

Helicopter Crash

13 May 1970

May 13, 1970. Having survived the invasion into Cambodia, the men of Bravo Company, 2/35th Infantry, had landed back in Vietnam and were headed for a much needed stand-down back at Camp Radcliff when a Chinook crashed into one of the loaded trucks. The result was four dead and 25 injured. The following is the report of the crash of Helicopter 68-15737 and the personal account of Tom Mahon, who risked it all to save the life of his friend and those around him.

The pages in this report are dedicated to these men of the 2/35th:

1Lt. Charles Bazzinotti, Age 23, Dorchester, Massachusetts

Sp4 Paul Ramos, Jr., Age 20, Ft. Bragg, North Carolina



Left side of the aircraft as viewed from the west. This picture depicts the damage to the truck and the center portion of the aircraft. The personnel receiving fatal injuries were in the bed of the truck.

From Tom Mahon

I was in 3 Plt. Bravo Co. 2/35 Inf. 4th. Inf. Div. Paul Ramos and myself were good buddies and later we were both Squad leaders, we each had half of the Plt. My squad was the first one out that day.

We landed and ran for the trucks. We all got in one and then Paul landed and got his guy's in the other one. They had just got in and Paul was doing a head count, as we watched the Shit hook drifted to the right, I grabbed the radio to call to the chopper but there was so much noise and then the dust kicked up and I think the Pilot heard me and gave it the gas, so when

it drifted in to the truck it was pushing full power. The wheel caught the truck, and I was calling to Paul on the radio. Paul had the radio in his hand and bang it was over.

Parts of the rotor blade and truck went flying and it settled on top the truck. My self and three others ran to the crash. It was only 25 yards from us, we started pulling guy's out and fuel was leaking and the fire was going pretty good then. We got (so I was told after) 27 guy's out of the wreckage. I did not care about that then, I only wanted to help Paul. That is for the most part the story as I remember it.

The Info will help me put my feelings to rest. Also it will help us as a unit to re-cover those lost minutes that happened so fast. Thanks again.

"Brother in Arms" Tom

For his actions that day:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96262

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 4382

24 August 1970

AWARD OF THE SOLDIER'S MEDAL

TC 439. The following AWARD is announced:

MAHON, THOMAS F (SS# withheld) SPECIALIST FOUR United States Army, Co B, 2d Bn, 35th Inf, 4th Inf Div, APO 96262

Awarded: Soldier's Medal

Date action: 13 May 1970

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Authority: By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 2 July 1976.

Reason: For heroism not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. Specialist Four Mahon distinguished himself while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion, 35th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. On 13 May 1970, a CH-47 helicopter crashed at New Plei Djerang, landing squarely on top of a truck loaded with troops. Occupants of both the helicopter and truck were trapped in the wreckage, many unable to move because of injuries sustained in the crash. Despite the possibility of explosion caused by the leakage of fuel, Specialist Mahon rushed to the scene and began pulling victims of the crash to safety, administering medical aid where needed most. Specialist Four Mahon's personal bravery, selfless actions and exemplary devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

FOR THE COMMANDER :

OFFICIAL:

HAROLD D. YOW
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

//SIC//

DONALD G. JOSEPH
CPT, AGC
Asst AG

In addition to Tom Mahon and Juan Pena, the following individuals were also recommended for award of the Soldier's Medal for their actions this day. While Juan received his while in Vietnam, Tom did not until years later. Here it is hoped that some measure of recognition can be achieved for these men's actions.

Gentlemen, We Salute You!

