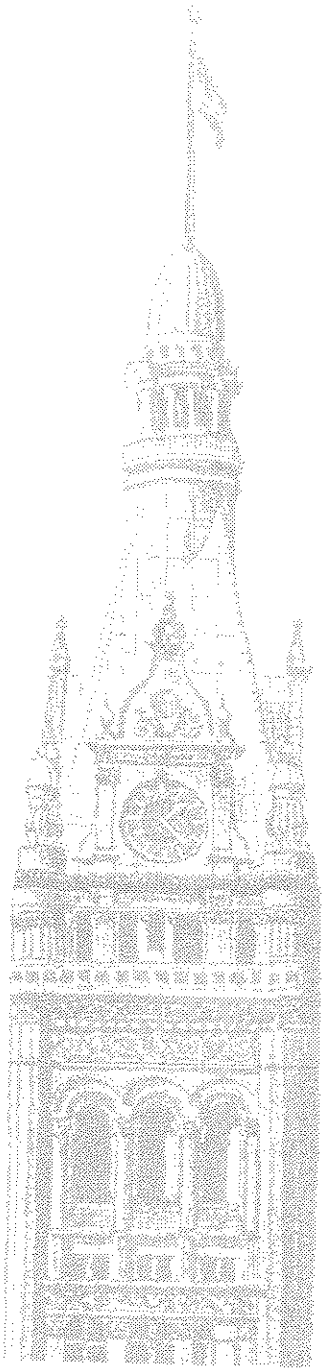
**Robert G. Donovan**
Alderman, 8th Aldermanic District

MEMBER:
Public Safety Committee
Public Improvements Committee
Zoning, Neighborhoods
& Development Committee
Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee



**TO:** **Debra Fowler**

**FROM:** **Alderman Bob Donovan** RGD

**RE:** **PARK NAME CHANGE**

**DATE:** **February 11, 2004**

On behalf of Mr. Kevin Bilello, I am submitting his proposal (attached) to have the name of Cleveland Park changed to Robert J. Modrzejewski Park.

The area that the park is in will not be part of the 8th District after the April 2004 elections coming up soon. Therefore I am willing to either introduce this request for resolution or act as a co-sponsor depending on which district it falls under at the time of introduction.

If anyone needs to contact Mr. Bilello, he is at 262-789-8894, 313-0445 or 2136 N. 62nd Street in Wauwatosa.

I trust that you will get this proposal filed with the proper committees or staff people. Please let me know if you need further information from me.

City of Milwaukee, 200 E. Wells St., Room 205, Milwaukee, WI 53202-3570 (o) (414) 286-3533, FAX (414) 286-3456
e-mail: jthoma@ci.mil.wi.us

# MODRZEJEWSKI PLAYGROUND PROPOSAL

I, Kevin J. Bilello, submit for the consideration of the Citizen Advisory Committee the following proposal to rename Cleveland Playground as Modrzejewski Playground effective July 3, 2004.

## A. PROPOSAL DETAILS

1. Cleveland Playground is located at 1020 West Cleveland Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53215. See attached Figure A-1.

2. Modrzejewski (pronounced Mo-g-s-key) Playground is the full form of the name being proposed as well as the form suggested for use in the renaming of Cleveland Playground.

3. Modrzejewski Playground shall be named in honor of Robert Joseph Modrzejewski. Robert is distinguished as the first Wisconsin citizen to become a Vietnam Medal of Honor (M.O.H.) recipient. As of November 24, 2003, he is one of only 132 living M.O.H. recipients (http://www.homeofheroes.com). See attached Figure A-3.

4. Robert Joseph Modrzejewski was born on July 3, 1934 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to his Polish-born parents Joseph and Rose Modrzejewski. Robert attended James Witcomb Riley School, and later attended Rutherford B. Hayes School where he enjoyed playing various sports including basketball, swimming, and football. While enrolled at Casmir Pulaski High School, he was even quarterback for the football team. Academically, history and physics were among his favorite classes. He graduated in 1953 from Pulaski and later in 1957 from UW-Milwaukee (Bachelor of Science, Education). Robert began his military career with the United States Marine Corps (U.S.M.C.) in 1957. Six years later, Robert exchanged marriage vows with his wife Diane. After approximately two months into his Vietnam tour of duty, Robert and Diane became parents with the birth of their son Michael Robert on June 9, 1966. From July 7, 1966 through August 3, 1966, Captain Modrzejewski was involved in Operation Hastings. It was during this time that Robert's act of bravery resulted in the recommendation of the Medal of Honor. On March 12, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson presented the Medal of Honor to Major Robert J. Modrzejewski. See attached Figure A-4. In 1976, he graduated from Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, California (Master's Degree, Education). After 30 years of serving as a positive role model in the Marines, Colonel Modrzejewski retired in 1986. Robert then taught at the high school level for the next seven years. Currently, Robert and Diane are enjoying their retirement in San Diego, California. Robert is an active member of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in which he is serving as Secretary

on the Board of Directors. Additional information regarding Robert's U.S.M.C. service, M.O.H. citation, and personal life can be obtained at his website: http://neptune.spaceports.com/~kjb/rjm.html.

