

# THE PROUD WARRIOR

First Battalion Ninth Marines Association

March 2024





# FIRST BATTALION NINTH MARINES ASSOCIATION, INC.

## Board of Directors

**PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR, FINANCE COMMITTEE, REUNION COMMITTEE, STORE MANAGER**  
James Vierstra, [jvierstra@19walkingdead.org](mailto:jvierstra@19walkingdead.org)

**VICE PRESIDENT, REUNION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE, FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
Patrick Hart, [phart@19walkingdead.org](mailto:phart@19walkingdead.org)

**TREASURER, FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, HUMANITARIAN COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
Stephen Jonas, [sjonas@19walkingdead.org](mailto:sjonas@19walkingdead.org)

**DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE, FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
Warren Domingo, [wdomingo@19walkingdead.org](mailto:wdomingo@19walkingdead.org)

**DIRECTOR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE, HISTORIAN, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
Rod Fink, [rfink@19walkingdead.org](mailto:rfink@19walkingdead.org)

**CHAPLAIN, DIRECTOR, HUMANITARIAN COMMITTEE, WOODY AND GALE POSTLE FAMILY AUXILIARY COMMITTEE, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
Ray Linebaugh, [rlinebaugh@19walkingdead.org](mailto:rlinebaugh@19walkingdead.org)

**DIRECTOR, SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, WOODY AND GALE POSTLE FAMILY AUXILIARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE, FINANCE COMMITTEE, REUNION COMMITTEE**  
David Peralta, [dperalta@19walkingdead.org](mailto:dperalta@19walkingdead.org)

**DIRECTOR**  
Brigt Skjerpe, [bskjerpe@19walkingdead.org](mailto:bskjerpe@19walkingdead.org)

**DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
Matt Valenzuela, [mvalenzuela@19walkingdead.org](mailto:mvalenzuela@19walkingdead.org)

## The Proud Warrior

**INTERIM EDITOR** Matt Valenzuela

**CONTRIBUTOR** Ray Linebaugh

**CONTRIBUTOR** Abby Que

**CONTRIBUTOR** Albert Thompson





# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

# R&R

**RICHARD & RICHARD**

Construction Company, Inc.

## RECURRING DONORS

Frank Sellin  
Matt Valenzuela  
Edward Valenzuela  
Hubert Hopson

## DONORS

Jim Krohn  
John Hoffman  
Michael Hoyette  
Wesley Fortman  
Robert Webster  
Russell Watt  
David Peralta  
Ed Mertens  
Wallace Campbell  
Sean Gray

## REUNION SPONSORS

Robert Syler, Member, First Battalion  
Ninth Marines Association

Stephen Green

Richard Woolsey, R&R Construction

Ron Hanstein

Gene St. Hilaire

Jason Woodin, Coastal Postal

Kyle McGeary, Disorder Skateboards

VFW 3225, Clovis, CA



VFW 3225, Clovis

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 8 **Sig-Event Calendar**
- 9 **2024 Reunion Update**
- 11 **Enhancements to Our Election Process**
- 11 **Reunion Fundraising**
- 12 **A Call to Action: Sponsorships**
- 12 **1/9 Pledge Campaign**
- 13 **2023 Annual Report**
- 13 **Leveraging Technology for Member Operations**
- 15 **May 4th San Diego Mini Reunion**
- 16 **April Members Live Discussion**
- 16 **Welcome to Our New and Returning Members**
- 17 **New Emeritus Program**
- 17 **Community Care and Support Initiative**
- 18 **New Prayer Group**
- 18 **Calling All 1/9 Business Owners**
- 19 **Store Updates**
- 19 **New Vietnam Shirt, 1/9 Shirt, and Zippo Lighter**
- 21 **Blood, Sweat, & Honor by Derl Horn**
- 23 **The First Battle of Khe San**
- 30 **Contacts and Links**



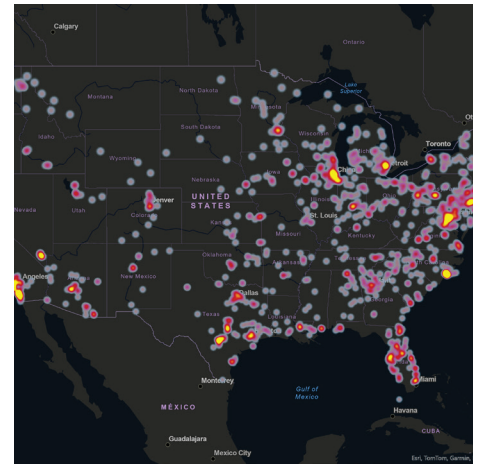
## 9 2024 Reunion

Mark your calendars for the 2024 First Battalion Ninth Marines Association Reunion, taking place from August 20th to 25th in sunny San Diego, California...



## 13 2023 Annual Report

Read about the first inaugural annual report for the Association.



## 13 Leveraging Technology for Member Operations

Read about how the Association is using mapping technology to better manage Membership Operations.



## 17 Community Care and Support

An update on our work to put the heart of the Association at the forefront of our efforts.



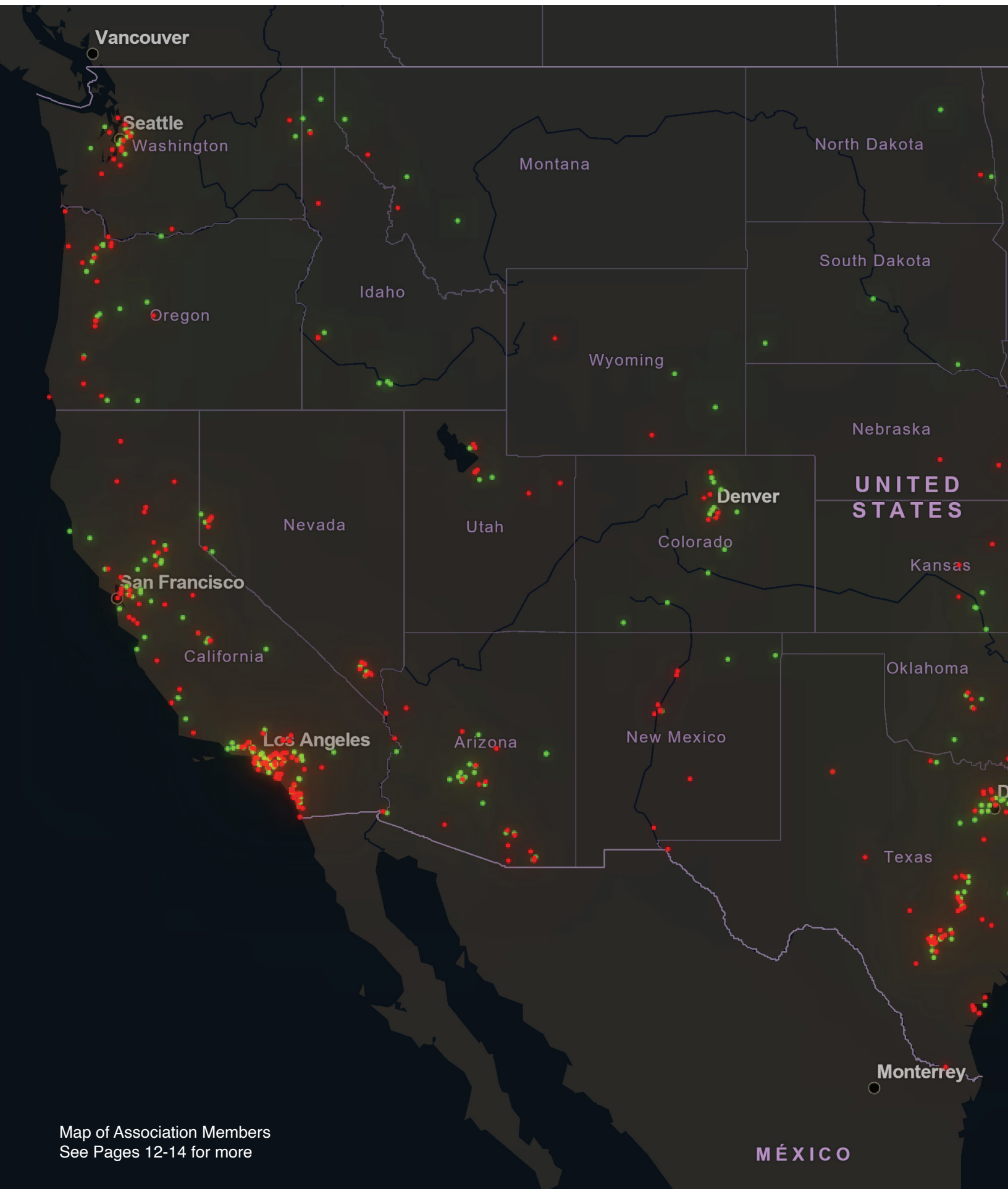
## 21 Blood Sweat, & Honor by Derl Horn

A tribute to Derl Horn and his book Blood Sweat, & Honor: Memoirs of a Walking Dead Marine in Vietnam

