

Official Newsletter of the Beirut Veterans of America

# Root Scoop II

Vol. VI, Issue 1

“The First Duty is to Remember”

January 2009

## Remember



Retired Lieutenant Colonel Larry Gerlach (seated) acknowledges his troops and on-lookers after his “change of command,” as retired Col. Tim Geraghty looks on. Gerlach received a framed 1st Battalion, 8th Marines guidon as a token of respect and appreciation from his troops. He never received a formal change of command due to his extensive injuries in the 1983 Beirut bombing.

Photo: Alex Gaddo

### Record Turnout!

## 25th Remembrance Honors Beirut Heroes

By any measurement, the 25th Beirut Remembrance was an unprecedented success.

Measured in turnout, more people turned out than ever attended previously. More than 600 attended the Oct. 23 banquet; the crowd for the morning candle-light service stretched back farther than ever before; and an estimated 3,000 were in attendance at the 10:30 a.m. formal ceremony. For many, this was the first time they'd been to a Remembrance, ever. For others the first time since the 20th.

If measured by the number of special features, again it more than made the grade.

For example, there was the historic formation of Beirut veterans from 1958 through 2006 held at the football field behind Goettege Fieldhouse on Oct. 22.

This featured an emotional presentation of a framed 1st Battalion, 8th Marines guidon to retired LtCol. Larry Gerlach from his Marines. This initiative, planned by new BVA president Craig Renshaw, was intended to supplant the change of command Gerlach never received due to his extensive injuries in the 1983 bombing.



Photo: Alex Gaddo

Another feature was the participation of Commandant of the Marine Corps James T. Conway, himself a Beirut veteran. He not only spoke at the 10:30 event but also chose to center his 233rd Marine Corps Birthday message on the Beirut operation. His video message was played at the banquet, further bonding attendees together and making this a memorable year.

The 25th received a dramatic level of national and international news media coverage, advancing the BVA mission to ensure the world does not forget the fallen in Beirut.

This issue of the RSII is filled with wrap up items from the 25th. For those who couldn't make it, this is for you with hope you will come to a Remembrance in the future.

Message From the Outgoing BVA President**25th Heralds In New Era for the BVA**

The 25th Remembrance was a new beginning in many ways for the BVA.

The 2008 event heralded in a new era of inclusiveness that featured a higher level of involvement from new participants. This could be seen vividly at the banquet, where three distinct generations joined to honor the memories of fallen Beirut heroes.

First, parents of the fallen, who these many years have observed October 23rd as a family memorial day, were there once again to honor their son's memory. As one father put it while he looked at a picture book of his son's life, "It never gets any easier."

The wives, siblings and other family members formed the nucleus of a second generation. For the first time, siblings and other family members were acknowl-

edged as a vital element in the continued existence of the BVA. So important are they that BVA leadership will be considering full membership in the upcoming months, enabling a wider range of participation up to and including voting rights.

Third were children of the fallen Beirut veterans. These young men and women are now in their early to mid-20's or possibly tipping the 30-some scale. They want to know more about their heritage, about these heroes they only know from letters, newspaper articles or family stories. They come to the one place they can find out, to be among men who served in combat with their fathers and with families who understand. Joining them were children of vets who served in Beirut and survived.

There is

even a fourth generation emerging from the aftermath of this chapter in United States history; grandchildren of those who were killed or who served. This generation is still in diapers or taking their first steps, but they were at the 25th, beginning a tradition of honor that will become part of their lives.

These last two generations will continue the fight that their fathers and grandfathers were drawn into so long ago, the Global War on Terror.

For the veterans who served with the fallen, 2008 also marked a new era; an era of inclusion into Marine Corps history. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway,

**2006 BVA Board of Directors**

Mark T. Hacala 3350 Conquistador Court Annandale, VA 22003	703-698-7667
Pat Metcalf 11 Trotter Circle Fredericksburg, Va. 22407 hope4@verizon.net	h: 540-834-5546 c: 540-538-9128
Glenn Dolphin 164 Wisteria Drive Aiken, S.C. 29803	w: 803-648-0728 c: 803-508-9015
Randy Gaddo 217 Sandown Drive Peachtree City, GA 30269	(h) 770-629-2613 cwo4usmc@comcast.net
Rick Cunningham- new, info not available at press time	
Bill Kibler 2005 Columbia Pike #624 Arlington, VA 22204	707-209-USMC bill@beirutstamp.com
Mary Ellen Jackowski 20 Stagecoach Road Chestertown, NY 12817	518-494-4609 jjandme@peoplepc.com
Alicia Sanchez 10323 Sheraton Ct. Independence, KY 41051	c: 859-486-5650 H: 859-356-0811 nursealicia@ymail.com

chose to make the 25th Remembrance the center of his 233rd Marine Corps Birthday message. The general is himself a Beirut veteran, having served with the 31st Marine Amphibious Unit afloat in the Beirut theater of operations. No doubt this influenced his decision to link the 1982-84 operation to the current War on Terror his troops fight in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As he began his message at the base of the Beirut Memorial in Jacksonville, then transitioned to the current battlefield in Iraq, something subtle, but significant, happened. The Beirut operations of 1982-84 and 1958 were pulled from the category of "isolated incident" and were properly placed into the pages of Marine Corps history.