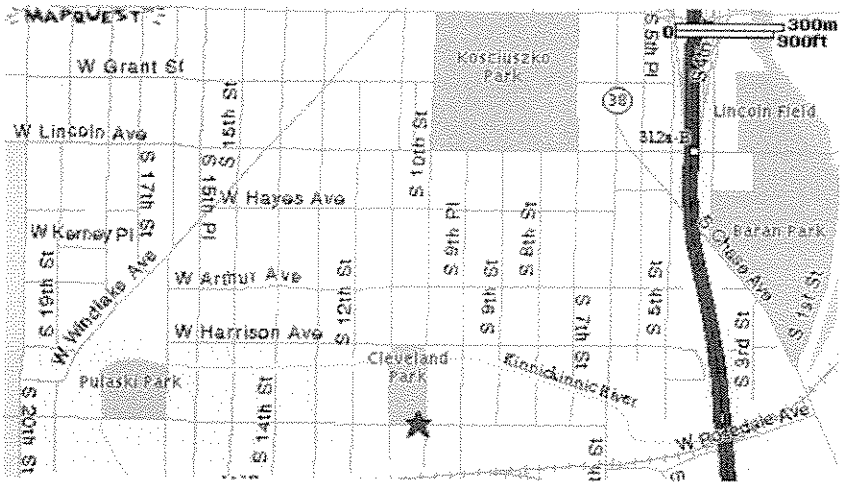
5. Robert spent most of his early childhood living on the south side of Milwaukee at 2633 South 9th Place. Much of his spare time was spent at the playground near his house (Cleveland Playground) playing baseball or basketball. He also learned how to swim at Cleveland Playground (The Milwaukee Journal - May 19, 1968). See attached Figure A-5. In terms of rationale, Modrzejewski Playground would be appropriately bordered by Pulaski Park and Kosciuszko Park as both are also named in honor of Polish-born war heroes. Through his military career and dedication, Robert Modrzejewski has defended the United States of America and the freedoms each citizen is thereby entitled to. Modrzejewski Playground will permanently memorialize one of Wisconsin's under recognized Medal of Honor recipients. It will serve as a reminder of Robert's accomplishments achieved through education and the pursuit of excellence for the Milwaukee community and area residents who visit the playground.

6. See attached letters of recommendation in favor of this proposal.

**Submitted by:**

**Kevin J. Bilello**
**2136 N. 62nd Street**
**Wauwatosa, WI 53213**
**414-313-0445 (Home)**
**262-789-8894 (Work)**
**kjb6974@hotmail.com (Email)**

# Figure A-1.


MAPQUEST
W Grant St
W Lincoln Ave
W Hayes Ave
W Kerney Pl
W Arthur Ave
W Harrison Ave
W Windlake Ave
S 19th St
S 17th St
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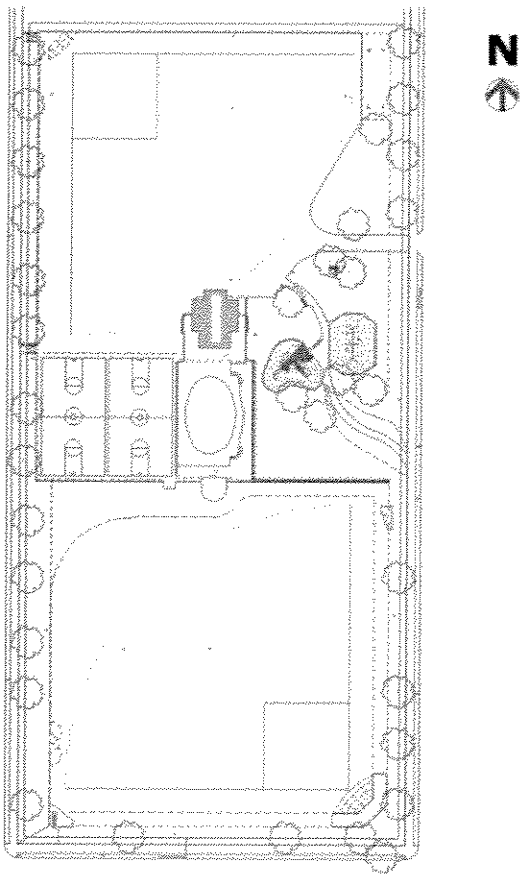
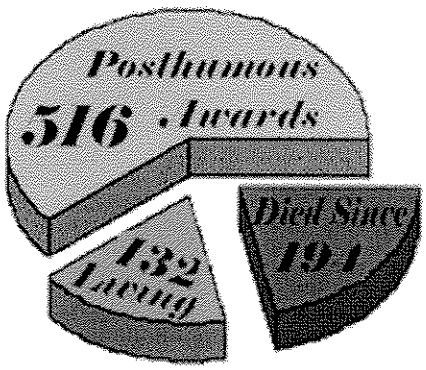
S 15th Pl
S 14th St
S 12th St
S 10th St
S 9th Pl
S 9th St
S 8th St
S 7th St
S 5th St
S 5th Pl
S 3rd St
S 1st St
S 20th St
Kosciuszko Park
Lincoln Field
Baran Park
Cleveland Park
Pulaski Park
Kinnickinnic River
W Rosedale Ave
0
300m
900ft


