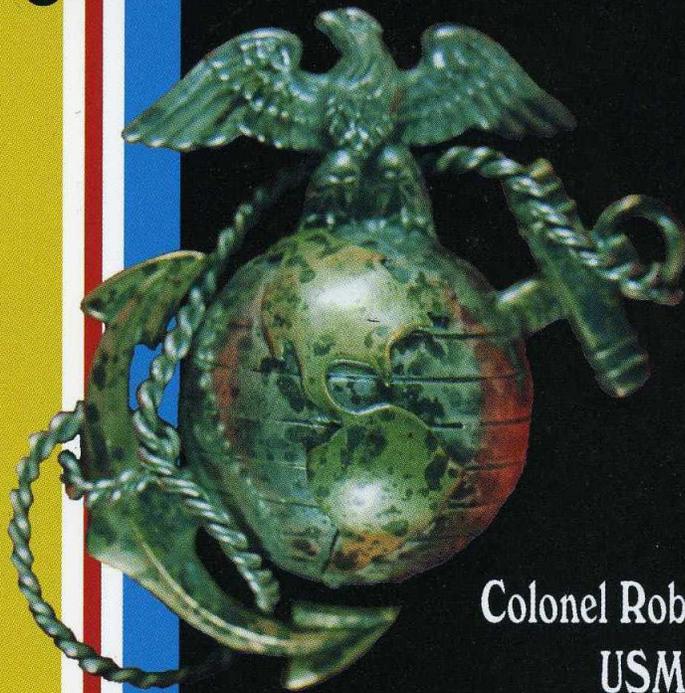


A PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO

Dark Horse Six



Colonel Robert D. Taplett,
USMC, Ret.

From: Gerald F. Merna, USMC (Ret.)



46386 Bluestem Court, Potomac Falls, VA 20165-6461 Tel: (703)406-3590 gfmerna-usmc@verizon.net

23 January 2007

Mrs. Patricia Taplett
The Metropolitan
901 South 15th Street, Apt. 1220
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Pat:

Yet another year has passed and I did not send you the pictures I've been wanting to. As the date of Bob's second anniversary of his death (December 17th) also got away from me, I told Dot I was at least going to get this letter and its enclosures to you before the anniversary of his services at Arlington on (January 31st).

And to be fully honest, I was reminded anew of Bob's death because I just attended yet another funeral at Arlington on January 17th, for my last "boss" in fact who was more like a brother to me—Lt. Gen. Larry Skibbie, U.S. Army (Ret.). Like Bob, Larry also died in December and had to wait until January in order to receive the full military honors that Bob received.

Larry and his wife Nancy were also very dear friends. As you may recall, my last job was as a Vice President for the National Defense Industrial Assn. (NDIA) and Larry Skibbie was its President. He personally "hired me away" from AFCEA (SIGNAL Magazine) to work for NDIA and its magazine, National DEFENSE. They held a retirement party at their home for me, and also came to our 50th Wedding Anniversary in 2001; we attended their's in 2003. Larry was two years younger than me and retired two years after I did. As with you and Bob, they were very special to Dot and me.

I told Nancy I lost three brothers in 2006; you already know we lost Brother Richard (71 and a Marine) who died on July 4th (buried at Quantico National Cemetery) and we appreciated very much the sympathy card you sent. Less than six months later (Dec. 22) we lost another Brother, Bob, 75 and a Navy man, who lived in San Jose, CA. Brother Jim (now 73) and I and two nieces buried him at San Joaquin National Cemetery in CA. Both Rich and Bob were Korean War veterans, never married, and younger than me, so only Jim and I remain from six brothers. (Our only sister Vivian lives in Sun City West, AZ, and she came to San Jose for Bob's funeral). Larry Skibbie, my "honorary brother," died on December 12th. This was also part of the reason we didn't get all our Christmas greetings out.

Pat, we think of you and Bob so often and continue to remember each of you in our prayers. As you know, though Bob and I served in the Corps for over 20 years, we did not know one another during that time (though we had the Fifth Marines in common), but became good friends when we worked for the U.S. Postal Service after our respective retirements.

I will always remember the first time I met Bob at the old Post Office Department, then on Pennsylvania Avenue. I was being introduced to some of the folks I was going to work with when this tall, distinguished-looking fellow approached me, hand outstretched, and said “*Hi, I’m Bob Taplett; I understand you are a Marine, too!*” Who could ask for a better welcome than that? Our friendship flourished from that day forward. We even had a few common adversaries (I can think of a lot stronger term for a couple of them) that we delighted in “discussing” and dropping each other notes about (I still have a couple of Bob’s that now give me a “chuckle” instead of the heartburn we both endured from one or two. Fortunately we were blessed with many more common friends.

At Bob’s funeral I took a lot of pictures, and perhaps you already received some from others who were there as well. Nevertheless, in the hope that I caught a few scenes others may not have, I put together the enclosed booklet for you. I also added a few pictures of my time with Bob in the Postal Service that perhaps you’d not seen before. Additionally, I made a CD of this for you in the event any family members wanted copies.

We hope that as you review these pictures over the years it will remind you that Bob is in very good company in a very special place, expecting to see a lot of us as the years go by, as he prays for us in the meantime.

Even though his remains are still at the bottom of the South Pacific, my brother George (KIA WWII) also has a Headstone in the Memorial Section in Arlington Cemetery. I’d like to think Bob and George are swapping a few “sea stories” there with all the other heroic men and women, and family members, with whom they share that hallowed ground. After Gen. Skibbie’s funeral I visited George’s gravesite and took a few pictures of his area that still had those beautiful Christmas wreath’s in place. As you will see from a few pictures I also enclosed, it looked just magnificent. (With the pictures there is also an “explanation” about the Memorial Section).

Dot joins me in sending you and your family our belated best wishes for a Blessed and Healthy 2007.