No longer will Beirut veterans feel as though they'd been forgotten and that the sacrifices of life and limb had gone unnoticed. No longer will parents and families of the fallen feel as though their son and family member had died in an "isolated incident."

General Conway very clearly and eloquently voiced what the BVA and friends have known and kept alive for years; the fallen in Beirut were not victims of a tragedy; they were killed in action in a war against terrorists that started then and continues today. For that, the BVA thanks and salutes him.

I have been proud to be president of the BVA over the past two years as I have watched a new era of involvement take hold among BVA members and friends. As I hand the reins of president to Criag Renshaw I am confident he and his officers (listed page 3) will lead the BVA to new heights of accomplishment. The board members listed to the left of this column are strong leaders, dedicated to the motto "The First Duty Is To Remember." Members are more involved than ever before. It is indeed the dawning of a new era for the BVA, one that will continue to properly honor the memories of our fallen so that they will continue to serve a higher cause.

**Semper Fi...Randy Gaddo**

## ROOT SCOOPS

### Jordan Receives BVA's First Founder's Award

The BVA presented its first Founder's award during the 25th Remembrance banquet Oct. 23 to recognize outstanding achievement by a member.

The BVA Board of Directors unanimously approved the recommendation that the inaugural award go to its namesake, Bob Jordan, for his sustained and continuing service in telling the story of the service members who fought and died in Beirut.

The Maj. Robert T. Jordan Founder's Award was established in 2008. Named in honor of the organization's founding president, the award is presented by the BOD chairman on behalf of the board to "one who has provided significant leadership and great service to the BVA and its veterans." No more than one award per year may be authorized.



Chairman Mark Hacala (L) presents the award, a 7" beveled crystal laser etched with an image of the statue from the Beirut Memorial, to Bob Jordan. (Photo: Alex Gaddo)



### President, Three State Governors, Hail Beirut Veterans

President Bush, the U.S. Congress and governors from Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware all recognized Beirut Veterans for their service and especially remembered the 25th Remembrance in proclamations.

The President's two paragraph statement noted, "Twenty-five years ago a suicide bomb destroyed the Marine barracks in Beirut. We remember the 241 American Marines, Sailors and Soldiers who lost their lives in that attack and we pay tribute to their families and loved ones. The U.S. forces in Lebanon were serving as part of the multinational force working to bring peace and security to that country, torn by years of civil war." The other pro-



clamations contained similar sentiments, with the Pennsylvania statement also remembering French troops killed in a separate, simultaneous attack.

### U.S. House Issues Beirut Resolution

In October the U.S. House of Representatives passed H. Res. 1421 – a resolution introduced by Third District Representative Walter B. Jones (R – NC) to solemnly commemorate the 25th anniversary of the October 1983 terrorist bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut and to remember those who lost their lives and those who were in-

jured. The resolution passed by a vote of 414 to zero. Congressmen Jones made the following remarks on the House floor:

Mr. Speaker, on October 23, 1983, the War on Terrorism began when a truck filled with explosives detonated inside the United States Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 241 of our servicemen. Between 1982 and 1984,

270 Marines, Sailors and Soldiers from 39 states and Puerto Rico lost their lives while serving as Peacekeepers in Beirut."

In April, the U.S. Senate passed a similar resolution introduced by Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R – IN) remembering also the April 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, which killed more than 60, including 17 Americans.

#### Beirut Veterans of America

BVA President - Craig Renshaw  
 Vice President - John Jackson  
 Secretary - Michael Fullarton  
 Treasurer - Steve Godfrey  
 Membership/ - Bill Thompson, Jon Warmling & Bill Yontz  
 "Scoop" mailout - Jeff Handy  
 Associate Editor: Bill Kibler

#### Root Scoop II

Editor, Randy Gaddo  
 217 Sandown Drive,  
 Peachtree City, Georgia 30269  
 (h) 770-629-2613  
 Email: cwo4usmc@comcast.net  
 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.

**New Spirit Item****Beirut Ornament on First USMC Museum Christmas Tree**

Fallen Beirut Peacekeepers were among the first of three groups honored at the National Museum of the Marine Corps this Christmas.

The museum featured three Christmas trees on display this season for the Leatherneck Gallery overlooks. At the museum's invitation, the BVA provided one ornament (shown below) for each of the KIA names listed on the Beirut Memorial wall. The Beirut honorees joined the Montford Point Association and the Woman Marines Association as the first three to receive this distinction.

The ornaments were sponsored by Mr. Thomas Fortune Fay (Fay, Kaplan Law, PA) and his wife,

**USS San Antonio Crew Holds Tribute Oct. 23**

BVA member Jeff Handy's son, Seth, is a Marine Lance Corporal serving aboard the USS San Antonio (LPD-17) afloat.