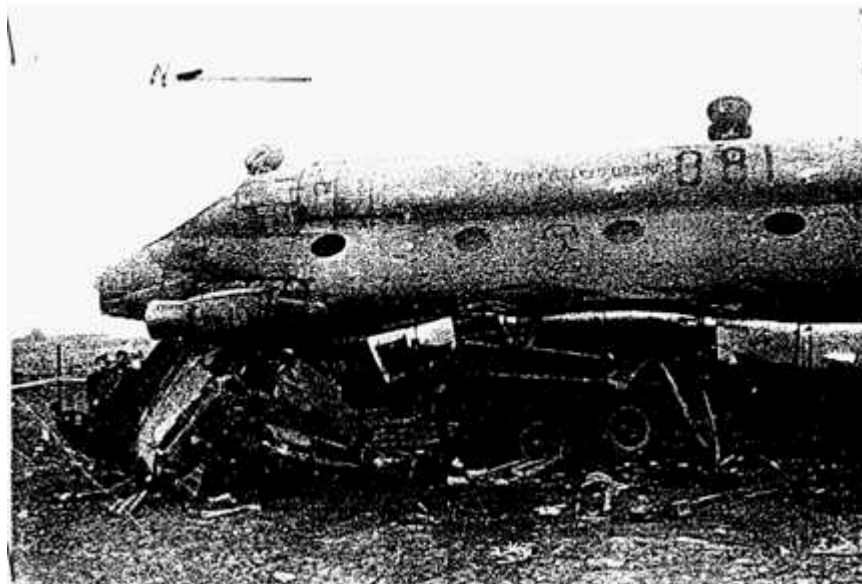
Sammy J. Seagle

Joe R. Clark

Robert C. Forsyth

Kenneth J. Butterfield

Edward F. Mosey



Left front view of aircraft depicting damage to aircraft and front portion of truck. Flatbed trailers with barrels of penneprime in left background.

In a message from Juan Pena....

Jim:

I do recall the crash of the Chinook. It happened in March of 1970; I don't recall the exact date. We had just come back from 2 weeks of sweeps in Cambodia. The Fourth Infantry Division and various other units were sent into Cambodia to interdict the NVA supply and troop routes and we humped over a very wide area, but we had few contacts; I guess they were expecting us and moved out when we moved in.

When we came back from Cambodia, we had units being moved into the staging area so we could be sent back to our base camps to go back into our usual patrol AO's. My friend Ramos from the Philippines had gotten on the truck as had about 30 other troops. I don't know what the shithook was doing, but it kept coming toward the truck, and we tried to wave it off. I guess the pilot didn't see the truck or the troops, because he kept coming about five feet off the ground. He ran right into the truck and toppled over it, killing a lot of the troops in the truck.

The shithook was spilling fuel, so I organized some of the grunts to throw dirt over the fuel with their entrenching tools so it wouldn't catch fire, I had others start helping people off the truck and I had two ambulances come over to haul the wounded off. Lt. Mosey recommended

me for the Soldiers Medal, and it was given to me along with my bronze star and other medals when we held the final formation of the Fourth Infantry Division at An Khe; I was the most highly decorated soldier in the Fourth Infantry Division in that final formation, and I came home with the colors on November 2, 1970. Because I was so short, I ETS'd after 2 weeks at Fort Lewis, Washington.

Atentamente,
Juan

In a message from Don Evitts, A Co. 2/35th

To: Jim Anderson Cacti Historian & Archivist

From: Don Evitts

(A Co. 2/35th, 4th Inf. Div., 1969-70)

Re: Helicopter 68-15837; Crash at Plei Djereng, 13 May, 1970.

I was on one of the last loads out of the Bn. base camp in Cambodia, with mostly Bravo Co. and some of us Alpha Co. guys. The tail of the bird would not lift off, so the crew chief came back and made five guys get off the helicopter. We were then able to take off. All the way back to Vietnam, I had the feeling we were teetering along with the tail wanting to drag.

When we got to Plei Djereng, we were engulfed in a cloud of red dust and could not see the ground. We hovered in and then hit the ground HARD:, then flipped up in the air and came down upside down on the deuce and a half filled with Bravo Co. men. I woke up with some guy standing on my chest yelling "get out, get out". I then came to and went to the rear opening and dropped my gear out the back. as I started to jump, I looked back and saw several injured and unconscious men lying on the floor (ceiling), and thought "I can't leave those men to burn in this thing." The fuel was already pouring in, but there was no fire yet, so myself, and one other man; Sgt. Pospistle (sp?) helped everyone out of the bird.

One of the injured was my former machine gunner from 3rd. Pit., who was pinned under the steel table with the Bn. radios bolted to it; (Alex (Log) Wright.) I think adrenalin was working as I tossed the table aside and lifted "Log" up. (He was a Big man)

We quickly cleared everyone out of the helicopter, but I could hear crys for help from beneath our feet. Don't ask me why, but I grabbed a survival knife from a rucksack and cut through the aluminum top of the helicopter and was able to reach some of the trapped men in the truck, but was unable to do more than comfort them. Unable to help them any further, I moved over and cut a hole near the truck driver. The fuel was pouring right on him and his skin was getting a serious chemical burn, but his legs were jammed under the steering wheel and he could not move. I was finally able to free him and lift him up and out through the helicopter. I handed him down to the waiting medics, then Sgt. Pospistle and I were the last men out.

