

Veterans Day

Wednesday
November 10th, 2010
VA Chapel 10:00am

Honoring All Who Served



Tomah VA Medical Center



Director's Message

Over the years, the observance of Veterans Day has evolved. Our Nation's custom had been to observe the end of World War in 1918 at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, which became a legal holiday known as Armistice Day in 1938. Then, in 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued America's first Veterans Day Proclamation. In it, President Eisenhower called on all Americans to "solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us re-consecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain."

On this Veterans Day 2010, we remember and honor the more than 1.1 million Americans who died while in military service and the 24 million other American Veterans who have passed on since their service. On this Veterans Day 2010, we continue to honor those who have served our Nation in uniform; some 48 million men and women whose service spans our history -- from the Revolutionary War to Iraq and Afghanistan. On this Veterans Day 2010, we think of the sacrifices of our Veterans, their families and loved ones.

Thank you for attending today's Veterans Day ceremony.

Jerald D. Molnar

Medical Center Director

INTRODUCTION

James Theras Public Affairs Officer Tomah VAMC,
Master of Ceremonies

INVOCATION

Maynard P. Hofer VA Chaplain

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

American Legion, Mauston

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Entire Assembly

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Tomah, a capella choir/ Entire Assembly

WELCOME

Jerald D. Molnar, Medical Center Director

"You Can Hear A Pin Drop"

Video— Michael Peterson, NVCAF Emcee

REMARKS

Donald J. Weber CEO Logistics Health Inc.

"O America"

Tomah a capella choir

Directed by: Ms. Angie Plueger

Ceremony Participants:

Ed Thompson, US Navy Veteran

Former Mayor of Tomah

Dennis Beattie, US Marine

Jr. Vice Commander, Marine Corps League

Mitchell Red Cloud Jr. Detachment

Jerald D. Molnar, Medical Center Director.

"Amazing Grace"

John Elliott, US Navy Veteran

RETIRING OF COLORS

American Legion, Mauston

BENEDICTION

Chaplain Hofer

TAPS

HALL OF HEROES INDUCTEES

Peter Wirth Jr.

(U.S. Marine)

Navy Cross and Purple Heart for extraordinary heroism on the island of Okinawa, June 2, 1945

Leonard J. Jasinski

(U.S. Marine)

Two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart for heroic actions during the Korean War

The Battle of Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir On October 25, 1950, with General Douglas MacArthur's United Nations forces closing in a victorious end to the Korean War, Communist Chinese forces began pouring across the border. Striking the spread out UN troops with overwhelming force, they compelled them to retreat all across the front. In northeastern Korea, the US X Corps, led by Major General Ned Almond, was strung out with its units unable to support each other. Those units near the Chosin (Changjin) Reservoir included the 1st Marine Division and elements of the 7th Infantry Division.

Advancing quickly, the Ninth Army Group of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) blunted X Corps advance and swarmed around the UN troops at Chosin. Alerted to their predicament, Almond ordered the commander of the 1st Marine Division, Major General Oliver P. Smith, to begin a fighting retreat back towards the coast.

Commencing on November 26, Smith's men endured extreme cold and severe weather. The next day, the 5th and 7th Marines attacked from their positions near Yudam-ni, on the west bank of the reservoir, with some success against the PLA forces in the area. Over the next three days the 1st Marine Division successfully defended their positions at Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri against Chinese human wave assaults. On November 29, Smith contacted Colonel "Chesty" Puller, commanding the 1st Marine Regiment, at Koto-ri and asked him to assemble a task force to re-open the road from there to Hagaru-ri.

Complying, Puller formed a force consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Douglas B. Drysdale's 41 Independent Commando (Royal Marines Battalion), G Company (1st Marines), B Company (31st Infantry), and other rear echelon troops. Numbering 900 men, the 140-vehicle task force departed at 9:30 AM on the 29th, with Drysdale in command. Pushing up the road to Hagaru-ri, the task force became bogged down after being ambushed by Chinese troops. Fighting in an area that was dubbed "Hell Fire Valley," Drysdale was reinforced by tanks sent by Puller.

Pressing on, Drysdale's men ran a gauntlet of fire and reached Hagaru-ri with the bulk of 41 Commando, G Company, and the tanks. During the attack, the B Company, 31st Infantry, became separated and isolated along the road. While most were killed or captured, some were able to escape back to Koto-ri. While the Marines were fighting to the west, the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) of the 7th Infantry was battling for its life on the eastern shore of reservoir. Repeatedly assaulted by the 80th and 81st PLA divisions, the 3,000-man 31st RCT was worn down and overrun. Some survivors of the unit reached the Marine lines at Hagaru-ri on December 2. Holding his position at Hagaru-ri, Smith ordered the 5th and 7th Marines to abandon the area around Yudam-ni and link up with the rest of the division. Fighting a brutal three-day battle, the Marines entered Hagaru-ri on December 4. Two days later, Smith's command began fighting their way back to Koto-ri.

