



IRISH FALL FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 22, 23, 24 AND 25, 2011

THE 2011 IRISH FALL FESTIVAL GRAND MARSHAL

Jon R. Cavaiani

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jon Robert Cavaiani

Born August 2, 1943 (age 68)



Cavaiani in 2004

Place of birth	Royston, England
Allegiance	United States of America
Service/branch	United States Army
Years of service	1968 - 1990

Rank	Sergeant Major
Battles/wars	Vietnam War
Awards	Medal of Honor Legion of Merit Bronze Star Purple Heart

Jon Robert Cavaiani (born August 2, 1943) is a retired [United States Army](#) soldier and a recipient of the United States military's highest decoration—the [Medal of Honor](#)—for his actions in the [Vietnam War](#).

Biography

Born in [England](#), Cavaiani emigrated to the [United States](#) with his parents in 1947 at age four. Though initially classified 4F, due in part to a severe allergy to bee stings, Cavaiani joined the Army from [Fresno, California](#), shortly before becoming a [naturalized](#) citizen in 1968.

He was sent to [Vietnam](#) in 1970 with the [Special Forces](#) and by June 4, 1971 was serving as a [Staff Sergeant](#) in the Vietnam Training Advisory Group. On that day, in the [Republic of Vietnam](#), his [platoon](#) came under intense enemy attack. Cavaiani organized the unit's defense and, when evacuation by helicopter became necessary, he voluntarily stayed on the ground and directed the aircraft, which successfully evacuated most of the platoon. Cavaiani and a small group were left behind. During a major enemy attack the next morning, he ordered the remaining men to escape while he stayed and provided [suppressive fire](#) to cover their retreat. He was captured and spent the next two years as a [prisoner of war](#).^[1]

Jon R. Cavaiani was released by the Provisional Government of Vietnam on March 27, 1973.

Medal of Honor citation

Staff Sergeant Cavaiani's official Medal of Honor citation reads:

S/Sgt. Cavaiani distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in action in the Republic of Vietnam on 4 and 5 June 1971 while serving as a platoon leader to a security platoon providing security for an isolated radio relay site located within enemy-held territory. On the morning of 4 June 1971, the entire camp came under an intense barrage of enemy [small arms](#), [automatic weapons](#), [rocket-propelled grenade](#) and [mortar](#) fire from a superior size enemy force.

S/Sgt. Cavaiani acted with complete disregard for his personal safety as he repeatedly exposed himself to heavy enemy fire in order to move about the camp's perimeter directing the platoon's fire and rallying the platoon in a desperate fight for survival. S/Sgt. Cavaiani also returned heavy suppressive fire upon the assaulting enemy force during this period with a variety of weapons. When the entire platoon was to be evacuated, S/Sgt. Cavaiani unhesitatingly volunteered to remain on the ground and direct the helicopters into the landing zone. S/Sgt. Cavaiani was able to direct the first 3 helicopters in evacuating a major portion of the platoon. Due to intense increase in enemy fire, S/Sgt. Cavaiani was forced to remain at the camp overnight where he calmly directed the remaining platoon members in strengthening their defenses. On the morning of 5 June, a heavy ground fog restricted visibility. The superior size enemy force launched a major ground attack in an attempt to completely annihilate the remaining small force. The enemy force advanced in 2 ranks, first firing a heavy volume of small arms automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenade fire while the second rank continuously threw a steady barrage of [hand grenades](#) at the beleaguered force. S/Sgt. Cavaiani returned a heavy barrage of small arms and hand grenade fire on the assaulting enemy force but was unable to slow them down. He ordered the remaining platoon members to attempt to escape while he provided them with cover fire. With 1 last courageous exertion, S/Sgt. Cavaiani recovered a machine gun, stood up, completely exposing himself to the heavy enemy fire directed at him, and began firing the machine gun in a sweeping motion along the 2 ranks of advancing enemy soldiers. Through S/Sgt. Cavaiani's valiant efforts with complete disregard for his safety, the majority of the remaining platoon members were able to escape. While inflicting severe losses on the advancing enemy force, S/Sgt. Cavaiani was wounded numerous times. S/Sgt. Cavaiani's conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism and intrepidity at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Army.^[1]

President [Gerald Ford](#) presented Cavaiani with the medal during a ceremony on December 12, 1974. Cavaiani later reached the rank of [sergeant major](#) before retiring from the Army in 1996.