

= Darrell S. Cole =

Sergeant Darrell Samuel Cole (July 20 , 1920 ? February 19 , 1945) was a United States Marine who posthumously received the United States ' highest military decoration , the Medal of Honor , for his " conspicuous gallantry " at the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II .

Although he was originally assigned to play the bugle , Sergeant Cole repeatedly requested that his rating be changed from field musician to machine @-@ gunner . Although rated as a bugler he fought as a machine @-@ gunner in several major campaigns of World War II including Guadalcanal , Tinian , Saipan .

On his fourth request to change his rating to machine @-@ gunner the request was approved 4 months before he was sent into combat again on Iwo Jima . During the battle , Cole made a successful one @-@ man attack against two gun emplacements impeding the advance of his company . Upon returning to his squad , he was killed by an enemy grenade .

In 1996 the United States Navy named the USS Cole (DDG @-@ 67) , a destroyer , in his honor . This destroyer was damaged in a suicide attack in Yemen but subsequently repaired and is currently in service .

= = Early life = =

Darrell Cole was born July 20 , 1920 in Esther (now part of Park Hills) , Missouri . He attended high school in Esther , graduating in 1938 . Before graduating , his main interests were sports ; particularly basketball , hunting and photography . He also learned to play the french horn which later led to him being assigned as a bugler .

After graduating from high school , he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) , where he became an assistant forestry clerk and assistant educational advisor for his company . He left after one year and he went to Detroit , Michigan where he worked at a company that made engine gaskets .

= = Military service = =

On August 25 , 1941 , he enlisted in the Marine Corps . Following United States Marine Corps Recruit Training at MCRD Parris Island , South Carolina , he was appointed to the Field Music School for training as a Marine Corps Field Musician (a bugler) . He was unhappy with being a field musician because he had joined the Marine Corps to fight . He applied for a change in rating to be a machine @-@ gunner , but was refused due to the shortage of buglers . After completing field music school , he was transferred to the 1st Marine Regiment , 1st Marine Division .

After completing his first overseas tour , he returned to the United States in February 1943 and was assigned to the First Battalion , 23rd Marines , 4th Marine Division at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune , North Carolina . When his unit moved to California he again asked for relief as a field musician ; and for permission to perform line duties . Again , due to the shortage of buglers in the Marine Corps , his request was denied . Throughout the course of World War II , until his death on Iwo Jima , Cole participated in several battles and campaigns as a machine @-@ gunner and was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 1944 .

= = = Battle of Guadalcanal = = =

The Battle of Guadalcanal , was fought between August 7 , 1942 , and February 7 , 1943 , in the Pacific theatre of World War II and was the first major offensive launched by allied forces against the Empire of Japan . Cole arrived on Guadalcanal on August 7 , 1942 for the first American offensive of World War II ; and his first opportunity to fill in as a machine @-@ gunner in the absence of the regular gunner .

= = = Battles of Kwajalein , Saipan and Tinian = = =

After Guadalcanal , Cole served in several more battles throughout the Pacific theatre , including the battles of Kwajalein , Saipan and Tinian . The United States launched an assault on the main islands of Kwajalein in the south and Roi @-@ Namur in the north from January 31 , 1944 , to February 3 , 1944 . The Japanese defenders put up a stiff resistance though outnumbered and under @-@ prepared . Although the United States won the battle the determined defenses of Roi @-@ Namur left only 51 Japanese survivors of an original garrison of 3 @,@ 500 . During this engagement of the 4th Division Cole , again forsaking his bugle , stepped in as a machine @-@ gunner .

When Cole was sent to fight with his unit in Saipan , he was assigned to a machine gun unit ; and was designated as a machine gun section leader . During the battle his squad leader was killed and Cole , although wounded , assumed command of the entire squad . He was awarded the Bronze Star for " ? his resolute leadership , indomitable fighting spirit and tenacious determination in the face of terrific opposition . " and was awarded the Purple Heart for the wounds he received .

When fighting began on the island of Tinian in the Mariana Islands from July 24 to August 1 , 1944 , Cole 's unit was sent in a few days after the battle began . Cole again led his squad ashore in the invasion and defeat of the neighboring islands of Tinian ; and continued to build his reputation as " The Fighting Field Musician . "

= = = Mariana and Palau Islands campaign = = =

The Mariana and Palau Islands campaign was an offensive launched by United States forces against Imperial Japanese forces in the Mariana Islands and Palau in the Pacific Ocean , between June and November , 1944 during the Pacific War . It was after the Marianas campaign , that he submitted a request for a change of rating for the third time . Pointing out his experience and combat record , he stated that he felt he would be of more benefit to the Marine Corps performing line duties than those of field music . This time his request was approved and he was redesignated Corporal and subsequently promoted to Sergeant in November 1944 .

