



**Sgt. Mecot E. Camara, USMC**

**December 28, 1960 – October 23, 1983**

**(Hinton News – November 01, 1983)**

**CAMARA**  
Marine Sgt. Mecot E. Camara, 22, of Jacksonville, N.C., formerly of Hinton, died Sunday October 23 in Beirut, Lebanon during an insurgent attack on command headquarters.

He was born in Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 28, 1960, the son of Mrs. Jean Hoskins Camara of Hinton and the late Dr. P.B. Camara. He was a member of the St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Hinton, and was a 1979 graduate of Hinton High School, where he was a member of the football team.

He attended Concord College and was a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

He resided in Hinton most of his life.

Survivors in addition to his mother are his wife, Tammy Kathliff Camara; one son, Mecot Echo Camara; two sisters, Mrs. Threase Lilly and Miss Elsa Camara, both of Hinton.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete and the body will be sent to the E.M. Meadows Funeral Home in Hinton.

## **Beckley Register Herald Reporter**

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He was a brother, a son, a friend, a comedian, and so much more, according to those who knew him best. Those who knew Mecot Camara say he was a patriot, through and through. After 30 years, those who knew and loved Mecot are taking the time to remember him.

“He was a great kid,” friend Jack Scott said. “To be a Filipino in southern West Virginia at that stage of your life, there couldn’t have been a more enthusiastic American. Anything American, Mecot was fired up about. Anything he was doing at that moment was the most exciting thing you could be doing at that moment.

“Everyone in the community knew who he was. His dad was a doctor here and a very popular person as well. I think Mecot’s personality is really what separated him from everyone else. He was very fun-loving. He loved to hunt and fish. He was very passionate about the outdoors.”

Scott says he has all sorts of stories about his friend, some of which might not be fit to print.

“I could tell some really funny stories, but I don’t think it’s anything that people would want to run in the papers,” Scott said with a laugh. “He and I were altar boys together. It was Good Friday. On Good Friday in the Catholic church you do the lighting of the palms and you spread holy water on everyone. That Friday that we had Mass, our priest at that time came over a bit late and church was ready to start.

“We lit the palms, but they burned out before he showed up. We were like, ‘Oh no, what are going to do?’ So we went downstairs and started ripping up newspapers and putting them into a bowl. So here he comes and we lit them. The little pieces of paper were flying out of the bowl and hitting the carpet. Mecot laughed later and said, ‘Jack, I don’t think anyone got holy water on them tonight. Father was too busy trying to put out the fire you started with that newspaper.’”

Scott says Mecot had a great sense of humor and could have done anything he wanted to do, but decided to serve his country.

“He could have avoided going into the Marines,” Scott said. “Mecot could have stayed and worked at the hardware store that his dad owned. He had so much pride and he didn’t want to do things like that so he joined the Marines and started his own family.”

Mecot's time in the Marines took him to Beirut in Lebanon. The year was 1983. The Lebanese Civil War was going on. Mecot, like so many other American troops, got caught in the middle of the fighting and became one of the 241 Americans killed in a suicide bombing.

"Our soldiers on the base, even the guards, didn't have live ammunition," Scott said. "They were on a peace-keeping mission so they weren't allowed to have live ammunition. Someone realized that and took advantage of it. They drove a truck into the building that was fitted with bombs. Mecot was sleeping on one of the lower floors of the building. It really stood our community on its head. Everyone knew who he was and everyone thought a lot of him.

"I told Elisa this a couple of weeks ago, but we grew up in a very special time," Scott added. "Hinton was just a wonderful place to grow up and go to school. Everything you did made your community into your family. I think that was one of the reasons that his loss was so impacting to our community. Probably everyone in the community at that time realized what a sacrifice he made for our country at that point. It really showed everyone that you can't take anything for granted."

Elisa is Mecot's sister and she says she looked up to her brother for everything he did for those in the community.

"Spending time with him was priceless to me," Elisa Camara said. "One of the best memories of him was when he helped me after I broke my leg. He and Coach Bill Garden would literally carry me down the steps from the gym to the main building. He was just such a good caregiver.

"Every day growing up with him was an adventure. The times that he took me canoeing, the times we were on Bluestone Lake together, the times at Camp Lejeune and he would always inspire me. The things he said before he left was to be proud of our family name. He always preached faith, hope and love. He said you have to have faith, hope and love and they'll get you everywhere."

Camara would go on to write a book about her brother and his life called "American Brother."

"I got inspired a few years ago at the reunions that I would go to," she said. "The memorial services up at Camp Lejeune and seeing the other families and seeing their sorrow and their hurts, I knew where they were coming from with losing someone special who was fighting for our freedom, really just inspired me to share that with the world.

"I started with the idea that I wanted to remember the 241 U.S. Marines that were killed in the Beirut bombings. It's a very significant historical event and something that should not be forgotten, especially in today's world."

Camara says she wanted to spark some patriotism in Americans and make sure those soldiers' sacrifice is never forgotten.

"It's about valuing America and what it is," she said. "It's making sure that we value and we respect the ideals that America was built on.

"You hear about suicide bombers every day and we almost belittle the significance of that. I don't think people realize that our troops are on the front lines every day and fighting for our freedom," Camara said.

One delegate who was friends with Mecot says the man's legacy is also about the American Dream and what it means for so many people.

"Mecot's father was an immigrant to the United States," John O'Neal, R-Raleigh, said. "Mecot and his sisters were raised here and they were all-American kids. Mecot's father was one of 14 kids from a family in the Philippines. He came to America and got his medical degree, married an American woman and settled down in Hinton. He was a very involved community leader. He was just committed to immigrating and assimilating to the United States. His kids did what typical American kids do.

"Mecot loved West Virginia and he loved America. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at a very young age and was very passionate about giving back to this country. After the bombing in Beirut, it was all a huge loss in our community. I remember feeling a sense of anger, disbelief and frustration. Eventually it gave way to a sense of pride and appreciation for his sacrifice and his service to this country.

"In my mind it's the classic story of what America is to the world. It's a place where people come pursuing the American Dream and his was a family that got it. They assimilated. They didn't call themselves hyphenated Americans. They were Americans."

O'Neal says Mecot's story is even more relevant in today's world of subcultures and politics.

"In some places, our country seems to be becoming more and more fractured, whether it's political extremism or whether it's identity politics and people saying, 'I identify first as a race or a certain gender, or lifestyle,'" O'Neal said. "I think our cultural leaders have lost a sense of the melting pot of America. People come into this country seeking to become what an American is.

"Too often we have people that want to separate Americans by race, by class, lifestyle, or gender in so many different ways when I think the Camara family is the perfect example of a family that came to America because they loved what the country stood for. They wanted to be part of that American Dream and I think it's

fair to say that it's not as strong as it once was, the sense of identifying as an American first and then as a member of a class of some sort second."

To honor Mecot Camara's memory and his legacy, a memorial ceremony will take place at the Willow Wood Country Club in Hinton. The ceremony will be on Saturday, Oct. 26, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Elisa Camara will also be having a book-signing for her book, "American Brother" from 1 to 3 p.m., at The Otter and Oak in Hinton on the same day.