

# "THE WORD"

*Pass It Along*

*Semper Fi #1 Memorial Honor Detail  
January - September 2011*



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*MSgt Wesley Morrett*

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Steve Fisher*

*Once again, "The Word" is up and running. Many events have occurred since our last publishing. We have gained new members and lost some old friends. Our level of professionalism has reached many organizations within the community and has lead to many requests for services. Our leadership remains strong and in keeping with the principles set down by Master Sergeant Morrett.*

*"The Word" is a publication written by each of us; the Semper Fi team. Input is encouraged from all hands as we each have contacts in various areas that can be useful to all hands. Please submit any information as it becomes available.*

*We hope you enjoy reading "The Word" and find the information useful and helpful.*



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**



*Marines,*

*As we fastly approach the birthday of our beloved Corps, I'm proud to say that thanks to Sgt. Major Dickerson, we are back on track with our newsletter. As you know Cpl. Henry Wilson was the publisher of our last newsletter, but due to personal issues, had to discontinue with putting out the newsletter. I would like to thank Henry for all of his hard work, in the past, with publishing a very informative newsletter.*

*I would also like to thank Sgt. Major Dickerson for taking on a very challenging endeavor. As always, in order for this to be successful, he will need all of your support. If you have any information that you think would be of interest to the organization, you need to get the information to Sgt. Major Dickerson.*

*The Board of Directors, the staff and myself will make a valiant attempt via the newsletter to keep you updated on any new procedures, or information that will enable us to be a better informed organization.*

*It is my hope that this newsletter will become the lifeline of information for all of us.*

*Enoch "Mac" McClain, President  
Semper Fi #1 Memorial Honor Detail*

## **SPECIAL EVENTS TEAM**

*S.E.T. has reached a point of notoriety to where we are being asked to participate in annual public events sponsored by various cities and clubs. For example:*

### **March**

*American Legion Post 291 requests we provide a color guard for the Law and Order Awards Dinner at their Newport Harbor facility. This is a major events for the post and city and is attended by city officials and a host of other dignitaries.*

### **April 17**

*City of Riverside Salute to Veteran's Parade. Approximately 15 members of Semper Fi #1 participated in the parade to include the color guard and two squads of Marines. Del Peterson asked a friend of his, Dan Patterson to loan us his vehicle to transport those members who were not physically able to march but wished to participate in the parade to represent our unit. WSe were also joined by a Woman Marine Gunnery Sergeant Leann Pollard who saw us in formation and asked if she could march with us. The parade conveniently ended at 12<sup>th</sup> and Main in Riverside. Just around the corner was a pub (tavern) named the Salty Pig where we were able to hydrate after the grueling march. Pipe Major Mike Terry of the UC Riverside Pipe Band played the Marine's Hymn on bagpipes every time one of us entered the pub.*

### **May**

*The City of Lake Elsinore and the local Baptist Church hold their annual Memorial Day service at Elsinore Valley Cemetery and requests a rifle team, bugler and bagpiper for the ceremony. This event is attended by approximately 300-400 spectators. Other events for the day include parachute jumpers, ROTC performers and helicopter landings. The S.E.T. has received multiple commendations for the support of this event.*

July

Stonecraft Ministries requests we provide a color guard for their annual luncheon at Wilson Creek Winery.

The City of Rancho Cucamonga asks for a color guard for the Fourth of July ceremony at the Epicenter.

September

The organization. "Moms of Military", holds their annual September 11 Commemoration Day and requests a rifle team for the closing ceremonies.

**RECRUITING TEAM**

**Chino Airport**



**Yucca Valley**



## **TAPS**

*In 2011, members of this unit have conducted numerous services for fellow veterans at Riverside National Cemetery:*

<i>Army.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Marine Corps.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Navy.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Air Force.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Coast Guard.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Total.....</i>	<i>106</i>

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **September**

**9<sup>th</sup>** *Scarlet and Gold Teams duty day. Formation/Inspection at 0830 hours. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend.*

**22<sup>nd</sup>** *Blue Team Duty. Formation/ Inspection at 0830. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend.*

### **October**

**2<sup>nd</sup>** *Training Day 0900-1200 hours*

**8<sup>th</sup>** *Scarlet and Gold Teams Duty Day. Formation/Inspection at 0830 hours. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend.*

**22<sup>nd</sup>** *Blue Team Duty Day. Formation/ Inspection at 0830 hours. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend.*

### **November**

**5<sup>th</sup>** *Training Day 0900-1200*

**11<sup>th</sup>** *Scarlet and Gold Teams Duty Day Formation/Inspection at 0830 hours. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend.*

