

# RONALD MACKEDANZ



Ronald W Mackedanz was born on 26 June 1948 in Hutchinson Minnesota to Warren and Loretta Mackedanz. As he grew up he took every chance he could to be an outdoorsman including hunting and fishing. In January 1966 he met the woman that became his wife, Janet Wangerin. He asked her to marry him and they planned to be married in December 1966. He went to California to find work and got a job with Blue Chip Stamp Redemptions. On 23 December 1966 he headed back to Minnesota to get married and bring his new wife back with him. They were married on 29 December 1966 in Hutchinson and by 6pm that night they were on their way back to California. In March 1967 Ron and Janet lost a baby they were looking forward to and after the miscarriage the draft board changed his classification to 1A. Ron had stayed registered with the draft board in McCleod County in Minnesota hoping that maybe they would lose track of him while he was in California. They didn't, and on 23 December 1967 Ron recieved a letter notifying him that "his presence was requested to take a pre-induction physical in Minneapolis Minnesota.

In January 1968 Ron and his wife Janet flew back to Minnesota for a couple of weeks to do his physical. During his time back Ron talked to the local Air Force recruiter about enlisting in the Air Force. He was told that if he stayed in Minnesota he could probably get him in before he was drafted. With all of their possessions in California Ron and Janet decided to go back and try to enlist out there. The recruiter in California was not as pleasant as the Minnesota one. Ron was told, "all you S.O.B.s wait until you get your draft notices and then want to get in the Air Force." Up until Ron knew he was going to get drafted, the military was not very appealing to him.

Over the last number of years Ron has been putting together his memories of his military life. The time that Ron spent in the US Army I will let him say it in his own words:

“Around the first week in April of 1968, I received a letter from the draft board. It started out saying, “Greetings, you have been selected by your friends and neighbors for induction into the US Army.” I knew then and there that I needed to leave town and make new friends, because they obviously didn’t think all that highly of me.”

“Although I never really had any idea about not going provided I was drafted, I really would have rather not gone. Several things played in my decision to go. First off, my dad and three of his brothers were all WWII veterans, second and probably more influential in my decision, was that on 21 April 1968, my cousin Lyle Mackedanz was reported as missing in action in Vietnam. With this event there was no way that I could not go, and still be able to look in the mirror each day.”

On 16 May 1968 Ron was back in Minnesota. He and his wife had either sold their items in California or brought them to Minnesota and stayed at his parents home in Olivia Minnesota. On that morning Ron’s parents and Janet drove him over to Glencoe to board a bus of draftees to go into the Army. Ron went to Minneapolis to be sworn in. At the time the Marine Corps were drafting a few guys so they asked for volunteers out of the group of about thirty. Two or three men volunteered and they picked out two more. Ron felt that since he didn’t want to join the Army, he could see no reason to join the Marine Corps. After finishing with physical and other testing Ron went to the airport and flew out to Fort Campbell Kentucky for basic training.



**Lyle Mackedanz, Ron’s cousin listed as MIA on 21 April 1968. MIA Bracelet for Lyle, donated by Ron.**



Remembrances of basic training in Ron’s own words: “As I remember, we arrived about 2 o’clock in the morning. We were warmly greeted by a staff of drill sergeants, etc. yelling at the top of their lungs. Telling us what a bunch of maggots we were. We spent the first four or five days in an orientation center. More testing was done to see if we were intelligent enough to go into flight school, OCS, or other areas. Shots were given, uniforms issued, and then we were assigned to our basic training companies. Once we had all of our gear, they came and got us in the middle of the night, and had us fall into formation. Then with the drill sergeants hollering and screaming at us, with our duffel bags on our backs, we ran to our new company area. It may have been only about a mile, but it seemed like five. Most of us were not ready for the rigors that we were in for. I remember the drill instructors hitting the duffel bags of guys who were lagging behind. From the sound of it, you would have thought that they were going to kill us all.”

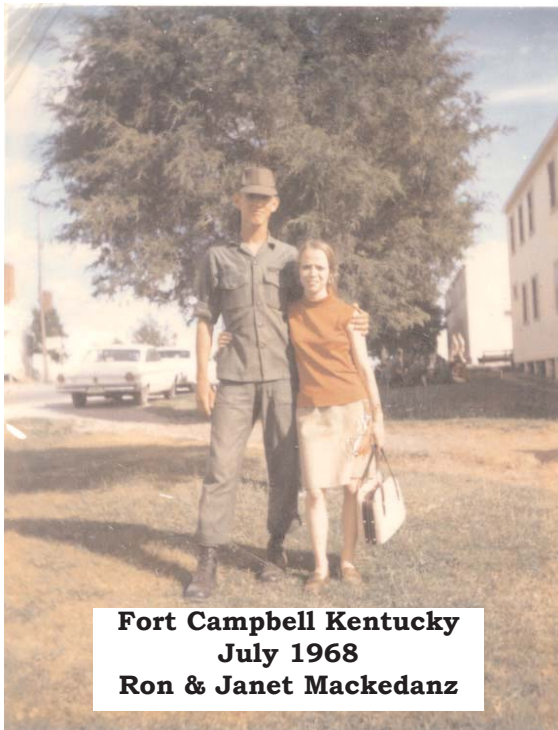
“Fort Campbell in May wasn’t all that bad of a place to train, but once June and July came it got hotter than hell itself. Each and every day the cadre did their level best to strip you of any and all ties that you might have to your civilian life. “Don’t worry about your wife or girlfriend, Jody will take care of her for you,” and other shit like that. They tried to make you feel like nobody at home cared about you, so you might as well get ready to go out and fight and die.”

“Around the end of June, one of the companies in our training battalion had a couple of guys die of heat exhaustion. After that, with pressure from some congressmen, they started cutting us a little slack. By that time we were in our final two weeks of basic, and the DI’s started treating us a bit more like we were human beings. We still had two weeks of intense training to complete, but somehow, now it felt like it was do-able.”

