

April 2018 Vol. 39 • No. 4 • \$4.00



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Remembering the Fallen 22

Navetta Mason Contractors Sets the Stone on the 1/24 Memorial Wall

By **Mary Kremposky McArdle** Associate Editor

Time magazine's December 11, 2006, edition called Iraq's Anbar Province the most dangerous place in Iraq at the time. Twenty-two Michigan men from the First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment went bravely into that danger zone and did not return. Angelo Lema, Jr., retired staff sergeant and fellow 24th Regiment Marine, has been waging a fundraising campaign for a memorial in Chesterfield Township to honor the "Fallen 22."

These Marines answered the call of duty, and the construction industry has answered its own call to serve in the building of this 65-foot-long masonry memorial wall. Navetta Mason Contractors, Novi, whose founder, the late Mike Navetta, was a proud veteran of the Korean War, is one of the firms that contributed its expertise, muscle and heart.

The actual call came from Tom Ward, director of the Detroit Apprentice and Training Center of the Michigan Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC) Local 2. Ward himself has been deeply involved in helping the 1/24 Memorial Committee move the project forward over the last three years. The Committee needed a masonry company capable of producing a durable wall built to preserve the memory of the Marines of the 24th Regiment who sacrificed their lives in Iraq's Anbar Province during the intense fighting of 2006 and 2007.

"It is the second largest loss in their regiment's history," said Ward. The First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment is a U.S. Marine Corps reserve Infantry battalion located throughout Michigan, Ohio and Indiana and headquartered at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Harrison Charter Township.

The Wall Rises

In the summer of 2017, Navetta's five skilled stone masons and three mason tenders placed approximately 47 tons of limestone quarried in Lannon, Wisconsin. The 1/24 Memorial Committee purchased the stone, thanks to the generosity of donors.

The light-colored stone wall resembles the buildings in Iraq in color and in placement. "The stone had to be placed in a random pattern," said Navetta President Steve Dudek. "We visited every website we could think of to find out exactly how the stone should look.

"Once on the site, we spread out the mason crew across the length of the wall, which is natural stone on both sides," Dudek continued. "Each mason could then pick and choose the kind of stone laying on our work platforms. We did whatever it took to get the stone to look right, and to avoid having large joints. When the architect and Angelo came to the site and said, 'We love it,' we were very pleased and happy."

Tiseo Architects, Inc.'s President Ben Tiseo, FAIA NCARB, is the memorial's architect and a military veteran. The memorial designers are Anna Ives, managing partner of patterhn ives, llc, St. Louis, Missouri, and Nicholas Watkins, PhD, director of research for EwingCole, New York City. According to www.1-24memorial.com, Watkins "has studied and published findings exploring the relationship between war memorial designs and the mourning process. His research on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has revealed how veterans and their families use the memorial to honor sacrifices and make sense of traumatic losses."

Navetta supplied its services at cost and under contract to Roncelli, Inc., Sterling Heights. Another general contractor, the DeSalvio Construction Group, Clinton Township, contributed significantly to the project in previous years. Dudek has personally donated to the project, and his firm has supplied some materials, as well as performed the stone placement at cost. "We weren't there to make money, but we had to cover costs," said Dudek.

Masonry: The Material of Memory

The Navetta masons often worked while fighter jets from nearby Selfridge Air National Guard Base roared overhead, reminding the team of the wall's purpose and of the need to construct a truly quality installation. Before stone placement, Navetta installed stainless steel flashings along the entire base of the wall and on both sides of the wall. A drainage material, resembling netting, was placed on the full height of the block backup wall. "The drainage material is breathable to allow moisture to travel down the wall, hit the flashing and exit the weep holes," said Dudek. "It prevents mortar from falling down behind the stone and resting on the flashing or clogging the weep holes at the base."

