

6-23-20 – Preliminary Draft

Early History Of Diamondhead Marines 1990 to 2018



By
Harold Dawley

Dedication

**Dedicated to every past, present and future Marine who has, is,
or will live in Diamondhead.**

Note: This brief history focuses on activity of Marines meeting to socialize and celebrate Marine Corps traditions and ceremonies from 1990 to 2018 as well as major contributions made to our community. I volunteered to gather this history since I was closely involved in some of it. I have also asked others who also were closely involved to contribute. As with writing any history, the challenge is to include all relevant people who created the history. This history is thus best viewed as incomplete and is selectively distributed now requesting additional information. It is requested readers who see errors or omissions that should be part of the history of Diamondhead Marines, please forward it to me at HDawley@Bellsouth.net. It is hoped additional historical reports will be provided for later periods of time to maintain the history of the Diamondhead Marines.

I have worked on this report for a long time and have had multiple revisions. Some of you have kindly provided missing name but due to overwriting some material before copying I may have lost what you provided. So any help in identifying everyone in our photos will be appreciated.

The Marine Bond

Across America in large cities and small towns Marines gather to meet in fellowship. Those who did not serve in the Marines have difficulty understanding the strong bond among all Marines. One explanation for the bond is related to the rigorous training in which Marines learn to automatically follow orders. In doing so, we quickly learn the most important rule of all – the bond of loyalty to our Corps and each other. This bond means we come to the aid of one another in combat and we don't leave our wounded or dead behind. This bond carries over to civilian life as reflected in the sight of someone wearing something indicating they served in the Marines eliciting a feeling of camaraderie and the automatic “Semper Fi” and handshake. The history of celebrating Marine Corps events in Diamondhead is an inspiring story of a successive series of Marines carrying on the honored traditions of our beloved Corps. Diamondhead still honors our Marine traditions and will continue to do so. Across America many other communities have a similar story to share about their Marines.

Scope of This History – 1990 thru 2018

Unfortunately, no written record has been kept of the early Marines in Diamondhead and their activities honoring Marines and veterans in general. As our older generation of Diamondhead Marines die, a danger exists their history will die with them. With this concern in mind and having had the honor of personally knowing key Marines who have died, I spent a number of months interviewing other Diamondhead Marines who were (and still are) active in celebrating our Corps and included what they shared with me in this document. The net result is this history of Diamondhead Marines from 1990 thru the formation of the Diamondhead Marine Corps League Detachment's first year. I was fortunate in having the honor of being a part of some of these early events. I have used some of my photos accumulated over the years and am requesting additional relevant photos from those of you reviewing this preliminary draft you are willing to share as part of this historical report..

The Enduring Marine Coffee Group: 1990 to present

There's no doubt Marines were among the early residents of Diamondhead but little is known about these Marines until they began to gather together around 1990. It is important to keep in mind the relatively small number of Diamondhead Marines who actively worked to organize and coordinate Marine Corps events and activities over the years. The Marine coffee group is the most significant activity in the history of the Diamondhead Marines. This group started when Marines living in Diamondhead began meeting regularly at the McDonald's fast food restaurant in Waveland, MS. Shortly thereafter it moved to the Dairy Queen in Diamondhead but because they took up too much space and primarily drank coffee they were asked to meet elsewhere. They briefly tried meeting at the Waffle House but encountered the same problem. The group then moved to the old 19th Hole (which is now the POA Office) and eventually to the new 19th Hole bar in the Country Club where it now meets on Friday and Saturday mornings.

As some of the original members of the coffee group have died or are no longer in the group, other Marines have joined and it continues. Of all of the Marine social activities, the coffee group has played the most important role in the history of Diamondhead Marines as it is the single ongoing semi-formalized group of Marines still in existence. I was able to contact early key Marines active in this group who provided its history. Billy Powers is one such Marine as he was the early initiator of the regular Friday and Saturday morning coffee meetings with Marines. At the the risk of inadvertently not

mentioning every Marine who played a role in this group, the early group included a number of Marines who were or still are active in Marine Corps activities to the date of this history such as Donald “Don” Hinthorn (deceased), Gary Gilmore, Bob Walker, L.M “Mac” Velveteen (deceased), Leonard Nederveld (deceased), Tom Dempsey, and James Randolph. Most of these Marines were also members of the Marine Corps League Detachment, Waveland, MS. This coffee group continues to meet every Friday and Saturday morning at the Country Club bar/restaurant.

