



TEXAS IWO JIMA LETTER

A new focus on the Texas Iwo Jima Memorial

Iwo Jima

**“Uncommon Valor
Was A Common
Virtue”**

Admiral Chester Nimitz

“The Iwo Jima victory came at a terrible price. By the time the American troops had taken the entire island, over 17,000 Marines were wounded and more than 5,000 Marines and 1,200 Navy personnel had been killed.

“Within a few days after raising the flag, three of the six flag raisers were killed fighting for the island. It is said to be ‘the costliest battle in Marine Corps history’”.

Ila Ray White

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Our country’s most iconic Military Memorial shall deserve in some small measure the sits in the Mexican border town of Harlingen, Texas. By God’s Grace, via five heroic Marines, and one heroic Corpsman; combat photographer Joe Rosenthal and Sculptor Felix De Weldon; the original Iwo Jima Flag Raising Memorial hallows the ground here on the campus of the Marine Military Academy (MMA).

This place of goosebumps and eyemist, is a colossal reminder of the Virtuous Solidarity of men so close they are willing to die for one another.

The Memorial was dedicated here on April 16, 1982, a long way from Feb. 23, 1945 on Mt. Suribachi. Hours after Rosenthal’s photo went public, Felix De Weldon, sculpted a scale model from the photo. Congress ordered the Monument made. De Weldon first made this Memorial out of chicken wire, cloth and plaster enabling him to shape the face of each flag raiser. Nine years later, the Memorial was cast in Bronze



USMC Gunnery Earl DeLong, 1922-2008, getting the Silver Star on Tarawa. Seriously wounded on Iwo, Earl was saved by his USMC Brothers. Longtime Volunteer at Iwo Museum. R.I.P. Marine.

and was placed adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery. The plaster model was returned to De Weldon and he donated it to the MMA in 1981. Speaking at the 1982 dedication, Mr. De Weldon said:

“The hands of these men reaching out symbolizes the help so frequently given to suffering people around the world, a spirit of devotion to one’s country, groping for that Power which we all need so much in time of adversity..

“This Memorial typifies the unsurpassed gallantry of all Marines...It symbolizes sacrifices made throughout the ranks of our fighting men. There is very little we can say to add to the glory of the Marines. All we can hope for is that we

worthy of theirs. This Monument is to recognize that the Marines ...and those who have fallen are remembered here as Citizens as well as fighting men. Citizens who sacrificed their lives for what they believed was the Common Good.”

That is the purpose of this newsletter, to hope we are worthy of the sacrifices the Marines made on Iwo Jima for us. We want to call attention to this Memorial which means so much to man’s good nature and our Common Good.

The Marine Military Academy is led by USMC COL Glenn Hill, his outstanding Marine staff and sharp Cadets. The Cadre inspires the Flag Raisers’ virtue in these young men.

The Iwo Jima Museum and Visitor Center, welcoming, educational and respectful, is headed up by Curator/Director Gloria Boling, Assistant Director Gracie Galarza and a veteran volunteer staff. The Museum, documents the Flag Raisers’ story. The battle, Marine and Navy combatants are in pictures, a short movie, combatants-visitor notebooks and war equipment. Pictures of the Iwo Medal of Honor recipients are here.

Director Boling asked me to start this newsletter - quite an honor for this 82nd Paratrooper. Write us! This is the place to remember Marines like Iwo’s Bob Bloedorn; my cousin, USMC Force Recon Paratrooper, COL James Laney Williams who earned two Silver Stars in Vietnam; and, our friend Gunnery Earl DeLong, an uncommonly valorous, Iwo Jima Marine. Earl was saved by a Marine Miracle enabling Earl and wife Dorothy to raise a nice family. Their daughter Marcia, married my brother Bill! You can get the whole story here in the next *Texas Iwo Jima Letter!* Semper Fi, All The Way! —Tom Laney, Editor

MMA MOURNS LOSS OF FOUNDER CAPT WILLIAM "BILL" GARY



Capt. William "Bill" Gary, USMCR (Ret), the founder of Marine Military Academy (MMA) in Harlingen, Texas, died on Jan. 12 at the age of 89, in a Phoenix hospital.

A native Texan, Gary was a successful rancher, land developer and home builder who lived near Prescott, Ariz. Above all, however, he was a Marine. Gary's business savvy coupled with his military leadership led to the opening of MMA in 1965, the first school in the United States based on the values and traditions of the U.S. Marine Corps. His son, William "Bill" Gary Jr., was the first cadet enrolled at MMA.

The news was quite a blow to the MMA staff and board of trustees. According to Superintendent Col. R. Glenn Hill, Gary loved his country, family, the Marine Corps and MMA. He remained involved with the school until his demise, serving on the MMA Board of Trustees as the Executive Vice-Chairman and Military Committee Chairman.

