

# **LOOKING FOR PFC STARK MCCRACKEN**

**By Chuck Tatum**

**Private First Class Stark McCracken never made it off the beach at Iwo Jima. He died instantly from a gunshot wound to the head. Stark wasn't a nickname. If your real name is Stark you don't need a nickname in the Marine Corps. Stark was a member of the machine gun platoon, Company B, First Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines and a damn good Marine!**

**Stark was the best boxer in the company. As a fighter he would have been rated as a lightweight. As a Marine I rated him as a heavyweight, real contender if there ever was one! Stark, like a lot of the members of B Company was a former paratrooper; and was proud of it; and justifiably so.**

**To make it in the paratroopers you had to be tough. Stark was a real scrapper. It was too bad he didn't get his chance at the Japanese defenders. It would have been one hell of a fight.**

**Helen McCracken, his widow, requested that his body be returned to the States for burial at the Gettysburg National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. In the meantime, however, Helen remarried and relinquished authority to his mother, Mrs. Ruth McCracken of Nicholson, Pennsylvania. The same place where Stark had been born.**

**At first Ruth McCracken went along with his wife's request, but apparently changed her mind and requested that Stark be buried in the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.**

**Private First Class Stark McCracken, U.S.M.C.R. is buried in Section C, Grave 1548 at the National Cemetery of the Pacific on Oahu Island, Honolulu, Hawaii. Stark isn't alone. He lies on hallowed ground. He is with the heroes of the battle at Iwo Jima, in the land of Leal.**

**ARTICLE FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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***IWO JIMA FLAG RAISER HONORED AT DEDICATION OF  
MONUMENT***

*Marine Corps veteran Charles Lindberg finally got his recognition Saturday, 57 years after World War II ended.*

*Lindberg, an 82-year old Minnesota native, was honored in Long Prairie by hundreds of well wishers who came to see the dedication of the Veterans War Memorial on the city's Main Street. The memorial is a 40-foot-tall replica of Mount Suribachi, which Marines wrested from the Japanese during the World War II battle of Iwo Jima.*

*Lindberg, who now lives in Richfield and is not related to the famous aviator, was part of the first group of marines that raised the flag atop Mount Suribachi to rally the troops.*

*Another group of men, the second set of Marines to raise the flag on the mountain, was immortalized in a now-famous photograph.*

*"This moment is something I never expected to see," Lindberg said Saturday. "It makes me feel very good."*

*The memorial includes a replica of the graveyard at Normandy and a tribute to women in the military.*

*Lindberg is the only survivor of the flag-raising groups. Sculptures of the six men were unveiled by their relatives Saturday on top of the Mount Suribachi replica as Lindberg raised the U.S. flag.*

*Long Prairie businessman Rodger Johnston had stressed that he wanted the memorial, which was designed by Twin Cities artist Kim Lawler, to be inclusive of all veterans. True to his word, the program featured speeches from veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as presentations of the flags from all military branches.*

*A portion of the memorial that was unveiled depicts Dorothy Klick of Long Prairie as she looked when she was a surgical nurse during World War II. Johnston said he wanted to make sure that women who served in the military were included because “they suffered like every other combatant.”*

*The audience was filled with veterans in their dress uniforms or with their caps and decorations.*

*“I thought it was tremendous,” said Erling Johnson, 82, of Long Prairie, a World War II veteran. He shared the names of relatives who have participated in every war from World War II to Afghanistan.*

*“We’re a military family, and we’re proud of it,” he said.*