

# STRIKING SIXTH

## 1st Provisional Marine Brigade Newsletter



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Fall 2025

## We Got Together in Quantico...And Had a Terrific Time!



There were 57 attendees, including five World War II veterans. Most of the group is pictured above. Front and center are the five WWII veterans (L-R): **Neal McCallum** (29th Mar-2-F), **Paul Judd** (4th Mar-3 Corpsman), **Donald Wioskowski** (Marine who served in WWII and Korea whose older brother, Joseph Wioskowski, was in 22nd Mar-2-HQ and KIA 15 May 1945), **Lester Penny** (29th Mar-2-HQ), and **Walter LaSota** (22nd Mar-2-I).

### Five WWII Veterans Enrich Our Time Together!

We hoped we'd get a good turnout. We hoped some new people would come. We hoped they'd blend well with the regulars. And most of all, we hoped a few WWII veterans would be able to make the trip. We are happy to report that all of our wishes came true! We got an excellent turnout, and it was amazing how quickly everyone bonded. We shared stories, we looked at artifacts, and of course, we expressed our gratitude for the veterans of the Sixth Marine Division.

Thank you to everyone who came! Special thanks to Connie Housewart for spearheading the event and making all the arrangements with the hotel and caterers. Thanks also to Joe Hennessey for his presentations and for coordinating our museum visit. And finally, thanks to Kate McGuigan and the anonymous donor who covered the cost of our dinners.

*See pages 2-9 for more photos and info from the event.*

Fall 2025

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# Expressing Gratitude to Sixth Marine Division Veterans



1) Neal McCallum with one of his many fans

2) Walter LaSota, Peggy Warner and Mike Senko

3) Shirley and Paul Judd with their daughter Doris Burruss

4) Lester Penny with his great grandson Sam Nicholson

5) Joseph Wioskowski who was KIA on Okinawa

6) Family members of Joseph Wioskowski — seated is his brother Donald, also a WWII Marine; standing are Donald's daughter BJ Wioskowski, daughter-in-law Lenora Wioskowski and son Richard Wioskowski. How wonderful that they came to honor their brother/uncle's sacrifice.



# Making New Friends and Reconnecting with Old Ones



- 1) Randall and Lynn Setzer
- 2) Brittany Baker and Janet Ulrich
- 3) Mary Brauer and Donna Bremer
- 4) Neal McCallum and Zack Wolf
- 5) Bob McGowan and Ross Hood
- 6) Connie Houseweart and Phuong Riles
- 7) Jim and Melanie Rigby
- 8) Kevin Welch and Connie Houseweart



# Sharing Favorite Stories and Memories



- 1) Barbara and Joe Kite
- 2) Rick Willauer and Shirley Judd
- 3) Patty Payne, Sharon Woodhouse, Anita Benedetti, Melinda Benedetti and Lisa Benedetti
- 4) David Hilner, Bob McGowan and Connie Houseweart
- 5) The Bertram family — Jack, Nathan, Laura, Kenny, Dolores and Rich
- 6) Dan Petriello, Jeanne LaSorda and Maria Geserick with the Sixth Marine Division rug made by Jeanne and framed by Dan for their late father, Sam Petriello (15th Mar-4-L). They generously gave it to Connie Houseweart when Sam passed away.



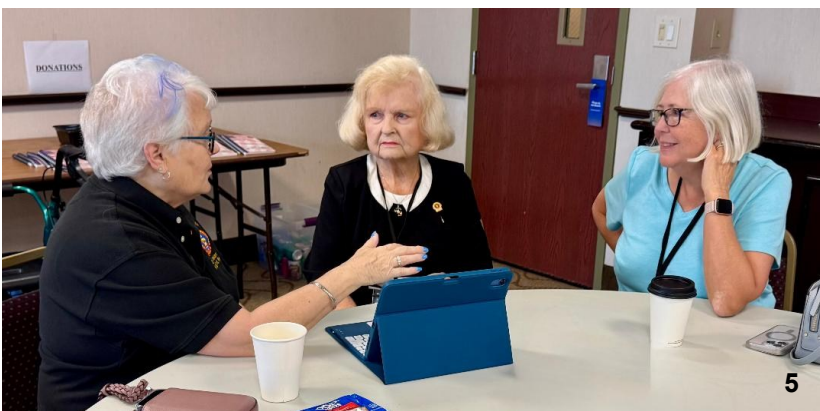
# Examining Books, Maps, Photos and Artifacts



Thanks to everyone who brought their artifacts and mementos to share with our group.

