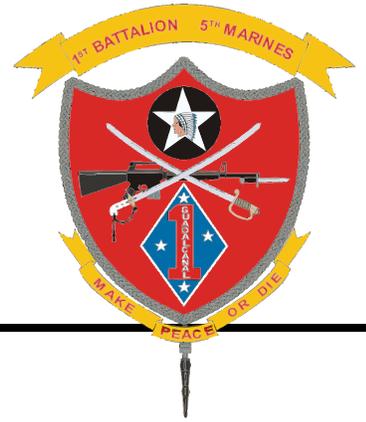


The FOURRAGÈRE

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



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

Special Edition

Volume XII Special Edition



The Sgt. Davis Story Continues

Early on the morning of 6 September 1967, Sergeant Rodney M. Davis, from Macon, Georgia, earned the Medal of Honor. He was killed in action during one of the many large battles in the Que Son Valley dubbed Operation SWIFT.

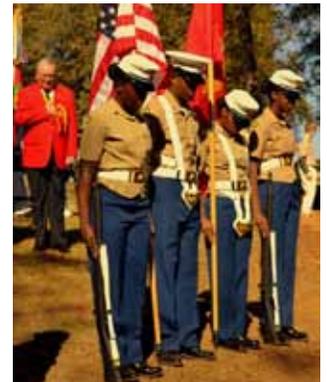
Sergeant Davis was married and had two young children. He had been serving as a Marine Security Guard at the American Embassy in London, England, and could have avoided combat in Vietnam altogether because his enlistment was nearly at an end. But Rodney had several friends serving in Vietnam and he felt a calling to join the fight. He volunteered for combat duty, and was assigned to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Sgt. Davis had only been in South Vietnam for about three weeks, serving as a Platoon Guide. Shortly after dawn that morning, in the midst of hellacious fighting all around them, the Bravo Company Marines found themselves outnumbered and nearly surrounded. The enemy's positions were close – too close, and the Marines of Bravo Company quickly found itself fighting for their lives. Suddenly, an enemy hand grenade was thrown into one of the Marines' hasty defensive positions, a muddy trench line, 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 in the process. One of those veterans whose life was spared remembered that when Sgt. Davis acted, he dropped to the ground, covering the grenade and then in the last moments of his young life frantically did everything he could to completely shield his Marines from the violent explosion.

Eye-witness, Lance Corporal Gary Petrous, shared his memories of that fateful day.

"We had a kind of lull in the fighting. During that time, Sgt. Davis appeared at our position and gave us instructions about fire discipline, distributed more ammo, and assigned us fields of fire. He told us we would be moving people around into better defensive positions shortly, and then moved on to the next position. I didn't envy him his task, but I have to say that his visit was hugely reassuring. Sgt. Davis returned to give us the word on the move and we reluctantly left the deep crater we had been in, but favored the new spot over the old when we saw that our position had improved dramatically. Sgt. Davis went off to another position. I thought he appeared visibly shaken by the fury of the attack and the peril of our situation, but he had mastered his feelings; his voice was anxious but even, and he performed his duties in the finest traditions of a Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. We were now in as good a position as possible and ready to respond like Marines."

"The enemy had realized our action and prepared their reaction. They tried to get close and engage but we beat them back a couple times. They resorted to slinking through the ground cover and attempting to soften us up with a grenade attack. Sgt. Davis, SSgt. Ron Posey (our Platoon Sergeant) and LCpl. Randy Leedom had gathered in a trench a few dozen feet away from where I lay. 2nd Lt. John Brackeen, our platoon commander, and his radio man, Greg Crandall, had joined them in the trench to get instructions to carry back to the squads. A grenade came out of the area where the huts were and landed in their trench. All five of them dived out and the grenade went



