



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
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PRESS RELEASE

Voices of Veterans: Staff Sergeant John Latta Shares His Story of Service in the U.S. Marine Corps

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AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. This week, we highlight the service of Staff Sergeant John Latta, who served in the United States Marine Corps.

Latta was born in Niagara Falls, New York, in 1930, to hardworking parents who ran a small farm and preferred country living. After finishing high school, Latta joined the Marine Corps and attended boot camp in Paris Island, South Carolina. He chuckled when asked about the difficulties of boot camp. The training was relatively easy for a strong young man familiar with strenuous farm work.

He met his best friend Gene Moscicki in Buffalo, New York, and they both waited to be assigned to a group to enter boot camp. Latta and Moscicki would spend most of their time together in the Marines.



VOICES OF VETERANS

name Latta, John		
military branch Marines	rank SSgt	conflict Korea
date interviewed 11/22/2010		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interview available on voicesofveterans.org

John Latta served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1948 to 1952, as a Reconnaissance Marine. SSgt. Latta's fire team battled days of freezing weather and were one of the last groups of Marines to leave the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War.



Latta entered the Reconnaissance Company and was assigned to the First Marine Division out of Camp Pendleton in California. While the trip overseas was a bit hazy for Latta, one of his first memories of being in Korea was incredibly profound.

"The first memories I really have are of Gene Moscicki sitting on a pile of rocks out behind the school that we were bivouacked in after we beat the North Korean Army, and he was Catholic, and he was playing with something with his hands. I couldn't tell, so I walked out to see what he was doing, and he was playing with his medals. He had a St. Christopher Medal. He said, 'Jack, I'm not gonna make it back.' I said, 'Gene, don't Give

me that crap.' But he didn't make it back. He got killed. He was on point heading up the company, going into the Chosin Reservoir, and got killed. I still have that St. Christopher Medal. I carried it for years. I almost wore it out, and then I put it up. I put myself up too, come to think of it."

The most harrowing time during his service was when Latta led his fire team out of the Chosin Reservoir. His fire team was one of the last groups to leave the battle. They fought against the enemy but also against the deadly natural elements. Latta recalled that it could be anywhere from 30 to 60 degrees below zero, depending on the time of day. Many men suffered from frostbite and even lost feet.



VOICES OF VETERANS

VLB CHAIRWOMAN, DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

"After we fought our way out of the Chosin Reservoir, they put me in a hospital and let my toenails grow back and trench foot heal."

Later, Latta returned to South Korea, where he served as a Platoon Sergeant. Altogether, he spent 15 months in Korea and left service as a Staff Sergeant. After the war, Latta got a business degree and worked for many years as a successful Regional Sales Manager in Denton, Texas. He retired at 61 and was happily married to his wife of 61 years at the time of his interview.

To listen to Staff Sergeant John Latta tell his story, click the button below:

[Staff Sergeant John Latta's Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)