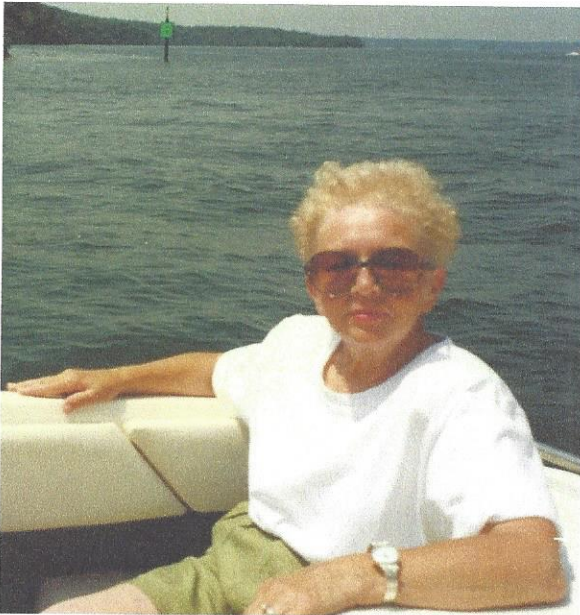


MARINE JERRY MERNA MEETS NAVY MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT THOMAS G. KELLEY, PRESIDENT, CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY, U.S.A. IN ARLINGTON, VA, MARCH 14, 2016

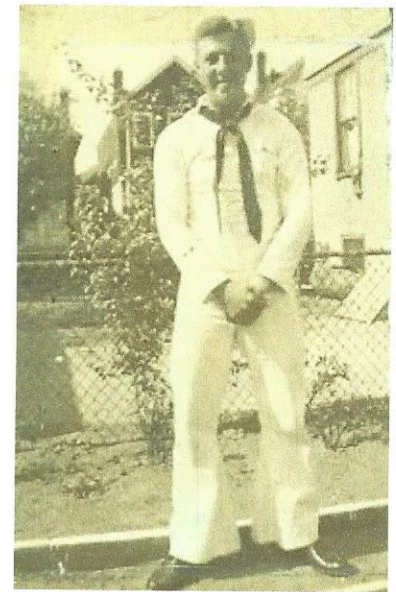
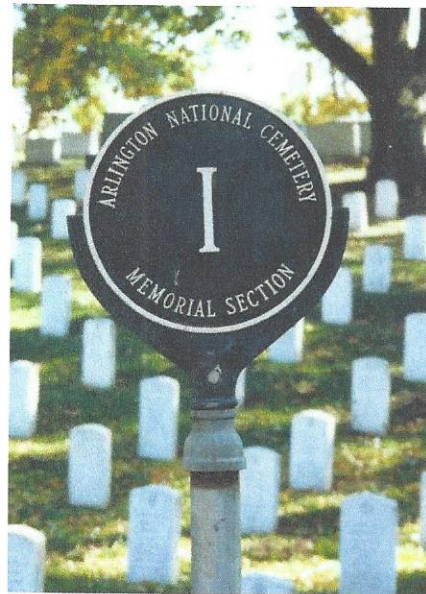
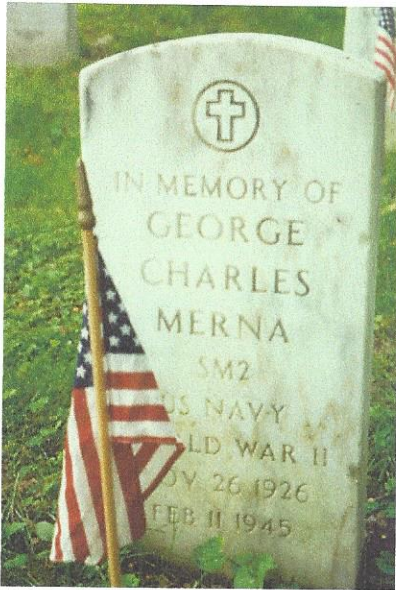
Attached is a brief pictorial story about Retired *Navy Captain Thomas G. Kelley*, the current President of the *Congressional Medal of Honor Society, USA*. He is one of only 78 living Medal of Honor recipient heroes, earning that award as a young Navy Officer in Vietnam. (His citation is included in the story).

Captain Kelley and I met at the restaurant in a local Arlington hotel on March 14, 2016, and enjoyed several discussions about the Medal of Honor, Vietnam (he earned his MOH there in 1969, see details below, while I was there 1966-67), and Arlington National Cemetery. He of course knows every one of his fellow heroes, including the six in the 1983 Medal of Honor tribute story you recently posted, though a few are now deceased.

Now in his 70's, Captain Kelley is far from "retired." He was visiting Arlington because he is on the Board of the *Arlington National Cemetery Council*. That of course really got my interest since Dot (former Dorothy May Sedlack of Piermont, NY), my Bride of 60 years who died five years ago, is interred there, holding down my "future home." My oldest brother George is also there, in Memorial Section I,¹ not far from Dot's grave in Section 59. (Captain Kelley was not aware of the "Memorial Section" and appreciated learning about it). A former St. Agnes Convent (Sparkill, NY) "House's Kid" and WWII Navy Signalman, "Sonny" as he was nicknamed from childhood, was killed in action at age 19 on 11 February 1945 as a result of the Leyte Invasion when his LST-577 was sunk by a Japanese submarine, and his remains were never recovered.



