

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



MARCUS MAGEE
UNITED STATES ARMY
SPECIALIST 5 (E-5)
1969 – 1975



WOUNDED IN ACTION JANUARY 7, 1971
as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
JULY 2025

Honoring His Service and Sacrifice
Sponsored by: St. Joseph Chapter, NSDAR



My name is Specialist Fifth Class Marcus J. Magee. I will write a very short narrative for this project. It is very difficult to write something about Vietnam, as there are so many emotions that play into each daily experience.

From day one, I remember arriving in Vietnam and looking down from my seat on the airplane, seeing flashes of light, not realizing that those flashes were exploding ordinance of both sides. Prior to our landing, the pilot made the statement that when the plane stops and the door opens, run to the building we would be directed to, as the airport was receiving enemy fire. The plane landed, and the door opened to a tremendous rush of the hottest air I had ever felt. There were several extremely loud explosions going off relatively close, so my apprehension was extremely high, thinking, "What did I get myself into?" Someone was screaming to follow him in the pitch black, so I tried to follow his voice, running and tripping over all

the things that were in our path as the only glimmer of light was the occasional flash of incoming rockets. Some man was yelling to get behind the sandbags as they were taking small arms fire. I thought, "What sandbags and where are they?" That was my first few minutes in Vietnam,

At daylight the next day, I was taken by truck to my duty station at the 67th Evac Hospital in Qui Nhon. Walking in the door, I noticed a young woman lying on a gurney with a half-dollar piece of her skull lying next to her. I remember the thought that this is very real, so my apprehension level peaked out as my fears were now a reality. I was taken through the hospital, where I saw many people in various stages of recovery,

with others being treated. I went out a side door in the hospital into the most horrendous smell you could imagine. There were two men with a stack of bags that I found out later were body bags of deceased soldiers. Each bag was bloated tight like an air mattress in the screaming hot sun, and these men were putting them into the four refrigerated containers that were there.

I was taken to a small 6' x 8' wooden shipping container that had a door, a rectangular cutout with no screen, and a cot in it for my quarters. There were about 10 of these in a row screwed together. I thought, as hot as it is, I'm probably just going to die the first night. A couple of the guys living next to me came over and showed me where the latrine was, but other than that, it was the most basic place I'd ever seen, other than just lying on the ground. I spent the first night not sleeping, imagining every scenario that could happen with a distant fire base shooting throughout the night.

The following day and months were a myriad of events such as working in the hospital, flying out to pick up wounded and dead, and daily chores that I was trained to do. I was eventually sent to several fire base small hospitals throughout Vietnam, as there were shortages of personnel. This is where things went downhill for me, as the 67th Evac Hospital was fairly civilized with some sparse amenities. The vast majority of these fire base clinics were underground, where steel shipping containers were buried and covered with dirt to protect them from enemy fire. They were dark, hot, and moist with all the humidity, and had very little, if anything, to work with. We still had to do our job. All this being done in scorching heat, drinking hot water out of my canteen, eating C rations, no showers, using a toilet that was a board with a hole in it that dropped into a 55 gallon drum cut in half so each time I used that toilet my butt was covered in flies. We were hit with motors and rockets more frequently as these small firebases were targets, as they were much smaller and not defended very well. I was eventually transferred to the 71st Evac Hospital in Pleiku, where the conditions were much better. By the time I was transferred, I had lost almost 50 pounds from the heat and poor nutrition. One of the very specific things I remember is that while being transferred, it had taken almost two days to fly me and drive me there due to the monsoon season, and I hadn't eaten anything. By the time I arrived, it was late evening, so I went to the mess hall to see what I could find to eat. It was closed, but there was an older Mess Sergeant cleaning up, and I asked if he had anything I could eat. He first said they were closed, so I sat there for a little bit as I was exhausted. He later came out of the kitchen carrying something. He sat down with me and handed me some fried potato fries he had cut up and deep-fried. He had also whipped up some mayonnaise. He said we don't have any ketchup or anything, but I thought this might be good with those fries. When I took a bite, it was the most wonderful thing I had ever eaten in my life. Nothing on this earth could have tasted any better. I still to this day eat my french fries with mayonnaise and remember this man's kindness.

I worked at this Hospital for several months as it was near the Cambodian border, so we had quite a few more patients. I flew many Medivac flights from there as the fighting had increased in this area. I have many very distinct memories from this Hospital, as some days we had more wounded than we had doctors. This being the situation, if a patient came in when we were in a mass casualty situation, some of these men, due to their serious injuries, could not be treated. I remember one soldier

that I knew wouldn't be treated as he had severe injuries. I went over to him and spoke to him for a few minutes, telling him we would get to him in a few minutes and not to worry, he'd be fine. He reached out as my hand was close and squeezed it. He never said a word, I think he knew. As I was working on others, I noticed his head was turned towards me, and after a short while, I saw his eyes slowly close. It was simply timing, as any other time we might have been able to get to him.

As I only had a few months left in the Vietnam tour, I was sent back to the 67th Evac Hospital in Qui Nhon. I went back to the same duties I had been doing and carried on as usual. One day after two Medivac flights to pick up a few soldiers, I had a chance to relax and just sit and drink a few hot beers. It was a somewhat quiet evening with the usual small arms fire and mortar rounds going off in the distance. As the evening drew near and it started to get dark, all of a sudden, the loudest explosion I had ever heard went off. One of the largest ammunition dumps in Vietnam, just a few miles from Qui Nhon, had been hit, and the entire site blew up, sending a tremendous shock wave that knocked almost everything in our area down. We all started running for our sandbag bunkers, grabbing our weapons on the way, when we started getting hit with rockets. The rockets were working their way towards us as the Vietnamese readjusted their fire with each blast. I was running in the darkness as I knew they were getting very close, when a rocket unfortunately passed over me, and I was hit with the back blast. The blast knocked me out, and when I started to wake up, I could hear men talking, telling me I would be ok. After some time had passed and the rockets had stopped, they took me to the hospital, where I was treated for my injuries. This was January 7, 1971.

To write a very brief experience about Vietnam is almost impossible, as I have so many stories.