Photo below was taken around 2005 and shows some of the key early Marines replicating the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima in WWII. Three members of the group, Leonard Nederveld, LM McElveen, and Bob Walker, fought on IWO JIMA in WWII.

IWO JIMA FLAG RAISING



Left to right: Gary Gilmore, Leonard Nederveld, James Randolph, L.M. “Mac” McElveen, Bob Walker, and Tom Dempsey.

Marine Coffee Group Moves To Diamondhead – 2006 photo

Eventually as more Marines from Diamondhead began to join the morning coffee group the group moved to the Diamondhead Dairy Queen and and shortly thereafter to the old 19th hole in the Country Club that is now the POA office. By 2006 the group regulars were Bob Walker, Gary Gilmore, James Randolph, Leonard Nederveld, Billy Power, and Tom Dempsey. In 2007 my wife and I moved from Pass Christian to Diamondhead. Shortly thereafter, I began attending the Marine Coffee group on an irregular basis. This coffee group continues to this day at the Country Club's new 19th hole on Friday and Saturday mornings.



2007 photo of Tom Dempsey, James Randolph, Leonard Nederveld, Bob Walker, Harold Dawley & L.M. McElveen at the original 19th Hole.

Marine Coffee Group Continues -2012



Left to right: Dutch Vandervort, Wes Melton, Gary Gilmore, Bob Walker, Leonard Nederveld, Tom Dempsey, and Harold Dawley. Seated Neal Nadler and Nolan Briley.

Chuck Ingraham – Diamondhead's Highest Ranking Marine



In 2001 Retired Marine Colonel Chuck Ingraham initiated the VFW Memorial Day Ceremony under the Oaks at the Country Club. He continued the service through 2014 when he turned it over to Pat Laird. Pat hosted the ceremony through 2018. This ceremony continues to this day. Due to inclement weather, the 2009 ceremony was conducted in the Club House. All others were held under the oaks. Chuck has been active in Marine Corps and veteran related activities and events since moving to Diamondhead. He has served as an Officer in the Diamondhead VFW Post and arranged for the Navy band to perform at the annual Memorial Day service at the Country club.

Navy Band At Diamondhead Memorial Day Event



First Mayor of Diamondhead – Marine Chuck Ingraham

Chuck Ingraham and about 150 energetic and dedicated and a small group of colleagues worked long and hard for Diamondhead to become a City. In 2012, thanks to their efforts, the City of Diamondhead came into existence. According to an article in the Hancock County Historical Society this group of forward thinking individuals took bold action leading to Diamondhead becoming a City including recruiting talented leaders to create a new municipal government. Retired Marine Colonel Chuck Ingraham was appointed as the first Mayor per the petition for incorporating of the City. The Hancock County Historical Society goes on to state Chuck Ingraham and those who worked with him in designing and implementing a self-sustaining city are to be applauded.

2007-8 First Formal Celebration of Marine Corps Birthday in Diamondhead, MS

While meeting with the 19th hole Marine coffee group in 2007, I suggested we celebrate the upcoming birthday of the Marine Corps and agreed to host it at my home. Someone then suggested I contact Chuck Ingraham whom I did not know at the time to see if he was interested in joining the celebration. I did contact Chuck and he quickly indicated his interest in being part of the Marine birthday celebration. Chuck provided a list of other Marines who would also likely be interested in celebrating the Marine Corps birthday. We established the date November 10, time, 6 pm, and place, my home for the celebration and invited as many Marines as possible and the party was a success.

Chuck played a key role in the first Marine Corps birthday celebration by officiating at the event. The oldest Diamondhead Marine was Bob Walker. Bob also agreed to buy the cake and bring it to the party. A sword was needed and James Hourin, a retired USAF general, volunteered a sword that belonged to his father, a Marine Officer. Since I served as a Marine bugler, I enjoyed calling the group together by blowing the alert call and then starting the event by playing colors. The birthday party was a resounding success. Sadly, I lost photos of the 2007 event but have a photo of the 2008 event below.

