



Connection

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AREA MAN HONORED WITH CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF VALOR

54 years after his military service, Specialist Four Stephen Benoit was honored by the United States Army. Yes, there is a story here.

You may have met Steve on the golf course or you may know him from his former business known as Benoit Aerial Spraying. For forty years he did local crop dusting and he has enjoyed golf for many years as well.

Benoit graduated from McNamara High School, then was drafted into the military during the challenging Vietnam War. He spent one year in the miserable conditions of the jungle. Once every 10-14 days, the soldiers were brought to a secured compound where they got showers and hot food. Benoit recalls a special friend Jim Boll who was “the chef.” Their relationship grew in time and they remain friends today.

Benoit recalls a mission where they were trekking through the jungle with a sharp shooter in the front and one in the back of the line. They stopped several times because the last man heard something behind him. He was afraid that they were being followed and would be shot. Each time they stopped, the noise also stopped. They were being followed but they found the devotee to be a six foot tiger. The culprit was shot and many photos were taken of the feline.

Their group was trying to protect the poor people of the area known as mountain yard. These villagers had nothing, little clothes, little food, poor shelters. The army guarded and protected them as much as they could. The soldiers did all they could to protect a bridge that the children used to go to school. One young girl in particular knew English very well and she liked to talk to the soldiers.



Benoit says, “I know I experienced many miracles during my time in Vietnam. Many times I thought I should be dead.”

One such recap happened on July 7, 1969. The following is a direct quote from the Department of the Army:

Specialist Four Benoit distinguished himself by heroic actions in connection with military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam while serving as a machine gunner on an armored tank vehicle with Troop B, 2d Squadron, 1st Calvary. In the early morning hours Troop B’s firebase at Luong Son was attacked by enemy mortars, rockets, small arms fire, and sapper teams. When the attack started Specialist Benoit immediately gathered his crew

and assisted his tank commander in organizing a plan for defensive action. Due to his extremely quick reaction to the situation the defense was set up in a matter of minutes, providing maximum security for the crew’s area of responsibility.

During the ensuing fire fight, some of Specialist Benoit’s fellow soldiers became wounded. Although still under heavy enemy fire, Specialist Benoit bravely exposed himself to aid in the evacuation of the wounded. Due to his quick thinking and courageous action in the face of enemy aggression, the lives of his fellow soldiers were saved, and only light casualties suffered by Troop B. Spec. Benoit’s heroic actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Official accommodations were given by Adjutant General Daniel L. Ledda and Brigadier General Richard H. Johnson. Because the climate and attitude of the general public during this crisis were negative, many deserving soldiers did not finish their paperwork for honors. Not until Benoit was encouraged by a high ranking friend did he pursue the endeavor. It required three years and a mountain of paperwork before the award was finalized.