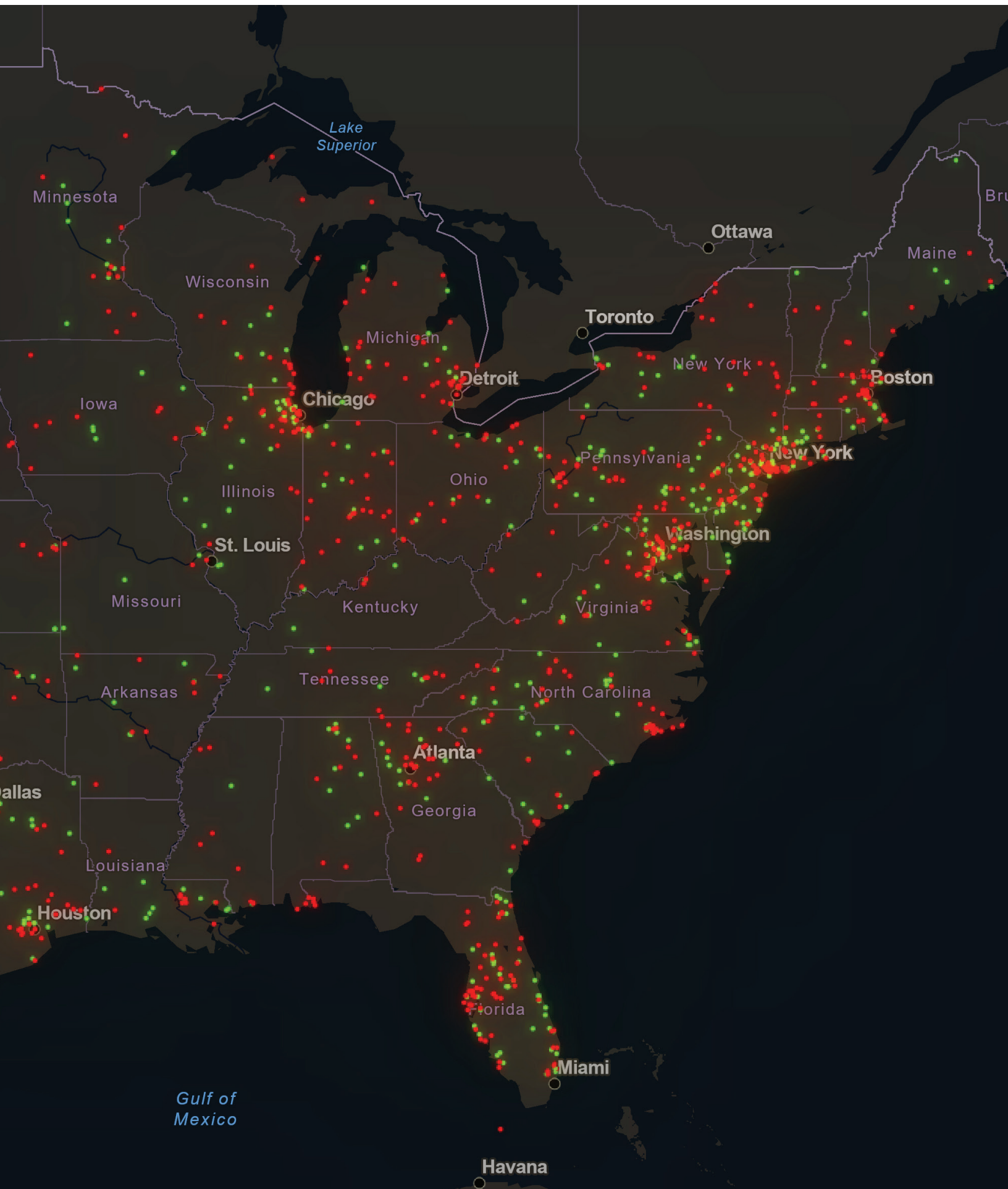


## 23 The First Battle of Khe San

Member and author Al Thompson shares with us the history of First Battalion Ninth Marines.



Map of Association Members  
See Pages 12-14 for more



# SIG-EVENT CALENDAR

## 2024

3/31/2024	2024 Q1 Members Survey	Virtual
4/19/2024	April Live Members Discussion	Virtual
5/4/2024	San Diego Mini Reunion	Location TBD
5/17/2024	May Live Members Discussion	Virtual
6/15/2024	Q2 National Mini Reunion	Various Locations
6/21/2024	June Live Members Discussion	Virtual
7/19/2024	July Live Members Discussion	Virtual
8/16/2024	August Live Members Discussion	Virtual
8/21 - 8/25	2024 National Reunion	San Diego, CA
9/20/2024	September Live Members Discussion	Virtual
10/18/2024	October Live Members Discussion	Virtual
11/9-10/2024	Q4 National Mini Reunion	Various Locations
11/15/2024	November Live Members Discussion	Virtual
12/20/2024	December Live Members Discussion	Virtual





# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2024

12:00 PM - 7:00 PM Registration  
12:00 PM - 7:00 PM Hospitality Room Open  
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM Evening Reception / Members Welcome Event in Hospitality Room  
Enjoy your time in San Diego!

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024

7:00 AM - 11:45 PM Hospitality Room Open  
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM Registration  
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM Camp Pendleton Tour with Lunch  
Enjoy your time in San Diego!

## FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2024

7:00 AM - 11:45 PM Hospitality Room Open  
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM MCRD Graduation/USS Midway Tour  
12:00 PM - 5:00 PM USS Midway Only Tour  
Enjoy your time in San Diego!

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2024

7:00 AM - 5:00 PM Hospitality Room Open- Must Close During Social Hour/Banquet  
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Memorial Service  
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Family and Friends Social  
10:30 AM - 1:00 PM Members' Meeting  
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Social Hour with Cash Bar  
7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Closing Banquet Dinner and Auction with Keynote Speaker

**VISIT [WWW.19WALKINGDEAD.ORG/REUNION](http://WWW.19WALKINGDEAD.ORG/REUNION) TO REGISTER**

Bernie Taylor	1966-1967
Albert Thompson	1965
Brian Tuohy	1967
Matt Valenzuela	2007-2011
Kenneth (Don) Vermillion	1966-1967
James Vierstra	1986-1990
Stephen Weldon	1967

Remember, registering before April 8 ensures you pay the lower rate and helps us with planning a truly spectacular reunion. For those who have not yet registered, we encourage you to do so at your earliest convenience. Your involvement is what makes our events special, and this reunion will be no different.

Stay tuned for further updates, including sneak peeks of our venue visits and more. Your active participation and interest are what make our community strong. We look forward to making memories together at the national reunion. For more information on registration and the event, please reach out through our designated contact channels.

## ENHANCEMENTS TO OUR ELECTION PROCESS FOR THE 2024 REUNION

As we eagerly anticipate our upcoming 2024 reunion, we are excited to introduce several enhancements to our election process. These changes, which reflect our commitment to transparency, aim to support both candidates and members, ensuring that our governance mirrors our collective voice and aspirations.

Traditionally, the nomination of Board of Directors candidates has taken place during the business meeting at each reunion, a practice that remains at the core of our process. However, in light of past challenges related to participation and attendance on boards, we are implementing measures to promote informed candidacy and active involvement.

To better prepare potential candidates for their future roles, we are launching a “job shadowing” program. Members interested in joining the Board are encouraged to attend board meetings leading up to the reunion. This hands-on experience allows them to familiarize themselves with the responsibilities, ask questions, and grasp the dedication involved.

Additionally, to ensure our community is well-acquainted with all candidates, we invite submissions of biographies, qualifications, and visions for the Association to be featured in our newsletters and the Proud Warrior. This approach facilitates early and effective communication and empowers members to make informed decisions during the leadership elections.

It is essential to understand that these enhancements are not mandatory for candidacy but rather opportunities to enhance the electoral process. Candidacy remains open to all regular or lifetime members who are up to date with their dues, preserving our valued tradition. This initiative aims to deepen our understanding and engagement gradually, moving away from making decisions in the limited timeframe of a single meeting.

We encourage all individuals considering leadership roles within our Association to engage with these valuable enhancements promptly. By doing so, we will fortify the foundations of our community, ensuring that every voice is heard, and every leader is equipped for the meaningful responsibilities that lie ahead.

Your active participation and unwavering support are what set our Association apart. We appreciate your continued involvement and eagerly anticipate another year of growth and shared achievements.

Go to <https://www.19walkingdead.org/association-candidacy-declaration-2024> to fill out the form.

## REUNION FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

In an incredible demonstration of community spirit and generosity, we are thrilled to announce that our reunion fundraising campaign has surpassed expectations, amassing over \$7000 in donations to date. This remarkable achievement reflects the commitment and solidarity of our members and supporters, who have come together to ensure the 2024 reunion will be both memorable and meaningful.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the following donors for their generous contributions:

Robert Syler, Member, First Battalion Ninth Marines Association  
 Stephen Green  
 Richard Woolsey, R&R Construction  
 Ron Hanstein  
 Gene St. Hilaire  
 Jason Woodin, Coastal Postal  
 Kyle McGeary, Disorder Skateboards  
 VFW 3225, Clovis, CA

A special note of appreciation goes to Association member Matt Schavel, who has dedicated his efforts to engaging businesses as sponsors for our reunion. Matt’s initiative and enthusiasm have been instrumental in furthering our fundraising goals.