/sic/ Don Evitts

For his actions this date, Don was awarded the Soldier's Medal

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96262

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 4345

21 August 1970

AWARD OF THE SOLDIER'S MEDAL

TC 439. The following AWARD is announced:

EVITTS, Donald G 512—44—4570 FIRST LIEUTENANT INFANTRY United States Army, Co A, 2d Bn, 35th Inf, 4th Inf Div, APO 96262

Awarded: Soldier's Medal

Date action: 13 May 1970

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Authority: By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 2 July 1976.

Reason: For heroism not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. First Lieutenant Evitts distinguished himself while serving with Company A, 2d Battalion, 35th. Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. On 13 May 1970, the CH-47 helicopter in which Lieutenant Evitts was being transported with elements of his company crashed, landing upside down on top of a 5 ton truck loaded with troops. Immediately, Lieutenant Evitts took charge and directed the evacuation of all personnel from the helicopter and personally evacuated at least 12 injured personnel. After insuring that everyone had been taken from the helicopter, Lieutenant Evitts cut through the top of the helicopter and evacuated the men trapped in the cab of the truck. Despite the fact that the fuel tanks of the aircraft had ruptured and fuel was flowing freely, Lieutenant Evitts remained on the scene until the area was cleared. First Lieutenant Evitts' personal bravery, selfless actions and exemplary devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

**OFFICIAL: HAROLD D YOW
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff**

OFFICIAL:

**/sic/ DONALD G. JOSEPH
CPT, AGC
Asst AG**

The following report was provided by George Heidt, VHPA

Information on helicopter 68-15837

Helicopter 68-15837

Information on US, Army helicopter CH-47C tail number 68-15837

The Army purchased this helicopter 1168

Total flight hours at this point: 00000158

Date: 06/15/69

Unit: 179 ASHC

This was a Combat incident. This helicopter was REPAIRED IN THEATER

This was a Logistics Support mission for Resupply. While on Landing Zone this helicopter was on Take-Off at 0050 feet and 010 knots. South Vietnam Helicopter took 1 hits from: Small

Arms/Automatic Weapons; Gun launched non-explosive ballistic projectiles less than 20 mm in size. (7.62MM) The helicopter was hit in the Right Side. Systems damaged were: FUEL SYS The helicopter made a Forced Landing. Aircraft took off fully flight capable. Unknown as to mission impact. Aircraft inspected and found to be in flyable condition

Original source(s) and document(s) from which the incident was created or updated: Survivability/Vulnerability Information Analysis Center Helicopter database. Also: JSIDR (Joint Services Incident Damage Report.)

Information on U.S. Army helicopter CH-47C tail number 68-15837

The Army purchased this helicopter 11 68

Total flight hours at this point: 00000747

Date: 05/13/70

Incident number: 700513251 ACD Accident case number: 700513251 Total loss or fatality Accident

Unit: 180 ASHC

This was a Accident incident.

The station for this helicopter was Phu Hiep in South Vietnam

UTM grid coordinates: YA 881 455

Number Killed in accident 4 .injured 25 Passengers 28

costing 1859161

Original source(s) and document(s) from which the incident was created or updated: Defense Intelligence Agency Helicopter Loss database. Army Aviation Safety Center database.

Also: OPERA

(Operations Report.)

Loss to inventory

Crew Members:

AC 02 JO MURPHY

P W2 U BELL

CE ES S LEGRAND

G E4 M SPRINGER

Passengers:

Information on helicopter 68-15837

ILT BAZINETTI CHARLES A, NOT A; E3 RV PRYCE, PAX, 0; SGT RAMOS PAUL LAJADA JR, AR, 00, KIA; E4 O SMITH, PAX, D; ES LB BASS, PAX, D; ES MW BASIL, PAX, 0; E5 OR MCABEE, OGY, D; P5 T SISSOMS, OGY, D; E4 JJ COX, PAX, D; E4 A BYRD, PAX, D; P6 JJ LASASSE, OGY, D; P3 SD DEAN, PAX, D; P4 OBRIEN, OGY, D; E4 D RANDALL, OGY, D; E3 SW BANTNER, PAX, 0; P4 OJ WILLIAMS, PAX, D; P4 R MOSLEY, PAX, D; E4 A WRIGHT, PAX, D; E3 P CHESTER, PAX, D; SSG COX GARY LEE, AR, 00, KIA; E4 M WRIGHT, PAX, D; 02 DO EVITTS, PAX, G; E3 DM OLSON, PAX, D; E3 DO ARMIJO, OGY, D; E3 W MARTIN, PAX, D; P3 C MOSS, PAX, D; 1LT HUBNER DAVID ERVIN, AR, 00, KIA; E3 J MCKEY, OGY, D;

