

[REDACTED]
O'Fallon, Illinois 62269
25 March 1996

Dick,

I sure did enjoy reading what you sent me. It brought back some memories.

I vaguely remember that about the gunner being pinned beneath the helicopter. I had just started crewing then in the Little Bears, but in that unit we did hear about it. I had forgotten it until I got your letter, but now I remember hearing of it.

In addition to how I would have liked the overall mission work a lot better, another reason why I wish I would have got to the 188th when I thought I would is because I wish I would have got out of the infantry a lot sooner than I did. I feel now that I wasted a lot of good time in something I hated and something I could have done better without. And no doubt I did.

Better yet, I wish I would have just simply skipped that infantry bit entirely. I wish now I would have gone right on into aviation as soon as I joined the Army. I wish somebody would have told me the story about it then.

Yes! You are so right!! We did see some action back then! However, sometimes when I think of what happened in assault helicopter companies, air cav units and some others, I feel like a piker. In any event though, I wish I would have had at least a second tour in Vietnam. Even with the one I had, I at least got to do SOMETHING --so you might say.

Here's a copy of a combat action I was in. By the way, in the 188th were they good about awarding medals?

Clear Right,



Info removed by VNCA

PS - The Robin Hoods relocated to Germany after Vietnam. They remained as the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company until they were absorbed into the 3rd Armored Division, after which they became Company E, 503rd Aviation Battalion. Even there, they still had their own "Sherwood Forest." Remember, back at Lai Khe they had that too?!

After that unit became part of 3rd AD, it was never the same. In either the late part of 1985 or early '86, that unit became 57th Avn Co. I was in it then; it was the worst Blackhawk unit I ever saw.

When I was in the Little Bears we had one of our crewchiefs who applied for and got reassignment to the Robin Hoods. That was a mighty good unit then, as I'm sure you'll agree and remember.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION FOR VALOR OR MERIT
(SUBMIT IN THREE COPIES)

THRU: Commanding Officer 25th Avn Bn APO US Forces 96225		TO: Commanding General 25th Infantry Division APO US Forces 96225		THRU: Commanding Officer Co A, 25th Avn Bn APO US Forces 96225	
1. NAME (LAST, FIRST, MI) AUSTIN, Frank B.		2. SN: SSAN: [REDACTED]		3. GRADE SP/5	
4. BRANCH OFFICER (MOS-NO & EM) 67N20		5. AGE (Nearest year) 20		6. CATEGORY L-Y PERSONNEL YES ☐ NO ☒	
7. MONTHS IN RVN (Nearest month) 10		8. POSTHUMOUS AWARD: YES ☐ NO ☒			
9. ORGANIZATION AT TIME OF ACTION Co A, 25th Avn Bn		10. ACTION OF FINAL APPROVING AUTHORITY: APPROVAL ☐ DISAPPROVAL ☐ UPGRADE ☐ DOWNGRADE ☐			
11. AWARD INDIVIDUAL IS RECOMMENDED FOR					
☒ DSC ☐ ACM "IV" ☐ SERVICE ☐ SS ☐ IM ☐ ACHIEVEMENT ☒ DEC ☐ BS ☐ OAK LEAF CLUSTER ☐ SM ☐ AM ☐ BS "IV" ☐ ACM ☐ AM "IV" ☐ PH				FOREIGN/OTHER AWARD 	
12. DATES OF SERVICE-MERIT: DATE (S) OF ACTION-VALOR 17 Apr 68		13. DEROS: 30 Sep 68		14. CURRENT ORGANIZATION Co A, 25th Avn Bn	
15. PREVIOUS AWARDS (PH OR HIGHER)					
DECORATION AM		DATE OF ACTION OR SERVICE 12 Nov - 14 Jan 68		AUTHORITY No Orders	
16. OTHERS RECOMMENDED FOR AN AWARD FOR THE SAME ACTION: (STATE NAME AND AWARD) See Inclosure #2					
17. NAMES OF EYEWITNESSES: Major Roger McLeod Captain Gary L. Nies					

18. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION: (For all awards described in detail what individual did to award decoration. For valor award describe in detail the mission, terrain and weather, enemy condition and friendly casualties. Use plain bond paper for continuation sheet if necessary.)