## CALL TO ACTION: WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The success of this campaign is a testament to the power of collective action, but our work is not yet done. We need the continued commitment of all members to reach our fundraising objectives. This is a call to action for anyone willing to help spread the word and attract further donations.

If you can assist in approaching businesses or know potential donors who might be interested in supporting our cause, we have prepared a donation letter that can be shared to solicit their support. This is a fantastic opportunity to make a significant impact and assist in making the 2024 reunion an event to remember.

For those ready to take action or in need of the donation letter, please reach out to us at [info@19walkingdead.org](mailto:info@19walkingdead.org). Your effort and support could make all the difference. Together, we can achieve incredible milestones and ensure our reunion is a resounding success.

Your participation and generosity are not just contributions to an event; they are vital components of our united effort to celebrate and honor the legacy and camaraderie of the 1/9 family. Thank you for standing together with us in this endeavor.

<https://www.19walkingdead.org/donate2024>

## 1/9 PLEDGE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

We are thrilled to announce that, to date, our 1/9 pledge fundraising campaign has successfully raised \$5,000! This impressive figure is the combined result of both single pledge contributions and recurring monthly pledges from our devoted members. It's heartening to see the strength and generosity within our community, as each donation directly supports the mission of the association and contributes to the planning and execution of our 2024 reunion.

Yet, the path to our financial goal continues, and we invite every member of our 1/9 family who has not yet contributed to consider joining this meaningful effort. Remember, no donation is too small; every amount goes directly towards our association's endeavors to celebrate and honor our legacy and camaraderie.

By participating, you are not just donating; you are reaffirming your bond and commitment to our community's values and future. With each pledge, you help us inch closer to making the 2024 reunion not just a possibility, but a guaranteed success story we can all be proud of.

If you're ready to make a pledge or interested in increasing your contribution with a recurring monthly donation, please contact us at [info@19walkingdead.org](mailto:info@19walkingdead.org). Every donation, no matter the size, makes a significant impact. Together, we can achieve our goals and ensure that our association continues to thrive.

Thank you for your continuing support and dedication to the 1/9 family. Your contributions truly make all the difference.

<https://www.19walkingdead.org/1-9pledge>

# UNVEILING OUR INAUGURAL ANNUAL REPORT

We are pleased to present our inaugural Annual Report, a significant milestone in the evolving narrative of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. This announcement signifies the start of a new chapter, marked by a strong focus on transparency, communication, and accountability. For the first time, we have compiled a detailed overview of our financial performance, operational achievements, and strategic initiatives from the previous year.

This initiative stems from our core commitment to keeping our valued members well-informed, promoting transparency in our actions, and upholding accountability in managing our resources.

By thoroughly assessing our activities, challenges, and opportunities, we aim to empower our members with the insights needed to actively contribute to shaping our organization's path forward. Furthermore, the report plays a vital role in supporting our Board of Directors in effectively carrying out their oversight responsibilities by offering comprehensive insights into our performance against established goals, pinpointing areas for improvement, and outlining strategies to better serve our members and the broader community.

Looking back, the absence of such oversight has highlighted the impacts of operational inefficiencies. Through engagement with the Annual Report, members will gain a deeper understanding of our achievements, ongoing obstacles, and future ambitions. Whether it involves increasing member engagement or enhancing our financial sustainability, every aspect of our operations has been meticulously reviewed to uphold our steadfast dedication to our members and the legacy of the First Battalion Ninth Marines.

We strongly encourage each of you to delve into the Annual Report (sent to your email), to analyze, question, and share your perspectives as we strive for excellence in all our pursuits. Together, we are dedicated to embodying the values of honor, courage, and commitment that define us, working towards a prosperous future for the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association.

## 2024 Q1 MEMBER SURVEY

In our continuous quest for excellence and improvement, we are excited to announce the 2024 Q1 Member Survey, set to open on March 31, 2024. This survey represents a critical mechanism through which we seek your invaluable feedback on our recent initiatives

and your insights into the direction we should head.

Before participating in the survey, we strongly encourage each of you to first immerse yourself in the latest edition of "The Proud Warrior" and the Annual Report. These documents meticulously outline the work done by the Board of Directors and various committees over the past quarter. By familiarizing yourself with these updates, you ensure that your feedback is well-informed and reflective of our collective accomplishments, ongoing challenges, and articulated goals.

The voices of our members are paramount in steering the course of the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. The insights you share through the 2024 Q1 Member Survey will directly inform our strategies and initiatives, ensuring that our actions resonate with our values of honor, courage, and commitment. By engaging with both "The Proud Warrior" and the Annual Report, you equip yourself to provide feedback that is not only constructive but also aligns with our shared vision for the future.

Mark your calendars for March 31, 2024, and watch your email inbox to join us in this important exercise of reflection and projection. Your perspective is critical to our continued success and collective achievement.

## LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE MEMBER OPERATIONS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

In an exciting development for the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association, the Board of Directors has given the green light for the acquisition of groundbreaking mapping software, a decision poised to revolutionize our member operations and community engagement. The approval came in early March, marking a significant stride towards integrating technology into our association's nucleus.

This innovative software is designed to empower us with several capabilities critical to enhancing our operations and fostering a stronger sense of community within our ranks:

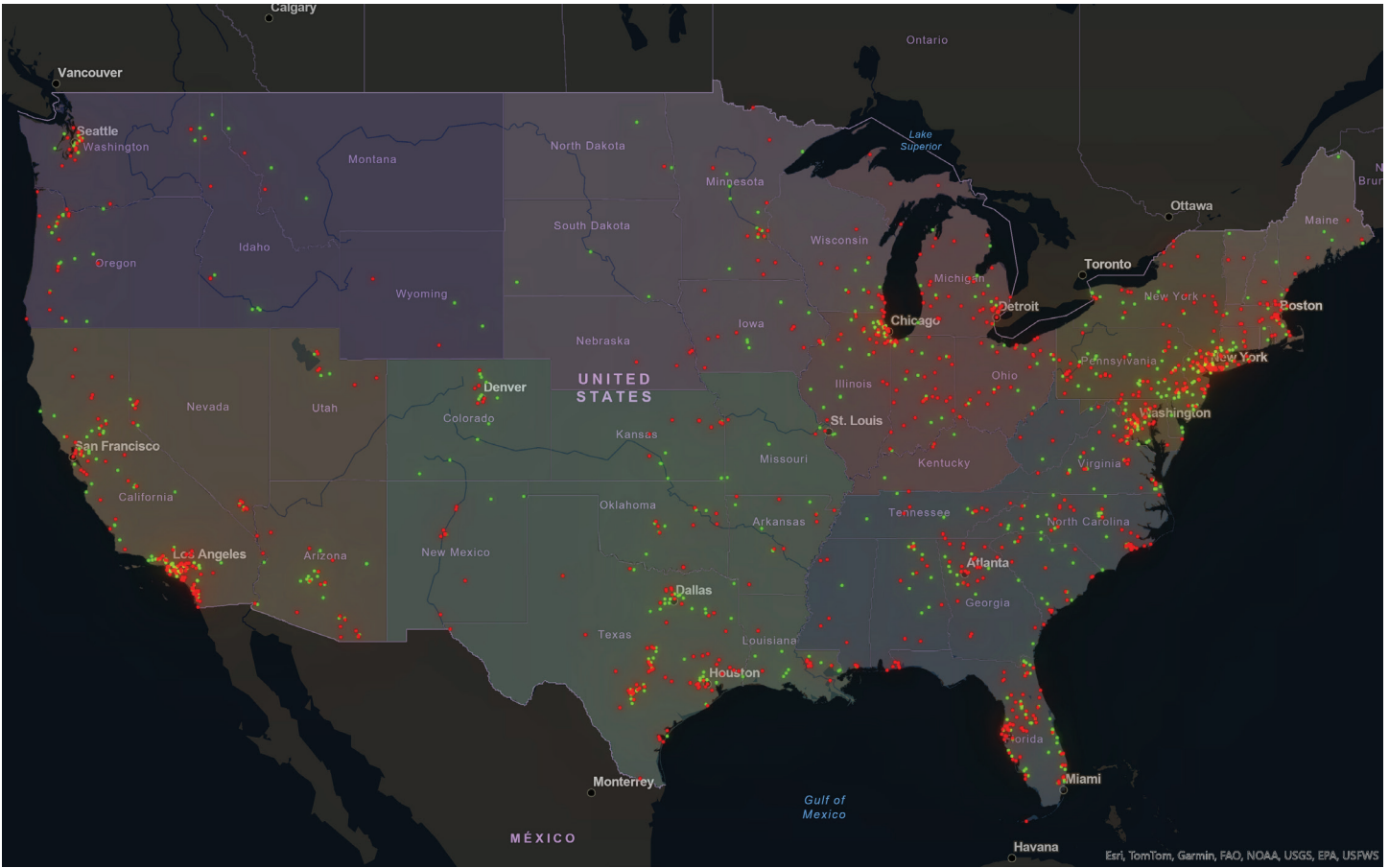
### Local Community Formation

By organizing our roster geographically, we can initiate local area groups for mini-reunions. This marks a step towards building a tighter-knit community, enabling members to connect and interact on a more personal and frequent basis.

### Event Planning Assistance

Understanding the density of our members in specific locations will immensely benefit the planning of events, be it





reunions, local fundraisers, or other gatherings. This insight allows for more strategic and inclusive event planning.