Love,

Jerry Merna

(Gerald F. Merna)

PROLOGUE

In the “Preface” to his book, *Dark Horse Six*, Colonel Robert D. Taplett, United States Marine Corps (Retired) 1918 – 2004, Bob describes himself this way:

“I am a Marine infantry battalion commander, now retired. I am not a historian or a journalist. My book is my effort to describe the actions of one battalion...during the early critical stages of the Korean War (1950-1951). I hope this book will put the collective deeds (of the grunt survivors of his battalion) into the record so that historians will recognize and properly evaluate what they (his Marines) accomplished in their “violent little world” (the term his Marines used) opposing the march of Communism during the “Cold War...””

I was privileged to know such a person who was dedicated not only to his mission, but equally to his men! Though at the time he wrote this he had earned many accolades as a combat Marine, including being awarded his Country’s second highest award, the Navy Cross, he chose to describe himself as “a battalion commander,” opting to recall a time when, together with his Marines, he underwent experiences few men ever do.

My brief but personal “Tribute” to Bob contained in this booklet is based on a friendship and civilian life working relationship I enjoyed with this esteemed Marine Warrior. Though we both served 20+ Marine careers and both served in Korea, our Marine paths never crossed. Therefore only briefly does my tribute dwell on his military career; he does not lack tributes for those feats; indeed, they are so well known that one can but pick up any history book about the Marine Corps or the Korean War and read about Bob Taplett’s heroic achievements; they will take up a goodly portion of any such book’s pages.

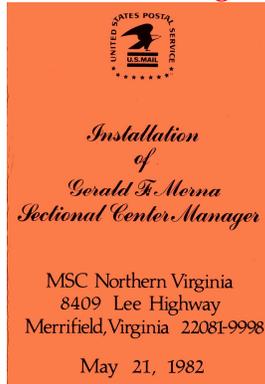
To me Bob was foremost a fellow Marine, a special relationship that only his family, and all other Marines, will fully understand and appreciate. In his post-Marine Corps career it quickly became evident he brought to his new tasks the same brilliant mind and innate sense of doing the right thing in the right way at the right time as he did in the Corps. He was a skillful strategist and planner, someone who always saw “the big picture,” but most of all, he was not only a fine human being but someone you truly believed when he called you “friend.”

There have been various reasons given as to why Colonel Taplett retired from his beloved Corps with “only” (*my word*) twenty years of service. I have no doubt most of the explanations given were legitimate, but considering a few conversations I enjoyed with him I think there were other timely concerns in his making that decision. And though I certainly accept any and all stated reasons, there is no doubt in my mind (and I know in many others) that had Bob Taplett decided on a 30-year career he would not only have become a General Officer, but would also have been a top candidate for Commandant of the Marine Corps. His war-time experiences, command and leadership positions (including a coveted one as Commanding Officer of the “Basic School” for new Marine officers), gave him *extraordinary* credentials, not to mention that he was also a *Marine’s Marine*-- steady, dependable, quick, combat-tested, reliable, and possessed with the integrity, ability, and character to perform in such positions. In today’s military environment, he would be another top-caliber leader our Corps needs to see our Country through the many struggles we face in waging the war in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the overall war on terror.

I hope my all- too-short professional and personal relationship with this outstanding man comes through in this brief tribute.

Gerald F. Merna
1stLt USMC (Ret.)
gfmerna-usmc@verizon.net

May 21, 1982: Installation of NOVA Sectional Center Manager Gerald F. Merna



L: Deputy Postmaster General Neil Benson & McLean Postmaster Curt Weed observe MSC Mgr/PM Gerald F. Merna take Oath of Office from MD-DC-VA District Manager James McDougald; R: Dir. Bob Taplett, DC Postmaster John Cochran congratulate Jerry Merna



DC Postmaster John Cochran congratulates MSC Manager Jerry Merna as Bob Taplett looks on .



Ron Bland (District), Ron Barco (HQ), Fred Maguire (MSC Mgr PG Co. MD), John Cochran (PM Wash. DC) and Col. Taplett (DirFin DC PO

July 1, 1983: Medal of Honor Stamp Ceremony, NOVA MSC, Merrifield, VA



Col. Taplett is acknowledged by Jerry Merna as a Navy Cross and Silver Star recipient at ceremony for six MOH recipients. A reception at the MSC and luncheon for the honorees and their families at LaGuingette Restaurant followed at which they were thanked for their heroic services



L: Congressman Frank R. Wolf (R-VA) with Col. Robert D. Taplett (USMC Ret.)



H. Ross Perot addresses MOH luncheon guests at La Guingette Restaurant, Fairfax, VA



Ed Marston, Dir E&LR, Bob Taplett, John Cochran, and CSR Doris Michael

Our Nation's Highest Military Honor

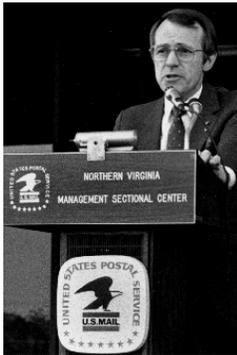


"...Above and beyond the call of duty."

- General Leon W. Johnson
United States Air Force
McLean, Virginia
- Colonel Lloyd L. Burke (Ret.)
United States Army
Burke, Virginia
- Colonel Robert F. Foley
United States Army
Fairfax, Virginia
- Colonel Reginald R. Myers
United States Marine Corps
Annandale, Virginia
- Lieutenant Colonel Jack H. Jacobs
United States Army
Annandale, Virginia
- Lieutenant Colonel Walter J. Marm
United States Army
Woodbridge, Virginia
- Sergeant First Class John F. Baker, Jr.
United States Army
Alexandria, Virginia
- Sergeant John L. Levitow
United States Air Force
Vienna, Virginia

H. Ross Perot (l.) and six Medal of Honor recipients listen to remarks of MSC NoVA Mgr. Gerald F. Merna (1stLt USMC Ret.)