Limestone coping caps the top of the entire wall,



BAC Local 2 bricklayers Jason Dudek (right) and Chris Warfield (left) place the limestone, quarried in Lannon, Wisconsin, on the memorial's freestanding plaque.

completing this well-crafted masonry structure that clearly follows Navetta Mason Contractors' motto: "Workmanship is our primary interest." Dudek commented, "We used some of the best materials available, because we want the wall to last hundreds and hundreds of years. Masonry is the best building material known to mankind. It lasts forever."

Masonry, "the eternal flame of materials," is durable, long-lasting and a fitting material to ensure these 22 men will never be forgotten. Their names are engraved on an imposing black granite plaque set in the 10-foot-high memorial wall.

Another black granite plaque is set in a free-standing stone wall explaining the next phase of the project: the piecing together of granite pieces to form a 19-foot-long table. The table will feature 22 granite plates engraved with the names of each of the men. This moving tribute is part of "the time-honored United States Marine Corps tradition of setting an empty table, designated as the "Fallen Comrade Table," in the dining area of Unit Mess Nights, Marine Corps Birthday Balls, and wherever Marines gather in camaraderie," according to the wording on the plaque.

Navetta Mason Contractors handled the setting of these two granite plaques with the care and regard of two soldiers carefully folding the flag. Each granite plaque weighed approximately 6,000 lbs., and neither arrived with any holes drilled for the stone clamps needed for hoisting and setting these five-foot-tall, four-foot-wide granite memorials. "Drilling these large pieces of granite was nerve-racking, because they could potentially crack," said Dudek. "We had to drill a hole in the back of the granite to insert the stone clamp that has a small peg about five-eighths or three-quarters thick. Once drilled, inserted, tightened down and clamped, we could lift the granite with a strap and use a rough terrain forklift to set it in place."



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Navetta Mason Contractors also had to grind a slot on the side of the granite to place the stainless steel stone anchors that clip back to the wall. "We drilled a hit pin into the concrete wall to accept the anchors," added Dudek. Overall, Navetta installed four stainless steel stone anchors on one granite plaque, and six on the other.

Navetta Mason Contractors completed their part in the project in August 2018. The company was founded in 1958 and now celebrates 60 years in business. "This is only one of many projects Navetta has done, but it is one that we are very proud to be a part of," said Dudek. "It meant a great deal to the masons in the field, too."

The 1/24 Memorial will honor the Fallen 22, and will provide their fellow Marines, families and community a gathering place to honor their brave service and memory. "Helping to build the 1/24 Memorial was an amazing

opportunity," said Dudek. "God bless our military and America."

Sergeant Brock Babb, Lance Corporal Tyler Overstreet and Private First Class Tarryl Hill are only three of the 22 fallen Marines whose names are engraved in granite on this moving memorial to the "Terror from the North," the nickname given to this Marine battalion from Michigan and Ohio. History may record the names of the battles and the forces shaping the conflict, but few history books will remember the names of the individual soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thanks to the efforts of Angelo Lema, Tom Ward, the 1/24 Memorial Committee and the dedicated workmanship of Navetta Mason Contractors, the names of the Fallen 22 are etched in stone for perpetuity.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Founded in 1958, Navetta Mason Contractors, Inc. celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2018. Owner Laurie Navetta Dudek and President Steve Dudek explain the secret to 60 successful years in the masonry industry: Focus on quality workmanship and run a lean operation with low administrative overhead.

This philosophy honors the legacy of the late Mike Navetta, company founder and industry champion who created the company motto: "Workmanship is our primary interest." "Mike Navetta's goal throughout his career was to develop excellent masonry practices based on knowledge of materials, details and installation," said Steve Dudek, Navetta President and Mike's son-in-law. "He emphasized hands-on experience, along with sound engineering practices for the design and construction community. Mike was passionate in his firm conviction that masonry can be promoted through performance."

