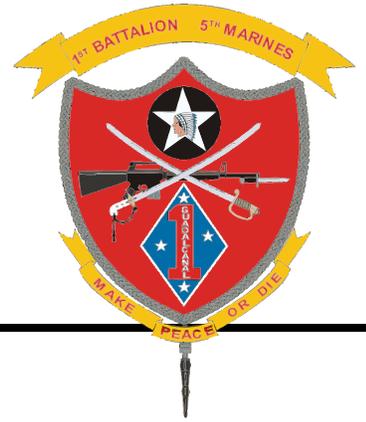


The FOURRAGÈRE

The Newsletter of the Vietnam Veterans of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines



In Honor of Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, USMC, MOH

Special Edition

Volume IX Special Edition

Remembering

Sergeant Rodney M. Davis, USMC (MOH)

1/5 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Monument Project

The Story of an American Hero!

On 6 September 1967, Sergeant Rodney M. Davis, USMC, gallantly gave his life to save several of his fellow Bravo Company Marines. Sergeant Davis was nominated for the Medal of Honor, which he received posthumously.

Sergeant Davis, a young African/American from Macon, Georgia, had already served several years as a Marine Security Guard at the American Embassy in London, England. Married and a father of two young daughters, he could have avoided combat in Vietnam because his enlistment was nearly at an end; but he had several friends serving in Vietnam, and he felt a "calling" to join the fight. He volunteered for combat duty.

Upon arrival in the Republic of South Vietnam, Rodney was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, who had been fighting the guerilla forces called the "Viet Cong" as well as major elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in and around the Que Son Valley (dubbed by the Marines "VC Valley") for many months. In early September, 1967, Rodney and his fellow Marines found themselves in the middle of a deadly combat operation.

Dubbed Operation SWIFT by higher command, this operation included some of the worst fighting of the Vietnam War, resulting in the largest number of American casualties suffered by this battalion in any combat operation throughout the entire war. In the midst of hellacious fighting all around them, the Bravo Company Marines were outnumbered and nearly surrounded. Suddenly, an enemy hand grenade was thrown into the Marines' position, and Sergeant Davis, without hesitation and with no thought of his own self-preservation, leaped forward and covered the grenade with his body, saving many lives but losing his own as a result of his heroic action.

Although Sergeant Davis was qualified for burial with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery, his family's wishes were that he be returned home to Macon. When his body was returned to his family in Macon, Georgia, he was buried in his family's plot in Linwood Cemetery.



Linwood Cemetery and the Rodney M. Davis Gravesite

Linwood Cemetery, a 13-acre historic Cemetery, was established in 1894. It is the final resting place of many of Pleasant Hill and Macon's prominent African/American citizens, included in it's over 4,000 gravesites. One gravesite commemorates the life of a Buffalo Soldier; another is the final resting place of Jefferson

Long, a former slave who, in 1870, became the first African-American from Georgia elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He was buried in Linwood Cemetery in 1901. This sacred ground is truly a historic treasure for the entire Macon community.

Unfortunately, over the ensuing years Linwood Cemetery became overgrown and fell into disrepair.

For several years now, members and volunteers of the Macon Cemetery Preservation Corp (MCPC), under the capable leadership of Alice Jackson, President of MCPC, have worked to remove heavy vegetation growth from the 19th and 20th century graves at Linwood Cemetery. "Our mission is to preserve, protect and restore," Jackson said. "Linwood Cemetery fell into disrepair because its

funds were not being used for perpetual care, so volunteers formed the nonprofit group," she said.

SUPPORT THE MEMORIAL PROJECT!

- **LEARN!** *An Idea is Born* - page 3
- **VOLUNTEER!** *Ongoing improvements through the Linwood Cemetery Volunteer Project* - page 1
- **DONATE!** *How to Build a Memorial Monument* - page 4

1/5 Vietnam Veterans Volunteer

One of Sergeant Davis's Bravo Company buddies, Marine Randy Leedom, visited Macon a few years ago. When he saw the overgrown cemetery and the sad state of the Davis family plot, he alerted the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans. We agreed to do everything in our power to work with MCPC and right this terrible wrong. Since learning of the overall condition of the cemetery through Randy, one of those who is alive today because of Sergeant Davis's selfless act, volunteers from the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans and many other veterans groups, active duty military groups and civic organizations in the Macon area have regularly attended work parties to clean up the Davis Family plot and the surrounding area.

