

Destination: Okinawa

Two lineal descendants and your editor traveled to Okinawa this spring. We bring you their reports: Carroll McGowan on pages 1-2, Bob McGowan on page 3, and John Roberts on pages 4-5.



Recently rebuilt Shuri Castle, site of the underground headquarters of Japan's 32nd Army during the Battle of Okinawa

Joy, Sorrow and Gratitude

Trip kindles a range of emotions for Carroll McGowan

Bob and I talked about going to Okinawa for years. The battle was the defining moment of his father's life, and it was a big part of Bob's childhood. The distance and expense of getting there was a deterrent, and we kept putting it off. What finally put it on the front burner was getting to know Steph Pawelski of the Okinawa Battle Sites Facebook page and finding out she might not be on Okinawa much longer.

Last year, Steph discovered that Bob's Dad's corpsman, Vernon (Monk) Martin, was not listed on the wall in Okinawa's Peace Memorial Park, even though he was killed in the battle. Bob

(continued on the next page)

Inside This Issue:

Okinawa Trip Reports.....	2-5
VMI Scholarship Winner.....	5-6
VMI Scholarship Update.....	6
Officer and Unit Director Listing	7
From the Historian.....	8-9
Mail Call.....	10-11
Donations.....	11
TAPS.....	12
Editor's Note.....	12
Okinawa Peace Park Mapping.....	12
Quantico Mini-Reunion.....	13-15

Joy, Sorrow and Gratitude (continued)

and Steph were determined to fix this, and with a lot of hard work, Steph made it happen. We are indebted to Steph, and we are big fans!

Bob and I flew to Japan with our younger son Sean in March of this year, and we had three full days on Okinawa. You really need a car to get around, but we did not want to rent one, so we booked a two-day tour of the battle sites. It was our great fortune that Steph was able to spend our free day with us.

Our first stop with Steph was Peace Memorial Park. We headed immediately to the wall with Monk's name on it. What a thrill it was to see it in person with Steph! Next, we searched for the names of the Marines in Bob's Dad's platoon who were also killed in action. Bob had heard stories about these men throughout his childhood, and seeing their names filled him with emotions that are difficult to describe. For me, my heart overflowed with sorrow and gratitude. It was a poignant and meaningful introduction to Okinawa.

Next Steph drove us up to the Motobu Peninsula where the Sixth Marine Division secured the northern part of the island. Unlike the southern half of Okinawa, which is now densely populated and full of modern buildings, the north looks much like it did during the war. It is lush, mountainous and beautiful.



Steph Pawelski and Bob & Carroll McGowan find Monk's name in Peace Memorial Park

We roughly followed the path taken by the Division and passed by caves that once held Japanese snipers. If you know Steph, you know she's never met a cave she didn't love, and she introduced Bob to quite a few. I was content to remain outside and contemplate the battle without bumping my head or encountering creepy crawly things.

Everyone was happy, and it was a wonderful day. Thanks, Steph!



Bob McGowan and Steph Pawelski explore one of Okinawa's many caves

We spent the next two days with Harry M., a guide with gowithguide.com. What a lucky find – he was knowledgeable, thoughtful, and enthusiastic. He took us to Taguchi Beach, Kadena Air Base, Kakazu Ridge, Hacksaw Ridge, Sugar Loaf Hill, Half Moon Hill, Shuri Castle, a Japanese hospital in one of the underground tunnels, and several other World War II sites. It was amazing! For Bob, seeing Half Moon Hill where his father was wounded was an extraordinary and thought-provoking experience. *(See his story on page 3.)*

My favorite place was Shuri Castle, site of Japan's 32nd Army underground headquarters. We were able to look out over a ridge at the same sweeping view the Japanese generals had as they monitored the battle. In 1945, it was a scene of devastation and tragedy as horrific as any the world has ever witnessed. Today that view is of buildings and homes as far as the eye can see. Places where people are working, raising families and enjoying time with friends. In peace. May it ever be so.

I am so grateful we were able to take this trip and so glad we did it when we did. In June, Steph and her family moved back to the U.S.

A Moving Discovery on Half Moon Hill

Bob McGowan writes about his visit to Half Moon Hill 81 years after his father, Robert W. McGowan, was wounded there

My Dad was a squad leader in H-3-29. Early on May 14 during the assault on Half-Moon Hill, he took shelter in the entrance of one of the many Okinawan tombs that dotted the hillside. As he was getting set to throw his last grenade, he was hit by a burst of machine gun fire. The bullets went through his right arm and lung and tore his pack and cartridge belt off. Luckily, the shock knocked the white phosphorus grenade out of his hand before he pulled the pin.

