

*Official Newsletter of the Beirut Veterans of America*

# Root Scoop II

Vol. VI, Issue 3

**"The First Duty is to Remember"**

Nov/Dec 2009

## Wreaths, Flowers, Candles and Words

## 2009 Beirut Remembrance

Wreaths, flowers, candles and words highlighted the 26th Remembrance of the Beirut Bombing, which again honored all U.S. servicemen killed in action and wounded in Beirut during peacekeeping operations there 1982-84.

In Jacksonville, N.C., home of the Beirut Memorial, on October 23rd the traditional Candlelight Vigil at 6 a.m. featured words and candles as the name of each fallen serviceman on the wall was read by families and fellow veterans.

Those attending the 10:30 a.m. ceremony at the Wall were escorted to the event by the North Carolina Rolling Thunder motorcycle group.

Words were also featured here, and song, with "God Bless The USA" sung by Eric Horner closing out the morning. The Military Order of the Devildogs also contributed words at their traditional service later in the day.

While Jacksonville is recognized as the home of the "official" Beirut Remembrance, people across the world, from Naval ships to small towns, were Remembering in their own ways. For example, the officers and crew aboard the U.S. Guided

Officers and crew of the USS Higgins cast the wreath



Missile Destroyer, USS Higgins held a ceremony and laid a wreath at sea near the shores of Beirut. Commander Carl Meuser, CO, told his crew: "It is well that we pause before Lebanon's cedars to remember the men killed in their barracks that Sunday morning, not that we may rekindle our anger or perpetuate the hatred and mistrust that led to the deaths we mourn, and which continue to divide mankind by chasms of mankind's own making. Rather, we pause to reflect upon the sobering knowledge that the privilege of service to a cause greater than one's self is not received without cost."

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Eastlake,  
Ohio  
Beirut  
Memorial

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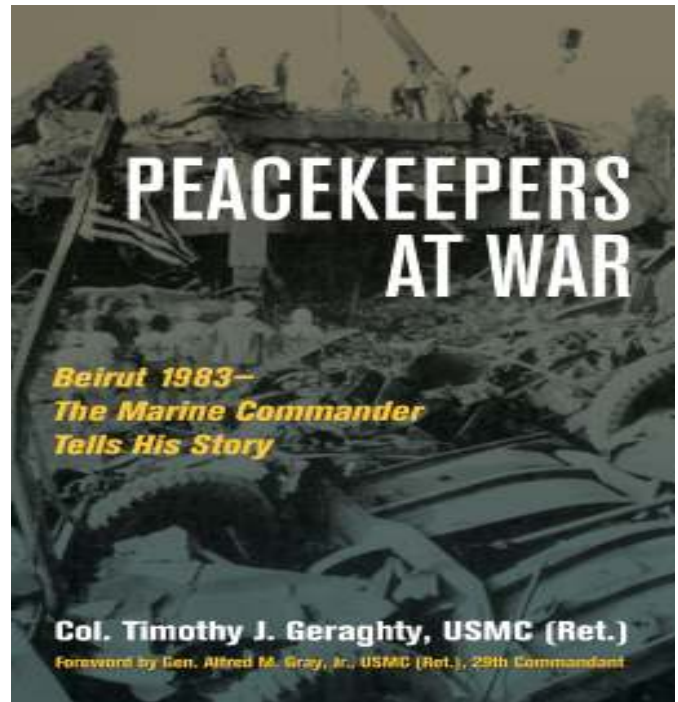
**Untold Beirut Story...**

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## Peacekeepers At War

### Colonel Geraghty Tells His Story

Colonel Timothy J. Geraghty, commander of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit in 1983 at the time of the Beirut barracks bombing, has just released a long-awaited book that gives the inside story of this seminal event in U.S. and Marine Corps history. In the book the colonel details the complicated sequence of events that led up to the bombing. He argues that the absence of any retribution against those responsible emboldened the terrorists and convinced them that they could attack western targets with impunity. He shows how the event contributed to the on-going war on terror. After Geraghty retired from the Marine Corps in 1984 he worked with the CIA in the Counterterrorism Center. He had previously worked with the CIA when he was a lieutenant colonel, with the Special Operations Group there. Books can be purchased by calling Potomac Books at 1-800-775-2518 or on the Web at [www.potomacbooksinc.com](http://www.potomacbooksinc.com)



