



# In FOCUS

## Newsletter

Issue 4  
February, 2014

### Message from FMF Chairman



Walt Suhre

Greetings Marines -

Here we are in a brand new year, looking forward to four more FOCUS sessions. The 2014 dates are March 1-7, June 7-13, September 6-12 and December 6-12. We encourage you to seek out fellow wounded warriors who need help and who, you believe, would benefit from attending a FOCUS session. If you will provide us with their contact information, we'll take it from there.

Our four FOCUS sessions in 2013 brought to 12 the number of sessions conducted since inception in March, 2010. A total of 273 Marines, Corpsmen and Soldiers have completed the course. Of possible interest, 99 individuals from 28 different states attended one of the four sessions last year. Six of those needed additional help and were attending a second time. Five of the 99 were Women Marines, 2 were greenside Corpsmen and one a soldier. The average age of those attending was 31 years, the youngest of which was 23, the oldest 47. The average number of years on active duty was six and a half, and

(Cont. Page 2, "Walt's Welcome")



### FOCUS December 2013

We can summarize December 2013 FOCUS in one word...C-O-L-D!

Out-of-towners got a taste of true Missouri weather – ice, rain, sleet, snow – a little bit of everything. Luckily, nearly everyone arrived before the weather hit. The rest of the week, however, we had to improvise, adapt, and overcome.

Sunday's activities were impacted by the poor road conditions but this provided the opportunity for the Combat Casualty Visiting Nurses to introduce themselves to the FOCUS Marines and have a Q&A session in a small group setting. We discovered the benefit of building this time block into the schedule as a permanent feature in FOCUS classes.

Outside activities for the rest of the week became few and far between. A large portion of the class hailed from warmer climates and found themselves a bit on the chilly side. It didn't dampen anyone's spirits, however. In fact, small groups bonded around the fireplaces in the Lodge and a few brave souls even wandered out to the fire pit.

Despite the outside conditions, FOCUS Marines again made life-long connections and discovered that their support network increased exponentially. The understanding they find during the week opens doors to new thinking about themselves, their goals, and their futures. Yet again, these warriors take the FOCUS spirit back home with them.

## Walt's Welcome (cont.)

the average number of years since release from active duty was slightly over four.

We at FOCUS Marine Foundation are enormously proud of each of you for your willingness to seek help (never an easy thing for we Marines to do), for attending FOCUS, and for sticking it out through some pretty tough sessions. We are particularly proud of the overwhelming majority of you who, after leaving FOCUS have continued the process, accepting the inevitable downturns and working through them, working toward your Smart Goals and reaching out to help others in your communities.

Stay the course. Apply those Marine Corps values for which you worked so hard to this often chaotic civilian world and be proud. Stay in touch – with each other and with us. We're in this to the end – to help you whenever and however we can.

Semper Fi,  
Walt



## Black Sands of Iwo Jima

The month of February marks the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what may be the most significant battle in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps, the amphibious assault on the black sands of Iwo Jima.

On February 19, 1945, Marines of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions disembarked their troop carriers into LVTs and amphibious assault vehicles to confront the 21,000 Japanese troops deeply dug into the rugged mountainous terrain of this tiny island. Although the island was small, the significance of this battle was enormous.

Iwo Jima was considered by the Japanese as part of their homeland. Consequently, the defenders on Iwo Jima were ordered to fight to the death. And indeed they did. Of the 21,000 Japanese troops, 19,000 were confirmed killed, and just over 1,000 surrendered, with the remaining being sealed in the caves and catacombs of the island for eternity.

From the perspective of the allies, Iwo Jima was of strategic importance because of the proximity to the Japanese mainland. Iwo Jima was the home of Japanese fighter squadrons which mauled the B-29's flying from Saipan and Tinian to attack the Japanese homeland. Once secured, the airfields on Iwo would eliminate the Japanese fighter threat, and host squadrons of U.S. B-29's which would bomb all areas of Japan from coast-to-coast with impunity.

