

Hosting A Reunion

So, you are thinking about hosting a reunion? How do you get started? Here are some tips to assist you in making that decision and how to go about it.

First and foremost, it is essential that you have the time to do all the things that are required to host a successful reunion. If you are committed to other clubs and organizations which may take more time than you anticipated, it might be wise not to take on an additional task of a reunion. It all depends upon how organized you are.

Second, when is the best time to hold a reunion? Generally, this would be some time between late June and early September. This is due to some members having children or grandchildren in school and, to some extent, work schedules.

Third, what would the reunion have in the way of events? Typically, we have:

- Tours of interesting places; i.e, military bases, historic battle sites, historical military museums, museums in general, etc.
- A picnic and/or an evening social such as a dinner with no host cocktails. Picnics could be held in conjunction with a tour. Evening socials could be held at the headquarters hotel or some restaurant.
- A memorial service and, if in the San Diego area, a battalion awards assembly with the active battalion.
- A board and general meetings scheduled for at least two hours total.
- A banquet which would consist of a cocktail period followed by dinner, remarks from a guest of honor. A raffle can be considered as well, but timing is a factor.

Lastly, time lines on which to make your plans is essential to getting everything done in time.

Getting Started

Contracts. Making contracts with the headquarters hotel, banquet facility, if separate from the headquarters hotel, and transportation company, as necessary or desired, should be completed no later than 31 January in order that the registration form is ready for publishing in the association newsletter, on the web site and any special mailings required early on.

Publicizing. It is incumbent to get the word out to the various veteran organizations as early as possible. Be aware that some organizations need long lead times for their respective publications which are monthly and quarterly. This sometimes means four to six months in advance of the reunion dates. All you need for them to publish is: name of reunion, dates of reunion, location of reunion and name of the point of contact with phone number and e-mail address.

In order to maximize reunion attendance, a list of registered attendees should be posted and updated as time allows on the web site for others to view. During the reunion, the latest list of attendees should be posted in the hospitality suite. Additionally, after each reunion, a final list of attendees should be posted on the web site and in the Sea Horse for all to see.

Sample Notice To Be Submitted:

" **U.S. MARINE CORPS: 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines Association**, _____ (dates) _____, _____ (location w/address) _____. All assigned or attached Marines, Navy chaplains & corpsmen - all years. Contact: _____ (name) _____ (address) _____, _____ (phone number) _____, _____ (e-mail address) _____ or visit web site: www.2-4Association.org."

List of Organizations To Be Contacted To Run Ad:

Note: Please note that the contact information below should be checked for updates annually before sending out the reunion notice for publication.

1st Marine Division Association: <https://www.firstmardivassoc.com/contact>

2nd Marine Division Association: <https://www.facebook.com/SecondMarineDivisionAssociation/>

3rd Marine Division Association: http://www.caltrap.org/3rd_mardivassoc/officers.asp#webmaster

4th Marine Division Association: No contact information available

1st Marine Air Wing Association - Vietnam Service: <http://firstmaw.homestead.com> > "The Scoop"

2nd Marine Air Wing Association: No association found.

3rd Marine Air Wing Association: No association found.

American Legion: <https://www.legion.org/reunions/submit>

American Association of Navy Corpsmen: <http://aaonhc.club/other-reunions-of-interest/>

Disabled Veterans of America: Ashley Styles, Communications Coordinator
AStyles@dav.org>

Note: Submit NLT five months in advance of reunion

Fleet Reserve Association: Reunions@fra.org

Note: Free for members; \$35 for non-members - declined to pay in 2010

HQMC "Semper Fidelis": smb.manpower.mmsr6@usmc.mil

Leatherneck Magazine: <https://mca-marines.org/magazines/leatherneck/>

Marine Corps Aviation Association (MCAA): <https://www.flymcaa.org/contact>

Marine Corps Gazette: <https://mca-marines.org/magazines/marine-corps-gazette/>

Marine Corps League: <https://www.mclnational.org/contact.html>

Marine Corps Times: <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/contact-us/>

Marine Corps Mustang Association:

<https://www.marinecorpsmustang.org/contact/>

Submit to Business Manager in Word or .pdf format for newsletter NLT five months in advance of reunion and anytime for web site. No charge. Board must approve. Quarterly newsletter.

