



Daniel Paul Mathurin Nevot

April 26, 1920 - July 1, 2019

FORT WORTH - Daniel Paul Mathurin Nevot was born on April 26, 1920 at Les Bordes-Aumont, near Troyes in east central France. He was the fourth of eight children in a working class family. The family moved to Fontaine-les-Gres, near Nancy, when he was still a child.

After contracting a life-threatening case of pneumonia and pleurisy when he was 16 years old, Nevot was sent to a sanitarium. He recovered, but the sanitarium then made him an unpaid orderly--a sort of indentured servant. He ran away to Nancy and found work as a dishwasher and then as a waiter and bartender.

Nevot joined the French army as a volunteer on Oct. 25, 1938. His extraordinary World War II biography includes the Croix de Guerre with a bronze star, silver star, gold star and two bronze palms, the Medaille Militaire (1945), and the Legion d'Honneur (chevalier, 1999; officier, 2010). The Legion d'Honneur is the French equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor. It can be awarded only by vote of the French government.

Nevot's service in WWII included a heroic action in northern Norway (May - June, 1940) with the French Foreign Legion in which he was the sole survivor among 30 other volunteers and a second harrowing escape from the Wehrmacht at Brest, France in June, 1940, after which he arrived in southern England aboard a British destroyer.

At a famous meeting in 1940 at the Imperial Hotel in London, Nevot and other French military refugees volunteered to serve with the Free French under DeGaulle. Those who volunteered were then taken to the London YMCA formally to sign up. Nevot was the 184th signatory. When asked how he felt about continuing to fight, Nevot simply said, "I didn't surrender."

He was next sent to Africa with the Free French, to the only French province in Africa that declared for DeGaulle instead of Vichy. After going up the Congo River and marching hundreds of miles through the jungle to Fr. Lamy (now N'Djamena, Chad), he fought at

Koufra in southern Libya, the very first WWII battle won by the French in North Africa. In that battle, 250 French combatants and 150 native African irregulars in support traveled through 1,000 miles of desert on commandeered vehicles to capture a well-supplied Italian fort, its airfield, and 300 prisoners. Inside Koufra, Nevot personally heard Leclerc's Serment de Koufra. In that famous speech, Leclerc promised that the French would continue fighting until all Germans were expelled from French Africa and from all of France herself until the tricolore was raised over the Cathedral in Strasbourg, in the northeastern corner of France.

The full name of the North African military unit created and trained by Leclerc was called the Regiment du Marche du Tschad (March of Chad Regiment). It was possibly the most famous French regiment of WWII. Nevot was its last survivor from the Battle of Koufra.

In the next winter's campaign, Nevot captured (with only two other soldiers) another Italian fort at El Gatroun, Libya. In the latter action, the three Frenchmen captured not only the fort itself but also its payroll, supplies and approximately 100 prisoners. In later recounting this to his biographers, Mr. Nevot added, "We also captured their wine."

As more Frenchmen from Vichy joined DeGaulle, Leclerc created a larger N. African unit called "Force L." Force L guarded U.S. Gen. Patton's left (desert) flank during the latter portion of the North African campaign.

After the Germans were finally expelled from North Africa in 1943, Nevot and the other Force L survivors were sent to England, where they were further trained by Leclerc and formed into the Second Armored Division. They landed at Normandy two months after D Day, on August 6, 1945. They fought several desperate actions in northern France. They lost seventeen percent of the division in their first battle.

Nevot rode his motorcycle at the head of a column during the liberation of Paris, which DeGaulle accomplished by directly disobeying orders from senior Allied generals. After Paris, Nevot personally liberated, by himself, his home village of Fontaine-les-Gres in east central France. The Germans had just left. It was the first time his family had seen him in five years. Before his arrival, they did not know he was still alive.

Nevot continued to fight with the Second Armored Division until the latter reached Strasbourg in the spring of 1945. He was personally present with Leclerc when the tricolore was raised over the Cathedral in Strasbourg, in fulfillment of Leclerc's Serment de Koufra. He could never recount that event without emotion.

After Strasbourg, Nevot and about 200 other elite French troops were sent on a reckless dash into the Bavarian Alps, to Hitler's "Eagle's Nest," in an audacious attempt to capture Hitler. They were the first Allied troops to arrive. However, the eyrie was abandoned when they arrived--Hitler had stayed in Berlin.

After World War II, Nevot was sent to the Ecole Militaire at Antibes, France's reorganized military college for NCOs. In addition to his academic subjects, he learned judo, fencing and swimming, including the use of a so-called aqualung being perfected by one of his instructors, Jacques Cousteau. Nevot graduated second in his class at Antibes and spent most of his remaining years of army service at various postings in Africa. As the senior NCO (Adjutant-Chef) on every base, he was usually in charge of the men's physical fitness and morale, of keeping them in fighting condition, and of the security detail protecting the senior officer.