= = = Battle of Iwo Jima = = =

The Battle of Iwo Jima was fought between the United States and the Japanese Empire , in February and March 1945 during the Pacific Campaign of World War II . Ground fighting on the island took place over approximately 35 days ; lasting from the landings of February 19 to a final Japanese charge the morning of March 26 , 1945 . The U.S. invasion , known as Operation Detachment , was charged with the mission of capturing the islands airfields . The Japanese positions on the island were heavily fortified , with vast bunkers , hidden artillery , and 18 kilometers (11 mi) of tunnels .

On February 19 , Sergeant Cole led his machine gun section ashore in the D @-@ Day assault of Iwo Jima . Moving forward with the initial assault wave , a hail of fire from two enemy emplacements halted his section 's advance . Sergeant Cole personally destroyed them with hand grenades . His unit continued to advance until pinned down for a second time by enemy fire from three Japanese gun emplacements . One of these emplacements was destroyed by a machine @-@ gunner in Cole 's squad . When his machine guns jammed , armed only with a pistol and one hand grenade , Sergeant Cole made a one @-@ man attack against the two remaining gun emplacements . Twice he returned to his own lines for additional grenades and continued the attack under fierce enemy fire until he had succeeded in destroying the enemy strong points .

Upon returning to his own squad , he was killed by an enemy grenade . As a result of his one @-@ man attack , Sergeant Cole 's company could move forward against the fortifications and attain their ultimate objective . Sergeant Cole was initially buried in the 4th Marine Division Cemetery on Iwo Jima , but at the request of his father , his remains were returned to the United States to be buried in Parkview Cemetery , Farmington , Missouri .

= = Honors and awards = =

= = = Military decorations = = =

In addition to the Medal of Honor and Bronze Star Medal , Sergeant Cole was awarded the Purple Heart with Gold Star in lieu of a second award , the Presidential Unit Citation , American Defense Service Medal , Asiatic @-@ Pacific Campaign Medal , and the World War II Victory Medal .

= = = = Medal of Honor = = = =

Cole was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor , which was presented to his widow on April 17 , 1947 . The citation reads as follows .

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Leader of a Machine @-@ gun Section of Company B , First Battalion , Twenty @-@ Third Marines , Fourth Marine Division , in action against enemy Japanese forces during the assault on Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands , 19 February 1945 . Assailed by a tremendous volume of small @-@ arms , mortar and artillery fire as he advanced with one squad of his section in the initial assault wave , Sergeant Cole boldly led his men up the sloping beach toward Airfield Number One despite the blanketing curtain of flying shrapnel and , personally destroying with hand grenades two hostile emplacements which menaced the progress of his unit , continued to move forward until a merciless barrage of fire emanating from three Japanese pillboxes halted the advance . Instantly placing his one remaining machine gun in action , he delivered a shattering fusillade and succeeded in silencing the nearest and most threatening emplacement before his weapon jammed and the enemy , reopening fire with knee mortars and grenades , pinned down his unit for the second time . Shrewdly gauging the tactical situation and evolving a daring plan of counterattack , Sergeant Cole , armed solely with a pistol and one grenade , coolly advanced alone to the hostile pillboxes . Hurling his one grenade at the enemy in sudden , swift attack , he quickly withdrew , returned to his own lines for additional grenades and again advanced , attacked , and withdrew . With enemy guns still active , he ran the gauntlet of slashing fire a third time to complete the total destruction of the Japanese strong point and the annihilation of the defending garrison in this final assault . Although instantly killed by an enemy grenade as he returned to his squad , Sergeant Cole had eliminated a formidable Japanese position , thereby enabling his company to storm the remaining fortifications , continue the advance and seize the objective . By his dauntless initiative , unfaltering courage and indomitable determination during a critical period of action , Sergeant Cole served as an inspiration to his comrades , and his stouthearted leadership in the face of almost certain death sustained and enhanced the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service . He gallantly gave his life for his country .

= = = Other honors = = =

The second USS Cole (DDG @-@ 67) , an Arleigh Burke @-@ class Aegis @-@ equipped guided missile destroyer was named for Sergeant Cole . The Cole is homeported in NS Norfolk , Virginia . The ship was built by Ingalls Shipbuilding and delivered to the Navy on March 11 , 1996 . On October 12 , 2000 , the Cole was damaged by a suicide attack while harbored in the Yemeni port of Aden . The first USS Cole (DD @-@ 155) , launched in 1919 , was named for a Marine who was killed in World War I.

The Marine Corps Reserve training center in Camp Las Flores aboard Marine Corps base Camp Pendleton , California is also named in his honor .

The Sgt Darrell S. Cole Band Hall aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico is also named in his honor .