Battling overwhelming odds, the Marines and other elements of X Corps attacked continuously as they moved towards the port of Hungnam. A highlight of the campaign occurred on December 9, when a bridge was constructed over a 1,500-ft. gorge between Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni using pre-fabricated bridge sections dropped by the US Air Force. Cutting through the enemy, the last of the "Frozen Chosin" reached Hungnam on December 11.



The Battle of Okinawa proved to be the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War. Thirty-four allied ships and craft of all types had been sunk, mostly by kamikazes, and 368 ships and craft damaged. The fleet had lost 763 aircraft. Total American casualties in the operation numbered over 12,000 killed [including nearly 5,000 Navy dead and almost 8,000 Marine and Army dead] and 36,000 wounded. Navy casualties were tremendous, with a ratio of one killed for one wounded as compared to a one to five ratio for the Marine Corps. Combat stress also caused large numbers of psychiatric casualties, a terrible hemorrhage of front-line strength.



In the battle of Okinawa, the rate of combat losses due to battle stress, expressed as a percentage of those caused by combat wounds, was 48%. American losses at Okinawa were so heavy as to illicit Congressional calls for an investigation into the conduct of the military commanders. Not surprisingly, the cost of this battle, in terms of lives, time, and material, weighed heavily in the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan just six weeks later.

By late October 1944, Okinawa, in the Ryukyu Island chain, had been targeted for invasion by Allied forces. This invasion -- code named Operation Iceberg -- would see the assembling of the greatest naval armada ever. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance's 5th fleet was to include more than 40 aircraft carriers, 18 battleships, 200 destroyers and hundreds of assorted support ships. Some 1,300 US ships surrounded the island. Of those, 365 were amphibious ships. Over 182,000 troops would make up the assault, planned for 01 April 1945, Easter Sunday.

On 29 September 1944 B-29 bombers conducted the initial reconnaissance mission over Okinawa and its outlying islands. On 10 October 1944 nearly two hundred of Admiral Halsey's planes struck Naha, Okinawa's capital and principal city, in five separate waves. The city was almost totally devastated. The American war against Japan was coming inexorably closer to the Japanese homeland.

In mid-March 1945, the American fleet of over 1,300 ships gathered off Okinawa for the naval bombardment. The first kamikaze attacks of the Okinawan campaign began on 18 March 1945. On 21 March, the first baka or piloted, suicide rocket bombs, were spotted below Japanese "Betty" bombers.

The invasion began on 01 April 1945 when 60,000 troops (two Marine and two Army divisions) landed with little opposition. The day began and ended with the heaviest concentration of naval gunfire ever expended to support an amphibious landing. Gathered off the invasion beaches were 10 older American battleships, including several Pearl Harbor survivors—the USS Tennessee, Maryland, and West Virginia—as well as 9 cruisers, 23 destroyers and destroyer escorts, and 117 rocket gunboats. Together they fired 3,800 tons of shells at Okinawa during the first 24 hours.

Okinawans had long been resigned to the severe typhoons that sweep their land, but nothing in their experience prepared them for the *tetsu no bow* the "storm of steel" as one Okinawan characterized the assault on the island. At 0830 the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions of the XXIV Corps and the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions of the III Amphibious Corps crossed the Hagushi beaches, with 16,000 troops landing unopposed in the first hour. By nightfall more than 60,000 were ashore.

The battle proceeded in four phases: first, the advance to the eastern coast (April 1-4); second, the clearing of the northern part of the island (April 5-18); third, the occupation of the outlying islands (April 10 - June 26); and fourth, the main battle against the dug in elements of the 32nd Army which began on 06 April and did not end until 21 June.

Donald J. Weber founder, chairman and CEO of Logistics Health Inc. of La Crosse.

Before all that he was Don Weber, Marine grunt, not long off the family farm half a world away from the dangerous battlefields of South Vietnam in 1967-68.

"I felt a need to serve," said Weber of the time after his 1966 graduation from Cashton High School. Besides, "the family farm wasn't big enough" to absorb him, not with four other kids wedged around the kitchen table.

He grew up on the small dairy farm knowing how to work hard but said he didn't have much time before and after chores for reading and homework. It was touch and go as to whether he would even graduate from high school.

His late father, also named Donald, was a World War II Army infantry veteran who spent more than a year in a German prisoner of war camp in 1944-45. He was starved down to about 120 pounds and had been tortured for an escape attempt before liberation finally came, the son recalled.

Don's mother, Rita, still has the 167 letters from her special soldier - including the one and only that made its way out of the Young Don figured they were pretty poor back on the farm until he ended up in Vietnam, in villages with bamboo huts, no running water and hungry children begging for food.

The teenage Don Weber could just as easily been a soldier, sailor or airman, but he wanted to get started right away and the casualty-depleted Marine Corps was willing to take him within 10 days.

Join the Marines - no waiting, no long delays - just sign here and get ready for three or four very tough months in boot camp and infantry training.

With that initiation into the Marine fraternity behind him, Weber and lots of others flew to Okinawa to pick up weapons and gear. Then, before you can say lock and load you're in Danang and aboard a chopper taking you to your new workplace.

In Weber's case, home was in the ranks as a replacement in Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines somewhere north near the DMZ.