“Sometime toward the end of our basic training, we were allowed to have our wives come down for the weekend. Janet and I spent the night in a hotel off post. It was sure great to see each other again, but it was always hard to say good-bye. As we were to find out, each time became increasingly more difficult.”

“During my last week of training at Fort Campbell, while we were out on the rifle range, qualifying for our rifle badges, I came down with some kind of bug, and ended up in the hospital for a couple of days. I managed to get out of there just in time to cycle out of basic training with my group.” Ron graduated from basic on 15 July 1968. That night they were in a four-engine prop plane en-route to Fort Lewis Washington. Somewhere flying over Oklahoma two of the engines flamed out. Ron says “about the time we lost the second engine, I wasn’t sure that we were going to have to worry about getting killed in Nam.” Ron thinks that they landed in Fort Sill and boarded another plane to finish their trip to Fort Lewis.

Fort Lewis was a welcome change from Fort Campbell. the weather was a lot cooler, and they were treated somewhat better. Ron does remember them saying to him that “you’ll all be dead by Christmas.” Those that were married were allowed to have their



**Fort Campbell Kentucky  
July 1968  
Ron & Janet Mackedanz**



**Larry Groves and his wife,  
Janet & Ron Mackedanz at Fort  
Lewis  
September 1968.**



wives come out and live off post if they could find a place. Two of Ron’s friends from Tennessee, Larry Groves and James Hodges, sent for their wives and Ron sent for Janet. They all came out and tried to find a place to hole up. About when the Tennessee girls were ready to give up and go home Janet found a three bedroom mobile home for them to stay in. The platoon sergeant was real good about letting them stay off post overnight as long as they didn’t miss reveille in the morning. Ron says “the time that we had together went by so fast. Not knowing if I would get a 30-day leave after AIT, or if I would get shipped straight to Nam. Too soon the day came again for us to say goodbye. I took Janet to town and she boarded a bus bound for Minnesota.”



During the training at Lewis they had night maneuvers where they had to try to evade the enemy (graduates of former AIT classes). as they made their way through the woods (jungle). If they were caught they were brought to a Vietnamese prison camp modeled after the real thing. Ron was captured with a couple of other guys about 100 yards from their finishing point. They blindfolded them and marched them off to the makeshift prison camp.

About the exercise: "It didn't take me long to figure out from watching the other guys, that the more resistance you put up, the harder they were on you (and these were our guys). As soon as their attention was diverted elsewhere, I started looking for a way out. I didn't take too long before I found a place in the wire I could get through. You must understand that I was somewhat skinny in those days, so it didn't take all that big of a hole for me to get out."

"A black friend of mine came out right behind me and we made our way to our unit. I kept kidding him, "Smile, Dobson, I can't see ya." He was pretty cool about it." The next morning our DI's asked how many of us had gotten captured. After just a few guys raised their hands, the DI said that the rest of us who wanted our ID's back had best raise our hands too. I guess they had us, and they knew it. So much for escape and evasion training."

"One of the parts of our training that really made you sit up and take notice was the infiltration course. They took you out to a course, where they made you crawl under barbed wire, through the mud, while machine gunners fired live ammo over your head. If you were real unlucky, you might come face to face with a snake. If you jumped up you would be ripped apart by machine gun bullets. All the while that you were crawling along, simulated charges were going off right next to you. It definitely made you feel like you were in the heat of it. I guess that's what it was all about. I always said that they taught us just enough to get ourselves killed. The hand-to-hand combat course that we had was a prime example of that. They taught us just enough Judo, etc. to



**Ron & Janet in October 1968 before he left for Vietnam.**

where we thought we knew what we were doing. Realistically, it was just enough to get us into trouble in a combat situation."

On 10 September 1968 Ron received his orders. Hopes were running high since a large number of the class ahead of them got orders for Germany or Korea. Ron says, "We all knew we were going to Nam, but you have to hope that you'll get lucky and dodge the bullet. When they called out my name "Mackedanz, Vietnam", it came as no surprise to me. The good news was that I was going home for thirty days before shipping out. I got on a plane and flew back to Minnesota that same day."

Ron spent his leave at home with his wife, contemplating the future, or if there would be one. They tried to make the best of those days. Ron said "They say war is hell, but good-byes are a son of a bitch."

On 10 October Ron flew to Los Angeles. He stopped to visit his sister who lived there and say good-bye before reporting to Travis Air Force Base. While visiting, Ron's 4 year old nephew asked his mommy, "Why does Uncle Ronnie have to go fight the war?" Ron felt the answer to that question seemed to evade a lot of them during those times. "We thought we were doing the right thing." While waiting at Travis to board the plane Ron got a big surprise. When they called his name a guy got up and said "Hi". It was a kid he knew from his own home town, Luwayne Schuft. Ron had graduated High School with Luwayne's younger brother Chuck. The

two traveled to Vietnam together. They landed in Hawaii, and then on to "Goony Bird Island" (Guam). It took about seventeen hours to fly from California to Saigon. Ron says "The first thing that really hit me when I got off the plane, was the smell. The hot, humid, decaying, rotting, smell. It was a smell, the likes of which I had never experienced before. Looking at the ox carts and people around me, I felt like I'd just gone back in time a hundred years." From Long Binh he was bused to Camp Alpha which was his holding point until he received his unit assignment. Ron and Luwayne had many meaningful tasks: "It seemed the biggest thing they had to worry about at Camp Alpha was keeping us busy, picking up litter, burning shit barrels, and other meaningful duties."



**Ron and Luwayne  
enroute to Vietnam.**

One day Ron and Luwayne were being marched over to a supply building to sort through a bunch of equipment. There was a cart with a couple of tanks on it sitting right in the way. The Corporal in charge told Ron and Luwayne to move it out of the way. They didn't stop until they were about two blocks away. Within a day or two after that they received their orders. It was 17 October 1968.

