

TAPS

It all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing in Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land.

During the night, Captain Ellicombe heard the moan of a soldier who lay mortally wounded on the field. Not knowing if it was a Union or Confederate soldier, the captain decided to risk his life and bring the stricken man back for medical attention. Crawling on his stomach through the gunfire, the captain reached the stricken soldier and began pulling him toward his encampment. When the captain finally reached his own lines, he discovered it was actually a Confederate soldier, but the soldier was dead.

The captain lit a lantern. Suddenly he caught his breath and went numb with shock. In the dim light, he saw the face of the soldier. It was his own son. The boy has been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, he enlisted in the Confederate Army.

The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission of his superiors to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status. His request was partially granted.

The captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge of the son at the funeral. That request was turned down since the soldier was a Confederate. Out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him only one musician. The captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted. This music was the haunting melody we now know as "Taps" used at military funerals.

Day is done,
gone the sun,
from the lakes
from the hills
from the sky,
all is well,
safely, rest,
God is near.

Fading light,
Dims the sight,
And a star
gems the sky
Gleaming bright,
From afar,
Drawing, near,
Falls the night.

Thanks and praise,
For our days,
Neath the sun
Neath the stars
Neath the sky,
As we go,
This, we, know,
God is near.