Coughing up blood Dad figured he was done for, so he stripped his rifle and threw the pieces away (as they had been instructed to do if mortally wounded). He called Pvt Knaus over and ordered him to tell Corporal Grant Soper to take command of the squad. He gave Knaus the last grenade and asked him to give him a morphine shot in his calf. Dad then crawled in the tomb, dragging his cartridge belt behind him. He said the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm and passed out.

Sometime later he suddenly woke up, completely covered with inch-long red, white and black ants. A grenade or shell had burst in the entrance of the tomb and shattered the two burial urns that he was laying against. The prospect of being slowly eaten alive motivated him to seek shelter elsewhere, so he scrambled down to a small stream where three other Marines lay wounded. Although pinned down all day by rifle and machine gun fire plus occasional mortar and artillery shelling, all four of them were eventually able to make their way back to H Company lines. Three of them crawled on the back of a tank which retreated after it drew more heavy artillery fire.

Just before dark, Dad made a run for it despite another wound in his right foot from mortar shrapnel. His buddies got him to an aid station, but he wasn't out of the woods by any stretch. Paralyzed from shock, he was quickly flown back to Guam, then Hawaii and eventually the States. Doctors patched him up and told him to get ready for the invasion of Japan.

Dad had intentionally left his damaged canteens behind in the tomb because he thought the bullet might have hit his stomach. Drinking water with

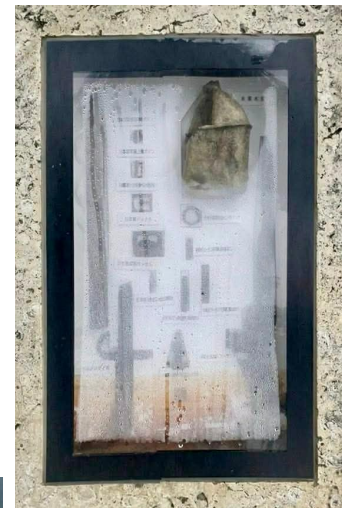
a stomach wound can make a bad situation even worse. I always felt that someone might have found his canteens when exploring that old tomb.



Bob McGowan and son Sean on Half Moon Hill

When we walked up Half Moon Hill and I saw an American canteen with an old grenade pin in a foggy display case, I wasn't surprised. The relics in that case were found during excavations of the tombs in 2008. No way of telling if that was Dad's canteen.

right and below: closeup of a canteen and grenade pin



My Dad was a man of few words. If he were alive today and I showed him a picture of that canteen, he would examine it closely and just nod his head, as if to say, "I told you so."

Okinawa: Family Ties

John Roberts visits Okinawa where his father, Richard (Dick) Roberts, and uncle, Valentine Kmiecinski, both fought with the Sixth Marine Division

81 years have gone by since a family member of mine was on Okinawa. Through those years many things have changed. In May my wife, daughter and I visited a beautiful island lush and full of greenery, buildings and people going about their business. We went kayaking on a river into open water to a beach. We visited a beautiful tropical garden. We went snorkeling at the Kerama Islands and saw beautiful coral and many fish of different sizes, shapes and colors. We went to restaurants and enjoyed delicious food, and we enjoyed the convenience of the 7-11 stores scattered throughout. It was truly a wonderful time in a beautiful environment.

brothers already in the army and navy and was married with a child. But after being challenged by others in town, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and was on Okinawa with the 22nd Marines in the 6th Marine Division. He was wounded in the battle for Sugar Loaf Hill and sent to a hospital ship. Although he was expected to survive, he died from his wounds.

My father Richard Roberts enlisted at 16 years old and turned 18 two weeks before landing on Okinawa. He was in JASCO, assigned to the 4th Marines of the 6th Division. He had already received a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Valor on Guam. During the Battle of Okinawa, he was wounded twice.



above: John Roberts reflects on his father's landing on Okinawa; below: He finds the name of his uncle who lost his life on the island

Then there was the other side of the visit. After our flight landed at Naha, we got our rental car and the first place we went to was the Peace Memorial. It was amazing to see all of the walls with the names of all of those who died from the battle etched upon them. Over 242,000 names in all; 14,000 plus are Americans who gave their all for their country.

The first thing we did here was go to the name of my uncle Valentine Kmiecinski, my mom's brother. Months ago Steph & Jeff Pawelski, of the Okinawa Battle Sites Facebook page, had done a pencil tracing of his name on the memorial and sent it to me. I then gave that to Val's daughter who was so thankful and full of memories from that time. She told me that Val did not have to go in the service since he had

Most of our trip I was thinking of these two men and what they were going through during their time on the island. Where we saw lush greenery, they saw land devastated by the constant air, land and sea bombardments. Where we were riding on nice roads, they were trying to transverse rough ground in heat, rain and mud. Where we were enjoying the tranquility and quiet of the island, they were under constant fire and fighting for their lives.