- 1) Kevin Walsh displayed an interesting collection of uniforms and other artifacts from the Sixth Marine Division on Okinawa.
- 2) Mary Beth Tierney and Patty Payne
- 3) Walter LaSota and Donny Willey
- 4) Neal McCallum, Lisa Benedetti and Melinda Benedetti
- 5) Sallie Shepherd and Cynthia LaSota
- 6) Walter LaSota and Brittany Baker

# Reviewing Military History and Research



- 1) Max and Marilyn Santiago and Larry and Sheila Eason
- 2) Phuong Riles and Rick Willauer
- 3) Joe Hennessey, Mary Beth Tierney and Neal McCallum
- 4) Sallie Shepherd and Donna Bremer
- 5) Sharon Woodhouse, Dolores Bertram and Helen Simmons
- 6) Max Santiago, BJ Wioskowski and Marilyn Santiago

# Visiting the National Museum of the Marine Corps



- 1) Neal McCallum, Richard Wioskowski, Paul Judd, BJ Wioskowski, Donald Wioskowski, Joe Hennessey, Lester Penny and Walter LaSota
- 2) Major General James W. Lukeman, USMC (Ret).
- 3) Neal McCallum and Colonel Keil Gentry, USMC (Ret)
- 4) Mary Brauer and Lester Penny
- 5) Melinda Benedetti, Anita Benedetti and Lisa Benedetti

## Two Marines and a Tailor Get the Job Done for PFC Walter LaSota

Tuesday evening in Quantico, PFC Walter LaSota (22nd Mar-2-D) and his daughter Cynthia were chatting with Donny Willey. PFC LaSota was only 17 years old when he fought and was injured (twice) on Okinawa. He mentioned that he had a couple of Marine events coming up and he hoped he could attend in uniform. The wheels started turning in Donny's head. As a retired Marine Gunnery Sergeant, he had access to the Quantico Post Exchange (PX), and he was familiar with the uniform and tailoring facilities there. He suggested they go and explore possibilities. The LaSotas jumped at the chance, and the next morning Donny and Mike Senko (also a Marine) drove them over to the PX.

As host to the Marine Officers Candidate School, Quantico is a Marine showplace, and the PX is top of the line, as is the tailor shop. In fact, one of the two Marine Corps four-star generals was shopping there that morning.

The visit created quite a buzz, especially when they heard about the Sixth Marine Division reunion. The Chief Tailor (who has more than forty years at the exchange) was delighted to outfit a 99-year-old PFC. While tailoring normally entails a several day wait, the tailor agreed to do this job overnight.

To speed up the process, Donny organized and mounted the proper medals and insignia, down to PFC LaSota's salty old Globe and Anchors. He found a Sixth Marine Division shoulder patch in the possession of Connie Houseweart (one of only two she had left). She was happy to donate it to the cause, and Mike and Donnie took it over to the tailor.

On Thursday morning, the uniform was ready as promised. Later that day, Donny and Cynthia helped PFC LaSota prepare for a surprise showing at the Reunion's farewell dinner.

As everyone was enjoying their pizza, Donny entered the room. Using his central-casting Marine Senior

*(continued on the next page)*



Donny Willey, PFC Walter LaSota, his daughter Cynthia LaSota and Mike Senko



## Two Marines and a Tailor (cont.)

Non-Commissioned Officer voice and manner, he called on PFC LaSota to present himself front and center. Cynthia wheeled him in, and PFC LaSota stood erect and saluted. What a moment it was. The crowd was full of sincere emotion and admiration, and they gave him a well-deserved standing ovation.