Mike's son-in-law, daughter Laurie and grandson Jason are carrying on his tradition of quality workmanship. In keeping with this philosophy, the company has produced six decades of well-crafted masonry buildings, including the beautifully detailed masonry on the Van Buren Township and the Milford Township Fire Stations. After completion of the Milford project, the George W. Auch Company leadership personally called Steve Dudek and said, "I am so happy to find a mason contractor who can follow and create detail," recalled Dudek.

More recently, Navetta Mason Contractors completed 15 buildings at the M-1 Concourse in Pontiac, as well as two, 40-foot-tall stair towers. Installing burnished CMU and colored mortar, Navetta worked under the George W. Auch Company on this exclusive community of more than 250 secure, private and very upscale garages set along a 1.5-mile champion motor speedway. Current projects include Botsford Beaumont South and East Towers, North Farmington High School, M1



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The stone wall resembles the buildings in Iraq, both in the color of the stone and in the random pattern of its placement.
Photo courtesy of Navetta Mason Contractors, Inc.

Concourse, and the Livonia Fire Station No. 1.

This family-owned company honors the legacy of Mike Navetta in every project and in the placement of every brick or stone. Quoting son Jason Dudek, Steve Dudek said, "We never cut corners." Jason is a hard worker, and Mike would have been very proud of his grandson. Our biggest source of pride is being family-owned for 60 years."

Serving the masonry industry is another part of Mike Navetta's legacy. Mike Navetta was president and chairman of the Masonry Institute of Michigan (MIM) and president of the Mason Contractors Association (MCA). "Masonry was his passion and his life," said Laurie Navetta Dudek. Steve Dudek has carried on this tradition of service to the masonry industry, having served as past vice president of MCA and continuing to serve on the MCA board, as well as having been past president of MIM from 2001 to 2004. "I do it because I love my industry too," said Dudek.

Navetta has an outstanding reputation with design professionals, general contractors, construction managers and owners serving in the Michigan area for the past 60 years. Dedicated to the masonry industry, Navetta Mason Contractors looks forward to serving its industry for many years to come.



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HELP US SET THE TABLE

Step Up to the Plate for the 1/24 Memorial



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BAC LOCAL 2, TOM WARD

Retired Master Sergeant and 1/24 Memorial Committee Chairman Angelo Lema, Jr. tells the story of the memorial wall and of the fallen men it honors to the workers of BAC Local 2.

By **Mary Kremposky McArdle**

Associate Editor

The United States Marine Corps has a tradition of setting an empty plate in the mess hall to honor fallen comrades. Somehow the image of an empty seat and plate makes someone's absence seem more tangible and real. A Fallen Comrade Table in black granite will feature 22 bronze plates engraved with the names of the fallen Marines from the First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment. The table is one of the last pieces of the 1/24 Memorial that needs to be put in place in the Chesterfield Township site on 47275 Sugarbush Road. Its presence will complete a long journey that began in Iraq's Anbar Province in 2006, spans a decade of fundraising, and the construction of the actual memorial wall itself in 2016 and 2017.

Tom Ward, director of the Apprenticeship and Training Center for the Metro Detroit Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC) Local 2, learned about the "tradition of the table" from the chairman of the 1/24 Memorial Committee and retired Marine Angelo Lema, Jr. "When I heard about the tradition of the table, it hit home," said Ward. "When I shared the story with our leadership at Local 2, we all said, 'Let's roll up our sleeves and see what we can do.'" As a result, BAC Local 2 completed the memorial's CMU block core walls and enlisted support from Operating Engineers Local 324 for land balancing/grading.

The strong construction market, however, has proven to be challenging to the spirit of volunteerism. "Today, the bench is empty," said Ward. Because bricklayers and stone masons are working in a hot market, and many have retired or left Michigan during the past recession, the availability of volunteers has dramatically declined. Against these odds, "we still managed to build the CMU core for the wall and for a free-standing masonry sign," said Ward. "It was done with 100 percent donated BAC labor and materials in 2016."