On October 23, 2008, all hands stood down and gathered on the flight deck to hold a 25th Remembrance event. This tribute was conceived and planned by junior enlisted Marines and Sailors on the ship.

"The Beirut bombing was an event that has stuck with me since I was 16 years old," said Marine Lt. Col. John Giltz, Combat Logistics Battalion 26 commanding officer. "The weight, tragedy and inspiration have been with me for 25 years now and to be a part of today's ceremony and remember those who went before us is a moment I'll never forget.

"We are not invulnerable," said Giltz. "You are all just like them -- young, full of life, with goals and aspirations. Their lives were taken in an instant, and so we dedicate ourselves to training and remember what it is to be a Marine."

San Antonio's commanding officer, Cmdr. Kurt Kastner, stated the importance of the event.

"Our first duty is to remember," said Kastner. "That is the motto and mission of the Beirut Veterans Association, established in 1992. The second is to perpetuate the memory of those 241 Sailors, Soldiers and Marines who gave their lives for their country."

Patricia. Mr. Fay is one of the attorneys who has taken the lead on the lawsuit launched by surviving family members and veterans against the perpetrators of the 1983 Beirut bombing.

The ornament is also available as one of the BVA spirit wear items offered at the BVA store which can be seen on the website, [www.beirutveterans.org](http://www.beirutveterans.org).

BVA board member Mary Ellen Jackowski headed up a committee that arranged purchase of the ornaments and organized the decorating effort.

"As you look at the names on this tree, please remember that Peace has a price and reflect on those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Beirut," she commented.

The trees went on display in early December.



Decorating Committee: (L) Col. Charles Dallachie, Jeff and Frann Haskell, Evi Jordan-Cox; (R) (rear) Bill Kibler, Maggie Knipple Alvarez and Deborah Knipple Peterson, Mary Ellen and John Jackowski

Kastner's words touched his Sailors.

"The speeches made about the Beirut bombing were very motivational in not letting me forget why we are out here and what we are doing," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW) Joseph Nayock.

Senior leadership was proud of how the junior Marines set up the ceremony.

"Many of these types of events are usually handled by staff, COs or officers, but today it was all corporals and sergeants, the backbone of leadership," said Gunnery Sgt. Benjamin McKinney. "It was a very touching ceremony, and I was moved on how the non-commissioned officers did it today."

Though unconfirmed, the editor believes that LCpl. Handy may have had an influence in setting up this event.



## Carry On: A Forum for Beirut Families *Information of, for and by Families of Beirut Vets*

Carry On is a forum to share information about families of Beirut veterans. Families may forward their information to Rosalie (Ro) Milano: email, [ojgroup@ojcpi.com](mailto:ojgroup@ojcpi.com) or fax 610-268-0305 or call 610-268-0304. The RSII will attempt to include as much information as possible but may need to edit for space considerations.

### Ohio Park To Be Named For Beirut KIA Daugherty

Thanks to the tenacity of a childhood friend, a park in Eastlake City, Ohio will be named in honor of Marine Corporal David L. Daugherty.

Dan Matheke of Eastlake announced in November 2008 that the Eastlake City Council approved an emergency measure on November 4 to clear the way for the honor. By all accounts, Matheke, a retired Naval reservist, has been trying for years to get this

approval. The resolution reads: "That the Council and Administration of the city of Eastlake hereby designate that the Willow Green Park is hereby known as the "Corporal David L. Daugherty Park" in remembrance of a fellow Eastlake resident who valiantly sacrificed his life for the well being and liberty of all."

Daugherty was killed in action on Dec 4, 1983 in Beirut. He was part of Sgt. "Manny" Cox's squad (Guts Golf

2/8) at check point 76, which was attacked by Druze and Hezbollah insurgents for three and one half hours. After fierce fighting and heroic action worthy of Marine Corps legend, Daugherty and seven of his fellow Marines were killed by an incoming 122-mm rocket.

The park is expected to be dedicated on Memorial Day 2009. Follow the RSII for future coverage.

### Dan "Lefty" Dixon Succumbs to "ALS"

Not sure if any of you knew Dan Dixon, who went by the nickname of Lefty (he had his arm amputated after a motorcycle accident). His mother called to tell me that he had passed away in October after battling ALS for the past year. Dan came all the way from Texas to join me for the Beirut Remembrance Walk I did here in D.C. a few years ago and spent a week here having a blast. Dan was in Beirut the same time I was as a member of TOW Platoon. He will be greatly missed.

Semper Fi, *Bill Kibler*

### In Memoriam: Root Vet Parents Pass Away

Judith Young compiled this list of Root Vet parents who have passed away. No dates with names indicates she did not know the dates of their passing.

