THEY CALLED HER
RECKLESS
A TRUE STORY OF WAR, LOVE AND ONE EXTRAORDINARY HORSE
By Janet Barrett

When the Marines of the Fifth Regiment’s Recoilless Rifle Platoon acquired a small Korean pony to haul ammunition up the steep hills to the front lines, what they got was a real-life hero, Reckless, the courageous and indomitable warhorse who stood with her buddies for two years during the Korean War, saving many lives, raising spirits, and winning the love and respect of all who knew her.

She came on base in October, 1952, disrupting a softball game and capturing the attention of everyone around. Immediately named for the "reckless" rifles she would supply, she began life with the Marines as Private First Class Reckless. In short order she was an integral member of the platoon, learning quickly to run into her bunker when incoming fire hit the camp, navigate the trails and hills on her own, and calmly accept the roar of the recoilless rifles at close range.

In skirmishes and firefights, and ultimately in the savage Battle for Outpost Vegas, Reckless showed her bravery and resilience. In that last bloody fight, surpassing all expectations, she hauled ammunition for three days and nights wherever it was needed. For wounds sustained, she was awarded two Purple Hearts. Ever the character, she also shared her buddies C-rations and mess hall chow, beers and an occasional whiskey, and on cold nights, their warm tents. She was promoted to sergeant by the Commander of the Marine First Division. Then, in late 1954, the men got their wish, and Sergeant Reckless sailed for San Francisco, a hero's welcome, and another new life.

Enhancing Reckless’ story is an extensive selection of photographs, of her time in Korea and later in California. Many of them come from the private collections of the Marines who knew her, and have never before been published. The generosity of so many -- some 60 Marines in all -- who shared their memories of Reckless, made it possible to tell her story.

From the moment she heard about Reckless, Janet Barrett knew she would write this book. Her experiences as a horsewoman gave her a particular appreciation of the tight bond that developed between Reckless and her fellow Marines, from which the story springs. The author’s first book was On The Fence: A Parent’s Handbook of Horseback Riding; as well, she has written for magazines and newspapers, and the public relations field.

Paperback, 200 pp. including 14 pp. of photographs; $15.95 retail. Available from: Marine Corps League; National Museum of the Marine Corps; MarineShop.net; Sgt. Grit; Amazon.com; also from Janet Barrett (860-526-5431 or About_Reckless@comcast.net)