

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Navy Cross Presentation for LCpl. Ned Seath
Quantico, VA
Friday, 11 February, 2011

Welcome to the award ceremony presenting both a Navy Cross and a Bronze Star to Ned Seath. Welcome also to Ned's wife, Sue, his children, Angie, Melissa and Ben.

This has been a long time coming, 45 years in fact, and a lot of people made today happen: Bill Hutton, who served with Ned in his platoon; Major General David Richwine, U.S. Marine Corps, retired, who was platoon commander; Congressman Dale Kildee, who asked the Navy to forget about the length of time that had passed and take a look at this; and Sue, for helping set up this event.

It says something, also, even after 45 years, about the character of Ned Seath. He joined the Marine Corps, did his duty in a heroic and valiant way and got on with his life. Became a football player with the Detroit Lions' farm team and a champion power lifter and did a lot of honest days' work in the service of this country in different ways outside the Marine Corps.

Ned Seath grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. His dad was a Marine who fought at Guadalcanal. There was some story about a fair in the woods and a clown in a cedar tree that we sort of won't go into here, but Ned grew up hunting and fishing, and when he was 17, he joined the Navy, of all things.

But after two years, his heritage won out and he transferred to the Marine Corps. Now, why you'd want to go through two boot camps is a little beyond me, but he did and was better for it.

Four years later, he found himself in Vietnam. On the 15th of July, 1966, when a sniper hit his unit - Company K, 3rd battalion, 4th Marines - there was a Marine down, wounded, and Ned was told that he was not reachable because of the fire coming in. Ned crawled out there and brought him back to safety anyway. For that, Ned is being awarded the Bronze Star today.

The very next day, July 16th, 1966, Company K and Operation HASTINGS was set up to block a major, major route for the North Vietnamese army and the Vietcong. And they came under heavy attack. The machine gunner and his machine gun went down and the Marines were in danger of being overrun. Ned Seath, in the dark, took two broken machine guns and, from the good parts of them, assembled one working machine gun. And even though he'd been wounded in the hand and in the leg, he started firing at the enemy and he drove them back, and at times he stood up over the machine gun to fire. Bill Hutton said it best, if Ned Seath hadn't done what he did, he wouldn't be alive today.

Ned is accepting these awards on behalf of all the Marines who served. He particularly mentioned Pat Englemen, who that night, July the 16th, crawled with no weapon back and forth

to bring him ammunition. So just like that night 45 years ago, Ned Seath is still thinking about his buddies more than he's thinking about himself. But that's what it is to be a Marine.

We are surrounded in this great place by history of the Marine Corps. For 235 years, the Marines have looked after Marines. Marines have gone through the cauldron that is combat with uncommon courage, uncommon valor, always looking after their fellow Marines.

You can read about Ned's heroism, but it just can't tell you what it was like in any way to do that, to go through what he and his fellow members of his battalion went through. But what they went through, what Ned did, was emblematic of what the Marine Corps has done through its entire history. And it's emblematic still with Ned's successors, the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, who will deploy this spring to the Helmand province in Afghanistan.

Ned Seath is a hero. He's a hero for a lot of things – for what he did in Vietnam and for what he's done since he came home. He worked to help his fellow veterans, not only Vietnam but from the wars since then. Today, the men that you saved have children and grandchildren of their own. There is no better legacy than that.

Thank you all very much.