Marines Memorial Club: <https://marinesmemorial.org/contact-us/>

MILITARY newspaper:

Submit to:

MILITARY

Reunions

2116 28th Street

Sacramento, CA 95818

They ask for a \$2 donation per month to cover costs

Military Officers of America Association:

infoex@moaa.org

Submit at least 6 months in advance. 40 words maximum.

Military Order of the Purple Heart: <https://www.purpleheart.org/contact-us/>

Non-Commissioned Officers Association:

This organization does not post reunion information on their web site / newsletter.

POW's: <https://www.axpow.org/contact.html>

The Retired Enlisted Association:

https://trea.org/TREA/Contact_Us/TREA/Contact_Us.aspx?hkey=358d66d1-b16f-4d7f-a589-5bc5d0ee9a21

USMC Combat Helicopter Association: <http://popasmoke.com/contact-us/>

Veterans of Foreign Wars: <https://www.vfw.org/forms/reunion-form>

Vietnam Veterans of America: <https://vva.org/contact/>

Note: There are a lot more organizations, but these have been filtered out due to their being marginal in expected return from past experience. It is the reunion host's call on whom to notify.

Hotel. This should be negotiated as early as possible. Contractual items should include: number and type of rooms; i.e., kings, queens, doubles, smoking and non-smoking, and handicapped; the Saturday night banquet room and meal plus no host bar; hospitality suite or room [preferably a complimentary setup] with the right to have snacks and beverages of all types in that room; and, meeting rooms for both board and general meetings. The 2/4 Association Board of Directors should have the opportunity to review the proposed contract before you sign it. There may be something that you miss that they will see, which protects you, the Association and the hotel.

Banquet. If the banquet is to be held in a place other than the hotel, this must also be negotiated. Remember to include a no-host bar, podium and microphone. It is also important to come up with a guest of honor early on. The Association usually picks up the cost of their room and meals, so this must be incorporated in your budget planning.

Transportation Contract. This should be negotiated for any transportation required for tours and trips to/from the hotel. Chartered coaches should be ADA compliant for veterans having wheel chairs and other walking issues.

Reunion Shirts/Hats. This is an important item for attendees since they like to have a souvenir of the reunion. It would be best to delegate this task to a trusted friend or acquaintance. This person would be responsible for the contracting, item selections, ordering, pick up and the transportation of the reunion shirts/hats to the headquarters hotel. Acquiring the products to be ordered and prices plus shipping, if preferred, needs to be done early in order that the information is made available on the registration form.

Registration Packets. Once the items above have been taken care of, it is important to set up a spread sheet for keeping track of attendees and what they have paid for in the way of meals, shirts, transportation, etc. It is recommended that you keep a file folder on each person in which you can put a schedule of events, their tickets, name tag,s information of the area, an area map(s), things to do during free time, etc. When they check in, these folders can be handed to them.

Getting The Word Out. Connect with the most recent reunion host to get their experience about how best to put the word out to the veteran community.

Signage. If the hotel is willing, ask them for permission to put a welcome on their marquee outside, and also banners [the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for the 2/4 Association banner] or posters inside the hotel telling attendees where to go for various events. A registration desk in the lobby would be helpful, but can also be in the hospitality room.

Sponsorships. If possible, try and gain a sponsor or sponsors to help pay for such items as travel, billeting and food for the guest of honor, help pay the hospitality room, printing of programs, table decorations, gifts and/or plaques for the guest of honor, etc. We should be willing to display a sponsor's banner or signs appropriately as well. The Association has a non-profit status of 501.c(19) [EIN: 31-1720488] which bodes well for sponsorships since they can be written off as tax exemptions.

Miscellaneous. You can tailor make a check list of things you need to accomplish from the list provided below. You can never be too organized. Do not take anything for granted. Double check things so that you won't be surprised at the last minute. Remember the 7 "P's." Proper Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance. Also, have a good time and don't let things overwhelm you. Others can help when you need them. Don't be afraid to ask and delegate.