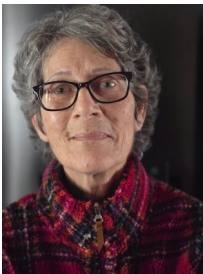
~Mike Senko



Follow up in November —  
PFC Walter LaSota shines at the  
Marine Corps Ball



## Message from the President



I had a vision over a year ago to put together a Sixth Marine Division Get Together. Everyone was skeptical, to say the least. I did my due diligence, and after many months of conference calls and emails, it all came together...  
The Get Together of 2025!

Everything seemed to fall into place. The hotel provided us with a place to hang out and shoot the breeze. No hectic schedule to adhere to. The day we went to the Marine Corps Museum I was totally blown away by Major General Lukeman and Colonel Gentry's hospitality. It did my heart good to have this group honored the way they were.

Joe Hennessey! What can I say about him? Not enough!!! All good of course. His presentations were extremely detailed. His knowledge was above

and beyond. Without our Bob McGowan, we never would have gotten to be blessed with Mr. Hennessey. Thank you, Bob.

Famous Dave's went off without a hitch. Thank you to Patty Payne's sister, Kate McGuigan, for her donation of the barbecue dinner. Thank you to our anonymous donor for the pizza dinner. Finally, thank you to all the board members for helping turn my vision into reality.

It was a really great turn out. The camaraderie picked up right where we left off at the last reunion in Fredericksburg. The new friendships that formed were enlightening. I can only hope that everyone had as great a time as I did.

Would I do it again? You betcha!!

God bless, good health and be safe,  
Connie

## Editor's Note



There's not much I can add to what Connie said above about our gathering in Quantico. Bob and I had a wonderful time, as you can see from the smiles on our faces in this picture.

We loved seeing old friends and meeting so many new

people who share our love of the Sixth Marine Division. We especially loved that we had five veterans from World War II with us. What an inspiration they are!

As the days shorten and the temperatures drop, I wish you all a holiday season filled with joy, love and peace.

~Carroll McGowan

# Meet VMI Scholarship Winner, Ryan L. Halverson

*Each year VMI awards three scholarships to Cadets who are pursuing a Marine Corps Commission through VMI's Naval ROTC program. This year, all three Cadets also received a copy of The Mosquito Bowl by Buzz Bissinger.*

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

First and foremost, I am truly honored to have received this award. It means a great deal to me because of what it represents. Here is a little bit about myself and the experiences that have shaped who I am today.

I was born into a Marine Corps family; my father served for 27 years. Growing up in a military household came with unique challenges and lessons. We moved frequently, often leaving behind the comfort of familiarity: close friends, schools I had just gotten used to, neighborhoods I started to enjoy, and hobbies I began pursuing. Before I graduated high school, I moved more than 12 times and attended nine different schools. Change became constant in my life, and adaptability quickly turned from a necessity to a strength. During all of these transitions two things remained the same: my family and the Marine Corps. These two things provided me with a deep sense of purpose, belonging, and identity. They have played a crucial role in shaping my values, work ethic, and long-term goals.

When it came time to choose a path after high school, I decided to come to VMI. I was drawn to it because I wanted a college experience that would be unlike any other. A place that could challenge me mentally, physically, and morally. Most importantly, I came to VMI with the goal of Commissioning into the Marine Corps and following in my father's footsteps. However, after learning more about Marines like General Shepherd and many others, it quickly became about honoring their legacies as well. I knew that the road ahead was



Ryan Halverson with his family

going to be difficult, but I love welcoming challenges.

My first year at VMI was filled with the challenges I had hoped for. I learned many lessons the hard way. Through mistakes, missteps, and getting in trouble I began to find myself. I was forced to reflect, adapt, and grow. I believe that pushing through adversity is the most powerful form of development. VMI has proved this time and time again. I study English, which has sharpened my ability to think critically and communicate

effectively—skills I know will serve me well as a future Marine Corps officer.

