

NCO HISTORY BRIEF
EUGENE ASHLEY, JR

By

MSG June Pugh

SGM Nick Spade

Group Room 5

25 February 2005

Outline Draft on Eugene Ashley, Jr.

I. Introduction

A. References

Craig, William T. *Team Sergeant*. New York, Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998

Sigler, David. *Vietnam Battle Chronology*. North Carolina, McFarland and Company, Inc., 1973

Cash, John A.; Albright, John; Sandstrum, Allan W. *Seven Firefights in Vietnam*. New York: Bantam, 1985.

II. Body

A. Post Humous Award Citation

B. Implementation and Purpose of the 5th Special Forces

C. Lang Vei Camp Battle

III. Closing

A. Summary

B. Question and Answer Period

C. Concluding Statement

SFC Ashley, Jr. was assigned to Company C, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces. Near Lang Vei, republic of Vietnam, 6th and 7th February 1968. He distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while serving with Detachment A-101, Company C. SFC Ashley was the senior Special Forces advisor of a hastily organized assault force whose mission was to rescue entrapped US Special Forces advisors at Camp Lang Vei. During the initial attack on the Special Forces camp by North Vietnamese Army forces, SFC Ashley supported the camp with high explosive and illumination mortar rounds. When communications were lost with the main camp, he assumed the additional responsibility of directing air strikes and artillery support. SFC Ashley organized and equipped a small assault force composed of local friendly personnel. During the ensuing battle, SFC Ashley led a total of five vigorous assaults against the enemy, continuously exposing himself to a voluminous hail of enemy, grenades, machine gun and automatic weapons fire. Throughout these assaults, he was plagued by numerous booby-trapped satchel charges in all bunkers on his avenue of approach. During his fifth and final assault, he adjusted air strikes nearly on top of his assault element, forcing the enemy to withdraw, resulting in friendly control of the summit of the hill. While exposing himself to intense enemy fire he was seriously wounded by machinegun fire but continued his mission without regard for his personal safety. After the fifth assault he lost consciousness and was carried from the summit by his comrades only to suffer a fatal wound when an enemy artillery round landed in the area. SFC Ashley displayed extraordinary heroism in risking his life in an attempt to save the lives of his entrapped comrades and commanding officer. His total disregard for his personal safety while exposed to enemy observation and automatic weapons fire was

an inspiration to all men committed to the assault. The resolute valor with which he led five gallant charges placed critical diversionary pressure on the attacking enemy and his valiant efforts carved a channel in the overpowering enemy forces and weapons positions through which the survivors of Camp Lang Vei eventually escaped to freedom. SFC Ashley's bravery at the cost of his life was in the highest traditions of the military service, and reflects great credit upon himself, and the US Army.

What I have just read was the citation for SFC Ashley, Jr. recipient of the Post Humous Honor of Valor award. Now here is the rest of the story according to Team Sergeant William T. Craig.

"Personnel from the 1st Special Forces Group first entered Vietnam in the summer of 1957. During the following few months, they trained 58 Vietnamese soldiers in Special Forces techniques at a training center in Nha Trang, later designated the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Recondo School. On 21 September 1961 the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces was activated at Fort Bragg. Its mission was to train personnel in counterinsurgency methods to be used in Vietnam. Training stressed infiltration and land navigation techniques and the use of parachutes, small boats, sabotage, intelligence gathering, communications, medicine, and weaponry. Also in 1961 USSF began training ethnic minorities in Vietnam, and this became the basis of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG). The purpose was to reestablish government control over remote areas and to provide forces capable of combating the Communist insurgents. During 1961 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) used one Special Forces team to train Vietnamese Special Forces to conduct reconnaissance and

harassment operations in North Vietnam. On 1 May 1962 the Combined Studies Group (CSG) was attached to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).

SFC EUGENE ASHLEY, an older black GI with plenty of on-the-job training, headed the enlisted personnel. He had gathered five Laotians in support of the rescue mission of Special Forces soldiers captured in the company TOC. Ashley was in the command bunker when the Special Forces camp was hit. After laying on two air strikes to cover their advance, Ashley notified team leader, CPT Willoughby of the rescue attempt. Laotians, equipped with LAWS, were authorized to set up listening posts within sight of the camp. As the motley crew neared the eastern perimeter and Company 104's areas, the North Vietnam Army (NVA) opened fire with machine guns. By the time Ashley had assembled volunteers, the NVA mortar shells began to drop around them. At first light we were through the wire and approaching the road before automatic weapons fire sought us out from the vicinity of the command bunker. We made it to the road when two GIs in camouflage fatigues smiled broadly and grabbed our hands. SGT Tiroch and I turned toward our camp and ran into Ashley's Laotian troops, who were by then in full retreat. We slowed them down until Ashley came raging down the hill on the south side of camp. According to Ashley this would be the third attempt. Ashley and I urged our warriors forward from the center of the line. Our assault started well, but once we received small arms fire, the charge sagged. We returned matching fire, to make the NVA keep their heads down, and slowed our advance. We were edging closer when the enemy machine gun halted our progress. Ashley's recruits were down roughly to a platoon. He was urging one more try. We had to get close enough to take out that machine gun. The Lao surged forward into the trenches before Ashley received a chest

wound. He was taken back to the highway where he was loaded onto a jeep headed for the dispensary, we began receiving mortar fire again. Just inside the camp, a round shattered the jeep, killing Ashley. The man had given his all for his teammates”.

SFC Eugene Ashley, Jr. proved that he was a leader of not only American soldiers, but of the Laotians, as well. He was dependable and loyal to his unit, comrades and the United States Army.

Works Cited

Craig, William. Team Sergeant. New York, Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998.

Sigler, David. Vietnam Battle Chronology. North Carolina, McFarland and Company, Inc., 1973

Cash, John A.; Albright, John; Sandstrum, Allan W. Seven Firefights in Vietnam. New York: Bantam, 1985.