¹ By a special act of Congress, "Memorial Headstones" and markers, for individuals or groups, are furnished for eligible deceased active duty service members and Veterans whose remains are not recovered or identified, are buried at sea, donated to science or whose cremated remains have been scattered. Memorial headstones and markers may also be furnished in national, military post/base or state Veterans cemeteries to eligible spouses whose remains are unavailable for interment, whether or not they predecease the eligible Veteran. These headstones and markers bear an "In Memory of" inscription, as their first line and must be placed in a recognized cemetery. Memorial headstones and markers for spouses and other dependents are not available for placement in private cemeteries. VA Form 40-1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker, must be submitted to request a memorial marker.



Captain Kelley also gave me his “*Challenge Coin*”² (pictured below in this story). We also discussed other significant “challenge coins” that are mentioned in my story about meeting (now retired) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin E. Dempsey, U.S. Army, in July 2014:

General Dempsey On July 30th 2014 - Pictorial: By Gerald F. Merna, 1stLt USMC (Ret.)

A Thank You From Gen Dempsey 9/8/15.)

**Jerry Merna
03-21-16**

² A challenge coin is a small coin or medallion (usually military) bearing an organization’s insignia or emblem and carried by the organization’s members. Traditionally, they are given to prove membership when challenged and to enhance morale. In addition, they are also collected by service members. In practice, challenge coins are normally presented by unit commanders in recognition of special achievement by a member of the unit. They are also exchanged in recognition of visits to an organization. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Challenge_coin).

THOMAS G. KELLEY, PRESIDENT, CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY, U.S.A. IN ARLINGTON, VA, MARCH 14, 2016



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SEMPER FI!
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**1stLt USMC (Retired) Gerald F. Merna of Arlington, VA with Captain Thomas G. Kelley, USN (Retired), Medal of Honor recipient, of Somerville, MA. (MOH coin and card on table)
(03-14-2016, Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel, Arlington, VA)**

Lieutenant Commander Thomas G. Kelley



Vietnam War

US Navy

Lieutenant Commander Kelley's Act of Heroism

Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in the afternoon while serving as commander of River Assault Division 152 during combat operations against enemy aggressor forces. Lt. Comdr. (then Lt.)

Kelley was in charge of a column of 8 river assault craft which were extracting 1 company of U.S. Army infantry troops on the east bank of the Ong Muong Canal in Kien Hoa province, when 1 of the armored troop carriers reported a mechanical failure of a loading ramp. At approximately the same time, Viet Cong forces opened fire from the opposite bank of the canal. After

issuing orders for the crippled troop carrier to raise its ramp manually, and for the remaining boats to form a protective cordon around the disabled craft, Lt. Comdr. Kelley realizing the extreme danger to his column and its inability to clear the ambush site until the crippled unit was repaired, boldly maneuvered the monitor in which he was embarked to the exposed side of the protective cordon in direct line with the enemy's fire, and ordered the monitor to commence firing. Suddenly, an enemy rocket scored a direct hit on the coxswain's flat, the shell penetrating the thick armor plate, and the explosion spraying shrapnel in all directions. Sustaining serious head wounds from the blast, which hurled him to the deck of the monitor, Lt. Comdr. Kelley disregarded his severe injuries and attempted to continue directing the other boats. Although unable to move from the deck or to speak clearly into the radio, he succeeded in relaying his commands through 1 of his men until the enemy attack was silenced and the boats were able to move to an area of safety. Lt. Comdr. Kelley's brilliant leadership, bold initiative, and resolute determination served to inspire his men and provide the impetus needed to carry out the mission after he was medically evacuated by helicopter. His extraordinary courage under fire, and his selfless devotion to duty sustain and enhance the finest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service.

Information courtesy of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society – www.cmoHS.org



"CHALLENGE COIN" OF CAPTAIN THOMAS G. KELLEY, U. S. NAVY (RETIRED)

Thomas G. Kelley was born in Boston, Massachusetts on May 13, 1939, and graduated from Boston College High School in 1956. He attended the College of Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Economics in 1960. He was also commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy in 1960 after competing Navy Officer Candidate School. He graduated from the U.S. Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, California in 1973 with a Master of Arts in Management, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Studies from the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology in 2011 for his efforts on behalf of returning Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Veterans.

In Vietnam, Lieutenant Kelley was in command of River Assault Division 152 – part of the U.S. Navy's Mobile Riverine Force. On June 15, 1969, he led eight boats on a mission to extract a U.S. Army infantry company from the bank of the Ong Muong Canal in Kien Hoa province. During the extraction mission, the convoy came under attack from hostile forces on the opposite bank as one of his boats suffered a mechanical failure which prevented it from raising its loading ramp and getting under way. After ordering the other boats to form a defensive line around the disabled craft, Lieutenant Kelley maneuvered his own boat to the front, between his men and the enemy, and engaged the hostile force. He received a severe head wound when a rocket struck near him, penetrating the boat's armor and spraying shrapnel in all directions. Although unable to stand or speak clearly, he continued to relay directions to the convoy with the help of one of his sailors until the crippled boat was repaired and the group was able to depart safely. Lieutenant Kelley survived his wounds, was promoted to Lieutenant Commander, and in a White House ceremony on May 13, 1970, he was presented the Medal of Honor by President Richard M. Nixon.

Despite the loss of one eye during his combat action on June 15, 1969, Lieutenant Commander Kelley requested and received authorization to remain in the military, and he served an additional 21 years on active duty as a Navy officer. His last duty position in the military was serving in Washington as the Special Assistant for Legislation and Oversight to the Chief of Naval Personnel. After 30 years of active commissioned service, he retired at the rank of captain in 1990.