

2021

## Donald Calvin Cordle

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### Recommended Citation

Daise, Brett; Gaertner, Jack; and Nelson, Brick, "Donald Calvin Cordle" (2021). *Native Sons Lost: The Vietnam War Dead of Milledgeville, Georgia*. 16.

<https://kb.gcsu.edu/nativesons/16>

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May 7, 2021

Donald Calvin Cordle



November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943-December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1970

Donald Calvin was born in Macon, Georgia and raised in Milledgeville, Georgia by his parents, Calvin Clifford Cordle and Fannie Charlotte Smith, according to Ancestry.com. He was married to Gudrun Franke Cordle and had two children, Donald C. Cordle Jr. and Karen Sue Cordle. Ancestry.com also reported that he began his military career in November 1960. He underwent basic training in Kentucky and specialized in light weapons infantry. On July 24, 1967 he began his first tour of duty in Vietnam and held the rank of Sgt. First Class. According to honorstates.org he was sent to Advisory Team 66 in South Vietnam in the Dinh Tuong province. He completed his first tour and was sent home. Sgt. Cordle's duties on the Advisory Team as Sgt. First Class included training. He was not fully involved with combat missions.



Sgt. Cordle (bottom right) poses for a photo with another sergeant (top right) and a private first class (top left).

## Local GI Killed In Vietnam

Word has been received here of the death of SFC Donald C. Cordle in Vietnam. According to the telegram received by his wife, Gudrunel of 32 Dalewood Dr., her husband was killed by hostile action.

More details could not be learned this morning.

However, SFC Cordle served as a training officer with the Third Training Bn., of the First Training Bn., while stationed at Ft. Campbell, Ky.

SP5 Michael W. St. Mark

Sgt. Cordle began a second tour in Vietnam on August 8, 1970, according to Ancestry.com. He returned to Advisory Team 66 and continued service there for another few months. According to Honorstates.org, on December 18, 1970 he was killed by small arms fire from hostile combatants. Details surrounding the fire fight and his death are unknown. It is known that he held an advisory position and his main mission on base was to train South Vietnamese forces. We surmise that his death was related to an ambush or surprise attack from North Vietnamese forces. Sgt. Cordle's family at the time stated that they were living in Clarksville Tennessee, according to his obituary on Findagrave.com. His body was sent to Dover, Tennessee to be buried in the Fort Donelson National Military Park.

Sgt. Cordle was buried December 29, 1970 and according to an interview with the Reverend of the church that helped with his funeral, "Few people in the church knew Donald Cordle; he was not a member of the church." The Reverend would go on to say that he did not even know Cordle and that he got to know him while attending to his funeral. It is also reported from this same interview that fewer than twelve people attended Sgt. Cordle's funeral.

News reports at the time, like the one on the left, did not provide details about Sgt. Cordle's death, which remains a mystery to this day. Sgt. Cordle is memorialized not only in his hometown of Milledgeville but also in Washington DC on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. His name appears on panel 06W line 128.

## SFC Cordle

Graveside services with full military honors for Sergeant First Class Donald Calvin Cordle, 27, will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Ft. Donelson National Cemetery in Dover by Chaplain (Capt.) Paul Hartrick.

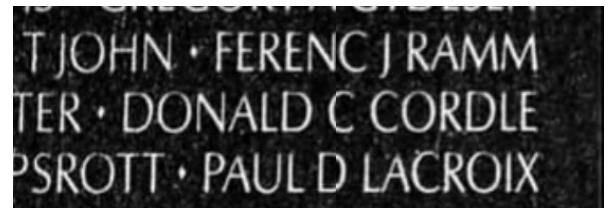
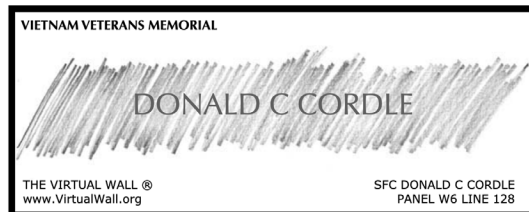
SFC Cordle was killed in action on Dec. 18 in Vietnam while assigned to MACV Advisory Team 66. He had been in Vietnam five months on his second tour of duty there.

