

NO BRAG, JUST FACTS
CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS FOR OUR FALLEN BROTHERS
From Bill Carpenter

“The Vietnam Wall” webpage is the primary source for “cause of death”.

The LRRP/Rangers roster has over 1,000 names of men who served in our unit. There are very few, if any, of us who did not have direct contact with the enemy sometime in our tour. Not everyone was on a team, but almost everyone in the HQ component did participate at times in getting the teams in, and out.

We were the longest serving LRRP/Ranger unit in the Viet Nam War. Tradition is that we are also the most decorated company in the history of the U.S. Rangers, and also perhaps the entire U. S. Army. On 9 June 72, Elvis Osborne and Jeffrey Maurer became the last two infantrymen to die in the Vietnam War.

Some officers did not award many medals; they considered a five, or six, man team taking on a platoon or company of the enemy as “Just part of your job.” But to counterbalance that I quote my CO Jim James who said in his audio on our webpage, *“Each and every soldier that went on a mission, did more than many individual soldiers in conventional units who were awarded the Silver Star”*.

Another statement by Col. James that I often quote is, *“You can’t judge a soldier by the medals he wears, you judge him by, what did he do.”*

So, with that rather long intro, here are some data for our unit.

Died in Viet Nam	45
Died while serving in other unit	7
Died in non-hostile chopper crash	4
Died from enemy “other explosive device”	5
Died in “ground contact, hostile fire”	23
Died from other causes	6

From July 1969 through June 1972, the last three years of the war, only eight of us died due to “ground contact, hostile fire”.

Our unit was at full strength by June '67 and came home in June '72, that is five years, 260 weeks. I have no source for this, but assume that the entire unit averaged 8-10 missions a week. That is 2,000 to 2,500 missions for the war.

Kregg Jorgenson has written that about 60% of us earned Purple Hearts. The general consensus is that about one half of all missions ended with a “hot extraction”. Some of us were never assigned to a team, but there are very, very few of us, if any, who were never “in contact” with the enemy.

So to be conservative, and using the lower number, this means that at least 500 of us were wounded in 1,000 enemy contacts.

Granted, any death is one too many, but having only 23 KIA in 1,000 fire fights is an amazing number.

We must have been doing something right.

Addendum just received from Patrick Tully

William Francis (died 3/9/70) fell from a Jungle penetrator when the Team Leader climbed off before it was pulled into the aircraft. The JP tilted and Bill had his pack on and slid off (he was RTO and had the radio in his pack). It was dusk and the aircraft was low on fuel so had to leave the scene. The blues were inserted the next morning and recovered Bill's body.

Until that time, we didn't tie ourselves on to the JP and kept our packs on.