## From the BVA President

It's been a little more than a year since the big 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BLT Bombing and although we didn't have as many attend the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary we had a great time. I would have to say that I enjoy the off years as well as the big years. Although more Beirut Veterans and Family members came to the 25<sup>th</sup> the off years offer you more time to do things you want to do. I have time to spend with friends and time to speak with new friends. It's good to be able to talk of the time we spent and shared together in Beirut and what you find out from the new acquaintances you make. For those of you that couldn't go you were thought of and missed. There was not a lot planned for this year's gathering since we didn't expect a big turnout. We opened up at the USO on the 22<sup>nd</sup> from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to register, meet with friends and other activities. This year there were 2 books that have been written about Beirut, both authors were in Jacksonville to promote and sign their books. Author Claude Salhani, who is editor of Middle East Times and longtime BVA supporter, has a new book, "While the Arab World Slept," about the Bush years and the impact it had on the Middle East. For more info type or copy and paste [www.whiletheArabWorldslept.com](http://www.whiletheArabWorldslept.com) to your search engine, also do a search with the title to find out more about him. The second author most of us know, he was the CO of the 24<sup>th</sup> MAU in Beirut from May-Nov 1983. Col. Timothy J. Geraghty, USMC (Ret.) tells his side while commanding the unit until its return to the U.S. You will not want to miss reading this book

### 2009 BVA Board of Directors

Mark T. Hacala, Pat Metcalf, Glenn Dolphin, Randy Gaddo, Rick Cunningham, Bill Kibler, Mary Ellen Jackowski, Alicia Sanchez

(see the article above). The annual meeting was held during the afternoon, the meeting was held as a casual meeting and gave time for members to inform the group of activities that have happened throughout the year, some of which are covered in this edition. I would like to thank the Marine Corps Association for donating some very good items for our raffle. This is the third year that they have been gracious in doing this to help us out. The morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> we gathered at the Beirut Memorial at 6 a.m. for our Candlelight Ceremony. We had about 80 in attendance and the weather was good. Mrs. Judith Young spoke and then each name was read from the wall and ended at 6:23 a.m. and all candle flames were blown out. At 10:30 we again gathered at the Memorial for the ceremony that is hosted by the City of Jacksonville. As always they did an outstanding job setting this up and arranging speakers. They again asked Eric Horner to sing and as always he brought all who attended to their feet. At 2 p.m. we went to Camp for a heartfelt, warming Memorial service. The Military Order of the Devil Dogs were the first to hold a ceremony in honor of those who died in Beirut and they do a great job each year. Rolling Thunder was also there and asked at the conclusion that the NOK and veterans pass through their open ranks in column to show that they have not forgotten. That evening a dinner was donated at the Holiday Inn for all to attend. It was a good night with the last group of brothers breaking up to hit the sack about midnight. To close this, I would like to thank all the regulars who make this journey every year and to those that make it most years when possible. I would also like to thank the ones that have just started coming and are becoming our regulars. To those of you who could not make this trip, we know that in heart you were with us and wanted to attend but could not. We missed you. I would also like to thank those who helped with this year's Remembrance.



## ROOT SCOOPS

### Memorial Day: Plan For The D.C. Parade!

Save the Date! Monday, May 31, 2010. Memorial Day Weekend in Washington, D.C. with the National Memorial Day Parade. Join the Beirut Veterans of America as we celebrate Memorial Day by marching in the National Memorial Day Parade ([www.nationalmemorialdayparade.com](http://www.nationalmemorialdayparade.com)). This will be our 6th year and each year we grow in participants and have a lot of fun that weekend with all the events in Washington, culminating with the BVA parade entry down Constitution Avenue past the White House. For more information, contact Bill Kibler ([bill@beirutstamp.com](mailto:bill@beirutstamp.com) / cellphone: 703.209.USMC). We need all the BVA Members we can get!

### RootVets Tap into Corps history at MB, 8th and I

What started out as a one time thing has turned into tradition on or about every October 23rd for the past 5 years that BVA board member Bill Kibler has 'tapped the keg' at the Enlisted Club at Marine Barracks Washington, 8th and I. It started out as a Thank-You for helping BVA with the 2005 Memorial Day Parade. This year is no different with BVA helping to pick up the tab along with Alan Opra and Bill Kibler. Giving a Beirut 101 class is also part of the adventure, making sure Marines know exactly what happened. BVA has been the only Veterans Service Organization to keep this tradition alive, as many VSO's used to argue over which night was theirs to tap the keg. Marines love it, coming off the parade deck in the hot sweltering heat and humidity Washington is so well known for, having a cold beer at the end of the night makes it all worth it. The bar card reads "Beer presented by Beirut Veterans of America on another outstanding Parade Season. - Semper Fi"

## BVA Donates Beirut Flag to USMC Archives

BVA leaders secured a safe home for a special piece of history when they donated a flag flown by the last Marines in Beirut to the Library of the Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections.

BVA Chairman Mark Hacala and Board Member Pat Metcalf presented the flag and accompanying documents to Archives head Michael Miller and volunteer Sarah Holcomb at the Alfred M. Gray Research Center in Quantico, VA in July.

