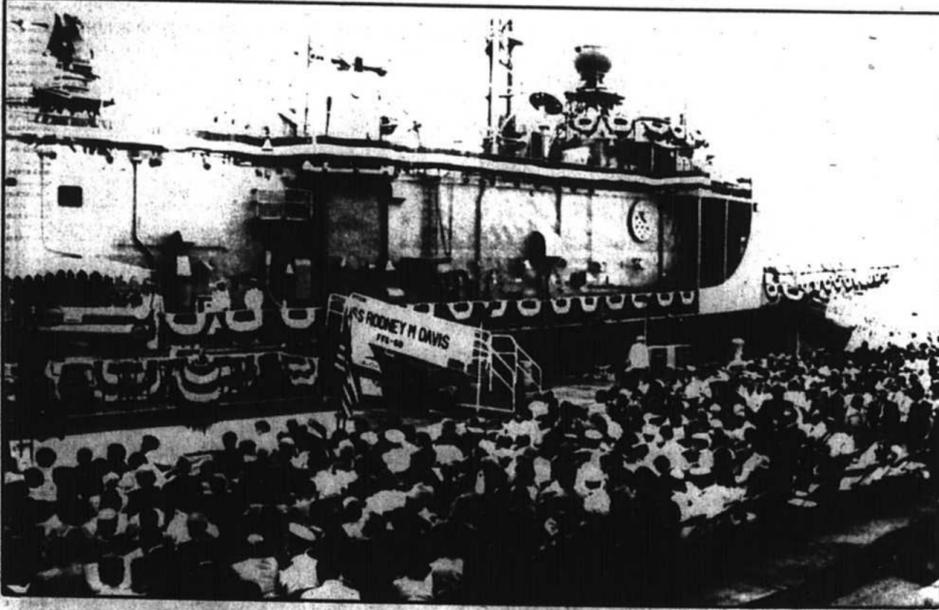


LIFESTYLES

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Black Marine Hero Honored By Navy



COMMISSIONING CEREMONY - Family and guests gather at the naval station in Long Beach, CA., for the May 9 commissioning ceremony of the Navy's newest frigate, the USS Rodney M. Davis.



GIVING HONORS -- Mrs. Judy Davis, left, and Mrs. Ruth Davis, the widow and mother of the late Marine Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, salute as the national anthem is played during commissioning ceremonies May 9.

Special To The Post By Kirk W. Draper & L.J. Samuelson

During one of the thousands of battles fought in Vietnam, a young, black Marine sergeant earned our nation's highest honor.

Rodney M. Davis of Macon, Ga., had decided to join the Marine Corps right after his high school graduation in 1961. Davis would earn the nation's highest decoration for bravery, and now the Navy has commissioned a ship in his name.

His mother, Ruth Davis of Macon, says only that he was very proud of his country. But when Davis requested duty in Vietnam, he made a place for himself in United States history.

On Sept. 6, 1967, he had been in Vietnam for only one month. As the right guide of 2nd platoon for Company "B," Davis was part of the 1st Marine Division. He was 25 years old and a 6-year Marine Corps veteran.

While on patrol in Quang Nam Province, Sgt. Davis' platoon had been pinned down by a larger force of attacking North Vietnamese Army regulars. He ordered his men into a trench line and continued to direct their fire to repel the attack.

Amid enemy hand grenades and intense mortar and small arms fire, Davis moved from man to man shouting words of encouragement while firing and throwing grenades at the onrushing enemy.

Instantly, according to men in the trench, Davis came to a halt.

An enemy grenade had just landed among them. Davis threw himself on the grenade, absorbing with his own body the full force of

the explosion.

In mid-September 1967, back in Macon, Ga., Judy Davis received a letter about her husband from his platoon commander: "... The absence of so great and courageous a man has left an unfilled spot in our ranks and hearts. I think Rodney died for a cause that he believed in."

The letter did not mention the details of how Davis died. Two years later, though, a military visitor contacted his wife.

"I was at the dentist's office when someone called me and said someone from the military was at my house," says Judy Davis. "My thoughts were - My God, maybe he didn't die!"

"Then when I found out I'd been called because of the Medal of Honor -- at first I was disappointed, but after I got over the initial shock, I began to realize the magnitude of the honor."

His mother, wife and children, Nichola, 4, and Samantha, 3, were flown to Washington, D.C., to receive the Medal of Honor posthumously awarded Rodney M. Davis.

At the White House ceremony, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew commented, "His actions, his selflessness, his conduct and courage will stand as examples for Young men to come and generations to follow."