**12<sup>th</sup>** *Semper Fi #1 Marine Corps Birthday Ball. Riverside Convention Center 1700-2300.*

**24<sup>th</sup>** *Blue Team Duty Day. Formation/ Inspection at 0830 hours. Call your team leader if you are not able to attend*

## **IN THE NEWS.**

### **Medal of Honor recipient saved 36 lives during battle**



*By Rhyne Piggott, USA TODAY  
The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest award for bravery.*

**GREENSBURG, Ky.** – *When Marine Cpl. Dakota Meyer plunged into Afghanistan's Ganjgal Valley, he was sure he wouldn't come out alive.*

*"I don't think there was ever a question in my mind if I was going to die," Meyer said. "It was just when."*

*Inside the narrow valley, Taliban insurgents were dug into the high ground and hidden inside a village, pouring down deadly fire at Afghan forces and their American advisers. Armed militants swarmed the low ground to try to finish off the troops.*

*Meyer's team was pinned down near the village. He wasn't going to wait and see whether they would get out. Defying orders to stay put, Meyer set himself in the turret of a Humvee and rode straight into the firefight, taking fire from all directions. He went in not once, but five times, trying to rescue his comrades.*

*During about six hours of chaotic fighting, he killed eight Taliban militants and provided cover for Afghan and U.S. servicemen to escape the ambush, according to a Marine Corps account of the events.*

*Meyer saved the lives of 13 U.S. troops and 23 Afghan soldiers that day, Sept. 8, 2009. Next week, President Obama will award him the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest medal for bravery. During the ceremony Sept. 15, Meyer will become the third living recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

*Meyer, who joined the Marines almost on a lark, said in an interview with USA TODAY at his grandparents' farm that what he did was an easy decision to make.*

*"My best friends were in there getting shot at," he said. Meyer said he knew he was taking a chance by defying orders, but he never doubted his decision. "I'd rather be sitting in jail right now for the rest of my life for something like this and those guys be alive than ... questioning if I could have done something different," he said.*

#### ***As a youth, irrepressible and blunt***

*Greensburg is a small town in a "dry" county, where alcohol sales are forbidden. The rolling hills are dotted with small churches, cornfields and farms where cows and horses roam.*

*"We don't really have people in a small community ever get a lot of honor," said Mike Griffiths, Meyer's high school football coach and a mentor. In high school, Meyer was smart but also irrepressible and blunt. Teachers were impressed by his intelligence, but Meyer's strong will and independence often would frustrate them, Griffiths said. After his parents divorced, Meyer was brought up by his father on a farm next to his grandparents'. "He is going to size you up," Griffiths said. "He's going to know ... how far he can push the envelope."*

*When Meyer was in a required home economics class, he and a few friends told the teacher they were taking two months off from class to train for a bobsledding team. The teacher walked into the class to find Meyer and his friends lined up in chairs, pretending to be in a bobsled.*

*When the frustrated teacher said she was going to call the assistant principal, she was told not to bother; they knew where his office was. "I definitely wasn't the model student," Meyer said.*

*His irreverence carried over to his farm work. Told to pick up some livestock for the farm, he*

*once came back with an ostrich, said Marine Gunnery Sgt. Juan Rodriguez-Chavez, who deployed with Meyer to Afghanistan.*

*Meyer had another side that few people saw, friends say. During his senior year in high school, he approached Tana Rattliff, who taught a class of special-needs students, and asked whether he could work as a peer tutor in her class. Rattliff was wary. She didn't know Meyer well, but she knew he was a popular jock, a running back and linebacker on the football team, and wondered about his motives. "If you do this, you have to be a good role model," she warned him.*

*One autistic teenager had spent most of his time in special-needs classes and was particularly withdrawn, she recalled. Meyer took him by the hand and showed him around the school. Before long, the students in the class adored Meyer and would attend school football games to cheer him on, Rattliff said. Meyer said he learned from the students, too.*

*"They don't worry about the normal stuff that a high school student does," Meyer said. "The last thing on their mind is a boyfriend or a girlfriend or what somebody said. "They enjoy life to the fullest." It turned out to be "the best year of teaching I ever had," Rattliff said. "We became like a family."*

*That school year, Meyer encountered a Marine recruiter in the school lunchroom. Although his grandfather had been a Marine, Meyer said, he hadn't considered the military as part of his future. He went up to the recruiter out of curiosity, and as they talked, Meyer told him about his plans to play college football somewhere. The recruiter told him that was a good plan because "there's no way you could be a Marine." Meyer walked away but quickly returned. "You pick up your stuff right now," Meyer told the recruiter. "Let's go sign the papers."*