Luwayne was assigned to the 2nd of the 2nd Mechanized Infantry, operating northwest of Saigon. Ron was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, Mechanized, Charlie Company, 2nd Platoon. He was headed to Lai Khe up by the Iron Triangle, about fifty miles north of Saigon. The next time Ron and Luwayne would see each other was in September 1969 at Vaugh Tua, an R & R spot for GI's. In 2001 Ron tried to contact Luwayne and found out that he had died of a massive coronary just six months earlier. Ron decided then that he would not let another day go without trying to contact friends from the Army.

Ron went from Tahn Sa Nute to Camp Alpha then on to Dian the main base for BRO. There he sat on an airstrip to board a C-123 to go to Lai Khe.



**Insignia of the 16th Mechanized Infantry  
From Ron's jungle fatigues worn in Nam**

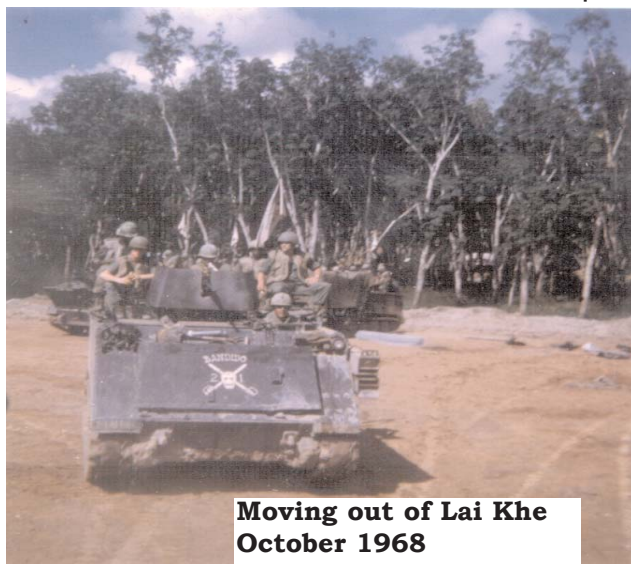


After Ron arrived at Lai Khe, he spent a few days receiving jungle training and went out on burm guard at night. "Man, I really thought I was in the thick of it. Little did I know Lai Khe was a relatively safe area compared to where I was going."

The unit known as Bandido Charlie was just reassigned from the 9th Division to the First Division. Due to the difference in the operating methods between the two divisions, there were a lot of unhappy soldiers in the unit. The 1st Division didn't like the idea of the name Bandido Charlie on the track vehicles and such. They were "encouraged" to delete them. This had a large negative impact on the men who had taken a lot of pride in the name from the 1968 Tet Offensive. With the help of First Sergeant Al Herrera, who saw the importance of the name, Bandido Charlie was once again allowed back on the tracks and on boonie hats of the soldiers in Vietnam. The name was finally OK'd by the upper echelon of the First Infantry Division brass.



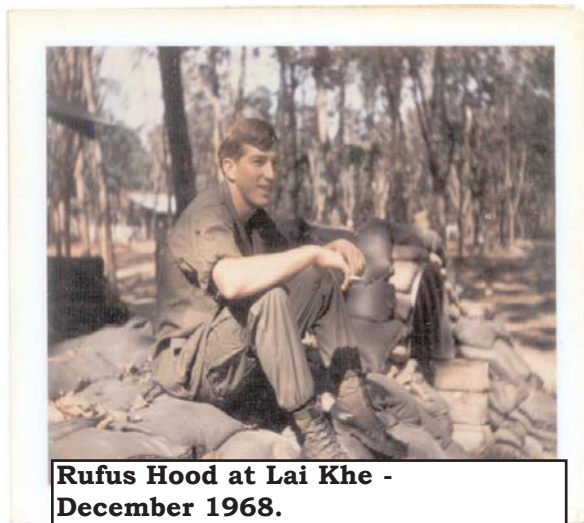
On or around 25 October 1968, the company had been on a stand down. As Ron recalls, that is when the official ceremony was held changing the 5th of the 60th over to the 1st of the 16th. After the ceremony they left Lai Khe and headed east for Firebase Jim. The trip took them through the rubber plantations. Ron traveled with Captain Wendy Winslow in command and a bunch of fresh troops. "I remember looking at the guys who had been there for a while and thought to myself, "Man, these are all a bunch of old guys". As it turned out, some were younger than I was, It's just that war makes you age" Ron recalled in 2005. They stayed at Firebase Jim for about three weeks. Ron worked with the engineers, sweeping roads and securing the route for convoys that would be coming through during the day. The main assignment was to protect the mine sweeping



**Moving out of Lai Khe  
October 1968**

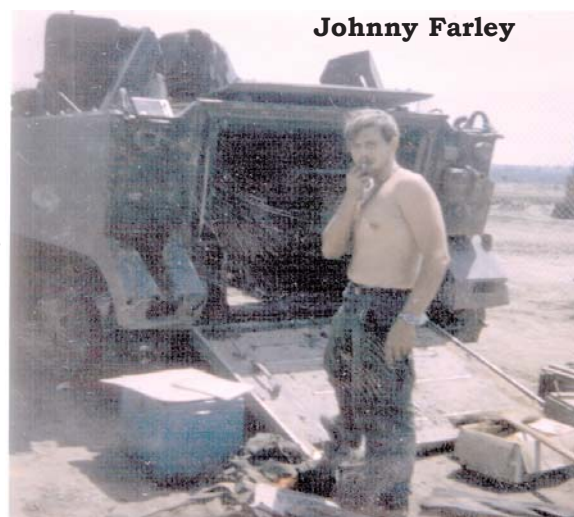
crews and the convoys. They would also go out on Search and Destroy Operations, and sweep areas that had just been bombed. At night they would go out into the Nipipalms and listen for enemy that might be advancing on the base camp, or reconned several suspected enemy base camps. Ron had his first taste of combat in a firefight while on patrol north of Firebase Jim.

