

This Marine Captain Stood Tall

By John Gunn

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Death has claimed a former Marine captain who won the Medal of Honor on Iwo Jima three years after the Philadelphia Eagles offered him a contract.

Bobby Dunlap had played football for Monmouth (Ill.) College. "Bobby, you're 5-9, 155, if that. How and why did the Eagles ever try and sign *you*?" a reporter once asked.

In early 1942, the Eagles signed a number of free agents because WWII was taking a lot of their players (Dunlap was called up before training camp). Coach Greasy Neale invited "hordes of rookies," a record book noted. The 2-9 Eagles used at least 23 playing their first pro season, for many their only season, and merged with the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1943.

In those days, Illinois might scrimmage a Monmouth or a Knox or another small Illinois school for a quarter or a half. (The L.A. Rams also did that in the early '50s with overmatched Navy and Marine teams from Southern California.) Famed Illinois coach Bob Zuppke recommended Dunlap, a back, to the Eagles because he made 10 or 12 tackles.

The truth was that Bobby, like Ted Williams, had 10-20 or better vision. "I could read the quarterback's lips in the huddles and knew where the play was going," Dunlap said.

Zuppke obviously didn't know that.

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Rank and organization: Captain, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, 5th Marine Division.

Place and date: On Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 20 and 21 February 1945. Entered service at: Illinois. Born: 19 October 1920, Abingdon, Ill.

Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as commanding officer of Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines, 5th Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces during the seizure of Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands on 20 and 21 February, 1945.

Defying uninterrupted blasts of Japanese artillery, mortar, rifle and machine gun fire, Capt. Dunlap led his troops in a determined advance from low ground uphill toward the steep cliffs from which the enemy poured a devastating rain of shrapnel and bullets, steadily inching forward until the tremendous volume of enemy fire from the caves located high to his front temporarily halted his progress.

Determined not to yield, he crawled alone approximately 200 yards forward of his front lines, took observation at the base of the cliff 50 yards from Japanese lines, located the enemy gun positions and returned to his own lines where he relayed the vital information to supporting artillery and naval gunfire units.

Persistently disregarding his own personal safety, he then placed himself in an exposed vantage point to direct more accurately the supporting fire and, working without respite for 2 days and 2 nights under constant enemy fire, skillfully directed a smashing bombardment against the almost impregnable Japanese positions despite numerous obstacles and heavy Marine casualties.

A brilliant leader, Capt. Dunlap inspired his men to heroic efforts during this critical phase of the battle and by his cool decision, indomitable fighting spirit and daring tactics in the face of fanatic opposition greatly accelerated the final decisive defeat of Japanese countermeasures in his sector and materially furthered the continued advance of his company.

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His great personal valor and gallant spirit of self-sacrifice throughout the bitter hostilities reflect the highest credit upon Capt Dunlap and the U.S. Naval Service.

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Dunlap carried war wounds with him through the years as he taught and farmed in and near Monmouth, a western Illinois community. He was a 1942 graduate of Monmouth College, finishing several months before his cousin, (Adm.) James Stockdale, entered.

On the campus, the Dunlap Terrace leads to the Stockdale Student Center.

As long as his health permitted, Dunlap went to Medal of Honor functions in Washington. "When the President says jump, you jump," He said with a smile.

But his health didn't allow him to attend the opening of a national Medal of Honor exhibit at Indianapolis last Memorial Day weekend.

Jack Lummus, an end with Baylor and the New York Giants, also won the Medal of Honor on Iwo. Both served in the 5th Marine Division.