Specialist Five Frank B. Austin, RA16866932, United States Army, distinguished himself while participating in aerial flight by displaying exceptional and uncommon valor evidenced by heroic action above and beyond the call of duty on 17 April 1968 while assigned as crew chief of a UH-1D helicopter, Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, Republic of Vietnam. Specialist Austin's aircraft was flying a combat assault for the 1st Battalion (M) 5th Infantry when, at approximately 0830 hours his was one of two aircraft diverted from the mission to affect an emergency extraction of a ten man Long Range Combat Patrol (LRCF). The patrol was in heavy contact with a vastly superior Viet Cong force and their only chance for survival was an immediate helicopter extraction. Upon arriving over the beleaguered patrol's position, Specialist Austin's aircraft orbited the area while gunships from Company B, 25th Aviation Battalion suppressed the enemy positions and the patrol hastily prepared a landing zone. Upon arrival of a smoke ship, the extraction was initiated. While the fire teams suppressed the enemy firing positions and the smoke ship laid down a heavy screen to cover them, Specialist Austin's aircraft and the sister ship made an approach to the landing zone. On short final, it was realized that it would be impossible to make an approach to the ground since small trees dotted the landing zone. Despite the intense enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire directed at him, Specialist Austin calmly and efficiently guided his pilot down in between the trees to a hover. Once in the landing zone, Specialist Austin found himself in a rapidly deteriorating situation. The smoke ship was critically low on its smoke supply and its crew was unsure as to how long they could continue their support; the gunships had expended their ammunition and were giving fire support with their door guns; and the hostile fire increased as the enemy force frantically attempted to prevent the successful extraction. In the face of all these adversities, Specialist Austin continued to perform his duties in an outstanding manner, insuring that the pilot was informed of the changing situation. Upon arrival of the friendly patrol, Specialist Austin placed himself in a highly vulnerable position by leaning out on the skid and assisting the crew members aboard. Specialist Austin's untiring efforts contributed immeasurably to the success of the mission. His courage, outstanding professional ability and devotion to duty at the risk of his own life reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, the 25th Infantry Division, and the United States Army.

19. ENCLOSURES

20. INDIVIDUAL INITIATING RECOMMENDATION

Incl
3

NAME, GRADE & POSITION
CARROLL E. BARROW JR
MAJ, Arty Commanding

SIGNATURE & DATE

Carroll E. Barrow Jr
6 Apr 68

21. RECOMMENDATION OF THRU COMMAND

RECOMMEND

APPROVAL

DISAPPROVAL

OTHER

NAME, GRADE & POSITION

PETER W. MCGURL
LTC, Inf Commanding

SIGNATURE & DATE

Peter W. McGurl
6 Apr 68

PROPOSED CITATION

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT, UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE ACT OF CONGRESS, APPROVED 2 JULY 1926, A DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS IS AWARDED TO SPECIALIST FIVE FRANK B. AUSTIN, RA16866932, UNITED STATES ARMY, FOR HEROISM WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AERIAL FLIGHT EVIDENCED BY VOLUNTARY ACTION ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY. SPECIALIST AUSTIN DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF BY EXCEPTIONAL VALOROUS ACTIONS ON 17 APRIL 1968 WHILE SERVING AS CREW CHIEF OF A UH-1D HELICOPTER, COMPANY A, 25TH AVIATION BATTALION, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. SPECIALIST AUSTIN'S AIRCRAFT WAS FLYING A COMBAT ASSAULT FOR THE 1st BATTALION (M) 5th INFANTRY WHEN, AT 0830 HOURS HIS AIRCRAFT WAS DIVERTED FROM THE MISSION TO AFFECT AN EMERGENCY EXTRACTION OF A TEN MAN LONG RANGE COMBAT PATROL (LRCP). THE PATROL WAS IN HEAVY CONTACT WITH A VASTLY SUPERIOR VIET CONG FORCE AND THEIR ONLY CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL WAS AN IMMEDIATE HELICOPTER EXTRACTION. WHILE THE FIRE TEAMS SUPPRESSED THE ENEMY FIRING POSITIONS AND THE SMOKE SHIP LAID DOWN A HEAVY SCREEN TO COVER THEM. SPECIALIST AUSTIN'S AIRCRAFT AND THE SISTER SHIP MADE AN APPROACH TO THE LANDING ZONE. DESPITE THE INTENSE ENEMY SMALL ARMS AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE DIRECTED AT HIM, SPECIALIST AUSTIN CALMLY AND EFFICIENTLY GUIDED HIS PILOT DOWN IN BETWEEN THE TREES TO A HOVER. IN THE FACE OF ALL THESE ADVERSITIES, SPECIALIST AUSTIN CONTINUED TO PERFORM HIS DUTIES IN AN OUTSTANDING MANNER, INSURING THAT THE PILOT WAS INFORMED OF THE CHANGING SITUATION. UPON ARRIVAL OF THE FRIENDLY PATROL, SPECIALIST AUSTIN PLACED HIMSELF IN A HIGHLY VULNERABLE POSITION BY LEANING OUT ON THE SKID AND ASSISTING THE PATROL ABOARD. SPECIALIST AUSTIN'S UNTIRING EFFORTS CONTRIBUTED IMMEASURABLY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION. HIS COURAGE, OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL ABILITY AND DEVOTION TO DUTY AT THE RISK OF HIS OWN LIFE REFLECTS GREAT CREDIT UPON HIMSELF, HIS UNIT, THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, AND THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