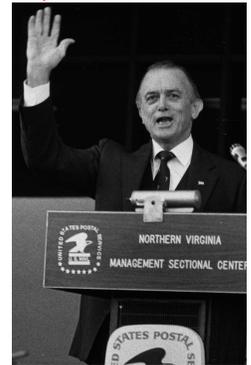
November 9, 1984: Salute to Veterans Ceremony, NOVA MSC, Merrifield, VA



Opening Remarks by GFM



Honored guests stand at attention for Armed Forces Color Guard



Keynote Speaker VAdm. Boyes



L: Col. Robert D. Taplett (USMC Ret.), Director DC Post Office, stands to be recognized as Navy Cross Recipient by Jerry Merna; Also shown is MSC NoVA staffers Ms. Doris Michael, Customer Services Rep. and Jay Stiltner, Director of Customer Services. C: Mrs. Dorothy M. Merna and Daughter Linda M. Figura; R: Mrs. Frances Ford, Special Assistant to MSC Manager Gerald F. Merna



Enjoying the refreshments in the MSC hospitality room are: (L): Bob Taplett and Northern VA Postmasters Curtis Weed (McLean) and Charles Moser (Woodbridge). (R): Gen. Leon Johnson USAF Ret., Medal of Honor recipient WWII; Washington, D.C. Postmaster John Cochran, and Director of Finance Robert D. Taplett (USMC Ret.).

July 26, 1985: Korea War Veterans Stamp First Day of Issue Ceremony, Washington, D. C.



Col. Taplett accepts congratulations from Postmaster General Paul Carlin, R: Col. Taplett; MSC Mgr/PM (Lt USMC Ret.) Gerald F. Merna and Postmaster General Paul Carlin at the Dedication of the 22¢ Korean War Stamp, Washington, D.C.

First Day of Issue Ceremony
Korean War Veterans Stamp
Washington, DC
July 26, 1985



*George H. Ziegler
Post USMC
Richard Sheaff*

At the conclusion of World War II, the Allies agreed that the Soviet Union would accept the surrender of the Japanese in northern Korea, and the United States would accept their surrender in southern Korea. The dividing line between the two areas was the 38th parallel of northern latitude, a boundary which eventually carried considerable historical significance.

On June 25, 1950, the Communist North Korean army crossed the 38th parallel and invaded the newly formed Republic of Korea. The South Korean army was totally unprepared and could offer little resistance. Acting quickly, the United Nations adopted a resolution calling the invasion a breach of peace and asked that all U.N. member countries furnish assistance to repel the attack.

In response to the U.N. resolution, American forces, commanded by General Douglas MacArthur, captured much of North Korea, but the intervention of Communist Chinese troops prolonged the fighting. After several more years of combat and cease-fire discussions, a truce was signed upon and fighting ceased on July 26, 1953.

The United States Postal Service is proud to issue this stamp honoring the courageous veterans of the Korean War, a conflict in which more than 130,000 Americans were killed or wounded. Artist Richard Sheaff of Needham Heights, Massachusetts, based his design of the stamp on a photograph by David Douglas Duncan.



L.toR: 1stLt Gerald F. Merna USMC (Ret.), MSC Mgr., NoVA (formerly with Easy Co., 2nd Bn., 5th Marines); His Excellency Byong Hion Lew, Ambassador to Korea; Col. Robert D. Taplett USMC(Ret.), D.C. Post Office (Former CO, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines, The Chosin Few); Mr. John R. Cochran, Postmaster, Washington, D.C. Dedication of Korean War Stamp, July 26, 1985

Presiding John R. Cochran Postmaster Washington, D.C.		
Presentation of Colors Joint Armed Forces Color Guard		
National Anthem Ceremonial Brass United States Air Force Band		
Invocation Rabbi Simeon Kobrinetz Director Veterans Administration Chaplain Service		
Welcome Billy Ray Cameron National Commander-in-Chief Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States		
Introduction of Distinguished Guests Cooper T. Holt Executive Director Washington Office VFW		
Remarks His Excellency Byong Hion Lew Ambassador of Korea Colonel Ruby G. Bradley, USA <i>Retired</i> Former Chief Nurse <i>Ruby Bradley</i> United States Far East Command		
Address and Presentation of Albums Honorable Paul N. Carlin Postmaster General of the United States		
Honored Guests		
R. Jack Powell Executive Director Paralyzed Veterans of America	Frank Navicko Korean War Veteran Northwest Region USIV	Robert L. Smith Korean War Veteran Western Region USIV
Luis Guerrero National Past Service Director Brokers Veterans Association	Frank Ford Korean War Veteran Eastern Region USIV	George E. DeWier Korean War Veteran Central Region USIV
Mike Krae Executive Director Washington Office American Legion	Noel C. Woodley National Service Director AMVETS	James N. Eames Korean War Veteran Southern Region USIV
		Samuel Greenberg National Commander Jewish War Veterans of the United States
		Richard Sheaff Designer of Stamp

July 26, 2003: 50th Anniversary of the end of the Korean War, MCI Center, Wash. DC



Bob Taplett and Jerry Merna meet at MCI Center, Washington, D.C., to attend entertainment for Korean War Veterans on July 26, 2003, the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Korean War

Robert D. Taplett

Colonel, United States Marine Corps

Decorated Marine Robert Taplett Dies
by Joe Holley

Courtesy of the Washington Post, Saturday, January 8, 2005

Robert D. Taplett, 86, a heavily decorated Marine Colonel who led his 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, in the grueling strategic retreat at Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War, died December 17, 2004, of congestive heart failure at the Powhatan Nursing Home in Falls Church, Virginia.

