

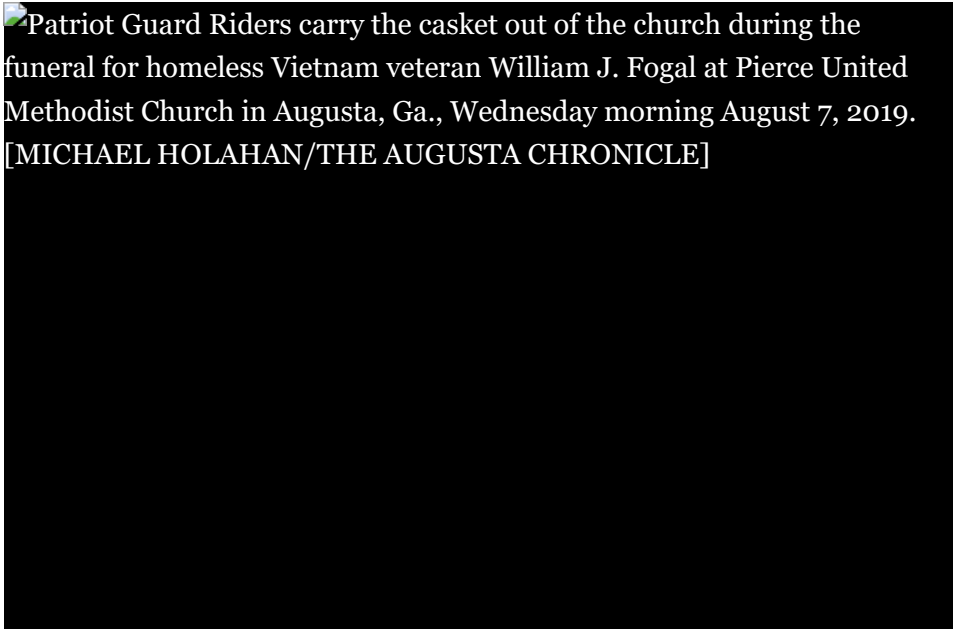
NEWS

Local homeless veteran remembered at memorial service

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Patriot Guard Riders carry the casket out of the church during the funeral for homeless Vietnam veteran William J. Fogal at Pierce United Methodist Church in Augusta, Ga., Wednesday morning August 7, 2019. [MICHAEL HOLAHAN/THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE]

Patriot Guard Riders carry the casket out of the church during the funeral for homeless Vietnam veteran William J. Fogal at Pierce United Methodist Church in Augusta, Ga., Wednesday morning August 7, 2019. [MICHAEL HOLAHAN/THE AUGUSTA CHRONICLE] *Augusta Chronicle*

William “Bill” Fogal was a Vietnam veteran, an inventor, a volunteer fireman, but also a homeless man.

On Wednesday, his family and veterans from the area were among those who honored him at a memorial service at Pierce United Methodist Church . He died July 23 after being found living in his car with his dog. Fogal was taken to Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, while his dog, Tic-Tac, was taken to [CSRA Forgotten Souls Rescue](#) and is still waiting to find a home.

Don Clark, ForcesUnited deputy director, organized the service and spoke during the ceremony. He felt it was important not to mourn, but celebrate Fogal’s life.

“It was important to raise awareness in the community to support our homeless veterans, all of our veterans, but especially those that are in a homeless state like Mr. Fogal was,” he said.

As an inventor, Fogal made a semiconductor and demonstrated it at

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Augusta Technical Institute in an attempt to get more funding for laboratory testing in 1997, according to *Augusta Chronicle* archives.

In 2003, he told the *Chronicle* he worked as a technician at A&R TV Service on Old Evans Road. It is unclear when he became homeless.

“It really makes me proud that he was such an inventor. He was just a natural thinker and that is what everyone said about him,” His son, Randall J. Rockefeller said.

Rockefeller, 45, spoke about his father during the service, but said they didn't really know each other.

“ I was given up for adoption when I was an infant," he said. "Every child wants to rediscover their roots.”

Rockefeller was able to spend time with Fogal when he was 13, but hadn't seen him since.

He said he searched for him online over the years and it wasn't until he submitted his DNA to 23andMe that he was able to connect with his father's side of the family. His girlfriend, Kyair Ivey, said they have talked about his father for years and is happy he was able to get closure.

“Although I never really knew him, in some miraculous way, he gave me a great gift, a second chance to connect with family and discover my background, which always remained a mystery,” Rockefeller said.

It was Rockefeller's uncle who told him his father had died. Clark told Rockefeller about the service and plans to honor his father.

Rockefeller said he regrets not being able to reconnect with his father. He encourages people to reach out to homeless veterans, to help and learn their stories.

“Just take the time, reach out, especially if there is a family member that you haven't heard from in a long time, he said. "Take the time to look them up, try to locate them. I'm sure they have a story, try to reach out to him before it is too late.”

Clark said his organization will continue to combat the homelessness problem. Although it's not as bad in Augusta as other areas, he said progress needs to be made.

“It's one of those things that keep you moving forward in a progressive manner to try to combat that, to try to wrap our arms around them, but also to try to make sure we add some level of awareness to the community,” he said. “The biggest thing is that we can never quit trying to assist and trying to combat that.”

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