



# *Marine Corps Coordinating Council of Kentucky*

**Rodney Williams, Jr. Memorial Award**

**2014**

*In recognition of demonstrated leadership, committed service and dedicated support  
of the Marine Corps community within the Commonwealth of Kentucky.*

**RONALD D. RAY**

**Colonel, United States Marine Corps (Retired) 1964-1994**

## Ronald D. Ray, Colonel, United States Marine Corps (Retired)

Following active duty service with the United States Marine Corps (1964-1969), during which he was decorated for valor in the Vietnam War, with two (2) Silver Stars, a Bronze Star with Combat "V," a Purple Heart, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, he continued to serve with distinction in the Marine Corps Reserve, commanding combat and combat service support units in Louisville and Fort Knox, Kentucky, and various other positions of great responsibility, until his retirement as a colonel in 1994.

Throughout his Marine Corps Reserve service, he was fully engaged supporting active duty and reserve Marine Corps programs throughout Kentucky, to include the recruitment of officer candidates, as an adjunct asset to various Officer Selection Officers assigned to the Marine Corps Recruiting Station Louisville. With his mentoring, logistical, and financial support, then 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant William R. "Rich" Higgins, established the Officer Selection Office Mess Night to honor a fallen classmate from Miami University, at Oxford, Ohio. His leadership engagement contributed directly to the establishment of a Marine Corps Reserve Officer Association (MCROA) chapter and a Marine Corps Reserve Training Unit, both of which ultimately provided a foundation for a Marine Corps Coordinating Council at Louisville, which today serves the entire statewide Marine Corps community as the Marine Corps Coordinating Council of Kentucky.

As a practicing attorney-at-law, with unflagging dedication to the Marine Corps in Kentucky, he has been an invaluable resource in assisting Officer Selection Officers in the identification, recruitment, and mentoring of future Marine Corps lawyers. He has served as a keynote speaker and guest of honor on numerous occasions, to include celebrations of the Marine Corps Birthday and Mess Nights, frequently calling upon professional relationships and friendships developed during his military service and post-retirement employment as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve and Guard, to secure distinguished guest speakers for what is now known as the Colonel William R. "Rich" Higgins Memorial Mess Night, a truly unique event, during which officer candidates are introduced to time honored traditions and customs of the Marine Corps.

During 1984, he assumed the chairmanship of the newly formed Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation, which privately raised more than one million dollars to construct and dedicate a unique granite sundial memorial at Frankfort, Kentucky, following which he was appointed by President George H. W. Bush to the American Battle Monuments Commission, which commemorates the service, achievements, and sacrifice of United States armed forces, through the management of overseas military cemeteries, memorials, monuments and markers.

Like most Americans, who have earned the title of "United States Marine," his love and dedication to the Corps has never diminished over the years since his retirement. Numerous officers, recruited from area colleges and universities, have been influenced by his exemplary leadership and support, in their acceptance of the considerable challenge of leading Marines. Through his long-standing contacts with officer candidates, dating back to the 1971 origin of the Colonel William R. "Rich" Higgins Memorial Mess Night, he has always encouraged them to accept and develop the uncompromising core values of honor, courage and commitment, which will serve them well during their active duty time and beyond, as the baton is passed to a new generation of patriots, who have chosen to distance themselves from their contemporaries, by what he has frequently referred to as "showing up" to serve country and Corps.