Around the 15th of November 1968 Bandido Charlie was ordered to head southwest. They received word that the 2nd of the 28th was in heavy contact with the NVA in the Iron Triangle. They "Saddled up and headed hell bent for lection" for the 2nd of the 28th's location.



**Rufus Hood at Lai Khe -  
December 1968.**

Bandido Charlie went through the provincial capital of Ben Cat, crossed the bridge into the village of Andien, and headed west along the rice paddies. This area of the Iron Triangle was also known as "The Hobo Woods". They hadn't gotten very far before they started seeing dead NVA with "Black Lions" patches laid on them. The Black Lions was the name of the 28th Infantry. They left patches on their kills to let others know who did the work. The 2nd of the 28th was in hot pursuit and Bandido Charlie's job was to secure the area for the night. Large caches of rice and weapons had been found in the area. They set up base camp along the river where a lot of activity had been taking place. That night, they were hit with mortars and small arms fire. Johnny Farley got hit with shrapnel, but was back out with them in a few days.



**Johnny Farley**

The following day they moved a few clicks, through a rubber plantation. They moved deeper into the Iron Triangle. In the middle of the rubber plantation was a large clearing where the Bandidos were to build a new firebase, Firebase Huertgen. Artillery was flown in, wire was placed around the perimeter, bunkers dug in and sand-bagged.

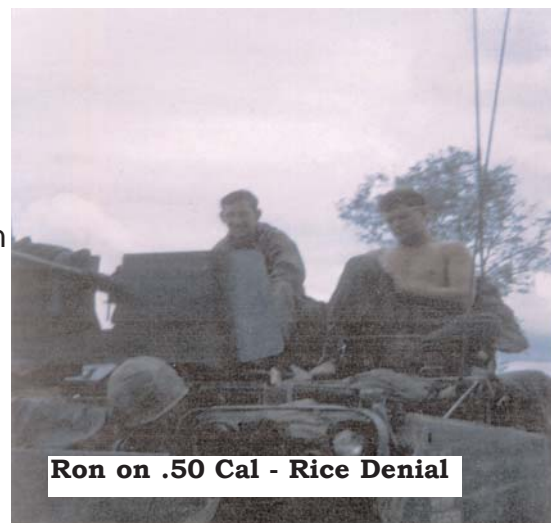
**Ron at Firebase Hurtegen**



They set up a base camp for two companies of infantry and an artillery unit. One of the platoons of Bandido was assigned to build a small platoon sized NDP up on the flats, just above the village of Andien. They were to provide med-caps and rice denial security to the locals. From the firebase they made sweeps of the surrounding area, set up night ambushes, and went out on three man listening posts deep in the jungle, three to four clicks from the base camp. They also went on cordon and search operations around the village of Andien. The village was having a lot of VietCong activity. They would surround the village during the night and then send a platoon into the village at daylight to flush out the VC. Ron recalls, "One night, around midnight, we all left FSB Huertgen on foot and surrounded the village of Andien. It had been reported that a number of

VC had been infiltrating the village at night. We had troops on all sides of the village. Then right at sunrise, a platoon went in and searched the entire village. Several VC tried to escape but were gunned down when they refused to lay down their weapons."

A week or two before Christmas 1968, the platoon securing Andien was pulled and Ron's platoon, 2nd platoon, was assigned to the task. They moved towards Andien and took over building a platoon sized base camp. The platoon leader was 2nd Lt. John McCarthy. Some of the other members Ron remembers were; Ben McGeachy, Johnny Farley, Mike Nelson, Greg Goldstien, Norm Hardin, Mike Tessaro, Ed Liepelt, Glasgow, Whitey, Stoney, Otts, Sgt. Lester, Mike Renshaw, Melvin McEldridge, Don Brewer, Squirrel, Oscar Papa, Massey, Don Lane, and Herb McHenry.



**Ron on .50 Cal - Rice Denial**



Their job was to provide security to the the village of Andien. They would go out and guard the workers in the rice paddies as they were bringing in the rice crop. They would also go down to the village, with a couple of medics and provide medical care for the locals. "Sometimes, it seemed like we were shooting the Viet Cong at night and patching them up the next day." Some nights they would go out on ambushes, three GI's and eight to ten Vietnamese. As soon as the shooting started, they would look around for the Vietnamese and they had high tailed it back to the vil-lage. They would even spend some nights at the vil-lage chiefs home and pull security since the pro-US village chiefs were on the hit list for the Viet Cong.



24 December 1968, Christmas Eve; "While the rest of the world thought that we were all enjoying a Christmas truce; I was out on an ambush patrol with about eight other guys. We were heading from our base camp down to a site near the rice paddies where we had just hit a mine with one of our armored personnel carriers the day before. Our job was to make sure that the Viet Cong didn't get anything out of it. It was dusk as we made our way down to our position. As we got closer, we could

see two or three VC down by the track.(with a block of crystallized TNT). One of our guys fired a grenade at them. The next thing we knew, we were in the middle of an all out firefight. So much for our Christmas truce. We had a couple of guys that got wounded but nothing too serious." During this fight Ron was carrying a PRC-25 radio. When they started to receive return fire from the VC he hunkered down in a small depression with the M-60 gunner. The VC fired two PRG's at them. The first one landed just short of their position, the second went just over their heads. They were lining up on the tracer rounds from the M-60. Ron was expecting a third RPG to take them out when all of a sudden a couple of tracks came up from behind with .50 caliber machine guns blasting over their heads into the enemy positions. At that point Ron say's, "'Silent Night" couldn't have sounded sweeter."