Although time and volunteers were in short supply, the rewards were great. "In the field, we had a tradition of hanging two American flags on our scaffold," said Ward. "That tradition continued at the memorial, and I've never been more proud to hang our flag. We have been blessed with an opportunity to honor the fallen and just say 'Thanks.'"



The American flag flies proudly as men from BAC Local 2 complete work on the memorial's CMU block core walls.

Today, the vertical stone walls are up, and it's time to set the table. Funding for the table and other Phase II items are needed, including the footings for the table, the table itself and the benches, site work, electrical, landscaping and the flag pole. Half of the funds for this roughly \$500,000 project still need to be raised to turn this compelling design into a place of remembrance for the families of the Fallen 22, servicepeople and their families and the general public. "We are asking folks to help us," said Ward. "Help us set the table."

Companies and individuals are stepping up to the plate to create this solemn granite version of the Fallen Comrade Table. Because every operation on the battlefield and on the construction site needs a great general, the 1/24 Memorial Committee has secured the

services of Roncelli, Inc., a large general contractor based in Sterling Heights, to help deliver the job.

Proud to be involved in the Fallen Comrade Table 1/24 Memorial, the Roncelli organization remembers those soldiers of the First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment who made the ultimate sacrifice serving their country. Roncelli supports local and national charities that are fully aligned with its core values, purpose and mission. "We believe this commitment to the Fallen Comrade Table, through volunteering and financial gifts, strengthens the bond between people and humanitarian causes while promoting the Roncelli brand and its core values," said Roncelli Director John Raimondo.

Based on the welcome generosity of contributors, the 1/24 Memorial could be dedicated this year. The table could be set and the plates engraved with the names of the Fallen 22: Brock Babb, Joshua Hines, Richard Buerstetta, Tyler Overstreet, Thomas Gilbert, Jonathan Thornsberry, Tarryl Hill, Marcus Golczynski, Troy Nealey, Minhee "Andy" Kim, Bryan Burgess, Jeremy Shock,



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Brent Beeler, Nicholas Miller, Brett Witteveen, William Spencer, Christopher Eskelson, Jacob Neal, Luis Castillo, Mark Kidd, Matthew Pathenos, Bufford "Kenny" Van Slyke. A moving tribute to these brave men can be viewed on YouTube under "1st Battalion 24th Marines Memorial Video."

The 1/24 Memorial can be seen as a way to honor all soldiers who have sacrificed their lives. Turning general statistics into specific names, and creating a simple, empty table and a stone wall creates an intimate type of memorial both for the actual men and for every soldier who never returned to home and hearth, for both the individual families of the Fallen 22 and for every family who suffered such a loss, and perhaps for any person who grieves the terrible



The CMU core for the memorial wall itself and for a freestanding memorial sign was constructed with 100 percent-donated BAC Local 2 labor and materials in 2016.

consequences of war as symbolized simply by an empty seat and plate at the table.

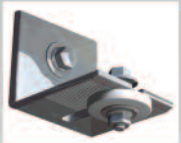
The Michigan masonry community has been strong supporters of the 1/24 Memorial. Many generously gave their time, labor and materials. The following is a list of material and labor donations procured by BAC and friends:

- Re-bar for footing and CMU Walls - Smede-Son & Supply, Inc.
- Masonry Accessories - Mason Pro
- CMU - Fendt Block
- Stone Storage and Delivery - Florence Cement
- Mortar - St. Mary's Cement Co.
- Website design and maintenance - Graphic Designer Joe Coots and the Construction Association of Michigan
- Land Balancing/Grading - Operating Engineers Local 324
- Electrical Package - Commitments made from IBEW to provide and install electrical package at zero cost
- Provided Water and Damp Proofing of CMU, and has committed to provide all caulking for the project - D.C. Byers
- Acid Wash Masonry Cleaner - PROSOCO
- CMU wall construction and assistance in footing placement - BAC Local 2