EYEWITNESS STATEMENT

At approximately 0830 hours on 17 April 1968 elements of A and B Companies, 25th Aviation Battalion, were diverted from a combat assault mission in support of the 1st Battalion (M) 5th Infantry. The Command and Control aircraft received word from the 25th Aviation Battalion TOC that a Long Range Combat Patrol was in immediate need of emergency assistance. The patrol was in heavy contact with a much superior force, and their only chance of survival was immediate helicopter extraction. The Command and Control aircraft immediately proceeded to the 2nd Brigade VIP pad for a briefing and then continued to the area of operation. Two Alpha Company, 25th Aviation Battalion slicks were diverted to the area along with a fire team from Bravo Company, 25th Aviation Battalion. Upon arriving at the patrol's position a second fire team from Bravo Company, 25th Aviation Battalion was on the scene and a need for the Bravo Company, 25th Aviation Battalion smoke ship was determined. The smoke ship was requested thru the Battalion TOC by the C & C aircraft. While awaiting the arrival of the smoke ship, the C & C ship made low level passes over the area disregarding the intense enemy fire identifying targets and orienting the fire teams as to friendly positions and enemy locations. Both fire teams made low level passes over the area and suppressed the enemy forces. The C & C aircraft continued to direct the fire teams and plan the emergency pick-up from the hastily prepared landing zone. Upon arrival of the smoke ship, the extraction was initiated. While the fire teams suppressed the enemy firing positions with rockets and machinegun fire, the smoke ship laid down a heavy screen of smoke to cover as much as possible the final approach of the slicks. The C & C aircraft led the slicks to the landing zone while the fire teams and smoke ship continued to protect the area. One slick was able to land in his small landing zone, but could not avoid striking trees with his rotor blades. He picked up his five patrol members while still receiving intense small arms and automatic weapons fire and departed the area. The second slick could not land in his landing zone. The trees (15-20 feet) were too tall and dense. Time was critical since enemy fire was still heavy in the area, so selection of another landing zone was out of the question. The slick was brought to a hover, then lowered until its belly was actually crushing and forcing down the trees and the rotor blades just clearing the tree tops. The pilot held the aircraft in this exposed position, disregarding automatic weapons fire coming from a treeline to the west. One patrol member managed to leap up-grab a skid-then pull himself up into the aircraft. Leaning out, he reached down and with the assistance of the crewchief, pulled the remaining four soldiers on board the aircraft. While the slick was hovering in this dangerous position in the landing zone and the patrol was struggling to get aboard, the fire teams were maintaining constant suppressive fire and the smoke ship provided constant smoke cover. The professional support rendered by the fire teams included continuous passes with door guns after all rockets were expended. Throughout the engagement all crewmembers involved in the operation continually braved the heavy enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire and exposed themselves, disregarding personal safety in order to assist the beleaguered LRCP team. The flight crews mentioned below were directly responsible for the safe rescue of all ten members of the LRCP team.