The body will be at Tarpley Funeral Home until time of services.

He was born in Milledgeville, Ga., Nov. 1, 1943, a son of Calvin C. Cordle and Mrs. Charlotte Smith Butts, both who survive.

Other survivors include his widow, Mrs. Gudrun Franke Cordle, whom he married March 13, 1963; a son, Donald C. Cordle Jr.; and a daughter, Karen Sue Cordle, all of Clarksville.

A 10-year Army veteran, SFC Cordle entered military service in November 1960. From July 1968 until February 1969, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, U.S. Army Training Center, Ft. Campbell.





While serving in the military, Sgt. Cordle received various commendations including Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Marksmanship Badge, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation and Vietnam Gallantry Cross. All of these medals and badges can be seen below in a picture from the site virtual wall.org.



Many times we need to be reminded of the needs of those other folks around us—their needs in times of sorrows especially.

I'm speaking specifically of a case which was brought to my attention by a local woman over the Christmas holidays concerning a young mother who lost her husband in Vietnam just before Christmas, and how she had to spend the holidays mostly alone with her sorrow.

Rev. Durwood McCord, pastor of the New Providence Baptist Church, wrote an article in the Jan. 6 issue of his church paper, and it tells the story much better than I could. The article reads as follows:

"Few people in the church knew Donald Cordle. He was not a member of this church and had lived in Clarksville but a short time. I did not know him either, but Tuesday, I attended his funeral.

"SFC Cordle did not die of natural causes or by a accident here at home. He was killed by hostile action in the delta of Vietnam. Left at home besides his parents, was a six-month old son and a five-year old daughter and a devoted wife. The news of his death came shockingly to blot the joy of Christmas for this family. He was in Vietnam because we felt he should be there and most of us felt more secure because he was there, but less than a dozen people stood beside the grave in the Military Cemetery at Dover, Tenn., as the chaplain read words of Scripture and committed his body to its resting place.

"On Christmas Eve night I visited Mrs. Cordle. She had taken well this cruel intervention into life, and before I left she asked me if there was a needy family in the area. When I told her there was such a family she gathered fruit, cake, and other items, put them in a box and asked me to deliver them to the family. I thought how great that in a time of personal need, she thought of the needs of other people. There was something deeply Christian about it.

"On December 29, as the honor guard fired its volley of three shots, and as the mournful sound of Taps echoed across the hill, I wept...not because this was such an unusual situation...it had been repeated hundreds of times, but because I thought of what might have been.

"Mrs. Cordle left the cemetery carrying with her a folded American Flag. She will share it with her children. Perhaps they will understand. I am not sure I ever will. The words of Scripture keep coming to mind. "How Long, O Lord, How Long."

"It is with this scene still vivid in my mind that I urge each of you to devote every ounce of strength you have to praying and working for peace in the New Year. How tragic that in the same week that we celebrated the birth of the Prince of Peace, word came of death, due to war."

The people with whom I talked knew of Mrs. Cordle's plight, and were concerned not only for this particular family, but more so that we have tended to become complacent in our thoughts toward our soldiers who are giving their lives for us to have freedom. I realize it is not possible for the public to be aware of the background of each man whose body is returned home for burial, but maybe we could become a little more concerned and, perhaps offer as much comfort to the family as possible.

It has been suggested that perhaps some sort of community system could be set up to coordinate some sort of plans for comfort to such families. After all, it wouldn't hurt for the whole community to show its gratitude to a family who has sacrificed a loved one, and give that comfort that can be given.

This transcript of a radio interview found on Fold3.com outlines the tragic circumstances surrounding Donald Cordle's death and funeral. This second-hand report documents details of his wife's grief, and the grief of the two young children Cordle left behind during the otherwise joyful holiday season of 1970.

After researching the life of Sgt. First Class Donald Cordle we have come to learn about his expansive military career in Vietnam as well as a small portion of his long ten year military career before he served in the Vietnam war. Sgt. Cordle being killed in 1970 cut not only his life short but impacted the lives of his wife and two children and unfortunately we were not able to locate either of them. The impact he had on his wife is felt in the obituary. He will hopefully continue to stay in the memories of his wife and children and anyone else close to him.

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