**Visual Member Directory**

The ability to build a visual representation of where members are located encourages connectivity and networking among our veterans. Seeing how many fellow members reside nearby can spark more meet-ups and shared experiences. This directory will operate on an opt-in basis, meaning members need to choose to be listed. Locations of each member will only display the city registered with the Association to protect privacy. Members will be able to view the map and see the names and email addresses. We are choosing to only display the email address to allow for members to connect while still protecting their actual address and phone number.

**To be clear, exact member locations nor addresses will NOT be shared.**

**Event Site Mapping**

For larger gatherings, such as our annual reunion, the software can create detailed maps showcasing points of interest around the event venue, adding an extra layer of convenience and engagement for attendees.

The investment in this software, at an annual cost of

\$550, reflects our commitment to solving member requests for more localized events, regional coordination, and a more accessible member directory. It represents a thoughtful response to our community’s needs, embodying our values of honor, courage, and commitment in the digital age.

We believe that by adopting this technology, we are not just enhancing our operational efficiency but also paving the way for a more connected and engaged First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. This initiative underscores our dedication to leveraging technology in ways that respect our members’ privacy while significantly enriching our communal bond.

**UPCOMING MINI REUNION IN THE SAN DIEGO AREA: AN EVENING OF CAMARADERIE AND CONNECTION**

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is thrilled to announce an upcoming mini reunion for our members in the San Diego area on the evening of May 4th, 2024. This gathering is an opportunity for our community to come together in a spirit of camaraderie, catch up on old times, and forge new connections.

The evening will kick off with association updates, providing insights into our latest initiatives and accomplishments. Following that, we'll have a session dedicated to introductions and getting to know each other, creating a welcoming atmosphere for both long standing and new members alike.

Dinner will be a focal point of the evening, offering a chance to share stories and experiences over a meal. This will be complemented by a Q&A discussion, where members can voice their thoughts, express their needs, especially those specific to the San Diego area, and offer suggestions on how the Association can further support its members.

Given the personalized nature of this event, the specific time and location are yet to be determined and will depend on the number of attendees. This approach allows us to select a venue that best suits the size and needs of our group, ensuring a comfortable and accommodating environment for everyone.

We kindly ask those interested in attending to RSVP as soon as possible. Your prompt response will greatly assist us in planning and making necessary arrangements for our mini reunion.

Please stay tuned for further details on the time and venue. We look forward to an evening filled with fellowship, reflection, and lively discussion.

<https://www.19walkingdead.org/events-calendar>

## MEMBERS LIVE DISCUSSION

**4/19/2024**

We are excited to announce a special live discussion for our members to be held via Zoom on **April 19th, 2024, at 4:00 PM PST**. In line with our commitment to fostering strong connections within our community and maintaining open lines of communication, this event aims to bring members and leadership closer together, even when we're apart physically.

This virtual gathering is an opportunity to hear the latest updates and insights directly from the association's leadership. It's also a forum for you, our members, to ask questions, voice concerns, or confirm that we're moving in the right direction. It's an invaluable chance to engage directly with decision-makers and contribute your perspective for our future.

To make this event even more impactful, we encourage each attendee to bring along a fellow 1/9 veteran. Expanding our attendance and participation will enrich our discussions, offering a broader range of experiences and viewpoints. This, in turn, helps us to grow stronger

as a community, ensuring that we're meeting the needs and expectations of all our members.

Mark your calendars and make arrangements to join us for this meaningful conversation. Your input and engagement are what guide us forward. Stay tuned for the Zoom meeting details, which will be shared shortly. Together, we can continue to build a vibrant and supportive community.

## UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Our membership roster serves as a critical tool in our communication strategy, enabling us to keep you informed about what's happening within the association. Updating your contact information should not be overlooked. It is a small yet significant step that can make a substantial difference in how we communicate and engage with our members.

Updating your contact information is straightforward. Simply visit the link below and follow the instructions provided. <https://19walkingdead.org/updatecontact>

## WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS AND CELEBRATING RENEWALS

As our Association continues to thrive and expand its horizons, we take immense pleasure in recognizing the individuals who have recently become a part of our community, as well as those who have renewed their commitment to our collective goals and missions. The strength of our association lies in the diversity and dedication of our members. Your continued support and engagement are not just vital for our growth; they also enrich our community, making it a more vibrant, knowledgeable, and supportive environment for all.

We extend our warmest welcome to the new members who have joined us, believing in our vision and objectives. Simultaneously, we express our heartfelt thanks to those who have reaffirmed their faith in our mission by renewing their memberships. Your belief in our mission fuels our drive to push forward, ensuring that our association remains a beacon of support, advocacy, and camaraderie in the lives of 1/9 veterans and families.

Thank you for being the backbone of our growing family.

### New Members

James Clark 2006-2010  
Shannon Whitehead 1998-2000  
Ryan West 2010-2013  
Ernie Cole 1989-1993  
Ronald Johnson 1968-1972



## New Associate Members

Eugene Spanos 1966-1971  
Peter Sciortino Sr 1965-1966

## Returning Members

Murrie Hubbard 1972-1973  
Thomas Theurer 1967-1967  
Lesley Stephenson 1969-1970  
Tim Haley 1967-1968  
Thomas Kraft 1965-1966  
Jeffrey Mays 1990-1991  
Plinio Tuta 1968-1969

## Renewing Members

Simone Pace 1966-1966

# ANNOUNCING THE FIRST BATTALION NINTH MARINES ASSOCIATION EMERITUS PROGRAM

The First Battalion Ninth Marines Association is proud to introduce the Emeritus Program - a new initiative designed to honor and recognize the outstanding dedication and service of individuals who have significantly contributed to our organization. The mission of the Emeritus Program is to express our deep gratitude for these invaluable contributions while providing opportunities for continued involvement and support.

## Program Objectives

We aim to acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary efforts of past volunteers who have played a pivotal role in advancing the mission and objectives of our Association. The program seeks to maintain and foster meaningful connections with emeritus members, reinforcing the sense of community and camaraderie within our organization. By drawing upon the knowledge and insights of emeritus members, we can shape the Association's future direction and priorities more effectively. It's crucial to preserve and honor the legacy of past volunteers, ensuring their contributions are remembered and celebrated by future generations.

## Program Components

The nomination process for emeritus status involves inviting members, including volunteers, and board members to nominate distinguished individuals based on their contributions and qualifications. A selection committee of board members and organizational leaders

will assess nominees' service length, impact, and alignment with values. Emeritus status benefits include designation as a member, recognition in materials, lifetime membership, and advisory roles. We will honor new emeritus members at our bi-annual National Reunion.

The Emeritus Program reflects our commitment to celebrating the legacies of those who have profoundly impacted the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association. Through recognition, engagement, and the utilization of expertise, we want to ensure that the contributions of emeritus members continue to guide and inspire our mission for many years to come.

To nominate someone for the program, go to <https://www.19walkingdead.org/emeritus-program>

## COMMUNITY CARE AND SUPPORT INITIATIVE

In our continuous effort to support the well-being of our members, the First Battalion Ninth Marines Association has taken significant steps towards enhancing the support within our community. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by military veterans and their families, a group of dedicated members came together to formulate a strategic plan that addresses these specific needs.

This initiative began with an insightful gateway training session on suicide, facilitated by LOSS Community Services of Columbus, Ohio. LOSS exists to install hope in those bereaved by suicide and empower survivors to thrive. The training provided by LOSS was both educative and inspiring. It underscored the importance of being prepared and equipped to support one another, especially in situations unique to veterans and their families.

Our strategic plan for supporting the well-being of our members and community includes several key components. These include outreach efforts such as sending personalized cards and gift baskets to hospitalized members or those experiencing grief, making outreach calls to offer support, and elevating awareness on grief/postvention through education. Additionally, the plan focuses on guiding members to local and national resources for further assistance, ensuring that help is accessible when it's most needed.

Progress in drafting this plan has been promising, and we have already begun to outline operational aspects of the initiative. However, the success of this endeavor relies heavily on the participation and dedication of our community members. We are actively seeking volunteers who are willing to

contribute their time and empathy towards supporting our members through challenging times.

Given the nature of our community being military veterans and their families, it is unfortunately common for us to encounter situations that put our members at risk. By being proactive in our approach to mental health support, we aim to create a nurturing environment where everyone feels supported, understood, and hopeful. Our goal is not only to assist in times of immediate need but to foster a community where continuous support and understanding are readily available.

We invite all members who want to make a difference in the lives of our veteran community to join us in this important initiative. Together, we can ensure that our community is a beacon of hope and strength, standing united in support of one another.

If anyone wishes to submit names of members who are sick, in the hospital, facing upcoming operations, going through a difficult time, or have recently lost a loved one, we strongly encourage you to reach out. Our collective effort to support each other is crucial, and by identifying those in need, we can tailor our outreach and support more effectively. Please feel free to contact us through our designated channels with information about members who could benefit from our support initiatives. Your input is invaluable, and together, we can extend a helping hand to those within our community during their times of need.