EYEWITNESS STATEMENT

On 17 April 1968 I was a passengerⁱⁿ a Little Bear aircraft, Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, Republic of Vietnam. Assigned to fly for the Second Brigade's Command and Control snip and witnessed a flight of a Little Bear aircraft extracting a Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol in the vicinity of the filhol plantation. The LRHP had previously reported receiving fire from an unknown size hostile force, within fifteen minutes after the reported contact Diamond Head gunships were on station effectively neutralizing the hostile force thus enabling the LRHP to prepare for extraction. Shortly thereafter two slicks were on station. Braving a heavy volume of hostile fire the slicks landed and extracted the patrol. Little Bear's rapid reaction, well coordinated effort, and bold extraction prevented the patrol from suffering heavy casualties.

s/Gary L. Niles
t/Gary L. Niles
CPT, Arty

THIS IS A TRUE COPY:

Patrick C. Heffernan
PATRICK C. HEFFERNAN
WO1, AV

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Aircraft Commander</u>		
C & C Aircraft	A; 25th Avn Bn	JAAP, James L.	05312482	CPT
Slick (Lead)	A; 25th Avn Bn	HODD, James A. Jr.	05315501	CPT
Slick #2	A, 25th Avn Bn	STEPHEN, Michael J.	05709310	CPT

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Pilot</u>		
C & C Aircraft	A; 25th Avn Bn	McLEOD, Roger	083958	MAJ
Slick (Lead)	A; 25th Avn Bn	JEMPSON, James R.	08103461	CPT
Slick #2	A, 25th Avn Bn	WHITE, David W.	03158688	WO1

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Crew Chief</u>		
C & C Aircraft	A; 25th Avn Bn	THACKER, Daniel L.	RA15702799	SP/1
Slick (Lead)	A; 25th Avn Bn	JENNERS, Glenn F.	RA16915702	PTC
Slick #2	A, 25th Avn Bn	AUSTIN, Frank P.	RA16866922	SP/5

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Gunner</u>		
C & C Aircraft	A; 25th Avn Bn	HOLLISTER, Robert L.	RA50171231	SP/1
Slick (Lead)	A; 25th Avn Bn	SUTTONS, Raymond D.	US51644963	SP/1
Slick #2	A, 25th Avn Bn	FLAHERTY, James D.	US56704722	SP/1

The courage and skill displayed by all crewmembers is praiseworthy and I am submitting this statement with the sincere hope that appropriate recognition will be accorded.

Roger L. McLeod
 ROGER L. MCLEOD
 MAJ Arty

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96225

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 4720

29 June 1968

AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

AUSTIN, FRANK B. RA16866932 (SSAN: [REDACTED] SP5
Co A, 25th Avn Bn, 25th Inf Div

Awarded: Distinguished Flying Cross

Date action: 17 April 1968

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism while participating in aerial flight: Specialist Five Austin distinguished himself by heroic actions on 17 April 1968, while serving as a crew chief with Company A, 25th Aviation Battalion in the Republic of Vietnam. While on a combat operation his helicopter was diverted from its mission, and ordered to extract a nearby friendly patrol that was under heavy enemy fire. As Specialist Austin's ship neared the battle torn area they began to receive fierce hostile anti-aircraft fire. Specialist Austin calmly directed his aircraft commander through the hazardous terrain and the hail of enemy fire to an area that could be utilized for the extraction. When his aircraft had landed, Specialist Austin, with complete disregard for his own safety, continually exposed himself to the withering hostile fire as he aided the endangered patrol aboard his aircraft. After the friendly soldiers had boarded his helicopter, Specialist Austin continued to brave the insurgents' shelling as he placed murderous suppressive fire on their positions. His valorous actions were responsible for the successful extraction of his endangered comrades. Specialist Austin's personal bravery, aggressiveness, and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, the 25th Infantry Division, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 2 July 1926, and USARV message 16695, 1 July 1966.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:



CLAYTON C. CUMMINS

CPT, AGC

Asst AG

B. F. HOOD
Colonel, GS
Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION:

D (Modified) Plus

3-CO, 25th Avn Bn, 25th Inf Div

10-Act Br

4-Indiv conc

2-CO, USARV ATTN: AVHAG-PD

1-Div CSM

1-Rec Br

SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION:

1-TAGO ATTN: AGPE-F