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Pryor Hall building honors African-American soldier

By Dr. Gail Siller
Special to the News Leader

On Feb. 6, the one-year anniversary of Sgt. Maj. Rufus C. Pryor III's death, Robert G. Cole Junior/Senior High School officially renamed the school's Junior ROTC building in his honor.

Recently, school officials confirmed that Pryor Hall is the first building in the 127-year history of Fort Sam Houston to be named for an African-American soldier.

"After a review of the Fort Sam Houston Museum's records concerning the memorialization of facilities, roads, and buildings, I have determined that Rufus C. Pryor is the first African-American soldier to have a facility memorialized in his honor," stated Fort Sam

Houston Museum Director John Manguso, in a letter to Pryor's widow, Janice.

"What a fitting tribute to an outstanding leader and role model for our students," said Dr. Roland Rios, Cole principal. "We are so proud that Sergeant Major Pryor's memory could be honored in this way."

"This all would have been unbelievable to Rufus because, to him, he was just doing his job," stated Janice.

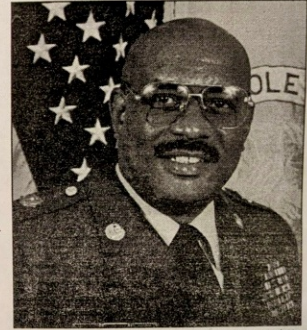
"His entire family was proud of him," she added. "I call him an earth angel. He affected everyone in such a positive way."

A 30-year veteran, Pryor joined Cole's JROTC staff in August 1990 after he retired from the Army. Born in San Antonio, Pryor entered

the Army after graduating from Brackenridge High School in 1960. He served three tours of duty in Vietnam, and was wounded twice.

Cole's senior Army instructor Lt. Col. Robert Hoffmann said, "I know that Rufus Pryor would be totally honored and humbled to know that he is the first African-American soldier to have a facility named in his memory on the installation. What a fitting way to remember someone who was so well thought of and loved."

Pryor's other family members include two sons, Keith and Wendell; two daughters, Krystine and Kimberly; 14 grandchildren, one sister and two brothers.



Courtesy photo

Sergeant Major Rufus C. Pryor III is the first African-American soldier to have a facility located on Fort Sam Houston memorialized in his honor. Pryor Hall was dedicated Feb. 6 in his memory.

Gloria Ray's deceased brother, Sgt. Maj. Rufus C. Pryor, III, a distinguished War Veteran and local Educator, was honored by the Ft. Houston Independent School District, when they named the Jr. ROTC Building on the Campus of Robert G. Cole High School in his honor. Sgt. Maj. Pryor was the first Black American to be so honored, on Ft. Sam Houston. Pryor Hall was dedicated February 06, 2003.

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JROTC building honors NCO

By Edmundo Conchaes
San Antonio Express-News
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Cole Junior/Senior High School recently recognized a beloved leader so his memory will live on.

The Fort Sam Houston school's Junior ROTC building was officially renamed Pryor Hall at a ceremony earlier this month in honor of Sgt. Maj. Rufus C. Pryor III, the school's JROTC instructor for 12 years who died in his sleep last year.

The dedication was well deserved and a fitting way to honor noncommissioned officer Pryor, school officials said.

"He was truly inspirational," said Roland Rios, principal at Cole. "The day that he passed was a sad day for us. He loved the students and when he passed, the kids talked about how we could immortalize him."

"It was absolutely great," Col. Robert Hoffman, senior army instructor at Cole, said of the building renaming. "Last year, we went through a period of mourning here. (Pryor) was so well thought of here and he was deeply loved. He was everybody's best friend."

The event was held on Feb. 6, exactly one year after Pryor's death.

Pryor's wife Janice said the ceremony was emotional for her and her family. She believes the dedication would have come as a surprise to her husband.

"He wouldn't have expected this," she said. "This would have been unbelievable to him. He was just doing his job."

"But he was a sergeant major, a friend and a father (figure)," she added. "Students would look to him for everything, and that made him feel so good."

Pryor grew up in San Antonio and was a graduate of Brackenridge High School. He was a 30-year U.S. Army veteran and served three tours of duty in Vietnam, where he was wounded twice. Pryor had been at Cole since 1990.

"He cared so deeply about all the kids," Hoffman said. "This ceremony said to us, 'We can move on.' There were some tears, but there was also a lot of

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