Capt. Henry Donigan III flew this flag over the command post of Echo Co., BLT 2d Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, 22d MAU near the site of the destroyed BLT headquarters at the Beirut International Airport. Upon its return, he donated it to the Drill

Instructors at MCRD Parris Island.

The flag was given away several years later. Its whereabouts remained unknown until a benefactor approached BVA seeking to donate the flag. "A young lady who wishes to remain anonymous received it from someone and she wanted it to go to the right place," said Metcalf, who engaged the BVA Board of Directors to determine the best home for the artifact.

Hacala approached several Marine history-related organizations to determine interest in the item. The Archives and Special Collections expressed great desire to include it in the Beirut Archive, which they began last year at the request of BVA.



(L-R) BVA Chairman Mark Hacala; Michael Miller, head of the Library of the Marine Corps' Archives and Special Collections; BVA Board Member Pat Metcalf; and archives volunteer Sarah Holcomb.

### Beirut Veterans of America

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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.



These are photos taken of the Beirut Display at the National Museum of the Marine Corps near Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA. The Story of U.S. Marines and Navy in Beirut is a special display located in the "Legacy Walk" section of the museum. Along the Legacy Walk, visitors are immersed in more than 200 years of Marine Corps history from 1775 to present. The Beirut display is in the 1976 – 2000 section.

*Photos: Art Crow, former USMC Captain*



## Advisory Committee Defers Beirut Stamp Decision Until January

*By Hope Hodge, J'ville Daily News*

Sometimes, fitting tributes can come in small packages.

Beirut veterans and family members learned that their fight to get a stamp honoring the victims of the 1983 Beirut bombing is not over yet. Some members of the Beirut Stamp Initiative have been working for more than two decades to get approval for a stamp memorializing the 241 peacekeepers who perished in the attack, most of whom were based in Jacksonville.

In that time, they have written letters to three U.S. presidents, mailed petitions containing an estimated 75,000 to 100,000 signatures and received three rejections from the U.S. Postal Service. This year's application includes endorsements from Beirut Veterans of America, American Gold Star Mothers,

Inc., 16 members of U.S. Congress and former Commandant of the Marine Corps retired Gen. Michael W. Hagee.

The Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, a group of 12 scholars and public figures whose members include former second lady Joan Mondale and Harvard academic Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., convened in early November and were slated to deliver a decision about the Beirut memorial stamp. But rather than denying the petition a fourth time, the committee chose to defer a decision until January, citing a lack of sufficient information about the memorial.

Bill Kibler, an Arlington, Va., resident and veteran who was in Beirut with the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit several months prior to the bombing, said he was pleased that the committee had

not denied the group's request again. "It's a really positive sign for now," he said.

The web master for the Beirut Stamp Initiative, Kibler said he had worked to come up with a new idea this year to avoid another rejection. In the past, he said, the committee had denied requests based on its policy of not creating stamps to commemorate tragedies. The latest application is for a stamp based on Jacksonville's Beirut Memorial, a wall bearing the 270 names of U.S. servicemen who died between 1982 and 1984 serving as peacekeepers in Lebanon. Since the USPS minted a stamp dedicated to the Vietnam Memorial in 2000, the group hopes that this approach will clear the way to approval for them.

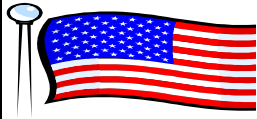
Judy Young of Burlington County, N.J., is a Gold Star mother who lost her son, Sgt. Jeffrey Young, in the Beirut attack and co-founded the stamp initiative about 24 years ago. She said that finally getting a stamp would be a small but fitting tribute to the work and heroism of those like her son.

Kibler said a stamp would show that honoring the veterans of Beirut is as vital as paying tribute to veterans of other American conflicts. "It will finally mean a little more sense of closure, that the government's finally stepping up to acknowledge what happened 26 years ago," Kibler said.

But for now the work of this group is over for a few months.

"All we can do now is sit and wait," Kibler said.





## 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.

## VOICES FROM BEIRUT: The Peacekeepers Speak

BVA Next of Kin members Mary Ellen Jackowski and Peggy Stelpflug plan to collaborate on a collection of letters from the Peacekeepers.

They would like family members and Beirut Vets to participate by submitting either one of their letters -- or excerpts from various letters -- written by the Beirut Peacekeepers.

Since memories fade, this will be a permanent record of the thoughts and feelings at that time.

"Though this process may open up painful memories, the desire to record the thoughts of the US Peacekeepers, 1982-1984, overcomes this very real concern, say the collection's compilers. "Those who died in Beirut can no longer speak for themselves, but we can be their voices and ensure that their words are heard. Through this project, by sharing personal thoughts, Beirut Vets can continue their healing process."

