

THE 69<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY - A RICH HERITAGE:
PROUD TO SERVE - FROM CIVIL WAR, WWI, WWII TO IRAQ AND CURRENT DAY READINESS
IPHOTO CREDITS - WIKIPEDIA: 69TH BATTALIONI



# VETERAN CORPS BULLETIN OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2020

# **Veteran Corps Meetings Schedule:**

Veteran Corps 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Mission Statement

The mission of the Veteran Corps 69th Regiment is to preserve and expound the history and traditions of the Regiment, to provide a venue to inform and foster camaraderie among veterans of the 69th. and to assist the Commander of the active unit with the morale and welfare of the soldiers and their families.

#### **Executive Board:**

#### **Until Further Notice:**

Executive Board meetings will be held <u>via conference calls</u> on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 1900 Hours

<u>Sunday Membership Meetings</u> – 2020 SCHEDULE: Until further notice membership meetings are suspended.

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SCHEDULE – Executive Board Meetings: Subject to Change				
Exec – Board of Officers	11/10/20	Tuesday	1900	
Exec – Board of Officers	December Meeting	TBD		

Wishing all Veteran Corps members and their families a safe and peaceful holiday season!

REGIMENT WEB SITE: WWW.THE69THVETERANSCORPS.COM





From Jose A. Flores, CSM (ret) Commander, Veteran Corps 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment



As I write this update, I hope that members of the Veteran Corps and their families remain safe and healthy. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our ability to organize and gather to hold annual traditions.

➤ Makin Day Remembrance: Our annual tradition is to hold the Makin Day Dinner on the first Friday of November which was 6 Nov 2020. But due to the risk of COVID-19 spread, rules for social gathering and for the safety of our members and families, we had to postpone this honored tradition of the Veteran Corps. I am asking each member of the Veteran Corps to take a moment of silence to remember those who served during WWII and this battle:

An excerpt of the summary of the battle of Makin Island is noted as follows (source – Wikipedia):

#### World War II:

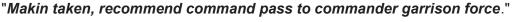
During World War II, the regiment again served with distinction. Still designated the 165th infantry, it served with 27th division (New York state's national guard division at the time) and was federalized 15 October 1940. It was first sent to Alabama and Louisiana for training. One week after Pearl Harbor, it was sent to Inglewood, California, to assist in defense of the west coast. Beginning in January 1942, the regiment made its way to Hawaii via Fort Ord and San Francisco.

#### Makin Island

#### 2ND BATTALION, 165TH INFANTRY LANDING DURING BATTLE OF MAKIN ISLAND

First assigned to island defense in Kauai, they were recalled to Oahu in October to begin training for the 20 November 1943 landings on Butaritari Island of Makin Atoll, part of the Gilbert Islands. There it was supplemented with artillery and armor to become the 165th Regimental Combat Team. The regiment's first and third infantry battalions would land on the western ("Red") Beach, which was expected to be the most heavily defended, and the second battalion would land on the Northern ("Yellow") beach to trap the defenders from behind. The Japanese actually kept their forces near the

northern beach, so resistance on Red beach was minimal. The commander of the 165th Infantry Regiment, Col. Gardiner Conroy, was killed in action by a Japanese sniper on the afternoon of the first day and was succeeded by Col. Gerard W. Kelley. The second battalion landings were more difficult due to the enemy presence and the need to wade in from 250 yards out, but by noon the beach was secure. On 21 November, the regiment secured Butaritari Village and endured a Banzai charge that night. The regiment continued to sweep across the island and by mid-morning on 23 November, the signal "Makin Taken" was sent. Two days of determined fighting reduced Japanese resistance. After clearing the entire atoll, the 27th Division commander, Maj. Gen. Ralph C. Smith, reported on the morning of 23 November,

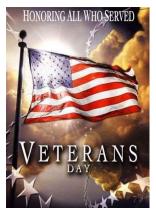




Maj. Gen. Ralph C. Smith, USA

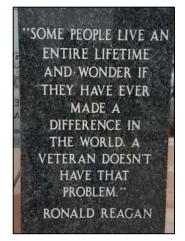
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#### ➤ Veteran's Day 2020 – Wednesday, 11 November 2020:



Historical tidbit:

- ➤ On November 11, 1918 an armistice (cessation of hostilities) was agreed to between Germany and the Allied forces led by the United States of America this marked the end of World War I.
- ➤ In 1954, Congress passed legislation to replace the word "armistice" with "veterans" to nationally recognize and honor all veterans on this day.



It is important that we all take a moment the honor the men and women who have served or who are serving today – across the world. We thank you for your service and all you do in the service of our country!