(Cont. Page 3, "Iwo Jima")

## “Two Jima”

(Cont. from Page 2)

The highest point on Iwo Jima was a 556 foot volcanic peak called Mount Suribachi. Because of its strategic importance, Marines of the 28<sup>th</sup> Regiment/5<sup>th</sup> Division were under orders to capture Mount Suribachi at all cost. It took four days of heavy fighting with heavy losses to ascend the peak of Suribachi. Finally on the morning of February 23rd, the Marines from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion reached the crest, and amongst a dead silent interlude in the fighting, unfolded a small American flag which they raised on a piece of scrap iron pipe. The sight of the Stars and Stripes flying on top of Suribachi brought a sudden outburst of celebration amongst the more than 450 ships below off the beaches of Iwo. However, it also brought down the fury of the Japanese defenders who launched a barrage of shelling into the area of the flag. This original flag atop of Mt. Suribachi was not destined to stand for long.

Because some low-level Brass wanted the 1<sup>st</sup> flag as a souvenir for the visiting Secretary of the Navy, he sent another group of Marines up to the peak of Suribachi with a larger flag to replace the original. As the Marines struggled to detach the original flag from the make-shift pole, fold it properly, reattach the new larger flag, and raise it on the peak of Mt. Suribachi, an AP combat photographer named Joe Rosenthal struggled over the last outcroppings to reach the peak of Suribachi. With his wet camera he began shooting pictures, eighteen in all, not knowing if any would even turn out. After returning to the rear and developing the pictures, he was surprised with his results. He submitted the best of his pictures to Stars and Stripes.

Within days, one of these pictures was selected for publishing, and in today’s vernacular, this picture of five Marines and a Navy Corpsman raising the United States Flag on the summit of Mt. Suribachi went viral. This lone iconic picture soon became the symbol of the war in the Pacific, and in short order became the most famous icon of the United States Marine Corps.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, the battle for Iwo Jima was far from over. The bloody conflict for control of the island continued for more than a month. At its peak another Marine Division was committed, and more than 80,000 American troops were fighting to secure this tiny little island. It wasn’t until March 24, 1945 that the Japanese defenders succumbed to the Marine assault. The Marines had won, but at a terrible cost.

U.S. casualties for Iwo Jima were over 25,000 men, with more than 6,000 KIA. Amongst the killed was the hero of Guadalcanal, John Basilone, who was awarded the **Medal of Honor** for his heroics on the ‘Canal. GySgt Basilone was killed within hours of the initial assault on February 19<sup>th</sup>, and for his leadership and valor he was awarded the Navy Cross.

This was also the first time in the Pacific war that American casualties were greater than the Japanese. It was the bloodiest and most costly battle in Marine Corps history, which resulted in the fighting strength of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Divisions being decimated. In this six-week battle, 22 Marines and 4 Navy Corpsmen received the **Medal of Honor** for their valor.

The first crippled B-29 Super Fortress returning from a bombing raid over Tokyo landed on the runway at Iwo Jima on March 4th, even before the island was secured. From this date until the end of the war in the Pacific, more than 2400 B-29s used the air facilities of Iwo Jima for emergency landings. The 6,000 Marines who gave their lives to secure this strategic piece of black sand are credited with saving more than 25,000 air crew as a result of their sacrifice.

Three of the six Marines who raised the flag on Mt. Suribachi were killed during the battle. The other three, returned to the states where they launched a war bond drive that raised more than \$26 billion based upon the famous image of the flag raising. Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, witnessing the flag raising, was quoted as remarking to General Howland Smith, “...the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years.”