**Second Platoon track vehicles. Ron was assigned to the second platoon. The company was a Mechanized Infantry unit that utilized armored Personnel Carriers in their operations.**

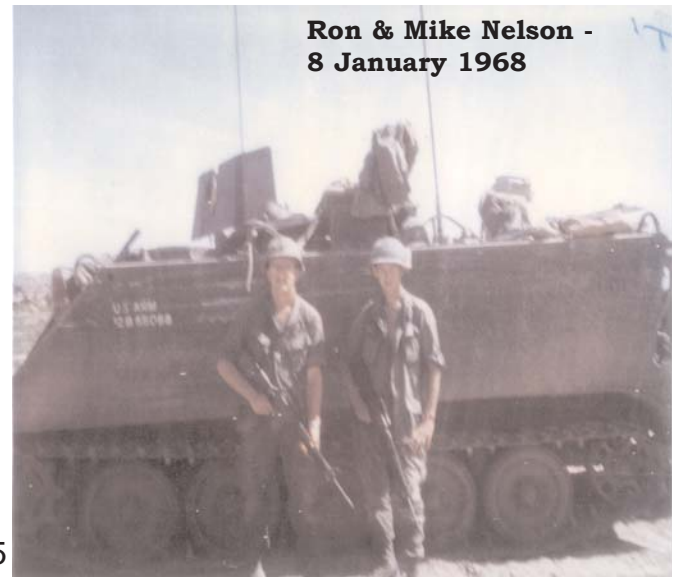


The men of Bandido Charlie continued to pull security for the village of Andien, reinforce their NDP, work rice denial, med-caps and ambush patrols for the next few weeks. In the beginning of January 1969 everyone was worried about another attack like the 1968 Tet Offensive. No one seem to know what might happen, but they were all ready for hell to break loose. Everything stayed quiet until the night of 8 January 1969.

Everything stayed quiet until the night of 8 January 1969.

That night as the fog rolled in, they sent out a squad sized ambush patrol down to the rice paddies just north west of the village. They also sent three or four guys down to secure the village chief and his family.

Mike Nelson was one of the guys on the ambush patrol. A few hours after they were set up the fog rolled in on them very heavily. The next thing they knew, they had VC walking on the rice paddy dikes right in front of them. Their claymores (an anti-personnel mine) were on the dike, about twenty yards away, facing away from the VC. Due to the fog, they couldn't see how many VC there were until after they had passed. Mike said that there were about 30 to 35 of them.



**Ron & Mike Nelson - 8 January 1968**

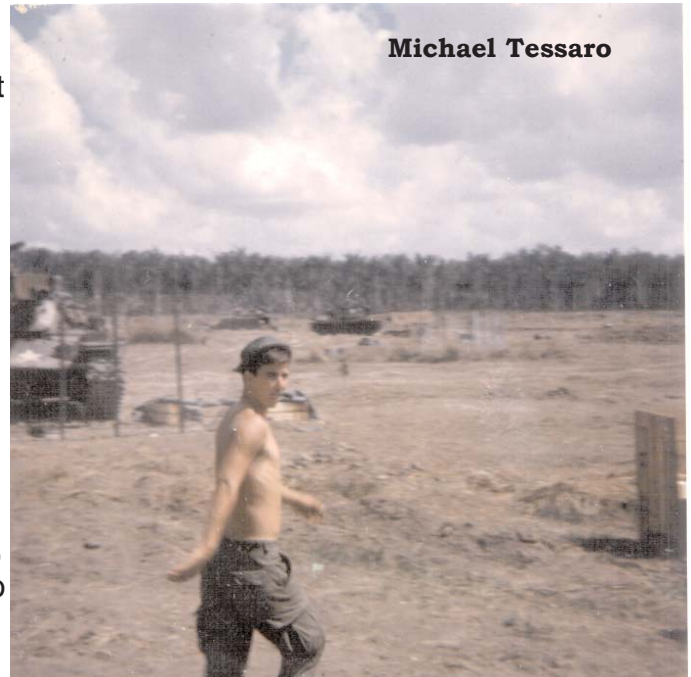
They didn't pop the ambush because they didn't know what size force they were up against. When the VC had cleared the area, the squad radioed the NDP at Andien that a platoon sized force was heading their way.

Ron remembers; "We all got into position, manning every fifty-cal, M-60, M-79, M-16, and mortars. When the first round came in, we let fly with everything we had." Ron's unit recieved mortar fire and small arms fire. "I was next to a bunker, facing west, firing my M-16, when I discovered my pants leg was wet. My first thought was "Oh shit, I pissed my pants". A bit later I discovered that I had been hit in the back of my left thigh. The wet was my blood."

"I, for whatever reason, ran over to the new command bunker that we were building in the center of our NDP. As I remember, we didn't have a roof on it yet. When I got inside the door, I found Michael Tessaro lying there wounded. The bunker had taken a hit from an RPG, and Michael had caught a lot of shrapnel."

"The firefight didn't last very long, due to the fact that we were set and ready for them, but when it was all said and done, about ten of us were medivaced out by helicopter that night. Michael Tessaro's head lay on my feet; he had terrible wounds to his face and chest. I believe that he died on the way to Lai Khe. Michael was one of those guys that everybody liked. His death had a dramatic impact on a lot of Bandidos."

"My leg wound turned out to be nothing too serious. The chunk of shrapnel about the size of a 9mm round is still lodged in my leg. From what I was told, it would have done more damage to cut it out than to leave it in. Besides, we were getting short of troops again so they sent me right back out three days later. I remember some of the guys giving me shit, 'cause they figured that I was shammin', but screw them. They're not the ones carrying this gift from Charlie with them."



**Michael Tessaro**

Area Deaths 1-21-68

## Services Scheduled For Viet War Victim

Funeral services are scheduled Tuesday for Michael John Tessaro, 23, of 417 Cass Ave., killed in action Jan. 8 in Vietnam. He was the son of Mike and Mildred Short Tessaro of Route 4, Edwardsville. His parents survive.

Mr. Tessaro was married to Connie L. Schmidt of Edwardsville on May 1, 1965, in the Eden Church of Christ in Edwardsville.