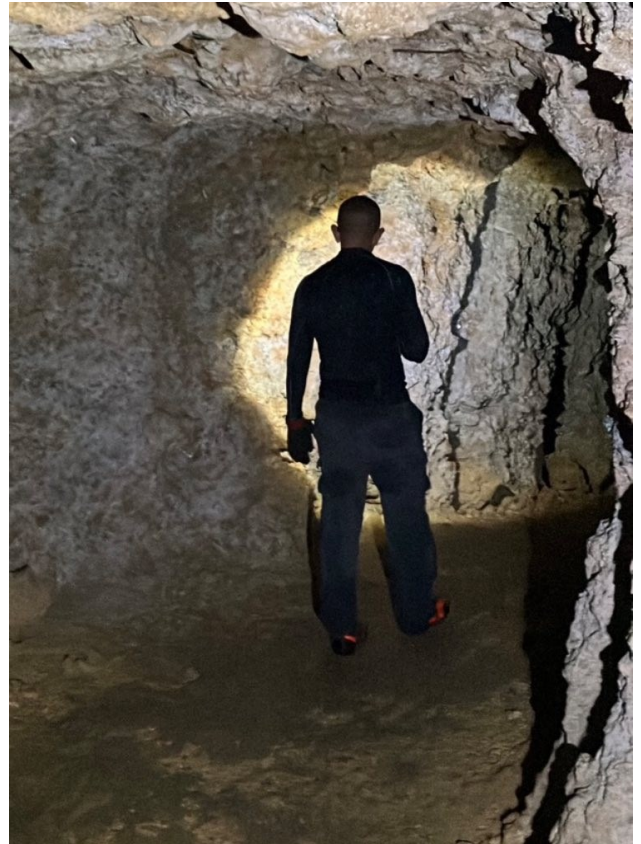
This coming year, I will be serving as the Rat Disciplinary Committee President and the Company Gunnery Sergeant for Marine Company. These leadership positions mean a great deal to me, and I don't take them lightly. While VMI as an institution has offered me incredible experiences and opportunities, I believe that most of my personal growth and leadership development have come specifically through my involvement with Marine Company. The expectations, discipline, and camaraderie within that unit have continually pushed me to be better—not just as a cadet, but as a leader and teammate.

Receiving this award is both a humbling honor and a reminder of how far I've come. It also motivates me to continue striving for excellence and to lead with integrity, humility, and purpose. Thank you again for this recognition—it means more than words can express.

Very Respectfully,  
Ryan L. Halverson

# A Crack of Thunder, A Glimpse of War

by Steph Pawelski, Okinawa Battle Sites, August 3, 2025



Last weekend, [Jeff](#) and I came across what looked like a simple cave entrance tucked into a hillside. It was unmarked, quiet, and easy to overlook.

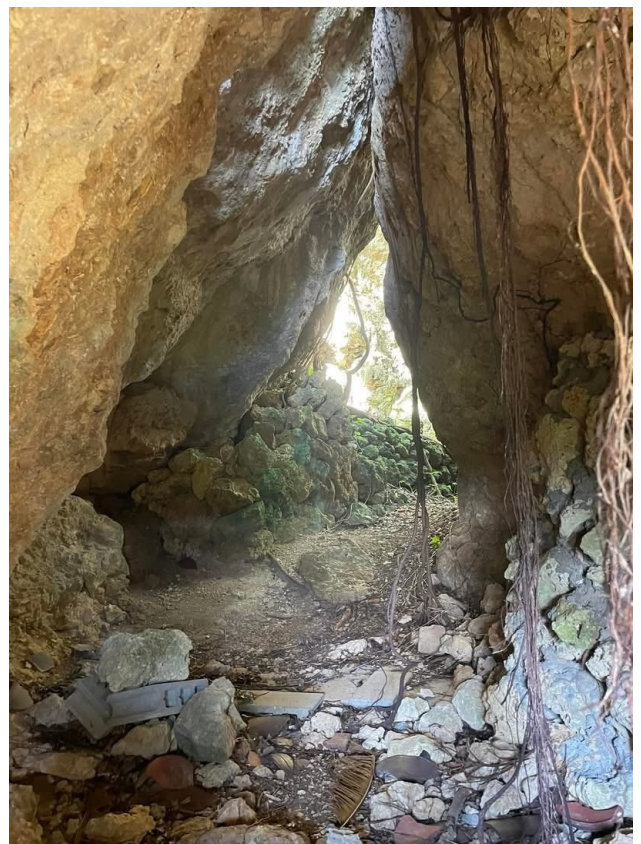
We followed the path in. The space transformed from a cave to something dug out. A hallway stretched ahead of us. It branched in multiple directions, connecting hallways to hidden rooms and lookout points. In a few spots, openings overlooked the coast below. We could only imagine what it must have felt like to use these tunnels during the battle; to watch and wait, hidden from the sky.