*Meyer was 17. He needed a parent's permission to join the military. When his father came home from work, he found Meyer and the recruiter waiting.*

*"When did you think about this?" his father, Mike, asked.*

*"About three hours ago," Meyer said. He celebrated his 18th birthday at Parris Island, the Marines' boot camp.*

*Meyer chose to go into the infantry after basic training and later trained as a sniper.*

*"I don't want to join the Marine Corps and have a job that I could have as a civilian," Meyer said.*

*He was about to return to Iraq for a second tour when an opportunity to go to Afghanistan arose. The action in Iraq was winding down. He opted for Afghanistan.*

### ***'He had a bad feeling'***

*Ganjgal Valley is a narrow gorge with a dirt road running through it and walls of rock-strewn peaks rising up on both sides. Villagers live in mud-walled homes that cling to the hillsides. The valley is surrounded by terraced fields.*

*Meyer was 21 in the fall of 2009, part of a small team of advisers attached to an Afghan army battalion operating in Kunar province, a remote and mountainous region that borders Pakistan.*

*The mission on Sept. 8 was straightforward. The Afghan battalion would go to the village to meet with elders who had indicated they were willing to switch allegiance and turn on the Taliban, the Muslim clerical movement ousted from power in 2001 by a U.S.-led invasion after it refused to turn over Osama bin Laden following the Sept. 11 attacks.*

*This was hopeful news for U.S. and Afghan forces. In 2009, the Taliban had free rein in parts of Kunar province, and Afghan commanders were eager to win over tribes and villages.*

*The plan was for the Afghan battalion to leave base before the sun came up and arrive at the village before first light. They would talk to the elders about renovating a mosque and see whether there were other projects the government could help with.*

*A U.S. quick-reaction force would be on standby, and an observation post would be established to keep an eye on the battalion as it moved down the valley toward the village. Snipers would be positioned to fire into the valley if needed.*

*Aircraft were not assigned directly to the mission, but teams were told attack planes or helicopters could respond quickly if needed. "They said if we were to get into a firefight or an ambush, we'd get it (air support) right away, within 10 minutes," Rodriguez-Chavez said.*

*Afghan commanders weren't expecting a fight. It was a "key leader engagement" — not a major offensive. Intelligence suggested the battalion would receive only "light harassing fire" by up to 10 insurgents, according to a military investigation of the events that day. That was standard for Kunar province.*

*The Afghan troops and their U.S. advisers left Forward Operating Base Joyce around 2 a.m. According to the plan, Meyer was to stay with the vehicles near the mouth of the valley. The Afghan soldiers and their U.S. advisers would walk into the village from there. Meyer didn't like the idea of being separated from his team. "He wasn't comfortable letting his team go in without him," Rodriguez-Chavez said. "He had a bad feeling."*

*During a briefing before the operation, Rodriguez-Chavez and 1st Lt. Michael Johnson, Meyer's team leader, recommended that Humvees go with the team. The vehicles were armed with heavy weapons and would be useful if the battalion were attacked, Rodriguez-Chavez said. They were overruled. Commanders were uncertain what they would find on the road — which was little more than a dry streambed that got worse as it approached the village — and feared the vehicles would be vulnerable to roadside bombs, Rodriguez-Chavez said. Meyer said he waited anxiously by the vehicles as the column snaked its way toward the village. Soldiers in observation posts watched villagers preparing breakfast in the pre-dawn darkness. That wasn't surprising. It was Ramadan, when Muslims fast throughout the day.*

*At 5:30 a.m., the lead of the column approached the village. The lights in the village blinked off. All hell broke loose.*

*More than 50 insurgents fired from positions on mountains surrounding the valley and from within the village. It was perfect geography for an ambush: high ground with clear fields of fire. The troops were trapped. Back at the vehicles, Meyer and Rodriguez-Chavez heard the firing and could see into the valley. The volume of fire increased, and the radio traffic grew increasingly desperate. The team was pinned down, and the only way out was to pound the militant positions with airstrikes or artillery. Meyer's team and others in the valley*

*called for airstrikes. The requests were denied by staff officers in a command center who were concerned about civilian casualties and were unclear how fearsome the ambush was, according to a military investigation.*

*From the valley it appeared as if the entire village had joined the fight. Women were running between positions, resupplying the insurgents with ammunition. Some of the shooters were children.*

