

TAYLOR, JESSE GAY ("J.G.") SN: 299 781

Jesse Gay Taylor was born June 17, 1919. He died December 25, 2004.

Father: Jesse Stephenson Taylor.

Mother: Essie Velma (Pate) Taylor.

Wife: Constance (Digman) Taylor.

Date of marriage: June 1, 1946.

Children: Wade Taylor, Larry Taylor, Linda Brock, Arlene Mincey.

Brothers: Glendale Taylor, Gwin Taylor, Garvis Taylor, Grady Taylor, Gardner Taylor, Gideon Taylor.

Sisters: Sara Gene Wilson, Glendon Bryant, Grace Setzer-Dewsnepe, Gladys Stephenson, Gloys Willoughby, Glera Taylor.

[Editor's note: Five of the Taylor children served their country during World War II.

Glendon served in the US Navy, Grace was a US Army nurse, Gwin Wade was in the US Navy in the Pacific Theater, and Grady was in the US Army serving in North Africa and Italy.]

Jesse enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in Miami, Florida in 1942 at the age of 23. When he was honorably discharged August 14, 1946, he had advanced from the rank of carpenter's mate third class to carpenter's mate first class.

Taylor was working on a dairy farm when he decided to join the Coast Guard, and was sent to Manhattan Beach, New York for basic training. From New York he went to Atlantic City, New Jersey where he was placed on guard duty, and played a lot of basketball. It was one military experience he could remember as a fun time.

From New Jersey he headed to Norfolk, Virginia where he received training aboard LSTs for service with the Coast Guard. Upon graduation he traveled by train to Dravo Ship Yard in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. There he attended a welding school and when his training was complete he finally received his assignment aboard the Coast Guard manned *USS LST-884*. His journey began as the ship and crew sailed down the Allegheny River to the Ohio River, into the Mississippi and on to New Orleans. From there the crew sailed to Gulfport, Mississippi for intensive training in the gulf and then back to New Orleans to take on supplies and head to the Panama Canal Zone. Taylor and his crewmates left San Diego, California for Pearl Harbor, with orders to replace a disabled ship.

LST 884 caught up with a convoy at Eniwetok Island and sailed for Saipan, where it embarked a troop of marines and supplies headed to Iwo Jima. There the ship took 13 five-inch shells from the Japanese guns embedded in Mt. Suribachi, and had to return to Saipan, where Taylor spent two days welding plates over the shell holes in the LST. After repairs the ship and crew again transported the marines, their gear, vehicles, rations, small arms, and all equipment needed to keep the landing forces moving inland on Iwo Jima. Jesse said that the LST was about a mile offshore when the American flag was raised on Mount Suribachi. The first flag was supplied by *USS LST 758*, and was later replaced by a larger flag from *USS LST 799*. "What a great feeling that was," said Taylor, "seeing the stars and stripes flying over that spot."

Going back to Saipan, the crew again took on marines and supplies and headed this time to Okinawa. The ship arrived off the beaches on Easter morning, April 1, 1945. What happened next has been described as one of the most stirring naval incidents of the Okinawa Campaign. Boatswain's Mate First Class James Clinton Bolton gave this written account of what happened: "In a new chapter of dramatic Coast Guard action, the crew of the *884* fought off a Japanese air attack; was crashed by a Nip suicide plane; abandoned ship to return