The last place we visited before leaving was Shuri Castle where General Ushijima set up headquarters for the Japanese 32nd Army. They were

(continued on the next page)



Okinawa: Family Ties (continued)

firmly entrenched in the ridges and surrounding hills. When looking out over this area now, it's hard to distinguish the various hills and battle sites. It is full of greenery and buildings in a thriving land. To think about how many men lost their lives or had their lives changed by the events that happened there left you awe struck.

Yet, those events also led to some happy outcomes. My father was assigned as the honor guard for my uncle's body and escorted it home. That is how he met my mother, through God's providence and the results of the battle of Okinawa.

We truly enjoyed our time on the island and at the Peace Memorial. We went through the museum there, which was interesting with many displays and videos. Overall it seems the Okinawans don't dwell

upon the battle. For the most part, they have put it behind them, choosing to look toward the future rather than the past. There are plaques where the battles took place, but not the kind of parks and memorials you see at battlefields and historic places in our country. Still, I could not help but think of the peace and tranquility there now contrasted with the nightmares that my Dad struggled with his whole life afterward. As I've read many times in various books, the men never talked about it because if you weren't there, you couldn't understand. It brought tears at times thinking about that while we were there. But we also marveled at the kindness and generosity of the people in Okinawa and on the Japan mainland.

I was glad we had the opportunity to take such a memorable trip.

Meet VMI Scholarship Winner, Olivia J. Hurd

Each year, VMI awards three or more scholarships to Cadets who are pursuing a Marine Corps Commission through VMI's Naval ROTC program. These scholarships were funded in part by the Sixth Marine Division Association in honor of the Division's Commanding General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. The Cadets also receive a copy of The Mosquito Bowl by Buzz Bissinger. The books are donated by General Sheperd'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.

Before anything else, I want to express my sincere gratitude for receiving this scholarship. I am incredibly honored by this recognition, and I appreciate the support and belief that this award represents. Opportunities like this make a meaningful impact on my experience at VMI and on my path toward becoming a Marine Corps officer.

I am currently a psychology major at Virginia Military Institute and am pursuing a commission into the United States Marine Corps. I am also a prior member of the VMI track team, where I competed in the 800m and the 4x400-meter relay. Athletics have always been a major part of my life and have taught me many lessons that extend beyond sports themselves, but nothing like the value of discipline, consistency, and perseverance that the Marine program at VMI has shown me.

The Marine Corps has always had a significant presence in my life. My father served in the Marines and has been one of my biggest inspirations growing up. Watching his dedication, values, and

sense of purpose created a desire in me to pursue something greater than myself. Initially, my motivation to serve came from the desire to be like my dad, but over time, that desire developed into something more personal. I began learning about the history, traditions, and expectations of the Marine Corps and realized that I wanted to earn the title for myself and lead a life like those who served before me.

When it came time to choose a college, I had other opportunities and options available to me. However, there was always something about VMI that stood out. I knew that if I wanted to become the best version of myself and prepare for the future I envisioned, VMI would provide the kind of environment that would push me mentally, physically, and morally while surrounding me with people who held high expectations of themselves and others. My experience here has not always been easy, but I believe the most meaningful growth comes through challenge. During my time at VMI and in

(continued on the next page)

Meet VMI Scholarship Winner, Olivia J. Hurd (continued)

the Marine program, I have learned difficult lessons, experienced setbacks, and been pushed outside of my comfort zone many times. Those experiences have forced me to reflect, adapt, and grow, and looking back, I can confidently say they have shaped me into a stronger person and a better leader.



Olivia J. Hurd with her parents

Marine Company has played an especially important role in that growth. The environment within Marine Company continually challenges me to hold myself to a higher standard and pushes me to improve every day. The expectations, accountability, and camaraderie have shaped me in ways I never anticipated. Through the program, I have developed leadership skills and formed friendships that I know will last far beyond my years at VMI.

This summer, I will be attending Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia. This is a milestone that I have been working toward since arriving at VMI, and I am incredibly excited for the opportunity. I look forward to being challenged and continuing to grow throughout the experience. Looking ahead to next year, I will also be serving on the Rat Disciplinary Committee, which is a responsibility I am honored to take on. I know this role will continue to challenge me as a leader and allow me to contribute to the development of future cadets.

If all goes according to plan, I will also be graduating a semester early and commissioning in December 2026. This goal motivates me every day and serves as a reminder of the purpose behind the work I put in both inside and outside the classroom.

Receiving this scholarship is an honor because it serves as a reminder that others believe in my potential and support the goals I am working toward. I do not take that support lightly. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and for the generosity that makes it possible.

Thank you again for your investment in my education and future. I will continue striving to represent this scholarship, VMI, and the Marine Corps with integrity and dedication.