Besides his parents and wife, Mr. Tessaro is survived by a brother, Larry Tessaro, at home; a sister, Mrs. Gerald (Roseann) Bergrader of Granite City, and his grandmother, Mrs. Rose Tessaro, also of Granite City.

Mr. Tessaro was a member of the Bethel Evangelical Free Church of Granite City.

He was graduated from Col. Harvey High School in 1964.

Mr. Tessaro, who was employed by the Shell Oil Co. at Wood River for about eight months prior to entering the armed services, had coached in the Edwardsville Little League.

Friends may call at the Weber Funeral Home in Edwardsville after 2 p.m. Monday.

Members of the Edwardsville American Legion, World War I Barracks and Veterans of Foreign Wars will meet at the funeral home at 7:30 p.m. Monday.

Funeral services will be at

## Pfc. Tessaro of Edwardsville Dies of Wounds

EDWARDSVILLE — A local man, Pfc. Michael John Tessaro, 23, died Thursday in a hospital in Vietnam after being injured in action, his family learned Friday.

No further information concerning his death has yet been made available by U.S. Army authorities.

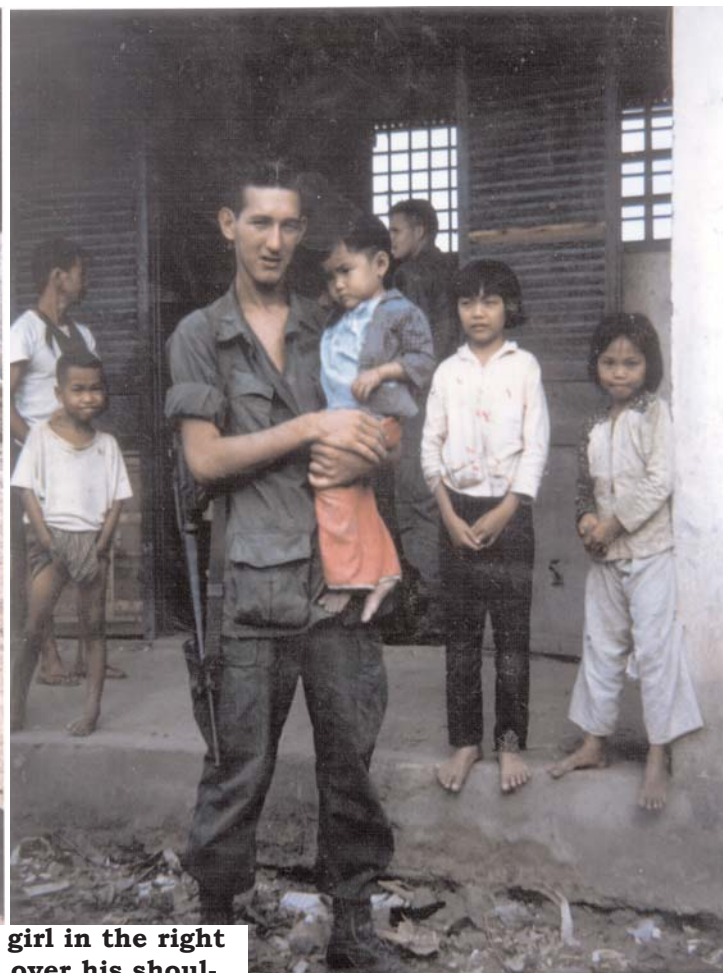
Pfc. Tessaro, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Tessaro of Rte. 4, Edwardsville, is also survived by his wife, the former Miss Connie Schmidt, who resides with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. William F. Schmidt of 417 Cass Ave.; a brother, Larry, at home; a sister, Mrs. Rose Ann Bergrader of Granite City; and paternal grandmother, Mrs. Rose Tessaro of St. Louis.

He was a member of Bethel Free Evangelical Church of Granite City.

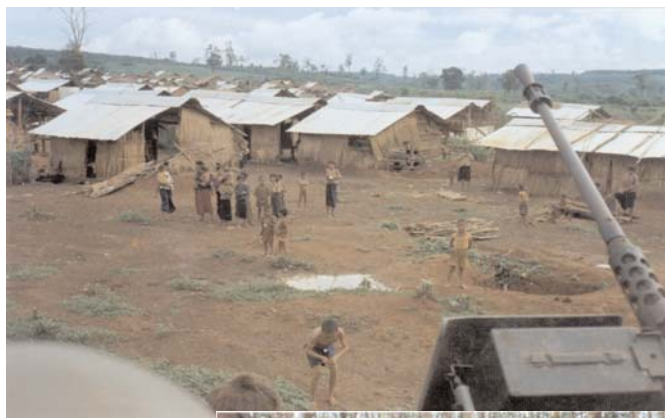


**Michael Tessaro and his wife Connie. Mike was Ron's friend in Vietnam and died at Ron's feet. 34 years after Mike's death Ron traveled to Illinois to visit his family and talk about the death of their son.**





**Ron Mackedanz with kids in Vietnam. The little girl in the right photo wouldn't stop crying so Ron slung his rifle over his shoulder and comforted her. The little girl quit crying soon after. Ron spent a lot of time with the people of Andien.**



**Traveling through villages in Vietnam. to the right, Vietnamese women gather wood.**



**Ron in a bunker near Andien South Vietnam.**





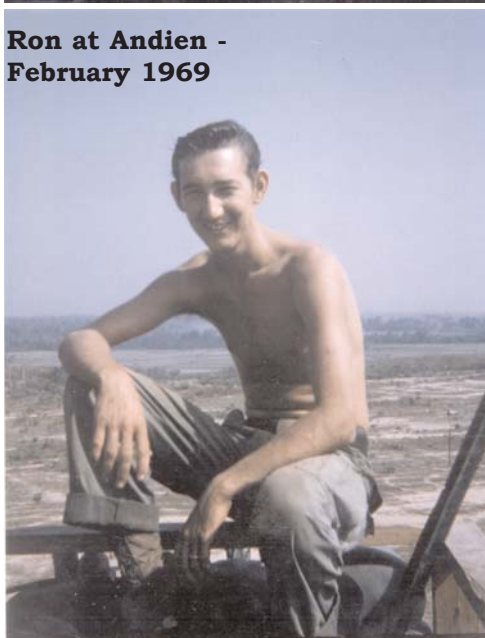
Ron doesn't remember much about the rest of January or February 1969. They spent most of their time in and around Andien and he was driving track for 2nd platoon. Sometime around 1 March 1969 Captain Woody Goldberg was replaced by Captain Kenneth Costich. Ron was chosen to be the Captain's track driver. In April the company



