

The Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans' Memorial



The Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veterans' Memorial will be built at the entrance to the Mount Vernon Recreation Center at the intersection of Mount Vernon and Commonwealth Avenues. Present plans are to wrap up fundraising by early summer 2001, complete construction of the memorial by the end of October and to dedicate the Memorial on Veteran's Day, November 11th, of this year.

Background on Rocky Versace

Humbert Roque "Rocky" Versace was born in Hawaii on July 2nd, 1937. As the son of a West Point graduate (WP '33) and a career Army officer, Rocky and his family moved frequently, but since spending five years on Forest Street, Rocky always considered Alexandria his home. The Versace family was very active in Saint Rita's Catholic Church where Rocky was an Altar Boy.

After graduating from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1959, Rocky served in Korea, and later as an officer with the Old Guard at Arlington National Cemetery. By 1962, Rocky was serving as a military advisor in South Vietnam, where he was well known for his off-duty humanitarian efforts, especially projects benefiting the Vietnamese children. During the summer of 1963, serving his second tour in Vietnam, Rocky had decided to leave the Army to prepare for the priesthood as a member of the Maryknoll Order. His plans were to become a Missionary and return to Vietnam to work with the children of that war-torn country.

On October 29, 1963, just weeks short of his return, Rocky was captured with two other Americans during a fierce firefight. For the next 23 months, Rocky Versace was confined to a bamboo cage about the size of a coffin. Despite regular torture and the deplorable conditions he experienced, Rocky refused to cooperate with the enemy and lived strictly by the Military POW Code of Conduct. Ignoring three bullet wounds to his left leg, he attempted escape three times. For his refusal to cooperate or make statements against the United States, Rocky was executed in September of 1965. In 1970, Major Nick Rowe, one of Rocky's fellow captives who has recently escaped, recommended an award for valor for Versace. The Army presented the Silver Star. In 2000, the Army Special Forces Command, in a complete review of Capt. Versace's heroism, resubmitted his award recommendation.

In January of this year, Secretary of the Army Luis Caldera approved the Medal of Honor for Rocky Versace. The Versace family will receive the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor sometime this spring or early summer.

Remembering Alexandrians Who Did Not Return



Sixty-one other Alexandrians who served our country in Vietnam did not return. Each of their names will be inscribed in the circular seating area surrounding the Memorial. If other names are submitted and verified, there have been provisions made to add additional names to the Memorial. The names of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines presently included are:

CAPT Paul M. Bayliss (Air Force)
SSGT Douglas Randolph Blodgett (Army)
SGT Ray Burmaster Browne (Army SF)
CAPT George Burton Colgan II (Army)
PVT Ross Williard Collins Jr. (Army)
WO1 Raymond Lester Conway (Army)
CPL Robert William Cupp (Army)
MAJ Joseph Edwin Davies (Air Force)
SGT Robert William Dean (Army)
SGT James Wheeler Dickey (Army)
PFC Bernard Guy J. Dillenseger (Army)
MAJ Morgan Jefferson Donahue (Air Force)
CPL Charles Henry Elliott Jr. (Army)
LCPL Richard Holt Freudenthal (Marine Corps)
CPL Thomas Mark Gaither (Army)
PFC Darrell Lee Gibbons (Marine Corps)
LCPL Donald Wade Gill Jr. (Marine Corps)
WO1 Bruce Elliot Graham (Army)
1LT Richard Tenney Gray (Air Force)
1LT Cleveland Ray Harvey (Marine Corps)
PFC Richard William Hoffler (Marine Corps)
PFC Kermit W. Holland Jr. (Marine Corps)
SP5 William David Holmes (Army)

CPL Wayne Lamont Jordan (Marine Corps)
CPL Herman Leroy Judy Jr. (Army)
MAJ Paul Richard Karas (Army)
LCPL Michael John Keberline (Marine Corps)
SP4 Michael John Kilduff (Army)
SGT James Edward King (Army)
2LT Henry Alverson Ledford (Marine Corps)
SP4 David Atwood Lerner (Army)
CAPT George B. Lockhart (Air Force)
PFC Michael Eugene Ludwig (Army)
PFC Philip Newman Malone (Marine Corps)
CAPT Tschann Scott Mashburn (Army)
1LT Leland S. McCants II (Army)
SP4 Michael Joseph McCarron (Army)
LTJG Kenneth Earl Norris (Navy)
PFC Kevin McElhannon Jr. (Army)
1LT Brian Joseph O'Callaghan (Army)
SSGT Clarence M. Overbay Jr. (Army)
SP5 Henry Lindsay Page II (Army)
CAPT Joseph Lewis Powell Jr. (Marine Corps)
PFC Harry F. Richardson Jr. (Army)
CAPT Kenneth Robert Sawyer (Army)
AO2 Joseph Clarence Shartzter (Navy)
SP4 Johnny Jerome Smith (Army)
CAPT Henry Mershon Spengler II (Army)
1LT Lewis Lynn Stone (Army)
SGT Charles Lee Suthard Jr. (Marine Corps)
SGT Michael Oliver Thomas (Army)
SP4 Matthew Winston Thornton (Army)
PFC Foster Jewell G. Touart Jr. (Marine Corps)
PVT Jeron Franklin Valentine (Army)
CAPT Humbert Roque Versace (Army)
SFC David James Warczak (Army SF)
CPL James Clinton Ward (Marine Corps)
PFC Ronald Wayne Ward (Army)
LTC Robert Earl Whitbeck (Army)
PFC Raymond Leroy Williams (Army)
SA John Anthony Winkler (Navy)
MAJ Carl L. Young (Army)

Memorial Fund Contributions

The cost of the Rocky Versace Plaza and Vietnam Veteran's Memorial will be approximately \$300,000.00. The entire amount will be obtained from private donations. The City of Alexandria, although not contributing to the fund, is accepting the donations through the Department of Finance. All funds received are tax deductible and 100% of the donations will go towards the project. Please send donations to:

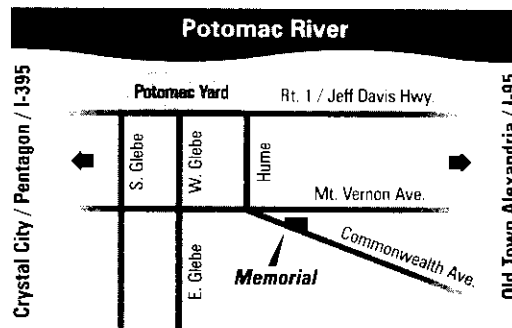
**Mr. Daniel Neckel
Director, Department of Finance
City of Alexandria
P.O. Box 178
Alexandria, Virginia 22313**

Please note checks "*For Versace/VN Vets Project*" and you will receive a letter from the City for your tax records.

The City of Alexandria has a unique opportunity to not only recognize and remember the brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who lost their lives in Vietnam, but to also pay tribute to a hero who is soon to be a recipient of our Nation's highest award for Valor, *The Congressional Medal of Honor.*



Memorial Site



The Rocky Versace Plaza & Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund

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