"MMA is deeply saddened by the loss of its founder. Capt. Gary's vision and establishment of this school has changed the lives of countless young men. He was instrumental in paving a path to success and creating professional leaders not only in the United States but around the world," Hill said. "While we mourn his loss, his legacy will live on in the young men who attend MMA. Our prayers are with his family during their time of grief."

MMA will hold a memorial service in Gary's honor on Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 6:30 p.m. in Yeckel Auditorium on the MMA campus.

Born in Dallas on Nov. 21, 1924, Gary graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in Dallas as the commanding officer of the ROTC regiment. He then entered Texas A&M University where he was a member of the Corps of Cadets and majored in Animal Husbandry.

On Dec. 12, 1942, Gary enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps – among the last men to enlist voluntarily during World War II. He was called to active duty in June 1943. After completing the Platoon Leaders Course, he was commissioned on July 4, 1945. During the war, he was assigned to the USS La Salle in the Pacific. Gary was released from active duty in September 1946, but he stayed in the Marine Reserve until 1957.

After his release, Gary's life as a businessman and family man began. He returned to Texas A&M University and received his master's degree in Animal Husbandry in January 1948. A few months later, he married Marion Luken, whom he met in 1945 while stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif. Gary then launched his first ranch in Hunt County, located in the Dallas area, where he raised registered Herefords. The rancher moved his family and cattle business to Arizona in 1958. Near the city of Prescott, Gary named the land he purchased Smoke Tree Ranch.

In the early 1960s, Gary began looking for a school for his son. He specifically wanted to

Gary spent two years laying the foundation for MMA, finding financial backers and recruiting staff. On September 9, 1965, MMA opened its doors to 58 cadets; six would comprise the first graduating class of 1966.

To take an active part in the early development of the MMA, Gary sold Smoke Tree Ranch in early 1965 and moved to Harlingen. He served at MMA in several leadership positions for the first two school years, including commandant of cadets. His wife, Marion, also worked at MMA as the first librarian.

Gary moved back to Arizona in 1967 and bought Horner Mountain Ranch outside of Prescott. He and his wife raised Charolais-Hereford cross commercial beef cattle and registered Charolais beef cattle.

At that time, Gary also went into the building business. The business was an offshoot from the sale of Smoke Tree Ranch. A part of his payment, Gary accepted several lots in a Prescott subdivision. To move the lots faster, he decided to build homes on them. He took what he learned and started the company that would become Yavapai Builders, the largest

home building company in the Prescott area.

In his free time, Gary collected antique guns. Both his interest and collection started at age eight after receiving an 1860 model Derringer pistol. Gary was

particularly interested in military small arms from the American Revolutionary War to the Chinese Boxer Rebellion as well as Confederate small arms. He owned nearly all of the Marine Corps long arms used from the American Revolutionary War to the Chinese Boxer Rebellion. His prized possession was his 1813 Springfield flintlock ship's musket.

Gary is survived by his wife Marion Gary and his daughter Kathy McCraine. He is preceded in death by his son William "Bill" Gary Jr.

His daughter Kathy graduated from Harlingen High School and earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Arizona in 1971. She owns Livestock Communications and is the southwest correspondent for Range magazine. His son Bill Jr. graduated from the University of Wyoming and became a commercial pilot. He died in December 1976 in a plane crash near Sheridan, Wyo.

(From the Marine Military Academy [January 16, 2014](#) by [admin](#))

"Capt. Gary's vision and establishment of this school has changed the lives of countless young men." - MMA COL Glen Hill

send his son to a secondary school that embraced the ideology of the Marine Corps. Gary believed the concepts of leadership, discipline and moral values could be successfully applied to a college-preparatory education. He could not find such a school, so he decided to start one. In 1963, he recruited a group of prominent Marines to assist him, including Gen. Vernon McGee, USMC (Ret); Lt. Gen. Edwin Pollack, USMC (Ret); Lt. Gen. Holland Smith, USMC (Ret); Brig. Gen. Walter McIlhenny, USMCR (Ret); and Maj. Orrin Johnson, USMCR (Ret).

MMA's home was to be in Prescott until Gary and his supporters learned of Harlingen Air Force Base, located in the southernmost part of Texas. The defunct military base was used to train combat navigators during World War II. Gary envisioned the base as a campus, a campus for an all-boys, military boarding school. He began building the educational laboratory that would develop today's young men into tomorrow's leaders.

Greetings from the Iwo Jima Museum & Visitor Center!



HI!!!!

Welcome to our first Newsletter from the Iwo Jima Museum at the Marine Military Academy in Harlingen, Texas.