N

# Figure A-3.

| | WWII | Korea | Vietnam | Somalia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Recipients | 464 | 131 | 245 | 2 |
| Posthumous | 266 | 94 | 154 | 2 |
| Surviving Recipients | 198 | 37 | 91 | 0 |
| Died Since | 148 | 19 | 27 | 0 |
| Living Today | 50 | 18 | 64 | 0 |



## Figure A-4.

The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pleasure in presenting the MEDAL OF HONOR to:

MAJOR ROBERT J. MODRZEJEWSKI
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as Commanding Officer, Company K, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines, Third Marines, Third Marine Division, in the Republic of Vietnam from 15 to 18 July 1966. On 15 July, during Operation HASTINGS, Company K was landed in an enemy infested jungle area to establish a blocking position at a major enemy trail network. Shortly after landing, the company encountered a reinforced enemy platoon in a well organized, defensive position. Major (then Captain) Modrzejewski led his men in the successful seizure of the enemy redoubt, which contained large quantities of ammunition and supplies. That evening a numerically superior enemy force counterattacked in an effort to retake the vital supply area, thus setting the pattern of activity for the next two and one-half days. In the first series of attacks, the enemy assaulted repeatedly in overwhelming numbers but each time was repulsed by the gallant Marines. The second night the enemy struck in battalion strength, and Major Modrzejewski was wounded in this intensive action which was fought at close quarters. Although exposed to enemy fire, and despite his painful wounds, he crawled 200 meters to provide critically needed ammunition to an exposed element of his command and was constantly present wherever the fighting was heaviest. Despite numerous casualties, a dwindling supply of ammunition and the knowledge that they were surrounded, he skillfully directed artillery fire to within a few meters of his position and courageously inspired the efforts of his company in repelling the aggressive enemy attack. On 18 July, Company K was attacked by a regimental size enemy force. Although his unit was outnumbered and weakened by the previous fighting, Major Modrzejewski reorganized his men and calmly moved among them to encourage and direct their efforts to heroic limits as they fought to overcome the vicious enemy onslaught. Again he called in air and artillery strikes at close range with devastating effect on the enemy, which together with the bold and determined fighting of the men of Company K, repulsed the fanatical attack of the larger North Vietnamese force. His unparalleled personal heroism and indomitable leadership inspired his men to a significant victory over the enemy force and reflected great credit upon himself, the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

**Figure A-5.**

# Hero Carries Medal Quietly

By ROBERT W. WELLS
Of The Journal Staff

Maj. Robert J. Modrzejewski does not brood about what has happened to him. He has never awakened at 3 a.m. to consider the possibility that being singled out as a hero can be a burden as well as an honor. He has not returned to the events of July, 1966, in his dreams.

The major still worries about his golf game and waits with anticipation for the football season, so he can watch the Packers. He still does his job in the marine corps, as he did before he became the first Wisconsinite to win the medal of honor in Vietnam.

**Many Types of Heroes**

Military heroes come in various guises. There are the flamboyant ones, who spend the rest of their lives living up to their role. Some have used the medal to win success in politics or the marketplace. A few found the temporary nature of fame a cause for bitterness or an excuse for a slide to oblivion.

Modrzejewski, 33, fits none of these categories.

There is nothing special about his background. He grew up on Milwaukee's south side, son of a machinist for the North Western road. His parents were born in Poland. When he was born, they lived on S. 9th st. The house he remembers best from his boyhood was at 2833 S. 9th pl., where the family moved when he was 6 or 7.

**Attended Riley School**

He went to the first grade at James Whitcomb Riley.

When the family moved from S. 9th st. to S. 9th pl., he changed to a grade school named for the 19th president. After he won his medal, he said here last week, he got a letter from his eighth grade teacher at Rutherford B. Hayes school — "I was surprised she remembered me."

What Modrzejewski remembers best from his childhood is sports. He spent most of his spare time at the city playground at 1020 W. Cleveland st., playing baseball or basketball.

**Learned to Swim**

"The Cleveland playground had a baby pool and I started splashing around there when I was 4 or 5," he said. "Later, I used to spend all day at the swimming pool at Kosciusko park.

"I never cared about hunting or fishing and I hated camping. My dad was a big fisherman, but I couldn't see spending four hours in a boat trying to outsmart a fish. My idea of going fishing is to wear a bathing suit and take a portable cooler of of beer and when you get warm, jump in the water."

At Pulaski high school, the major said, he liked history and physics but his

Turn to HERO, page 10, col. 1

**The Milwaukee Journal - May 19, 1968**