

## Charles Michael "Mike" McKinney

Private First Class

FOX CO, 2ND BN, 4TH MARINES, 3RD MARDIV

United States Marine Corps

28 October 1947 - 08 April 1967

Bristol, Tennessee

Panel 17E Line 126 on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall



2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment insignia



Left to Right: Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal



4<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment Insignia



3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division Insignia

Mike, known as Mac to his fellow Marines, was one of my best friends growing up. The eight letters he wrote me from Vietnam spoke of how hard it was to kill, how he had to carry back a dead Marine who had been killed in the same foxhole with him, how difficult daily life was, and how much he was going to enjoy himself when he came home.

Mike was born in Bristol, Tennessee to Hugh Donald McKinney (1904-1978) and Edna E. McKinney (1908-1976). He attended Holston View Elementary School and Bluff City High School. In his younger years, he was a Boy Scout, active in YMCA activities, and played Little League baseball. Mike was high energy and sought excitement. He left school in his senior year to enlist in the United States Marine Corps on 27 March, 1966. He took basic training at Parris Island, South Carolina and completed advanced individual training as a rifleman at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. He was ordered to the Republic of Vietnam, and after a leave home, he was at Camp Pendleton, California for a short time before shipping out to Vietnam, arriving there in September, 1966.

Depending on his arrival date in country he may have been stationed near Dong Ha, near the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone). Later in September, the 2/4 moved to the Hue/Phu Bai area in Thua Thien Province. He saw combat almost immediately and participated regularly in operations against the enemy.

On 5 November, 1966, the 2/4 began moving to the island of Okinawa to rebuild personnel strength and to conduct additional training. The battalion departed Okinawa on 1 January, 1967 and arrived at Da Nang on 6 January. From the 2/4 monthly command chronologies, it is likely Mike spent the months from January until his death in April in the Dai Loc district southwest of Da Nang. (Note 1) The letter from his company commander to Mike's parents stated that he was killed instantly from shrapnel to the head while on a squad patrol about 12 miles southwest of Da Nang. It is also likely that at the time of his last patrol, he was based on Hill 41, an outpost in the same area. According to a narrative about another of the Marines in his squad, the squad was on "patrol near Cay Sung (1) (There were several areas named Cay Sung and each had a number), 6 K from the Tuy Loan Bridge when it was ambushed on three sides by an unknown number of NVA. By the time the Sparrow Hawk reaction force scrambled to assist, 4 survivors had made it back to the CP, all of them WIA. The other eight were all KIA. (LCpl Othel Thomas later died of his wounds on 17 April). PFC James Popp's heroism broke the ambush and allowed the three to survive. He was awarded the Navy Cross Posthumously and it is included in his profile." (Note 2)

PFC Popp's Navy Cross Commendation follows and gives additional details of the ambush.

*The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Private First Class James Arthur Popp (MCSN: 2246112), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as a Grenadier with the Second Platoon, Company F, Second Battalion, Fourth Marines, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in the Republic of Vietnam on 8 April 1967. Private First Class Popp's squad was conducting a squad-size patrol against the Viet Cong forces in Quang Nam Province. While moving along a trail in search of the enemy, the squad was suddenly taken under a murderous volume of small-arms, hand grenade and 40 millimeter grenade fire. The heavy volume of fire rained in from three sides, killing or wounding several of his comrades. Seeing his comrades*

fail, and realizing that the remaining squad members needed covering fire in order to remove the casualties and select a defensive position, Private First Class Popp valiantly remained on the open trail and provided the necessary fire. Although wounded in the initial moments of the engagement, he completely disregarded his wounds and placed accurate and deadly 40 millimeter grenade fire on the enemy. His devastating fire immediately resulted in three enemy killed, sent many of them scurrying for cover and allowed several of the squad members to gain covered positions. The enemy was intent on annihilating the Marine squad and realized that Private First Class Popp was a deadly threat to the success of the entire enemy mission. The bulk of fire was immediately brought to bear on Private First Class Popp and he was struck a second time. Fearing for the safety of his comrades and critically wounded, he exhibited uncommon courage as he knelt in the withering fire and rained grenade after grenade on the enemy. He personally accounted for at least six Viet Cong killed and inflicted severe injuries on many others. He continued to fight, inspiring the men around him with his dynamic and courageous fighting spirit until he fell mortally wounded when struck for the third time. Private First Class Popp's actions in the face of insurmountable odds were responsible in great measure for saving four other Marines, though wounded, from death at the hands of the enemy and thereby upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country. (Note 3)