If no letter from Beirut is

available, a present-day written account regarding a particular serviceman can be submitted. This account may include any specific memory or experience such as why he joined the military, thoughts about the peacekeeping mission, future plans or any memory or experience shared during his time in Beirut.

The format of the collection will include an alphabetical listing of one page per serviceman:

### Sample

Sgt. John S. Doe  
U.S. Marine Corps  
H&S 1/8  
MOS: Cook  
An introductory paragraph about the serviceman;  
The letter or excerpts from several letters;  
Your name and relationship to the serviceman which indicates your permission to publish the information.

Before the *Beirut Connection* became part of the BVA, many families and vets shared letters from Beirut. Permission to reprint any of those letters would be greatly appreciated. (Please follow the sample format.)

This project was in the planning stages before the 25th Remembrance and it is our hope that it will be realized before the 30th Remembrance in 2013.

Please submit your information to:

Mary Ellen ([jjandme@peoplepc.com](mailto:jjandme@peoplepc.com)).

or Peggy ([pegstelpflug@charter.net](mailto:pegstelpflug@charter.net)).

Hard copies (photostats -- not originals) can be mailed to: Mary Ellen Jackowski, 20 Stagecoach Road, Chestertown NY 12817

(518) 494-4609 (or)  
Peggy Stelpflug, 2600 Orchard Circle, Auburn AL 36832  
(334) 821-8671

## *The First Duty Is To Remember*

### Woman Dies From H1N1, Sister of Beirut KIA LCpl. James F. Silvia

A 49-year-old woman who died October 30 did have the H1N1 flu, and that H1N1 flu is the cause of death, the Rhode Island Department of Health said. The woman was identified by her family as Leslee P. Silvia. She had several underlying illnesses. She was one of nine children, including the late Lance Corporal James Francis Silvia who died in the 1983 bombing of Marine headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon. She is also sister to Liz Mullen, a long-time supporter of the BVA. Our condolences go out to the family. Silvia was the sixth Rhode Islander to die of the H1N1 flu. According to The Providence Journal Ms. Silvia was born in Newport, grew up in Middletown and was living in Riverside, R. I. at the time of her death.





## Pass In Review!

### Root Vet Represents BVA at Parris Island Graduation



***Editor's Note: On Friday, October 23, 2009 at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, the 26th Remembrance was recognized during a graduation of new Marines and the BVA was asked for a representative to review the troops. BVA President Craig Renshaw had very little time to find someone but Mr. David Lord stepped up to the plate. Lord was a field radio operator with 8th Communications Battalion detached to the 24th MAU and served in Beirut from October 1982 to February 1983. While serving in Beirut, he was a Radio Watch Supervisor on a rotating shift responsible for and maintaining communications from HQ 24 MAU to subordinate and support units. Upon returning to the States, he helped to prepare for the unit's return to Beirut, Lebanon. Upon their redeployment, he was assigned to Headquarters Battery 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 10<sup>th</sup> Marines. He was released from active duty on August 2, 1983. Following is his account of his experience at Parris Island...***

On the 26th anniversary of the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, I had the honor of being the reviewing official at the graduation of a series of new Marines at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina.

BVA President Craig Renshaw

requested that a Beirut Marine attend in that capacity in honor of those who served in Beirut. I talked with Capt. Raymond Szapara at Parris Island and plans were made.

When I arrived, I was treated like a very distinguished guest. I have to say that it was a lot different than my last trip to P.I. thirty years ago! I was met by Capt. Szapara and not by a bunch of rabid....I mean, friendly Drill Instructors.

The quarters were excellent! A two-bedroom suite was provided for me for the night before the graduation. It was a lot different than sharing a squad bay with over 70 other men! Oh, and no "friendly Drill Instructors" were there to throw a trash can down the middle of the room to wake me up either!

Before morning colors on the morning of the graduation, I had coffee with the Chief of Staff of P.I. and the depot Sergeant Major. Afterwards, we went down to hear the base's band and watch as the colors were raised.

It was then time to attend the graduation of recruits! I stood out

front and center with the Depot Sergeant Major and gave the command for them to pass in review. Looking into the faces of those young Marines made me wonder if I were ever that young. Looking at my boot camp picture when I got home, I believe that I may have been younger.

It was both an honor and privilege to attend that ceremony. The return to P.I. and seeing all the changes was nostalgic and special to me.

Talking with some of the recruits the day before (at family day) was great too. Their stories of training were mostly the same as those that we would be able to tell.

I am in debt to Craig for asking me to attend and for being invited as their guest of honor. I got to wander about in "Officer's Country" and other parts of the base that I didn't even know existed. I visited my old squad bay and chow hall as part of the base tour that the Protocol Office set up. Oh yeah, I even walked on the grass! Like I said, things were a lot different on this trip.