*Coalition command policy was to use airstrikes sparingly to avoid harming civilians, but troops in trouble were supposed to get the firepower they needed to protect themselves.*

*"If (you) don't give me this air support, we are going to die out here," Johnson yelled over the radio, according to the Marine Corps account of the battle. The shooting was surprisingly accurate — not the typical harassment fire. These were hardened fighters in protected positions. Some wore helmets and body armor.*

*"We're surrounded," Lt. Johnson radioed. "They're moving in on us."*

*Over the radio, Taliban insurgents called on the Afghan soldiers to surrender. They refused. Meyer and Rodriguez-Chavez called four times to their headquarters, pleading for permission to drive into the valley to help Meyer's team. Permission was denied. Senior advisers worried that vehicles driving into the valley would add to the chaos, Rodriguez-Chavez said. Meyer and Rodriguez-Chavez looked at each other.*

*"We have to get in there," Meyer told Rodriguez-Chavez. Meyer recalled, "I couldn't just sit back and watch."*

*Rodriguez-Chavez jumped behind the wheel of a Humvee, and Meyer climbed into the turret, manning a grenade launcher. They headed down the valley and straight into the fight. Bullets pinged off the turret; mortar shells landed around them, and rocket-propelled grenades streaked past.*

*Meyer fired furiously in all directions as the Humvee bounced along the rutted dirt road. They came upon Afghan soldiers, some wounded, staggering out of the valley. Meyer got out and put five of them in the vehicle. Others were cut down as they ran for the Humvee. The Marines*

*drove back to a safe spot, let their passengers out and headed back in. An Afghan senior non-commissioned officer warned them that going back would be suicide, Rodriguez-Chavez said.*

*Meyer and Rodriguez-Chavez, then a staff sergeant, returned to the valley repeatedly, firing at insurgents, retrieving wounded and pulling out bodies. Rodriguez-Chavez would barely slow the vehicle, and Meyer would jump out to rescue survivors.*

*At one point, Meyer dropped from the turret, falling into the vehicle. Rodriguez-Chavez assumed he was dead. "I'm OK, I'm OK," Meyer yelled and got back behind the gun, blood gushing from his right arm as he resumed firing.*

*His weapon jammed, so the two Marines went back to get another Humvee, this one with a .50-caliber machine gun. Rodriguez-Chavez warned that the vehicle might get stuck on the barely passable dirt track as they drove deeper into the valley. "I guess we'll die with them," Meyer replied.*

*Back in the valley, an insurgent got within a couple of feet of the driver's side of the Humvee, startling Rodriguez-Chavez. Meyer aimed his M-4 rifle and shot the insurgent in the head.*

*After four trips, Meyer had not found his team. Together with Marine 1st Lt. Ademola Fabayo and Army Capt. William Swenson, Meyer and Rodriguez-Chavez headed back into the valley a fifth time. At that point, they were an easy and expected target. It was as though every gun in the valley was turned on the vulnerable Humvee.*

*By this time, helicopters were buzzing the area, helping Meyer search for the missing team. The helicopter crew saw what appeared to be four bodies just west of the village and radioed to the men on the ground searching. The helicopter couldn't land, so its crew dropped a smoke grenade marking the position.*

*Meyer bolted from the Humvee and ran toward the smoke. Insurgents trained their weapons on him. Rodriguez-Chavez, still behind the wheel, thought it would be the last time he saw Meyer.*

*Ten minutes later, Meyer was back. "They're all dead," Meyer told Rodriguez-Chavez. "Every single one of them."*

*The team — Marines 1st Lt. Michael Johnson,*

25; Gunnery Sgt. Edwin Johnson, 31; Staff Sgt. Aaron Kenefick, 30; and Navy Corpsman 3rd Class James Layton, 22 — appeared to have been killed by insurgents who had sneaked up on them, according to the military investigation, the results of which were released by Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., a member of the Armed Services Committee.

The men were in a ditch where they had sought cover. Kenefick was clutching a GPS. Layton had been treating his lieutenant, who had a shoulder wound. Gunnery Sgt. Johnson had been keeping an eye out for the enemy. It appeared they had spent all or most of their ammunition trying to defend themselves, given they were found with empty magazines. Their bodies had been stripped of their weapons and radios, according to the investigation. Meyer carried the bodies out of the valley.

Two Army officers who worked in the combat operations center were reprimanded later for not taking immediate action to provide the teams with air support, according to Jones' office. The report found an atmosphere of complacency in the combat operations center.

### **'He doesn't see himself as a hero'**

Rodriguez-Chavez, 34, now a gunnery sergeant, and Fabayo, now a captain, were awarded Navy Crosses, the nation's second-highest medal for valor.