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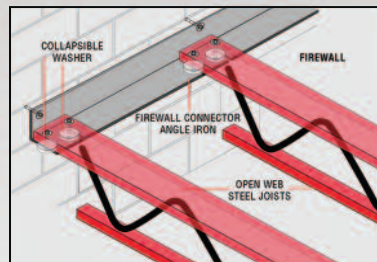
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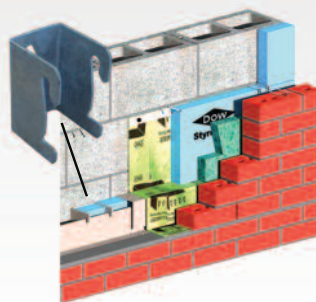
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The final piece of the 1/24 Memorial will be a "Fallen Comrade Table" in black granite with 22 bronze plates engraved with the names of the fallen Marines from the First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment. The 1/24 Memorial Committee is currently seeking donations for the table, which will be placed near the black granite commemorative plaque along the main wall.

- Provided Scaffold and Mixers to Build CMU Walls - Leidal & Hart Mason Contractors
- Provided rough terrain fork lift and a Mason to build CMU walls - Rosati Masonry Co.
- Free ads and radio coverage on WYCD 99.5 - CBS Radio
- Story featured on Channels 2 and 7 - Charlie Langton & Malcom Maddox

The 1/24 Memorial has a gofundme page. Please visit www.1-24memorial.com to learn more, for updates and to view progress photos. To make a donation by check, please send contributions to the 1/24 Memorial to the Department of Michigan, Marine Corps League, P.O. Box 450117, Selfridge ANG Base, MI 48045. Please make checks out to the Department of Michigan, Marine Corps League, and place "1/24 Memorial" in the memorandum line. To donate services or materials, host a fundraiser or for further questions, please call Angelo Lema at (586) 718-2342. 💎



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Tiseo Architects, Inc.'s President Ben Tiseo, FAIA NCARB, is the memorial's architect and a military veteran. The memorial designers are Anna Ives, managing partner of patterhn ives, llc, St. Louis, Missouri, and Nicholas Watkins, PhD, director of research for EwingCole, New York City.

The Making of the 1/24 Memorial

Once a Marine, always a Marine: Master Sergeant Angelo Lema, Jr. retired from the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in 1994, but a meeting with another Marine, at the VFW hall in St. Clair Shores drew Lema into a different type of service. He was called to serve once again by helping to build a memorial to honor the 22 Marines from his former battalion, who lost their lives in Iraq in 2006 and 2007.

Lema tells the story: "The memorial wasn't actually my idea. It began right after the battalion returned from Iraq in 2007. I had made inquiries into how I could lend a hand, and in early February 2008, I met with Lt. Colonel Bill Ray at the VFW Bruce Post in St. Clair Shores. He pulled out a folded piece of paper, and at the top of an organizational chart for the First Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment Memorial Committee, was my name along with the word, 'Chairman.'"

"Being a 1/24 Marine and a Life Member of the Marine Corps League, I couldn't refuse, and said, 'Yes,'" Lema continued. "That was in February 2008, and I have been working on it ever since. The Department of Michigan, Marine Corps League, is the umbrella organization for the 1/24 Memorial Committee. On the Department roster, I am listed as the 1/24 Memorial liaison, and report directly to the Department Commandant regarding issues with the memorial."

In those early days, the first step was securing a site. "The first proposal was to put the memorial either on Selfridge Air National Guard Base or just outside the main gate," recalled Lema. "If it was on the base, the commanding general said that he would have to convince the Air Force to let the Marines build a Marine memorial on an Air Force base! Also, that site would not allow public access. A second location outside of the gate was not large enough for either parking or the memorial."

