



A Tribute to Private Hal Vernon Buff

By - Tom Forney

Mere words are not adequate to express our feelings when we try to pay tribute to a member of the services from our community who has paid with his life to uphold the banner of freedom and justice. But words are all we have to express our pride, our sorrow, and sympathy to loved ones. Many brave men from every part of our nation have given and will give their lives for the ideals of Americanism. It makes us sad that this is so. Yet we are much more saddened when one from our midst must pay the supreme price. Praise cannot bring back the hero, but it can help to lessen the grief of the loved ones and possibly can inspire others to contribute toward making this sacrifice worth the price.



Private Hal Vernon Buff, United States Marine Corps Reserve, was killed in action on Iwo Jima. He was known to family and friends as "Vernon." As one who volunteered to become a Marine, Vernon without doubt was full of courage and devotion to duty. To us it is certain that to be a Marine is to be courageous.

Vernon was only 19 years old when he, presumably advancing upon the enemy on the far-flung island of Iwo Jima, lost his life, March 19, 1945. He was born March 11, 1926, at Morganton, N.C. Vernon was the son of Carl Buff, originally of near Lawndale, and Mrs. Evelynna Martin Buff of Lawndale. His grandfather is Mr. George Martin better known to all Lawndale as "Pap." Vernon has uncles, aunts and cousins, as well as brothers in our community. Vernon attended Mull Elementary School and Morganton High School. His family later moved to Lawndale and Vernon went to work with the Cleveland Mill & Power Company. He worked in the spinning department on the 3rd shift, later being changed to the Brownell Twister Department on the same shift. Vernon's record as a worker is excellent. He was a quiet boy who went about his duties with seriousness of purpose and enthusiasm in doing a job well. He was a member of the Bethel Methodist Church near Morganton.

Vernon volunteered for the Marine Corps, entering service June 16, 1944 at 18 years of age. He reported to Parris Island, S.C., where he received his "Boot" training. After that he was transferred to Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he stayed about a month, following that he spent about one week at Camp Pendleton, Calif. From there he sailed into the Pacific battle area. It is not known just where he was during the interval of time lapsing between his leaving California and his death on Iwo Jima except that he mentioned in a letter written at sea that he had been at Pearl Harbor.

Vernon wrote his family as often as possible, and these letters tell much of his character and state of mind. He was constantly assuring his mother that he was all right and having fun. He often mentioned church activities at home and in service. He wrote often of prayer. He liked his company and spoke highly of his superior officers. He sent money home to his family. Vernon received a Christmas check from the Cleveland Mill & Power Company as did the other former employees in service. We think it is worth special mention that he presented his check to his mother as a birthday gift and instead of taking full credit, he said it was from his brothers and himself.

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