- \*Ronald Hollingshead August, 2000
- Jan. 6, 2006
- \*Sigurd Olson
- \*Ceola Hollingshead January, 2001
- Jan. 16, 2008
- \*Patricia Boccia September, 2005
- \*Bertha Olson
- \*Henry Hukill
- \*Ben Gorchinski
- \*Richard Haskell

\*Nell Eckard (mother of Michael D. Mercer)  
**Any parents missed, please info Ro Milano at points of contact listed at the top of this page.**



### Thorstad Remembered at Luxembourg Embassy

In 1996 the Marines were no longer needed to guard the U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg; however, after 9/11 they were asked to return.

To mark the special occasion, in 2004, a commemorative plaque in memory of Staff Sergeant Thomas P. Thorstad (KIA, 10-23-83) was unveiled. He served in the U.S. Embassy as Marine Security Guard from

December 1976 until March 1978.

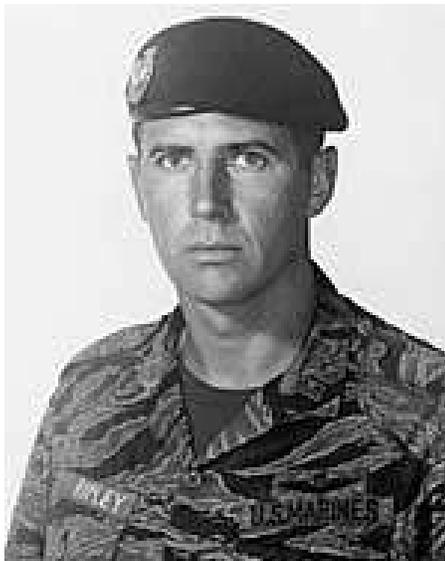
The ceremony was attended by James and Barbara Thorstad and their son, Ryan. The plaque now hangs in the Marine Barracks in Luxembourg.

A picture of the plaque and description would be appreciated. If anyone can obtain one, please send it to Judith Young, 30 Eraser Road, Moorestown, N.J. 08057.

General Barrow, Colonel Ripley

# Two Marine Legends Die Two Days Apart

**Marine legends Colonel John W. Ripley and General Robert H. Barrow died within two days of each other in October. During a month where Beirut veterans and families remember their fallen heroes, they can now also remember two of the Corps' best known heroes.**



**Navy Cross Recipient, Col. Ripley** (USMC – Ret), 69, died at home in Annapolis, MD, October 28, 2008, apparently in his sleep.

He enlisted in the Marines in 1957 and in 1958 was selected to attend the U.S. Naval Academy. He graduated in 1962 and was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant.

Few Americans were still fighting in Vietnam in 1972. Ripley was, serving as the sole advisor to the 3rd Vietnamese Marine Corps Battalion (VNMC), his second tour.

On April 2, 1972, Major Le Ba Binh, commander, 3 VNMC Bn, was ordered to “hold Dong Ha at all costs” with his 700 men as enemy tanks were seen approaching. There was a key bridge on QL-1 (route 1) and the enemy was streaming across. The enemy flag was flying on the bridge. Tanks were to follow and the Marines saw them as they approached the bridge and engaged. Enemy artillery was fierce.

The order then came down to

Army Major James Smock, working with the 20th ARVN Tank Bn., to blow the bridge. Ripley heard the radio order, wanted to help and walked towards the bridge. Smock drove up and said, “Hey Marine, climb aboard and let’s go blow a bridge.”

ARVN engineers had already stuck 500 lbs. of TNT and C-4 explosives to the bridge. Ripley assessed they put it in the wrong place and told Smock they had to move it along the girders.

While both sides exchanged intense fire, Ripley climbed a chain link fence and Smock lifted the TNT over the fence to Ripley, who moved hand-over-hand along the girders under the bridge. The enemy watched as Ripley worked his way back and forth between beams, placing the explosives. Smock would climb the fence, placing more explosives within Ripley’s reach. But when they touched the detonation wires together, the bridge did not blow.

As a contingency, he had also attached a 30-minute fuse which was now smoking its way toward the bridge. It worked. The bridge blew, a span crashed into the river and the enemy could not cross.

Following this So. Vietnamese A-1 fighters attacked the enemy, Ripley called in naval gunfire and B-52 heavy bombers arrived and shut down the enemy. The enemy kept trying at other locations and naval gunfire shut them down there. The enemy armored assault had been stopped. Ripley received the Navy Cross, Smock the Silver Star.

**General Robert H. Barrow**, 86, the 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps, died in his sleep on October 30, 2008, in his hometown, St. Francisville, LA. In death he joins his beloved wife of 53 years, Patty, who passed away in 2005.

A highly decorated veteran of three wars, General Barrow’s greatest accomplishments were his many enduring reforms to the Marine Corps during his service.

Barrow was born on Feb. 5, 1922 in Baton Rouge, LA. After high school he enrolled at Louisiana State University in 1939, but left school in the fall of

1942 to enlist in the Marine Corps.