## Other updates:

## **❖** Logan Duffy Rifle Match:

Traditions continue – but different for 2020. The Logan Duffy Rifle Match, between the 182<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment from the Massachusetts National Guard and our Fighting 69<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was held this fall. Participants were limited to the rifle team members; spectators were not permitted this year due to COVID-19 precautions. It is with pride and honor that I share that the Rifle team members of the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment won the match and the Logan Duffy bowl will remain at the Lexington Armory! Most importantly, an annual tradition was upheld. Again congratulations to the members of the 69<sup>th</sup> Infantry rifle team!



## Lexington Avenue Armory – Status Report:



**Lead Clean-up:** The work in the Armory related to the lead clean-up continues; the Veteran Corps room is off-limits as construction is in that area. Windows in the VC room have been replaced. The current update is that it will be at least June 2021 before we can access that area within the Armory. As I get updates – will pass them along.

#### **❖** Jamaica Armory Renovation:

October 2020 – Federal, state and local officials announced that federal funding (approximately \$91 million) to renovate the Jamaica Armory has been secured and shovels will soon break ground to start the work. These renovations will provide the necessary modifications needed to support the National Guard readiness in years to come. Our good friends from the 71st Veterans Corp had to vacate the building due to the renovations but will be able to look to the future to return back upon completion.



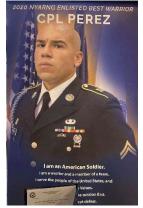
### ❖ Active Battalion Update:

In addition to the update provided by CSM Butcher below, Charlie Company has been reassigned from Camp Smith to the Lexington Armory location. Congratulations to the Active Battalion who now reports the highest retention rate of 79% - which is the highest in the state!

#### NY NATIONAL GUARD – WARRIOR'S COMPETITION:

Representing the Veteran Corps, I attended the 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Warrior's Competition held at the Camp Smith Armory on Saturday, October 17, 2020). I presented the awards to the 2020 NCO and Soldier recipients - SSG Ortiz and CPL Perez.







CAMP SMITH ARMORY



1SG - O"DOUGHERTY, BENITES, AQUINO AND CSM BUTCHER (LEFT TO RIGHT)



SGT SALL AND SPC SANCHEZ

Sgt Sall and SPC Sanchez participated in the 2021 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Warrior's Competition. SPC Sanchez will move forward to the State competition.



## **❖** Active Battalion Update – CSM Shaun Butcher:

Veteran Corps,

I hope this finds all of you well during these trying pandemic times. This has been a unique time for all of us and especially the battalion as we have navigated the covid-19 pandemic, stood ready for riots, and tried to maintain readiness through virtual means over the past months. On St Patrick's Day, with the history, tradition, and longevity in jeopardy, LTC Whaley mustered a volunteer group of the regiment reminiscent of 1885 to walk the parade route with the St Patrick's Day committee in order to keep the tradition alive. Although small and a contingent group the march counted as a parade. The battalion received the activation phone call 17 march 2020 to prepare for a COVID-19 response within NYC. We conducted 146 straight days of joint operations consisting of test sites, hospital access control, food distributions, call centers, and food pantry operations. TF 1/69 distributed over 51 million meals, assisted with testing over 450k people, helped distribute 350k gallons in hand sanitizer, and provided access control to two covid-19 hospitals. The taskforce controlled by LTC Whaley consisted of multiple units from around the state, 1200 soldiers, airman, naval militia, and NY state militia across all five boroughs of NYC. During these trying times simultaneously our soldiers still prepared for, and dominated two other levels of the best warrior competition earning our third straight national level appearance, destroyed the 182nd infantry to claim a Logan-Duffy victory, and we ended the fiscal year with an astonishing 79% retention rate. Continue to do well, and we hope to see you all soon! Garryowen in glory!

Well wishes and good health, Command Sergeant Major Butcher 1st battalion, 69th infantry regiment "Fighting 69th" Wolfhound 7



# Letters, Emails, and Conversations:



Tom Fitzsimmons, Past Commander

Edward Dunn: Spoke to Ed recently and expressed our sympathy on the loss of his brother due to the COVID-19 virus. Other than that Ed seems to be doing fine. He is taking this virus very seriously and being very careful. With the weather getting cooler he reports he still sits on his balcony but the ladies are not displaying their bathing garments any longer. Real bummer. Ed misses the guys and sends his best to all.

Kevin Maxwell: For a change I called Kevin this time. He and his wife Pat plan to be in the Long Island area in the near future and I wanted to check dates with him. He is again making a donation to the Rifle Team and will be stopping by my house to drop it off. Pat and Kevin have a few deer that stop by his home and they have been feeding them. Oh for that wonderful country life!

PS: Since I first wrote the above paragraph Kevin and Pat stopped by our home last Sunday for a brief visit. They had run into traffic jams on the New Jersey TPK and were a little behind schedule and only stayed about half hour. But although short in time it was great seeing them.....