## **PRAYER GROUP : STRENGTHENING FAITH AND COMMUNITY**

In line with our ongoing commitment to support and uplift our community, we are thrilled to announce the formation of a new prayer group, led by our esteemed Association Chaplain, Ray Linebaugh. Recognizing the importance of faith in the lives of many of our members, this initiative seeks to forge a strong, faith-based community within our association, where veterans and their families can find solace, strength, and camaraderie.

The prayer group convenes once a month under the guidance of Chaplain Ray Linebaugh, creating a space for members to come together in prayer, reflection, and support of one another. The meetings are intended to be a source of spiritual strength, enabling our community to grow closer in shared experiences and in our spiritual journeys.

For those among us who hold faith as a pillar of strength, this group represents an opportunity to explore and affirm our beliefs within a supportive community context. We also encourage members to bring their prayer requests to these meetings, whether they are personal reflections, hopes for

their families, or thoughts for the wider veteran community.

This is an open invitation to all members who feel drawn to participating in this new prayer group. Your presence would be a valuable addition to our collective effort to build a community rich in faith and mutual support. For more details on the inaugural meeting and how to get involved, please go to <https://www.19walkingdead.org/prayer-group>.

## **CALLING ALL 1/9 BUSINESS OWNERS**

In an effort to further bolster the unity and collaborative spirit within our 1/9 Association community, we are excited to initiate a new venture aimed at supporting 1/9 veterans who are business owners. Understanding the power of community and the impact of mutual support, we are exploring the establishment of a robust network — a constellation of business resources, connections, and opportunities tailored specifically to the entrepreneurs among us.

This initiative could take many forms, be it a comprehensive business directory, featuring articles on various 1/9-owned businesses, or even a dedicated business support group where owners can engage with one another, share insights, and provide assistance based on shared experiences and challenges. The exact shape this initiative will take is still under consideration, and your input is invaluable in crafting a platform that best serves our collective needs and aspirations.

To kick this off, we are calling on all 1/9 business owners to come together for an exploratory discussion. This meeting will be the foundation upon which we build a network designed to uplift and support each other in our entrepreneurial journeys. Whether you're a seasoned business owner or just starting out, your perspective and experiences are crucial to the success of this initiative.

Please register at <https://www.19walkingdead.org/business-owners> to join the conversation. Once we have a comprehensive list of interested members, we will arrange a date and time for our inaugural discussion. This is more than just an opportunity to network; it's a chance to weave a tighter knit community, reinforcing our commitment to each other's success and to the enduring legacy of the 1/9 veterans.

Together, we can create a vibrant ecosystem that not only supports our business ventures but also honors the spirit of service and camaraderie that defines our 1/9 family. We look forward to your participation and to the wealth of possibilities our collective effort will undoubtedly unlock. Thank you for considering this opportunity to deepen our connections and support one another in a truly impactful way.

# EXCITING UPDATES FROM THE ASSOCIATION STORE

We are pleased to share some significant updates from our Association Store that you may have noticed over the past month. These changes are aimed at enhancing your shopping experience, ensuring reliability, and broadening our merchandise selection. At the helm of these improvements is James Vierstra, who has recently taken over the store operations.

Our commitment to improving customer service and expanding our product line is already bearing fruit. Notably, at the end of February and into March, we achieved record sales, a testament to the community's support and the enhancements we've made. These sales are not only a milestone for the store but also crucial in supporting our association, various initiatives, and our broader community. Your continuous support has been invaluable, and we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to each of you.

In line with bringing new merchandise to our store, we are excited to announce the launch of two special products. First, we've introduced the Vietnam shirt and hoodie, designed to honor our Vietnam vets. This new product line reflects our commitment to recognizing the valor and sacrifice of those who served during the Vietnam War. Additionally, we've also launched our staple 1/9 unit shirt and hoodie. These products embody the spirit of our community and will remain regular fixtures in our store.

By making these changes and introducing new merchandise, we aim not only to meet your expectations but to exceed them. We're thrilled about the direction our Association Store is headed and the opportunities these enhancements bring. Stay tuned for more updates and new product launches. Your support means everything to us, and we look forward to continuing to serve you.

Should you have any questions or need further information, please reach out through our designated contact channels. Here's to making the most of our Association Store and strengthening our community together!

## Vietnam Shirt and Hoodie

In our continuous effort to honor the bravery and sacrifice of our veterans, we are thrilled to unveil the latest additions to our store - the exclusive Vietnam Veterans Shirt and Hoodie. Designed with respect and pride, these new items offer a meaningful way to commemorate the valor of those who served in Vietnam, while also supporting our Association's initiatives.



## 1/9 Unit Shirt and Hoodie

We are proud to introduce the 1/9 "The Walking Dead" Unit Shirt and Hoodie, a tribute to the bravery and resilience of the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. These items honor the legacy of one of the most decorated battalions in the Marine Corps. The shirt and hoodie remain as a regular item in our store.

## 1/9 Zippo Lighter

We are thrilled to present the latest addition to our store, the exclusive 1/9 Zippo Lighter. Crafted with the precision and quality synonymous with the Zippo brand, this windproof lighter emerges as a testament to the unwavering spirit of "The Walking Dead." Featuring a black finish and adorned with the 1/9 shield logo, this officially licensed Marine Corps Edition lighter epitomizes both reliability and elegance.

## Products in Development

Our community's unwavering support has led to the



amazing success of our 1/9 hats, which completely sold out in March. Recognizing how special these hats are to you, we've partnered with Zach from Salty Vet Woodworks, a proud 1/9 Veteran Business Owner, to not only restock but also to elevate the quality of these hats. We're thrilled to share that James Vierstra has just received the upgraded hats and is diligently preparing them for sale in our store.

Furthermore, the demand for our Bravo and Alpha Company coins was so high that they too sold out during March. We've placed an order with our vendor for another batch of these commemorative coins, and we promise to keep you updated on their availability.

In our ongoing effort to offer you a variety of merchandise, we are also working with a vendor to reintroduce the 1/9 Coozies into our store, alongside new stickers, patches, and a new beanie design.

One of the most exciting developments in our product line is the collaboration with a talented graphic designer to create MOS shirts. These shirts are set to feature a minimalist yet impactful design, including the MOS number and name, along with an illustrative representation of the weapons system. We aim to gather community feedback on the concept art soon to gauge interest in these unique merchandise items.

Additionally, we're expanding our coin collection to include Charlie and Weapons Company coins, enriching the ways in which you can honor the diverse branches of our unit.

Lastly, we're in the process of designing OIF and OEF shirts to pay tribute to our 1/9 veterans. We're hopeful these additions will resonate with the community.

Stay tuned for more updates as we work to bring these exciting products into our store.



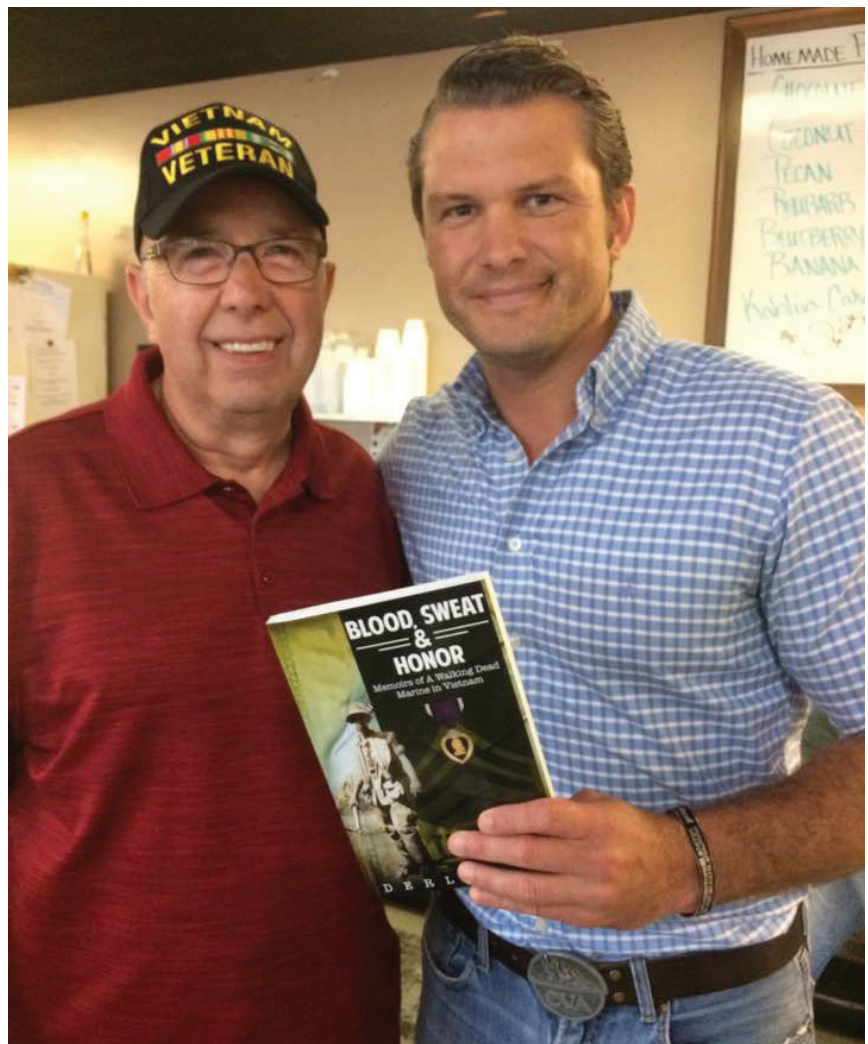
We know that you have options when it comes to purchasing 1/9 memorabilia, and we genuinely appreciate your decision to support our store. It's important to us to remind you that by choosing to shop with us, you're not just buying a product; you're actively contributing to the Association and its mission. Your purchases play a crucial role in enabling us to continue our work and support for the 1/9 community. Thank you for your trust and your contributions.