Take some time to let those in command of Parris Island know how much it means to each of us that they remembered that special yet sad day in our history. Write to them and tell them thank you. Perhaps they will invite one of us to attend in the future. Let them know that our first duty is to remember and how much we appreciate them for tending to that duty.



## Wreaths, Flowers, Candles and Words 2009 Beirut Remembrance

....from Page 1

In towns and cities across the nation, people Remembered. For example in Eastlake, Ohio, people left flowers in the newly dedicated Daugherty Memorial Park. Just dedicated on Memorial Day 2009, the park is named in honor of Corporal David L. Daugherty, killed in action in Beirut.

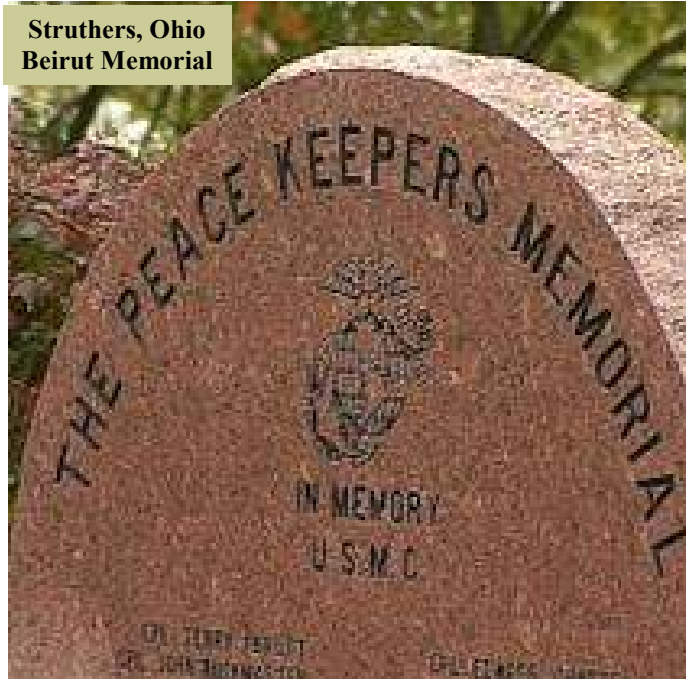
In the small town of Struthers, Ohio there sits a granite memorial on the banks of Lake Hamilton. Each year on the Sunday before October 23, people gather there to remember those who died in Beirut.

Frank Sokol is Commandant of the Tri-State Marine Corps League out of Youngstown and he tells us, "The Marine Corps League here believes it is our privilege and our honor and our duty to come down here and remember these young men."

For three area families the Beirut bombing hit too close to home. Edward Johnston, of Struthers, Stanley Sliwinski of Niles, and James McDonough of New Castle lost their lives in the attack.

During the ceremony family members came forward to place a wreath at the monument in honor of their lost loved ones. The families are honored that 26 years after the tragedy, dozens of people still show up to remember those men who gave their lives on that October morning.

Struthers, Ohio  
Beirut Memorial



Mary Ann Beck lost her brother Edward Johnston and she tells us, "With every remembrance service, you know, we don't forget. But even for these survivor Marines and other servicemen who come, it shows them that people aren't forgetting them either and what sacrifices they made."

These and other examples all over the world, year after year, should continue to encourage BVA members that their efforts are fruitful and we are carrying out the BVA motto: **Our First Duty Is To Remember**



Officers and crew of USS Higgins renders honors. The ship is named after William R. Higgins (1945-1990), a United States Marine Corps Colonel who was captured and held hostage in February 1988 by a pro-Iranian group allied with Hezbollah while serving on a United Nations peacekeeping mission (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, UNTSO) in Lebanon. He was killed in captivity by July 1990.



The Untold Beirut StorySailor Chronicles Care of Injured on USS *Iwo Jima*

**Editor's Note:** The following article was originally seen in the September/October 2009 edition of the Marine Corps League magazine *Semper Fi*. It is reprinted here with permission from the magazine and the author. Al Sandrik was a crewman on the USS *Iwo Jima* just off shore from Beirut when the 1983 terrorist attack killed 241 service members and injured scores more. Years later he would chronicle a first person account of the heroic efforts to save lives on board the *Iwo Jima* as wounded were medivaced there. As Sandrik explained in an email to the *Semper Fi* editor: "It is the untold (or at least not often told) story of that day and the triage and medical care onboard the USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH-2). I do not want to call undue attention to myself nor minimize what others did that day, but the only way I know to tell the story is 1st person. Hopefully it does honor to all Marines, Sailors and Soldiers on that hanger deck that day."

**By Al Sandrik**

The story you are about to read will be, without a doubt, a difficult one to read.

Since the Marine Barracks Bombing in 1983, much has been written about the events and rescue operations at Beirut International Airport. Since 9/11, many analyses have been conducted about the reasons for the attack, but until now I do not believe anyone has written about the events that occurred on the USS *Iwo Jima* that day.