Officially the DMZ was the demilitarized zone separating North and South Vietnam. Unofficially, and more to the point, the DMZ was known as the Dead Marine Zone.

Young Weber was a rifleman, often walking point for his unit. He was shot and wounded in an ambush and saw many of his friends die. And that was just the first three months.

"For some reason I'm here and many aren't," he says, expressing the familiar feelings of veterans from all wars when they try to figure out what happened and why.

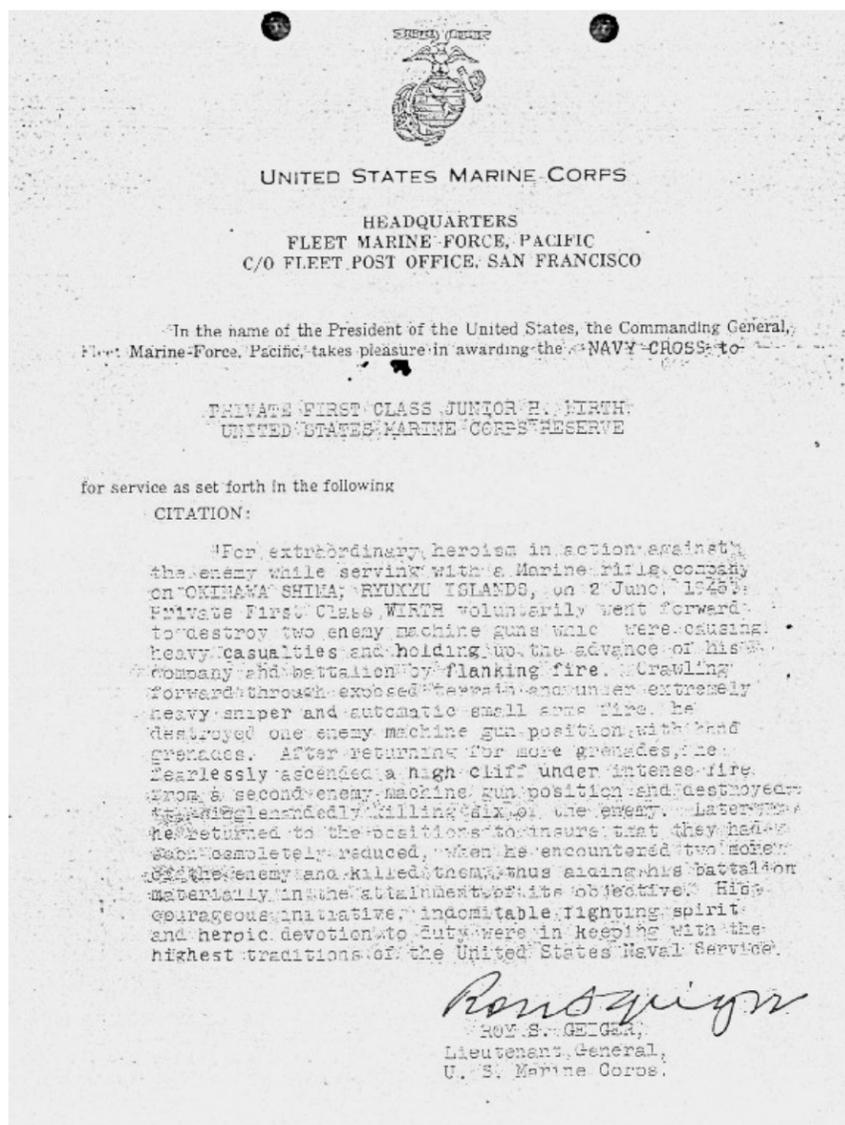
He went on to serve his full tour of duty in Vietnam and the corporal from Cashton earned some military honors, including two Bronze Star medals, Vietnam Gallantry Cross Medal and the Purple Heart for wounds in combat.



2010 Hall of Heroes Inductee Peter Wirth Jr.

Marine Peter Wirth Jr. was an 18 year old Marine when he received a Navy Cross and Purple Heart for extraordinary heroism while serving with a Marine rifle company on the island of Okinawa Shima, Ryukhu Islands on June 2, 1945. Private First Class Wirth voluntarily went forward to destroy two enemy machine guns that were causing heavy casualties. The Battle of Okinawa was the largest amphibious assault of the Pacific War and lasted eighty-two days. The battle has been referred to as the "Typhoon of Steel" because of the ferocity of the fighting, the intensity of the gunfire and the sheer numbers of combatants involved.

Mr. Wirth and his family are in attendance.



2010 Hall of Heroes Inductee Leonard J. Jasinski

Marine Leonard Jasinski received two Bronze Stars (one with "V" device) and a Purple Heart for heroic achievement in connection with combat operations while serving with the 1st Marine Division near Oi-jong-bu, South Korea and Sudong, North Korea. Private First Class Jasinski served in China and Pearl Harbor in 1948 and participated in the following campaigns during the Korean War: Capture and securing of Seoul, Korea and the Wonsan-Hungnam-Chosin Campaign in North Korea. His wife, Mrs. Arlene Jasinski, and several family members are in attendance.

