

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



HARRY BAHR
UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIALIST 5 (SPEC-5)
AUGUST 11, 1968 – JUNE 21, 1970



as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
MARCH 2025

Honoring his service and Sacrifice

Sponsored by: Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR



After six years of graduate school at Kansas University, Harry J. Bahr was teaching deaf students in a Kansas City inner city school before being drafted into the U.S. Army. On November 8, 1968, he began basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, then moved to Fort Ord, California, for Infantry Training. He was hoping to work in the Medical Corps because he had a lot of Audiology in college. Ironically, his unit at Fort Ord encountered a field of Poison Oak, sending 80% of the company to the hospital. While there, Harry checked out the ENT (Ears, Nose, and Throat) Clinic. He talked to the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) in charge, and he remarked that he would love to have him there. He referred him to the Hospital Commanding Officer (CO), who said he would have orders cut and assign Harry to the ENT Clinic instead of Vietnam with his experience in Audiology. The paperwork was started, but he did not hear anything from him for a couple of weeks. Harry called the office to check, and they said he was in the hospital. Then he read in their post newspaper a few days

later that he had passed away unexpectedly. The paperwork was started but delayed.

After graduating from Advanced Individual Training (AIT), his unit waited for delayed orders. When they arrived, Harry noted, "Nam took precedence." So, for the next four months, Harry was in combat. "Our company was working in the boonies, not much civilization, so we didn't have much contact with the enemy; we mostly saw one or two soldiers at a time. We engaged with a large enemy force once for two days, losing four soldiers in four months. My 23-year-old platoon sergeant, who had been there nine months, was very sharp, and I admired him despite being older. I told him that I would pattern myself after him. Tragically, I had the job of carrying his body back behind the lines after he was killed, and that was tough."

"I considered myself lucky because I did not see all the suffering that many soldiers saw. Most of the time, it was going through the jungles with the heat and rain. I was the oldest man in the company at 25 years old except for one of the officers. Most were 18-20 years old.

18 years old had the most casualty rates in Vietnam. One 18-year-old was only there three weeks when he was killed. They were so young and so impressionable. They came in feeling cocky but became scared very quickly. I really felt sorry for them.”

Harry enjoyed the few times that we could see children in the free-fire zone. He was able to interact and give them gum and tootsie rolls. Also, when the young soldiers were dragging and said that they could not go on, he would throw some tootsie rolls at them. It would spark them up. His wife, Corky, sent him tootsie rolls about every three weeks. He used them wisely.

When this interviewer asked Harry about his Purple Heart, he related the following story. “We were in a jungle full of bamboo. The night before was one of my scariest nights. It was dark and we were separated from our platoon. We spent the night in a Michelin Rubber Plantation that smelled of death and we had no place to take cover if you came under fire. The next morning, we marched into the jungle full of bamboo and met up with our platoon. We captured an enemy soldier and were cutting down bamboo, clearing an area for the chopper to land to pick him up. We were to stay in place waiting for the chopper. I ordered our men not to shoot because we thought we had two men in the ‘listening post’. We had killed two of our own men about a month earlier in a situation.

While waiting, as the chopper landed, rifle fire erupted 30 feet in front of me. The enemy was shooting at the chopper. We could not see anything through the bamboo. My machine gun had a broken spring, and I was getting a new machine gun from the supply chopper. Unfortunately, I knew I could fire one round then it would jam. The enemy fired and hit me. I fired one round. I told the guys, I missed him, but he didn’t miss me. My assistant threw a grenade, and it hit the bamboo and bounced back, and shrapnel hit across my back and into my other shoulder. I screamed, ‘I’m hit,’ and crawled backward on my belly faster than I ever went forward.”

Harry was transferred to a field hospital. They quickly looked at him and sent him to a larger hospital. He was in this hospital when they came in and gave him the Purple Heart. The following day, they transferred him to Japan. When he was ready to be moved, he looked in the drawer, and the Purple Heart was gone. Someone had stolen it. Yes, it was replaced later. After spending about three weeks in a hospital in Japan, Harry was transferred back to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, via Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He noted that the military hospital plane provided excellent service during the flight. He contacted his wife. Greeting him at Scott Air Force Base were his wife, his mother, sister and brother, his wife’s parents, and his new son, Steve, whom he saw for the first time as he was born eight days after Harry left for Vietnam.

He stayed at Scott Air Force Base overnight, then proceeded to Fort Leonard Wood. After a 30-day leave, he returned to Fort Leonard Wood for the next 10 months. He has fond memories there of working in the ENT Clinic with a surgeon drafted from the Mayo Clinic. Harry said this was a valuable learning experience as he would accompany him in surgery. He added that the Army was not that bad.

Harry was officially discharged on August 21, 1970. The medals he received were the Purple Heart, 2 Bronze Stars with “V” device, Army Commendation, National Defense, Vietnam Service, Republic of Vietnam Campaign, and Combat Infantry Medal. Harry received one of the Bronze Star citations at Fort Leonard Wood. He commented reluctantly during the interview that the write-up resembled a movie story, like one featuring John Wayne.

He and his wife, Corky have three girls and a boy. Harry authored a book about his military events at a request from his son. “Why didn’t you ever tell me about Vietnam?” “You never asked,” said Harry. His siblings also remarked, “You did not bring it up, we thought you did not want to hear it.” Harry then made a timeline from letters that his wife had saved and that was extremely helpful. He finished the book about five years ago and added pictures from

Vietnam.

After the military, he worked for the Special School District for four years teaching deaf children and then into administration. Harry was then Director of Special Education for South County for over 30 years. As a member of Holy Redeemer Church in Webster Groves and a true humanitarian, he oversaw a non-profit service, Shepherd's Center. It provides services to senior citizens so they can live independently. He also chaired a committee that arranged medical missions to Haiti. They built a dental clinic, and water filtration project and sent yearly shipments of food, clothing, and medical supplies for 15 years. He is still involved but not in charge. As you can see, Harry continued after his military service to help provide peace and security to the underprivileged.

The Daughters of the Louisiana Purchase Chapter, NSDAR, are proud to nominate Specialist 5 Harry J. Bahr as a Purple Heart Patriot and extend their gratitude for his patriotic service and commitment to our great nation.



SP 5 HARRY BAHR

USA VETERAN

RANK
Specialist 5

SERVICE
1968 - 1970

MOS
91U-Ear Nose And Throat Specialist

PRIMARY UNIT
1969-1969, C Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry (Airmobile)

UNITED STATES ARMY

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The poster features a dark green background with gold and white text. It includes a portrait of Specialist 5 Harry Bahr in military uniform, a collection of his service ribbons, and several military insignia: a Purple Heart, a Rifleman's emblem, a Paratrooper's emblem, and a Medical emblem. The text provides details on his rank, service dates, military occupational specialty, and primary unit. The poster is framed by the United States Army seal in the corners.