

December 3, 1996

Headquarters U.S. Marines Corps
Military Award Branch (MHM)
3033 Wilson Blvd. Rm. 206J
Arlington, Va. 22201
ATT.: Mr. Harry Smith

Re.: Gregory Allen Vandergriff
File #
S.S #

Dear Sir,

PFC. Gregory A. Vandergriff was serving with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion of The Third Marine Division, which on May 25, 1969 was on Hill 174 about 200 meters from the DMZ.

Around 1700 hours a fire broke out on one of the mortar pits. At first Lieutenant (John William Abbott) ordered several Marines to put out the fire. I was one of those Marines he ordered to help put out the fire. A pop from an enemy mortar tube was heard and someone yelled "incoming". About half of us putting out the fire ran for our holes while I stayed along with the other half. As soon as I knelt to the ground with my E-tool to start shoveling dirt to throw on the fire, that enemy mortar round hit directly on top of our own pallets of mortar rounds that had just been choppered in earlier.

The next thing I remember, was coming to somewhere on the side of the hill in

original contains material of a personal nature and is in Restricted Access file.

terrible pain, hurting all over from wounds from that explosion. I could hear several Marines crying out for help or a corpsman. We were still receiving incoming from the enemy. I was scared, that any second of those incoming rounds would finish me off. I couldn't move to even try to get to cover. I kept blacking out, the next time I came to, there was a Marine standing over me, bleeding from different wounds, calling my name. He told me he thought I was dead, I looked so bad and wasn't moving. He immediately started working on me to stop some of the bleeding. PFC. Vandregriff repeatedly exposed himself to enemy mortar fire, shielding me everytime a round exploded anywhere close to me. He patched me up and stopped the bleeding waiting on a corpsman to get to me. All the corpsmen were very busy. PFC. Vandergriff wouldn't leave me and kept talking to me and telling me I would be fine. I guess he didn't want me to go into shock or be scared I would be blown away from the incoming.

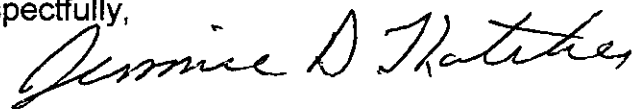
Finally the corpsman started working on me. PFC. Vandergriff was going around helping other wounded or dying Marines. Although, wounded himself, PFC. Vandergriff continually exposed himself, helping others. He and another Marine whose name I do not know, carried wounded Marines close to the LZ waiting on the medivacs to come in. PFC. Vandergriff and another marine came back after me to carry me closer to the LZ, so I could be medevaced to a Hospital along with many others. I remember being carried on a poncho by PFC. Vandergriff and another Marine. We were still being pounded by the enemy with mortars. It seemed like every few yards they would have to put me down and cover me with their own bodies. I was scared to death we all would

be killed. PFC. Vandergriff took some more shrapnel while protecting me with his own body while caring me to the LZ. We could hear the choppers coming from a distance, to rescue the wounded. As they approached the LZ, it got hot. They were pounding it with everything they had causing the medevacs to abort their mission until things cooled off. Finally the choppers came back, the LZ was still hot but they landed anyway. While under intense mortar fire PFC. Vandergriff, after being wounded twice, risked his life again for me making sure I got aboard the first medevac that landed. He was told to get aboard with the other wounded, but he refused, saying he had other marines to help. I later heard that PFC. Vandergriff kept helping other marines and never got medevaced to the rear. He wanted to stay and help his under strengthened company, for he feared the enemy would launch an all out attack and overrun his company. The corpsman patched him up and he stayed to help his fellow Marines.

I feel PFC. Vndergriff's acts of heroism and courage while disregarding his own wounds and safety, helped save my life and I am sure others too, should be awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

All of the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge. If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jimmie D. Thatcher". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Jimmie D. Thatcher

The above document is subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public, for
the county of Blount, state of Tennessee, this 17th day of December, 1996.

Grace M. Luning

My commission expires 9-11-1999

William T. Bennett

December 3, 1996

Military Award Branch (MHM)
3033 Wilson Blvd. Rm. 206J
Arlington, Va. 22210
ATT.: Mr. Harry Smith

Re.: Gregory Allen Vandergriff

File #

S.S #

Dear Sir,

I am writing you concerning some events that occurred back on May 25, 1969. These events took place on hill 174 near the demilitarized zone, in the Republic of South Vietnam.

