



Davis Funeral Home's Veteran of the Week



as this week's Veteran of the week. Donald (Buzz) Mathis like so many men in the 1960's and 1970's was drafted into the United States Army to serve his country during the Vietnam



Morgan County Today, is humbled and honored to praise United States Army Veteran, Donald (Buzz) R. Mathis,

War.
Buzz

Mathis' tour of duty began on September 24, 1970. Buzz, quickly moved up the enlisted ranks and earned the respectable rank of Sergeant within one year of service while serving in the Military Occupational Specialty as a Light Weapons Infantryman, in the 101st Airborne Division, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry, A Company. Tragically on May 28, 1971 Buzz Mathis was killed in action in the Thua Thein Province of Vietnam.

During SGT Mathis' honorable military service he earned the following awards; Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Air Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Marksmanship Badge, Parachutist Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam campaign medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Vietnam Gallantry Cross, and an Army Good Conduct Medal.

Any reader of this article can clearly see that SGT Mathis was an excellent soldier just by the awards and rank he earned in such a short time. Anytime an American Soldier is killed in action while defending the freedoms and rights of Americans or anyone who cannot defend themselves not only does America but the world

Soldier writes school children prior to death

"I feel that if my blood is spilled on this foreign soil, it will not be in vain as long as it helps to preserve our freedom in some small way and helps here our next generation from having to go through the hardships of war."

These are the words of a Southern soldier from Morgan County who died in Vietnam on May 28, 1971. Donald (Buzz) Mathis, age 21, expressed these sentiments in a letter to the fourth grade class of the younger school at Central Elementary School in Warburg. The letter, received late in January, was one of the 812 received before SGT Mathis' death.

It was written in response to a gesture by the school children each of them, about 40 in number, had written to Donald in Vietnam. The letter is reprinted here in its entirety.

Donald Mathis, who was born and reared in the Blount County community near Warburg, entered the army in April, 1970. He was a graduate of Central High School in Warburg. After his graduation from high school, he was employed as a laborer at the Blount County Courthouse in Jefferson City in the field of the former Wanda Jones, Jr., of the Blount County community.

Donald, who was in the army, received his basic training at Fort Jackson, S.C., and then his advanced training at Fort Polk, La. He went to Vietnam, where he served as a squad leader in an infantry unit. In September, 1971, Donald was killed when a scout from his platoon stepped on a booby trap while on an operation in the jungle. He was later honored by his family that he had been promoted to the rank of sergeant the day before he was killed.

According to reports from the army received by his family, Donald was an efficient, helpful and dedicated soldier.

Throughout his high school days, Donald worked for a grocery store in Blount County. He was in the band in high school, and showed an avid interest in civics. He had planned to study further in the field after leaving the army.

In addition to his wife, Donald is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Mathis, of Blount County; one sister, Mrs. Corne Maddox.



DONALD MATHIS

Harrisman; these brothers, Larry, stationed in Maryland with the Navy, David, a fifth grader at Central Elementary School, and James, a pre-schooler, grandmother, Mrs. Cora Mathis and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Mathis. Donald, who would have left for Vietnam in January, was shipped with full military honors to Blount County.

Donald took his first and last flight from Vietnam in mid-April. His wife joined him in Hawaii for a week, just one month before he was killed.

Donald never said much about conditions in Vietnam to his father, said his sister Mrs. Corne Maddox. "He was just there, and he was just there," she said. "He was just there, and he was just there."

In giving the letter to "The Harrisman Record" for reproduction, Mrs. Maddox said, "I just wanted to tell you how much I love him and how much I love you."

Donald Mathis was let him speak for himself. His letter tells the whole story.

Dear Mrs. Pacey and children of the fourth grade:

I regret that time will not allow me to answer every single one of these thoughtful and encouraging letters. I am really happy to find out that our younger generation is growing up so well and appreciative of the freedoms they have and that they realize the importance of preserving these freedoms.

I realize that I'm only a single individual doing his small part

Jan. 26, 1971
Dear Mrs. Pacey and children of the fourth grade, I regret that time will not allow me to answer every single one of these thoughtful and encouraging letters. I am really happy to find out that our younger generation is growing up so well and appreciative of the freedoms they have and that they realize the importance of preserving these freedoms.

I realize that I'm only a single individual doing his small part to preserve our way of life. I feel, if my blood is spilled on this foreign soil, it will not be in vain as long as it helps to preserve that freedom in some small way and helps keep our next generation from having to go through the hardships of war.

Appreciative I am for your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely yours,
Sgt. Donald Mathis

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I am back to my home and my mind, now that I have received your letters and have the very best of you. You can never know how appreciative I am for your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely yours,
Sgt. Donald Mathis

have a great loss beyond all comprehension. Although most readers never met SGT Mathis, all can honor him and his ultimate sacrifice by taking a moment to reflect on and appreciate the freedoms we as Americans enjoy everyday. Morgan County Today, thanks SGT Donald (Buzz) R. Mathis and the Mathis family for their incomprehensible sacrifice and loss.