



Staff Sergeant Reckless was a Mongolian bred horse that was purchased by Lieutenant Eric Pederson, a member of the Recoilless Rifle Platoon of the 5th Marine Regiment. The rough terrain that they had to encounter, and the weight of the rounds needed for the recoilless rifle were too heavy and too time consuming for the members of the Regiment during the Korean War. Lieutenant Pederson, a longtime horseman, got permission to buy the horse and train her for battle. The mare was bought from a young man at the Korean racehorse stables that needed the money for a prosthetic leg for his sister, who had stepped on a landmine. The mare was only 3 years old, 900 pounds, and 14 hands tall (or 56 inches). This is smaller than many of our American Quarter Horses. The mare was bought for \$250 with Lieutenant Eric Pederson's own money.

After her purchase the mare went straight to "Hoof Camp," as they called it. There she was taught to avoid barb wire, lie down under fire, and to return to the bunker after hearing the call "INCOMING!" She was expected to pack up to 9 shells for the Recoilless rifle that weighed 24 pounds each. Up to 216 pounds of weight, not including her pack saddle, through the rough terrain of mountains and rice fields full of mines. She was given the name "Reckless" after the recoilless weapon that she was carrying ammunition for and the men that had to fire it, which was a very dangerous and unpredictable weapon.

She became one of the men, bonding to them so deeply that she protected them and trusted them with her life. They let her roam the camp freely. Sleeping in their tents at night and by the camp stove on cold nights. She enjoyed eating with the marines also. Having her pancakes and eggs in the morning along with

coffee, C-rations, bread, beer, and her favorite Coca-Cola. In fact, Lieutenant Pederson had to make the men limit her to two bottles of Coca-Cola a day.

Reckless spent her career delivering the front lines of the Korean War with ammunition and supplies. It would take her two trips to learn a supply route and after that she was sent on her own without a handler. The men found out that she would learn the route and travel it faster without them.

Her most heroic moments in battle came in 1953 during the Battle for Outpost Vegas. Reckless made 51 solo trips to resupply the multiple units on the front lines in one day. She traveled up to 35 miles and delivered 386 recoilless rounds. Also, on her return to get more ammunition she packed the wounded to safety. Every trip she carried something on her back. She was wounded twice, but was patched up and kept going on her route.

Sergeant Reckless had great courage, stamina, and loyalty to her men, it showed that day. She never gave up and continued to supply her platoon with the supplies they needed, even though she was exhausted and wounded. Because of her actions in the war she was awarded 2 Purple Hearts, a Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal, inclusion in her unit's Presidential Unit Citation from two countries, and many other military honors.

After the war she was brought to the United States and Retired at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. She died in May of 1968 at approximately 20 years old and was buried with full military honors. A statue dedicated to Sergeant Reckless was placed at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia on July 26, 2013. Also, a bronze statue of her was placed in the Kentucky Horse Park, in Lexington, Kentucky on May 12, 2018. It sits among great racehorses, including the one and only Secretariat.