

# Notice of Joe Foss' passing taken from Association Newsletter dated April 2003.

*Article written by Lynn Hagen, Chairman at the time.*

## TAPS

Joe Foss passed away New Year's Day 2003 from an aneurysm in Arizona. Joe had been in Michigan to give a speech and went into a coma. He was flown to Arizona by a corporate jet arranged by Lt. Col. Oliver North. He remained in a coma until his death. Joe was born in South Dakota in 1915 and was 87 years old at the time of death. Joe is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. His grave is in Section 7a just below the Tomb of the Unknowns. Bill Sullivan of Lake Havasu City, AZ sent me a copy of the obituary from the local papers. I will bring these along to Beaufort for everyone to read.

Much has been written about Joe Foss in many major publications. I got to know Joe for the first time at the Galveston reunion. Having Joe there seemed to get all of the attendees in a "lively" spirit. Everyone wanted to stop and talk to Joe. Some hadn't seen him since the war, and the happiness showed on their faces. Joe was great for remembering names and faces. At the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Joe was introduced to two Marine astronauts in training. Major General Norm Gurley was with Joe and an immediate photo session was in place. The astronauts were really impressed with Joe.

At all the reunions where Joe attended, he always had time to speak to the young Marine honor guards we had for our banquets. Joe would autograph the page with him and Charles Lindbergh together on one of the first pages of the VMFA-115 History Book.

At the Cherry Point reunion in the fall of 2000, Joe was asked by the Commanding General of the base to talk to the enlisted Marines in the messhall for a motivational speech. This was one of Joe's specialties. He could motivate an audience quickly. At the banquet that evening at the Holiday Inn, Joe had brought his Medal of Honor with him and had it in his suit coat. He let the enlisted and officers of the then VMFA-115 personal hold his medal and have their pictures taken with it.

At the St. Louis reunion, several of us reunion attendees were watching the World Series on television. It was fun to listen to Joe talk about all the owners, commissioners, players in both football and baseball that he knew personally.

Joe was very accommodating at reunions to sign autographs for everyone. Members brought old photos for Joe to sign. He would bring copies of books to sell and sign. I recommend that everyone read Joe's book, "**A PROUD AMERICAN**", written by Joe and his wife, Didi. Pocket Books- 1992

Joe had his picture on Life magazine cover for June 1943. I found a copy at an antique market that Joe was glad to autograph it for me. It now hangs on the wall in our home.

There is a tribute to Joe in the February 2003 issue of the American Legion. It was an interview that was done shortly before his death. The magazine reporter, Dan Allsup stated in a short paragraph at the start of the story that Joe was alternately blunt, brash, irreverent, outspoken and decidedly political incorrect. Those of us who knew Joe well can relate to the reporter's statement.

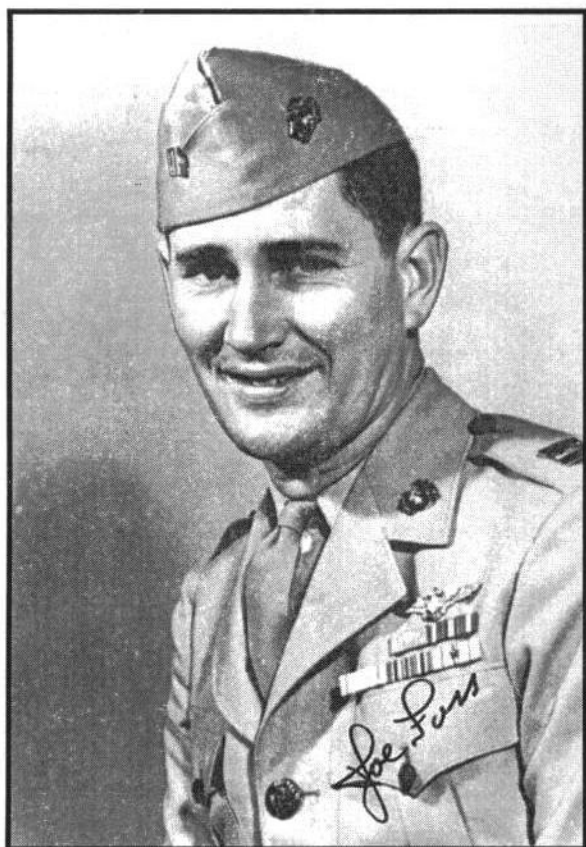
A sample question from the reporter: "What do we do with Saddam Hussein?" Joe's answer, "Knock him off. Next question."

He tells of his fight with Gregory Boyington, of the Baa, Baa, Black Sheep fame that happened in 1949 at the Hilton Hotel in Washington, D.C. Boyington was apparently drunk and Joe had to take care of him. He stated that he and Boyington were friends. If you can find a copy of this Legion magazine, read this article. The cover has a "homeless" veteran with a shopping cart on the cover.

The American Rifleman magazine for March 2003 also has several articles written by the editor of the magazine. One of Joe's best friends, Charlton Heston wrote a nice tribute to Joe, and also a 3 page spread devoted to Joe who had been a member of the board of directors and past President and was on the Executive Council.

If any of you ever happen to fly or drive into Sioux Falls, South Dakota, make sure to stop at the main terminal and see the statue of Joe.

**MARINE FIGHTER ATTACK  
SQUADRON 115 (VMFA-115)  
MEMORIAL SERVICE**



**Brigadier General Joseph J. Foss, USAF (Ret.)**  
April 17, 1915 - Jan 1, 2003

19 July, 2003

Page Field  
MCRD Parris Island, South Carolina



Memphis 1990



**Santa Barbara 1993**



**Galveston 1994 (@ NASA)**

**Foss middle row, extreme right w/cowboy hat.  
(Hagen is second to Foss' right in striped shirt.)**