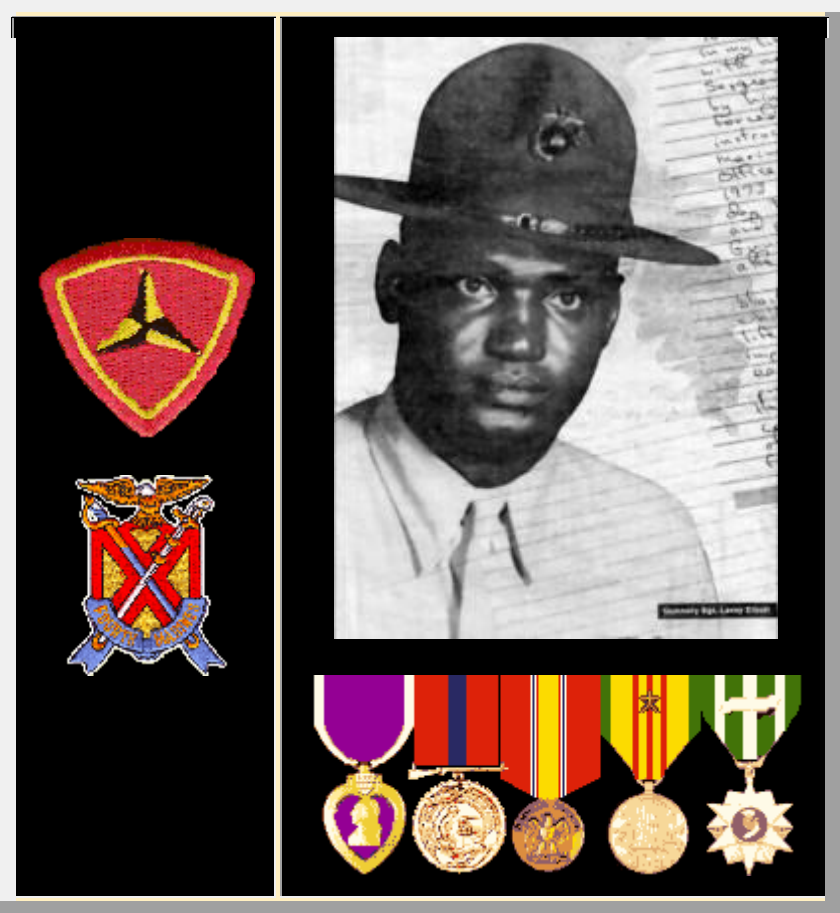


Special Tribute To:

LEROY ELLIOTT, GUNNERY SERGEANT



D CO, 1ST BN, 4TH MARINES, 3RD MARDIV

United States Marine Corps

28 September 1931 - 08 May 1967

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

(Written, July 2011)

I arrived at Parris Island, S.C. in November of 1965, and for the next two months endured the rigorous discipline of processing from a civilian to a United States Marine. That process included the rude awakening of an immature 19-year-old kid to the responsibilities of an adult. The training was brutal and the senior trainer was, in my opinion at that time, the meanest man on the face of the earth! My new home for 8 weeks was *1st Recruit Training Battalion, Company C, and Platoon 1025*. I was now “Recruit, Private Peters.”



That senior trainer was Senior Drill Instructor SSgt Leroy Elliott. I found him to be a 100% Marine, totally dedicated to his profession of making Marines out of raw recruits and furthermore, training them to fight and survive on the battlefield. Vietnam was now raging and combat duty was the total essence of our Marine training.

As I look back in retrospect, I am very thankful that the molding process of my life was enhanced greatly by this Marine Drill Instructor. I was too immature then to know what was happening, but now – 45 years later – I value more than ever that “brutal training” that had no tolerance for quitting when the going gets tough.

Gunnery Sergeant Elliott is a hero in my eyes. His love of Country and sense of duty was reflected in his total commitment to Country and Corps. He was a real professional in his work. He, furthermore, was a Marine’s Marine!

He distinguished himself further by applying on the battlefield his “warrior ethos.” He volunteered for duty in Vietnam and paid the supreme price of his life in 1967. I never again met my Senior Drill Instructor after graduating from Parris Island Boot Camp, Platoon 1025, but I know that his training has impacted every aspect of my life in some way.

I have been a Pastor now for more than thirty-five years. I have learned the reality and value of enduring hardness as a soldier of the cross. I have had my spiritual battles! I recently completed a Military career which ended after combat duty in Iraq. My Military life began as a Private at Parris Island in 1965 and I was fortunate to obtain the rank of Major before retiring from the Army in 2005.