He attended boot camp in San Diego, staying on after graduation as a drill instructor. He left San Diego for Officer Candidate School in March 1943 and on May 19, was commissioned as a second lieutenant.

During the last seven months of WWII, he led an American team serving with Chinese guerrilla forces in Japanese-occupied central China, for which he was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat “V.”

In Korea he led a battalion ashore at Inchon and received a Silver Star. He later received the Navy Cross at Chosin Reservoir.



As series of assignments led him to Vietnam in 1968 in command of 9th Marine Regiment, receiving the Army Distinguished Service Cross for valor during Operation Dewey Canyon in early 1969.

He was named Assistant Commandant in 1978 and Commandant a year later. He was the first Marine to serve a regular four-year term as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He continued his leadership in personnel reform.

## BVA Annual Membership Meeting Held at Goettege Field House

The Annual General Meeting of the Membership and the Board of Directors of the BVA was held aboard Camp LeJeune NC at 3 p.m. 22 October, 2008. Present at the meeting were BVA President. Randy Gaddo, Secretary Mike Fullarton, BOD Chairman Craig Renshaw, Board Members, Mark Hacala, Pat Metcalf and Glenn Dolphin as well as several dozen BVA members.

Gaddo called the meeting to order at 3:10 and he began by honoring BVA Board of Directors member, Craig Renshaw and his Remembrance Planning Committee for their efforts in organizing the 25<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Ceremonies. Gaddo then honored Cliff Walling for his considerable efforts with the BVA web site and with the production, management and marketing of the BVA Spirit Wear but also announced Cliff's intention to step down from that responsibility and appealed to the membership for someone interested in stepping in to take charge in the future.

Gaddo introduced the assembled membership to Bill Kibler and thanked him for his efforts in championing the Peacekeepers Stamp initiative and for his taking on the responsibility of producing the Root Scoop II BVA newsletter during preparation time for the 25th.

Gaddo then recognized NOK Board Members Judy Young and Mary Ellen Jackowski for their continuing contributions. President Gaddo also acknowledged and thanked Alex Hacala for her efforts in organizing the Banquet.

Gaddo asked the Treasurer Steve Godfrey for his report and he reported that the BVA has taken in deposits of

\$22,789.00 (with an additional \$3,335.50 in funds not yet deposited). The expenses for the year were \$30,104.03 and that the BVA currently has a balance of \$11,674.57 in our accounts. With revenue expected to continue coming in from spirit wear, Gaddo said he expected the BVA to be in sound fiscal shape after the 25th Remembrance.

Secretary Mike Fullarton opened the floor for nominations for three regular BVA Board of Directors members (Jeff Bucchi, Tim Greer and Don Inns) who announced their intention to vacate their posts. Secretary Fullarton announced that there were two nominations received for Regular Board Members, they were for members Rick Cunningham and Bill Kibler. On motion made and seconded, both Board nominees were elected by unanimous acclamation of the membership present to fill the vacant positions. The new Board Members are Rick Cunningham and Bill Kibler.

There was also a NOK Board opening when Judy Young announced her intention to vacate her position as well. Two NOK members have been nominated for this position; they are Alicia Sanchez and Rosalie Donohue. Gaddo asked the two NOK nominees to introduce themselves to the membership and then asked the membership present for the preferred method of election, by secret ballot or by a show of hands. It was decided to elect by a show of hands by the regular membership. The result was twenty-one (21) votes cast for Alicia Sanchez and twelve (12) votes for Rosalie Donohue.

Gaddo announced his own intention to step down as President of BVA at which

time, Board Chair Mark Hacala asked him to consider taking a position on the Board of Directors. Gaddo agreed that once his successor for President of the BVA had been chosen that he would agree to serve on the Board of Directors to the obvious approval of all of the members present.

Gaddo then announced the need for the BVA Board of Directors to appoint a successor (Per the by-laws, nominations for officer positions can be taken from membership but the Board of Directors appoints officers.) for the office of President of the BVA and nominated Craig Renshaw for the position, the nomination was seconded by Major Robert Jordan and the appointment made by unanimous acclamation of the BVA Board of Directors.

President-elect Craig Renshaw thanked the membership and the Board of Directors for the honor and stated his intention to get right to work to continue to build the organization. President-elect Renshaw then nominated for the position of Vice President, John Jackson, and the nomination was seconded by Joe Cavala. There being no other nominations made from the floor, the BVA Board of Directors removed themselves to discuss the nomination and on their return announced that they had accepted John Jackson as the Vice President of the BVA.

See "Minutes" pg. 11

**Special Note: The official BVA Website has changed from .com to .org - The Website is [www.beirutveterans.org](http://www.beirutveterans.org)**



They Came In Peace

## BVA Vet Soldier Runs Marine Corps Marathon in Remembrance of 25th

By Mike Chard, Beirut Vet, Anchorage, Alaska

Each Beirut veteran has his own story. Each one of us has our own memories that we carry.

