



# SEMPER FI SOUND OFF

The newsletter of the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group

Winter 2010

## 235<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps Birthday Ball

This year, the 5th Marine Regiment Birthday Ball was held at the beautiful Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort and Spa in Dana Point on November 10th. As one can no doubt surmise our young Marines earn very little, work extremely hard and are subjected, all too often, to the rigors of Combat. To this end and once a year, as has been the case since 1775, they can enjoy the camaraderie and tradition of this celebrated evening in each other's company.

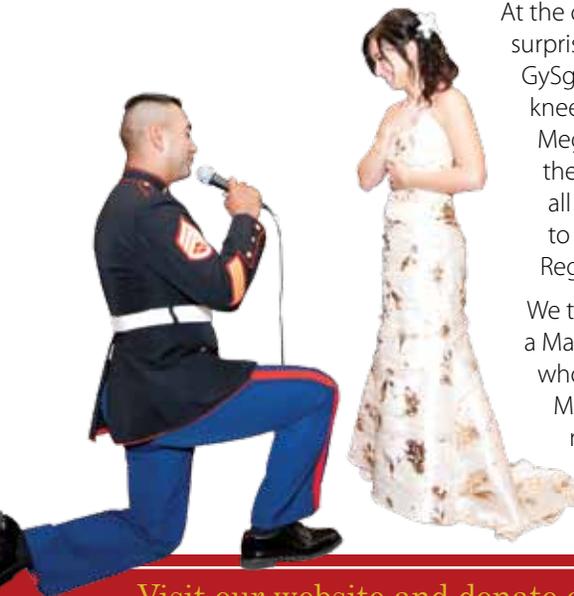
Generous community donors assured that "no man was left behind." Over 525 Marines, spouses, significant others, Dana Point Support Group, and Friends of the Fifth joined for this magnificent celebration.

This Birthday Ball had tremendous energy and enthusiasm. It was the first Birthday Ball for many young Marines and was also the last Ball before deployment for our 5th MAR Command next year. This was also the last Ball to celebrate with Col Willy Buhl who is one of the finest 5th Mar CO's the Support Group has had the opportunity to serve. Col Buhl's change of command will come about next March. The Guest Of Honor and Keynote Speaker was BGen Larry D. Nicholson, previously a Commanding Officer of the 5th Marines, CO of Regimental Combat Team Five (2006-2007) and Commanding General of the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2009-2010) which was our initial, forceful thrust in to Afghanistan with over 10,600 Marines. BGen Nicholson gave a rousing, energizing salute to all our 5th Marines. He honored the youngest and oldest Marines with a traditional handshake and a Challenge Coin thanking them for their service.

Tradition, ritual, and ceremony were at its best. During the cocktail and reception hour, men bore the uniforms of the different battles the 5th Marines were engaged in. During the ceremony itself, the Color Guard entered proudly displaying the colors and battle streamers of the USA, Marine Corps and 5th Marine Regiment. Master Gunnery Sgt. J.D. Sterling, passed a piece of Birthday cake to Lance Cpl. B.P. Conley, signifying the passing of experience and knowledge from a senior member to a young one. Col Buhl acknowledged the tragic loss of lives and paid a tribute to our Gold Star Table where families were seated who have lost a son or husband in Operation Enduring Freedom.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, there was a surprise marriage proposal when the Company GySgt Jeremy Martinez got down on one knee and proposed to his beautiful girlfriend Megan and asked her to be his wife. So, there was something for everyone and we all came away from the Birthday Ball thrilled to be part of a tribute to the most decorated Regiment in Marine Corps History.

We thank all those who were able to sponsor a Marine or table of Marines at the Ball. Those who joined and were part of celebrating the Marine Corps' 235th Birthday were part of a magnificent bonding ritual with our brave warriors. Ooooh-Raaah!!