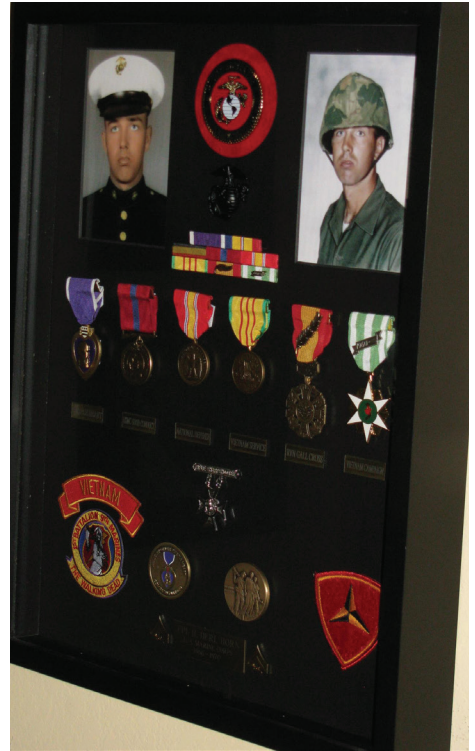
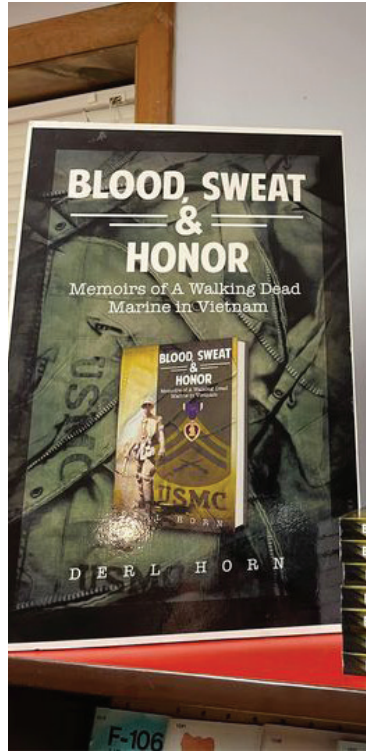
# BLOOD, SWEAT & HONOR: MEMOIRS OF A WALKING DEAD MARINE IN VIETNAM

In his gripping memoir, Derl Horn brings to life a pivotal moment in the history of Bravo Company during the Vietnam War. On July 2, 1967, just north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the company found itself ensnared in a deadly U-shaped ambush. Despite the seemingly insurmountable odds, the Marines demonstrated extraordinary valor, fighting tirelessly to protect one another. The harrowing hours spent in battle tested their resolve, with only twenty-six men surviving the ordeal. This incident indelibly marked their lives, a testament to their unyielding spirit and brotherhood.

Horn's narrative seamlessly transitions from his initial experiences of being drafted into the Marine Corps to the brutal realities faced on the battlegrounds of Vietnam. He does not shy away from depicting the struggles and horrors encountered, yet intersperses these with moments of camaraderie, support from loved ones, and a strengthened faith in God. His story is not just a personal account but a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by those who served.

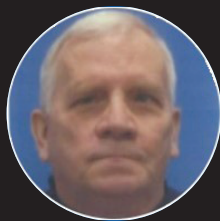
A lifetime member of the association since 2006, Horn's connection to his fellow veterans and dedication to sharing their collective legacy is palpable throughout his book. His detailed recounting serves not only as a historic documentation but also as an homage to the bravery, resilience, and solidarity of the Marines with whom he served. Derl Horn's memoir is an important contribution to our understanding of the Vietnam War and a moving tribute to the indomitable spirit of its veterans.





# 1/9 HISTORY

*Albert Thompson, The Story of the 1st Battalion 9th Marines*



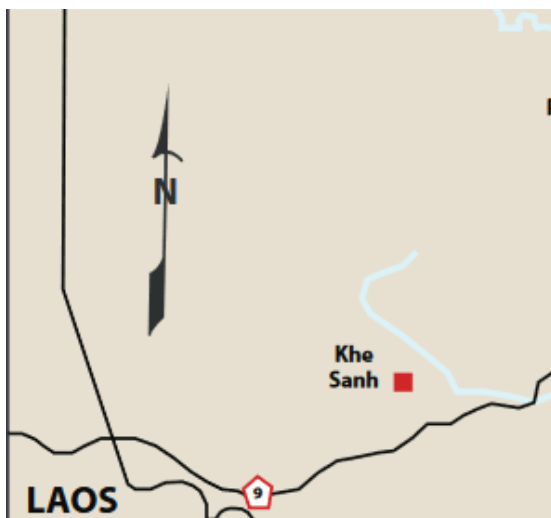
## About the Author

Al Thompson has more than fifty years' experience as a technical writer and training course developer for various computer companies. He has authored more than eighty books on computer applications. He has also functioned as department head for Publications and Marketing departments.

Al was born in Cleveland, Ohio. Upon graduation from high school, he joined the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam from June 1965 to March 1966. Upon discharge, he completed a trade school course at Control Data Institute in Computer Science. He then worked as a manufacturing technician and customer service engineer on large mainframe computers. He lived and worked in the Sant Clara Valley in the 1970s and 80s when computers were being developed.

He completed an undergraduate BSCS degree at San Jose State in Technology Management and a MBA from The University of Phoenix, and Doctoral work at San Jose State in Mass Communications.

He has taught business and computer science at the University of Phoenix, Portland Community College, and Pioneer Pacific University.



## THE FIRST BATTLE OF KHE SAN

General Westmoreland believed the remote outpost of Khe Sanh was important to the NVA planning. Khe Sanh is in the mountainous northwest corner of Quang Tri Province astride Route 9 near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating North and South Vietnam. It is just 10 kilometers east of the Laotian border. Westmoreland felt it provided them with an advantage if they had it as a base, Marine Corps brass did not agree.

In 1968 there was what media referred to as the siege of Khe Sanh and erroneously compared it to Dien Bien Phu. However, because of Westmoreland's insistence, the Marines were at Khe Sanh on 30 September 1966, when 1/9 was airlifted there using a Lockheed KC-130 Hercules.

From October of 1966 until January of 1967, the Marines lost 1 KIA and 27 WIA. They claimed 15 NVA KIA. The worst enemy for 1/9 at Khe Sanh seemed to be the cold and wet weather. On 1 and 2 February of 1967, 1/9 was withdrawn from Khe Sanh and replaced, not by another battalion, but by Company B 1/9 under the command of Captain Michael W Sayers. The garrison also included a platoon from 3d Recon and Battery I, 1/12. They all reported to the Senior Officer Present (SOP) Col, Thomas A Horne.

The Company had the same mission as the battalion, and shortly after arriving, there was enough contact to indicate increased enemy activity. On 25 February, Second Lieutenant John M. Kramer's 2nd Platoon was patrolling about three kilometers west of the airstrip when its 1st Squad, led by Sergeant Donald E. Harper Jr., collided with the enemy.

The squad spotted several NVA who avoided contact. A fireteam headed by Corporal Steven Wright came to the top of a hill and ran into three NVA sitting on the ground. They fired first, killing one and wounding the others severely. Another enemy was wounded several yards away. The Marines then began receiving intense incoming small-arms fire from the reverse slope of a hill 50 yards away. Harper concluded he was facing a superior force and withdrew to the bottom of the hill, notified Captain Sayers, and requested artillery.

Captain Sayers ordered Harper to reoccupy the hill and retrieve the NVA bodies. They reached the top of the hill and began to drag the bodies back when they received fire from their front and their flank. Harper withdrew and

requested more artillery. Captain Sayers ordered two squads led by 1st Lt, David Mellon to join Harper who was down to five men. They attacked and were met by increased small arms fire and mortars that killed S/Sgt Kendall Cutbirth and wounded 10 others, including Lt. Mellon. Despite his wounds, Mellon was able to request air support and two F-4 Phantoms dropped their 500-pound loads on the reverse slope devastating the enemy force.

Searches turned up 10 NVA KIA an 82mm mortar, several mortar base plates, hundreds of mortar rounds, binoculars, rifles, a pistol, and more than 20 packs. This indicated that the NVA had taken heavy casualties and been forced to leave rapidly, abandoning such a large amount of equipment.



The next three weeks were relatively quiet, with a mortar barrage and small contacts almost daily. Captain Sayers was able to convince General Ryan of the need for more men and on 7 March Captain William Terrill's Company E 2nd Battalion 9th Marines arrived. They took over half the TAOR and began patrolling.