2008 - 2nd Marine Corps Birthday Party in Diamondhead 2008



Rear left to right: Gary Gilmore, Leonard Nedervled, Tom Dempsey, Wayne Departo. _____, _____ James Randolph, _____, Dutch Vandervort, _____, Bill Henderson, front row Darryl Davis, Harold Dawley, Chuck Ingraham.

The second Marine Corps birthday party (above photo of attendees) was again held at my home and officiated by Chuck. Most of the Marines who attended the previous year's party attended in 2009. Bob Walker was again the oldest Marine present.

2009-3rd and 2010-4th Marine Corps Birthday Parties At Community Center

The 4th and 5th Marine Corps Birthday Parties Coordinated by Chuck Ingraham and Harold Dawley were held at the Diamondhead Community Center with around 40 Marines and guests present. During my service in the Marines, I had a secondary MOS as a bugler based on having played the trumpet in my youth. In early 2010, I formed a brass band "The Diamondhead Regimental Brass Band". Within six months we had 24 members and we performed at the 2010 Maine Corps birthday held at the Community Center as well as at the last re-union of the 5th Marine Division that fought at Iwo Jima held at the Imperial Palace in Biloxi and other veteran related events in the local area. Members of the band included active duty military members from Keesler Air Base, high school band students, volunteer professional musicians including the recently retired bandmaster of the 4th Marine Corps Division Band plus local musicians from Diamondhead.

Attendees of 2010 Marine Corps Birthday Party: My recollection of attendees include Bill Powers and wife, Tom Dempsey and wife, Frank & Margaret Cannon, Bill Ledforth, Pat and Dutch Vanderbilt, Frank Cannon and wife, Ronnie Peterson, Harold and Linda Dawley, Chuck and Jerry Ingraham, Hiram Skaggs, Scott Saucier and wife, Jack and Leslie O'Neill, Bill and Janet Henderson, Hilda and Jerry Bourg, Gary and Linda Gilmore, Bob Walker and friend, James Randolph, Leonard and Celine Nederveld, Chuck and wife Jerry, Linda and Wayne DeParto, Bill Leforth, Harry Sharpe & wife, Charlie Gibson and wife.(Notify me if you were present)



Jack O'Neill finishes National Anthem as I signal our band to begin playing Marine marches



2010 Youngest and Oldest Marine Bob Walker and Chuck Ingrahm



2010 Birthday Cake

Diamondhead Regimental Brass Band at 2010 USMC Birthday Party



Jack O'Neill And Marine Corps Events

An additional key Marine in the history of the Diamondhead Marines is retired Chief Warrant Officer Jack O'Neill. He served in the Marines for 38 amazing years with one of his early assignments being the on the Rome Embassy Marine Detachment. Like many of us, Jack spoke frequently about the positive influence serving in the Marines had on his life. Along with his lovely wife Leslie, Jack was significantly involved in coordinating Diamondhead Marine's participation in several Marine Corps Birthday Parties and Balls. Jack also arranged for the 4th MARDIV Band to perform at a veterans event in front of the Country Club. While limited information is available on the Marine Corps birthday being celebrated in Diamondhead from 2011 through 2014, I recall Jack and Leslie coordinating at least one, possibly two Marine Corps birthday celebrations at the Community Center.

I also recall Jack coordinating Diamondhead Marines participating in several Marine Corps Reserve Detachment Birthday Balls held initially at the Hollywood Casino and later at the Beau Rivage Casino. Bob Walker was again the oldest Marines at these Balls. Jack O'Neill played a key role in the history of Diamondhead Marines as he routinely sang the National Anthem at events honoring Marines and or veterans in general with Chuck frequently officiating at such events. Jack was also closely involved with the Marine Corps Reserve Toy For Tots Program.

Jack's death unexpectedly on May 29, 2018 was a major blow to the Diamondhead Marine community. Jack's kindness, willingness to help others in need, and his love of the Marine Corps is remembered and appreciated by all of us. His death is one of our great losses. Jack's wife Leslie now stands in his place as a key member of the Diamondhad Marines. Semper Fi to Leslie.



