



2019 Veterans Day Essay Contest High School Honorable Mention: Rashad Seaborne

“Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country’s cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and services, as best he can, the same cause.”

– Abraham Lincoln

There are so many Virginians that are serving or have served in the military that inspire me daily for their countless acts of heroism and servitude....The serviceman I would like to highlight is Col. Porcher L. Taylor, Jr. His story, life and service fascinates me!

I believe that Colonel Taylor has, as Abraham Lincoln so eloquently wrote, ‘bravely beared his country’s cause...’ acting as both sailor and soldier. Colonel Taylor has served in two branches of the military. He has served in the United States Navy for three years and he also served in the United States Army for twenty-five (Taylor, xviii)! He is one of the few living Americans who served the United States in three major wars – World War II, Korean War, and the Vietnam War. In 1971, Colonel Taylor became the first African-American promoted to full colonel at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Using the G.I. Bill, he enrolled in Tuskegee Institute after being honorably discharged from service (Lohmann).

According to, ‘Damn the Alligators – Full Speed Ahead!’ Col. Porcher Taylor was born on August 9, 1925 in Jacksonville, FL. His first job was in the family business, Taylor & Son printing company (Taylor, 29). He worked as a pressman until he joined the military in 1943 – fighting in World War II, serving in the US Navy. After serving, he enrolled in the Tuskegee Institute Reserve Officer Training Corps. Taylor fought in the Korean War. He is a long-time resident of Petersburg, Virginia and has served not just his country but his community in countless ways. Even though Col. Taylor served his country during a time when people that looked like him were not always treated fairly...His duty to serve his country was firmly cemented and never faltered. I think of how difficult it must have been for him, and countless others, to fight for and serve his country, while also having to fight just to be considered a part of this country...I wonder if I could have answered that call and served in such a way – with such dignity and pride. His life and time of service are remarkable and inspiring to me.

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According to Col. Taylor's firsthand account of his time of service in the autobiography: 'Damn the Alligators – Full Speed Ahead', he recalls the time that he spent in the United States Navy as a Petty Officer, one of his greatest experiences (Taylor, 80). He speaks about knowing when he was only sixteen (after the attack on Pearl Harbor) wanting desperately to join the military so that he could 'pay his dues to his country' (Taylor, 80).

Col. Taylor did not join the military when he felt those initial nudgings to 'pay his dues'. He graduated from high school and went on to continue his education at, what was then, Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). While there, still not eighteen, he enlisted in the US Navy with his parent's consent. In his autobiography, he stated that during that time, his actions echoed the words of Gen. Douglas MacArthur: "I shall return." (Taylor, 81). Col. Taylor requested to be discharged from the Navy when his father became ill around 1946. His request was granted and he returned home to help his family. After his father's health improved, he returned to and finished school.

During the Korean War in 1951, Col. Taylor was recalled for active duty service. He had already been a member of the Army Reserves at Tuskegee, and he was excited to serve his country again (Taylor, 93). During his time in the United States Army, Col. Taylor was a training officer, a battalion commander and also at one time, Chief of Physical Training. Taylor received orders to become Assistant Professor of Military Science and Tactics (Taylor, 105).

Col. Taylor has endured hardships on foreign soil, serving this country and hardships fighting for justice and equality here on the homefront. He has jumped from planes, fought on the frontlines of wars, sailed the seas, trained other servicemen and women, and retired a decorated officer – he has 'bravely born this country's cause.' In closing, I feel Col. Taylor summed it up best himself: "Surely I shall die, but I hope that the good I have tried to bring forth in this world and to humanity will not fade away." (Taylor, 135).



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References

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