As I write, it has been 24 years since I participated in the triage and treatment of the injured and it is my hope that I am accurately detailing the events of the day. Most of all, I hope this story will bring honor to all

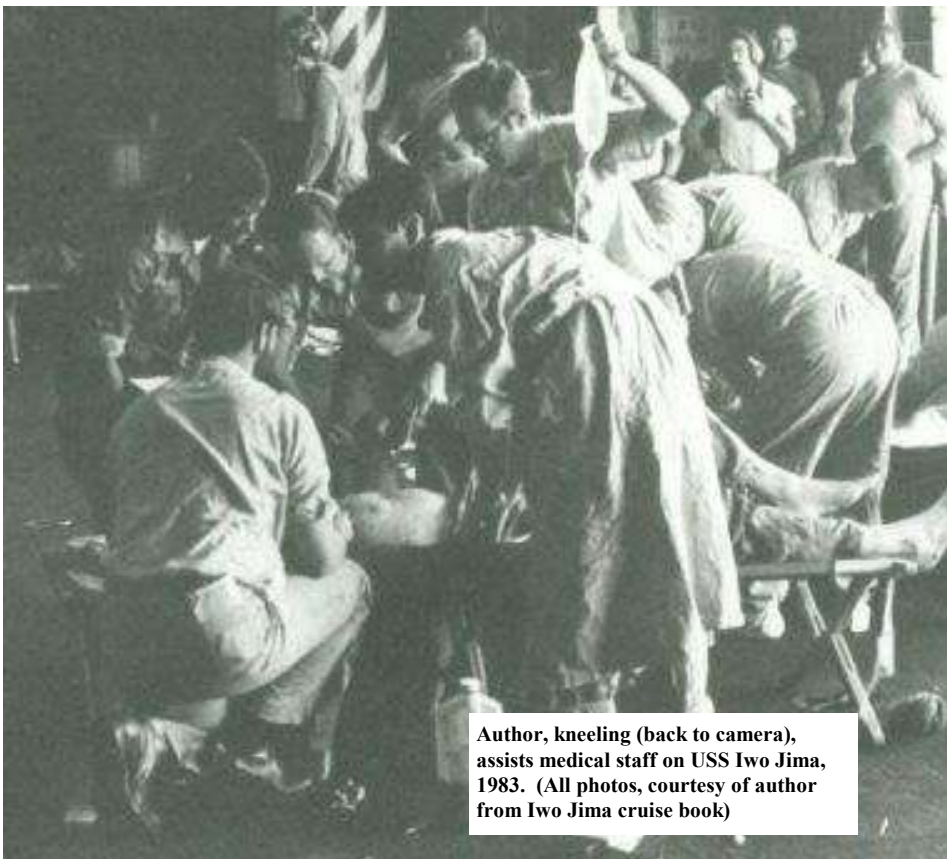
of the men, of all services, onboard the *Iwo Jima* that day. There is no way I can tell everyone's story and all I can do is to attempt to chronicle the day's events to the best of my memory and as I saw them.

In October of 1983 I was an Aerographers Mate serving onboard the Amphibious Assault Ship, USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH-2), sometimes called a "helicopter assault carrier," off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon. Prior to joining the Navy, I was an Emergency Medical Technician with the Pleasant Plains First Aid Squad in my hometown of Toms River, New Jersey. Since I had a medical background, I was on fairly friendly terms with several of the Corpsmen onboard as we had much in common to talk about. Still, even with over a year of serving on a first aid squad, I

had never been in a real mass casualty situation and wasn't really ready for what was to come.

Earlier that summer, my Division Officer, Lt. Rodney J. "Pat" Salts and myself had both been assigned to temporary duty with the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) Headquarters at Beirut International Airport. During that time I had made a few friends on the beach so I had a keen interest in events that were going on at the airport.

I had experienced several of the early mortar and sniper attacks, which was really nothing when compared to the action which would take place in



Author, kneeling (back to camera), assists medical staff on USS *Iwo Jima*, 1983. (All photos, courtesy of author from *Iwo Jima* cruise book)

See "Iwo" page 9

*Shipboard Photos from USS Iwo Jima cruisebook, by PH3 Jeff Potunas USN*



Marines on Iwo Jima, taking care of their own.



ment's controlled substances. I asked him what had happened and he told me a truck bomb had blown up near or in the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) barracks building and there were mass casualties. He was in a rush and headed down to the Medical Department spaces that were located one deck below our office.

From my experience I knew that the main highway into the airport terminal went right by the BLT Headquarters and barracks buildings and a high brick wall was located between the barracks building and the road. Normally, about the time of the explosion some Marines would begin lining up for break-

## “Iwo” from page 8

So, even though my primary duty was onboard the ship, I always felt bad about leaving the Marines I got to know on the beach. This brief period spent with the Marines of the 24<sup>th</sup> MAU was to shape some of my perceptions of what occurred that day.

