

**Sand Lake Memorial Day Parade and Service**  
**A Day In Honor of:**

***Major George Quamo***

**Monday, May 31, 2004**



**1940 - 1968**

**Major George Quamo's  
Military Award & Decorations List**

**Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously)**  
**Silver Star (First Oak Leaf Cluster)**  
**Legion of Merit**  
**Bronze Star Medal with V and (First Oak Leaf Cluster)**  
**Air Medal**  
**Army Commendation Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster)**  
**Purple Heart (Posthumously)**  
**Army Good Conduct Medal**  
**Presidential Unit Emblem**  
**Presidential Unit Citation Navy**  
**National Defense Service Medal**  
**Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal**  
**Vietnam Service Medal with (3) Bronze Stars**  
**Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device (1960)**  
**Combat Infantry Badge**  
**Parachutist Badge**  
**Pathfinder Badge**  
**Ranger Tab**  
**Expert Badge with automatic rifle, submachine gun and  
carbine bars**  
**Sharpshooter Badge with rifle bar**  
**Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm  
Unit Citation Badge**  
**\* Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Medal**  
**New York State Conspicuous Service Cross**  
**New York State Conspicuous Service Star**

**Note: Major Quamo is believed to have the above starred item in addition to the other awards listed  
and other foreign awards which are not listed.**



Major George Quamo  
20 June 1940 – 14 April 1968

By all accounts this young “tough as nails” Army Officer from Averill Park, was both handsome and brilliant. Known for being cool under pressure and a square shooter, it didn’t take this soldier long to become one of America’s finest warriors and at 27 years of age, the youngest major in MACV-SOG (Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Studies and Observation Group) when he was promoted to that rank on October 6, 1967. He spoke three languages – Laotian, Vietnamese and Thai- and was even an instructor in Vietnamese at the Army language school in Monterey, California.

Who was this American hero who lived among us back in the 1950’s ? Well to Yllka, Tefta, Andronika, Marietta and James he was their brother, to others in our Sand Lake community, he was the boy next door, the kid down the street, the Class President or the quarterback of the Averill Park High School Football Team. “I still receive phone calls from guys who served under him”, said his brother James, now of Spencerport, New York. “Some of them even cry telling me how they felt about him.”

In a newspaper article, written by Tom Haggerty for The Albany Times Union and Khe-Sahn Marines Magazine the following story is related. Master Sergeant Charles “Skip” Minnicks, at 38 was the oldest team leader in SOG when “this fresh-faced captain” took over the reconnaissance team in the fall of 1967. “I was madder than hell when he took over”, said Minnicks, a highly-decorated SOG veteran of four tours in Vietnam. “And I made no bones about it. I didn’t hide my feelings at all. He looked like a kid and I resented him.” He didn’t say anything about it for a few weeks and then one day, we were in the jungle somewhere and he pulled me aside. He said, “We’re both in this for the same reason. We’re both fighting the same enemy. I don’t want to fight you, too. We have to work as a team.” “Well, of course he was right,” Minnicks continued. “And I really felt bad about how I had acted. But I’ll tell you something. I grew to love that man. I would have crawled up inside the barrel of an enemy cannon for him. I mean that. He was one helluva of an officer. I can’t say enough about him. He was just excellent.”

“In another incident up on Co Roc Mountain, in an area swarming with North Vietnamese Regulars”, Minnicks recalled. “He had all four teams up there. There were patrols chasing us all over the place. He led us up a hill and then stood up and defied them to come get us. He was one tough guy”.

But again according to Tom Haggerty’s article, Major George Quamo’s finest moment came at Lang Vei, (a Special Forces camp in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam along Route 9, a mile and a half from the Laotian border). Quamo was in Khe Sanh when he heard (over the radio) accounts of the battle raging at Lang Vei. To make a long story short, he gathered a few dozen Special Forces commando volunteers from

the MACV-SOG base at Khe Sanh (FOB #3) and then led an heroic rescue mission into the Special Forces camp. His arrival in Lang Vei enabled its (14 surviving) defenders to evacuate the area, many by Marine helicopter in the late afternoon. Reflecting back, Master Sergeant Minnicks stated, "I really believe he should have been awarded the Medal of Honor for getting those guys out of Lang Vei. "He saved their lives." Already awarded two Silver Stars and a Bronze Star for bravery on previous missions, Quamo would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously for "exposing himself to a tremendous volume of fire" at Lang Vei. "He was the last man to leave the landing zone" the DSC citation reads. "Major Quamo's intense dedication to his men, his coolness in battle and his extraordinary courage are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army."

A month and a half later, on April 14, 1968 Quamo disappeared in an aircraft enroute to deliver some top-secret papers to Danang. An extensive search was undertaken as soon as Quamo's plane was reported missing, including a naval search. Since Danang was near the sea, it was thought the plane might have drifted out to sea and crashed. Six years later, on June 26, 1974, Vietnamese woodcutters discovered the wreckage in a dense jungle area and the remains of George Quamo were flown back to the United States, and he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on October 21, 1974, as his family and several Army officers and soldiers looked on. There were no bands, no generals and no parades. He died at 27, a very special soldier: truly an American hero.





The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 25, 1963, has awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously to

**Major George Quamo**  
**United States Army**

**For extraordinary heroism in action:**

Major George Quamo, Infantry, distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism on 7 February 1968 in connection with military operations against an armed and hostile enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. When the Lang Vei Special Forces Camp was overrun on 7 February 1968 by nine P79 Russian tanks and an estimated two battalions of North Vietnamese, Major Quamo immediately set about organizing a relief force, which he moved to Old Lang Vei Camp where the wounded survivors had withdrawn. Upon arrival at Old Lang Vei, which by this time was under attack, Major Quamo personally supervised the loading and extraction of the Lang Vei survivors, constantly exposing himself to deadly accurate enemy mortar and small arms fire. When it became apparent that his relief force was surrounded with no hope of extraction from that location, Major Quamo immediately set about dividing his force in half while continually exposing himself to a tremendous volume of enemy fire to bring in friendly air strikes. Under the firm hand and cool courage of Major Quamo, half of the group delivered such a withering and intense volume of fire that the enemy was unable to prevent the breakout. When the breakout force became pinned down enroute to the landing zone, Major Quamo personally maneuvered his group against the superior enemy force, driving them from their positions, allowing his personnel to reach the landing zone. Major Quamo personally supervised the extraction of his men while constantly exposing himself to enemy fire from all sides to call in friendly air strikes. He was the last person to leave the landing zone. Major Quamo's intense dedication to his men, his coolness in battle, and his extraordinary courage are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the military service.



**Killed in Action 14 April 1968**

**Sponsored by the Town of Sand Lake**