Just then, a loud crack of thunder exploded above us. The sound echoed through the tunnel, bouncing off the walls and rumbling into the earth. For a short moment, it gave a small glimpse into the experiences of those who fought here even though the thunder barely sounded like the impact of naval gunfire.

Jeff grew nervous, and after that thunderclap, he suggested we leave. Out of respect, and having already explored the main sections, I agreed it was time. But that moment left a lasting impression, it was as if we were sharing space with echoes of the past.

*{Follow Steph and Okinawa Battle Sites on Facebook.}*

pictured top left: Steph Pawelski; top right: Jeff Pawelski



# MAIL CALL



## China Marines

The photo at right is of a group of Sixth Division Marines in China following the Battle of Okinawa. My father, Charles Setzer (29th Mar-3-H) is second from the right kneeling in the front row. Does anyone recognize any of the men with him?

Thanks,  
Lynn Setzer  
hikester1000@gmail.com



## Knife Survives Okinawa

My great uncle, Gabriel Savoy (sp?), worked as a welder on submarines at the Portsmouth naval shipyard. He sent my Dad the knife pictured below, which he made from scrap steel from a submarine he was working on. He used scrap materials and a hand-powered grinding wheel to finish shaping and sharpening it.



knife carried by Paul Cote during the Battle of Okinawa



6th Division Marines in China. Charles Setzer is second from right in front row.

My Dad, Paul Cote, served as a telephone lineman with HQ 2/29. He received the knife when he was training on the canal, and he carried it throughout the Battle of Okinawa.

Pete Henry is another member

of HQ 2/29. He named his son Paul after my father because he saved him from a mortar attack while running wire to a company HQ.

Paul Cote  
sargentnoneck3@gmail.com

## Happy 104th Birthday to Marvin Skeath!



Marvin Skeath (4th Mar-HQ-HQ) celebrates his 104th birthday with his good friend Zack Wolf

## Mosquito Bowl Film Captures the Spirit and Heroism of the Sixth Division Marines



*Mosquito Bowl* actors Nicholas Galitzine, Tom Francis, Bill Skarsgård and Ray Nicholson

Filming of *The Mosquito Bowl* began in late August and has since moved to the US. The movie is being directed by Peter Berg, cousin of Buzz Bissinger who wrote *The Mosquito Bowl*, as well as *Friday Night Lights*. Berg developed the latter into the TV series and movie of the same name.

Regarding filming, Berg says, “I’m thrilled to be in Queensland filming *The Mosquito Bowl* with some of the best crews in the world. The landscapes here are cinematic gold — perfect for bringing this story to life. So far, I’ve crossed paths with two kangaroos and a couple of pythons, and I’m seriously considering casting them!”

*The Mosquito Bowl* will focus on four players in the football game that was played on Guadalcanal on Christmas Eve 1944: Bob Bauman, Tony Butkovich, John McLaughry and Dave Schreiner (pictured above).

