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Decorated soldier coming to St. Augustine

By PETER GUINTA | More by this reporter | peter.guinta@staugustine.com | Posted: Friday, February 20, 2009 ; Updated: 1:24 AM on Friday, February 20, 2009

David A. Christian, one of the most decorated American soldiers of the Vietnam War, is scheduled to visit St. Augustine on March 28 as guest speaker for the third annual Chase-Rescorla Awards Dinner at Casa Monica Hotel.

The dinner is an annual tribute to Pfc. Leo C. Chase Jr. and Lt. Rick Rescorla, who both served in the 1st Cavalry Division during Vietnam and who died defending freedom.

This year, U.S. Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park, will introduce Christian.

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With the proceeds from the event, the nonprofit Chase-Rescorla Foundation plans to award \$1,000 scholarships to needy students to help further their education or to the families of disabled veterans.

Last year, it awarded nine scholarships.

Michael Pullium, a Foundation board member and Vietnam War veteran, said, "We realized the economy isn't great this year, but the concept here is to reach out and help as many students as we can."

Septimus Connor, president of the scholarship committee, a decorated Vietnam veteran, and commander of American Legion Post 194, said the dinner is "a great opportunity to hear from those who so nobly served our country and to participate in supporting this worthwhile charity."

Christian, 60, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, an Air Medal, seven Purple Hearts and two Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry, among other awards, for his actions during 1968 and 1969.

was medically retired from the Army at 21 years old.

In 1978, he served as national commander of the Legion of Valor and holds a lifetime board of director's position with that organization. Legion membership is restricted to those who have been awarded the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross or Air Force Cross.

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Christian



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Christian was also a founding vice president of the Council of Vietnam Veterans and served as assistant director of the Department of Labor-Veterans Employment during the Reagan Administration.

Dinner tickets are \$100, are tax deductible and available at [www.chaserescorlafund.org](http://www.chaserescorlafund.org) or call SSG Kevin Crowell, chairman of the Chase-Rescorla Scholarship Committee, at 887-6969.

Multiple levels of sponsorship are also still available.

Crowell said, "In Vietnam, David Christian was given the last rites twice. Since then, he has spent much of his life devoted to ensuring veterans' rights."

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Sidebar

Chase, Rescorla tied to St. Augustine

By PETER GUINTA

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Soldiers Leo C. Chase Jr. and Rick Rescorla didn't know one another and died at different times and in different places. But they both gave their lives for the same reason -- protecting fellow Americans -- and both were inextricably bound into the fabric of St. Augustine.

Chase, 21, son of a prominent St. Augustine family, served as a rifleman with the Seventh Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), U.S. Army, in 1965. In November 1965, the unit was sent to the Ia Drang Valley, South Vietnam.

After a three day battle with rested and well-equipped enemy units, more than 300 Americans were killed in action, Pfc Chase among them. The enemy dead were estimated at 3,000.

Chase was killed on the line after his section was hit by a human wave attack. All the members of his platoon were killed.

He was due to rotate home within weeks and was the first St. Augustine casualty of the Vietnam War.

Rescorla, a native of Cornwall, England, had served as a soldier in Rhodesia but enlisted into the American Army at the urging of his friend, Dan Hill of St. Augustine. Both were commissioned lieutenants and Rescorla sent to Vietnam immediately while Hill went later.

Rescorla was known to all U.S. soldiers at the Ia Drang battlefield for his singing and constant presence comforting the soldiers. He survived all three days of the battle and was awarded the Bronze Star for his actions.

Later he attended law school and married his sweetheart on the lawn of the Castillo de San Marcos. He landed a job as vice president for security of Morgan Stanley in the World Trade Center and was inside the building the morning of Sept. 11, 2001.

Rescorla had trained the nearly 2,700 employees of the company to evacuate quickly and he led them all out of the building. When he went back into the building to check for stragglers, he was killed when the tower collapsed.

His last conversation was on his cell phone talking to his friend Dan Hill.

## Chase, Rescorla tied to St. Augustine

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