Photos by Montgomery Photography



## From the Desk of Col Buhl

*Dear Family and Friends of the Fighting Fifth,*

We are entering the Holiday Season after a very busy Summer and Fall that included Regimental Headquarters deployments to the high Sierras at Bridgeport in August with our 1/5 & 2/5 battalions and to the Mojave Desert in 29 Palms in September with our 1/5 & 2/4 battalions.



BGen Larry Nicholson (left),  
with Col Willard Buhl

We were proud to welcome Echo Company 2/4 back from the Helmand Province in Afghanistan, where they distinguished themselves in the highest traditions of the "Magnificent Bastards" and the "Fighting Fifth" Marine Regiment. We have also deployed 3/5 to the Sanguin District in Afghanistan where they are locked in heavy combat clearing the Taliban from one of its last safe havens in the Helmand Province. May I take this moment to ask all hands to please keep our 3/5 Marines and their Families in your thoughts and prayers. The landscape in Sanguin is changing as you read these words, but 3/5's success has come at very high cost. Our men are in combat daily and are inflicting heavy punishment on a determined enemy. 1/5 is preparing to relieve 3/5 in the Spring.

As many readers will know, we had a tremendous 235th Marine Corps Birthday Celebration at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott in Dana Point. Our Guest of Honor, Brigadier General **Larry Nicholson**, made an inspiring speech and was warmly welcomed home by his Regiment and his City of Dana Point. General Nicholson recently returned from ably commanding the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Afghanistan for a year. He is now the Senior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon.

In the New Year 2/5 will deploy to Okinawa, Japan to serve as the Battalion Landing Team for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit; this at a time when tensions in Korea are rising. Your Regiment will also be back up in the Sierras for the 3rd time in 16 months training in an extreme cold weather environment. We will then ready the Staff and our Headquarters Company Marines to command and control battalions in Afghanistan, where we are scheduled to deploy in August for 14 months. We are also preparing to welcome my relief, Colonel Roger Turner, who will leave the Pentagon in the New Year and assume command of the Fighting Fifth at the end of March.

As I said in my last newsletter comments, it is very hard for me to describe in words the great sense of honor and pride that I share with the 4,800 Marines and Sailors of our Regiment and our families. For all that we do – from major warfighting exercises, to promotion formations, to memorial services, to the many family readiness and community events shared with our own City of Dana Point. Thanks continue to be in order for the tremendous support and generosity of our Dana Point Fifth Marine Regiment Support Group and the many dedicated patriotic citizens who are part of the Fighting Fifth Family. Sergeant Major **Ernest Hoopii**, our Regimental Sergeant Major and I thank you all for the continued love and support of "your" Regiment, the Fighting Fifth Marines.

*Semper Fidelis*, Col Willy Buhl

## American Heroes



Third Battalion, 5th Marines, our Dark Horse unit, suffered 15 casualties since the unit deployed the last week of September. The unit has been patrolling Sangin, a violent district that the Corps took over from British forces. Camp Pendleton's 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment drew one of the toughest assignments in the Afghanistan-Operation Enduring Freedom War when they were sent to Sangin, a strategic crossroads town in Helmand Province. The Taliban have used this territory as a sanctuary for years. Sadly, many of our men have made the ultimate sacrifice clearing out these insurgents and protecting the people from oppression and violence.

Maj. Gen. **Richard P. Mills**, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in southwestern Afghanistan, said "The bravery and the courage of the Marines from the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines stands with any unit in Marine Corps history."

Let us honor and pay tribute to these brave men. They responded to the Nation's call with gallantry, valor, courage and dedication. Our Thoughts and Prayers are with our Fallen Comrades In Arms, their Families, and 3/5 Marines. God Bless Our Heroes.

