

Harold "Mousie" Evans

Richmond, Indiana

Army — First and Twenty-Fifth Infantry Divisions, Private



After graduation from high school in 1968, it was at the height of the Vietnam War. I enlisted because I did not want to wait and be drafted or be assigned to the marines.

After my basic training, I flew to Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, serving as a squad leader on a "Duster," which is an M42 A1 Tank. The tank has twin 40mm cannons with 60-caliber and 50-caliber guns mounted on the turret. The Duster was used as an air defense weapon and was able to move 360-degrees up and down. It also served as an excellent ground weapon.

The other weapons in our squad were quad 50s mounted on a five-ton truck which had heavy steel armor. All four 50s on automatic fire moved the heavy five-ton truck. The weapon could also lay down intense fire. When our dusters and quad 50s were around, we could usually destroy the

enemy very quickly. The VC were always trying to take-out our Dusters and Quad 50s because of their devastating fire power. They called them "Fire Dragons."

I saw combat three hundred days of the three-hundred-sixty-five I was there. Of the three-hundred-thirty-one different men I was responsible for during that year, three-hundred-thirty came home.

The bases in Vietnam had artillery installations and airfields. Fire support bases provided support for the main base camps and were designed to keep enemy troops away. However, there were times when the VC penetrated our fire support bases and main base camps.

At Base Randy, I was wounded the first time from heavy ground fire. When the Viet Cong (VC) attacked, we hit them with tank fire including my two-tank team. For forty-five minutes, we pumped-out numerous rounds of ammunition creating an intense volume of fire against the VC. At the end of the fight, we counted two-hundred-seventeen VC dead.

*Harold
Mousie
Evans*

During the firefight, my helmet was knocked off when I was hit. I suffered shrapnel wounds in my body, as well as a head wound. They evacuated me and took me to a field hospital at Base Randy. I returned to action the next day.

My unit also provided convoy support while we moved throughout Vietnam. At a firefight in Tianjin Province, I was shot in the head by an AK-47 round and once again was sent to a field hospital, stitched-up, and sent back to join my men. If I had not been wearing my steel pot helmet, I would not be here today. Because of our fire power, we also served as support for many other units that moved supplies and troops.

Due to my injuries, I received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for Valor. Mortar attacks were constant for my unit. I walked point, ahead of our tanks, for eight months. I learned to be observant and vigilant for any movement or something that just didn't seem right.

I grew up during a time of racial prejudice but for the most part did not experience much of it in the military. One time a new private arrived and asked who was in charge. When the men told him that Sergeant Evans was the man, the soldier, who was from Louisiana, replied, "No n..... is going to tell me what to do. Black people don't tell white people what to do."

In one battle the Louisiana soldier found himself pinned down under enemy fire. Sergeant Evans told him, "Don't move; make yourself part of the ground." The other men were able to shield the guy with cannon fire from the tanks and get him to safety. Back at the base, the soldier broke down and cried.

My team was often racially diverse. There were nine blacks, two Hispanics, and one white man on my twelve-member team. Another time there were two blacks, seven whites, and three Hispanics in my unit. Color didn't matter much in combat.

Returning home to Fort Lewis, Washington, I encountered antiwar demonstrators throwing eggs at the troops and holding "baby killer" signs. While in Vietnam, I knew what the country's attitude was regarding the war. I also remember encountering harsh words from a lieutenant in Germany. He admonished me for not being military "pressed and polished." I thought to myself, that "butter bar" lieutenant (those who earned their rank at a military officer candidate school) had no clue what I had just experienced while I was in Vietnam.

After my tour in Vietnam was completed, I was sent to Germany and became Chief Fire Control Operator of the Hawk Missile System, the best air defense artillery at the time. The weapon could lock-in on any enemy target within three minutes and had a range of three-hundred to four-hundred miles. I remained

in Germany one year before returning to the States where I served at several different bases. I was discharged in 1972 after three years of service.

I came back to Richmond a changed man. I was rebellious and mean and got into fights with anyone who made me angry; although, I was mostly treated well by my family and friends. Loud noises made me jumpy, and some of the men I worked with pulled pranks such as popping milk cartons behind my back to see how I would react. I worked for several different companies after the war and for the last twenty-two years, I have been working at Berry Plastics. I am very proud of my military service but I would not go back for a million dollars.