Meyer, who later was promoted to sergeant, has left active duty and returned to Kentucky. He works as a concrete contractor with a cousin.

Meyer is not sure about his future. At various times, he considered a career in the Marines, but eventually he decided to leave active duty.

"I just thought that chapter of my life is over with," Meyer said.

Except for a final page, when he will be drawn into the spotlight next week and President Obama will place the Medal of around his neck to mark a day that still fills Meyer with remorse.

"He doesn't see himself as a hero," Griffiths said. "He felt like he had let his team down."

Meyer appears to be uncomfortable with interviews and the publicity, but he says he endures them to honor the men killed in Ganjgal Valley and the troops still fighting in Afghanistan.

"It's kind of frustrating because everyone wants to get an interview about the worst day of your life," Meyer said. "At the end of the day, I do it because I think it needs to be told."

### **Something for the Ladies**

The fashion industry has joined forces with [Fatigues to Fabulous](#) to support women Veterans. DKNYC has designed an exclusive and stylish watch as a symbol of honor and appreciation. The watch, available exclusively through [HSN.com](#) and featured on HSN September 8th, 9th and 11th, comes in multiple colors (red, white blue, beige camouflage and brown camouflage) and sells for \$59.95. For each watch sold, a

\$10 donation will be made to [Give an Hour](#) and the Society for Women's Health Research to benefit the Fatigues to Fabulous campaign and ease the transition for women veterans returning home. For more information, go to [www.hsn.com/fatigues-to-fabulous](http://www.hsn.com/fatigues-to-fabulous).

### **Benefits**

For various benefits for California Veterans go to [www.calvet.ca.gov](http://www.calvet.ca.gov)

### **From the CEO of Military Connections**

As the 10th memorial of September 11th approaches, it is important to honor the memories of the 184 people who died in the attack on the Pentagon, the 40 innocent lives lost in Pennsylvania, and the 2,753 victims who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Through our remembrance, we honor the 343 firefighters, the 60 New York City and Port Authority Police Officers and the 8 private emergency medical technicians and paramedics who put the safety of others before their own. We salute the brave individuals who have fought to preserve the freedoms who hold so dear, especially those who enlisted after the 9/11 attacks.

*As a special tribute, we would like to feature your memories of that day. Please send us, in 250 words or less, what you were doing that day and how the attacks affected you. Email your thoughts to . We will post them on our [blog](#).*

*Warm regards,  
Debbie Gregory, CEO*

### **VA Posts of Online List of Ships Associated with Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure**

***WASHINGTON - Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.***

*An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore, has been posted at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/> to assist Vietnam Veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits.*

*"Posting of the ships list is an important recognition of the sacrifices U.S. Navy and Coast Guard Veterans made for this Nation," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "It provides an easier path for Veterans who served in Vietnam to get the benefits and services they are entitled to under the law."*

*VA presumes herbicide exposure for any Veteran with duty or visitation within the country of Vietnam or on its inland waterways during the Vietnam era.*

*Comprehensive information about the 14 recognized illnesses under VA's "presumption" rule for Agent Orange is also located on the webpage. In practical terms, Veterans with qualifying Vietnam service who develop a disease associated with Agent Orange exposure need not prove a medical link between their illnesses and*

*their military service. This presumption simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.*

*For questions about Agent Orange and the online list of ships, Veterans may call VA's Special Issues Helpline at 1-800-749-8387 and press 3.*

*When a claim is filed by a Veteran, surviving spouse or child, VA will determine whether the Veteran qualifies for the presumption of exposure based on official records of the ship's operations. Ships will be regularly added to the list based on information confirmed in these official records.*

*Even if a Veteran is not filing a claim, a Veteran may conduct his or her own research and submit scanned documentary evidence such as deck logs, ship histories, and cruise book entries via email to : [211\\_AOSHIPS.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:211_AOSHIPS.VBACO@va.gov).*

*Service on board ships anchored in an open water harbor, such as Da Nang Harbor, or on ships on other open waters around Vietnam during the war, is not considered sufficient for the presumption of Agent Orange exposure. For Veterans interested in obtaining deck logs, contact the National Archives at College Park, Md., at: <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/researcher-info.html>.*

*The Agent Orange Claims Processing System website located at: <https://www.fasttrack.va.gov/AOFastTrack/> may be used to submit claims related to the three conditions added to the list of Agent Orange presumptives last year (Parkinson's disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemias, and ischemic heart disease).*

*This website makes it easy to electronically file a claim and allows Veterans and their physicians to upload evidence supporting the claim. It also permits online viewing of claim status.*

*Veterans claiming other conditions may file online at VA's My-eBenefits web site at: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>. They can check the status of their claim with a premium account (confirming*

their identity), and use a growing number of online services.

