Bn	02/26/24
Clarkson, Frederick Donald	4th Mar-2-E	06/03/89
Henesey, Gregory	6th Marine Division	09/16/14
Hill, Floyd M.	6th Jasco	05/16/24
Keeley, John M.	4th Mar-1-B	01/07/20
Meacham, Charles H.	4th Mar-3-K	03/02/24
Nuckols, Jack R.	22nd Mar-3-K	12/03/23
Schunk, Arthur M.	6th Mar Div-HQ-HQ	02/05/17

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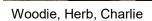
MAIL CALL (cont.)





Miss Hsi, Packard







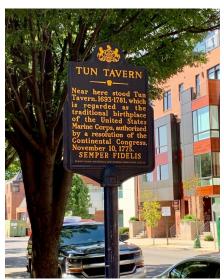
Charlie Ranberg

Tun Tavern To Rise Again

by Carroll McGowan, with special thanks to Bob McCalmont for bringing this to our attention

"Tun" is an Old English word for a barrel of beer. Although it's not in use today, Marines know the word as the name of Tun Tavern, the birthplace of the Marine Corps. On November 10, 1775, the Second Continental Congress commissioned Samuel Nicholas to raise two battalions of Marines for the American Revolution. Nicholas was a Freemason who belonged to a Masonic Lodge that frequently met at Tun Tavern, so he used the tayern as his base for recruiting Marines.

Erected in 1693, Tun Tavern stood at the corner of Water Street and Tun Alley on the Delaware River waterfront in Philadelphia. It served as a military recruitment site for the Pennsylvania Militia organized by Ben Franklin in 1756 to respond to Native American uprisings. It is also the place where John Ad-



Tun Tavern commemorative plaque

ams and the Naval Committee outlined the structure for what became the United States Navv. Tun Tavern was the earliest Freemason Lodge in



the original Tun Tavern

Pennsylvania and the meeting place for several charitable organizations that still exist to-

Unfortunately, the historic tavern burned down in 1781, near the end of the Revolutionary War. Today, Interstate 95 runs over the original site of the tavern. However, a commemorative plague stands close to where Tun Tavern once stood.

Members of the Tun Tavern Legacy Foundation would like to see the tavern resurrected. On April 30, 2024, the Foundation announced it had acquired land to rebuild and reestablish an authentic reproduction of the original Tun Tavern building. It will be sited at 19 S. 2nd Street, just 250 yards from the original Tun Tavern site.

According to the Foundation, the new Tun Tavern will function as a mariner's tavern and restaurant reminiscent of colonial Philadelphia. It will serve period-influenced food and refreshments and provide entertainment and education through exhibits, historical documents, and special events. Profits will be donated to support veteran causes, Masonic and other charities, and educational scholarships.

The Foundation, largely comprised of Marines and freemasons, is now in the process of raising funds to rebuild the tavern. Groundbreaking is expected to take place in November of this year, and the opening is planned to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the Marine Corps and Navy in November 2025.

For more information, go to thetun.org.

Summer 2024 14

Happy Birthday, Marines!



D C Rigby (left) turned 100 on March 15, 2024



Ross LaPorte (above) turned 99 on March 28, 2024



Ken Wells (above) turned 99 on April 5, 2024

Donations — Thank You!

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S. Louise Ratliff

Ed Whalen

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Striking Sixth Newsletter

Summer 2024

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Rebirth of Tun Tavern Planned for 2025

At our 2019 Reunion in Philadelphia, we stopped to see the commemorative plaque that stands close to where the original Tun Tavern — birthplace of the U.S. Marine Corps — was located.

If all goes as planned, Marines will soon be able to gather at an authentic Tun Tavern replica 250 yards from the original site.

See page 14 for more information.

standing beneath the Tun Tavern plaque at left: Herbert Kinney, Lester Penny, Kenneth Wells, Bennett Bard, Leonard Turner, Neal McCallum, and Harry McKnight