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Dorothy Taylor said her husband never spoke of his time in Korea, or medals he was owed.

By Carol Robidoux

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Dorothy Taylor had no idea about the medals her husband earned during his service in Korea.

"We couldn't get him to talk about his time in the war," said Taylor, whose husband, Charles Taylor, served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War with the 17th Infantry.

He died June 1, 2010 at the age of 77, after several years living valiantly with Parkinson's disease.

Yesterday his widow, five of the couple's eight children, two grandchildren and a son-in-law, crowded into the downtown office of Congressman Charlie Bass. They were there to receive the three combat medals that eluded Charles Taylor in life.

"I think we should do this outside," said Bass, realizing his new digs on East Pearl Street were inadequate for the size of the crowd.

Before stepping outside, Bass took a moment to page through an old photo album Dorothy Taylor brought along. Despite her husband's silence about the two years he spent in the thick of a bloody war, his photos at least tell part of the unspoken story.

"It means a lot to everybody when we can do something like this, and it means a lot to me, as well. I've read about Charles Taylor, and his story is much like my own father's, who died in October," Bass said. "I bet you between the time I was born and he turned 90, we discussed his service only a half-dozen times."

However, in the final years of his life Bass was able to persuade his dad, Perkins Bass, to write down his memories, including the brief missives he had scrawled in a government issue diary during the war.

"It's important to gather as much of these stories as we can and add them to the oral histories being collected by the Library of Congress," Bass said.

Several times throughout the brief ceremony Dorothy Taylor appeared to be overwhelmed with emotion. She thanked Leigh Ann Shriver, who's dedicated to aiding families of veterans and active military who contact Bass for help.

She said Charles Taylor's code of silence is not unusual.

"So many World War II and Korea veterans were ordered to pack up their uniforms and get back to the business of rebuilding their lives. With that, they also packed up their stories. Families often don't find out they are entitled to medals or benefits until they need a DD214 form for burial," Shriver said.

"It's a great honor to be able to help a family. Now they will have these medals to pass down through their family," Shriver said.

Taylor posthumously received the Korean Service Medal with one Bronze Star, the United Nations Service Medal, and the National Defense Service, as well as the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

"It's a wonderful day for us, especially when we can help a family like this one," Shriver said, noting that one son is a Boston firefighter and another, Tom Taylor, served in Iraq, enlisting right after 9/11.

"He wanted to emulate his father," said Dorothy Taylor, who also has a daughter unable to attend the ceremony, who is now retired from the military.

Dorothy and Charles Taylor met when she was just 14. Her future husband was nine years older. "He didn't know how old I was until I asked him to the junior prom," said Dorothy Taylor. They were married 52 years.

Charles Taylor was drafted into the service in 1952 and discharged just short of two years of service – they let him come home early so he could be back in time for Christmas, his widow said.

After that, he got back to his life, attended Wentworth College and Northeastern University, and spent his career working as a sales manager for Richmond Screw Anchor, a construction supply company. Although they didn't move to New Hampshire from Wilmington, Mass., until a decade ago, Charles Taylor built his family's vacation home in New Hampshire.

"We all helped him, carrying stones back and forth," said daughter Cheryl Keegan. "We always figured dad was just too damn busy to talk about the war. Nobody worked harder than our dad."

In getting to know the families of veterans when they come on a quest for records and medals, Shriver also gets to hear stories that stick with her, like the one about Charles Taylor's feet.

"Well, when he went into the service he had to go in his civilian shoes. They didn't have any in his size – size 14," said Dorothy Taylor, whose husband was "very tall," 6-foot-6 inches to be precise.

As her children looked on, Dorothy Taylor received the three small boxes containing her husband's medals, and clutched them close to her. Bass asked if she had anything she'd like to

say.

"Just thank you so much, for making this day special, and for all you do for veterans. I know my husband was proud to be in the service, and proud to be a part of that effort in Korea," she said.

"And I would just add that we miss our dad, terribly," added daughter Katherine Arlande.



Bass shows Dorothy Taylor of Nashua, widow of Charles Taylor, the medals her husband received for his service in the Korean War as a medic.