A running battle during the winter months of 1950, in temperatures falling to 40 degrees below zero at night, the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir lasted three weeks, as U.S. and allied forces fought their way back to the sea in the face of relentless assaults from Chinese forces, who outnumbered them by more than 5 to 1. About 15,000 Marines and 3,000 Army troops took part in the battle.



Navy Cross Medal



Silver Star Medal



Legion of Merit Medal



Bronze Star Medal

"From November 27 to December 10, we were in almost constant combat," Colonel Taplett told USA Today in 2000. "I don't think I slept two hours the whole time. You had to keep moving, or you'd freeze. I left Yudami-ni with roughly 1,300 men and got into Hagaru-ni (at the south end of the reservoir) with 326 effective Marines. Better than half our casualties were caused by weather." The severe frostbite he suffered caused Colonel Taplett to have difficulties walking for the rest of his life.

A longtime Arlington resident, Robert Donald Taplett was born in Tyndall, South Dakota. He graduated with honors from the University of South Dakota in 1940. He was a member of the Army ROTC in college, but in 1940, the Marine Corps corralled Colonel Taplett and a number of honor graduates across the country. He resigned his Army commission and became a Marine Second Lieutenant in 1940. He went through basic training at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

He loved being a Marine, his wife, Patricia Taplett, recalled. Dark-haired, 6 feet 2 inches tall, in his dress blues he seemed made for the Corps. "Some people called him a poor man's Gregory Peck," Mrs. Taplett said. "I always said he was a cross between Tyrone Power and Robert Taylor."

On December 7, 1941, he was serving aboard the USS Salt Lake City at Pearl Harbor. The cruiser was escorting the carrier Enterprise, which had engine trouble and was just outside the harbor when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor began. Unscathed, the Salt Lake City headed off in pursuit of the Japanese fleet.

He was aboard the Salt Lake City for three years and participated in the major battles of the Pacific; including a decisive engagement in the Aleutian Islands in 1943, a battle that naval historian Samuel Eliot Morison called "the last heavy gunfire daylight action, with no interference by air power, submarines or torpedoes." In October 1944, the Salt Lake City provided fire support at Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

After the war, Colonel Taplett served as commanding officer of the Navy supply barracks at Clearview, Utah, at Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay and at the Naval Air Station in Alameda, Calif. He also served with the Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division, at Camp Pendleton, California. He was dispatched to Korea in 1950.

"From the time he came in with the brigade, from Pusan, up through Seoul, all the way to the Chosin Reservoir, just about every dirty job the 5th Marines had, he led the way," said fellow Marine Frank Metersky, a member of the Chosin Few, an organization of Marines who survived the Chosin retreat.

"He, to me, is one of the finest officers in the history of the Marine Corps," said Metersky, co-chairman of the Korean War POW-MIA committee.

Colonel Taplett was awarded the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit and a Bronze Star.

After the Korean War, Colonel Taplett spent several months traveling the country lecturing to military audiences on the importance of close-air support, a Marine concept perfected during World War II, and then became academic director of The Basic School at Quantico in 1951 and 1952.

He was at Marine Corps headquarters from 1953 to 1956. From 1957 to 1959, he was based in Hawaii, although he spent most of his time training troops in Okinawa and the Philippines.

He was sent back to Quantico in 1959, a member of the landing force development center. Unhappy that he wasn't working directly with troops, he retired in 1960 after 20 years of service.

In retirement, Colonel Taplett and his family moved to Arlington, where he worked for several professional associations and then for the U.S. Postal Service, where his duties included teaching management techniques to supervisors. He retired in 1993.

He made two trips back to South Korea, the last in 1985, and while there expressed sympathy for the North Korean people. He remembered how they sheltered Marines during that unimaginably hard winter years earlier and how they shared whatever food they could spare.

He received his master's degree in human resource development from George Washington University, attending class at night, and wrote a combat memoir, "Dark Horse Six" (2003), the title alluding to his battalion's radio call, "Dark Horse." In Iraq today, the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines use the same call sign in his honor. He also collected donations for the Arlington charity SOME (So Others Might Eat), volunteered with the Women's National Symphony Decorators' Show House and was a monitor at the Kennedy Center Young People's Concerts.

Survivors include his wife of 58 years, of Arlington; six children, Claire Taplett and Marty K. Taplett, both of Arlington, Christine McCarty of Charlottesville, Robert Howard Taplett of Purchase, New York, Martin Ross Taplett of Pinehurst, North Carolina, and Margo Barbara Taplett of Park City, Utah; a brother; and nine grandchildren.

Posted: 8 January 2005 Updated: 4 February 2006



The Navy Unit Commendation Streamer

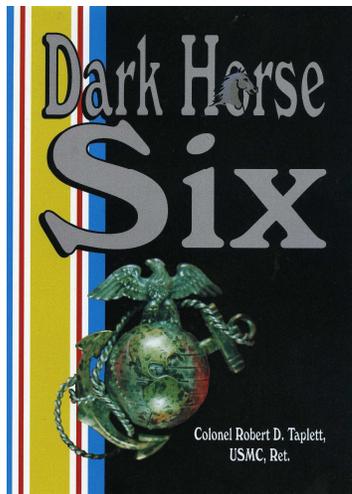
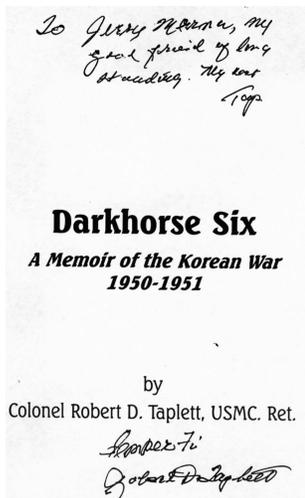
This bookmark depicts the Navy Unit Commendation Streamer awarded to the Marine Corps by the Secretary of the Navy. It was awarded for outstanding heroism in action against the enemy or in support of military operations. Three Navy Unit Commendations were issued to Marine Corps units for periods between August 1950 and July 1953.

Awards Received During The Korean War

At the conclusion of the Korean War in July 1953, a total of 42 Marines had been awarded the Nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor; 26 of these awards were posthumous. In addition, 221 Navy Crosses, and more than 1,500 Silver Stars were awarded to Marines. Of the awards cited above, Marine reservists received 13 Medals of Honor, 50 Navy Crosses, and over 400 Silver Stars.

On December 17, 2004 Gerald F. Merna wrote to Marine Daniel Hunter (and other Marines) as follows:

“Dark Horse Six” was the “call sign” for the Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, Fifth Marines in Korea in 1950. Bob Taplett was *that* Commanding Officer. He just finished writing his book “Dark Horse Six” (see promo card) telling of the sacrifices made by his Marines during that War. Just in time too, as we lost Col. Robert D. "Bob" Taplett, USMC (Ret.) *today*, as he accepted his new orders to “guard Heaven’s scenes.”



“Dark Horse Six”, by Col. Robert Taplett. The personal memoirs from Korea of the famed combat commander of the legendary 3/5th Marines. \$29.95 plus \$4.00 shipping. Ph. 609-567-0695 Send Visa/MC/Check to: Phillips Publications, P.O. Box 168, Williamstown, N.J. 08094

Dear Jerry— I apologize for being such a poor communicator. It's just that it takes me a long time to get anything done. My book is to be on the market @ April 1st. I have enclosed my first review received—since it is very favorable I'd like to share it with you. It was a long 7 year struggle to get it published. Regards as ever SF
3/23/03

(Dear Jerry—I apologize for being such a poor communicator. It is just that it takes me a long time to get anything done. My book is to be on the market @ April 1st. I have enclosed my first review received—since it is very favorable I'd like to share it with you. It was a long 7 year struggle to get it published. Regards as ever SF Tap 3/23/03)

Daniel Hunter replied:

Jerry,

Thanks for sending out the news of our loss. Please allow me to share an experience I was once blessed with that has helped comfort me many times over the passing years.

I once sat on the step of a fairly large monument in a local cemetery contemplating my life and the loss of friends lost in combat. I wondered aloud why life seemed so unfair and where it would lead me. As I sat there I questioned God and His reasoning, asked where His compassion had gone, and shed a few tears coming to terms with my life's decisions and the path I made the choice to follow.

After more than an hour of soul searching and deep prayer I still felt the pangs of pain tugging at my heart from not having the ability to understand God's will with my own understanding. I failed to quiet my mind long enough to allow Him to speak to me. Frustrated, confused, and angry, I got up and began to walk away from my granite perch on the steps of the monument. Something whispered from the depths of my heart to turn around.

As I turned and looked at the large marble object before me I was presented a gift as only our Lord could deliver it. The circular base was perhaps twenty feet across the center, beautifully polished granite that reflected the dazzling colors of the now setting sun with it's glorious reds, yellows, orange, blues, and purples along with the last shards of white glowing sunlight sparkling through the shine of the stone.

In the center, placed as a family stood a carved husband, wife, daughter and son all cut from white stone with the gentleman and lady to the rear touching hands as their children stood facing front before them as if they were all looking outside their silent gallery. Spread evenly around the base stood six strong pillars of light yellow laced marble, each with about a three foot circumference with six inch thick, four foot squared bases of light gray granite. Supported on the pillars at about twelve feet was a ring of the yellow laced marble approximately four foot high and four feet thick with a rounded protruding trim along the top and bottom.

Then as my eyes soaked in the beauty and amazing craftsmanship of the monument set before me I read the inscription carved in perfect gothic lettering curving across the upper ring that forced me to walk around the entire structure to read it in it's entirety. I, in the quiet of the twilight, realized what God was whispering to me the entire time I sat questioning His grace.

The inscription read, "TO LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WE LEAVE BEHIND IS TO HAVE NEVER DIED ". I will carry that whisper with me until our Heavenly Father calls me home to join my friends, family, and fellow Marines.

Colonel Robert "Dark Horse Six" Taplett will never die, Sir. As long as there are men like you..... As long as there are Marines... he will live on. He has given our young Marines a shadow to stand in. He has placed boots before us to fill with the feet of a brave young man willing to place our lives above his own. He has graced us all with the knowledge there are still outstanding Warriors willing to carry the burden of our nations safety and freedom, all the while doing their very best to make those Marines that went before them proud men like Colonel Taplett.

*May God himself greet him at the Gates of Heaven and bless him with peace of mind and heart.
With Deepest Sympathy,
Daniel*

Semper Fidelis is not just a motto for Marines ...it is a way of life.

Jerry Merna replied:

Daniel:

What a beautiful message you wrote. I was really very touched by it and appreciate you taking the time to do so. As a Marine, you know we lost a good man today; we lose a lot of good men every day lately it seems. I hit the sack now with your comforting words fresh in my mind. Many thanks. Your writing just gets better and better every time you compose something.

Your friend,

Jerry



The Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer

This bookmark depicts the Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer. It was awarded to the Marine Corps twice for extraordinary heroism in action during the Korean War. The first to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing for the historical role of close-support air missions in X Corps, United States Army operations, 22 November - 14 December 1950. The second was awarded to Companies B and C, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division who were attached to the 3d Turkish Brigade, Turkish Armed Forces Command. They were cited for outstanding performance and extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy, 28-29 May 1953.

1991

Robert D. Taplett
1101 South Arlington Ridge, No. 602
Arlington, Virginia 22202

May 24

Dear Jerry.

Thanks for the Complimentary
tickets. However I'm sorry to tell
you we're going to miss it. We
have today for a 7 week trip.

Won't be home until July 15th.

Will spend 2 weeks
visiting our daughter in Albuquerque
then north thru Colo. Wyo. north
across Canada to Ottawa and
finally on way home a short
stop with our family in Purchase
N.Y.

