

MEMORIAL DAY 2015

REMEMBERING A SOLDIER WHO GAVE HIS LIFE IN VIETNAM

THIS STORY TOOK PLACE ON JULY 15 -16TH, 1970, THUA THIEN PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM
OPERATION TEXAS STAR AND THE 23 DAY BATTLE FOR FIREBASE RIPCORD

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



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL PANEL W8 LINE 23

RICHARD R TIMMONS

12/01/1949 – 07/16/1970

Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin Age: 20

Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry

101st Airborne Division, USARV

Non-Hostile Ground Casualty July 16, 1970

When a soldier dies in battle there is little time for grief.

Alpha Company's assaults against the dug-in NVA on Hill 1000 were unsuccessful, resulting in many casualties. Hill 1000 was vital to the security of Firebase Ripcord but it was strongly defended by a formidable enemy. With US Public support for the war now less than 30%, the top brass were concerned that Hill 1000 would become another *Hamburger Hill* (May 1969). On July 15, Alpha was forced to pull back and establish an NDP (night defensive position) about 1000 meters northwest near Triple Hill. 50-60 mph winds started blowing that day and continued into the night. Air support was grounded so we could not evacuate our wounded. There was no relief from the howling wind, and the trees, weakened by artillery and rocket damage, were creaking and cracking all around us. The wind was gusting at 80 mph.

As senior medic for Alpha Company I was positioned in the CP (Command Post) with Captain Donald Goates. Just before dawn, on July 16th, there was a sharp crack and a large tree came crashing down across Timmons' chest. Our CP was only ten feet away. We rushed to help him, but it was too late. Crushed by the tree, Timmy's face was purple and his eyes were lifeless. A group of us lifted the heavy tree and dragged him out. He could not be revived and mercifully he died immediately. Timmy's death was a devastating loss, he was a friend to all and a soldier-brother. The merciless wind prevented us from evacuating his body until the 17th.

Epilogue: Richard R Timmons "Timmy" served his country in Vietnam for 131 days. He survived some of the harshest conditions and most brutal combat of the Vietnam War. He was the last of 21 soldiers from Alpha Company A/2-501, who gave their lives during the 4 ½ months of *Operation Texas Star* and the *Battle for Firebase Ripcord*. Rest in peace Timmy.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE VIETNAM EXPERIENCE

Operation Texas Star was a planned covert mission, concealed from the US Public, to thwart the offensive capability of the NVA and buy more time for Vietnamization. The fighting was brutal and frequently close range. This Operation culminated in a deadly 23 day battle for Fire Support Base Ripcord, from July 1-July 23rd 1970. Ripcord was the last major battle and one of the bloodiest of the Vietnam War. During the 4 ½ months of Operation Texas Star, 409 Americans died, 2067 were wounded and 5 were missing in action. 3 Medals of Honor and 5 Distinguished Service Crosses were awarded.

Recommended Reading: "Ripcord: Screaming Eagles under Siege, Vietnam 1970" by Keith W Nolan