**Ron driving a Track.**

was moved to an area west of Ben Cat. They were at various FSB's during the time of the move. Around the end of May they were sent up toward Song Bey. Bandido Charlie was

**Ron at Andien - February 1969**



assigned to build firebases along the road and provide security for the roan plows that were clearing jungle back off the road. Their company along with Alpha Company and the Battalion headquarters were all stationed up there. With each company moving ahead as the clearing progressed, and they would build another base camp. They built FSB's Remagen 12, 13, 14 and maybe more.

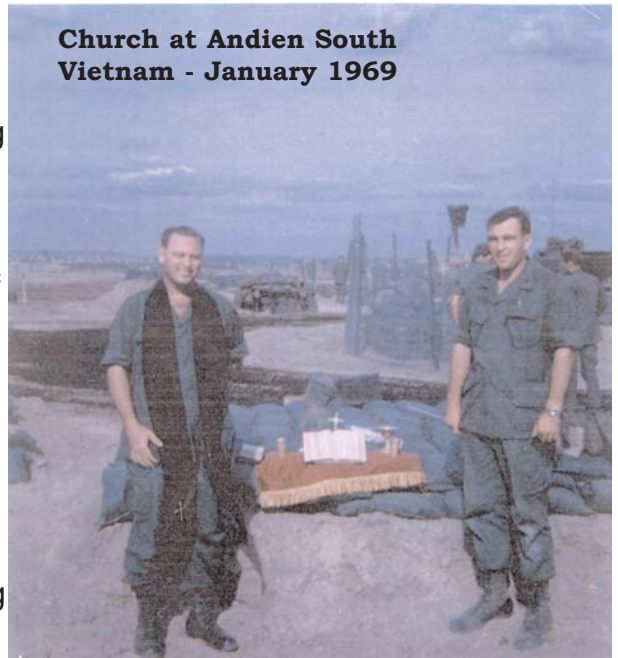
"One night, while coming back to our base camp, from battalion headquarters, we got ambushed. There were four APC's in our group. The lead one got through. I was running third. The fourth track got hit with an RPG and flipped over. The second track (band-aid) and I stopped, and turned into the ambush and opened fire with everything we had."

"We had a young forward observer (artillery), with us. He called in some illumination rounds, and brought some HE rounds into the north of our position. The whole thing probably lasted ten minutes. When it was all over, we had three guys wounded, off the fourth track. Everybody else was okay."

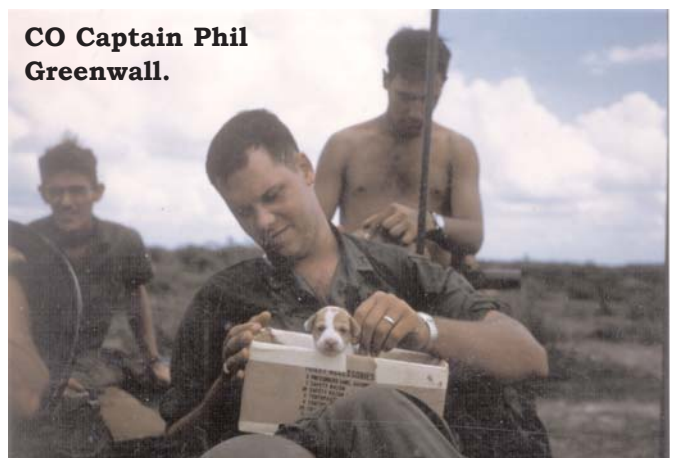
Sometime around the end of June or first part of July, they left Song Bey and headed back down around Lai Khe again. Captain Costich rotated out and Captain Phil Greenwall took over as Company Commander. They worked down to the southeast of Lai Khe, FSB Holiday Inn, Fourth of July, and FSB Jim as Ron recalls. Ron says of Capt Greenwall, "now this guy was a leader."

The second Week of July 1969, Ron finally got his R&R to Hawaii.

**Church at Andien South Vietnam - January 1969**



**CO Captain Phil Greenwall.**







**In June 1969 Ron received a three day in country R&R. He went to China Beach and met up with his brother-in-law Michael Wangerin. Mike was stationed there with the MN National Guard. This was their everyday life. Ron was jealous.**



**Command track in July 1969. That's Ron standing in front with no shirt. This is after Captain Greenwall took over.**



Ron met Janet in Honolulu during his R&R. Ron said that they "Spent a week doing things that married couples separated by war enjoy doing. We even got to see some of Hawaii. It was really hard to say goodbye. Going back to Nam to finish my tour was not on top of my agenda at the time."

When Ron returned to Vietnam, they operated in the Lai Khe area for a few weeks. Then around the first week of August, they saddled up and headed up Highway 13 toward An Loc and Loc Ninh. These two areas were receiving a lot of activity from the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and the Vietcong (VC).



**Ron's track.**



On 12 August 1969 Bandido Charlie, along with Alpha Company, and a Company from the 5th of the 7th Cavalry, went to bring the Cavalrymen out towards the Cambodian Border. The convoy consisted of Charlie Company with twenty APC's, Alpha company with twenty, and Battalion Headquarters with about six APC's. There were also about 150 men on foot with them. They were moving through the rubber plantations west of An Loc.