The Sgt. Davis Story Continues

continued from page 1

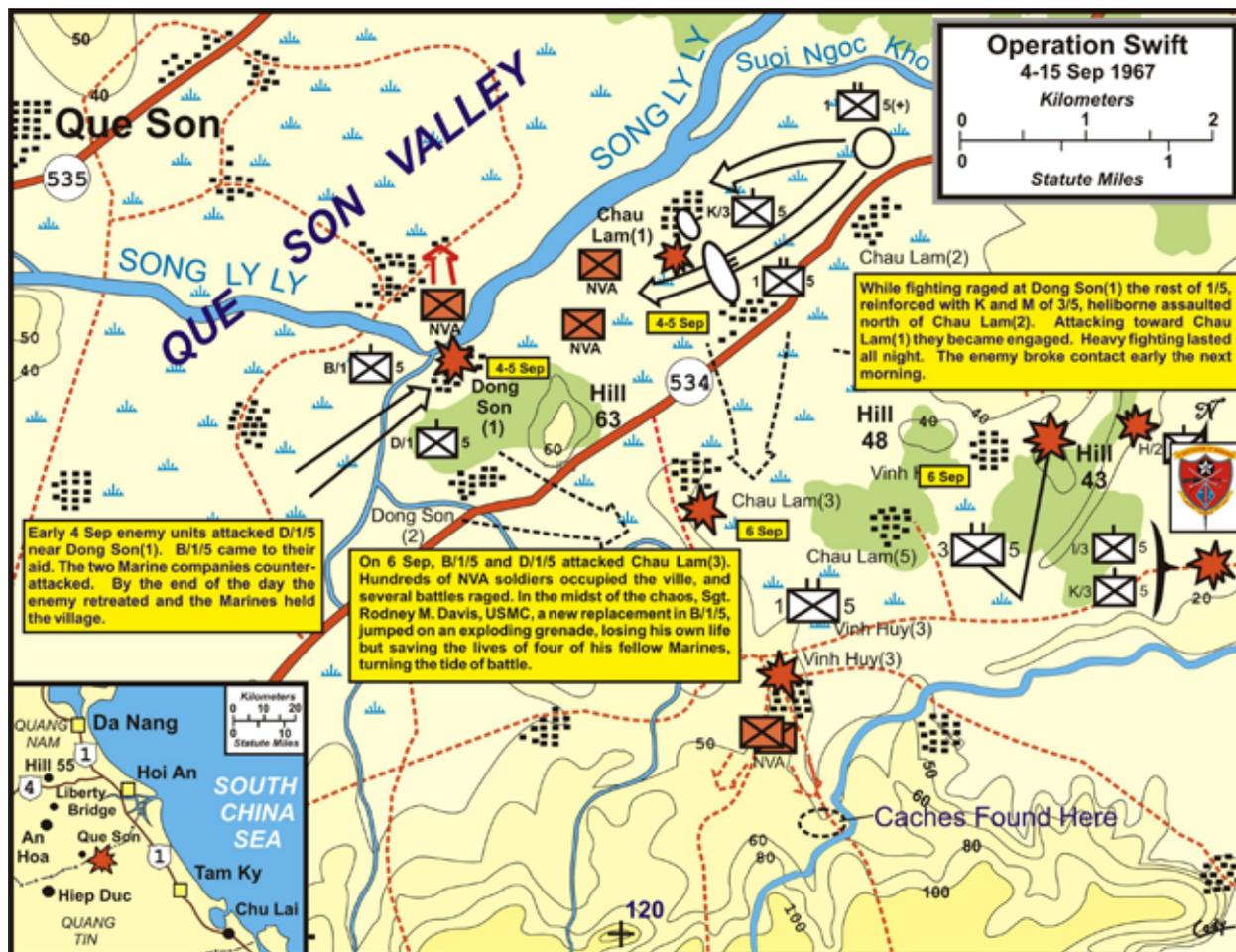
off harmlessly. A second grenade came in and landed outside the trench and they all dived back into the trench in what Brackeen later described as a wordless but perfectly choreographed ballet. That grenade went off harmlessly also. Then a few grenades came in, some outside and one inside the trench line. Four men froze in the paralyzing shock and fear that happens only in combat. Sgt. Davis did not. He threw himself on top of an enemy grenade saving the lives of the other four men at the expense of his own."

Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, USMC, was posthumously awarded our Nation's highest award for courage in battle, the Medal of Honor (see Citation, included in this issue). Rodney bravely acted without hesitation, saving many of his fellow Marines; and the Marines he saved in that trench were inspired, and able to continue the fight, and soon the tide turned. One of those Rodney saved, Marine Randy Leedom, said, "I remember that day clearly. There were four or five of us in that muddy trench line, and the NVA were right next to us. I didn't even really know Sgt. Davis, and I don't know why he did what he did, but I do know if it wasn't for him, I would not be here today.

He jumped on that enemy grenade, and when it exploded it drove his body straight up in the air. He was killed instantly, but all of the rest of us were saved by his heroic act."

Operation SWIFT officially ended at 1600 on 15 September 1967. During Operation SWIFT, this reinforced Marine infantry battalion had engaged in a deadly struggle with the NVA soldiers of the 1st NVA Regiment, as well as elements of the 3rd and 21st NVA Regiments. The Combat After-Action Report from Operation SWIFT estimates that nearly 1,000 enemy soldiers had fought in SWIFT's battles; nearly 600 of those NVA soldiers died. On the negative side of the equation, Operation SWIFT resulted in the deaths of eighty-nine U. S. Marines. 6 September 1967 would go down in history as the bloodiest day during the Vietnam War for the Marines of 1/5.

The Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, USMC (MOH), Memorial Monument is located in the heart of one of Macon's historic cemeteries, Linwood Cemetery. To reach it, just enter under the arched entryway at the end of Pursley Street, which is just off of Walnut Avenue. This is considered the "back entrance" of the Memorial Park. Follow the one-lane loop road to the



right, and you will see the Memorial Monument on the right. The monument sits atop a fairly high bluff that overlooks Interstate 75. There are four commemorative benches on the foundation's "apron" that have recorded all of the warm and generous contributors who helped raise the money and volunteered their sweat to see this monument become a reality. The monument was dedicated on the Marine Corps Birthday, 10 November 2012, in front of about 500 folks from Macon and across the country, including three Marines who survived the war because of Sgt. Davis's heroic act.

As you approach the monument, you will be facing a portrait of Sgt. Davis. As you walk up to his image, you will see two of eight "etched panels" that represent a brief combat history of Sgt. Davis's outfit – 1st Battalion, 5th Marines – during the Vietnam War. As you read this history, step to your right and walk slowly around the black and grey marble obelisk. The engraved image on all four sides of the black granite is the iconic representation of the Helmet, Rifle, Bayonet and Boots that is often seen at military memorial services. In this image, the engraving of a hand grenade resting on the ground near the point when the bayonet pierces the ground, reminds us of this incredibly courageous act. Sgt. Davis gave his life to save others.

Semper Fidelis!



SERGEANT RODNEY MAXWELL DAVIS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as the right guide of the 2d Platoon, Company B, in action against enemy forces. Elements of the 2d Platoon were pinned down by a numerically superior force of attacking North Vietnamese Army Regulars. Remnants of the platoon were located in a trench line where Sgt. Davis was directing the fire of his men in an attempt to repel the enemy attack. Disregarding the enemy hand grenades and high volume of small arms and mortar fire, Sgt. Davis moved from man to man shouting words of encouragement to each of them while firing and throwing grenades at the onrushing enemy. When an enemy grenade landed in the trench in the midst of his men, Sgt. Davis, realizing the gravity of the situation, and in a final valiant act of complete self-sacrifice, instantly threw himself upon the grenade, absorbing with his body the full and terrific force of the explosion. Through his extraordinary initiative and inspiring valor in the face of almost certain death, Sgt. Davis saved his comrades from injury and possible loss of life, enabled his platoon to hold its vital position, and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.

DONATIONS! Help Us Honor Sergeant Davis

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**The monument was dedicated on the Marine Corps Birthday, 10 Nov 2012.*

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Semper Fidelis!

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 used for improvements to the monument and the surrounding area.

Check here if you want this donation to support the Sgt. Davis Memorial Scholarship Program.*

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.

*For more information about the Sgt. Davis Scholarship Program, please visit <http://www.cfcga.org/davis-guidelines?>

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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