But this is more than a story about the renovation of a graveyard – it is a story of the “Generations of Marines,” about veterans and volunteers coming together to work together to right a wrong. Our involvement started when I heard Randy Leedom's report, and shortly thereafter received the following email from one of our members, Lt. Col. Dale Greene, USMC (Retired):

My oldest son, Jason, is a Corporal in Bravo Company, 4th Recon Battalion (the reserve recon battalion) here in Atlanta. He is quite well versed in 1/5 and he knows that our Association is unique and that we all stay in contact with each other wherever Marines are concerned but most especially, 5th Marines.

This past weekend Jason participated in a Flag Rededication Ceremony in Macon, Georgia. It seems the cemetery where the ceremony took place is a very old, predominately African American cemetery that had fallen into a state of neglect. A civic project was started some time ago to clean up the cemetery and one of the grave sites that was “discovered” was that of Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, USMC, the only Marine serving in our battalion to receive the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

Jason wanted to first and foremost bring this unique story to our Association's attention and let us know that Sgt. Davis has not been forgotten. Secondly, he is interested in developing some method of keeping Sgt. Davis's grave site in a condition befitting a MOH winner and something of which all of us from 1/5 would be proud.

Semper Fi,

Lt. Col. Dale Greene, USMC (Retired)

Since that chance encounter with his father's battalion's history and our hero, Jason Greene and his fellow reserve recon Marines in the Atlanta area have attended many of the weekend work parties, and have made a huge difference in cleaning up the area around Sergeant Davis's gravesite. They have also spent countless hours painting and renovating the sign and the large USMC letters in front of the sign. Sergeant Jason Greene has missed only one weekend work party sponsored by the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans since then, and it is understandable and excusable because he and his unit were activated and he spent one full combat tour in Afghanistan during that period, becoming a new father at the same time. Now

back on reserve duty in the Atlanta area, Jason and his friends (including many of their girlfriends) are always present at the twice-annual 1/5 Vietnam Veterans work parties at Linwood Cemetery.

The story of Linwood Cemetery and Sgt. Davis has garnered attention from many Marine Corps Veterans and Veterans Groups. Those groups include:

- The 1/5 Vietnam Veterans Unit Chapter of the 1st Marine Division Association
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 443, Macon, GA
- Bravo Company, 4th Marine Recon Battalion
- The Montford Point Marine Association
- Marine Aircraft Group 49 (Detachment A)
- Middle Georgia Detachment #970, Marine Corps League
- Westside High School Junior ROTC
- Students from Mercer University and Wesleyan College
- Members of First Presbyterian Church and Ingleside Baptist Church, and
- The family and friends of Sergeant Rodney M. Davis

One of the groups that is always present in force at the work parties is the Montford Point Marine Association. Many of these African-American veterans live in the surrounding area, but many drive for hours to attend. The young high school students, members of the Westside High School's Junior Air Force ROTC program, have really pitched in and have distinguished themselves at work parties twice every month for the past several years. Several Marines representing four Marine Corps League Detachments, including the Rodney M. Davis Detachment headquartered in Utah, have also made their presence known in Macon.

Over the past several years, residents of Macon and others have attended work parties, twice a month, to help restore Linwood Cemetery. Because our membership is spread out across the country and thus traveling to Macon is somewhat of a challenge, members of the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans have committed to leading two work parties a year, typically scheduled for April and October.



Davis Family Plot - Linwood Cemetery

An Idea is Born!

During a work party in April, 2011, volunteers gathered once again in Linwood Cemetery to continue this work. As usual, the representatives of the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans showed up early and started clearing weeds from the Davis Family plot, a job becoming easier with each visit. Happily, this time there were few weeds to worry about, and they were immediately dispatched.

After ensuring that Sergeant Davis's grave was neat and clean, we turned our attention to the big wooden sign that stands at the top of a bluff overlooking the I-75 freeway. This big sign, painted in the scarlet and gold of the Marine Corps, has seen better days. The two 6" x 6" posts that the sign is mounted on are still sturdy, but the painted plywood sign (4' x 6') itself has badly deteriorated over the years.

