

ALL GAVE SOME . . . SOME GAVE ALL

MAY 20, 1970, SOUTHWEST OF PHU BAI, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM

Written by Guy Rudawski, Company Medic for Alpha Company 2-501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, 1970

This story is based on events described in my letters from Vietnam and my recall of details as the first responder.

Tactical background information was provided by Brigadier General James Edwin Mitchell, US Army, Retired

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL, PANEL W10 LINE 73

TONY ROBERT WARD

East Point, Georgia 10/31/1949 – 05/20/1970 Age: 20

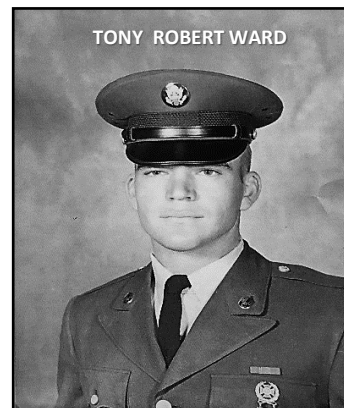
A CO, 2nd BN 501st INFANTRY 101st ABN DIV, USARV
NON-HOSTILE GROUND CASUALTY

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL, PANEL W10 LINE 69

ROY LYNN CARTER

Circleville, Ohio 08/26/1946 -- 05/20/1970 Age: 23

A CO, 2nd BN 501st INFANTRY 101st ABN DIV, USARV
NON-HOSTILE GROUND CASUALTY



On May 17th the 101st Airborne Division issued a serious threat warning of a possible NVA attack on the Phu Bai Combat Base to honor the anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's birthday. On May 18th, Alpha Company, commanded by Captain James E. Mitchell, air assaulted southwest of Phu Bai to carry out a "screening operation". Our mission was counter-reconnaissance to locate and disrupt enemy forces that might attempt to infiltrate the area.

I was assigned to 3rd platoon of Alpha Company as their field Medic. It was my first combat mission and I was apprehensive, but a year of training, including Special Forces Survival and SF Medic training, gave me confidence. At nightfall on May 19th, 3rd platoon established defensive positions on a knoll covered with high grass. There was no imminent threat reported that night so we maintained watch with 2 hour exterior guard shifts at each position.

Between 0100 and 0300 hours on May 20th an explosion rocked the hilltop. Believing we were under attack, every position opened fire as frantic screams came from the south west sector of our perimeter. **"THEY'RE OUT THERE! GOOKS! MEDIC! MEDIC!"** I started low crawling through the high grass, dragging my medical bag and M16 toward the wounded soldier. *Explosion, gunfire, screaming, adrenalin surging, my heart pounding.* Suddenly there was movement on my left and I froze . . . Staff Sargent Bob Nichol was advancing beside me scanning for the enemy. As we reached the horrific scene the first soldier was found sitting up, pointing and yelling: **"THEY'RE OUT THERE! HELP ME! MY LEG!"** His left leg was broken. Three feet away Sargent Tony Ward lie dead and in the middle was PFC Roy Carter, fighting to stay alive, unconscious but breathing with shallow gasps. *The hissing sound of sucking chest wounds, the stench of explosives and the metallic scent of Carter's blood are unwelcome flashbacks.*

The soldier with the broken leg was terrified and his constant screaming was giving away our position, so I stoned him out on morphine. Kneeling over Carter I was desperate, rapidly trying to seal the puncture holes in his chest. *So many holes oozing blood, more than I could contain.* Tony Ward's body was within reach next to Carter, lying face up and completely silent, his lifeless eyes watching me. *It was less than two days ago that I first met Roy Carter and Tony Ward. We shared stories about home and I got the impression they were friends.* Artillery support provided illumination and the gunfire stopped. There was no enemy! Incredibly, there was no enemy anywhere! The rhythmic "wop-wop" sound of the fast approaching medivac offered me hope. Carter was fatally wounded but still breathing as we carried the three soldiers to the chopper. Covered in Roy Carter's blood, I stood in disbelief watching the medivac lift off. *After the adrenalin fades, haunting images of violence and death eat at your soul.*

Epilogue: Roy Carter and Tony Ward sacrificed their lives after less than 3 weeks of service in Vietnam. Their deaths are listed as "Non-Hostile Ground Casualty" from an apparent accidental grenade explosion. No one knows how or why this happened. From February thru July of 1970, Alpha Company, 2-501st lost 25 gallant men and had countless wounded. To cope with the many experiences of brutal combat and death in Vietnam I became emotionally detached and learned to suppress these traumatic events, yet, they would forever haunt my subconscious.

"Not one of us who survived emerged the same as we arrived.

The images of killing, dying and suffering indelibly marked us all."

Joseph Galloway, Vietnam War correspondent, from the front lines of the Battle of Ia Drang, November 1965