Now almost 20 years after Davis' death, the U.S. Navy has ensured that he will be remembered. One of its newest guided-missile frigates, the USS Rodney M. Davis, is the fourth Navy ship to be named after a prominent black American. It is the first to be commissioned in honor of a black American Medal of Honor recipient.



MEMORIAL - Medal Of Honor memorial for Marine Sgt. Rodney M. Davis was erected in his hometown of Macon, Ga. It stands in front of Macon City Hall.

"This is a great honor, and I'm really glad that it has been bestowed on my son," says Ruth Davis. "The whole family is very proud and pleased. It's such a great thing to happen to a black man."

At the commissioning ceremony May 9 at the Long Beach Naval Station in California, guest speaker Marine Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen

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Station in California, guest speaker Marine Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen



ON PATROL - The newly commissioned frigate USS Rodney M. Davis under way off the Southern California Coast. The USS Rodney M. Davis is the

first U.S. Navy ship to be named after a black Vietnam veteran.



MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT - The late Marine Sgt. Rodney M. Davis, wearing his dress blues, poses for an informal portrait while serving as a corporal.

talked about Rodney Davis.

"I don't know how such men as Sgt. Davis can perform such acts of heroism, but I do know that I will never learn how to bury such warriors."

"As we honor such men today, we do so humbly. They are truly America's heroes," said Petersen.

"I knew that going to Vietnam

was something he wanted to do. He was a military man, and that was his career," says Judy Davis.

"He was willing and ready to go to Vietnam because he felt he was doing a service. He didn't hesitate about going," says Ruth Davis.

The commanding officer of the USS Rodney M. Davis, Cmdr. Craig Heckert of Philadelphia, talked about his ship's namesake and his crew.

"The officers and crew feel honored to have the ship named after a Vietnam veteran. Sgt. Rodney M. Davis will be an example for my crew to emulate. His dedication and selfless act will provide us with inspiration and support during our training. Personally, the fact that the ship is named after a Vietnam veteran is especially meaningful since I made my first deployment in the Navy to Vietnam."

"As any commanding officer, I want to see a well-trained ship take its place proudly among its sister ships in the fleet. With such an honorable namesake, it behooves us to uphold that name and

bring honor to Sgt. Davis. I would like people to say in the future that the USS Rodney M. Davis was ready in both peace and war and upheld the highest standards of both the Marine Corps and the Navy."

The USS Rodney M. Davis is a highly automated, multi-purpose ship designed to counter threats from aircraft, submarines and surface ships. It is the 17th of 18 ships in its class and is homeported in Long Beach, Calif.

"I certainly hope that the crew of this new ship will be brave like my son, and that they are willing to look forward to doing the best that they can at what ever task they are given," says Ruth Davis.

"I'd like to see the crew have determination and trust - mainly determination like my husband had," says Judy Davis. "When Rodney had something to do, he did it regardless of the sacrifice. He would be very proud of this ship."

(Kirk W. Draper and L.J. Samuelson are the leading chief and deputy director at the Navy Public Affairs Center in San Diego.)



Pictured above from left to right are members of the Pan Hellenic planning committee: Esther Hargrave, Marilyn McClain, Clarissy Knox, R.

Douglas Spears, Marie L. Grier, O'Dell Robinson, Adelaide Hunt, Marian Yates, Carrie Evans, Jacquelyn Cox and Sarah Stroud.

Council Plans Greek Weekend

The Charlotte Graduate Pan Hellenic Council is planning a "Greek Weekend" August 28-30.

Kicking off the function will be a wine and cheese sip that will be held on Friday, August 28 at the Omega Fraternity House. Only Greeks can attend this event.

Beginning at noon on Saturday, August 29 the schedule for the "Greek Weekend" will include a noon luncheon. Speaking at this occasion is Dr. Ada Jackson, president of the National Pan-Hellenic Council. Afterwards, a round table discussion will take place.

Worship service at Gethse-

mane AME Zion Church will conclude the "Greek Weekend". All Greek lettered organizations that belong to the Graduate Pan-Hellenic Council will be in attendance.

The Charlotte Graduate Pan-Hellenic Council hopes that this weekend will help develop a cohesive work unit of all greek lettered organizations which will brainstorm and formulate methods to solve problems affecting the black community, as well as provide an opportunity for open discussion of issues of significant impact in many areas of concern.

Formed in 1930 at Howard University, the National Pan-Hellenic Council was organized to provide "Unanimity of thought and action as far as possible in the conduct of Greek letter collegiate fraternities and sororities and to consider problems of mutual interest to its member organizations."

The Charlotte Graduate Pan-Hellenic Council consists of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.