Hope one of these days we
can get together again.

Best regards.

Tap.

MERNA BROTHERS' COMMENTS IN COL. TAPLETT 'S FUNERAL GUEST BOOK

My son, Major John Merna, USMC, was honored to write his thesis last year at the Command & Staff College exclusively about Colonel Robert D. Taplett and his heroic combat leadership of the Third Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment during its historic and grueling first year of fighting in Korea. Five weeks after his graduation, my son deployed to Iraq where he continues to serve today with the First Marine Division. John was so pleased to meet this Marine legend and appreciated the time Colonel Taplett spent with him during the oral interview, despite his illness. John told us he had a great meeting, that he was able to introduce his wife and then four-month old daughter to Colonel Taplett, and that Colonel Taplett "really enjoyed playing with (his daughter) Madelyn." A short seven months later, Colonel Taplett was called home to "heaven's scenes," as mentioned in our glorious "The Marines' Hymn."

In writing his thesis, John wanted to focus on the best of Marine Corps leadership. In selecting Colonel Robert D. Taplett, he chose well, a role model for current and future generations of Marines. God bless our Corps for producing leaders like "Dark Horse Six," Colonel Taplett's radio call sign during his Korean War battle.

Semper Fidelis,

James E. Merna, Lanham, Maryland

February 3, 2005



Marine Brothers Jim and Jerry, Korea 1952

Bob Taplett was as great in his post-Marine Corps civilian endeavors as he was as a United States Marine. We met very shortly after I joined the Postal Service in 1968 upon my retirement from the Corps, at the USPS Headquarters in Washington, DC. I did not know Bob while in the Corps (I was in Korea after him, May52-May53). When I checked in to Postal Service Headquarters I was approached by this tall, lean fellow with his hand outstretched to shake hands, as he said: "I understand you were a Marine?"

Our friendship existed from that day, and we worked side by side for many years. He had a sterling Postal Career as a Postal Executive in several key positions, and made many contributions. What more could one expect from "Dark Horse Six?"

Dot and I have also known Pat for many years, and I was privileged to attend his funeral on 31Jan05 to witness the well earned full military honors and ceremonies accorded him. There wasn't an empty seat in the Fort Myers Memorial Chapel, nor too many dry eyes! God Bless You, Pat, and all of your wonderful family.

Love, Dot and Jerry Merna (Mustang, 1stLt, USMC (Ret.) 1947-1968 Potomac Falls, VA February 2, 2005

Pat:

A brief update on John.

Now a LtCol, he is currently the Commanding Officer of the 1stBn, 5thMarines—the same Battalion Brother Jim and I served with in Korea (1952-1953). He just returned to Camp Pendleton with his Battalion last week after another 7 month tour afloat and in Okinawa. He expects another deployment to Iraq late spring or early summer.

He and his wife Michelle now have two children.

Jerry-23Jan07



**LtCol. John E. Merna USMC
CO, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines,
First Marine Division**



**MajGen R.F. Natonski CG 1stMarDiv; LtCol John E.
Merna, CO 1stBn, 5thMarines, John's Marine Dad
James E. Merna**

Change of Command Ceremony, Camp Pendleton, CA, 16 February 2006



COLONEL ROBERT D. TAPLETT, USMC (RET.) 1918 - 2004
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY – JANUARY 31, 2005

(Photos and Captions by 1stLt Gerald F. Merna USMC (Ret.))

MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL

Robert D. Taplett
 COLONEL
 United States Marine Corps, Retired



31 January 2005
 1245
 The Old Post Chapel
 Fort Myer, Virginia

CATHOLIC FUNERAL MASS

ORDER OF CELEBRATION

The funeral liturgy: "Order of Christian Funerals" Booklet
 is provided for following the Order of Mass.

Rev. Msgr. Joseph L. Goudreau, Presiding

Prelude	"Ave Maria"	Franz Schubert Virginia Brubaker, Cantor
Rite at the Church Entrance		Booklet, pg 1
Processional Song	"On Eagle's Wings" (Stanzas 1 & 2)	Booklet, No. 45, pg 42
First Reading	Wisdom 3:1-6, 9	Booklet, pg 29
Responsorial Psalm 23		Booklet, No. 47, pg 45
	Response: "My Shepherd is the Lord, nothing shall I want."	
Holy Gospel (please stand)		
Homily		
General Intercessions (stand)		
Communion Song	"Panis Angelicus"	Cesar Franck
Prayers of Final Commendation (people stand)		Booklet, pg 20
Song of Sending Forth	"Eternal Father, Strong to Save" (Stanzas 1 & 2)	Melita

(Funeral Program provided by Taplett Family)

HONORARY PALMBEARERS

- LT. CMDR. EMMETT D. ANDERSON, USNR (RET)
MR. HOWARD CHOW
- LT. COL. HARRY W. EDWARDS, USMC(RET)
MR. PATRICK T. HAGARTY
- BRIG. GEN. FREDERICH I. KARCH, USMC(RET)
MR. CHARLES J. LARSON
- GENERAL EDWARD C. MEYER, USA(RET)
COL. GEORGE G. RYFFEL, USMC(RET)
- COL. ALBERT W. SNELL, USMC(RET)
CMDR. JAMES H. TAPLETT, USN(RET)

LECTOR

COL. WILLIAM JONES, USMC(RET)

USHER

MR. JOHN OPIE

ORGANIST

MR. ROBERT SCHAAF



Hearse bearing Col. Robert D. Taplett USMC (Ret.) Arrive at Fort Myer Memorial Chapel, Arlington, VA



Band and Honor Guard in front of Fort Myer Memorial Chapel



Casket placed on board military caisson as Marine Band observes ceremony



Caisson leads Funeral procession into Arlington National Cemetery



America's Famous Riderless Horse assigned to the Caisson Platoon at Fort Myer, VA