Very Respectfully,
Olivia J. Hurd
VMI Class of '27

General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. Scholarship Award Update

The General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. scholarship fund was established in honor of the beloved Commanding General of the Sixth Marine Division at VMI, his alma mater. It provides a footlocker with the initial books for a professional library for the top Marine graduates of the Naval ROTC or other USMC commissioning program at VMI. It is specifically limited to members of the VMI Corps of Cadets.

The fund may also provide one or more cash grants to members of the VMI Corps of Cadets in the third or succeeding classes, who are pursuing a Marine Corps commission through any Marine Corps program. These grants may be made regardless of and in addition to other scholarships, awards, or grants to the particular cadet so long as the total does not exceed the total of all monies charged by VMI for attendance at the Institute.

In recent years, footlockers have been awarded to two Cadets and a cash scholarship has been awarded to one Cadet each year. Due to the recent steady growth in the endowment, VMI was able to fund two cash awards in 2026.



SIXTH MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION 2025-2026

Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Connie Houseweart
258 Sechler Drive
Montoursville, PA 17754
(570) 279-8197
almostnuts@comcast.net

SECRETARY

Lisa Benedetti
6039 Wilson Mills Road
Cleveland, OH 44143
(440) 442-0386
lisabene@sbcglobal.net

TREASURER

Sharon Woodhouse
12598 SW Dickson Street
Tigard, OR 97224
(503) 799-4455
sjawoodhouse@gmail.com

EDITOR

Carroll McGowan
1423 Pueblo Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 303-2906
chm1423@aol.com

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Bob McGowan
1423 Pueblo Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
(412) 580-7473
chmcg11@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Patty Payne
439 Chalfonte Drive
Catonsville, MD 21228
(410) 978-2979
pjpayne1984@verizon.net

Historian

Laura Lacey
262 Garretson Lane
Mansfield, TX 76063
(540) 809-4027
laurahlacey@gmail.com

Please send letters to the editor, materials for publication, suggestions, and feedback to:

Carroll McGowan
1423 Pueblo Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15228
chm1423@aol.com
(412) 303-2906

**Get together with other fans
of the Sixth Marine Division
in Quantico this fall!**

See pages 13-15 for more information.

Unit Directors

4th Marines	Vacant
15th Marines	Vacant
22nd Marines	Vacant
29th Marines	Neal McCallum
6th Motor Trans Battalion	Vacant
6th Medical Battalion	Vacant
6th Engineering Battalion	Vacant
6th Tank Battalion	Vacant
6th Pioneer Battalion	Vacant
6th Headquarters Battalion	Vacant
6th Recon Company	Vacant
6th JASCO	Vacant
1st Amphibs	Vacant

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:

Patty Payne
439 Chalfonte Drive
Catonsville, MD 21228
pjpayne1984@verizon.net

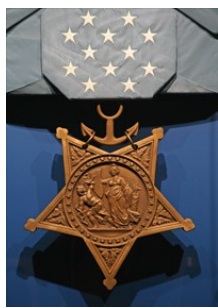
**Please make checks payable to:
Sixth Marine Division Assn.**

For more information, please contact Patty:

(410) 978-2979 or
pjpayne1984@verizon.net

From the Historian's Corner

THE MEDAL OF HONOR



This past year, a new museum opened in the Dallas–Fort Worth area that pays tribute to some of America’s most extraordinary heroes—Medal of Honor recipients. Let me begin by clarifying a distinction that has always mattered deeply to me: one does not *win* a medal; it is *earned*, and those who receive it are properly called recipients.

The Medal of Honor is our nation’s highest award for bravery. Established by law, it is awarded to U.S. service members who distinguish themselves “through conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty.”¹

The idea of honoring bravery dates back to George Washington, who created the Badge of Military Merit—now known as the Purple Heart. Although it fell into disuse for many years and serves a different purpose today, it marked the beginning of formal recognition for valor. During the Civil War, lawmakers determined that a new medal was needed to recognize extraordinary bravery in combat. Thus, Congress created the Navy Medal of Honor in December 1861, followed by the Army Medal of Honor in July 1862.² It was not until World War I that additional, lesser medals for bravery were introduced.

The first Medals of Honor were awarded to the soldiers known as “Andrews’ Raiders.”³ In its

early years, the medal was sometimes awarded to entire units rather than individuals. Initially intended for enlisted men—and even a few civilians—eligibility later expanded to include officers, while civilians were excluded. The medal’s design has evolved over time, though it originally featured red, white, and blue elements.