On the morning of the bombing I had just completed a 12-hour midnight shift in the weather office and was preparing to head down to the berthing compartment to

catch some sleep. I slipped a paperback I was reading into my back pocket and was leaving the weather office when I found out that a large explosion had occurred at the airport. I don't remember how we found out but I do remember going out into the aft gun mount to see what was happening.

As we looked toward the airport from a distance of less than a mile, the cloud from the explosion was already spreading out and I

decided to wait a bit to see what was happening. I busied myself taking care of some of my other office duties until something happened. Very soon the ship's general announcing system was announcing to prepare for mass casualties and a request was put out for blood donors.

About this time Lt. Salts came into the office to obtain a key for the drug lockers as one of his duties was to keep track of the ship's Medical Depart-

fast, so I assumed that the truck had blown up near the roadway and injured those Marines. The Iwo had already experienced several “mass casualty” events and it was usually about ten or so casualties. Until this point I had no reason to believe that anything more serious had happened and decided to go down to the Medial Department to donate blood before I went down to my rack.

**Continued, page 10 & 11**

**Because of her large sick bay, operating rooms and 100 bed hospital, *Iwo Jima* was normally designated the primary casualty receiving ship when operating in a task force.**



## Triage and Lifesaving aboard the Iwo...from page 9

When I arrived in Medical it was clear that this was more serious as crewmembers were lining up to give blood. I got into line when Lt. Salts came over to me and asked me if I would help out by taking vital signs for the Medical Staff during the triage. I immediately agreed and went down to the ship's hanger bay to the triage area. We set up the triage near an elevator that is designed to move helicopters from the hanger bay to the flight deck, so you can imagine it was a large structure. After the preparations were completed we had a bit of time to talk and get ready. I spent the time talking with two of the Corpsmen, Michael Black and I'm sorry to say I can't remember the other one's first name but his last name was Berhens. Within a few minutes the helicopters started landing and we were told to "get ready."

I remember telling my two shipmates to keep an eye on me as I might be a bit rusty in my medical skills, but I wasn't ready for what I was about to see. As the elevator descended and came into our view it was absolutely packed with wounded. Although the elevator was going at its normal speed, to me seemed like an eternity. Shocked at seeing so many wounded I froze and for a split second I considered running. Thank God Berhens saw what was happening and grabbed my shoulders. He told me to remember my training and I'd be all right. Soon the elevator stopped, the cable barricade went down and everyone began to move toward the elevator. I was still frozen in place and Michael shouted at me to get moving. I will always appreciate what they both did during those few seconds, as without them I likely would have run right then and there.

Everyone moved onto the elevator as a unit, grabbed a stretcher handle and moved the injured into the triage area. As the medical staff did

their evaluations I moved from patient to patient taking vital signs. This went on for about twenty or so minutes and, while I was busy, every once in a while I had the chance to look around. At one point I looked up to the top of some spare helicopter engine storage cases and saw one of the ship's Master At Arms standing there with a shotgun in his hands; other times I saw the line of ship's crewmembers standing nearby wanting to help. Before long some of the wounded were being moved to the medical elevator at the back of the hanger bay for transport up to the medical spaces and triage spaces began to clear. To me, it seemed like we were gaining the upper hand on the situation when the elevator began to descend again.

What I didn't know at the time was the medical staff was clearing the triage area for the follow on helicopters. Once again the aircraft elevator was packed with wounded and as we brought them into the triage area it almost seemed as if these cases were more severe than the first. Some of the Medical Staff was up in Medical so it seemed as if we didn't have quite as many people to deal with the injured. Now, in addition to taking

vital signs I also began to help treat and stabilize some of the more severe injuries. I remember about this time I glanced out the hanger bay door and saw the French Aircraft Carrier Foch about a mile from our ship. As an aside, at that time we were not experiencing strong cooperation with the French and I remember thinking to myself, "My God if the French are here to help us out this must be bad." I had no idea that the French had also been attacked that morning and were dealing with their own casualties.

We continued working on this group of wounded for what seemed like hours, but was probably only a half-hour or so. As I was working on one Marine I heard a voice asking me for a report on the patient. I looked up just far enough to see a clean pair of Khaki coveralls and realized how bloody and grimy we looked. After I relayed the information on the patient, I looked up to see a medical officer who I had never seen before. I asked him where he had come from and he told me they had flown over from the USS New Jersey. I remarked that I was glad to see him and got back to work.

