

RONALD ROBERT NORTHROP

Kansas City, MO

October 16, 1947 - March 11, 1971

US ARMY SP/5

Survived by his mother, Helen Pickering Northrop and father, Robert Northrop and brother, Mark Northrop

Ron enlisted in the United States Army and entered the service via Regular Military. Served during the Vietnam War. He began his tour on January 12, 1971. Northrop had the rank of Specialist Five. Service number assignment was 498520958. Attached to Army Security Agency Group V, 509th Rr Group.

During his service in the Vietnam War, Army Specialist Five Northrop experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life on March 11, 1971. Recorded circumstances attributed his death to: Non-Hostile Died of Illness or Injury, Intentional Homicide, Ground Casualty. Incident location: South Vietnam, Gia Dinh province.



Ronald is honored on the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington DC. Name inscribed at Panel 04w, Line 39.

COMMENDATIONS

- ★ National Defense Service Medal
- ★ Vietnam Campaign Medal
- ★ Vietnam Service Medal
- ★ Army Presidential Unit Citation
- ★ Vietnam Gallantry Cross
- ★ Army Good Conduct Medal

In Memoriam

POSTED ON 6.2.2021

POSTED BY: Samuel E. Hamilton

Fifty plus years have passed since his death and I have often thought about Ron over those intervening years but the dictums of life sabotaged speaking out. On several occasions I have visited the Vietnam Memorial thinking that I would leave an anonymous letter offering an explanation of Ron's death hoping it would somehow make its way to Ron's family. Today, Ron would have been 74 had he lived, perhaps a father, a grandfather.

Ron was assigned to the Technical Research Unit (TRU) at MACV HQ in early January 1971 in a detail from the 509th RRU Group, as a Vietnamese linguist/interpreter/translator where I was serving as acting OIC. Ron died a tragic death three months later in the alleyways in Saigon. Because of the sensitive nature of their work the majority of the TRU members were designated civilian status and lived on the local economy or with a contract agency and were somewhat immune from typical military regimen. Most team members had one or two tours under their belt working independently without much oversight. Therefore the TRU was a close knit unit with individual members looking out for each other.

On the morning of March 12 Ron was uncharacteristically late for duty when I asked one of his fellow linguists to go to his quarters to check on his well being. Sadly, shortly thereafter I received a call from the Army CID asking me to come to Tan Son Nhut Air Base mortuary to identify a casualty they believed to be that of Ron. According to their report, Ron and his Vietnamese girlfriend were having lunch the previous afternoon discussing the purchase of a Honda scooter for her and openly displaying the funds needed for the purchase. As Ron and his girlfriend left the restaurant, they were attacked by a gang of Saigon 'Cowboys' or street thugs who had overheard and witnessed their plans. I have always hoped this tragedy was not a setup and their relationship was truly one of mutual attraction by two young people from different cultures.

While any cause of death in a combat zone is devastating and tragic for the deceased's family, I felt at the time as I still do today that his parents and family had the right to know what had happened to their son and sibling as alien as it may have been to the way Ron was reared. Despite my objections, the Army for whatever reason chose a more veiled rationale for Ron's death. I apologize for not being more forthcoming and I offer my belated condolences for the resulting grief and sadness.

Place of Interment: Baxter Springs Cemetery - Baxter Springs, Kansas