A fellow Marine came to the rescue. Chief Warrant Officer Natalie McPherson-Ziegler, USMC, retired, who at the time, served on the Chesterfield Township Parks and Recreation Board, suggested a site in Chesterfield Township. The township board approved the site selection at a board meeting in February 2010. This location has proved to be ideal for public access. "The area has walking paths, children's baseball diamonds and a historical village," said Lema. "People walk their dogs and exercise in the area, and so it will give the memorial a great deal of public exposure."

In August, 2014, Anne Ives, of St. Louis, Missouri, one of the designers, informed the committee that her Michigan-based family would like to make a major donation toward the memorial. They donated a large portion of a family inheritance to make a difference. According to Lema, "That kind gesture helped us get to the groundbreaking ceremony of September 11, 2014. Phase 1 of the memorial was becoming a reality. We were able to cut an access road into the site for equipment and machinery access, and we even had a donation of crushed concrete to pave it."



After much fundraising and the generosity of the design and construction industry, the memorial wall and its freestanding sign have risen on a site in Chesterfield Township. Having worked diligently on the 1/24 Memorial for the last 10 years, the 1/24 Memorial Committee Chairman Angelo Lema clearly embodies the U.S. Marine Corps' motto, Semper Fi, meaning "Always Faithful."

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANGELO LIMA

"2015 saw some real headway, including the digging of the footings and the installation of the core of the block walls," Lema continued. "CMU, re-rod, cement grout, labor, material and equipment were all donated by local suppliers, contractors and labor unions."

For Lema, witnessing the memorial walls rising out of the ground and actually being built was beyond gratifying. "I was blown away," he said. "I stop by the site a great deal and ask people what they think. Everybody really loves it."

"2017 made the most significant progress so far," said Lema. "The veneer stone and the setting of the two granite plaques were completed. Again, much was donated for this phase, but all this time, we are continually raising money by asking for donations, selling T-shirts, magnets and pins. We also hosted a series of beer tastings, gun raffles, booths at the Selfridge Air Shows, music festivals and other activities. Donations ebb and flow, occasionally becoming more substantial and then falling off, over the course of the past

decade. The committee members have donated countless hours to serve at fundraising events, and no one on the committee is paid for their work. It is all strictly volunteer."

Lema recently checked his post-office box at Selfridge ANG Base and discovered a healthy donation from the Mason Contractors Association. "Last year, we also received a large donation from Navetta Mason Contractors, and a donation from the BAC, or Bricklayers Local 2," said Lema. "It amounted to a significant amount off from what it would have cost us if we would have paid full price for the wall."

Both construction and fundraising will continue into 2018. On June 16, 2018, the 1/24 Memorial Committee is hosting the 2nd Poker Run fundraiser with the Wolverine Harley-Davidson dealership in Clinton Township on Hall Road and Gratiot. For the first stop, riders will travel from the Wolverine dealership directly to the 1/24 Memorial at 47275 Sugarbush Road in Chesterfield Township. "Some of our committee members will meet the riders and talk about

the memorial," said Lema. "After completing the five stops of the Poker Run, there will be food, a DJ and a series of raffles at the AMVETS hall in Mt. Clemens."

The 1/24 Memorial Committee is still in need of a flag pole and funds to pay off the granite for the table and benches, for what is called the Fallen Comrade Table, a table set with plates engraved with the names of the Fallen 22. "There are still a number of elements that will need funds to complete," said Lema. "Footings for the site, walkways, brick pavers, landscaping and lighting name only some of the elements. Additionally, the 22 bronze plates need to be fabricated and paid for."

Having worked diligently on the 1/24 Memorial for the last 10 years, Lema embodies the U.S. Marine Corps' motto, Semper Fidelis, or simply Semper Fi. The iconic Latin term means "Always Faithful," and those two words certainly apply to Angelo Lema. "I have been saying my prayers and hoping we get the 1/24 Memorial done this year," said Lema. "I don't ask for donations for me. I ask for the 22 Marines and their families." ❖

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