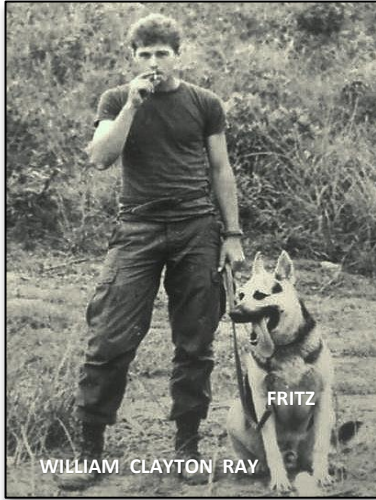


THE FOLLOWING TOOK PLACE ON JULY 4TH 1970, DURING THE 23 DAY BATTLE FOR FSB RIPCORD

By Guy Rudawski, Company Medic for Alpha Company, 2-501st, 101st Airborne Division, South Vietnam, 1970



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL, PANEL 9W, LINE 119

WILLIAM CLAYTON RAY

De Mossville, Kentucky 03/02/1949 – 07/04/1970 Age 21

58th SCOUT DOG PLATOON

Killed in Action on July 4th, 1970, Thua Thien Province,
Republic of South Vietnam, while assigned
to Charlie Company, 2-501st, 101st Airborne Division

Alpha Company, 2-501st, was taking casualties as we battled the NVA southwest of Hill 902 when we received a radio transmission that our brothers from Charlie Company, 2-501st, just suffered 5 Killed and 5 wounded. The Charlie point team, following a trail at the far end of the ridge running southeast of Hill 902, walked into a command detonated mechanical ambush. *It was another demoralizing blow and it was only day 4 of the 23 day Battle for Firebase Ripcord, the last major battle and one of the bloodiest of the Vietnam War.*

According to Charlie Company soldier Robert Thomas, William Ray's Scout Dog "Fritz" alerted to the scent of an enemy soldier hiding in the jungle on the right side of the trail. However, before escaping, the enemy soldier was able to detonate a daisy-chain of mortar rounds killing five Americans: PFC Carl Mickens, Sgt William Ray, PFC Jimmy Robinson, 1st Lt William Sullivan and PFC Gary Thaden. Fritz survived the blast with shrapnel wounds and was left permanently deaf.

Approximately 4000 military dogs served in Vietnam. 350 dogs and 263 handlers were killed in action. About 10% of the dogs died from diseases, snake bites and the harsh conditions of SE Asia. Each canine was regarded as military equipment and had a US military number tattooed inside its left ear. The dogs were so effective the NVA and VC offered a bounty on dog ears with that tattoo. The scout dog team frequently walked up front, making them the first target for ambushes or hidden explosives. It is estimated that K-9 teams were responsible for saving more than 10,000 lives in Vietnam. The high occurrence of testicular cancer in scout dogs fueled the debate over the effects of Agent Orange. Despite their devotion to duty, less than 200 dogs made it back to the US while the remaining dogs were abandoned or euthanized.

The following remembrances are found on William Ray's Vietnam Veterans Wall of Faces page:

I never met you uncle but I've spoken with enough people who say I would have loved you and know you saved a lot of lives. I also think you would be proud to know I was named in your memory and I will always keep your memory alive.

*I remember you my friend and I always will. As July 4th approaches you weigh heavy on my mind.
May God keep you . . .*

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE: FOUR LEGGED HEROES

War Dogs, a History of Loyalty and Heroism by Michael G Lemish © 1996 Brassey's Inc.

Forever Forward: K9 Operations in Vietnam by Mike Lemish © 2010 Schiffer

www.virtualvietnamveteranswalloffaces.org