

PETE "PITA" MALAE

In 1964 Pete (Pita) Malae graduated from Waipahu High School in Waipahu, Hawaii. Upon high school graduation, Pete followed his brother Faulalogofie (Jack), and enlisted in the Army in 1965. Pete was trained and assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, a Special Warfare Unit. During the years of 1966-1968 Pete served in Vietnam. During this time, Pete received numerous awards for his service. This included a Silver Star with valor, two bronze stars with valor, and a third bronze star. To say Pete served honorably, is an understatement.

“On September 27, 1968, while serving as a machine gunner with Company C, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade, Company C encountered a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire from a Battalion-sized North Vietnamese Army base camp with fortified and well concealed bunkers. As the point platoon maneuvered to gain fire superiority, the second platoon moved to form rear security. In the three-hour engagement that followed, both friendly and enemy forces began taking a number of casualties. It became evident that a defensive perimeter would have to be formed. Specialist Malae, realizing this and seeing that first platoon was unable to move because of the intense enemy fire, secured his machine gun and moved down the hill with the tracker team to the point of initial contact. He set up his machine gun in a critical position so he could put effective fire on the enemy. During the action, Specialist Malae’s assistant gunner was wounded, and he left the gun long enough to pull the injured man to safety. His courageous actions were responsible for saving the company from taking more casualties. Specialist Malae’s extraordinary heroism was in keeping with the highest traditions of military service.”

Upon his return, Pete attended Westfield College in Coalinga, California and played on the school’s football team. Pete was then recruited to play football for Santa Clara University. The person that recruited Pete was Bill McPherson. McPherson later became an executive for the 5 time winning Super Bowl Champion San Francisco Forty-Niners.

After Santa Clara University, Pete was hired at Santa Clara Police Department. Pete was a founding member of what was to become the Santa Clara Police Department SWAT team. Pete was the original “E-1.” Pete utilized the training he received in the military to train other team members. This added to numerous successful operations with no loss of fellow teammates.

Not only did Pete set the framework for our SWAT team, but he was instrumental in the development of the Santa Clara Police Motorcycle Unit. Pete joined the unit in 1979. Pete either trained or had significant influence in the training of new riders from 1980 to 2004 when he retired. Even after Pete retired, Pete would assist the new police motorcycle instructors in the development of new police motorcycle operators. Pete rode a police motorcycle for 25 years; this will never be accomplished again.

Pete Malae’s impact to the Santa Clara Police Department is unprecedented. Many of the training techniques developed by Pete for the SWAT team and Motorcycle Unit are still trained today. Pete Malae's teachings have added to the safety of Officers both in SWAT and in the Motor Unit.