We were officers and enlisted men from three different services. We were infantrymen, corpsmen, cooks, pilots and mortar-men; the list goes on and on, but we were all American servicemen sent by our nation to do a job. We rotated in and out of country on different orders and for different periods of time.

My own Beirut memories serving as a Special Forces soldier date from June of 1983 to April 1984, but regardless of what happened between those dates, October of 1983 holds a significance that weighs heavier than all others and I think this may be true for many of us.

Each year I find that as summer closes and fall begins I become more aware that 23 October is nearing, but this year my anticipation of 23 October seemed to start sooner. I knew that for the families of the men lost 25 years ago, this October needed to have special attention. I had run the Marine Corps Marathon in 2003 with the intention of commemorating the fallen. My planning was poor and nothing really came of it other than running the race thinking of what had happened 20 years before.

This year I decided to run the race again with more forethought and planning. In June I sent Cliff Walling an email laying out my

ideas and asking his thoughts. In short order Cliff contacted Randy Gaddo and Randy got the ball rolling.

He sent a letter to the USMC Marathon committee informing them of our intentions and asking what support they might extend to the BVA in our efforts towards the 25th Remembrance.

In the letter, Randy explained that I would carry a BVA flag throughout the race course along with a banner bearing the name of each Beirut veteran killed in action.

It was not long before Angela Huff at Quantico contacted me affirming that our request was being considered. She added that someone would let me know shortly as to what support the BVA could expect at the race.

In early September Beth Johnson from the USMC Marathon committee emailed me and affirmed that the BVA would officially be recognized at the race, including a moment of silence which would occur during the opening ceremonies.

Cliff, in the meantime, was working on getting the BVA flags ready. Cliff assured me that before leaving for the race, I'd have



Beirut Veteran Mike Chard carries a BVA flag in the 2008 Marine Corps Marathon

a flag and a 25th BVA tee shirt in hand. He was good to his word, despite the post office delivering the flags to the wrong Alaskan address shortly before my departure for the race.

In Anchorage snow hit the ground the first week of October and never left, which made the pre-race training a little more challenging, but I felt OK when I left for the race on Oct. 24th. As I rode the plane to D.C. with my wife and youngest son, I thought of the many Beirut Vets and families gathered in Jacksonville for the Remembrance ceremonies.

Con't, page 9

**“In several instances, spectators from the sidelines would see the BVA flag and call out words of encouragement. In a couple instances I was asked about the list of names and in all cases the runners left me with the impression that America has not forgotten what happened and the price that was paid.”**

**- Mike Chard, Special Forces Beirut Veteran**

### **Con’t from page 8...**

I picked up my race packet on the day before the race and noted that I was given #14 to that I could come to the front during the opening ceremonies. On race morning I arrived at the start line early. Even at 7 a.m., many of the 18,000 runners had already arrived. My son and I had the chance to walk around before the race and take in all the sights and sounds. During this time it came to me that our men who were lost 25 years ago would never have the joys of walking with their own sons.

While we all did our jobs over there, Sailors, Soldiers and Marines alike, the Marines did most of the heavy lifting and certainly paid the heaviest toll. So it seemed fitting that the BVA would be remembered at this race which starts

and ends at the Iwo Jima War Memorial.

At 7:35 the announcer recognized our presence in the race. He told of what happened in Beirut during 1982 to 1984 and the human price that was paid. The announcer then called for the moment of silence. As I stood, head bowed, holding the BVA flag and list of names, I could only think of the events 25 years past that had brought us to this place. A Navy chaplain then said a prayer, the National Anthem was played and we were readied for the race.

With a howitzer shot, the race started and it was hard not to be caught up in the excitement and energy of 18,000 other runners looking towards the finish line 26 miles away. It was not long into the race when other runners would

pull up beside me with either a comment about the moment of silence or to share their own story about how the events in Lebanon impacted their own lives. In several instances spectators from the sidelines would see the BVA flag and call out words of encouragement. In a couple cases I was asked about the list of names and in all cases the runners left me with the impression that America has not forgotten what happened and the price that was paid.

The USMC Marathon is uniquely American and it is hard not to be moved by the feelings of patriotism while running past places whose names are familiar to us all: Arlington Cemetery, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, U.S. Capitol Building, Constitution Avenue and the Pentagon.

**Running with the flag caused me a few small pains that I had not anticipated but overall everything went well. As I crossed the finish line with the flag and names waving above me, I felt privileged to represent such a fine group of Americans. The experience was an honor that I will not forget.**

**I believe that after all this time it is noteworthy that the BVA and in particular the BVA leadership has done such a commendable job of remembering. This act of remembering is no accident, since the Marines live by the motto, “Semper Fidelis.”**



**Spectators cheered Chard on with words of encouragement**

## Retired Marine Sues Camp Lejeune, Magistrate

# Base Bans Him For “Offensive Material”

Jesse Nieto is a 25-year Marine veteran whose honorable service included two combat tours in Vietnam. His youngest son, Marc, and 16 of Marc's shipmates were killed on October 12, 2000 by Islamic terrorists who bombed the USS Cole. Nieto has worked as a civilian employee at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina since 1994.