I have come to believe that the God that I serve knew that I needed what I received from the leadership of Marine Gunnery Sergeant Elliott. He taught me patriotism, love of Country and the willingness to die for the sake of freedom.

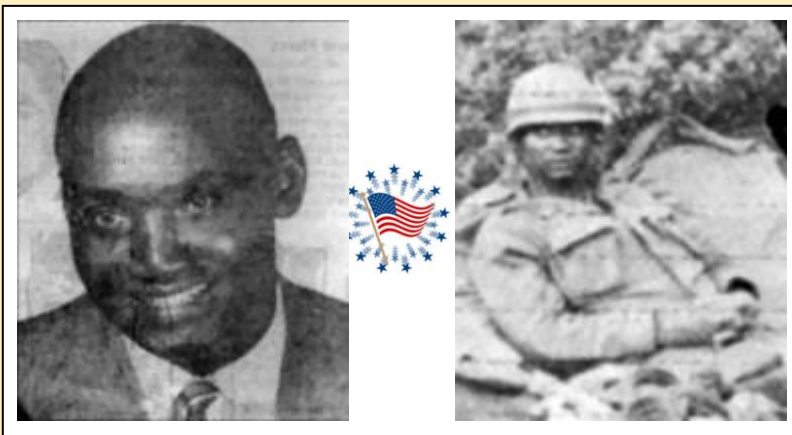
His tough training taught me to never quit. God has used that discipline many times while serving in Ministry “Bases” of duty!

Thank you Gunnery Sergeant Elliott for what you taught me. You are my hero! I’m signing off with an old soldier’s salute to one who taught me that there are some things worth fighting and dying for.

Those “some things” include a Country and a cherished freedom! Those “some things” include a sacrificial service for the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He is “Commander in Chief” of Heaven and Earth. He is the ultimate High Command!

I would, however, say to my fellow American Patriot, *Thank you, Sir.* Thanks for, **“Double Time, Quick Time March!”** Thanks for, **“Sir, Private Peters requests permission to speak to the drill instructor.”** Thank you for, **“You are mine while here at Parris Island”** and finally, **“Congratulations, Marines.”** You taught us that we had to earn that title. Semper Fidelis, Gunny!

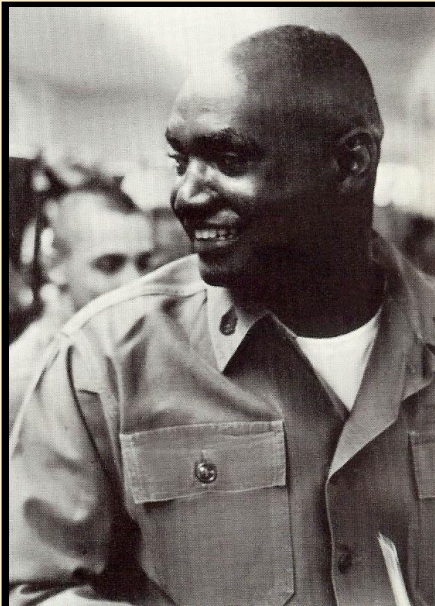
Charles Ray Peters Jr. (Maj. Ret., U.S. Army)



“Gunnery Sergeant Elliott was a black Philadelphian and I was a white Georgian. But those facts of life were

never and will never be important,” wrote Stephen B. Gray, who as a young Marine recruit had Elliott as a senior drill instructor at Parris Island, S.C. Gray never saw Elliott again after he finished boot camp in May 1965, but said he will always remember the imposing Philadelphian for enabling him to gain “the beginnings of the strengths of character, purpose, direction and never say quit attitude which has enabled me to achieve meaningful success thus far in my life ... He showed me qualities that knew no color.” Elliott, a 15-year veteran, left his comfortable stateside drill sergeant assignment to volunteer for Viet Nam in December 1966.

“He taught our son ... so many values at such an early age so he could grow up and walk like a man. He gave us so much, as if he knew that we would have to walk up the road of life without him,” his wife recalled. The 35-year-old gunnery sergeant was assigned to Company D of the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division. Elliott died near Con Thien, Quang Tri Province, on May 8, 1967. Survivors include his wife, son, father and a brother.





The complete letter from Stephen Gray reads as follows:

In February, 1965, I was an eighteen year old college dropout in search of direction. From Gunnery Sergeant Elliott I gained the beginnings of the strength of character, purposeful direction and never say quit attitude which has enabled me to achieve meaningful success thus far in my life. Those attributes will remain with me until I join Gunnery Sergeant Elliott. Their seeds were sown by him during many hours of drill, forced marches, physical training and instruction in the profession of being a Marine. I served as a commissioned Officer in the Marine Corps from 1973 to 1984 and never served a day that the lessons of character and perseverance taught me by Gunnery Sergeant Elliott did not affect how I led my Marines.