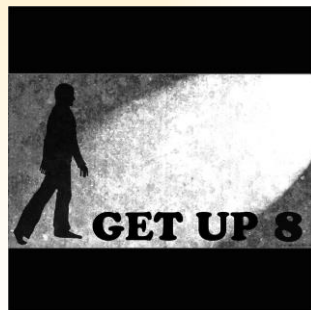
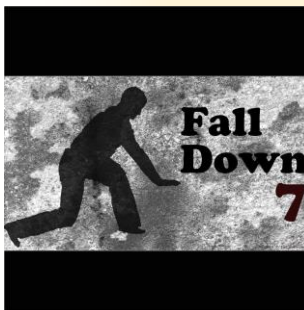
## “Fall Down 7 Get Up 8”

At FOCUS sessions we encourage our participants to move forward and upward with their life healing process. The process of healing however is not linear, there will be set backs, you will fall down.

One of our FOCUS participants, Corpsman Don ‘Doc’ Davis, eloquently summarized life’s journey by comparing it to climbing Mt. Everest. As you make the climb, you will have set-backs. You’ll tire and fall down. You’ll occasionally take the wrong path and must back-track to get back on the right path. However, as long as you rest, rethink, and get back up to continue that climb to the summit you will achieve your goal.

At FOCUS we summarized this analogy and adopted the motto “*fall down 7, get up 8*”. As long as you pick yourself up one more time than you fall back and continue life’s journey upwards, **you will** achieve your goal.

If you are a FOCUS Marine from 3 months ago or 3 years ago and you’ve fallen down – you’re struggling with relationships, anxiety, anger, alcohol, drugs, hyper vigilance, etc. – reconnect with FOCUS. Contact your team leader or call the FOCUS help line and ask for help. When you leave the FOCUS premises after your session, our commitment to you is to stay with you and help guide you through life as long as you need us.



FOCUS Help Line 888-553-0078.

Email: [help@mmffocus.org](mailto:help@mmffocus.org)

## FOCUS Support

No FOCUS session would be possible without the overwhelming support of our local community. At any given session we have more than 120 people from various organizations supporting our FOCUS participants. Below are highlights of just a few of these organizations.

### First Heartland Foundation

Meet one of Focus Marines largest benefactors: The First Heartland Foundation.

The First Heartland Foundation is a charitable organization that believes in placing the needs of others first and is dedicated to improving communities through philanthropic giving programs. 2014 will be the third year that First Heartland Foundation has supported Focus Marines Foundation.

First Heartland Foundation is an outgrowth of First Heartland Companies, located in Lake St. Louis, MO. They are a broker dealer, brokerage general agency and registered investment advisory with producers across the country.

Every year, First Heartland Foundation hosts a golf tournament, dinner and silent auction to benefit a charity based on the alignment of its values with the Foundation's mission statement. It is also important to them that they choose a charity where they can make a real difference, and be able to see that difference in the local community or the community of one of their agents.

In 2012, First Heartland elected FMF as one of the two non-profit organizations it would support, and committed to continuing that support over a three year period. That year and the following year at their annual golf tournament and meeting, First Heartland raised money and awareness for FMF, and their staff and clients had a chance to meet some of the people involved in the organization. This past year, First Heartland expanded

the golf tournament to include a trap shooting tournament, and also opened these events to the public. Additionally they sponsored a gun raffle which included nine guns; 3 hand guns, 3 rifles, and 3 shotguns. Both events were a success and we are looking forward to joining them again this year.



The 2014 fundraising event to be sponsored by First Heartland will take place on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at The Missouri Bluffs Golf Club in

St. Charles. If you are interested in attending the event, please contact Amanda Darr at [adarr@firstheartland.com](mailto:adarr@firstheartland.com) or (636) 695-2821 for more information.

After the first two years of supporting our organization, First Heartland has raised close to \$100,000 for FMF. Together, we are hoping to raise even more than we did before this year. Their support and involvement with FOCUS Marines is greatly appreciated.



## “Nurses Corner”

### **Mindfulness Practice in the Treatment of PTSD**

Mindfulness is a way of thinking and focusing that can help you become more aware of your present experiences. There are some things you might do every day without even thinking about them, like brushing your teeth in the morning. Mindfulness involves paying attention to the feelings and sensations of these experiences.