Servicemembers may enroll in My-eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings.

Veterans may also enroll through their myPay or MyHealthVet accounts, by visiting their local VA regional office or Veteran Service Organization, or by calling 1-800-827-1000.

### From the Marine Corps Times

*Minn. finds money for honor guards at funerals*

*The Associated Press*

*Posted : Wednesday Aug 31, 2011 19:04:08 EDT*

*ST. PAUL, Minn. — Minnesota's top veterans official said Wednesday that the state will keep helping pay for honor guards at veterans' funeral, after word that the American Legion and other service groups would seek new sources of funding to cover the honors.*

*Until recently, the state had reimbursed service organizations up to \$50 for each funeral and allocated \$100,000 for the program annually. Minnesota Public Radio news reported Wednesday that funding was discontinued as part of budget cuts being imposed to help plug a \$5 billion budget deficit, but Veterans Affairs Commissioner Larry Shellito told MPR that his agency has the funds to keep paying for the funeral honors.*

*"This is one thing we are not letting fall through the cracks," Shellito said.*

*The Department of Veterans Affairs was one of only two state agencies to see their overall funding increase for the next two years, while most others experienced substantial cuts. He said*

*some of the agency's programs end up costing less than budgeted, and donations from Minnesota residents have also helped.*

*"We have enough funds, we project, to handle this next year," Shellito said of the funeral honors.*

*Veterans groups had gotten word of the honor guard cuts as the American Legion holds its national convention in Minneapolis this week, prompting the Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and other groups to pledge to find money for the practice to continue — despite financial struggles among those organizations as well.*

*Bill Christenson, who directs the Honor Guard at the Albert Lea American Legion, said his post has been reimbursed \$10,000 since 2008. He said the funds paid for uniforms, mileage, rifle shells used during military salutes and musicians who played taps. He said he was surprised to learn that the grant funding would end.*

*Federal law requires funeral honors for an eligible veteran if requested by the veteran's family. At a minimum, the honors include presenting a folded American flag to the next of kin and playing taps.*

*Next year, Shellito said he will work with Gov. Mark Dayton and the Legislature to come up with a permanent source of funding for veterans' funeral honors. Sen. Mike Parry, R-Waseca and chairman of the Senate State Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, pledged to do likewise.*

*"I look forward to working with Gov. Dayton and Commissioner Shellito to establish a permanent funding process for this important service," Parry said.*

*About 72 percent of Minnesota veterans receive no regular federal benefits, but Shellito said many of them choose to be honored at their funerals. "That's a very, very small tribute to the sacrifices they've made. So that's what we're committed to," he said. "I'm going to fight for it severely."*

## **MARINE CORPS HISTORY**

### **THE MARINE CORPS BALL:**

*The first "formal" Birthday Ball took place in Philadelphia in 1925. First class Marine Corps style, all the way. Guests included the Commandant, the Secretary of War (in 1925 it was Secretary of War, not Secretary of Defense), and a host of statesmen and elected officials. Prior to the Ball, General LeJeune unveiled a memorial plaque at Tun Tavern. Then the entourage headed for the Benjamin Franklin Hotel and an evening of festivities and frolicking.*

*Over the years the annual Birthday Ball grew and grew, taking on a life of its own. In 1952 the Commandant, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., formalized the cake-cutting ceremony and other traditional observances. For example, Marine Corps policy now mandates that the first piece of cake must be presented to the Guest of Honor, the second piece to the oldest U.S. Marine present and the third piece goes to the youngest Marine present. Among the many such mandates is a solemn reading of the Commandant's birthday message to the Corps.*

*Like the U.S. Marine Corps itself, the annual Birthday Ball has evolved from simple origins to the polished and professional functions of today. Nonetheless, one thing remains constant, the tenth day of November. This unique holiday for Marine warriors is a day of camaraderie, a day to honor Corps and Country. Throughout the world on 10 November, U.S. Marines celebrate the birth of their Corps -- the most loyal, most feared, most revered, and most professional fighting force the world has ever known.*



*Marines disembarking from an LST during a landing at Tinian Landing*

### ***This Month in History***

#### ***Selected September Dates of Marine Corps Historical Significance***

***2 September 1945:*** *The Japanese officially surrendered to the Allies on board the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay. With General Holland Smith transferred home in July 1945, the senior Marine Corps representative at the historic ceremony was LtGen Roy S. Geiger, who had succeeded Smith as Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific.*