Have you visited the Iwo Jima Memorial in Harlingen, Texas? If you haven't, you are missing out on a great treasure from the past. We house many artifacts from the battle of Iwo Jima and other battles at the museum.

Along with the history of Sculptor Felix De Weldon's iconic Iwo Jima Monument which graces our grounds, we also include within the Museum, the history of the first Flag Raising on Iwo Jima which was attended by the USMC's Charles Lindberg of Bloomington, MN, (photo at Right).

We can help with facts. For instance, we can assure you that the Monument does not include 13 hands, as some claim. There are but 12 hands of five heroic Marines and one Corpsman.

Stop by and view everything at your leisure. We would love to discuss Iwo Jima history with you as well as your own history. We plan to include as many of your histories as we possibly can in this newsletter. Write us or email us.

We also show a documentary on the Battle of Iwo Jima which one of our volunteers or staff would love to introduce to you.

Our gift shop is one you will want to spend time in and select things for friends or yourself. We have things for all branches of service.

Tours of the Marine Military Academy may be scheduled at 956-421-

9273. This is a guided tour of the campus that ends up with lunch at the mess hall with our cadets. The tour begins in front of the Memorial and ends up back at the Museum/Gift Shop.

We are all Brothers and Sisters here. While our first interest is promoting USMC Iwo Jima History and the Marine Military Academy Staff and Cadets, we embrace all services and all Veterans.

The Museum is open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ; Sunday 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

You may contact us at 956-421-9234 or visitorcenter@mma-tx.org.

Hope to see you soon.



God Bless Our Troops.

Gloria Boling, Director
Iwo Jima Museum & Gift Shop
320 Iwo Jima Blvd.
Harlingen, Texas 78550



Coming Events at the Iwo Jima Memorial

February

8 - Plebes graduate from introductory training.

1000hrs.

19 - Iwo Jima Parade 1600

March

6 - Volunteer Luncheon

1100

April

4 - HM Smith Dinner 1800

11-12 Alumni Reunion

11 - Alumni Parade 1600

Tours of the Marine Military Academy

Maybe be scheduled at

956-421-9273

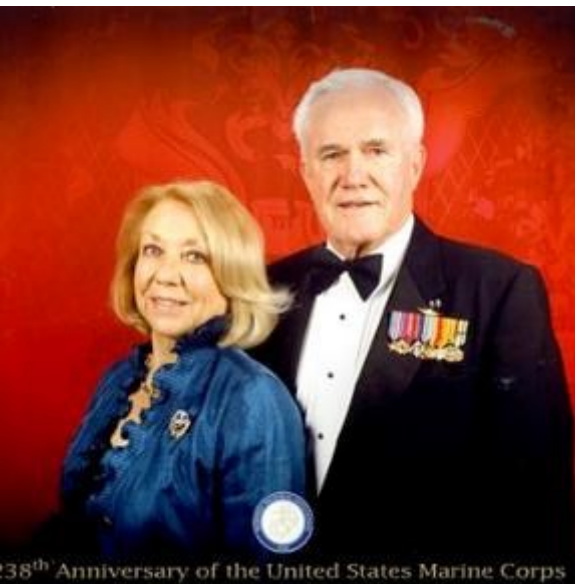
This is a guided tour of the campus that ends up with lunch at the mess hall with our cadets. The tour begins in front of the Memorial and ends up back at the Museum/Gift Shop.



MMA Cadet leads Veterans Day



A Marine Military Academy Cadet reads the Marines statement at the base of the Iwo Jima Flag Raising Memorial on Veterans Day. MMA COL Glenn Hill, properly disposes of worn out colors. Photos from the MMA.



CSM Cindy & COL (Ret) Jim Williams, (my 2 Silver Stars Vietnam Vet cousin) couldn't make the MMA Vets Day, celebrated the Corps' birthday in CA while an unidentified Iwo Jima Marine and wife saluted Vets Day at the Harlingen Memorial. (MMA photo).

MMA Tribute brings out 170 Veterans!



All Gave Some
Some Gave All



Turnout was BIG! RVN Vet T speaks for itself, Air Force General with COL Glenn Hill and troops above and below the MMA Color Guard. (MMA photos)

Visit the finest Iwo Jima Museum in America!

The Iwo Jima Museum features a 30-minute movie on the invasion of Iwo Jima and Revolutionary War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Arms, Medal of Honor Displays

Uncommon Valor Was a Common Virtue.



Director Gloria Boling and Assistant Director Gracie Galarza are the world's nicest Museum Curators.



Clockwise from top left—Iwo Jima Combat Veteran Bob Bloedorn, one of the extraordinary Museum volunteers, in front of the Harlon Block Display. Harlon, a Marine Paratrooper from Weslaco, was KIA three days after he raised the flag. He is buried at the Memorial; Marines fixing the first flag to a water pipe; Harlon Block's jacket displays 2nd Marines Paratrooper patch; Vietnam photos/models include Marine Smoke-Bringer Ontos with six 106's!