As always, Alice Jackson and her people gathered all the volunteers together and gave us an overview of the progress they have made since our last work party, and pointed out a few of their priority areas. Each group then scattered and focused in a particular part of the cemetery. Our group and the recon Marines focused on the Sgt. Davis gravesite, the flag pole and the sign / lighting, and the surrounding area. Today, this small plot of ground looks about as good as it can with just a monthly clean-up; it looks okay, but we all know that it could and should be much, much better. As we worked, we considered that assessment and the challenge of maintaining the wooden sign, which requires a complete renovation every year. Thus was born the idea to build the **Sergeant Rodney M. Davis, USMC, Medal of Honor Memorial Monument**.

Rather than renovating the wooden sign each year, the sign will be torn down and replaced with a permanent granite memorial monument commemorating Sergeant Davis's heroism. The monument itself will require no significant upkeep and will provide a memorial worthy of the U.S. Marine whose memory we honor.

This Special Edition of the Fourragère officially launches the Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, USMC, Medal of Honor Memorial Monument Project and the fundraising effort to make that project a reality. In this issue, you will learn all about this project and how you can help. Any questions, ideas, and offers of assistance can be directed to Nicholas Warr on my cell phone at 828-243-8708 or via email at nicholas@stonehillproductions.com.

How to Build a Monument

This project's goal is to raise the necessary funds to commission a suitable and permanent memorial monument for Sergeant Rodney M. Davis, USMC - Medal of Honor, a true American hero.

This project will be planned, organized and completed in "phases," as follows:

Phase 1: Design, build and install the memorial monument.

Phase 2: Dedicate the Monument and Memorialize Sergeant Davis - Memorial Service and Banquet. We plan to host the U. S. Marines whose lives Rodney saved at this event.

Phase 3:

Initiate and administer a Scholarship Program with funds raised in excess of what is necessary to complete phases 1 and 2, to benefit high school students in Macon.

The 1/5 Vietnam Veterans Unit Chapter of the 1st Marine Division Association is "taking point" on this project, by providing project planning, fund raising and marketing support capabilities, along with volunteer and professional labor. We intend to support this project by making individual and organizational donations, by leading the work task efforts under the guidance and approval of the Macon Cemetery Preservation Corporation, and utilizing our "national network of members" to reach out to other individuals and businesses and organizations in communities across the country. All "Stakeholders" mentioned in this Project Plan include all those who have contributed in this effort to date as well as others who decide to join our cause.



DONATIONS! Help Us Honor Sergeant Davis

Project Fund-Raising Goal: \$ 75,000.00

We are seeking donations from individuals, businesses and organizations to help us fund this project. We would appreciate any size donation, but we are also offering special opportunities for recognition to those who make major donations.

Major Donation Categories.



(1) Navy Cross Donor - \$ 25,000,00 This donor will be invited to attend and participate in the memorial monument dedication and commemoration banquet (10 seats) and will be given the “inside back cover” of the programs for a memorial commemorative message.



(5) Silver Star Donors - \$ 5,000.00 ea. These donors will be invited to attend the memorial monument dedication and commemoration banquet (4 seats), and will be given a quarter-page space in the programs for a brief memorial commemoration message.



(50) Bronze Star Donors - \$ 500.00 ea. These donors will be invited to attend the memorial monument dedication and commemoration banquet (2 seats), and will be named in the programs.

Every donation - of time, ideas, expertise, physical labor, and money in any amount - is greatly appreciated.

Rodney M. Davis Memorial Monument DONATION FORM

Your donation will be placed in a charitable trust administered by the corporate attorney representing the 1/5 Vietnam Veterans. If for any reason this memorial monument is not built, all donations will be returned.

The 1/5 Vietnam Veterans Unit Chapter of the 1st Marine Division Association is a 501 (c) 19 non-profit charitable organization. All donations made to support this special project are tax deductible up to the limits allowed by law.

Name, Company / Organization

Address

City, ST Zip

Email

Phone

Checks payable to: 1/5 Vietnam Veterans
For - Sgt. Davis Monument Fund
Mail to:
1/5 Vietnam Veterans
P. O. Box 1117
Flat Rock, NC 28731

email - sgtdavis@1-5vietnamveterans.org

Donation Amount

Please contact me to discuss a Navy Cross, Silver Star, or Bronze Star Donation.