***5 September 1956:*** *Eleven Marines from the 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division, stationed near Naha, Okinawa, drowned while swimming, from an undercurrent caused by Typhoon Emma. The violent storm, with 140 mph winds, struck the Philippine Islands, Okinawa, Korea, and Japan, causing some 55 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage.*

***6 September 1983:*** *Two Marines were killed and two were wounded when rockets hit their compound in Beirut, Lebanon. Heavy fighting continued for the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit peacekeeping force in the area near their positions around the Beirut International Airport.*

**8 September 1942: On Guadalcanal, the 1st Raider Battalion and the 1st Parachute Battalion, supported by planes of MAG-23 and two destroyer transports, landed east of Tasimboko, advanced west into the rear of Japanese positions, and carried out a successful raid on a Japanese supply base.**

**11 September 1992: Hurricane Iniki devastated the island of Kauai in Hawaii in one of the worst storms the islands had seen in over a century. Marines of the 1st Marine Brigade based at Kaneohe Bay, spearheaded Operation Garden Sweep, the massive cleanup effort.**

**11 September 2001: At 9:38a.m. a commercial airliner, piloted by terrorists, slammed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the Department of Defense, located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The Marines Corps was fortunate in that no Marines were killed or seriously injured in this attack. The weekend before, most of the Department of Marine Aviation, located directly above the site of impact, had been relocated to another area of the Pentagon, during building renovation. Immediately following the attack, Marines set up a "command center" under an overpass of Interstate 395, which runs beside the Pentagon. Working alongside fellow servicemen and civilians for hours, days, and weeks after the tragedy, Marines played a large role in the rescue and recovery effort. Including those aboard the hijacked Boeing 757, 189 men, women, and children were killed in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon.**

**15 September 1950: The 3d Battalion, 5th Marines landed on Wolmi-do Island in Inchon Harbor and secured it prior to the main landing. The 1st Marine Division under the command of Major General Oliver P. Smith landed at Inchon and began the Inchon-Seoul campaign.**

**16 September 1814: A detachment of Marines under Major Daniel Carmick from the Naval Station at New Orleans, together with an Army detachment, destroyed a pirate stronghold at**

***Barataria, on the Island of Grande Terre, near New Orleans.***

**18 September 1990: A new 40-acre training facility for Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) was dedicated at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, by General Alfred M. Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps.**

**20 September 1950: Marines of the 1st Marine Division crossed the Han River along a six-mile beachhead, eight miles northwest of Seoul, Korea. Five days later, the 1st and 5th Marines would attack Seoul and the city would be captured by 27 September.**

**24 September 1873: One hundred and ninety Marines and seamen from the USS Pensacola and Benicia landed at the Bay of Panama, Columbia, to protect the railroad and American lives and property during the revolution.**

**27 September 1944: The American flag was raised over Peleliu, Palau Islands, at the 1st Marine Division Command Post. Although the flag raising symbolized that the island was secured, pockets of determined Japanese defenders continued to fight on. As late as 21 April 1947, 27 Japanese holdouts finally surrendered to the American naval commander on the scene.**

**30 September 1945: Marines of III Amphibious Corps, commanded by Major General Keller E. Rockey, began landing in North China to assist the Chinese Nationalist government in accepting the surrender of Japanese forces and repatriating Japanese soldiers and civilians.**

## **SPOTLIGHT**



**Sergeant Major Steve Dickerson** was born on July 21, 1952 in Santa Ana, California. He is the son of Staff Sergeant Lawrence Dickerson, USMC(Ret.) and Lois Dickerson. Steve has three sisters, Linda, Laura and Sandra. Steve enlisted in the Marines on May 5, 1970, in Barstow, California, and went to boot camp at MCRD San Diego, Platoon 3060, Co. I, 3<sup>rd</sup> Recruit Training Battalion (RTBn). He graduated on July 21, 1970; his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

After his training at Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Pendleton, Steve attended Aviation Maintenance Administration School at NAS Millington Tennessee. He was stationed at Millington for almost 2 years until he finally joined, "The Fleet," with VMFA-251 at MCAS Beaufort, South Carolina.

Steve reenlisted for the first time and in October 1972 and, as is common with first time re-uppers, received the world. He was transferred to MCRD San Diego for his first tour of duty as a Drill Instructor with 3<sup>rd</sup> RTBn.