Research has shown mindfulness to be helpful with anxiety problems. It has been shown to help with symptoms of PTSD, such as avoidance and hyperarousal. If you have gone through trauma, and deal with PTSD issues, you may want to learn what mindfulness is and how it might be helpful to you.

Mindfulness practice has two key parts:

1. Paying attention to and being aware of the present moment
2. Accepting or being willing to experience your thoughts and feelings without judging them

For example, focusing on the inhale and exhale of your breathing is one way to concentrate on the present moment. Mindfulness involves allowing your thoughts and feelings to pass without either clinging to them or pushing them away. You just let them take their natural course. While practicing mindfulness, you may become distracted by your thoughts and that is okay. The process is about being willing to notice where your thoughts take you, and then bringing your attention back to the present.

Mindfulness might increase your ability to cope with difficult emotions, such as anxiety and depression. Practicing mindfulness can help you to be more focused and aware of the present moment while also being more willing to experience the difficult emotions that sometimes come up after trauma. For example, mindfulness practice might help you to notice your thoughts and feelings more and to be able to just let them go, without labeling them as "good" or "bad".



NMCRS Combat Casualty Nurses  
Tammy, Kim, Diana, Sheila, & Luz

Mindfulness is a practice, a continual process. Although it may be hard to do at first, regular mindfulness practice can help you notice your thoughts and learn to take a step back from them. Mindfulness practice can also help you develop more compassion toward yourself and others. You may be less likely to sit in judgment of your thoughts, feelings, and actions. You may become less critical of yourself. Using mindfulness can help you become more aware and gentle in response to your trauma reactions. This is an important step in recovery.

Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure have been shown to be the most effective treatments for PTSD. In both of these treatments, you are asked to write or talk about trauma with the guidance of your therapist. Mindfulness can prepare you for these treatments by giving you skills and confidence that you can handle your feelings. As you learn to be mindful, you learn to observe what is happening in your body and your mind. You can learn to be more willing to cope with difficult thoughts and feelings in a healthy way. This will help you keep going when you are asked to think and talk about your trauma in treatment. In this way you may get even more out of the PTSD treatment.

(Cont. Pg 7 “Nurses Corner”)



NAVY-MARINE CORPS  
RELIEF SOCIETY

## Nurses Corner

(Cont. from Pg 6)

There are several types of therapy that use mindfulness practices. These therapies have been used to treat problems that often affect people with PTSD, such as anxiety, depression, and substance use. The therapies may target specific problems such as:

- Difficult feelings and stress in daily living
- The stress of physical health problems, such as chronic pain
- Negative thinking patterns that can lead to repeated episodes of depression
- Trouble working towards your goals in life
- Urges to use drugs or alcohol

Mindfulness practices may be of benefit to trauma survivors. Research findings show that mindfulness can help with problems and symptoms often experienced by survivors. Mindfulness could be used by itself or together with standard treatments proven effective for PTSD. Learn more about specific PTSD treatments that work.



## Quilts of Valor

Quilts of Valor – Eastern Missouri works with the National Quilts of Valor Foundation established by Catherine Roberts in November 2003. The Eastern Missouri group began on July 19, 2005 with 23 ladies, and they have grown to 100+ ladies that come from 10 different counties.

The QOV chapter of Missouri is the only group that design and create hand-stitched quilts as our ancestors did. As of February, 2014, they have distributed 1,350 quilts. These QOV's have been sent to 33 different states, Germany, and Afghanistan.

The first priority for gifting quilts to veterans goes to the wounded coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. All the quilts go to military personnel, or “anyone touched by War.”



These future family heirlooms presented to our wounded by QOV sends the message to our combat veterans that “We the People” do care about them and are concerned about their healing process. The motto of QOV, “From our Heart to your Heart”, is always represented by a hand quilted heart somewhere in the presentation quilt.

FMF is privileged to have QOV-Eastern Missouri as a supporter of our FOCUS program.



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FOCUS Group 12/13



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