Douglas MacArthur McCrary '65

Douglas MacArthur McCrary was destined to become a military hero. Even as a young boy, growing up in the rural community of Berea, just outside of Greenville, SC, Doug was preparing himself for military life. According to a childhood friend, while in grammar school, Doug owned combat boots, a machete, camping gear consisting of a pup tent, sleeping bags, canteen, mess kit, and a Coleman lantern; also a Crossman pellet rifle and pistol (both of which, Doug used with great success on squirrels and birds).

Doug’s sense of preparation was out done by his sense of humor. Many folks said that Doug was indeed a character. Always playing pranks and initiating fun. Some credit him with naming the high school principal “cue ball” based on his baldness. One prank made the paper as he erected a headstone at the local gas station in honor of a popular song, Ski King. The headstone read, “Here lies Ski King”. He was always looking for adventure and fun.

Doug was able to take that fun loving nature onto the “fields of friendly strife”, as Gen MacArthur called them. Playing basketball, baseball and running track, Doug loved the sports for the fun of the game but honed his self-discipline and teamwork during those formative years at Berea High School.

After graduating from Berea High School, Doug attended Clemson University. While at Clemson, he was active in the American Farm Economics Association and majored in Agriculture Economics. Doug graduated from Clemson in 1965. He entered the Army on November 28, 1965 and was assigned to the Army’s 5th Battalion, 7th Calvary of the 1st Cavalry Division. His initial training was at Fort Carson. Apparently, his company commander, a West Pointer, was not too sure about this country, fun-loving guy from the sticks. But Lt Mac, as his men liked to call him, quickly earned the respect from his subordinates and superiors.
Lt Mac took his concern for his men from training onto the battlefield. During the terrible Vietnam monsoons, Lt McCrary would make the rounds and help pitch poncho tents to get his men out of the pouring rains. He tried to keep them at ease, on guard and prepared for whatever may lie ahead.

Charlie Company was moving along a dry creek bed under the lush canopy of the jungle. Bald Eagle Two, Lt McCrary’s Platoon had been on point for two hours when a rest was called. All men were on high alert as they had been briefed of a potentially large North Vietnamese force in the area. The mission was to search out and destroy the NVA.

The Commander of Charlie Company was in the process of relieving Lt McCrary’s platoon of the point post. Being on constant look out eventually wears one down. Lt Mac was always in constant motion looking out for his troops. He liked to communicate face to face with his men as opposed to over the radio. This made it tough for the company commander to actually locate Lt Mac so the orders were sent over the radio. His commitment to his men, brought an unusual accolade from the First Sergeant who had seen quite a few junior officers, “‘They don’t come much better.”

On February 16, 1967, Lt McCrary would face his final test. The 7th Cav was being used as an ambush formation and was spread out in small units across a large area of terrain. At 1610 hours, word came that Eagle Two was receiving heavy fire from small arms. Charlie Company Commander started a difficult march toward Eagle Two and came under heavy fire himself.

Lt Mac’s platoon was in serious trouble. Each of two squads was undermanned. When the first squad took fire, they were partially in the open. The men took whatever cover they could find. Because they were so sparsely covered, they were not even able to return fire. Platoon Sargent Flores was in the first squad. He left his covered position in an effort to get his squad out of their dire position. He was hit.

When Lt Mac saw Sargent Flores go down, he did not hesitate. He left his covered position to rescue Sgt Flores and bring him back to
cover. The ensuing fire exchange was tremendous. When the pinned down men saw that the NVA were now shooting at the Lt, they did not stop in their relentless fire on the enemy. Lt Mac made it to Sgt Flores and drug him back to safety. Lt Mac was killed in the midst of his remarkable act of heroism. Sgt Flores was already dead. Many thought of Douglas MacArthur McCrary as a character growing up. But his commitment to his country called to the very depths of his character. He laid down his life for his fellow man. As the First Sargent said, “They don’t come much better.”

For more information about Lt McCrary see: https://cualumni.clemson.edu/page.aspx?pid=1698

For more information about the Clemson Scroll of Honor see: https://cualumni.clemson.edu/scrollofhonor