



A "Celebration" of 2/1 Battalion Dedicates Monument To Its Vietnam War Marines and Sailors

Story and photos by Nancy Lee White Hoffman

The long line of Vietnam veterans, along with their family and friends, made its way through the fall foliage along the concrete-and-brick pathway to one of the farthest sites in Semper Fidelis Memorial Park, adjacent to the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Triangle, Va., Nov. 8, 2013.

Led by two Marine bagpipers and a color guard from the U.S. Naval Academy, the group was on hand for the dedication of a monument to the approximately 6,000 Marines and sailors who served in the 2d Battalion, First Marine Regiment, from September 1965 to May 1971, during the Vietnam War.

Lieutenant General Jack Klimp, USMC (Ret), guest speaker, said that the day was "a celebration of young men who left their homes and traveled thousands of miles to fight in a country many had never even heard of before—to fight for what they believed in and to, ultimately, fight for their buddies. ... They asked for virtually nothing from America. It was they who protected us, our families, our beloved people, and it was they who put it all out there to shield America. They could have done so many other things with their lives, lives so filled with potential. But, they chose to move to the sounds of the guns. ... They were, and are, American heroes."



Below left: Maj Phillip "Phil" Leslie, USMC (Ret), vice president of the Vietnam Veterans of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines, and chairman of the monument committee, addresses the crowd gathered for the ceremony, which museum officials said had the largest attendance to date for a monument dedication. Leslie served in "Golf" Co, 1968-69. Behind him is Paul Mangan, the organization's president, who served in "Foxtrot" Co, 1965-66.

Below right: Seated, from left, are Renee Lugo, the daughter of Medal of Honor Marine LCpl Emilio De La Garza Jr.; Mrs. Diane Norris; Col Donald J. Norris, USMC (Ret); Col W.V.H. "Bill" White, USMC (Ret); Mrs. Arlene Duncan; and Col Billy R. Duncan, USMC (Ret). Norris, White and Duncan were commanding officers of 2/1.



Left: Three of the battalion's 14 COs during the war (only five are still living) attended the ceremony and unveiled the monument. From left: Col Donald Norris, USMC (Ret), Republic of Vietnam, Sept. 13, 1970-March 7, 1971; Col Billy Duncan, USMC (Ret), RVN, Jan. 9, 1968-Aug. 9, 1968, partially obstructed; and Col Bill White, USMC (Ret), RVN, Aug. 9, 1969-May 15, 1970.



Above: Veterans of 2/1, along with their family and friends, make their way to the site for the dedication and blessing of their monument.

Left: MGySgt John Rode, USMC (Ret); LtCol Sean Smith; and Maj Lamsdale "Dale" Williams, USMC (Ret) lead the procession to the monument site. Williams, one of the monument committee members, was a corporal, 0311, in 1st Platoon, F/2/1 during 1969-70.



Enjoying the fruits of their labor, monument committee members pose with the Vietnam Veterans of 2d Battalion, 1st Marines monument. From left: LtGen Jack Klimp, USMC (Ret); Col Bill White, USMC (Ret); Maj Phil Leslie, USMC (Ret), chairman; LtCol Clyde Woods, USMC (Ret); Cpl Bruce Oliver, USMC (Ret); and Maj Dale Williams, USMC (Ret).

LtGen Klimp, who was a platoon commander, company executive officer and company commander of Co G, 2/1 during the war, said: "When I remember the very young men, many of whom are here today, and the days we spent together then, I am continually amazed, for these were mostly recent civilians, barely out of high school, called up from the cities and the farms to do their year in hell and then return.

"I am constantly reminded of the steadiness with which these Marines and sailors shouldered their incredible responsibilities and of how accepting most of them were

in the face of continuous peril."

They went on Operations Dagger Thrust, Harvest Moon, New York, Troy, Oregon, Jay, Hastings, Cannon, Coffee, Independence, Lafayette, Stone, Medina, Granite, Pegasus, Scotland II, Napoleon Saline, Meade River, Pipestone Canyon, Durham Peak, Dubois Square and Scotch Orchard in areas called Hue-Phu Bai, Dodge City, Da Nang, Quang Tri, Hai Lang Forest, Con Thien, Khe Sanh, Cau Ha, Go Noi Island and Marble Mountain.

They were "battle-wise and battle-hardened 20-year-olds teaching inexper-

enced 19-year-olds the intricate lessons of the unforgiving battlefield," said LtGen Klimp, also remembering, "The flawless skill of the young squad and fire team leaders as we moved through possibly hostile villages and weed-choked trails in the black of night—their willingness to risk their lives to save other Marines in peril. ...

"... These men are my heroes. They did not just carry on the legacy of the Corps—the legacy of Marines; they added to it and passed it along to the current generation of United States Marines. They are peerless examples of the courage of mind, body and spirit resident in Marines since 1775."

And, as LtGen Klimp told the group, "The war exacted a heavy price on the battalion. Many gave much. Many gave everything. Nearly 500 were killed in action or were classified as missing in action."

Three were awarded the Medal of Honor, all posthumously, and another three were awarded the Navy Cross.

Time will not erase what the battalion accomplished and sacrificed in that far-away land more than 40 years ago, and this monument will help serve as a reminder.

Thank you, 2/1, for a job well done. A belated welcome back to "the world."

2d Battalion, 1st Marines Medal of Honor Awardees



PFC Gary W. Martini
"Fox" Co, 1967



PFC Dewayne T.
Williams
"Hotel" Co, 1968



LCpl Emilio A.
De La Garza Jr.
"Echo" Co, 1970