Accident Summary:

THE NUMBER 6815837 WAS DIRECT COMBAT SUPPORT OF A/2/35 AND B/2/35 INFANTRY, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION. TOTAL FLIGHT TIME FOR THE DAY AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT WAS APPROXIMATELY 4 1/2 HOURS. REFUELING HAD TAKEN PLACE FORTY FIVE MINUTES EARLIER AT 1210 HOURS. AFTER PICKING UP THIRTY ONE TROOPS AT A PZ 20MM WEST OF POLIE DJERANG, THE AIRCRAFT PROCEEDED TO POLIE DIETANG WHERE AN APPROACH WAS INITIATED TO THE EASTERN PORTION OF THE AIRFIELD KNOWN AS THE HOOK PAD. RADIO CONTACT WAS ESTABLISHED WITH NIGHT JUMPER 10, AND INSTRUCTIONS WERE RECEIVED TO LAND TO THE LAND TO THE NORTH ON THE WEST

SIDE OF THE AREA. A NORMAL APPROACH WAS INITIATED BY THE PILOT ILT JAMES O MURPHY, AND THE APPROACH WAS TERMINATED AT A 15 FT HOVER. A TURN OF FOURTY FIVE DEGREES TO THE LEFT WAS INITIATED AND THE PILOT ATTEMPTED TO SET THE AIRCRAFT ON THE GROUND. EXTREMELY HEAVY DUST ENVELOPED THE AIRCRAFT AND THE RIGHT AFT LANDING GEAR STRUCK THE GROUND. THE AIRCRAFT BOUNCED AND STARTED MOVING TOWARD THE RIGHT, SIDEWAYS IN A NORTHWESTERLY DIRECTION. THE PILOT TRIED TO APPLY POWER FOR A VERTICAL LIFT OFF, BUT DUE TO THE HEAVY DUST, LOST SIGHT OF THE GROUND. THE AIRCRAFT MOVED 35 METERS TO THE RIGHT, WITH A RIGHT SIDE LOW ATTITUDE. THE FORWARD RIGHT GEAR STRUCK THE 5 DEGREE UPSLOPE, AND THE AIRCRAFT ROLLED TO THE RIGHT ANOTHER 15 METERS AND CAME TO REST ON A 2 1/2 TON TRUCK, IN AN INVERTED POSITION, FACING TO THE SOUTH. THE IMPACT WITH THE TRUCK FATALLY WOUNDED FOUR PERSONS IN THE BED OF THE TRUCK, AND INJURED FIVE OTHERS. THE FLIGHT ENGINEER AND LEFT DOOR GUNNER ON BOARD THE AIRCRAFT SUSTAINED MINOR INJURIES, WHILE THE RIGHT DOOR GUNNER RECEIVED MODERATE BURNS AS A RESULT OF THE POST CRASH FIRE. THIS FIRE WAS CAUSED BY FUEL LEAKAGE, AND WAS EXTINGUISHED BY ONE OF THE PASSENGERS ON BOARD. FROM TESTIMONY RECEIVED AND LOCATION OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE ACCIDENT WHO RECEIVED BURNS, THE FIRE OCCURRED ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE AIRCRAFT, AT THE RIGHT DOOR GUNNERS POSITION AND AFT WHEN THE AIRCRAFT WAS RESTING ON THE TRUCK. NEITHER THE PILOT OR CO-PILOT WERE INJURED. \\\

This record was last updated on 09/20/98

The following is crew member information for this incident:

Information on helicopter 68-15837

Name: ILT Charles A. Bazzinotti

Status: Killed in Action from an incident on 05/13/70.

Age at death: 23.2

Date of Birth: 03/13/47

Home City: Dorchester, MA

Service: IN branch of the reserve component of the U.S. Army.

Unit: 4 INF DIV

Major organization: 4th Infantry Division

Service: IN branch of the U.S. Army.

The Wall location: IOW-031

Aircraft: CH-47C tail number 68-I 5837

SSN: deleted by editor

Country: South Vietnam

MOS: 1542= 15 Infantry Unit Commander

Compliment cause: weapons

Started Tour: 11/17/69

"Official" listing: ground casualty

Length of service: *

Location: Pleiku Province II Corps.