Color Guard passes Col. Taplett's Caisson



Honor Platoon and Color Guard march past Memorial Chapel entering Arlington Cemetery



Marching Band and Honor Platoon begin march into cemetery



Honor Platoon and Color Guard join procession into cemetery



Caisson departs Memorial Chapel



Mrs. Pat Taplett joins procession into cemetery



**Retired Northern VA and Washington, DC
Postmasters Gerald F. Merna and John Cochran**



**Postmaster John Cochran and Son
Michael, from Greenville, DE**

Following his retirement from the Marine Corps, Col. Taplett joined the former *Post Office Department (POD)* and worked with both Mr. Merna and Mr. Cochran. After Aug. 12, 1970 when President Nixon signed into law the most comprehensive postal legislation since the founding of the Republic (Public Law 91-375), the *Postal Reorganization Act of 1971*, the *POD* was renamed the *U.S. Postal Service (USPS)* and Taplett, Cochran and Merna were appointed to Postal Career Executive Service (PCES) positions in the new *USPS*.



Marine Cemetery Road Guards for Col. Taplett's funeral join end of procession



Flag covered casket arrives at grave site, Arlington National Cemetery



13-Gun Salute rendered by Firing Squad and Marine Corps Honor Platoon



Mrs. Patricia Taplett (seated right) observes the folding of the American Flag presented to her in the name of the President of the United States

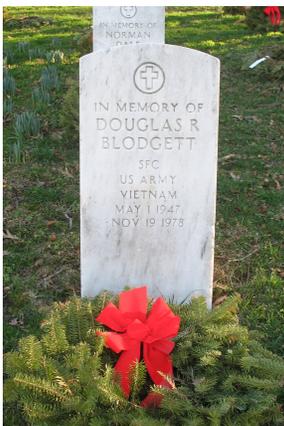


MEMORIAL SECTION I*, ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, JANUARY 17, 2007

(Photos by Gerald F. Merna)



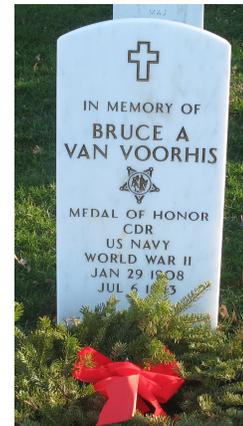
***Established by an Act of Congress and under regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Army whereby appropriate memorials or markers may be erected in Arlington National Cemetery to honor the memory of certain individuals or group of individuals. This includes those who are missing in action; whose remains have not been recovered or identified; whose remains were buried at sea, whether by the member's or veteran's own choice or otherwise; whose remains were donated to science; or whose remains were cremated and their ashes were scattered without interment of any portion of the ashes. Such Headstone inscriptions begin with, "In Memory Of."**



Brother of former Merna Neighbor



George C. Merna USN WWII



Medal of Honor Recipient

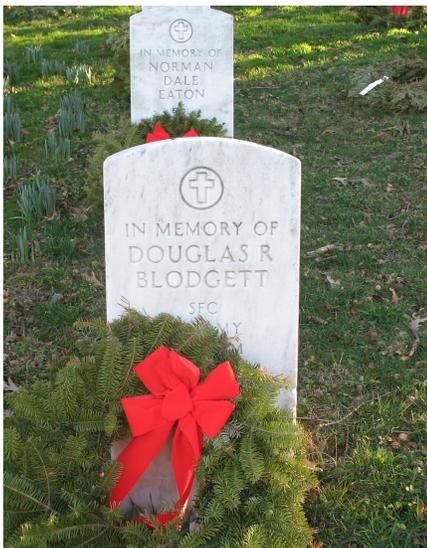


Wreaths Across America

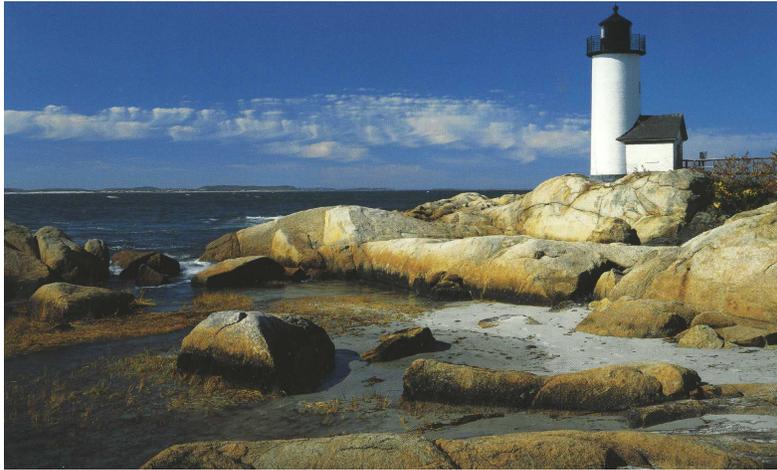
Every December for the past 15 years, Morrill Worcester, 56, owner of one of the world's largest holiday wreath companies, has taken time in the midst of his busiest season to haul a truckload of wreaths to Arlington from his small Maine town of Harrington where he and a small band of volunteers laid the wreaths in virtual obscurity. But in the last 12 months that has changed, thanks to a dusting of snow last year at the cemetery, an evocative photograph, a sentimental poem and a chain e-mail, and Worcester went national with a new program, *Wreaths Across America*. He, shipped about 1,300 wreaths to more than 200 national cemeteries and veterans' memorials in all 50 states, saying he wants to help Americans remember and honor deceased military veterans, particularly at Christmas, when they're missed most. On his website is this comment: "People want to know if I'm a veteran. I'm not. But I make it my business never to forget."



