

# Root Scoop II

Volume 6 Issue 2

The First Duty is to Remember

April/May 2008

## Remembrance Committee Progresses Through Planning Stages

BVA members eager to finalize planning for the 25<sup>th</sup> Remembrance will be happy to know that the Remembrance Committee is churning forward attempting to lock on final arrangements.

While all details are not yet finalized, here are some important items:

**Hotels:** as previously reported, five hotels have been secured, as listed below. You must tell them you are with the BVA registering for the 25<sup>th</sup> Remembrance to get special group rates. You cannot get the group rate by registering on-line; you must call at the numbers shown below:

The **Comfort Suites** (Headquarters Hotel) (phone 910-346-8900); \$75/night plus tax.

The **Holiday Inn Express** (910-347-1900); \$75/night plus tax.

The **Innkeeper** (910-938-0800); \$70/night plus tax.

**Extended Stay America** (910-347-7684); \$76/night plus tax.

**America's Best Value Inn** (910-455-6888); \$55/night plus tax.

**Hospitality suites** will be hosted by the BVA at the Comfort Suites and Holiday Inn Express from 8-11 p.m. October 21, 22, 24 and 25.

**The Command Post and event registration** area will again be at the Jacksonville USO, located at 9 Tallman Street in Jacksonville, 910-455-3411. This is where attendees can register and get their Remembrance goody bag, join the BVA, register for raffle giveaways, purchase spirit wear items, meet and greet other attendees and get up-

dated information about activities. Volunteers are needed to help staff positions during registration. Volunteers interested in helping at the registration can call the BVA president, Randy Gaddo, at 770-629-2613.

**An evening sit-down meal and Remembrance Program** is being planned for Oct. 23 at the Camp Lejeune field house. At press time the menu and price were being negotiated by Remembrance Committee members. A final cost will be announced on-line and in the RSII as soon as it is known. There will be limited seating and the Remembrance Committee is looking into alternative seating. However, once the announcement of prices and reservation information is made, it will be on a first-come, first-served basis until seating is filled.

**See Remembrance Planning, Page 3**

**On Memorial Day 2008, remind America She lost 270 good and true men in Beirut 1982-1984**



**Memorial Day 2008**

**Meeting with US Postal Service, Congressman Jones (R-NC), and BVA regarding Beirut Stamp**

A meeting was held in early April between the US Postal Service, Congressman Jones office, and Bill Kibler, webmaster of the Beirut Stamp website (aka the root scoop editor). It was a very productive meeting where the USPS acknowledged our existence and we discussed the various options we have to reapply in hopes of getting our request approved. It was unanimously agreed to reapply with the next Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee meeting in July. Randy Gaddo is currently working on a draft letter using the materials on the Beirut Stamp website to submit to the CSAC detailing the nature of the broad appeal of having a Beirut stamp, but given the nature of the request, have it honor the Beirut Memorial as the postal service has never turned down a request honoring a war-related memorial. At the earliest if approved, we wont rate a stamp until the year 2010/2011.

**White House Commission on Remembrance to hold 25th Remembrance Ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery**

Under the direction of Carmella LaSpada and the White House Commission on Remembrance ([www.remember.gov](http://www.remember.gov)), and No Greater Love, the annual Beirut Remembrance ceremony will be conducted Sunday, October 19th at Arlington National Cemetery where 22 of those KIA in Beirut are buried in Section 59. The ceremony begins at 12:00 by the Cedar of Lebanon Tree and honors all those killed in Beirut, Lebanon. Pictures of Section 59 can be seen at [www.beirutstamp.com/arlington](http://www.beirutstamp.com/arlington). Some who cannot make the trip to Camp Lejeune are planning to attend this service, while some are going to both this ceremony and then heading down to Camp Lejeune Mon or Tue. After spending a weekend in DC.

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**Root Scoop II**

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This publication is intended as a communication tool for members and friends of the BVA. Views and opinions are those of contributors and do not necessarily reflect views of BVA board, officers or members.

