



SHIP Changes the Life of a **MONTFORD POINT MARINE**



If you want to hear a heartwarming story of how helping others can make a difference, sit down with one Florida's more than 120 SHIP Administrators. They are changing lives everyday. Linda Byars, a SHIP Administrator from St. Petersburg is no different. The following story epitomizes the incredible spirit SHIP administrators demonstrate everyday of going above and beyond for our state's most vulnerable citizens.



LYNNE TAKACS

THE MAN IN THE RED CAP

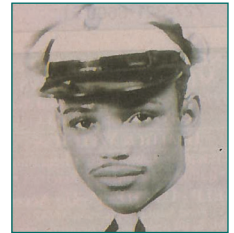
Mr. William C. Scott was a proud man. He rarely asked for help and was known for shying away for the spotlight. Last year, he faced a fact that he could no longer avoid - his roof was in such disrepair that he needed to ask for help. So the 87-year-old affixed his red U.S. Marine Corps. cap firmly on his head and walked into the St. Petersburg Housing and Community Development Office.

Housing Finance Coordinator Linda Byars was used to hearing requests for assistance, but something about Mr. Scott intrigued her. Perhaps it was his cap. Perhaps it was his age. Perhaps it was just meant to be, but when he left, Linda did some research. She soon uncovered that Mr. Scott was a Montford Point Marine and he had served his country proudly during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam Conflict. He was also eligible to receive a Congressional Medal of Honor – the nation's highest honor awarded to a civilian – and had somehow been overlooked.

Linda also uncovered that Mr. Scott was living in dire straights. His small cinder block house needed more than a roof repair – it need an entire new roof structure. Mold was eating away at the interior of his home and he had been living without electricity and running water. Upon seeing the conditions, building officials would not let him return and Linda Byers heart broke, but certainly not her resolve. She sprung into action and spearheaded two plans.

MS. BYARS GOES TO WASHINGTON

The first was to find volunteers, donations and SHIP funding to not only make the repairs, but help Mr. Scott move out of his home while construction was underway. Her second plan was to see that he received the medal he so well deserved. With an army of tradesmen, volunteers, congressional aids and city officials, she facilitated a complete rehabilitation of Mr. Scott's house. She also traveled to Washington. The results of her labor were unveiled on November 8, 2013 at a special ceremony. Mr. Scott entered his beautiful home...with a Congressional Medal of Honor hanging from his neck.



WILLIAM C. SCOTT

WHAT LOVE DOES

An otherwise stoic man, Mr. Scott smiled at the crowd that had gathered and then something inside him broke. Tears flowed down the face of this quiet, proud man whose life had been spent in service to others. Surrounded by members of the U. S. Marine Corps, representatives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Gibbs High School Honor Guard, city officials and his daughter and granddaughter who had flown in from New Jersey for the special occasion, he remarked, "It's been a long time."

What he said next, Linda Byars will never forget. Looking out into the crowd while wearing the shiny medal he reflected, "I have heard many times that love

is not what love says, but what love does, and I see it in the faces all around me.”

It was a good day for Mr. Scott and for Linda Byars. However, looking at a photo of that day is bittersweet. Mr. Scott enjoyed his home for four months and two days before he hit by a car on February 10, 2014 as he cycled a few miles away to Walmart to buy groceries. This tragic news rocked St. Petersburg and especially Linda Byars.

WE OWE HIM EVERYTHING

“Mr. Scott was a very special man. He told me many times that no one owed him anything, not the Marines, nor the city.” Linda shared. “I believe that we, as a country, and as citizens of this great country, owe him everything...His death hurts us all.”

It’s hard to know who made the greater impact - Mr. Scott or Linda Byars. While they are generations and worlds apart, they both left a profound effect on each other’s lives by answering the call to serve. Stories like these underscore not only the impact SHIP is having on Florida’s most vulnerable citizens, but also the impact it makes on our communities. The Florida Housing Coalition is hopeful the Florida Housing Trust Fund will be fully appropriated allowing SHIP Administrators like Linda the opportunity to provide dignity and honor to those who need assistance with safe and affordable housing. [HNN](#)

MORE ON MONTFORD POINT MARINES

In 1942, President Roosevelt established a presidential directive giving African Americans an opportunity to be recruited into the Marine Corps. These African Americans, from all states, were not sent to the traditional boot camps of Parris Island, South Carolina and San Diego, California. Instead, African American Marines were segregated - attending basic training at Montford Point - a facility at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Approximately 20,000 African American Marines received basic training at Montford Point between 1942 and 1949.

In July of 1948 President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order #9981 negating segregation. In September of 1949, Montford Marine Camp was deactivated - ending seven years of segregation. On April 19, 1974, Montford Point Camp was renamed Camp Johnson, in honor of the late Sergeant Major, Gilbert H. “Hashmark” Johnson. Johnson was one of the first African American’s to join the Corps, a Distinguished Montford Point Drill Instructor and a Veteran of WWII and Korea. The Camp remains the only Marine Corps installation named in honor of an African American. [HNN](#)

Information found at: www.montfordpointmarines.com



SHIP ADMINISTRATOR LINDA BYARS (FAR LEFT) AND MONTFORD POINT MARINE WILLIAM SCOTT (CENTER) STAND IN FRONT OF MR. SCOTT’S REHABILITATED HOME; FAR RIGHT MR. SCOTT ACCEPTS CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR.