



U. S. ARMY RESERVE  
60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
1908-1968



The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

JUN 23 1968

AM

128  
June 21, 1968

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed please find a clipping that appeared in the morning addition of the Austin American on June 18, 1968.

Our son and brother was slaughtered in Vietnam on June 13, 1968. We received the message of his death at 6:00 A.M., June 15, 1968. The tears that this family has shed since that early morning hour can in no way be measured. The grief and sorrow can never be amended. We ask that you take a good long look at this fine, healthy young man's picture and then read the article that goes with it. Read it well and we hope that a few tears come to your eyes to.

Sincerely,

The family of Pfc. Joe A. Snitko





U.S. Army Photo

**JOE SNITKO, ALMOST A CITIZEN**  
But he died before he could take the oath

## Pfc. Snitko

### 'Faces I Saw ... Don't Exist Anymore—Pray for Peace'

By NAT HENDERSON  
Staff Writer

"The faces I saw when I came don't exist anymore. They have been replaced by all new faces.

"I've brought back many dead and wounded, and I can't help but wonder when it's my turn."

Time ran out last Thursday for Pfc. Joe Snitko of Austin after only 21 years in this world, 19 of them in the United States. The last two and a half months of his life were in Vietnam.

He was an American soldier but not yet a citizen of the United States. Pfc. Snitko, a citizen of Poland, was fighting against a threat that caused his parents to flee from Europe and bring him to America in 1949.

Snitko was killed in action while serving with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 501st Infantry, Second Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. He had asked to be transferred to the 101st so that he could fight beside Marshall Neison of Austin.

They were close friends before entering the Army, and

Snitko thought the drudgery and danger in Vietnam might seem a little more bearable beside somebody from home.

He did not know Nelson had been killed in action on March 10 until after he started looking for him in the 101st.

Snitko, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Snitko of 500 W. 55th St., wrote a letter in May to Harry Brady, who was among a group of boys in the same neighborhood in high school in Austin. Brady will be a pre-medical student at the University of Texas next fall.

"Dear Harry. . . Well, you don't know how many times I've started to write you. But always something came up. It's so hard to write for me now. I've been trying to get ahold of Marshall ever since I came over.

"But I see now why I haven't heard from him. Harag, it really hurt to hear about Marshall. Me and him could have had a lot to talk about.

"But we are in a rough unit. They volunteer us for everything. They think we are

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# SNITKO: Pray for Peace

(From Page One)

made of steel and guts. I don't think Marshall ever saw base camp since he came over. It's been two months for me. Ever since I came to this damn place I've been fighting.

"My first day was hell, and it's been that way ever since. In the first five days I lost eight out of my squad. There is only me left now with all new replacements. . . .

"The faces I saw when I came don't exist anymore. They have been replaced by all new faces. I've brought back many dead and wounded, and I can't help but wonder when it's my turn. We lose men every day, and you just have to live with it.

"Maybe peace will come soon, but you know more about that than I do. I don't hear much news. . . .

"Tell me, was Marshall walking point? He must have been. I walk point a lot, and it's rough. You luck out a lot. Do you know where the arca was where he got killed?

"I was reading in the paper once, and I saw his name and address. I was so happy to see him alive, but now you write and tell me different.

"I'm sending you the little clipping. At least we know he got one before they got him. But me and you know he was real proud of being in the 101st.

"He never found out that I was in this same unit. I wanted to transfer to his brigade so we could be together. Do you realize how much better it would have been to fight alongside a close friend from home? It would have been a great feeling.

"How bad did his parents take it? I hope it wasn't too bad.

"Well, Harry, I better close. We are about to move on. Don't blame yourself for anything that happens to me. Anything I've done has been my fault, and I have no one to blame but myself . . . Always, Joe. P.S.: I misplaced the clipping."

Pfc. Snitko was an American who almost was a citizen of the United States. He already had filed a petition for naturalization in the country his parents and older brother chose for him when he was a baby.

His father was in the Polish Army during World War II. The family was separated and spent time in prison and concentration camps. As the war was coming to a close, the family was reunited at Hildesheim in West Germany in 1945.

Ted P. Snitko of Austin, who was eight at the time, says, "My father was a sensitive man. My father saw that communism was coming. Dad asked me where we wanted to go, and we picked the United States."

The family applied in America, but there was a long wait. Joe Snitko was born at Hildesheim, but he was a Polish citizen because of his parents. A sister also was born in West Germany before the family finally made it to the US.

They settled at Rockne in Bastrop County and later moved to Austin.

The parents and Ted Snitko have received their American citizenship. Ted served on active duty with the Texas-

National Guard during the Berlin Crisis.

Joe Snitko graduated from McCallum and attended Southwest Texas State College at San Marcos. He was planning to go to Blinn College when he entered the Army.

He completed his basic training at Fort Polk, La. He filed his petition for American citizenship. The Immigration and Naturalization Service approved the petition.

All that Snitko needed to do was to appear in Federal Court in Austin to renounce all "foreign potentates or princes." All he needed to do was to swear allegiance to the United States, promising to uphold her laws and serve her in war or peace.

He went to Vietnam before he could go to Federal Court, and he was killed on a combat patrol last Thursday while serving his chosen nation in war. Funeral arrangements are pending the return of his body to the city where he became an American except for a slip of paper formalizing his US citizenship.

He was looking forward to serving his nation in peace. His last letter to his brother said:

"I was glad to see peace talks finally start. However, the limited bombing has hurt. The NVA have infiltrated many troops since the halt. . . .

"Pray for peace, and I'll be the happiest man in the world. I hope it comes soon."

Besides his parents and older brother, Pfc. Snitko is survived by a younger brother, Rickey Snitko, and two sisters, Lillie Snitko and Mrs. Jeneva Perrone, all of Austin; and one niece, Tina Snitko, and one nephew, Richard J. Perrone Jr., also of Austin.

AGPC-E Smitko, Joe A.  
US 54 720 744

Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED]

President Johnson has asked that I reply to the recent unsigned letter regarding your son, Private First Class Joe A. Smitko. This will also acknowledge your son, Ted's, recent inquiry in your behalf addressed to the Disposition Branch, Memorial Division, Department of the Army, which has been forwarded to this office for reply.

Information received from Vietnam indicated that at about 10:30 a.m. on 13 June 1968 your son and members of his unit were on a combat mission in the vicinity of Thua Thien, Vietnam. During this operation, a hostile booby trap was detonated and Joe incurred a penetrating missile wound of the abdomen which resulted in his death before he could be removed to a hospital. Autopsies are not performed in cases of personnel who die as the result of hostile action.

Casualty reports are forwarded to the Department of the Army by electrical means and must necessarily be brief. However, you should receive a letter from your son's commanding officer containing additional details. The oversea commander has been requested to expedite this communication. The Chief of Support Services will reply further to the request for information pertaining to your son's personal effects.



AGPC-E Saitko, Joe A.

US 54 720 744

Mr. and Mrs.

I have carefully read the clipping you inclosed and I can readily understand the deep human feelings which prompted your letter. Please be assured that the President is most sympathetic and deeply regrets the sacrifices being made by servicemen and their families in the cause of peace, as do all of us in the Department of the Army.

Words alone are of little consolation when you are desperately seeking to understand the tragic loss of your beloved son and the limitations of our language in expressing meaningful condolences becomes most apparent at this time. Nevertheless, my deepest sympathy is with you in the tragic loss you have suffered.

Sincerely,

KENNETH G. WICKHAM  
Major General, USA  
The Adjutant General

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