## Remembrance planning from page 1

As of press time, the day-to-day schedule of confirmed items are:

**Tuesday, Oct. 21:** noon to 6 p.m., registration and other activities at the USO.

**Wednesday, Oct. 22:** 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., registration operations at the USO. Annual membership meeting and election of board members/appointment of officers, 3 to 5 p.m. at the USO.

**Thursday, Oct. 23:** 6 a.m., Candlelight Vigil at the Beirut Memorial; 10:30 formal Remembrance Ceremony at the Beirut Memorial; 2 p.m., Military Order of the Devil-dogs Remembrance Ceremony, Camp Geiger; 7 p.m. Remembrance Banquet.

**Friday, Oct. 24:** The BVA is planning a golf outing with the Wounded Warriors Battalion. The format will be a four-person scramble, pairing Beirut Vets with Wounded Warriors. A lunch will be provided afterwards. Place: Paradise Point Golf Club, Camp Lejuene; Time: 8 a.m.; Cost: \$40 greens fee with cart, payable at course on date of play. To reserve a spot, contact Mike Clepper at (717) 249-0609 by September 30, 2008. (The Wounded Warrior Barracks, officially known as Maxwell Hall, officially opened at Camp Lejeune in November 2005. It is named after LtCol. Timothy Maxell, a wounded Marine, who started the project to help returning wounded Marines help each other mend. A west coast WWB has also been activated and the WW Battalion was formed to help provide funding and support for the barracks.)

### City Memorial Day Parade Honors 25th Anniversary of Beirut Bombing

Blairstown, NJ is holding their annual Memorial Day parade this year, and this year they have chosen to remember the 25th Anniversary of the Beirut Bombing during the parade and will also be promoting the Stamp Initiative in its program guide. They are welcoming any and all Beirut Veterans and Family Members.

## Northport street to be named for fallen Marine - [www.newsday.com](http://www.newsday.com)

In the early morning hours of Oct. 23, 1983, while soldiers were sleeping, a truck stocked with explosives was driven into the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, by a terrorist.

The suicide mission claimed the lives of 241 military personnel and seriously wounded countless others who were in Lebanon on a peacekeeping mission.

Twenty five years later, the incident is being referred to by the Beirut Veterans of America as, "the first battle of terrorism" and the group's motto is . . . . "The First Duty Is to Remember."

Capt. Joseph J. Boccia Jr., a Marine from Northport, lost his life in the attack, and keeping true to the veteran's motto, will be remembered in a ceremony later this month.

Starlit Drive, a street that he grew up on, will be named in his honor.

A family friend and Northport police chief, Ric Bruckenthal, is responsible for getting the job done. He contacted the Huntington Town Board saying he thought it would be a good idea to remember "all of our fallen."

"The Town was very receptive to the idea," Bruckenthal said, "this wasn't a big petition, I didn't have to beat them over the head, they were just very receptive."

The board approved the renaming at a meeting on March 18, voting to change the street name to "Captain Joseph J. Boccia Jr./Starlit Drive." A date has not be set yet for the renaming ceremony. Bruckenthal, who lost his son in 2004 in Iraq and is neighbors with Boccia's brother Raymond, knows how much "things like this helps the family."

A graduate of Syracuse University and also a member of the ROTC, Boccia joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1978, graduating from Parris Island in South Carolina, where he was the recipient of the USMC Achievement Devotion Award, which distinguished him as the outstanding man of Platoon 1142. He was deployed to Beirut as part of a peacekeeping force.

According to Bruckenthal, "the people on the block won't have to change their address, adding Captain Boccia's name is symbolic."

## Dedicated Woman Keeps Beirut Veterans' Memories Alive

PORTSMOUTH, RI – Shirley Zdanuk epitomizes the BVA motto, "The First Duty Is To Remember." Shirley didn't lose a loved one in Beirut, she didn't lose a close friend, yet she is the driving force behind the Portsmouth Beirut Marine Memorial Committee. Since 1983, the Portsmouth resident has planned a Beirut Memorial to honor the memories of nine local Marines who lost their lives in the Beirut, Lebanon barracks bombing on Oct. 23, 1983. Each year the friends and families of those heroes have shared a sincere "thank you" with the event organizer. In some cases, it's a hug and some shared tears. For others it's a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

"It's not for me. The families should be the ones getting the flowers," she said. "They're just so grateful that the memories will be kept alive. It's tough on me, but when I think about what we're doing for them, it's definitely worth it."

Shirley said it all started with a promise. Initially, the Portsmouth Garden Club installed a Beirut monument on the property at the Portsmouth Historical Society and intentions were to honor the fallen Marines every year. But after the first five years, interest started to wane. Mrs. Zdanuk, whose husband and son were both in the military, had a prior conversation with

the mother of fallen Portsmouth Marine PFC Thomas Julian and promised to keep the event going.

"So I got a couple garden club veterans together, Max Loudenslager and two others, and we took it over," she said. "We had to get the speakers and organize everything. We formed the Portsmouth Beirut Marine Memorial Committee. Max stayed with me until he became ill and couldn't do it anymore. After around 10 years, I asked the Marines down in Newport for some help. They have taken care of it."

The event has grown since its inception, each year drawing large crowds of loved ones and others who just wish to show their respects for the Marines killed.

"Most veterans ceremonies get a few people to come out, but at this one, more and more people keep coming. The Marines have done a great job, and (Portsmouth police officer) Jerry Ims has helped with the committee, too," she said.

All the families who lost loved ones, have, at one time or another, attended the event, and each has taken time to thank Mrs. Zdanuk for her work. Meanwhile, the organizer has learned their stories and shared tears, feeling their pain during the morning-long event.

She's watched as Sgt. Timothy Giblin's daughter has grown over the years. Attending the first event at two years old, she has now outlived her father, an East Providence native, who was just 20 when he was killed.

Mrs. Zdanuk has shared hugs with Corp. David Massa's family. A Warren native, Cpl. Massa came to the United States from Portugal when he was three, and despite the fact that his parents didn't speak English they always attend and tried to show Mrs. Zdanuk their thanks with heartfelt hugs and tears.

"Emotionally, when I meet the families, that's probably the hardest thing," Mrs. Zdanuk said. "They want to talk. I've asked them if this is too much, if they'd prefer we not have the ceremony. I get a resounding 'No.' They want them to be remembered."

**See Dedicated Woman page 5**



Shirley Zdanuk of Portsmouth, talks to Cpl. Giblin of Cranston, brother of Sgt. Timothy Robert Giblin who perished in Beirut.

#### Dedicated Woman from page 4

The 20th year was especially emotional for Mrs. Zdanuk, who watched Donald Giblin remember his fallen brother. "He came to me and said 'I think I'm going to try to get here a little more often.' He said it helps him heal. That made me feel good."

Aside from organizing the speakers and baking more than 700 cookies to be served as refreshments for the event, Mrs. Zdanuk also requests the local Navy band, which plays the National Anthem and hymns at the event.

The ceremony is held every year on the anniversary of the bombing and will continue forever if Mrs. Zdanuk has anything to do about it.

"This is a labor of love, believe me," she said.

**Editor's Note:** Thanks to NOK member Lis Mullen for sending the RSII word of Mrs. Zdanuk's dedicated service to the BVA.  
**25 Years Ago, a New Kind of**

### A Blast Still Reverberating WashingtonPost.com

#### War Began in Beirut

By David Ignatius

Thursday, April 17, 2008;  
Page A23

It is April 18, 1983, and I am visiting the American Embassy in Beirut as a reporter for the Wall Street Journal.

It is a coolish morning, a day to wear the winter-weight suit one last time. By the time I reach the embassy, a bright sun is beginning to cut the haze. Approaching the front entrance on the Corniche, grand and all but unguarded, I look across the shimmering Bay of Beirut to the slopes of Mount Lebanon, where there is still a trace of snow at the peak.

The moist, sweet air of Lebanon is on my face like a phantom kiss.

The good times are returning, I think. The city has been pounded by eight years of civil war, and then by the Israeli invasion, and then by the massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila. But now the United States has arrived as Lebanon's protector; U.S. Marines are at the airport in what the embassy calls a "presence mission."