Once you commit to the process you will, of course, want to make it a memorable one. It is best if you form a committee to assist you. This committee may consist of other association members you know, family members and/or friends living in your area. While it is possible to do everything yourself, it is easier to have help so that you can focus on the overall task.

Checklist of Things To Do

Time Lines [suggested]:

- January - Complete contractual process with hotel for room block and banquet.
- January - Complete planning for reunion shirts; i.e. design, supplier, types of shirts/hats and prices to include shipping, if desired.
- February - Complete registration form, and submit to the Sea Horse Editor and Web Sergeant for putting out to the membership.
- April - Complete ordering for shirt/hat order.
- June - Sign ups completed.

Hotel Accommodations:

- Decide upon hotel to use
- Reserve block of rooms [king, queens, doubles, handicapped, smoking, non-smoking] and make a contract with the hotel keeping cost in mind
- Room reservations are usually set up separately for attendees to obtain lodging. This should be addressed in the registration information provided
- May need to reserve a room for the guest of honor [paid by Association]
- Ask for complimentary hospitality suite
- Ask for permission to have snacks and beverages in hospitality suite (this should be in the contract to preclude difficulties with the management later)
- Suggested snacks and beverages for hospitality suite [not locked in stone]:
 - Beer & non-alcohol beer
 - Ice - hotel
 - Water - hotel
 - Sodas - Coke, Diet Coke, Pepsi, Diet Pepsi, 7-Up, Diet 7-up
 - Platters of cold cuts, rolls, paper & plastic, and condiments [if desired for one day only - maybe Wednesday evening]
 - Chips & dips - Ruffles, Saltitas, salsa, southwestern, ranch
 - Nuts - almonds, cashews
 - Pretzels
 - Plastic cups
 - Napkins
 - Liquor - Jack Daniels bourbon, Famous Grouse scotch
 - Wine - not necessary as it almost never gets used
- Ask hotel for a room to hold a board and general meeting
- Speaker/microphone/podium system for meetings

Sponsorship(s):

- Acquire a sponsor, or sponsors, to assist with financing the reunion to some extent based upon anticipated requirements.
- Display sponsor banners and/or signs, as necessary.

Banquet:

- Work with the hotel or restaurant to come up with a banquet for Saturday evening
- Ask hotel/restaurant to set up small table with setting for one to remember those not here [Sgt-at-Arms will assist in setting the table]
- Ask hotel/restaurant for extra tables as desired for raffle prizes, etc.
- Ensure there is a host or no-host bar, as desired, for social and banquet
- Speaker/microphone/podium system for banquet
- Table decorations for banquet
- Ensure there is a missing man table which consists at a minimum of the following:
 - The table is round, to show our everlasting concern for our missing men
 - The cloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to serve
 - A small American and Marine Corps flag in a simple stand is displayed on the leading edge of the table; at the minimum, a folded American flag is laid in place
 - The single red rose; displayed in a vase, reminds us of the lives of these Americans and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith while seeking answers
 - A slice of lemon reminds us of their bitter fate; captured and missing in a foreign land
 - A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears of our missing and their families who long for answers after decades of uncertainty
 - A lighted candle reflects our hope for their return, alive or dead
 - A Bible represents the strength gained through faith to sustain us and those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God
 - A glass is inverted, symbolizing their inability to share a toast
 - The chair is empty, the seat that remains unclaimed at the table
- Procure a guest of honor/speaker [CO, 2/4 or a Marine of interest generally]
- Obtain a biography & picture from the guest speaker
- If possible, obtain a color guard [preferably Marine]
- American flag and 2/4 flag [Sergeant at Arms has] with stands for meetings, memorial service and banquet
- Program for the banquet:
 - Lineage, coat-of-arms of 2nd Bn, 4th Mar, histories
 - Opening ceremony - present the colors
 - Biography & picture of the guest speaker
 - Play / sing national anthem
 - Play / sing The Navy Hymn [include at back of program] - optional
 - Play / sing the Marines Hymn [include at back of program] - optional
 - Welcome by President
 - Chaplain gives grace
 - Dinner