Since 2001, Nieto has displayed various decals on his vehicle expressing anti-terrorist sentiments, such as “Remember the Cole, 12 October 2000,” “Islam = Terrorism,” and “We Died, They Rejoiced.”

On July 31, 2008, two military police officers issued Nieto a ticket for displaying “offensive material.” In mid-August, after Nieto refused to remove all “offending” decals from his vehicle, the Base Magistrate issued Nieto a written order to remove his vehicle from the base until all decals were removed and banning his vehicle from all other federal installations. The order in effect prevented Nieto from driving his vehicle to Arlington National Cemetery (a federal installation) to visit the grave of his fallen son.

As a result of the Marine Corps' action, the Thomas More Law Center, a national public interest law firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in November filed a federal lawsuit against the Camp Lejeune Commanding Officer and the Base Magistrate on behalf of Nieto in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern

District of North Carolina. The civil rights lawsuit challenges the military's ban on Nieto's speech on the basis that it violates Nieto's constitutional rights to freedom of speech and the equal protection of the law.

**Richard Thompson, President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Law Center, commented, “The banning of these decals is political correctness run amuck in the military. Our troops are being killed by Islamic terrorists, 9/11 was caused by Islamic terrorists, these terrorists want to destroy America, the Islamic countries persecute Christians and now the military is victimizing a father whose son was killed by Islamic terrorists while serving our nation.”**

Continued Thompson, “I suspect the next thing the Marine command will want to do is eliminate the Marine's Hymn since the phrase ‘to the shores of Tripoli’ celebrates the Marine victory over Islamic forces in the Barbary Coast War and the Battle of Derne.”

The lawsuit alleges that military officials have engaged in viewpoint discrimination prohibited by the First Amendment and have violated the Fifth Amendment's equal protection guarantee by allowing some messages to be displayed but prohibiting others that they find unacceptable. Additionally, the lawsuit alleges that the military's ban on “offensive” speech is impermissible because there are no objective standards guiding the decisions of government



officials, thereby granting these officials unbridled discretion to determine which speech is acceptable and which speech is unacceptable.

Robert Muise is the Law Center attorney handling the Nieto case. He is also one of the Law Center's attorneys defending Marine LtCol Jeffrey Chessani, the senior officer charged in the so-called “Haditha Massacre” case. A military judge recently dismissed the charges against Chessani, and the government has appealed the ruling. A decision by the military appellate court is expected in the next few months.

The Thomas More Law Center defends and promotes America's Christian heritage and moral values, including the religious freedom of Christians, time-honored family values and the sanctity of human life through litigation, education, and related activities. It does not charge for its services. The Law Center is supported by contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations, and is recognized by the IRS as a section 501(c)(3) organization. Thomas More Law Center can be reached at (734) 827-2001 or visit their website at [www.thomasmore.org](http://www.thomasmore.org).



## Annual Meeting Minutes

### From Page 7

Jeff Handy was introduced to the membership and he announced that with the increased postage and membership numbers, the cost of sending Root Scoop via the postal service has become prohibitive and suggested that the Root Scoop II should be delivered via e-mail to those members who are capable of receiving it via that medium. It was also suggested that we might post each new edition of the Root Scoop II on the web site. It was suggested by Bill Thompson that members give their e-mail address to the BVA so that a data base can be compiled for purposes of delivering the Root Scoop II via e-mail.

Gaddo announced his suggestion that the NOK family members should be given full voting privileges and that the free membership for the NOK family members should continue. From the floor, NOK family member Ed McDonough was recognized by Gaddo and addressed the membership on his belief that the NOK family members should be able to continue with free membership and voting rights in the organization.

BVA Board Member Pat Metcalf suggested that NOK membership be reviewed to determine who should be paying and who should be extended free membership. Major Jordan announced that the original intent was that NOK members would not pay dues and that privilege was intended for the immediate family. He felt that other family members (cousins, nieces, nephews, etc.) should be allowed to join but should not receive the free membership. He recommended that Regular membership should be made available to them but they will have to pay the Regular Membership fee.

Bill Yontz, of the Membership Committee, announced the need to expand the membership and asked all members to do their utmost to build the BVA by helping to spread the word about Beirut and to bring in all veterans that can be found.

BVA Board Member, Mark Hacala brought up discussion about a better membership card for distribution to the General Membership. He passed around some embossed plastic cards for the membership to consider. He then introduced the representative of the Marine Corps Archive to the membership and emphasized the need for the membership of the BVA to assist the Marine Corps Archives by submitting to them any pictures, documents or remembrances that they can give to the archive to help them tell our story of the Peacekeeping mission in Beirut. BVA Board Member, Mark Hacala then honored Randy Gaddo for his founding of the Root Scoop and for his efforts with Major Bob Jordan in the founding of the BVA. He presented Randy Gaddo with a framed and matted first edition of the Root Scoop to the applause of the membership.