Jack and Leslie O'Neill

2015 Diamondhead Veterans Memorial Bandstand

An old style bandstand honoring Diamondhead veterans funded and built by volunteers including Harold Dawley and Chuck Ingraham now sits proudly in front of the Diamondhead City Hall. At its opening ceremony Jack O'Neill sang the national anthem and a large number of Marines and other veterans participated.

Group photo of Diamondhead Marines at new Veterans Memorial Bandstand.



Left to right in previous photo - row 1: Gary Gilmore, Leonard Nederveld and Bob Walker
 2nd row: _____, Hiram Skaggs, Harold Dawley, 3rd row: Wayne Departo; _____, _____ 4th row: Tom
 Dempsey, _____, _____. 5th row: Jack O'Neil, Dutch Vandervort, _____. to right: Lenard Nederveld,
 Bob Walker, Tom Dempsey standing in background and Nolan Briley



To the right, Lenard Nederveld, Bob Walker, Tom Dempsey standing in background and Nolan Briley

Darryl Davis - 2015 to present: The Diamondhead Marine Corps Birthday/Military Ball

A substantial milestone was achieved in 2015 when Retired Chief Warrant Officer Five Darryl Davis with assistance from Craig Harvey organized and celebrated the first Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Diamondhead 2015. The Ball was held at the Diamondhead Country Club and was successful with over 60 participants attending. The event was unique in also being a Military Ball open to other branches of the Military. Retired veterans were encouraged to wear their uniforms. Those that served in the Marines were also encouraged to wear awards they received during their time in the military. This Ball is now celebrated annually in Diamondhead drawing a large number of Marine and military veterans.

Each year since 2015, Darryl Davis and his wife Judy have continued to coordinate the Marine Corps Birthday Ball held at the Diamondhead Country Club. Each of the following Balls were well attended and included outside speakers and local Marine Reservists plus some on active duty. Every year an increasing number Marines and other veterans attend the Ball.

Vietnam PBS Documentary “Lost Homecoming – When Our Vietnam Veterans Came Home”

A number of Diamondhead Marines who served in Vietnam were interviewed in the PBS documentary “Lost Homecoming – When Our Vietnam Veterans Came Home”. It first aired on 9-17-17 on the New Orleans PBS station WYES and has since aired multiple times on this station. I had the pleasure of writing, co-directing, and producing it based on my experience evaluating and treating Vietnam veterans during my career as a Veterans Administration psychologist. It can be viewed online at LostHomecoming.com or on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juGa0LIEc8g>

Photo below of Diamondhead Marines was also included in the WYES PBS Documentary.



Left to right 1st row: Harold Dawley, _____, _____ Chuck Ingraham, Anthony Palmature, Ron Slattery, Jack O'Neill, _____ Wes Melton, Bob Walker, Dutch VanDerVort. 2nd row” Wayne Departo, Gary Gilmore, Don Crosby, Larry Sullivan, Hiram Skaggs, Harry Lacoste, Warren Alexandor, Pat Laird, _____, Tom Dempsey, Steve Stoval, Lenard Nederveld

**FORMATION OF DIAMONDHEAD'S FIRST MARINE CORPS LEAGUE DETACHMENT
OFFICERS AND CHARTER MEMBERS
L.P. MCELVEEN, JR. DETACHMENT 1454**

Harold Dawley Forms First Marine Corps League Detachment And Is It's First Commandant

Remembering the earlier unsuccessful efforts of L. P “Mac” McElveen, and other early Diamondhead Marines to form a Marine Corps League Detachment in Diamondhead, I began the efforts to form a MCL Detachment in Diamondhead in early 2016. I contacted the State Senior Vice Commandant, Clifton Addison, who directed me to Ron Polk, the State MCL Commandant who provided a significant degree of support and help. I scheduled a number of meetings with Marines in Diamondhead in which Ron attended. I was told since Diamondhead is now a City, we can form our own MCL Detachment. As we grew closer to forming our own Detachment, a name had to be selected. Many Detachments are named in honor of someone who served bravely in the Marines. When I finally succeeded in forming Diamondhead first Marine Corps League Detachment, I named the Detachment the “L.M. “Mac” McElveen Detachment” after our deceased Iwo Jima Marine who lost a leg doing so. The efforts of Mac and others who earlier tried unsuccessfully to form a Marine Corps League Detachment in Diamondhead motivated me to form a MCL Detachment since we became a separate city.

