

**MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY  
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

*Proudly Honors*



**RONALD J. HOUSE**  
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
CORPORAL (E-4)  
SEPTEMBER 1965 – 1968



*as*

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT  
FEBRUARY 2025**

*Honoring his service and Sacrifice*

*Sponsored by: Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR*



In September of 1965, after two years of college at Southeast Missouri State, Ron House enlisted in the United States Marine Corps (USMC).

Ron's Basic Training was at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California, and Camp Pendleton, California. His Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was 0331, Machine Gunner. He served in the USMC 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. After basic training, he was transported on a troop ship to Okinawa, Japan, along with 5,000 other Marines; most of whom got seasick. He said it was quite a mess.

After additional training in Okinawa, his unit was sent to Vietnam as a Floating Battalion. He was stationed aboard the USS Princeton (LPH-5), an Amphibious Assault Ship (Helicopter) in Vietnamese Waters. They would be transported by helicopter into Vietnam where they would remain for maybe a week or two at a time on different operations and then would be picked up by helicopter and returned to the ship. This duty lasted about two months.

For the remainder of his time in Vietnam, Ron was "In country," meaning he was in Vietnam where he participated in over 16 different operations, most of which were in the Quang Tin Province of the Republic of Vietnam. Ron said, "You learn very quickly what to do and what not to do—or you don't survive." He called it developing "combat sense." For example, when you camp, there is no tent. You don't use your poncho to

make a tent because the enemy could see it sticking up and it would become a target for them. You sleep on the ground with a rock for a pillow. When you are exchanging fire, you don't just pop up and shoot three times from the same place or it becomes like you are in a shooting gallery. Several men were killed that way. When you approach a village, look for the children. If they are outside playing, it is probably safe. If there are no children—better be on guard. Speaking of the villages, Ron said he honestly did not think the villagers understood anything about the war or the politics of the war. They were just victims.

Ron told about one incident when they were at Chu Lai Combat Base Area which is near the coast of Vietnam. There were some bunkers there and there were cots they could sleep on. One soldier was sitting on a cot, writing a letter when he heard a strange noise. He turned to look and there at the end of the cot was a King Cobra with its head raised up almost two feet in the air. He very slowly put aside his writing paper and reached for his rifle which was leaning against the other end of the cot. Ron said the guy was praying he had a round in the chamber though it was against regulations. The guy reached out and picked up the rifle and slowly brought the barrel around until it was pointing at the snake. Left-handed, he fired the rifle, cutting the snake in two. They estimated the snake must have been 10 to 12 feet long. Ron said it was the only snake he saw the whole time he was there.

Before he was a squad leader, Ron was a machine gunner. He carried an M-60 machine gun which he said is a good weapon. He added, that when you carry a machine gun, you are a prime target. There was more than one time when he barely missed being shot and heard the “crack” sound a bullet makes when it is a near miss. Just three or four inches was the difference between a miss or being killed. After he became squad leader, he carried an M-16 rifle or a sidearm. He was carrying an M-16 when he was shot.



He was on patrol as a squad leader somewhere in the vicinity of Quang Tin Province, Republic of Vietnam. They were dug in on a small island without enough men to defend the whole island. For cover, there was a foundation of an old building, and next to the building was a big tree that had fallen. The Viet Cong (VC) attacked just after midnight. They were screaming, “You die tonight, Marine!”

The squad was surrounded. Ron sent two guys, machine gunners, down next to the fallen tree where there was a hollowed-out place where they could have some cover. During the fight, both of them were wounded, he thinks probably by a hand grenade. They were evacuated the next day. The man who shot Ron was up on the old foundation shooting down at him. The bullet went past the left side of his face, just

barely missing hitting him in the head, but instead hitting and entering his flak jacket where the path of the bullet ran down his back, wounding him. He fired one round toward the enemy but was reluctant to fire again because that would have given away his position. He made his way to the two wounded Marines and got the machine gun. Ron said that when you fire an M-60 machine gun, it lights up the whole area and that certainly would have drawn fire down on them. But he strapped three or four hundred rounds together and had made up his mind, that if they charged, he would cut them in half. They didn't.

Ron said that was the longest night of his life. No one could be medevacked until daylight. There was no way a helicopter could land. By the time the helicopter got there after daylight, the VC was gone. Only the ones who were more seriously wounded were taken out. He did not really know how serious his wound was because it was on his back, and he could not see it.

Ron's Purple Heart Medal was presented to him in the field on May 5, 1967; there was no ceremony. During this interview, Ron was quite modest about receiving the Purple Heart. The details of his 'combat history' show "WIANE, Grazing Gunshot Wound Back." The acronym means wounded in action-no evacuation. Once again, but for a matter of inches, Ron survived.

As we ended the interview, Ron said, "There is one thing I would like to say in closing. As long as I am able, I will stand for the National Anthem and for the Marine Corps Hymn. It's a matter of loyalty. Once a Marine, always a Marine—True statement." Ron left Vietnam in December of 1967 when he was transferred to Camp Pendleton to train Marines as a marksmanship instructor. He was honorably discharged in June of 1968 and returned to school at Southeast Missouri State. He graduated in May of 1969 and went to work at St. Joe Minerals.

Married to Bev Portell in July of 1973, they have two children, Nina and Matthew, and five grandchildren. After Ron retired in September of 2001, he and Bev have enjoyed traveling to many places, including China, Russia, Australia, Hawaii, Alaska, and Ireland.

The Daughters of the Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR, are proud to nominate Corporal Ronald J. House as Purple Heart Patriot of the Month and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.