The first Marine to receive the Medal of Honor was John F. Mackie in July 1863. The first—and only—woman recipient was Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, who received the medal in 1865. Although it was later rescinded, she refused to stop wearing it. In 1977, her honor was rightfully restored.⁴ The first Black recipient, William H. Carney, earned his medal for bravery at Fort Wagner in 1863, though it was not awarded until 1900.⁵

To date, there have been 3,538 Medal of Honor recipients, with 618 awards given posthumously. Nineteen individuals have received the medal twice—five of them Marines serving with Army units who received both the Army and Navy versions, and fourteen for separate acts of valor. Currently, there are 62 living recipients, and two Medals of Honor have been awarded this year.⁶

Today, each branch of the military has its own version of the medal. However, all Medals of Honor are worn on a light blue ribbon with 13 stars, representing the original colonies. While each design is unique, they all symbolize valor, victory, strength, unity, and wisdom.⁷



During World War II, 474 Medals of Honor were awarded, including 82 to Marines. On Okinawa alone, Marines, soldiers, and Navy personnel earned 24 medals. Members of the Sixth Marine Division received six, including one Navy corpsman serving alongside them. Each citation reflects extraordinary courage and a willingness to sacrifice for others. I encourage you to read these accounts; they are powerful reminders of what true bravery looks like.

Our website has information about each of them: <https://www.sixthmarinedivision.com/16MOH.html>. The full citations can be found in several places, including the Congressional Medal of Honor Society’s site: <https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/lists/wwii-okinawa-recipients>.

On a personal note, I have had the privilege of meeting several Medal of Honor recipients. What has always impressed me most is their humility. Many seem to understand that they wear the medal not just for themselves, but for every service member,

(continued on the next page)

From the Historian's Corner (continued)

especially those who never came home. There is simply something different about them.

I will always cherish the memory of Richard Bush, MOH, who would call me and say, "How is my second favorite Laura in Texas?"



Keith Lacey (Laura's husband) and Richard E. Bush MOH (6MD) at the dedication of the 6th Marine Division Memorial at Quantico Cemetery, 2000

I also had the honor of knowing General James Day and his wife Sally in a small way. I spoke at his memorial service in Quantico and wrote a poem in his memory. *[see right column]*

During the Battle of Okinawa, casualty rates were so high in some units that turnover exceeded 125 percent. In some cases, junior enlisted Marines found themselves leading entire companies. In then Corporal James Day's case, although many knew of his heroism, the official documentation of his actions was lost through attrition and the fog of war. When it was later discovered that he had not been properly recognized, efforts were made to correct the oversight. For years, he refused, concerned that it might appear tied to his rank and position.

Finally, years after his 1986 retirement—he finally allowed the

nomination to proceed. In 1998, he was presented the Medal of Honor for his actions on Sugar Loaf Hill at a White House ceremony. Although I was not there for the ceremony, many of his Sixth Marine Division buddies were, and they called me full of joy! All those who knew him felt it needed to happen. General James Day, MOH, "is believed to be the only Marine infantryman to have been wounded and decorated for valor in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Over his career, he received 31 decorations, including three Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, two Navy Commendation Medals, and six Purple Hearts."⁸

General Day exemplified the humility, courage, and selflessness that define every Medal of Honor recipient I have encountered.

For those able to travel, I highly recommend visiting the National Medal of Honor Museum in Arlington, Texas. Additionally, the National Museum of the Marine Corps features an outstanding display honoring Marine recipients of the Medal of Honor.

~Laura Lacey

¹<https://www.war.gov/Spotlights/Medal-of-Honor/>

²Jowdy, Laura. Congressional medal of Honor Society, May 2019

³Ibid.

⁴<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mary-edwards-walker>

⁵<https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/william-h-carney>

⁶<https://www.war.gov/Spotlights/Medal-of-Honor/>

⁷Ibid.

⁸<https://www.sixthmarinedivision.com/16MOHDay.html>



The General

In walked the general
perfectly straight
immaculately groomed
and the prescribed weight.
He said all the right things
and kept others in line
he knew when to eat
and when rather to dine.

But he came to a place
to be with men he'd not lead
but with whom he had fought
and he had bled.
Then no matter the ribbons
he was nineteen again
simply a Marine
with many an old friend.

I watched him from a distance
as the layers came away
he was no longer the General
just Cpl. Jim Day.
He taught me a lesson
that I should have already seen
that even the best Generals
will first be a Marine.

Laura Lacey, 1998



Laura Lacey, James Chaisson Jr NC (6MD), and General James L. Day MOH (6MD) in 1988.

[Note: NC stands for Navy Cross.]

Bob Whitmer and Friends

Below is a picture of my father — Bob Witmer, Pharmacist Mate with the Sixth Marine Division (top left) — and some of his buddies taken at Camp Pendleton in fall 1944. My father was seriously wounded on Okinawa in mid-April 1945 and passed away at age 75 in 1996.

I was unable to find the names of his buddies on the Division roster, so I think they may all be navy corpsmen in training with the Marines at Camp Pendleton.

