



Baited Trap: The Ambush of Mission 1890

Tracy Connors

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Baited Trap, The Ambush of Mission 1890 is the story of helicopter rescue Mission 1890, one of the most heroic—and costly—air rescues of the Korean War. This harrowing Air Force-Navy mission is explained in compelling detail, creating a detailed personal account of what five incredibly brave and determined Air Force and Navy airmen achieved on June 25, 1952 in the infamous “Iron Triangle.” On the second anniversary of the start of the Korean War, four U.S. airmen team up to grab a downed Navy pilot off the side of a mountain that was heavily defended by Chinese Communist troops. Under withering ground fire, Captain Wayne Lear made three hovering approaches in the lumbering H-5 “Dragonfly” rescue helicopter to the spot where Ensign Ron Eaton had flashed them with his survival mirror. Each time the helicopter took hits. Both Lear and his medical technician, SSgt. Bobby Holloway, were wounded. Overhead, Captain Elliot Ayer, How Flight Leader, his wingman, 1st Lt. Archie Connors, and other Mustang pilots from the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing provided covering fire, repeatedly attacking the ground batteries. Finally, after the third attempt under heavy fire, with Eaton on board, Lear nursed the badly damaged helicopter down the valley towards the safety of UN lines that were almost within sight. Seconds later, a lucky hit in the rotor changed the rescue into one of the most deadly missions of the Korean War. The families of the missing airmen entered the surreal, wrenching, bureaucratic world of the Missing In Action. A final section relates the poignant stories of what the families of Mission 1890 went through after it was quiet on the mountain. How they coped with their losses will inspire others.

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