Gaddo upon affirmation that there was no further business for the Board of Directors or the General Membership adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m..

**Respectfully Submitted, Michael Fullarton, Secretary**

## Eric Horner Presents Concert after 25th Event

Nashville recording artist Eric Horner presented a patriotic memorial concert for Beirut families, friends and survivors on Friday night October 24th at Trinity United Methodist Church in Jacksonville, N.C.



The concert featured songs that honor and celebrate the lives of Beirut's fallen heroes. Horner introduced a brand new song he wrote, entitled, "They Came in Peace" that evening. Horner is a long-time supporter of the BVA. His wife, Debby, was married to Beirut KIA Sgt. Rick Blankenship, who was killed in the Oct. 23rd bombing. It was through his marriage to Debby that Horner came to appreciate the sacrifices of America's military and he has devoted a great deal of his personal time and resources supporting servicemen.

Horner was a sought-after country music star who for many years was a guitarist and singer who toured with Lee Greenwood and played with other notable country stars. He was a 2006 recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award for Lifetime Achievement. He and Debby now engage in full time ministry through music with Eric Horner Ministries. He holds many patriotic concerts as part of this program. Find out more about Eric at his web site: [www.ericcorner.com](http://www.ericcorner.com).



# Spirit Wear !

Photos of all updated Spirit Wear items can be seen at the official BVA website: [www.beirutveterans.org](http://www.beirutveterans.org)

- #1: **25th Remembrance T-shirts, \$15:** youth large, S, M, L, XL, 2XL & 3XL
- #2: **Sweat Shirt** w/ full-front embroidered BVA Logo; 95% pre-shrunk cotton available in white, ash grey, hunter green, maroon, black, light blue. Adult sizes S, M, L, XL, 2x, 3x ...\$23 (3x in white, ash grey, hunter green only)
- #3: **Golf Shirt** w/embroidered BVA Logo; 6.5 oz., 100 percent combed cotton pique golf shirt w/quarter sleeves; welt collar and cuffs; side vents w/2" dropped tail; red, purple, blue (bimini & corporate), true royal, true navy, black, white, sports gray, putty, butter, tangerine, mango, wine, jade; **Adult Sizes: M, L, XL, 2X, 3X - \$27**
- #4: **Sport Cap;** brushed cotton twill, 6-panel, soft crown, low-fitting, adjustable strap, front embroidered logo, script on back; available in Maroon with green visor; Tan or Chestnut w/black visor: Price.....\$15 each
- #5: **New: BVA Christmas Ornament, \$5**
- #6: **BVA K-bar: regular, \$52; Gold Edition, \$102**
- #7: **BVA License Plate Frame: \$6**
- #8: **BVA Bumper Stickers...\$3 each**
- #9: **BVA Mousepads (blue), \$4 (8" x 9")**
- #10 **Round Cloth Patches, \$7.50 (3.5x3.5")**
- #11: **Static Window Clings: \$3.00**
- #12: **BVA Bronze Challenge Coin, \$6.50 each**

### Shipping Charge rates:

Subtotals up to \$14.99.....	\$3.00
Subtotals from \$15 to \$49.99.....	\$5.00
From \$50 to \$99.99.....	\$10.50
\$100 to \$199.99.....	\$18.50
\$200 to \$300.....	\$25.00
Over \$300, call Cliff Walling for cost	
Orders routinely shipped USPS	

25th T-Shirt: Quantity _____ Size _____ Color _____		\$ _____
Sweat Shirt: Quantity _____ Size _____ Color _____		\$ _____
Golf Shirt: Quantity _____ Size _____ Color _____		\$ _____
Cap: Quantity _____ Size _____ Color _____		\$ _____
Christmas Ornament: Quantity _____		\$ _____
BVA K-bar: Regular, # _____; Gold Edition, # _____		\$ _____
BVA License Plate Frame: Quantity _____		\$ _____
Bumper Stickers: Quantity _____		\$ _____
Mouse Pads: Quantity _____		\$ _____
Patches: Quantity _____		\$ _____
Static Window Cling: Quantity _____		\$ _____
25th Challenge Coin: Quantity _____		\$ _____
	<b>Subtotal</b>	\$ _____
	<b>Shipping:</b>	\$ _____
	<b>TOTAL ORDER</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

**Please Tell Us Your:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to BVA. Send order form and check to:  
 Cliff C. Walling  
 123 Prentice Avenue  
 South River, N.J. 08882-2210  
 Expect Delivery in 4-6 weeks. For more information  
 Call Cliff @ (h) 732-613-0441  
 Email: [wallingclan@msn.com](mailto:wallingclan@msn.com)

*Official Newsletter of the Beirut Veterans of America*

# Root Scoop II

January 2009



**Jeff Handy**  
741 Buena Vista Avenue  
LaHabra, CA 90631-7121