

Dear Members of the United States Armed Forces, American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars:

Being a life long member of the Drum and Bugle Corps community, a member of three Drum & Bugle Corps Halls of Fame, and a three time Past Commander of an American Legion Post, I would like to pass these sentiments along on a subject that is near and dear to me! That is the shortage of bugle players for military style and other funerals! I do this in support of Thomas Allen Founder and Director of "Operation Taps" of Rochester New York!

The reason that I threw these identifiers in on the first sentence was not to aggrandize myself as a Drum Corps or an American Legion aficionado but to convey the fact that I am acutely aware of the problem of a diminishing Veteran presence in this country and a diminishing amount of buglers to perform at military funerals.

It is very evident in today's society that there are an ever increasing number of funerals which are serviced by playing a tape recording of taps and other appropriate bugle calls but not by a live bugler at the site of that funeral. Therein the use of a tape has by default become an accepted practice and nearly numbingly looked at as the standard and welcomed practice. In fact I am sure that any, family member, funeral director or ceremonial leader would much rather have a live bugler at these events than a tape recording!

It is obvious that the reason our ranks of Veterans is steadily diminishing is because the Korean War Veterans are now in their mid and late 70's and 80's and our World War II Veterans are now in their mid and late 80's and 90's. On the other side of this equation; and what is not so readily obvious is the diminishing number of bugle players available which I made mention of earlier.

The reason for the diminishing number of Buglers across the USA is that the Drum and Bugle Corps movement today is a highly sophisticated and expensive operation. That cost driver keeps the overall quantity of corps down. The up side is that the Corps who are still active are the best that they have ever been. The down side is that there are just so many fewer Corps than ever before! With budget cuts in the military there are also fewer military bands than ever to draw Bugle Players from as well!

Therein, there is and continues to be, an opportunity here to serve this two pronged purpose of fulfilling the needs of the military veterans family by having a live buglers perform at military funerals and the live performance aspect of that participative involvement from various corpsmen across the country. In turn, this lets the local communities know that the Drum Corps are still willing to think and act past the paradigm of just competition only while thinking in terms of community involvement as well!

I suppose this practice of using a tape recorder has slowly crept in because there were no resources to call on for family members, funeral directors and ceremonial coordinators. Therein they turned to the only alternative that they could. However, I want to make as many people as possible aware that this fine organization called "Operation Taps" founded and headed by Thomas Allen is there for all to make use of in times of need for these very important last salutes to Veterans. Tom, as well, is a life time member of the Drum Corps community and through his vision saw the need to fill this ever so widening gap!

By virtue of this letter and any other means that we can, we need to get the word out that this organization stands at the ready to supply you with a live bugler so as to perform at as many military and even non military funerals as possible. The obvious reason is because there is just no acceptable substitute for a real live Bugler playing Taps at a Military Funeral! Please ring the bell far and wide and tell all that this "Operation Taps" organization is more than willing to help wherever and whenever possible to render a proper and well deserved final salute to those who have served!

William A. McGrath, Jr.

USMC 1968-1971

USAR 1989-2006

Cmdr Post # 98 Am. Legion 1999-2001