Mike Whitmer



L to R: Al Burrows, Bob Brown, Bob Wozniak, and Tom Desanno. photo taken by Al Pantelis



top row — Robert Witmer (Anacortes, WA), Jesse Sanders (Norfolk, VA), Wilder (TX), Litt Raines (TN)

bottom row — Rehment (Toledo, OH), R. D. Smith (Portsmouth, OH), Parker (LA), Jim D. Von Moss (Jackson, MI)

Friends of Al Pantelis

The picture above was taken by my father, Al Pantelis in Tsingtao, China in 1946. He was in the Sixth Marine Division.

Penny Goncalo



Marines on Guam

Greetings, The AI retouched photo at right is of my father, Michael J. Parziale, holding the BAR and his friend, Thomas J. Mcdermott, both from Queens, NY when they met up in Guam training for the invasion of Okinawa. Dad received a Purple Heart after suffering a blast concussion and numerous shrapnel wounds at Naha. He passed away on July 7, 1989. He never spoke of the war, but when I wanted to enlist for Vietnam, he said "Like

hell you are, I did enough fighting for both of us!" Dad knew what war was and didn't want me to see what he saw. I sorely miss him.

Thank you,
Michael Parziale



Michael J. Parziale and Thomas J. Mcdermott

MAIL CALL



John McCulloch's Letters

I read your piece about old family letters in the Spring 2026 newsletter, so I thought I would share a little about my father-in-law.

John McCulloch (22nd Mar-2-HQ) was in the Sixth Marine Division in WWII. He fought on Guam and then Okinawa. He was on a ship circling in the Pacific as they prepared for invasion of Japan, when they got the news that Japan had surrendered. He was then stationed at Tsingtao, China until discharged.

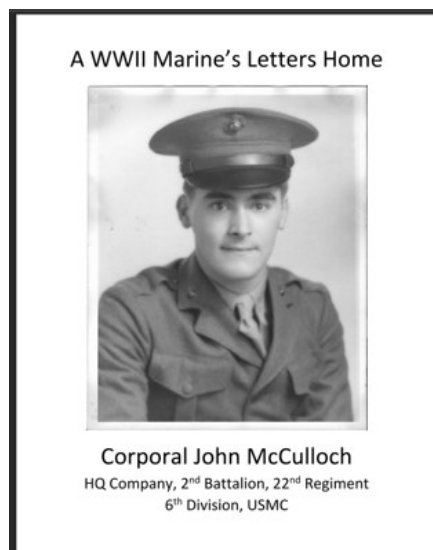
After John got home from the war, he never talked about any of it with anyone.

I had an uncle who was also in the Marines and was in a tank on Iwo Jima. Uncle Wayne was proud of his service and talked about it. He got John comfortable opening up. John remembered a lot about his time in the Marines but could not recall any of the actual combat. I found copies of many Marine action reports that I shared with John and pointed out the details regarding where he was in various battles. But he could not recall any of it. He talked with a psychiatrist who said there was likely a good reason why his brain had locked those memories away and he should not worry about it.

After reading James Hallas' book *Killing Ground on Okinawa*, I understood just how horrific John's experiences must have been at Sugar Loaf Hill.

One day as he shared more about what he did recall, he pulled out a box that held most of the letters he had written to his parents, mainly his Mom, while he was in

the service. I took those letters, scanned them all, and made a 500 page e-book. So now, all of John's children, grandkids, etc. are able to read the letters.



John wrote a lot of letters and sometimes had to be resourceful about writing material. Several of the letters were written on the back side of a letter he got from his Mom. Didn't have any new paper, so he just recycled.

Of course they were not allowed to write about any current action, so his letters were just about personal stuff. He also was careful to not write anything that might get his Mom worried. Reading the letters from early in his service, I was struck by how young he actually was. This was not a young man going off to war; it was a boy.

Thanks for all the work you do for the members of the Sixth and their families,

Craig A. Larson



Thank You from VMI Scholarship Winner, Ryan Halverson

Editor's Note: The letter below was sent to Sallie Shepherd, the Association's Liaison to VMI by Ryan Halverson. Ryan received a Sixth Marine Division Association scholarship in 2025 and was profiled in the Fall 2025 Newsletter.

Dear Ms. Shepherd,

I am an English major at VMI. I currently live in Virginia Beach, Virginia. I have had the opportunity to live in lots of places because of my dad's military career. When I am not too busy with school or my other obligations, I love spending time with friends, family, reading books, and surfing. I am extremely excited to graduate and earn my commission into the Marine Corps.

With your support I was able to afford the best-looking uniform the United States has to offer...Dress Blues. I cannot wait to put them on and start leading Marines, as well as carrying on the legacy of Marines like General Shepherd.

Again, thank you so much for your support over this past year of my leadership development.

Ryan L Halverson
VMI Class of 2026

Donations — Thank You!

GENERAL FUND

Joseph Hennessey
Sallie Shepherd

REUNION

Sallie Shepherd
Sloan Whitaker



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.