During his African service, Nevot won, in 1951, the French combined armed forces world judo championship--a tournament with no weight classes requiring him to win 20 consecutive bouts. During his African service he also became an upper level "Master" (Maitre) of fencing.

Nevot came to Texas in 1963 after 25 years in the French army and commenced his 24-year career at St. Mark's in 1964. His St. Mark's fencers had many successful results in regional and national tournaments, including the Junior Olympics (under 16 and under 20 age divisions). Three later became NCAA All-Americans.

Nevot married his first love, Anne-Marie Morville, on May 1, 1946. She worked in the St. Mark's cafeteria for some years to supplement his coach's pay. Anne-Marie, whom he called "Mary Ann" after they moved to Texas, died in 2005. They loved dancing on the weekends and together won many competitions. They had two daughters, Rosefrance and Patricia, who both survive them, as well as numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

After Mary Ann's death, Nevot married Helen Bohn, one of his first Texas fencing students, on January 21, 2006. They celebrated their thirteenth anniversary and his 99th birthday in 2019. She also survives him, as does his older brother, Pierre, who fought in the French Resistance (Maquis).

Nevot, the ultimate man of war and martial artist who trained others for war, died at peace, at home, in his sleep on July 1, 2019.

"There were giants on the earth in those days" (Gen. 6:4).

Events

JUL Memorial

03:30PM

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GREENWOOD CHAPEL - Greenwood Funeral Homes and Cremation, Cemetery,
Mausoleum, Florist

3100 White Settlement Road, Fort Worth, TX, US, 76107

Comments



“ I was fortunate to be able to be tutored by Maestro Daniel Nevot when he was coaching fencing at Cooke County Junior College while also teaching at The Saint Marks School for Boys in Dallas, Texas. It was in 1969- 1970. He was a marvelous man and a marvelous coach. He was our hero. His passing brings tears to my eyes. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him. Butch Good

Bob Good - December 28, 2019 at 04:13 PM



“ I'm sorry this is so late. I want to offer my heartfelt condolences, and also to say this man has a great spirit. I am another St Marks alum and I will say he had his very own way to encourage us to participate more, to be better. He always told us he shot Hitler in the war; little did we know his true history as a hero. Our lives were brighter and more interesting because of this man.

Merci et bon voyage!

Patrick Taylor - July 21, 2019 at 08:41 PM



“ He stands as a another giant as far as a major influence towards the students at The St.Mark's School of Texas. Even as a senior he could take down anyone in sports etc... His strength mentality and physically was unmatched.

Joseph Peter Tarantino IV - August 15, 2019 at 05:33 PM



“ I arrived at St Mark's in the fall of 1964 as the young French teacher for the upper school. As a new teacher it was expected that I would help coach as sport and since I had gone to school in France the administration thought that I should help Monsieur with fencing. I was a twenty-one year old woman and teaching in a boys prep school, but Monsieur Nevot was the most awe inspiring character from that year. It was difficult to explain that even though I spoke French I did not fence. Now I do, or at least I try.
Joey's Mom

Donna - July 15, 2019 at 07:37 PM



“ Monsieur Nevot was my PE teacher as a middle schooler at St. Mark's. He taught us unusual sports like French handball and soule ball. Gym calisthenics included fencing warmups with pantomime lunges. He was a kind man with a surface brusqueness that was only present when he was herding several dozen adolescents through athletic drills, accompanied by his trademark thick French accent--which was

a constant source of merriment among the students: "Three times around the gym-- and no sh-tting!" (i.e. "cheating"). He was always in phenomenal physical condition, even in the 1980s, and recognizable in his blue shorts and white polo shirt.

I remember one occasion when several French students from the Bois Robert International School visited the St. Mark's campus. Since Monsieur Nevot was the only native Frenchman on campus, the students were brought over to chat with him. He said, "Vous allez à l'école...over there?" Everyone laughed. Apparently his French was getting a little rusty!

Monsieur Nevot was universally liked and respected on campus, and recognized as one of the great all-time characters in the history of St. Marks. Little did we know he was also a bonafide World War II hero, and a legend in his own right.

RIP, Monsieur Nevot. Vive la France!

Bradley Miller - July 15, 2019 at 06:57 PM



“ Mr. Nevot has opened my eyes to the art of fencing. I will never forget the 'little old man' (my first impression) that took me to the limit and taught me the virtue of perseverance.

Mr. Nevot, it's too soon but you will be in our memory forever!

Our most sincere and heartfelt condolences to Helen and the family!

Long & Ryan - July 13, 2019 at 05:11 PM



“ Sincere Sympathies from Cowtown Gem, Mineral and Glass Club, formerly Lockheed Martin Gem, Mineral & Glass Club

Tina Moore - July 11, 2019 at 01:12 PM



“ Au revoir monsieur. Merci monsieur.

Robert McDowell - July 10, 2019 at 12:28 PM