**Continued on page 11**





## Iwo...from page 10

I had gotten up to get some supplies when a crewmember I knew came up to me and asked me what he could do. I guess he came to me because I was in his department and he knew me better than the medical staff. I brought him over to a man who we thought was going to die and told him to stay with him and try to make him comfortable and then returned to work. About this time, we were beginning to move this group up to the medical spaces and were grabbing other waiting crewmembers to use as stretcher bearers.

Once again we seemed to be getting the upper hand when the elevator began to come down yet again. Mercifully this time the elevator wasn't as packed but this was when I was to meet a man who's courage I would never forget. We went over to the elevator and I grabbed the handle on a stretcher of an African American Marine who appeared to be very badly injured. I would soon learn his name was Kevin and began to treat him. The doctor determined Kevin would require stabilization for surgery and we would need to get him up to medical. I was told at this point that I was a Corpsman now and was assigned to go up to the medical spaces with Kevin. As the elevator ascended I had a bird's eye view of the scene below me and could see the ongoing triage as well as the faces of the crewmen waiting and wanting to do anything they could to help.

We settled Kevin down into a treatment room and I began to clean his wounds. I honestly can't tell you I remember all of Kevin's injuries, but we felt sure he had internal bleeding, some steel rebar had badly cut his legs and he had some injuries to his arms. The real horrible thing about his injuries is he had a very large laceration on his forehead near his hairline and his blood had mixed with the pulverized concrete and congealed in his eyes. After an IV was started on Kevin there was little I could do about the other injuries so the best I could do for him was to clear his eyes. The problem was we could not give Kevin any morphine and the pain he went through was excruciating. I felt horrible about the pain I had to inflict on him and to keep

his mind off the pain we talked about football and our girlfriends at home. I tried my best to not let him know that tears were welling up in my eyes as I was doing this.

Meanwhile, Kevin was not the only patient I was responsible for and I had four Marines with seemingly lesser injuries just outside the door. One patient in particular was very concerned about and I checked his vitals because I felt he was possibly going into shock. I set off to find a doctor and when I finally found one he must have agreed as they moved the Marine into a treatment room right away.

Unfortunately during this same period Kevin had drained his IV and before I realized it one of the Corpsmen came into the room and saw it. He admonished me for letting it happen and we switched out the IV. I felt bad about it happening and the Corpsman was too busy to listen to explanations so I just got back to work.

I continued cleaning his eyes and was making some progress, but at the cost of great pain on Kevin's part. Kevin never once complained and as we were talking he was calling me "Doc." That is an honor that Marines use for their assigned corpsmen and I didn't feel worthy of him calling me that. I kept insisting I wasn't a Corpsman but that didn't stop him. Soon we got his eyes cleared and I moved to the laceration near his scalp. This was even worse because now the blood and concrete had congealed in his hair and hardened into a stiff mess. If I



caused Kevin pain before, this was far worse, yet still he wouldn't complain. It was all I could do to keep from crying but I couldn't do so in front of someone this brave.

After I got the wound as clean as possible some of the medical staff came into the room and announced Kevin was going to be med-evaced to Germany and we were staging him back down to the hanger bay. This time, as we descended the elevator the view was different. Men who were going to be evacuated were lined up in a row and the activity was not as hectic as earlier. We carried Kevin over to the staging area and put him down. I turned to leave when I heard Kevin call to me. I turned around and he was leaning up on his injured arm and reached out to me saying, "Thanks for working on me, Doc." I wished him luck and went over to the far side of the hanger bay and just cried for a few minutes.

After I composed myself, I went back up to medical and helped for an hour or so, but things were definitely winding down. After a bit I wasn't really needed in the Medical spaces and went into a secondary medical area called "medical overflow" to see if I could help with the less significantly injured.

I worked for a while in that space when I came across a guy I knew on the beach. He asked me how many had died on the ship and I told him we did pretty well and I thought only two or three (it turns out I was wrong, only one Marine died on the ship that day). He looked at me and said and there's about a hundred on the beach. I was dumbfounded and said no it couldn't be. The Marine asked me if I knew what happened and for the first time I realized I didn't. He looked at me and told me the building was gone.

I still didn't really understand, but for the first time I really began to realize what we had just done. **RSII**

# Spirit Wear !

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

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**#3: Golf Shirt \$27** 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; \$29 for 2X, 3X**

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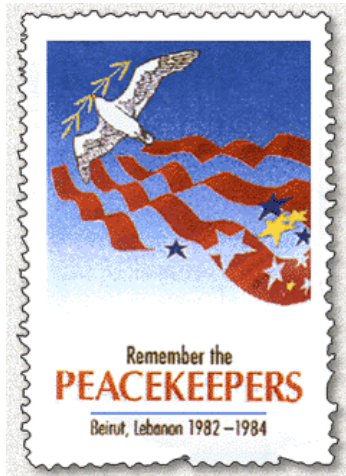
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# Root Scoop II

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