

TAPS

We have all heard the haunting melody of "Taps." It's the song that gives us that lump in our throats and usually tears in our eyes. But do you know the story behind the song? If not, I think you will be pleased to find out about its humble beginnings.

Reportedly, it all began in 1862 during the Civil War, when Union Army Captain Robert Ellicombe was with his men near Harrison's Landing, Virginia. The Confederate Army was on the other side of the narrow strip of land. During the night, Captain Ellisombe heard the moans of a soldier who was severely 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 the 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 and suddenly 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 had been studying music in the South when the war broke out. Without telling his father, the boy enlisted in the Confederate Army. The following morning, heartbroken, the father asked permission to give his son a full military burial despite his enemy status.

His request was only partially granted. The Captain had asked if he could have a group of Army band members play a funeral dirge for his son at the funeral. The request was denied since the soldier was a Confederate. But, out of respect for the father, they did say they could give him one musician.

The Captain chose a bugler. He asked the bugler to play a series of musical notes he had found on a piece of paper in the pocket of the dead youth's uniform. This wish was granted.

The haunting melody, which we now know as "Taps" used at military funerals, was born.

Day is done Gone the sun From the lakes From the hills From the sky

All is well, safely rest. God is nigh.

Fading light Dims the sight And a star Gems the sky, Gleaning bright

From afar, Drawing nigh, 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 nigh.