Company E's 1st Platoon found itself in trouble near Hill 861 on 16 March. Captain Sayers ordered Second Lieutenant Gatlin J. Howell to rush



toward Hill 861 with two squads from his 2d Platoon, Company B, to assist 1st Platoon Company E. Company B Marines had been patrolling 3,500 meters east of Hill 861 To make better time, they dropped their packs and pushed up the east side of the hill. A third squad boarded a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter so that it could be inserted on the southeastern slope of the hill. The CH-46 transporting the last squad of 2d Platoon, Company B, crashed near its intended landing zone, injuring every man aboard and leaving more casualties to be treated and flown out.

An on-target napalm strike brought an end to the NVA threat. Company B searched west of Hill 861 for two days and found little trace of the NVA. The effort to evacuate casualties had

provided them with time to withdraw and take everything with them.

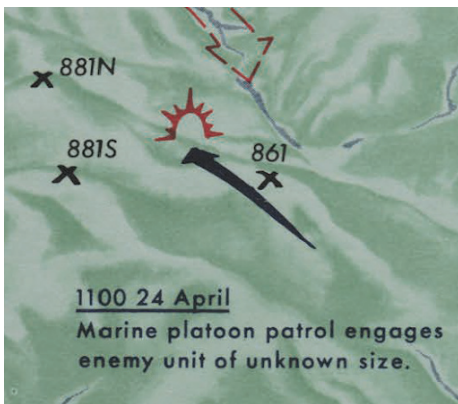
The 27th of March was a good news/bad news day for Captain Sayers. Engineers announced the opening of Route 9, relieving the dependence on air as the only source for resupply. In addition, Sayers received a section of tanks and two light sections of truck-mounted heavy weapons, including dual 40mm automatic cannons and quad .50-caliber machine guns. A section of M50 Ontos vehicles also carried six 106mm recoilless rifles. The bad news was that Company E 2/9 was returning to Dong Ha.

Intelligence reports indicated that the NVA were moving element of two regiments into the Khe Sahn area with the possibility of having up to



3000 men. They confirmed that the 18th Regiment of the 325C Division was dug into the hills surrounding Khe Sanh. They also believed that they were planning a major attack and that Company B 1/9 was the bait for the large unit activity General Westmorland desired.

It was determined that 3rd Marines could best support Khe Sahn, and that Company K 3/3 would relieve Company B 1/9 on 29 April. The relief was due to arrive on 25 April. On the morning of 24 April 1st and 3rd Platoons of Company B 1/9 swept a cave complex northwest of Hill 861. Sayers order 2d Platoon to advance to Hill 700 to support the sweep. Lt, Thomas King led two rifle squads and 10 men from the 81mm mortar section. In addition, a forward observer for the mortars and Lt Suaer, an Ontos Section leader. King established their position on Hill 700 and dispatched Lt. Suaer as part of a five-man team sent to Hill 861 to establish an observation post. The observation team was ambushed 300 meters short of the summit. The point man was killed and Lt. Suaer was killed as he used his .45 pistol to cover the withdrawal of the other three. Only the forward observer, Pfc. William Marks returned alive. Thus began the first Battle of Khe Sanh.



After losing radio contact with the observation team, LT King sent a rifle squad to investigate. The squad found the bodies of the two Marines but were forced to withdraw under heavy automatic rifle fire. Capt. Sayers and his radio operator flew to



King's position as King led a squad of nine on a third ascent to recover the other two bodies. They found them and they had been burned and decapitated by the NVA.

King moved to an area suitable for an LZ and requested a pickup for the bodies. The helicopter came under fire but was able to complete the extraction due to assistance from two Huey copters that covered the tree line with automatic fire.

The contact with the King's second platoon led Capt. Sayers to believe he could they had an opportunity to strike the NVA from two different directions. He directed the First Platoon, led by Second Lieutenant James D. Carter Jr., and 3d Platoon, led by Staff Sergeant Reyes, to advance east towards the summit of Hill 861.



After advancing 300-meters, the 1st Platoon ran into automatic fire and dove for cover. When the gunner for his section was knocked unconscious, LCpl Dana C. Darnell, a 60mm mortar ammunition carrier, placed the base of the tube in a helmet between his legs and steadied it with his bare hands. The rounds quickly heated the tube, so another Marine urinated on it to

keep Darnell from burning his hands. After expending all his ammunition, Darnell ran across open terrain under intense enemy fire more than three times to gather mortar rounds and bring them back to his tube.

When Lieutenant Carter ordered the Marines to move, two at a time, out of the open area to cover, Darnell dragged two wounded comrades to safety until an enemy mortar temporarily blinded him by blowing dirt and gravel into his eyes. Instead of allowing himself to be evacuated, he cleansed his eyes using drinking water and within an hour was back assisting the wounded. Darnell was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, having been killed in action two days later.

The 3d Platoon, about 400 meters behind 1st platoon, was hit with mortar fire wounding six Marines. An F-4 mistook them for the NVA and dropped two 250-pound bombs killing six and wounding an additional twelve.

Marines do not leave anyone behind. The thought of leaving dead and wounded on the battlefield is foreign to them, and the NVA used that against them. They sighted potential landing strips, waiting for medevac choppers to come and get the wounded. When they did, they attacked with mortar and automatic weapons. Each time increasing the number of wounded and dead.

Lt. Carter and SSgt Reyes moved their platoons to find a LZ that was free of NVA attack. On the 24th of April, Company B 12 Marines with 17 wounded and two missing. The confirmed enemy losses were five KIA and one prisoner. The Marines had received the short end of the battle. However, General Walt concluded that the action of Company B had forced the NVA to reveal their plans prematurely.

Walt determined that the NVA was staging men and supplies for a major attack on Khe Sanh on or about May 1. After staging troops, the second step in their plan was to isolate Khe Sanh by destroying



transport helicopters near the base and cutting Route 9 at key places. As the actual attack on Khe Sanh commenced, the enemy would create diversions to inhibit American ability to reinforce the base by striking Camp Carroll and Dong Ha with supporting arms. Actual subsequent attacks on Route 9 and the other Marine bases in Quang Tri Province on 27–28 April supported Walt's assessment, and this interpretation of enemy plans appears in official Marine accounts of the battle.

The next morning, 25 April, Capt. Sayers, and platoon sergeant S/ Sgt Leon Burns took the remaining 22 men of 2nd Platoon and their equipment of the northern side of Hill 861. Throughout the day, they were able to evacuate some of the more critically wounded. In the late afternoon Company B's three platoons began moving up Hill 861 hoping to link up with Company K 3/3. Around 2130, thick fog forced them to form a defensive perimeter for the night.



Around 0500, the NVA began a bombardment of the Khe Sanh base with recoilless rifles, 82mm mortars, and rockets. The weapons were close enough to Company B's position that they could see the muzzle flashes. Capt. Sayers called in artillery, and the enemy fire ceased.

Meanwhile, Company K arrived at Khe Sanh. They immediately began advancing towards Hill 861. Despite severe communications problems, they advanced to within 500 meters of the crest of Hill 861. They ran into

heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire while making a frontal assault on a fortified position. The 1st platoon lost 15 killed and 15 wounded, leaving only 10 men. That night all three platoons of Company K dug in and maintained their positions.

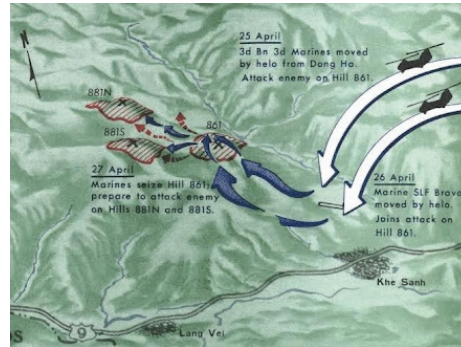
Lt. Col Gar Wilder, the 3/3 Battalion Commander, had operational control which included Company B 1/9. He was concerned about Company K and Company B. After a morning assault by 3rd Platoon Company K met with similar results, it was determined that they should get Company K off the hill. With the help of cover from UH-1 Huey gunships, they were able to get most of their dead and wounded evacuated to a secure LZ. Company K had lost 20 killed, 41 wounded, and four missing. That comprised 48% of the company's strength. As Company K 3/3 began its exit from Hill 861, Company K 3/9 was arriving.

The reinforced Company K 3rd Bn. 9th Marines led by Captain Jerrald E. Giles, was the reaction force Based at Camp Carrol. They disembarked from CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters at Khe Sanh at 1800 on 25 April. They moved outside the perimeter and made ready to help extricate the other two companies from Hill 861.



Attempts by Company B to move off Hill 861 met with additional ambushes and casualties as they tried to evacuate the wounded using helicopters. Col Wilder informed Capt. Sayers to carry his wounded out, but there were not enough able-bodied Marines to accomplish that. Sayer notified Wilder that he would settle into a defensive position and, "Fight until it was

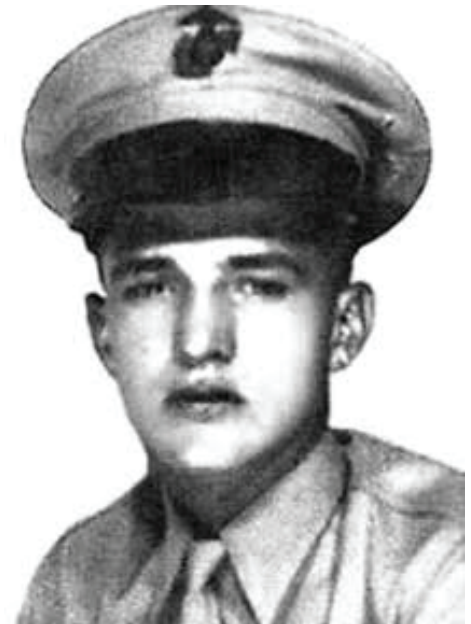
over." That did not happen because Captain Glen Golden's Battery F, 2d Battalion, 12th Marines formed a virtual ring of steel around the Marines.