Shirley Ketter	wife of Lyndal A. Ketter	June 2026
Michael J. Parziale	6th Marine Division	07/07/89
Steven Seminerio	22nd Mar-2-F	02/23/26
Harry M. Stanifer	6th Engineer Bn-C	03/27/26
Ralph M. Vozella	15th Mar-3	09/18/03

Reporting Deaths

Please report deaths as soon as possible to:

Patty Payne

Membership Chair

(410) 978-2979

pjpayne1984@verizon.net

Editor's Note



As you may have read, Bob and I had a wonderful trip to Okinawa and Japan in March. If anyone is thinking about making a similar trip, please feel free to call or email me.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

We now look forward to our next trip — the Sixth Marine Division mini-reunion in Quantico in October. I hope many of you are planning to be there too.

Special thanks to Sloane Whitaker (daughter of Dick Whitaker) and Sallie Shepherd (granddaughter of General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr.) who have generously offered to pay for the two dinners we are planning — BBQ on Wednesday and pizza on Thursday. Crowd pleasers for sure!

If you attend, we promise you will have a terrific time getting to know other friends and admirers of the Sixth Marine Division.

Make your hotel reservation today!

Hope to see you there,
Carroll McGowan

Website Lets Families See Names of U.S. Troops on War Memorial at Okinawa's Peace Memorial Park

Okinawa's Peace Memorial Park at the southern tip of the island is a special place for families of those killed during the Battle of Okinawa. The names of troops and civilians killed during the battle are engraved on a series of black granite slabs in the park. Unfortunately, many Americans are unable to travel to Okinawa to see their loved ones' names. However, now they can see them online.

A Japanese company in Naha, Ikemiya Shokai Co. Ltd, has mapped all of the 14,000 American names so that family and friends can see them on their phone or computer. The company chose to map the Americans first in recognition of the fact that the purpose of the Memorial is to pray for *all* the war dead, whether allies or enemies.

The link to access the website is:

okinawapeacememorialpark-3dmap.org

To find a name:

- Click on the magnifying glass in the top left of the screen.
- Enter the name, typing the last name then the first name. (It will not work if you start with the first name.)
- One or more names will be listed under Tags. Click on the appropriate name.
- A photo of the wall with that name will appear.

Please note the site does not always come up, so you may have to try it multiple times over several days. **The following link is more reliable, though more difficult to type:**

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=9TLGGA8SH8A>

2026 Mini-Reunion — Our Hotel

COMFORT INN NEAR QUANTICO MAIN GATE NORTH



16931 Old Stage Road, Dumfries, VA 22025
(703) 445-8070

Make your reservation ASAP!

To get the special \$110* room rate, use this link:

<https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/EO36N1>

Or call (703) 445-8070 and ask to book under the Sixth Marine Division.

Free cancellation until 4:00 pm on 10/12/26.

Please note there are only four accessible rooms.

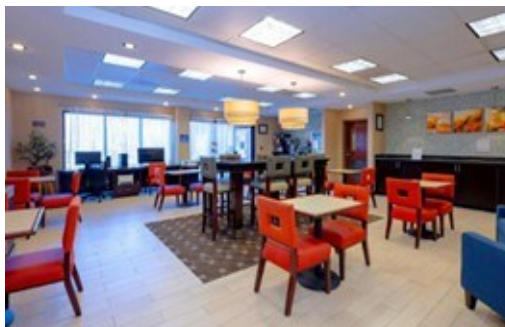
**The room rate including tax is \$125.40. It is available 4 days before October 13 and 4 days after October 15.*



Choose a room with 2 Queen beds or 1 King bed. Rooms are 3100 square feet.

Amenities

- Free hot breakfast 6am-9am
- Refrigerator
- Microwave
- Tea/coffee maker
- Free WIFI in all areas
- TV with cable channels
- Indoor pool & hot tub
- Fitness room
- Free parking
- Non-smoking
- 24-hour front desk
- Several restaurants within walking distance
- Check in from 4:00 pm
- Check out until 12 noon



top: breakfast area, bottom: pool

Distance from DC Airports

Reagan Washington
National Airport

30 miles, allow at least 1 hour

Dulles International Airport

35 miles, allow at least 1 hour

Please note the hotel does not have a shuttle. We suggest renting a car or using Uber or Lyft.

QUESTIONS???

If you have any questions,
please call, text or email

Sharon Woodhouse

(503) 799-4455

sjwoodhouse@gmail.com

2026 Min-Reunion — Tentative Itinerary

Tuesday, October 13

Arrival

Look for everyone to be socializing in our meeting room. And be sure to pick up your name tag.

Wednesday, October 14

Trivia Contest

Here's your chance to show what you know about the Marine Corps, World War II and the 1940s. We'll play in teams, and members of the winning team will get a prize. So start studying now!

