

## **Brothers in the Storm: Why Staying Connected Still Matters**

**Marines:** In the Winter 2026 *Semper Fi* magazine, I noticed an advertisement for a book titled *Fuji Fire: Sifting Ashes of a Forgotten U.S. Marine Corps Tragedy*. It immediately caught my attention. I had been doing some research on my own, trying to locate survivors from that day in 1979. During that search, I found a 2020 YouTube video in which Chas Henry mentioned he was beginning work on a book about the fire and was attempting to contact Marines who had been there.

As it turns out, he had sent a letter to an old address of mine that was never forwarded. We eventually connected. I purchased the book and read it — not as a casual reader, but as someone who stood on that ground.

On October 19, 1979, I was at Marine Corps Base Camp Fuji when disaster struck. What began as severe weather became one of the worst peacetime tragedies in the history of the United States Marine Corps. Thirteen Marines lost their lives. More than seventy were injured.

Reading *Fuji Fire* was not easy. The research is thorough, the interviews personal, and the details sobering. But what struck me most was not just the account of the fire itself — it was the reminder of who we were to each other. When the gasoline ignited and the squad bays filled with smoke and flame, Marines reacted without hesitation. They carried wounded Marines. They went back inside. They did what Marines are trained — and bonded — to do.

The book also reminded me that the fire did not end when the flames went out. Many carried scars, visible and invisible, for years. Some of us lost touch. Life moved on. But the bond forged that day never truly disappeared.

Staying connected matters. A phone call, a reunion, a League meeting — those simple acts reaffirm that we still stand for each other. We still remember the thirteen who never came home. We still honor the promise we made in uniform. On October 19 of every year, I recite their names so that their legacy continues. During my first running of the Marine Corps Marathon in 2016, I carried their names on my back so that everyone behind me could see that I was running for those that could not.

Semper Fi,

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