In 1975, Steve was transferred to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan and served with VMA-513; The first Harrier squadron of the Corps.

Upon his return to CONUS, Steve continued to serve with "The Wing," in New River, El Toro and 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

In 1983, Steve served on I&I Duty with MAG-46 at MCAS El Toro and gained an appreciation for the professionalism and contributions made by the Marine Corps Reserve.

In 1986, Steve returned to MCRD San Diego for his second tour of duty as a Drill Instructor. Steve was selected by his fellow students as the Class Honorman and received the coveted NCO Sword for his achievements.

While on his 2<sup>nd</sup> tour on "The Field" Steve was promoted to First Sergeant and served as Company 1stSgt for Company I, 3<sup>rd</sup> RTBn.

In 1988, Steve was transferred to duty with Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines. He found this assignment very exciting and enjoyable. While assigned to Battery B, Steve was deployed to the Persian Gulf on board the USS Fort Mc Henry (LSD-43) for service in Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In June 1991, Steve was transferred to Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division and served as Company First Sergeant. While serving in this role, Steve was selected for Sergeant Major and after a brief tour as Headquarters Battalion Sergeant Major, Steve was transferred to 9<sup>th</sup> Communications Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> SRIG, 1 MEF, as Battalion Sergeant Major.

Steve was transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing, MCAS El Toro and served as Squadron SgtMaj for MWSS-373, MWSG-37.

During Steve's service with the Marines, he served as a Maintenance Admin Clerk, Career Planner, Drill Instructor and Crew Chief on the UH-1N Huey and CH-46 Sea Knight Helicopters.

Steve's decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal (2<sup>nd</sup> Award), Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Unit Citation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Good Conduct Medal (8<sup>th</sup> Award), National Defense Service Medal (2<sup>nd</sup> Award), Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (5<sup>th</sup> Award), Drill Instructor Ribbon (2<sup>nd</sup> Award), South West Asia Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medals (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as the Naval Aircrew Device (Wings). Steve also qualified expert with the rifle (7<sup>th</sup> Award) and Pistol (15<sup>th</sup> Award).

Steve retired on Jan 6, 1995 and went on to serve as a police officer with the City of Buena Park. He medically retired on March 7, 2009, after being involved in an on-duty motorcycle crash. During his tour of duty with the BPPD, Steve served as a Police Explorer Program Advisor, Patrol Officer, Department Bagpiper, Motorcycle Officer, Economic Crimes (Fraud) Detective. OIC of the department Color Guard, Patrol Sergeant, Patrol Rifle Team Supervisor and Traffic Division Sergeant.



Also while serving as a police officer, Steve got in touch with his Scottish ancestry and became active at Scottish Highland Games throughout California and sets up a display booth for his Scottish family, Clan Keith. It was at these games Steve became interested in the bagpipes and sought out formal instruction to learn this ancient instrument. Steve has been playing bagpipes since 2001 and looks forward to many more years. He also plays bagpipes for the University of California Riverside Pipe Band.

Steve joined Semper Fi #1, as the Bagpiper, after receiving an email from the former piper, Gene Elkin in March 2010.

Steve lives in Corona and is married to Dawn (Dulin) Dickerson and has three children, Steffany (37), Sean (25) and Dulin (8). In his retirement, Steve is active as a Den Leader for Cub Scouts, active parent in Corona Little League and piping with Semper Fi #1 and UCR Riverside.

## **OPEN FORUM**

***This section is for any member of the unit who has information to share***

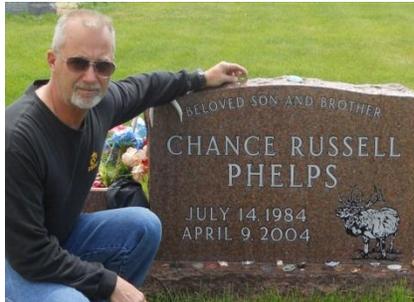
### **Sergeant Steve Fisher**

***I was in Teton Park in Wyoming this June and knowing that Chance's hometown and grave site where only about 70 miles from where we were camping I made it a point that we would make the short trip. He is buried in the town cemetery of Dubois, Wyoming, a small town of about 900 people in the Wind River Valley. I left a Semper Fi #1 challenge coin at his gravesite, and also signed a visitor's log on behalf of Semper Fi #1. The visitor's log is inside a 50 cal. ammo can next to the headstone. It was an honor to visit it and to leave a few items representing Semper Fi #1.***



Head Stone of LCpl Chance Phelps with Semper Fi #1 Challenge Coin





# MEMORIES



# ***SET IN ACTION***

