The Dallas Chapter of
The Military Order of the World Wars

Luncheon Speaker Series

Presents



Corporal Donald Graves, USMC

Tuesday, 5 January 2027

11:15 AM to 1:00 PM

Park City Club, 17th Floor

5956 Shery Lane, Dallas, TX 75225

Corporal Donald Graves survived the Battle of Iwo Jima (19 February 1945–26 March 1945). He served with the U.S. Marine Corps 5th Marine Division, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment, D Company. Born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1925, Graves felt called to enlist after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At 16, he left school and went to the Marine recruiting office. Told to return at 17, he enlisted on 17 August 1942. He was assigned to the newly formed 5th Marine Division and then to the 28th Marine Regiment. At 5 feet 6 inches and 145 pounds, Graves carried a 72-pound flamethrower and a .45-caliber pistol. Their mission was to secure the island of Iwo Jima and its three airfields, and Graves' battalion was assigned to take Mount Suribachi. As they landed under heavy fire, Graves prayed that if he survived, he would serve God for the rest of his life. He and his platoon took three days to climb the 545 feet to the top of Mount Suribachi, where he saw the flag raising, the iconic Associated Press second photo that day. Graves fought across the island for six weeks and witnessed immense death and destruction. In one incident, a replacement Marine was shot while looking over a foxhole. Graves later found a photo of the man's wife and child in his helmet in a moment that created a lasting impression in his life. At the end of the battle, only 18 of the 335 men who landed with his unit remained, and none were officers. Before leaving the island, the survivors visited the cemetery and read a sign that said, "Fellas, when you get home, tell them we did our best, that they may have many more tomorrows." Graves often reminds audiences that they are living those "many more tomorrows." He was honorably discharged on 12 January 1946 and returned to Detroit, where he met and married Rebecca. He struggled in the years that followed and worked several jobs, including as a public singer. Nine years after the battle, a turning point came when a landlord asked Graves to take him and his wife to a Billy Graham event. That night, Graves says, God began His work in him, and he was called into ministry. Graves served the church for 32 years and retired from his fifth church at age 82. He later moved to Texas and became a public speaker and has sung the national anthem and "God Bless America" at numerous events.

Topic

Iwo Jima: They Gave Up Their Today for Our Tomorrow

During this presentation you will learn:

1. The sense of duty in a generation of 17-year-old kids.
2. The true weight of a 72-pound flamethrower after 6 weeks of intense fighting.
3. Why Faith became a life changing event.

It is nobler to serve than to be served.