A few years ago, I was at Richmond's local Veterans Day Parade when I was approached by Marshall Smith of the local Veterans Affairs Office. I suffered from hearing loss and was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as being exposed to Agent Orange. At this time, I don't think I have any noticeable problems from my exposure. From that initial contact with Marshall Smith, arrangements were made for me to begin receiving treatment from the Veterans Administration Hospital in Dayton, Ohio. For this I am very thankful.

I married my wife, Violet, and we have five children. I am especially proud of my grandson, Ryan Crigler, who earned his GED and enlisted in the air force when he was nineteen. He has already served two tours in Afghanistan as a loadmaster and is now a sergeant. Ryan is in charge of the airfield in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Following is Harold's citation for the award of the Bronze Star Medal with Valor:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM ARTILLERY
APO San Francisco 96266

General Orders

18 June 1970

Award of the Bronze Star Medal

EVANS, HAROLD L. SPECIALIST FOUR United States Army

BATTERY B 5th BATTALION 2nd Artillery APO 96353

AWARD: Bronze Star with "V" device

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

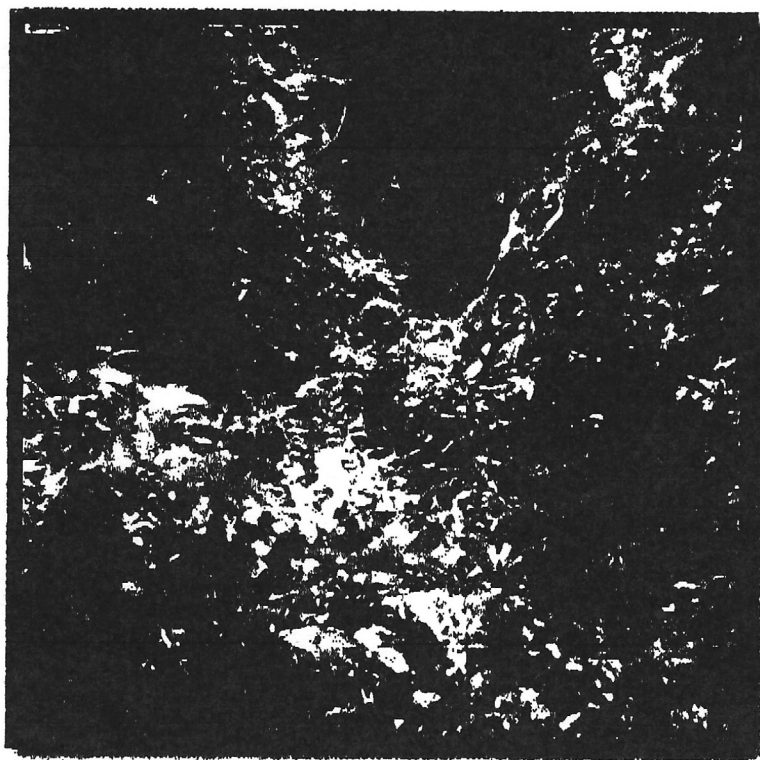
Reason: Specialist Harold L. Evans distinguished himself by heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force on 8 May 1970 while serving as a squad leader with Battery B, 5th Battalion 2nd Artillery in the Republic of Vietnam. When Fire Support Base Randy came under heavy

mortar attack, Specialist Evans with complete disregard of his own personal safety mounted his Duster, B131. At this time he suffered a fragmentation wound in the head. Recovering from the initial shock of the wound Specialist Evans returned to his track in time to direct it to an alternative firing position, thus completely exposing himself to enemy fire. Once the track was in position, Specialist Evans again took up a completely exposed position in order to load the 40mm gun and through his actions the track was able to maintain an intense volume of fire upon the enemy mortar positions. Specialist Evans' bravery and immediate response under fire were key factors in quickly silencing the enemy mortar attack. As a result he prevented the enemy from inflicting heavy casualties on exposed friendly forces. Specialist Evans' heroic actions and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962.

FOR THE COMMANDER;

R.G. Parrish
LTC, FA
Adjutant



Soldier humping in the Central Highlands
Photo courtesy National Archives