Our Detachment Charter was presented to us by State MCL Commandant Ron Polk. Also in attendance was State Senior Vice Commandant Clifton Addison who presented a Bible, gavel, and large American and Marine Corps flags in nice holders to our Detachment.



Left to to right – First Commandant, Harold Dawley, Darryl Davis, Craig Harvey, Pat Laird , Chuch Ingraham (No other photos are available of all officers of 2018 Detachment)

**OFFICERS AND CHARTER MEMBERS
L.P. MCELVEEN, JR. DETACHMENT 1454**

ELECTED OFFICERS 2018

Commandant – Harold Dawley
Senior Vice Commandant – Gary Gilmore
Junior Vice Commandant – Bill “Dutch” Vanderbilt
Judge Advocate – Hiram Skaggs

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Adjutant – Larry Sullivan
Paymaster – Ron Slattery
Chaplain – Harold Garrett
SGT At Arms – Anthony Palmature, Charter.

Major Events Of Our New MCL Detachment's First Year

1. **Getting The Detachment Up And Running:** The Detachment meetings were held on a Tuesday evening in a card room at the Diamondhead Country Club. Meetings followed Marine Corps League protocol. This first year was a learning experience as we ordered our uniforms and began functioning as Officers and members of the Diamondhead MCL Detachment.
2. **Supporting American Legion's endorsement of allowing research on the safety and effectiveness of medical marijuana in treating PTSD.** While medical marijuana does appear to help lessen the distress associated with PTSD, the American Legion endorses approval of controlled research studies to ensure its safety and effectiveness in treating PTSD. Our Detachment voted unanimously to endorse the American Legion call for research on medical marijuana for PTSD.
3. **Department of MS Convention April 27-29 2017 in Tupelo Miss** - This was an informative and enjoyable convention. I got to know a number Commandants of other MS Detachments and enjoyed the warm fellowship at the convention. I gave a report on the status of our Detachment and made a detailed report of the Convention to our members. I also received suggestions from other commandants on how our Detachment could generate funding for charitable endeavors such as being the donor recipient of golf tournaments.
4. **Big Kahuna Golf Tournament** (Because of the significance of this golf tournament, it is recommended a detailed separate report be made on it by those better qualified to do so.) A brief summary will be presented in this history of the Diamondhead Marines. Initiated by Darryl Davis and Craig Harvey, the first tournament netted _____ dollars to the newly formed Marine Corps League Detachment to help needy veterans.
5. **Marine Corps Birthday/Military Ball** – A number of Diamondhead Marines attended the Marine Corps Birthday/Military Ball organized by Darryl Davis. It was a moving experience appreciated by all in attendance.

Charter Members of the Detachment (In order of signing Charter)

Harold Dawley
Charles “Chuck” Ingraham
William P. _____)
Hiram Skaggs
Jack O'Neill
Wayne Departo
Donald Pat Laird
Don Crosby
John T. Dempsey
Larry Sullivan
Darryl B Davis, Jr.
Craig Harvey
William P. Vanderbilt
William Whitlow* (2 star USMC general)
_____(hard to read signature – need help identifying)
Robert Walker
Jeff Gable

*Retired Marine Major General and honorary Detachment member in town for ceremony.

Diamondhead's Unsung Marines: I was fortunate in serving with dedicated officers and was able to recruit an exceptionally talented group of appointed officers, three of whom continue to serve our Detachment at the time of writing this history. **Larry Sullivan** did and still is doing a great job as Adjutant. **Harold Garrett**, our Chaplain is a retired Navy Captain who served a number years with Marine units, and is also doing a great job. Perhaps the most difficult job in any Detachment is that of Paymaster. Our Paymaster was and is **Ron Slattery** who is still doing a great job paying our bills and minding our money. These and other Diamondhead Marines that need to be mentioned for their contributions to our history. It is hoped more of them can be identified in future reports of the History of Diamondhead Marines. The highly significant accomplishments achieved the second group of elected and appointed officers of the Marine Corps League Diamondhead Detachment needs its own historical report.