**LCPL James B Stack**  
**2NDLT Robert M Kelly**  
**LCPL Randy R Braggs**  
**LCPL Brandon W Pearson**  
**LCPL Matthew J Broehm**  
**SGT Ian M Tawney**  
**LCPL James D Boelk**  
**LCPL Irvin M Cenicerros**  
**LCPL Alec E Catherwood**  
**LCPL Joseph C Lopez**  
**CPL Justin J Cain**  
**LCPL Joseph E Rodewald**  
**PFC Victor A Dew**  
**LCPL Phillip D Vinnedge**  
**LCPL John T Sparks**

We have many wounded warriors in Bethesda Military Hospital. Our Command, Chaplain, and Family Readiness Officer have been visiting our Dark Horse heroes and supporting them in their challenging road ahead. Let us remember them now in their recovery, and pray for their speedy return home.



## From the President

Dear Friend, Patriots, & Supporters,

As we approach the holiday season let us give thanks to our Marines & Sailors plus all Military Service personnel and their families for making the sacrifices, some the ultimate sacrifice, which keeps our great Nation free from tyranny and repression.

To this end we have Marines In-Country in Afghanistan, located in outposts surrounded by elusive Taliban insurgents, with their families left here at Camp Pendleton to keep the home fires burning. For the next several months there will be no time for celebration and the Holidays will be void of cheer by comparison to those of the recent past. With this in mind, it is our turn to fill that void by delivering a "Slice of Home" to our Troops overseas and making sure their families are well taken care of while they remain behind.

We can put a smile on our Marines, their spouses and kids' faces in several different ways as we move in to the Holiday Season.

- ▶ Your Care and Comfort Gift may be sent via our Goody Boxes. Each box costs approximately \$12.50 to mail. 10 large USPS

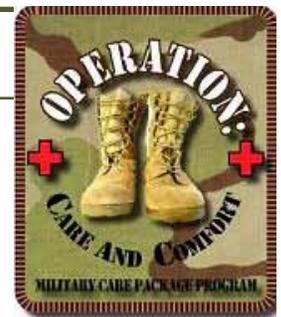


Flat Rate Boxes cost \$125 to mail. These boxes are jammed full of all sorts of yummys from home, toiletries, socks, and hygiene products.

- ▶ Your personal notes and cards from kids are particularly appreciated.
- ▶ Gift cards for children and families would allow parents to pick out toys and other household items that are real necessities.
- ▶ Other donations to our organization earmarked for our Operation Care and Comfort via our website [www.danapoint5thmarines.com](http://www.danapoint5thmarines.com) will allow us to fill in the gaps of all our programs to ensure that our Marines and Families are well taken care of this holiday.

Thank You for making this Thanksgiving and Yuletide Season one that our Fighting Fifth Marines & Families will never forget.

Semper Fi & Happy Holidays,  
Pete Hammer, President



## Goody Box Program Hits Dana Point

The City's 5th Marine Regiment Support group will be collecting holiday "goody box" donations through Dec. 23 which will be delivered in time for the holidays to the Fighting 5th Marines in Afghanistan. These gifts from home will make their holiday!

Drop off Locations for goodies:

- Olamendi's / 34660 Pacific Coast Hwy, Capistrano Beach
- Starbucks drive thru / 34122 Pacific Coast Hwy, Dana Point
- Starbucks / Gelson's Plaza, Crown Valley Pkwy, Dana Point
- Union Bank / 34177 Pacific Coast Highway, Dana Point
- Sunsets / 34700 Pacific Coast Hwy, Capistrano Beach
- Vivo Fitness Center by Mahe / 24961 Dana Point Harbor Dr, Dana Point
- Jack's / 24462 Del Prado, Dana Point
- Harbor Grill / 34499 Golden Lantern Street, Dana Point
- Running World / 34155 Pacific Coast Hwy, Dana Point
- Dana Point Chamber Office / 24681 La Plaza, Suite 115, Dana Point
- Coffee Importers / 34531 Golden Lantern Street, Dana Point
- Dana Point City Hall / 33282 Golden Lantern Street, Dana Point
- Tutor & Spunky's Deli / 34085 Coast Highway, #116/117, Dana Point

This Goody Box campaign is especially important this year. Marine casualties have increased recently and we have lost 15 of our brave defenders. There are over 20 injured 5th Marines in the Bethesda Military Hospital. We must let our Marines in Afghanistan know that we are thinking of them and are grateful for their sacrifices.

