



Mr. Samuel Cornelius Boyd

May 8, 1927 - March 7, 2021

Samuel Cornelius Boyd, Sr. passed away peacefully on March 7, 2021 at the age of 93, in the NC State Veteran's Home in Fayetteville, NC. Sam Boyd was a quiet patriot to the end, loved and respected by countless family members and friends, having left an indelible mark on his community and his country. He led a significant but humble life. God and Family were the essence of Samuel C. Boyd.

Samuel Cornelius Boyd, Sr. was born on May 8, 1927. His mother, Esther Bunch, raised a houseful of brothers and sisters in the family home in Belhaven, NC. He came from a large, loving, family. That family now spans widely, from California to New York. Sam Boyd thoroughly enjoyed annual Clark/Rodan family reunions, serving as facilitator and treasurer for many years.

At the age of 18, Sam left Belhaven, NC and joined the Marine Corps. He enlisted on August 6, 1945, the same day the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. At that time, Black enlistees trained at Montford Point Camp, the segregated training base near Camp Lejeune. The Marines only began accepting African-Americans in 1942. By all accounts, Montford Point was grueling; these men had to not only pass boot camp like their white counterparts, but excel, as the presence of Black men in the Marines was considered an experiment during the Jim Crow Era. Despite this (76 years later) Samuel Boyd told his son Derrick that he enjoyed boot camp and loved being a Marine. It takes one tough Marine to love boot camp; few

people say that.

After graduating from Montford Point, Samuel Boyd traveled to the Pacific Theatre, where he was a Military Police Officer, earning a Good Conduct Medal. One of his fondest memories from the Marines was being able to fish in the islands of the Pacific. Sam was honorably discharged in November 1946. He was forced to leave the Marines. From the sound of it, he would have happily stayed, but that was not the Marine Corps plan at the time, as they expected their experiment of allowing Black men to serve in the Corps to end. However, because of the outstanding service, dedication, and bravery of the Montford Point Marines, President Theodore Roosevelt integrated training in the Marine Corps and deactivated Montford Point Camp in 1949.

In 2011, Congress authorized the Congressional Gold Medal to the Montford Point Marines for their “outstanding perseverance and courage that inspired social change in the Marine Corps.” Samuel Boyd never spoke up to claim his medal. Only after his father’s stroke in February, 2021, did Derrick discover his father’s worn US Marine ID Card and honorable discharge card and realize that his father was a Montford Point Marine. Those weathered, almost lost documents entitled Samuel Boyd to the Congressional Gold Medal. When Derrick told Sam, three weeks ago, that he had been awarded the medal, Sam was thrilled, saying “Yes, yes, yes! Thank you!” It was as if he had been waiting for that medal but didn’t know how to get it. Less than one week after having the Montford Point Marine Congressional Gold Medal placed in his hands, Samuel C. Boyd, Sr. died.

Sam Boyd never let grass grow under his feet. Immediately after leaving the Marines, he was admitted to Shaw University, intent on becoming a teacher. He graduated from Shaw in 1953. Sam was a proud alumnus of Shaw and a lifelong supporter of the university. He felt strongly about education and about supporting others at his beloved alma mater. Sam Boyd was compelled, his whole life, to pave the way for others and to support the Black Community. Sam met the love of his life, Marthelia Walton, while at Shaw. Both graduated from Shaw and became teachers, marrying in 1957 at the bride’s home. The

couple built a life in Robersonville, NC, buying their family home in 1965, where Sam lived, quite independently, until the age of 93. Sam and Marthelia had three boys, Samuel Jr., Vincent and Derrick. This was a lively home, filled with love. Neighbor children practically lived there too. In essence, Sam and Marthelia raised quite a lot of children under that roof on Green Street. The family enjoyed many trips to the beach, cookouts and lots of sports in the backyard. Sam loved gardening and working in his yard.

Sam made sure to pass along his work ethic to his children; he wouldn't let grass grow under their feet either! When Derrick decided to join the military, Sam didn't try to influence his son as to which branch to join but was clearly pleased when Derrick joined the Marines. However, Sam never talked about Montford Point to his son. Derrick only knew that "Pop" had served in the Corps during WWII. A lot of Montford Point Marines chose not to talk about their experience. Many believe this is because after they left, little changed in the lives of these brave patriots and civil rights trailblazers; they were still Black in the eyes of their nation, in a deeply segregated south.

Sam's life calling was teaching. He was a science and driver's education teacher for over 30 years. He taught all over Eastern North Carolina, including Martin County, Lenoir County and Cumberland County. Still today, folks fondly remember Mr. Boyd, their drivers ed teacher.

Sam was a lifelong Christian and active member of Roberson Missionary Baptist Church. He was the Head Trustee on the Roberson MBC Board of Trustees. He was also the Union and Association Representative for the church. Sam was an active supporter of the Meals on Wheels program at the church as well. Pastor Larry Green said, "Sam loved the Lord, enjoyed people, and just enjoyed fellowship wherever he went. Everything Sam did, he did to please the Lord and it was done quietly. He believed that if the Lord wanted people to know of his works, they would find out without Sam saying so." Sam supported many nearby congregations, visiting services throughout the state. Many of the programs

he saved from significant services he attended were those from Black History Month Celebrations and Martin Luther King, Jr. events. A proud Mason since 1967 and Past Master of Widow's Son Lodge #4, Sam both led and participated in frequent events in his community. This included active involvement with the North Carolina Knights of Pythagoras, dedicated to mentoring and educating youth, ages 8-18, to become better men. A Past Master of Widow's Son Lodge, Wyatt Boswell, said "Sam had an aura about him. He was a very distinguished gentleman with a strong personality. He was uplifting and inspiring. Sam was the epitome of what a Mason would desire to be; he was a man." Sam was quietly charitable until his death, supporting not only local churches, but Shaw University, Habitat for Humanity, multiple boys' homes, veterans' organizations, and food banks. He was a long-time member of the ACIU and strong supporter of Senator and then later, President, Barack Obama.

In 2011, Sam's beloved wife, Marthelia died, after almost 54 years of marriage. After that, Sam lived independently in the home they enjoyed for so many years. Sam continued to attend church services and support his community, enjoying the company of family and friends- the drivers ed teacher, driving everywhere, until his stroke in February 2021. One of Sam's favorite hymns was "May the Work I've Done Speak for Me." Indeed, Sam Boyd's legacy as a Christian, Montford Point Marine, Mason, and family man speaks volumes.

Sam is survived by sons Samuel Boyd, Jr. of Greenville, NC, Vincent Boyd of Minnesota and Derrick Boyd (Maritza) of Fayetteville, NC. In addition, Sam leaves behind granddaughters, Zulyn De-Harty Ryan and Crystal Todd; great-granddaughters, Allana Ryan and Yariela Todd and companion, Sarah Butler.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 12. 1:00 PM (ET)

Colvin Funeral Home Chapel
2010 Murchison Road
Fayetteville, NC 28301

Memorial Service

MAR 13. 1:00 PM (ET)

Roberson Baptist Church
305 Cochran Street
Robersonville, NC 27871