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These are the names of the 8 men from Fox Company, 2/4 Marines, were killed in action on 08 April 1967:

- LCpl Lawrence R. Hagedorn, Carroll, IA
  - LCpl Howard L. Leroy, Vancouver, WA
  - LCpl Francisco A. Montano, Tucson, AZ
  - Pfc Charles M. McKinney, Bristol, TN
  - Pfc Jerry L. McKinney, Leaksville, NC
  - Pfc James A. Popp, Hemlock, MI (Navy Cross)
  - Pfc Jeffrey A. Schweikl, Enumclaw, WA
  - Pvt Don C. Benfield, Macon, GA
- (Note 4)

Four Marines survived the ambush and made their way back to company headquarters on Hill 41. All were wounded, and one of them, LCpl Othel Thomas died of his wounds on 17 April. The names of the other three could not be found.

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Mike's body arrived home the next week, along with a USMC escort and a notation that the remains were not viewable. He was originally buried in McKinney Cemetery, but his parents had his body moved to Glenwood Cemetery in Bristol, Tennessee the next year. His parents are buried nearby.

## NOTES

- (1) Information about Mike's time in Vietnam from September, 1966 until his death was obtained from his letters and from 2D BN 4<sup>TH</sup> Marine Chronologies covering September, 1966 through April, 1967. The April chronology contains a narrative of the engagement in which he was killed.

*At 1046H on 8 April, a squad from Company G at 883688 was ambushed. At 1209H Bald Eagle from Company E was activated. At 1320H Cmd Grp "A" dispatched to Co G CP on Hill 41. At 1346H Bald Eagle was at ambush site. At 1540H all units were back in their CPs. This action resulted in 8 USMC KIA and 4 WIA. Six (6) M-16E1 rifles and one ANPRC-25 radio set were lost to the enemy. Enemy casualties were 1VC KIA (conf) and 4 VC KIA (prob).*

Source: <http://www.recordsowar.com/vietnam/usmc/2ndBn4thMarines.htm>

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Sep-66 dated 9/1/1966 Document No. 1201045003

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Oct-66 dated 10/1/1966 Document No. 1201045004

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Oct-66 dated 10/1/1966 Document No. 1201045005

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering NOV - DEC 1966 dated 11/1/1966 Document No. 1201045006

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Jan-67 dated 1/1/1967 Document No. 1201045007

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Feb-67 dated 2/1/1967 Document No. 1201045008

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY](#) Covering Mar-67 dated 3/1/1967 Document No. 1201045009

[2D BN 4TH MARINES - COMMAND CHRONOLOGY & SITREPS](#) Covering Apr-67 dated 4/1/1967 Document No. 1201045010

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- (2) Source: TOGETHERWESERVED.COM,  
<http://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=168421>

- (3) Source: Military Times Hall of Valor <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=4248>

- (4) Source: <http://www.virtuwall.org/dm/MckinneyCM01a.htm>

Materials compiled by Jerry Shuttle, July, 2014

Killed Last Friday In Vietnam

## Services For City War Victim Set For Sunday

Funeral services for Marine Pfc. Charles Michael (Mike) McKinney, of 126 Sunnybrook Drive, who was killed last Friday in action in South Vietnam, will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at the Holston Baptist Church.

The body will arrive here by train at 9:48 a.m. today and will be taken to the Paul Cook Funeral Home. The body will remain at the funeral home until one hour before services.

Young McKinney enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps March 27, 1966, and had been in South Vietnam since last September.

He attended Bluff City High School and was a member of the Holston Baptist Church.

Burial will be in the McKinney Cemetery. Military services at the graveside will be conducted by the 1 and 1 staff and members of the 31st Rifle Company, USMC Reserve of Johnson City.

Palbearers will be members of the USMC Reserve Unit. Honorary palbearers who will also serve as flowerbearers include Jerry Shuttle, Kyle Hill, Steve Rutherford, Eddie Osborne, Charles Perry, Bobby Joe Newton.



PFC C.M. McKinney

Keith Faris, Bill Hunt, Maurice Lynch, Charles Webb, John Robinette, Allen Robinette, Jim Broyles, Willie Warren, Fred Vance, Sam Vance, Mackley Dobbins, Ronnie Freeman, Randy Cox, Jerry Cox, Larry Usman, Jerry Baker and Harold Wright.