Buffet Dinner at the Comfort Inn Catered by Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que

The meal will include beef brisket, chicken, several sides — and lots of barbecue sauce, of course. We'll make sure there is plenty to eat for vegetarians. The cost is being donated by Sloane Whitaker in honor of her father, Dick Whitaker (29th Mar-2-F). Thank you, Sloane!

Thursday, October 15

Visit to the National Museum of the Marine Corps

If this doesn't fill you with pride and admiration for our Marine Corps, nothing will! Please note you will be responsible for getting to the museum on your own. We feel certain those without a car will be able to find a ride with someone, because we are a friendly and helpful bunch! And of course, there is always Uber and Lyft.

Pizza Dinner at the Comfort Inn

This will be a fun and casual meal to afford maximum time for socializing on our final night. The cost is being donated by Sallie Shepherd on behalf of her grandfather, General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr, in honor of his beloved Sixth Division Marines. Thank you, Sallie!

Friday, October 16

Departure after Breakfast

Time to say good bye until we meet again.

IMPORTANT — IF YOU ARE COMING TO THE MINI-REUNION, PLEASE READ THIS!

We need to order food ahead of time, so if you want to eat dinner with us, you gotta let us know!
We also need your contact information so we can let you know if there are any changes.

Please complete the Registration Form on page 15 and mail it to Sharon Woodhouse.
If that seems archaic, or just too much work, call Sharon and give her the info over the phone.
Or email it to her. Or take a picture of the form and text it. Whatever is easiest for you.

Please do it by September 23. Better yet — do it now!

2026 Mini-Reunion — Registration Form

Please complete this form and send it by September 23rd to:

Sharon Woodhouse 12598 SW Dickson Street Tigard, OR 97224

– or – you can email, call or text Sharon with this information at:

sjawoodhouse@gmail.com or (503) 799-4455

Name _____ Spouse/Guest Names _____

If Sixth Division Marine, Regiment: _____ Battalion: _____ Company: _____

If Lineal Descendant, of whom _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Cell phone (____) _____ Email _____

Hotel Information (please check the correct box):

_____ I have made a reservation at the Comfort Inn Near Quantico Main Gate North

_____ I am staying somewhere else

Dinner Information (please tell us how many will attend):

Wednesday, October 14 at 6:00 pm – Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que Dinner at the Comfort Inn

_____ number attending

Thank you to Sloane Whitaker for donating the cost of the dinner in honor of her father, Dick Whitaker (29th Mar-2-F).

Thursday, October 15 at 6:00 pm – Pizza Dinner at the Comfort Inn

_____ number attending

Thank you to Sallie Shepherd for donating the cost of the pizza dinner on behalf of her grandfather, General Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr, in honor of his beloved Sixth Division Marines.

Emergency Contact Information

Contact Name: _____

Relationship to you: _____ Phone: _____

This section is ONLY for Sixth Division Marines and their wives/significant others and widows who are flying in with NO younger family members and need help with transportation:

Do you want us to pick you up and return you to the airport? _____

Please provide your airline, flight # and arrival date and time:

Please provide your airline, flight # and departure date and time for your flight home:

Sixth Marine Division Association

439 Chalfonte Drive, Catonsville, MD 21228

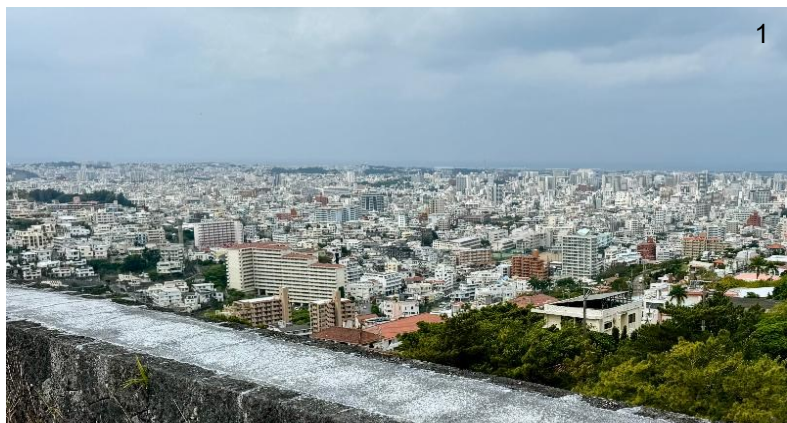


Striking Sixth Newsletter

Summer 2026

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRESORT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit # 1040
Leesburg, FL
34748



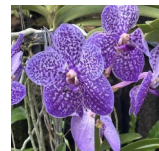
1



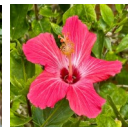
2



3



Okinawa Today



1) view from Shuri Castle, 2) Motobu Peninsula, 3) Pacific Ocean at Peace Memorial Park on southern tip of main island