Reason: vehicle lost or crashed

Casualty type: Non-hostile - died of other causes

married male U.S. citizen

Race: Caucasian

Religion: Roman Catholic

The following information secondary, but may help in explaining this incident.

Category of casualty as defined by the Army: non-battle dead Category of personnel: active duty

Army Military class: officer
This record was last updated on 07/30/95

Name: SSG Gary Lee Cox
Status: Killed In Action from an incident on 05/13/70.
Age at death: 24.8
Date of Birth: 08/12/45
Home City: Rosenberg, TX
Service: regular component of the U.S. Army.
Unit: 4 INF DIV
Major organization: 4th Infantry Division
Service: U.S. Army.
The Wall location 10W-03 1
Aircraft: CH-47C tail number 68-15837
SSN: deleted by editor
Country: South Vietnam
MOS: 12B40 = Combat Engineer
Major attributing cause: aircraft connected not at sea
Compliment cause: weapons
Vehicle involved: helicopter
Position in vehicle: crew member
Started Tour: 03/15/70
Information on helicopter 68-15837
"Official" listing: helicopter air casualty - non-aircrew.
Length of service: *
Location: Pleiku Province II Corps.
Reason: aircraft lost or crashed
Casualty type: Non-hostile - died of other causes
married male U.S. citizen
Race: Caucasian
Religion: Methodist (Evangelical United Brethren)
The following information secondary, but may help in explaining this incident.
Category of casualty as defined by the Army: non-battle dead Category of personnel: active duty
Army Military class: enlisted personnel
This record was last updated on 07/30/95

Page 4 of 6

Name: ILT David Ervin Hubner
Status: Killed In Action from an incident on 05/13/70.
Age at death: 23.3
Date of Birth: 0 1/13/47
Home City: Ferndale, CA
Service: EN branch of the reserve component of the U.S. Army.
Unit: 4INFDW
Major organization: 4th Infantry Division
Service: EN branch of the U.S. Army.
The Wall location: 10W-033
Aircraft: CH-47C tail number 68-15837
SSN: deleted by editor
Country: South Vietnam
MOS: 1331 = 1.3 Combat Engineer Unit Commander
Major contributing cause: aircraft connected not at sea

Compliment cause: weapons
Vehicle involved: helicopter
Position in vehicle: crew member
Started Tour: 01/29170.
"Official" listing: helicopter air casualty - non-aircrew
Length of service: *
Location: Pleiku Province // Corps.
Reason: aircraft lost or crashed
Casualty type: Non-hostile - died of other causes
married male U.S. citizen
Race: Caucasian
Religion: Lutheran (Missouri Synod)
The following information secondary, but may help in explaining this incident.
Category of casualty as defined by the Army: non-battle dead Category of personnel: active duty
Army Military class: officer
This record was last updated on 07/30/95

Name: SGT Paul Lajada Ramos, Jr. (posthumously promoted)
Information on helicopter 68-15837
Status: Killed in Action from an incident on 05/13/70.
Age at death: 20.4
Date of Birth: 0 1/05/50
Home City: Ft Bragg, NC
Service: regular component of the U.S. Army.
Unit: 4INFDIV
Major organization: 4th Infantry Division
Service: U.S. Army.
The Wall location: 10W-036
Aircraft: CH-47C tail number 68-1583 7
SSN: deleted by editor
Country: South Vietnam
MOS: 11B20=Infantryman
Major attributing cause: aircraft connected not at sea
Compliment cause: weapons
Vehicle involved: helicopter
Position in vehicle: crew member
Started Tour: 06/05169
"Official" listing: helicopter air casualty - non-aircrew
Length of service: *
Location: Pleiku Province II Corps.
Reason: aircraft lost or crashed
Casualty type: Non-hostile - died of other causes
single male U.S. citizen
Race: Malayan
Religion: Roman Catholic
The following information secondary, but may help in explaining this incident.
Category of casualty as defined by the Army: non-battle dead Category of personnel: active duty
Army Military class: enlisted personnel
This record was last updated on 07/30/95

**The following is Goldbook information on US Army helicopter CH-47C tail number 68-15837
It is provided here as an ESTIMATE of the history of this helicopter and is not intended to be
the final authority.**

This helicopter was purchased by the US Army in 1168.

Please provide any additional information on this helicopter to the VHPA.

(Following was the general history of the aircraft's flight hour history by month)

(End of the report as we received it – ED)