My name is William T. Bennett. I was a PFC. with 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, Bravo Company, 3rd Platoon Machine guns. Our company was attacked by NVA mortars. I was wounded along with many, many others. There were several killed during this attack.

I would like to tell you about a heroic event I witnessed on this day. PFC. Gregory A. Vandergriff a rifleman with the 1st Platoon, was wounded during the initial attack. Although he was dazed and bleeding from his wounds, he started going from Marine to Marine giving first aid and reassuring them that they would be ok until the corpsman could make it around to them. All this time he was doing this we were being mortared, shells exploding everywhere. One Marine he helped, that stands out in mind was a Marine by the name of PFC. Jimmy Thatcher. He was wounded very badly in severely places and looked to be dead. PFC. Vandergriff worked and worked on him until a corpsman showed up. PFC. Vandergriff stopped the bleeding and kept him from going into shock. He also repeatedly covered PFC. Vandergriff received more shrapnel wounds while attending and helping other Marines. He refused to be medivaced, so he could help others.

PFC. Gregory A. Vandergriff should be awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his continuous exposure to enemy fire to help save others, and for the extraordinary bravery this Marine displayed.

All of the statements I have written are true to the best of my knowledge.

Sincerely,

William T. Bennett

William T. Bennett

original contains personal information and is to be Restricted Access File This is a copy

December 10, 1996

Larry A. Petitti

Ref: Gregory Allen Vandergriff

V.A. file number:

Social security num

To Whom It May Concern:

PFC Gregory A. Vandergriff and I served together in Vietnam with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam.

On May 25, 1969, our company came under a heavy mortar attack late in the day. One of the rounds hit directly on top of one of the pallets of our own mortar rounds next to where several Marines were putting out a fire. PFC Vandergriff was wounded from the secondary explosion the enemy mortar round caused hitting our own ammunition pit. Several Marines were killed and over twice as many were wounded.

I witnessed PFC Vandergriff disregarding his own safety, although wounded. He exposed himself to enemy fire going from wounded Marine to wounded Marine giving first aid and protection. He helped to get these Marines to safety and to the LZ so they could be medevaced to a hospital.

All during this time we were being shelled by mortar fire from the enemy. PFC Vandergriff was wounded again while getting these men to safety, but he never stopped until the last of these wounded was aboard the medevac helicopters. He was told to stay on the chopper so his wounds could also be treated. PFC Vandergriff refused so he could stay and fight if his company was attacked. He

Original contains personal information and is in restricted Access file. This is a copy

had the corpsman patch him up and he stayed in the fight with his company.

I feel that PFC Gregory A. Vandergriff's unusual bravery and unselfish actions in disregarding his own wounds and helping save other wounded marines should be awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his actions on May 25, 1969.

To the best of my knowledge all the above statements are true.

Sincerely,

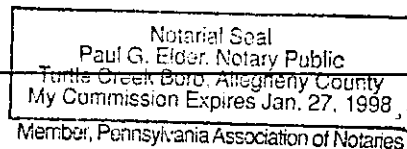
Larry A. Petitti

Larry A. Petitti

The above document is subscribed and sworn to before me, a notary public, for the county of Allegheny, in the state of Penn., this 30th day of December 1996.

Paul G. Elder

My Commission Expires



fire going to different marines giving first aid or moral support or whatever that marine needed. When the medevacs came to get the wounded, the LZ was too hot for them to land. They came back a second time knowing marines were dying. PFC Vandergriff went back to get PFC Thatcher making sure he got put on the first medevac chopper that landed. He knew PFC Thatcher would be lucky to make it. PFC Vandergriff was told to stay on the medevac because he was wounded, but he refused, said he had other Marines that needed his help and also said as long as he could still fire a weapon, he was staying for fear his company may be overrun.

What I witnessed that day was one brave marine, ignoring his own wounds and saving other marines, constantly exposing himself to enemy fire putting marines on Medevacs, refusing to be medevaced himself again to help and save others and to help protect his company from an enemy attack or being overrun. From what I witnessed that day PFC Gregory A. Vandergriff deserves nothing less than the Bronze Star Medal.

All the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge.

Sincerely,

Edwin T. Smith