*For a special treat: Write a holiday card to a Marine. At your church or school see if you can have children make cards (remember, these men will not be with their children for the holidays and these cards really put a smile on their faces).*





## Gown Extravagownza!

On Saturday, October 2nd the Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group joined hands with the Headquarters Family Readiness Officer, **Kim Merkel**, and other 5th Marine FROs to help them with their "Elegance Exchanged Extrava-Gown-za Event." Each wife or significant other of a Marine could bring a dress for the Marine Corps Ball and could take a dress. The civilian side solicited from the community for formal long gowns in good condition. The result was a huge dress exchange with over 600 dresses collected for a true "Extravagownza." Along with a dress swap was a pampering day of beauty with hair and makeup specialists, exercise and nutrition consultants, massage therapists, and refreshments for these angels who stand along side our fine Marines. For the women to be able to have a "new" dress for the Ball was a real a treat.

We want to thank each and every dress contributor, financial sponsor, and volunteer who made such a lovely day for our ladies of the Regiment. It was amazing how everyone's combined talents made for such a perfect day. All those who attended felt honored to be part of such a wonderful event.

We have to remember that these women will manage the responsibilities of home and family when their men are deployed. To have had a day of bonding with one another and be pampered with hair, make up and a new dress was just extraordinary. These women may be uprooted every few years and follow their Marine wherever he is sent. Following this event, they may take with them the spirit and support of not only the sisterhood of each other, but also the realization of how civilians can play a significant role in their support. If they are transferred to another area of the country, they may recreate similar types of events and solicit support from the civilians of their new communities.

Each lady of the Regiment felt like Cinderella going to the Ball. I am sure we will all remember their big smiles as they twirled around and looked in the mirror. Priceless.



## Gift Cards Wanted

The Support Group is also collecting **GIFT CARDS** of any type and value for our state-side Marines, their children and families at Camp San Mateo to make their holidays brighter. Stores that are retail chains would be best since most of the families live in the South Orange County and North San Diego area. Some suggestions for gift cards are:

Walmart • Target • Sears • Gas Cards  
Movie tickets • McDonalds, Carls Jr. etc.  
Toys R Us • Albertsons • Ralphs  
Best Buy • Starbucks

For any questions you may visit [www.DanaPoint5thMarines.com](http://www.DanaPoint5thMarines.com) or call 949-495-5007. You can also donate by credit card online or pay by check via U.S. mail. Please make check payable to "Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group." On the memo line add "2010 Operation Care & Comfort" and send to Dana Point 5th Marine Regiment Support Group, Attn: 2010 Operation Care & Comfort, P.O. Box 471, Dana Point, CA 92629-0471. Thank you!!

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## Support Your 5th Marines — Donate online today!

Log on to [DanaPoint5thMarines.com](http://DanaPoint5thMarines.com) & [Facebook.com/danapoint5thmarines](https://www.facebook.com/danapoint5thmarines). Here you will find many great new interactive features, such as:

**Donate Online:** Donate to the DP 5th Marine Regiment Support Group using a credit card or or via our secure PayPal account. Every dollar counts, so please donate online today. DPMRSG is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible. 100% of your donations will go directly to support our Fighting Fifth!

**Join our email list:** Click on the link titled "join our email list" and enter your email address. We won't sell or share your information with anyone. Keep informed about our news, information, fundraising activities, and great community events.

**LIKE the Dana Point 5th Marines on Facebook:** If you are on Facebook, please visit [Facebook.com/danapoint5thmarines](https://www.facebook.com/danapoint5thmarines) and click the **LIKE** button and you'll be telling all your Facebook friends you are a patriotic supporter of our Marines.