- Introduction of guest speaker [include biography and a picture in program]
 - Presentation of "Wild Bill Weise Magnificent Bastard Award"
 - Introduce new president - pass gavel
 - Raffle - optional
 - Closing
- Raffle [This has been done at many reunions, but is not required. It is a way to make a little money for the Association, but it does make for a long banquet]
 - Plaques or gifts for special association members and guests as President desires [discuss with him first]

Social Event / Picnic:

- Decide on whether or not to have an evening social and / or picnic and where [this would generally be on a Thursday or Friday]
- A tour of an historic site or a military related museum / venue is appropriate

Memorial Service:

- Pick a memorial service site, if not at the hotel
- If possible, obtain a color guard and musical unit [preferably Marine]
- Speaker/microphone system for memorial service
- Program for memorial service:
 - Coat-of-arms of 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines
 - Title of reunion - location
 - Sound Attention
 - Sound Church Call
 - Present the colors with color guard
 - God Bless America [all sing]
 - Retire the Colors
 - Reading ["We Remember Them"]
During the annual reunion memorial service, the names of those association members having passed away for any reason during the past year will be read by the Chaplain or other designated person to commemorate them appropriately.
 - Marines Hymn [1st verse]
 - Remarks by Guest [as desired] - optional
 - Guest of Honor - optional
 - Marines Hymn [2nd verse]
 - Scripture [as desired]
 - Read list of those lost to us during the past year - Chaplain
 - Taps played
 - Time to Hug
 - Marines Hymn [3rd verse]
 - Closing prayer
 - Sing "Eternal Father, Strong To Save" [all]

Transportation:

- Arrange / contract for a coach(es) to transport reunion participants to those venues requiring same (chartered coaches should be ADA compliant for veterans having wheel chairs and other walking issues)
- Have the driver's phone number available when on the trip

Reunion Shirts/Hats:

- T-shirts in the past have been the Port Authority brand which seems to be of good quality.
- Hats can be offered as a cheaper, quicker option for a reunion memento.
- Consider polo shirts which have pockets and shirts for the ladies as well.
- Once ordered, the shirts should be shipped to the reunion headquarters hotel. Shipping / receiving / contact instructions to hotel should be arranged before the reunion with someone who can hold them for us.

Get The Word Out:

- Put ads in veterans magazines (see list above)
- Make signs for hotel lobby
- Ask hotel/restaurant to put a "Welcome 2/4 Association" on front marquee
- Send reunion information, schedule of events and registration form to Web Sergeant for inclusion on the association web site and to the Sea Horse Newsletter Editor for inclusion in the newsletter

Registration:

- Registration packets
 - Table in lobby or hospitality room- hotel will provide
 - Name tags & holders
 - Schedule of events
 - Points of contact
 - Maps
 - List of restaurants and services nearby
 - Public transportation schedule
- Have extra registration forms on hand for late people
- Have extra schedules of events
- Have membership applications and membership cards on hand
- Need \$100 in change
- 2 Ice chests
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Feel free to talk to the hosts of previous reunions about any issue about which you are not sure. There are lists of veterans organizations, battalion logos, old programs, etc. available from previous hosts which can assist you in your planning.

Miscellaneous:

Government Installations. If an event is held on a military or government installation, it may be required by those entities for reunion attendees to either have a Department of Defense issued ID or permission to enter the installation. In the latter case, the registration form should have a place for attendees to provide personal information such as driver's license numbers, birth dates, etc. These would be compiled by the host and provided to the installation authorities as required for use at entrance gates.

Reunion Payment Options. This needs to be decided upon and addressed during the early planning period. The original option was to print out the registration form, fill it out and mail via the USPS with a check. This can still be an option, but, with the advent of the internet, registration forms can be set up to be filled out online and submitted with a payment. Payments can be set up via PayPal, Eventbrite or credit card. The web mistress can assist the reunion host in getting this set up.