Memorial Section I, Arlington National Cemetery



Douglas R. Blodgett, brother of a former neighbor in Alexandria, VA and Brother George C. Merna, Signalman 2d Class USN killed in Action 11Feb45 when his LST-577 was sunk in Pacific by a Japanese Submarine. (Memorial Section I)



Dear Jerry -

What a dear surprise came yesterday! Your heart felt Tribute to Tap is appreciated. You knew him well and had in common his job - the Corps, the USPS, and his Catholic being. He did well in this life and I do think he enjoyed his USPS years as much as his USMC years.

Your booklet is a treasure for our family and contains pictures of Arlington I do not have - It's been an empty two years without Tap but you are one of the few who saw him during those last years - he was ready to meet his Lord and we were ready to let him go. But that doesn't change the void he left. We can't celebrate Christmas as yet because Christmas time in 2004 was so grim knowing he was waiting burial (in Centerville!)

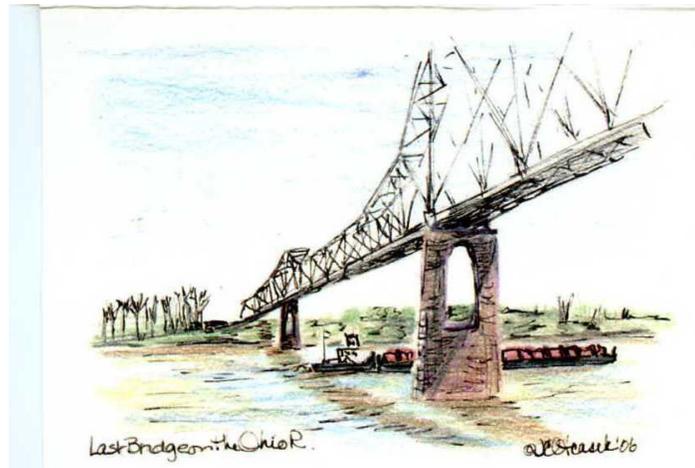
I haven't been to the new Museum as yet - I've heard conflicting opinions about it. When it is warmer the girls and I will venture to Triangle.

One grandson is now a USMC reserve Cpl in a reserve unit in Alabama and another is a new Ensign at Jintil school awaiting to board the USS Ronald Reagan. I'm glad because our own son didn't want a service life.

My very best love to Dad and please know how deeply appreciated your tribute to Tap is by this Marine widow -

Semper Par

Jan 18/2007 - Peta 1/27/07



2/15/07

Dear Jerry,

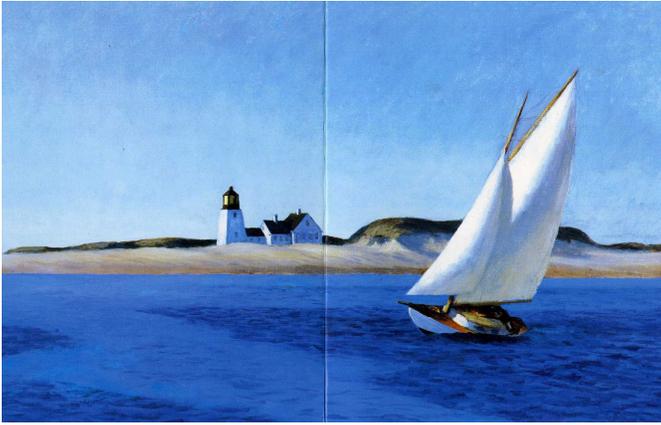
On a recent trip to visit my mom, Pat Taplett, she shared with me the lovely album you had assembled.

It is so obvious the huge esteem you felt for my dad. A very touching gesture on your part for her and us.

He is with his "troops" - what could be more comforting and he was fortunate to lived as long as he did and finally able to honor them with their story.

Such a special man - that I was able to call Dad.

In appreciation
Chris (Taplett) McClarty



THE LONG LEG
Edward Hopper, American, 1882-1967
oil on canvas, 20 x 30 3/4 inches
The Virginia Steele Scott Collection
The Huntington Library,
Art Collections and Botanical Gardens
San Marino, California (88.8.25)

H. George Caspari, Inc.
New York, Zürich
Printed in Switzerland
95-64807 A

Caspari Ltd.
Saffron Walden,
Essex CB11 3AP

3MART

Dear Mr. Merrin,

Thank you so very much for your thoughtfulness in sending the wonderful commemorative booklet on my father and Marjorie. Mother and I were so touched. How kind to include the diskette from which I'll make copies for my siblings and the grandchildren. It is a most touching tribute also to the bond and friendship the two of you shared. Your kindness is truly extraordinary to commit your time and

attention to such a remarkable memory. Thank you and may God grant many blessings upon you and yours during this Holy Lenten Season.

Fondly,

Clare Japlett



THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL

IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL



The Korean War was a conflict between Communist and non-Communist forces in Korea from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953. The United States suffered 36,934 dead and 103,284 wounded. China lost up to 1 million soldiers, Korea two million, and 3,000 Turks, Britons, and other nationals in the UN forces. The Korean War Veterans Memorial spans 2.2 acres of the National Mall in Washington, DC. Nineteen stainless steel statues (7'3"- 7'6" tall), each weighing nearly 1000 pounds, represent personnel from all services who fought the war. There are 14 Army soldiers, 3 Marines, 1 Navy medic and 1 Air Force Forward Air Observer comprised of all ethnic derivations. Low growth juniper bushes at their feet and the granite 'dikes' lying across the Patrols path suggest the rice paddy terrain so familiar to Korea.



The Mural Wall spanning 164 feet is highly polished dark gray granite weighing more than 100 tons. More than 2400 photographic images of land, sea and air support troops of all services and ethnic derivations are laser etched into the wall. The Pool is 30 feet in diameter, surrounded with highly reflective dark gray granite. The Reflecting Wall adjacent to the pool is engraved with the powerful inscription:

"Freedom Is Not Free"