

## MANY STRANGERS MOURN GUNNED-DOWN SOLDIER

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They never met Anthony Riggs, but they came anyway Friday to pay their respects.

The woman whose son also fought in the sand. The man who served in the Army 30 years ago in Korea. The 18-year-old Detroiter who just as easily could have been the one killed on an American street.

They and dozens of others walked into Swanson Funeral Home in Detroit, usually in groups of two or three, occasionally alone, to stand near a **black** and silver coffin accented by the red, white and blue of the U.S. flag.

No, they never knew Riggs, but they said they did know his spirit.

"I would have liked to be your friend," someone wrote in the family's guest book at the funeral home.

Army Spec. Riggs, 22, served with a Patriot missile unit in the Persian Gulf and returned to this country March 8.

On Friday, four days after he was shot dead in Detroit and his car stolen, Riggs' body lay in a casket, clothed in the drab green of his military uniform. Mourners had placed two long-stem roses by his head, another by an arm.

Gwendolyn Curtis, whose own son just returned safely from the gulf for a 15-day leave, said she came to show her support for Riggs' family.

"It helped me. It's something I feel I have to do," she said. "I got my son."

R.J. Smith said he came because "he's a veteran and I'm a veteran." He noted that Riggs' work with Patriot missiles helped protect lives.

"Here's a man that saved a whole country, then to come back and get shot down in the street," Smith said.

One of the longer visits at Riggs' casket Friday afternoon was by Charles Brooks, who at 18 knows the social problems facing young **black** men.

"It's just tragic, terrible," said Brooks. "It just bothered me because he was an innocent bystander. . . . He was trying to get on with his life."

Though none of Riggs' family members were present -- a family hour was scheduled for later -- the mourners believed their visit would help the family to overcome the loss.

It also brought the tragedy closer to them, they said.

Two women stood close to each other at the casket, surrounded by colorful carnations from the Detroit branch of the NAACP and the dead soldier's buddies at Ft. Bliss, Texas.

"Just sleeping," one woman said in a near whisper.

"So sad, sad, sad," said the other.

The NAACP branch is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to conviction of Riggs' **killer**. A Troy businessman is offering a separate reward of \$5,000.

Police said no one has been arrested. They ask that anyone with information call 596-2260 anytime.

Riggs' funeral is at 10 a.m. today at Little Rock Baptist Church, 9000 Woodward, Detroit. It is open to the public. The Rev. Jesse Jackson is expected to deliver a eulogy.

A memorial fund has been set up for the family. Checks may be mailed to the Anthony L. Riggs Memorial Fund, c/o First of America Bank, 4900 E. McNichols, Detroit 48212.

Caption: Photo WILLIAM DeKAY

: Finna Stovall, left, and R.J. Smith of Detroit view the body of slain soldier Anthony Riggs on Friday at Swanson Funeral Home in Detroit. They did not know him, but came to show their respect. The Army specialist was in a Patriot missile unit in the Persian Gulf War but was killed in a robbery.

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