Election of 2018 New Officers at last meeting of first year of the Detachment

Commandant: Darryl Davis
Senior Vice Commandant: Craig Harvey
Junior Vice Commandant: Pat Laird
Judge Advocate: Chuck Ingraham

Appointed Officers remained the same from first Detachment Except for SGT-AT-ARMS

Adjutant: Larry Sullivan, Paymaster: Ron Slattery, Chaplain: Harold Garret
New SGT AT ARMS Don Crosby.

2018 New Officers OF Marine Corps League Detachment In Diamondhead



Left to right Chuck Ingraham, Pat Laird, Craig Harvey, Darrel Davis, Harold Garret, Don Crosby, Larry Sullivan (missing Ron Slattery)

The Enduring Marine Coffee Group 1-10-20 Snapshot:



Left to right: Lars Simonson – Navy, Gary Gilmore, Bob Walker, Larry Sullivan, Nolan Briley – Air Force veteran, Steve Stovall, Tom Dempsey, regular Marine attendees not present – Wes Melton, Neal Nadler, Bill (Dutch) Vandervort, Alden “Cappy” Mann.

Marine Coffee Group Continues



Year after year the Marine Coffee group continues. With membership open to all, including non-Marines, a small core of Marine have kept this key group meeting regularly on Friday and Friday mornings at the Diamondhead Country Club. While it is difficult to mention all of the Marines and non-Marines who have participated and supported and the Marine Coffee, one participant needs to be mentioned – Nolin Briley. Nolin served honorably in the Air Force and is a long standing member of the Marine Coffee active in coordinating events. His sense of humor is appreciated, even his XXX rated humorous emails raise our spirits. He coordinates key events such as the anniversary of victory over the Japanese on Iwo Jima. Three Diamondhead Marine members of the coffee group fought and were wounded on Iwo Jima. The sign below is related to the annual celebration of this Marine Corps victory.

Two Diamondhead Marines Worth Noting

Robert “Bob” Walker



Our Beloved Bob Walker at age 99 – Diamondhead Winner of “Most Frequent Oldest Marine At Marine Birthday Celebrations” and one of oldest living MARINE IWO JIMA survivors. Bob Walker threatening to pull the pin on a fake grenade on 2-13-20

One of America's Oldest Living IWO JIMA Marine Corps Veteran Lives Here In Diamondhead!

Bob is a dear friend, mentor, and someone loved by every Marine who knows him - Robert "Bob" Walker, one of the oldest living Iwo Jima Marines. Although there seems to be some confusion over who is America's oldest surviving IWO JIMA Marine, I think it's Bob. If Bob is not the oldest IWO JIMA Marine, he is the best loved Iwo Jima Marine. Virtually most if not all Marines in Diamondhead know and love Bob. He is a great friend, a fair but firm person, and has a large heart. He is our fountain of wisdom when we seek guidance. Most importantly, Bob does hold the all time world record for being the oldest Marine at the greatest number of Marine Corps birthday parties. If I recall correctly, Bob has agreed to continue being the oldest Marine at our Marine Corps Birthdays and Birthday Balls for the next 15 years. Thank you Bob. Last but not least, the last time I visited Bob was when I took the above photo. As I was leaving Bob's home he reached behind him and grabbed a grenade from the

display case containing Marine related material and jokingly warned he'd pull the pin if I did not leave.

Retired USMC SGT/MAJ Wes Melton

Diamondhead Marines are listed on brick on the Memorial Wall Overlooking the National Marine Corps Memorial thanks to one of our own – retired SGT/MAJ and recipient of the Silver Star from combat in Vietnam, Wes Melton.

Thank you Wes on behalf of the Diamondhead Marines!





Wes Melton and Bob Walker
OORAH!!!

End of this historical report

Please send the names of anyone you recognize in photos in this report. Even more important, if I have misspelled someone's name, please send the correction to me. I have made numerous revisions to this report yet it is still incomplete. Some of have already provided information such as name of Marines in photos I've lost to computer crashes or accidentally over writing some of the text. Please send any additional information or photos you may have on the the history of the Diamondhead Marine.

Please send to
Hdawley@bellsouth.net

Please list the page and paragraph number (count number of paragraphs from top down) related to your correction or suggestion.

Example: "On page __, paragraph __, I suggest you _____"