About 1900 on the 26th, Company K 2/9 found Company B. They now had sufficient personnel to carry the wounded and the dead off Hill 861 using the darkness, fog, and Capt. Golden's artillery for cover. They marched through the night in the rain and mud, with four men on each stretcher until they reached 3/3's command post at the base of the hill at 0500 on 27 April.

Helicopters were used to take their casualties and equipment back to Khe Sanh. Trucks were made available for the able-bodied to be transported to the base. The men of Company B refused that offer and marched back. Once there, Capt. Sayers was able to account for every Marine and certify that no one was left on Hill 861.

On 27 April, what was left of Company B 1st Battalion 9th Marines was relieved from the fight and replaced by Company M 3rd Battalion 9th Marines. The decision was made to reinforce Khe Sanh and another 2/3 battalion was added. They were able to halt the NVA plan to make Khe Sanh another Dien Bien Phu.



L/Cpl Darnell, Dana Cornell

Dana Cornell Darnell was born in Greenville SC on February 5, 1948. He was KIA on April 26, 1967, at age 19 from small arms fire at Khe San Hill 861. He is buried at Graceland West Cemetery and Mausoleum, Greenville, Greenville County, South Carolina

Citation:

The President of the United States takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Dana Cornell Darnell (2208738), Lance Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism as a 60-mm. Mortar Ammunition Carrier attached to Company B, First Battalion, Ninth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in the Republic of Vietnam on 24 April 1967. Company B was engaged in a search-and-destroy operation against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces in Quang Tri Province. Lance Corporal Darnell's platoon was entering a clearing when it was ambushed by North Vietnamese Army Forces, using heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire. As the ambush was sprung, the mortar gunner was knocked unconscious while seeking cover. Lance Corporal Darnell retrieved the mortar by exhibiting sound judgment and extraordinary calmness in the

face of intense enemy fire. Due to the situation's urgency, he could not set the mortar up properly. Holding it between his legs and steadying it with his hands, he began firing the mortar from a position exposed to the enemy fire and delivered accurate fire into the enemy positions. When he had exhausted all his ammunition, he moved from man to man, collecting mortar ammunition to keep his mortar in action. He repeated this selfless performance many times, until the enemy fire was silenced. At this time, the platoon was ordered to withdraw from the clearing. Lance Corporal Darnell was dragging two wounded Marines from the clearing when he was temporarily blinded by enemy fire, which knocked dirt and rock fragments into his eyes. He refused to be evacuated and within an hour was again assisting in the care of the wounded. His outstanding courage, exceptional fortitude, and valiant fighting spirit inspired all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

HONORED ON PANEL 18E,  
LINE 91 OF THE WALL



1st Lt. Gatlin J Howell

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to First Lieutenant Gatlin Jerry Howell (MCSN: 0-93190), United States Marine Corps Reserve, for extraordinary heroism while serving

as Intelligence Officer, First Battalion, Ninth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in the Republic of Vietnam from 2 to 7 July 1967. While manning the command bunker at Con Thien on 2 July 1st Lieutenant Howell was closely monitoring the progress of Company B, First Battalion, as it became heavily engaged with an estimated two battalions of North Vietnamese Army Regulars near the Demilitarized Zone. When the unit suffered heavy casualties and was in danger of being overrun, he volunteered to lead a relief force to rescue the beleaguered Marines. Displaying exceptional leadership and tactical skill during his advance, he fearlessly exposed himself to enemy mortar and small-arms fire as he kept the relief column intact, pointing out directions of fire for the tanks and providing effective flank security as he moved rapidly to Company B's position. Immediately evaluating the situation when he arrived in the battle area, he established a defensive perimeter and moved to rescue the forward elements of the besieged company. As he searched for the wounded, he observed two men in a hole fifteen meters beyond the friendly lines. With complete disregard for his own safety, First Lieutenant Howell ran through heavy small-arms fire to treat the men and carry them to the safety of the perimeter. When his right flank was threatened by a North Vietnamese squad, he directed heavy fire against the assaulting force, undoubtedly saving the lives of at least three injured Marines caught between the enemy and the friendly lines. Subject to intense enemy mortar and artillery fire and road mines that disabled two tanks, he moved the casualties to the landing zone. After ensuring that the casualty evaluation process was well under way, he refused medical treatment for himself and instead returned to the forward area to determine that all of the wounded had been moved. During a rocket attack on 7 July at Con Thien, First Lieutenant Howell was killed in action. By his intrepid fighting spirit,

daring initiative, and selfless devotion to duty at great personal risk, First Lieutenant Howell was instrumental in saving many of his fellow Marines from capture, injury or possible death, and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service He gallantly gave his life for his country.

Gatlin Jerry Howell served an enlistment in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1953-1956, before attending San Francisco State University under the GI Bill. After graduating from SFSU, he taught physical education and coached the track team at Felton Junior High School in the Hunter's Point section of San Francisco. In 1965, he took a leave of absence from teaching and re-enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve.

He entered the 38th Officer Candidate Course at Quantico, VA, and was assigned to the 1st Platoon of Bravo Company. At age 30, Jerry graduated on 17 December 1965 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the USMCR. He was then assigned to the 3rd Platoon of Delta Company in Class 3-66 at The Basic School at Quantico and completed that class on 27 May 1966.

Ordered to the Republic of Vietnam, 2ndLt Howell was initially assigned as the platoon commander (MOS 0302) for 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Amphibious Force in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam for 10 months. He assumed command of Bravo 3 in late July 1966, while it was located on Liberty Road, approximately 3 kilometers south of Dai Loc and 1 kilometer north of the Liberty Road Ferry Crossing on the Song Thu Bon.

1/9 left the country in late September to go through a Special Landing Force (SLF) rotation. Refitting and training occurred on Okinawa. Additional training took place at Subic Bay in the Philippines in preparation for an early January Operation Deckhouse V in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

After changing shipping, 1/9 returned to Vietnam in early February 1967. At this point, Bravo Company was detached and sent to Khe Sanh to provide security for the Combat Base for the months of February, March, and April. After a brief assignment to Camp Carroll in early May, Bravo Company rejoined its parent Battalion, 1/9. Jerry continued as the Bravo 3 platoon commander through most of the month of May.

On 28 May 1967, Jerry took over the 1/9 Battalion Intelligence Officer billet (S-2) in Headquarters & Service Company from his Basic School Classmate, 1stLt Steve M. Snyder. On 2 July, while serving as the S-2, Jerry left the 1/9 command bunker at Con Thien to accompany his Basic School platoon commander, Captain "Mac" Radcliffe in rescuing as many of the survivors of the Bravo Company ambush at the "Marketplace" as possible. Jerry's former platoon had been on point and had accordingly suffered the most severe casualties in the close fighting. Jerry's loyalty to "his" platoon and love for his men motivated him to leave the relative security of the Command Bunker and accompany the relief column in the WIA recovery effort.

Several acts of valor are described in the Navy Cross citation that details Jerry's courageous actions and commitment in recovering the Bravo-3 wounded. Five days later, 1stLt Howell was back at his desk in the Combat Operation Center at Con Thien attending to Battalion Intelligence matters when, at 13:45, a 152mm delayed fuse artillery round penetrated the east-facing entrance and exploded inside, collapsing portions of the bunker. The round virtually exploded where Jerry's S-2 desk was located. Jerry's body had fragmentation wounds to the back and right knee. The wounds suggested that he was not at his desk at the moment of impact, but rather some distance from the site facing further into the bunker.

1stLt Howell died instantaneously along with 13 other Marines in this incident in Quang Tri Province

during Operation Buffalo. The single artillery shell also wounded 27 other Marines in the 1/9 Command Post. Operation Buffalo had also taken the life of Classmate 1stLt Wayne Hayes one day earlier. Wayne and Jerry had been in the same Basic School Company, Wayne in platoon D-2, while Jerry was in D-3.

Jerry married Nancy J. Ebert in San Francisco County, CA, on 14 June 1962. They had a son, Jay, prior to his departure for Vietnam. Nancy had visited him during the refitting and training cycle on Okinawa and she became pregnant with their second child, Mark, who was born after Jerry's death. Jerry was 31 years old.

# PHONE NUMBERS

## MAIN PHONE NUMBER

760-349-0311

## PRESIDENT

Ext. 200

## EVENTS

Ext. 300

## COMMUNICATIONS

Ext. 400

## SCHOLARSHIP/HUMANITARIAN AID

Ext. 500

## MEMBERSHIP

Ext. 600

# LINKS

## Website

<https://19walkingdead.org>

## Public Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/19association>

## Association Facebook Community

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/311736862862629>

## Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/19walkingdead/>

## LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/first-battalion-ninth-marines-association/>