One of the strengths of *The Mosquito Bowl* book is that it was

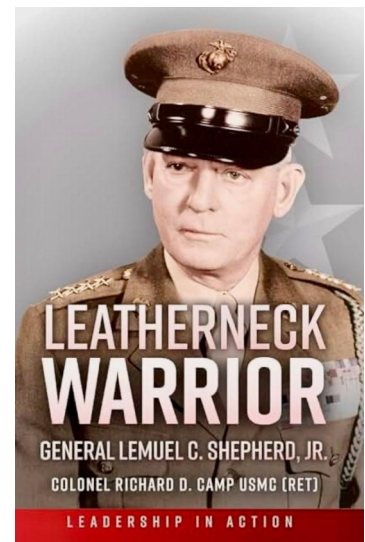
meticulously researched. Buzz was determined that every detail be historically accurate. In addition, the book covers a wide breadth of topics, including the military and American culture at the time of Pearl Harbor. Obviously, the movie cannot do this; it has just 90-120 minutes to tell a story. Berg wanted the focus to be on the men who fought the battle, so he chose four players to build the story around. Unfortunately, not enough is known about the players to create a compelling portrait. He had to fictionalize some of the details about the characters to bring them to life.

Buzz tells us he is fine with this. He says, “**I truly believe that the spirit and bravery and heroism of the four men that I wrote about shines through: the script is energetic and fast-paced, and the acting is wonderful.**”

*The Mosquito Bowl* is expected to be released on Netflix in late 2026 or sometime in 2027.

## Fresh Off the Press: New Book on General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr.

This concise biography tells the story of the Sixth Marine Division’s beloved Commanding Officer. From VMI through two World Wars and the Korean War to becoming the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Shepherd exemplified leadership and fidelity to the Marine Corps values of honor, courage and commitment.



## Donations — Thank You!

### GENERAL FUND

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L. C. Shepherd Retirement Fund

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**The Sixth Marine Division Association wishes all our members and their families a very happy and healthy holiday season!**



# TAPS

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.

George, Louis Sam 6th Marine Division 10/14/25

**Reporting Deaths**  
Please report deaths as soon as possible to **Patty Payne, Membership Chair** (410) 978-2979 [pjpayne1984@verizon.net](mailto:pjpayne1984@verizon.net)

## Website Consultant, Robert Aydelotte, 1/20/53—9/1/25

I am sorry to report that Robert Aydelotte passed away on September 1, two years after being diagnosed with ALS. He was happily married for fifty-one years to Belva Aydelotte, daughter of the late Walter Crombie (29<sup>th</sup> Mar-1-C). They lived most of their married life in Houston, Texas where Robert worked in the oil and gas industry and, like a true Texan, topped everything he ate with jalapenos.

I met Robert and Belva when they brought Watson to the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion of the Association in 2021. They impressed me as a couple who devoted their lives to helping others. Robert's obituary says, "Most of all, he loved serving people. He was quick to lend a car or an ear, to set up a sound system, or to help someone move. He always took time to care for those who were hurting, needed a friend, or found themselves in prison, serving faithfully for years as

a chaplain in the Wallace Pack Unit in Navasota [Texas] until he was no longer able."

During the annual meeting of the Association in 2021, I mentioned that I needed help with the website. (That was an understatement. I'm pretty sure I am



Robert and Belva Aydelotte and Stacy and Greg Duffy stand behind Walter Crombie at the Jangjin (Chosin) Few Battle Monument at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in 2021

the least qualified webmaster on the internet.) After the meeting, Robert came up and said he'd be happy to help. I was thrilled. I asked him if he could make the website more efficient and easier to edit. He went back to Texas and in no time, we had a much more functional website that was far easier to update.

Another example: He helped Connie and me to understand our contracts with vendors. He made several changes that made our lives easier and significantly lowered the fees the Association pays to maintain the website. He patiently explained all of this to us in words we could actually understand. Not an easy task!

Rest in peace, Robert, and thank you for all you did for the Association. I hope you have an endless supply of jalapenos.

~Carroll McGowan

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## Striking Sixth Newsletter

Fall 2025

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