- Rene Rivera: Spoke to him recently and he sounds as vibrant as ever. We kind of lost contact with him when the armory was closed due to the lead cleanup. But it was good talking to him again as I was asking permission to mention an incident in which he was involved when serving in Iraq (see below).
- Frank Stauss: Frank was a member of Headquarters Company assigned to the Motor Pool in the days of Lou Fanelli. He was looking for some verification of his time in service. I gave him a call and emailed the information to him.

# A Soldier's Story of True Friendship:

In the last Bulletin I put in a story about the 69<sup>th</sup> during the Battle of Okinawa in WWII.

This month I am writing about two soldiers of the 69<sup>th</sup> during their service in Iraq.

#### This is about Rene Rivera and Sam Cila:

Rene and Sam first met in 2002 outside the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory in Manhattan. Both from the east end of Long Island, both married and family men. They both served together in Iraq and very close friends.

On July 5, 2005 while riding in one of three Humvees patrolling a main supply route in Iraq, Rivera spotted a suspicious looking package in the debris-strewn road. Cila and the Company Commander, Captain Sean Flynn got out of the vehicle to take a closer look. The package exploded. Flynn was uninjured but through the smoke, saw that Cila had been wounded. "Blood was pouring out of him onto the street. Flynn then half carried and half dragged Cila to the closet vehicle. When Rivera, a medic, tried to lift Cila, his hand went right through a gaping wound where Cila's biceps had been.

"He was hemorrhaging..." Rivera recalled. "I had to put a tourniquet on him..." Inside the cramped Humvee, Rivera worked on his knees as the driver raced back to the safety of the Green Zone in Bagdad. He remembers cutting away his friends clothes and then applying the tourniquet to Cila's wounds. When they arrived at the hospital the doctors told Flynn that the way Rivera applied the tourniquet had probably saved Cila's life. Rivera received the Army Commendation Medal with Valor for "Meritorious Service" for his actions that day.

In Iraq the two men had spent up to 18 hours a day together in a Humvee. They got to a point where they could finish each other's sentences. But there was differences between the two. Rivera a soft spoken guy who liked to relax whenever he had the opportunity. Cila was just the opposite, a physical fitness fanatic. He had no problem getting up early and joked about having to drag Rivera out of bed. Cila, while he was recovering from his wounds, noted that before his injury he was always waiting for Rene but when it hit the fan he did not have to wait. Rene was there doing what he did best.

Cila was hospitalized for 5 months and underwent 15 surgeries just to close his wounds. After undergoing additional surgeries had his hand amputated at the wrist.

(To be continued in next copy of the Bulletin.)





#### IN MEMORIAM:

**NOTE:** The Veteran Corps will list the name of any active or former member of the 69<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the Memorial Segment. It is not necessary that they were a member of the Veteran Corps. They will also be remembered during the ceremony on our Memorial day each year.

ROUGE BOUQUET:

Go to Sleep; Go to Sleep
Slumber well where the shells screamed and fell,
Lay your rifles on the muddy floor
You will not need them anymore
Now at Last, Peace at Last,
Go to Sleep!

Sgt Joyce Kilmer KIA 30 Jul 1918 165th Old 69th

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SERVICE OFFICER'S SICK REPORT: (no member's listed at this time).

May we join in prayer that our sick have a complete and speedy recovery!

In case of illness or death of a member, please call our Service Officer, Frank Sherry at (516) 536-6756 or leave a message on our recording machine at (212) 686-6556 in a timely manner. If known, please list the Company and dates of service in the Regiment.

Please direct all correspondence to:

Veteran Corps, 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Inc., P.O. Box 48, Massapequa Park, NY 11762 Other contact information: Email address: THE69VETERANS@GMAIL.COM

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# ANNUAL DUES and 50/50 Drawings:



# **Annual Membership Dues = \$10.00**

With less than 2 months left in the year – all 2020 membership dues should be in by now. If you are not up-to-date with your dues – please submit the 2020 dues today! Members have the option to pay for membership for multiple years!

Take the time to renew now for 2021!

As a reminder, dues and the 50/50 drawings support Veteran Corps activities and the cost of publishing our Bulletin.

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## 50 / 50 Drawings:

Month	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place
September 2020	Winifred Grady	Robert Hutter
October 2020	Vincent Molinini	Heflyn Lalite





As I have included in each bulletin since March, I hope each member is taking time to reach out to a fellow veteran buddie to see how they are doing. Especially during November – when we remember and honor veterans – <u>take a few minutes and reach out to a fellow veteran</u>. I can tell you – it will not only uplift their day but

yours also! We will get through this - remember the traditions of "The Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>" and our slogan



#### "Gentle When Stroked, Fierce When Provoked"

We are tough and can survive this. Remember, the Executive Board members are here for you as well.





Wishing you and your family a Happy Thanksgiving!

Stay healthy and safe!

Jose A. Flores Commander, Veteran Corps