

THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

The Story of a Cryptologic Service and Sacrifice

SP4 Harold D. Biller



The 175th RR Coy was a vital link in the complex chain of signals intelligence capture and dissemination in the southern half of South Vietnam...The most urgent and perishable intelligence of tactical significance was sent out to commanders of tactical units...These alerted commanders to immediate threats and enhancing their situational awareness.

From, 547 Signal Troop and the Army Security Agency, by Phil Rutherford, Ph.D.

SP4 Harold D. Biller was born in Harrisonburg, Virginia on June 13, 1947, but his formative years were spent in Wheaton, Maryland, a suburb of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. He graduated from Wheaton High School in 1965, and spent a year studying at the University of Maryland before deciding to enlist in the United States Army.

After initial testing, he was selected to serve in the Army Security Agency (ASA), the cryptologic element of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era. After basic and advanced training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and imagery analyst training at Ft. Holabird, Maryland, he would spend the next two years serving with a variety of ASA units. February 1969 found him in Vietnam assigned as a Special Identification Techniques Operator with Detachment 2 (Det 2) of the 175th Radio Research Company at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province.

Det 2 had been deployed to the area to set up an AN/TRD radio direction finding system to assist units in the field to locate and destroy enemy units. Harold's job was to employ a variety of radio receivers and electronic tracking techniques and devices to do just that. The operation not only allowed U.S. and other friendly units to gain an advantage over the enemy, but also saved lives. By the time he arrived at Nui Dat, Harold had spent enough time in Vietnam to become an accomplished and valued cryptologic professional.

In the late afternoon of February 25 1969, Harold and Corporal Dave Breish signed out a "deuce-and-a-half" truck for a supply trip to Ba Ria. They did not have far to travel, but the road to Ba Ria had been closed for the last few days due to an increase in Viet Cong guerrilla activity. By the twenty-fifth, things appeared to have calmed down, and that, plus the fact that supplies for the DF site were badly needed, prompted the men to take their chances.

Before leaving the area, both agreed that Breish would drive and that Harold would serve as the "door gunner." They headed south on Highway 2 for what both expected to be a quick trip. Halfway between their base and Hoa Long, the truck struck an improvised land mine and came under small arms fire from both sides of the road. Despite being thrown from the truck by the force of the explosion, Breish survived the ambush and attack. Sadly, Harold had endured the full force of the blast and was killed instantly. He was only 21 years old, coming to the end of his second tour of duty in Vietnam, and according to his sister Patsy, preparing to volunteer for a third. For his courage and bravery that day he was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star.

Harold's death was mourned by his family and fellow soldiers, but like Specialist James Davis, one of the first ASA soldiers to die in Vietnam, his comrades in arms sought to remember him



by naming their installation in his memory. Henceforth, the DET 2 area was designated as "Camp Biller." He is buried at Parklawn Memorial Park in Rockville, Maryland.

The Vietnam War will be remembered by many as a conflict in which the United States struggled to achieve its objectives and to make sense of the many challenges the nation faced during that time, both home and abroad. However it is also important to remember that during the conflict there were countless acts of bravery, dedication and sacrifice. During his time "in country," SP4 Harold D. Biller embodied all of these attributes, and it is in this spirit that we remember him, and all of those who gave their lives during that time in an effort to both obtain critical information, save lives, and preserve freedom.



Figure 20. Dave Breisch with destroyed truck. Photo courtesy Dave Breisch.