Friendly, knowledgeable staff can answer all your questions!



Iwo Jima 1st Flag Raising Display features USMC's Charles Lindberg, Bloomington, MN.



The Chosin Frozen

In Memory of the USMC's Tom King, Iwo Jima Museum Volunteer and friend, who fought at the Chosin Reservoir. Tom never forgot the Marines who didn't make it home.

Rest In Peace Marine



Tun Tavern at right recalls the organizational meeting of the Marines in 1775. The model was made by Iwo Jima Vet Bob Bloedorn.

Iwo Jima Museum Visitor Center Gift Shop

Support the Iwo Jima Memorial! Over 5000 items for Marines, Force Recon, Navy, SEALs, Regular Army, Special Forces, Delta Force, Rangers, 82nd Airborne, 101st Airborne, Air Force, WWII, Korea, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan Vets!



Marine & All Services Books, Chairs, Umbrellas, Sweats, Caps, Patches, Ts, Stickers, Flags, Jackets, Pins & More.



Best Quality!

Iwo Jima Museum, Visitors Center & Gift Shop

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320 Iwo Jima Blvd.
Harlingen, TX 78550
Tel: 956-421-9234
800-365-6006
visitorcenter@mima-tx.org

Get Some! Buy the best to look your best!



Air Force sunglasses?? That's Editor Laney's nephew at right, USMC MAJ Pete Keough, Cobra Pilot with lots of combat hours in Iraq/Afghanistan. MMA gifts on way to Hawaii for Pete and his unidentified buddy. Get some!



Proceeds support Iwo Jima Memorial and Visitor Center. Y'all come visit us!



Ctrl/Click to go to link!



Visit our online catalog: www.mma-tx.org



You can always tell a Marine (But you can't tell him much!)

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Texas Iwo Jima Letter



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Bob Bloedorn a fixture at the Iwo Jima Museum, Volunteer, Iwo Combat Vet, Teamster, Gunsmith, Artist, Packer Fan, Carpenter, Craftsman; is our first Iwo Jima Volunteer feature.

Bob was a B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle) Man when he landed with the 1st Regiment/3rd Marines on Iwo Jima Feb. 24, 1945.

The island secured, Bob left Iwo Jima with the 3rd Marines on March 29, 1945.

From Milwaukee, Bob is now a year-round resident of Brownsville.

Bob's been volunteering at the Iwo Jima Memorial Museum for years. His first-hand knowledge of the invasion and battle of Iwo Jima is impeccable, as is his grasp of American history.

Ask him a question, you get the right answer.

A retired Teamster, it's been said that Bob is matter of fact, direct, a guy who leaves no doubt on where he stands. We like that! He is the archetypical Marine and big fan of the 13-Time-World - Champions Green Bay Packers.

Beyond his teachings at the Museum, he crafts things like his model of the Tun Tavern, the USS Constellation and a WWI machine gun which are displayed in the Museum.

Bob is presently working at the Museum on Saturdays. Stop in. Say hello. Watch the movie. Bob will answer all your questions, and more! Below, is the note Iwo Jima Marine Bob Bloedorn left in the Museum's 3rd Marines Book.

Believe me, he did much more than this!

-Tom Laney

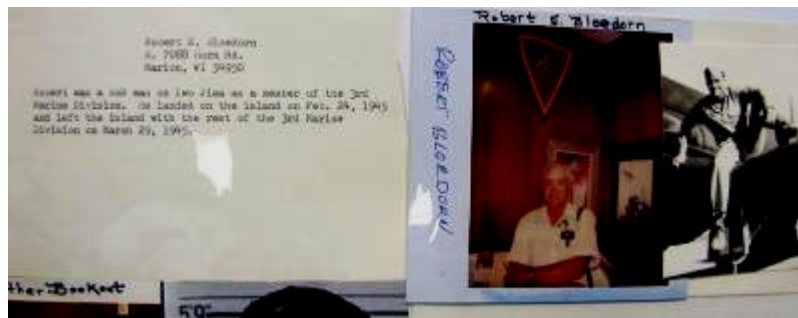


Former BARmen! Tom Laney with friend and mentor Bob Bloedorn.



CAPT (Ret) Bill Laney, 32nd ID Field Surgeon, in front of WWI Machine Gun made by Bob. Tun Tavern model, 1st meeting place of Marines in 1775 at left was also made by Bob.

Bill's father-in-law, Earl DeLong, USMC, was a good friend of Bob's.



Humble to a fault, this is Bob Bloedorn's history in the 3rd Marines book at the Iwo Jima Museum. He can tell you a LOT more! Visit us and contribute your own story.