Gunnery Sergeant Elliott was a black Philadelphian and I am a white Georgian. But those facts of life were never and will never be important. He wanted me, as well as each member of our platoon, to be a proud and thoroughly capable Marine. He showed me qualities that knew no color. Honor, integrity, pride, strength of character and dignity are rarely found embodied in one man. However, in Gunnery Sergeant Elliott I felt them resident in large measure.

I am honored to have my first-born son named in his memory. I am honored to have known him and served with him. Philadelphians and all Americans can be honored that he was, and is, ours. Please ensure that his name is properly and respectfully inscribed on the (Philadelphia) memorial. I pray that this letter will help ensure his memory will live on.



Stephen B. Gray Jr.
Formerly Captain,
United States
Marine Corps



I will never forget my Senior Drill Instructor. I was 17 years old and this man changed my life forever. He was funny and at times could be real scary. I'm proud to have had the honor of knowing him. I later served in Quang Tri also 1968-1969. May God bless his family!

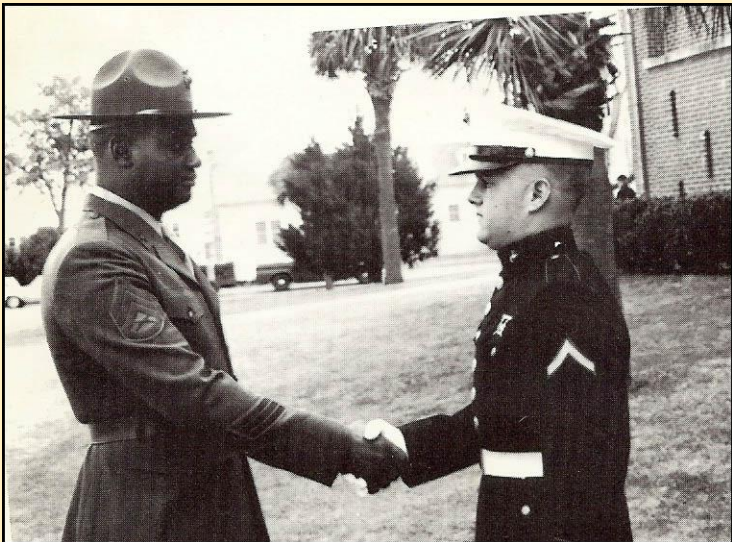
Sgt William M. (Bill) Spicer
Plt 1025 Graduated 1/20/66

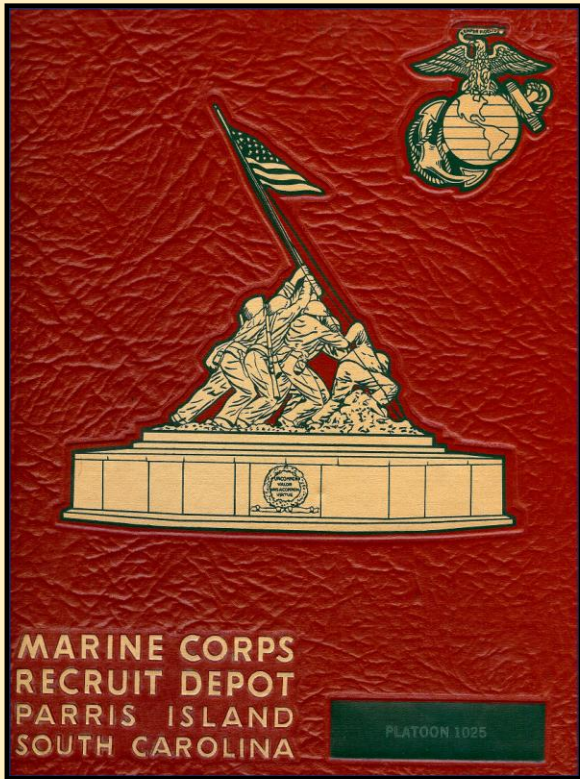


Gunnery Sergeant Elliott was my Senior Drill Instructor.

Our son, Matthew Elliott Gray, who was named in Gunnery Sergeant Elliott's honor, is today First Lieutenant Matthew Elliott Gray, United States Marine Corps. He is flying the F-18 Hornet. Gunnery Sergeant Elliott's name and legacy live on in the Corps.

Steve Gray, Platoon 116, 2/65-5/65 Parris Island, SC





SEMPER FIDELIS!