My appointment is at the Office of Military Cooperation on the fifth floor. The Army officer who meets me there has an upbeat message: The United States is rebuilding the Lebanese army into a force for national reconciliation that will bring together Sunnis, Shiites and Christians. The officers are wearing real boots now, he says, not those Gucci slip-ons like in the old days.

I take notes as the Army officer talks. It's almost believable, what he says. You want to think we understand what we are doing in this country -- that those Marines really are as popular in the Shiite slums out by the airport as their officers keep telling me when I go on patrol with them . . . and see the wary, watchful eyes in the shadows.

My appointment ends around 12:30 p.m. Rebecca McCullough,

the Office of Military Cooperation's administrative assistant, takes me back down to the lobby. She's wearing a summer blouse and a winter skirt, caught in between the seasons on this April day.

I pick up my passport from the Marine guard manning Post No. 1 behind a thick plexiglass screen -- shiny brass buttons, forbidding Marine physique. I climb the hill back to my hotel, wondering if there's a story in what the embassy official has told me.

At 1:03, I hear an enormous blast. The percussive force shakes my windows, nearly a mile away. I have a momentary feeling of vertigo, like fear but worse. I run back toward the Corniche.

When I reach the building, Marines are trying to form a perimeter. I look up at the remains of the embassy: The center facade has collapsed; rooms have been sheared in half; a body is visible, hideously, on an upper floor.

Sixty-three people are dead, including 17 Americans. It's the deadliest attack ever on a U.S. diplomatic mission up to that point. It takes many years to confirm that it was an Iranian operation, organized by operatives from their Revolutionary Guard.

Nobody understands it that day, but a new kind of war has begun.



## Drifter gets up to 22 years in prison for slaying Robert Haag of Thomas Township

by Darryl Tucker | The Saginaw News

Robert J. Haag was a U.S. Marine stationed in Beirut, Lebanon, when terrorists bombed the military compound and killed 241 servicemen Oct. 23, 1983.

Haag escaped death. But an honorable discharge and more than two decades later, Haag died at the hands of a murderer, said his sister-in-law, Robin Haag, who gave a victim's impact statement Monday during the sentencing of the killer, Carlos Grafton.

Police found Haag's frozen body wrapped in plastic in the backyard of an East Side home Jan. 30, 2007, when a man was moving into the dwelling. Haag, who lived in Thomas Township, was 44.

After the body thawed for three days, an autopsy revealed fractures in Haag's skull, indicating he died of blunt force trauma.

Grafton told detectives he hit Haag with a baseball bat during a fight in November 2006 and later found him dead. The victim's family said Grafton placed shingles and debris to conceal the body.

Haag's death came as a "total shock" to her and the family, said Robin Haag, 46.

"It's been difficult for me to accept," she said, adding Grafton

never tried to help Haag after striking him down.

Robin Haag said her brother-in-law was a licensed plumber who helped anyone in need, played football at Hemlock High School and was a family man who liked homemade baked cookies.

Saginaw County Circuit Judge Robert L. Kaczmarek sentenced Grafton, 42, who has no known address, to 8 1/2 years to 22 1/2 years in prison for manslaughter.

Kaczmarek gave Grafton credit for 444 days served in jail and ordered him to pay \$414 in restitution and \$120 in fees and fines. Grafton pleaded guilty, and prosecutors dismissed a charge of second-degree murder.



"I'm very sorry for what I did and for trying to hide the matters," said Grafton, who also asked the Haag family for forgiveness.

Bill Haag, the victim's brother and Robin Haag's husband, said it's time to put closure to the case and that Grafton should serve the maximum penalty allowed. He said he was unmoved to hear Grafton say he was sorry for the slaying.

"There is no apology he could give that I would accept," said Bill Haag, 50.

### Beirut Connection

A big thank-you to the families who sent in photographs and/or letters.

Another Beirut mom has joined her son. Barbara Estes, mother of Danny Estes, died December 2007.

— Joan and Judy



**The Beirut Memorial**  
Philadelphia, PA





# Root Scoop II

The official newsletter of the Beirut Veterans of America



**April/May 2008**

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