As they were going through the plantation a couple of NVA soldiers ran across the road in front of the column. The Battalion Commander (LTC Kenneth Cassels) ordered four tracks to pursue the enemy. The NVA led them straight into an ambush. They all turned to the right, heading toward the ambush to provide support for the four tracks. Suddenly they started to take heavy fire from the left flank. They swung around and proceeded up a hill in the direction it was coming from. Ron says, "I couldn't believe it, such a basic textbook ambush, and they drew us right into it."



Bandido Charlie Company, on the move, checking out local rubber tree harvest workers.

They were up against the 272nd NVA Regiment with reinforcements from the 273rd NVA Regiment. They were dug in and ready for action. The US soldiers were outnumbered two to one.

The battle in Ron's words; "As we moved into the ambush site, Alpha Company on the left, LTC



After action sweep of the battlefield, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1969. the previous day, August 12<sup>th</sup>, we engaged approximately 300 to 500 NVA 272<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. We lost several tracks, including the battalion command track and both Alpha and Charlie Company Command tracks.

Cassels in the middle, and Bandido Charlie on the right, we charged ahead. The Cavalry troops had dropped off to cover our right flank and rear. The NVA were dug in, tied up in rubber trees, and firing at us from every possible position. With the Bandido Charlie Command track leading the way, we let 'em have everything we had. The NVA knew what they wanted to accomplish. Within the first half hour of the firefight, they took out the Battalion commanders track and both Company Command tracks. I guess they knew how to count radio antennas."



"Driving for Capt. Greenwall, I saw the first RPG go right over my head. We were within twenty to thirty yards of where the NVA were dug in. I didn't see the next RPG. It hit the front of our track, destroying the engine. The service door in the driver's compartment blew out and hit me in the shoulder. At that point, I must have developed tunnel vision, because all I remember seeing was little brown guys all over in front of me. I grabbed my M-79 thump gun (grenade launcher) and started firing from the driver's hatch. I didn't realize at the time that there was no one left on my track. They had all been blown off when the RPG hit."



"After what seemed like forever I crawled out of the top of the driver's hatch. Al Kalchick, my fifty gunner, told me just a couple of years ago that he ran up and told me to get the hell out of there."

"When I got to the rear of our track Al Kalchick and First Sergeant Al Herrera were both there. I didn't realize that they were both already wounded from the initial RPG hit. As we hunkered down for a minute, another round came in from somewhere. Although we were all very close to each other, I was not hit but Kalchick and Herrera were both hit seriously. I was hollering for a medic while I was cutting Kalchick's pant leg off and bandaging up his wounds as best I could. First Sergeant Herrera was hit in the main artery near his arm pit. He had shoved his thumb in the wound to stop the bleeding."

"Finally a medic got there and took over. Not knowing what to do next, but realizing that we had nobody on our fifty, I went through the back hatch, into the track, and up on the fifty. Believe me, this was no hero thing. It was survival."

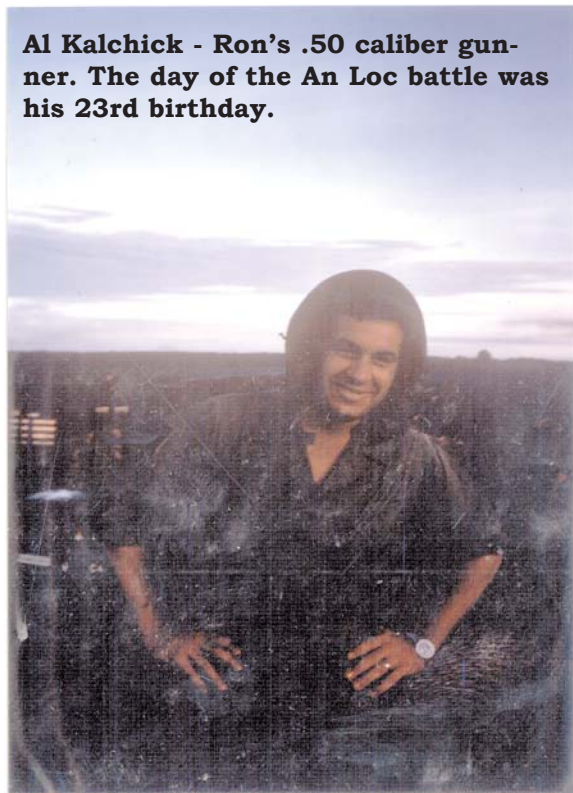
"Inside the track Captain Greenwall was trying to coordinate the support. At that point he believed that Lieutenant Colonel Cassels was out of the fight. After getting on the fifty I started firing at the NVA positions. Unfortunately the barrel on the fifty was burned out and rounds were going all over the place. Tracer rounds were going in six foot circles. I got off about one hundred rounds or so and Captain Greenwall was handing me more ammo, when another RPG with my name on it, hit in the trees just behind me on my right side. I took multiple shrapnel hits in my right hand, right shoulder, back, face, and the most serious ones in the neck. The biggest one just missed my jugular by about a quarter of an inch."

"I remember dropping down inside the track saying, 'I'm hit, I'm hit.' Captain Greenwall took one look at me and said, 'You're alright Mack, get out of here.' Years later he told me, 'you looked pretty tough Mack, I didn't think you were going to make it.' I was covered pretty heavy with blood, some mine, some Kalchick's."

"When I baled out of the track, the medic was still there working on Kalchick and First Sergeant Herrera. He bandaged my neck and hand wounds and told me to get the litter out of the track so we could get Kalchick out of there. I got the litter and we loaded Kalchick on it. The with First Sergeant Herrera running along side barking out orders, Mel McEldridge, I and two other guys grabbed the litter and started running down the hill with Al Katchick on it."

"We hadn't made it very far when McEldridge took a round thru his side that exited by his navel. He fell and I stumbled and fell on him and Kalchick. We got up, grabbed the litter again, and took off for the medevac track at the bottom of the hill."

**Al Kalchick - Ron's .50 caliber gunner. The day of the An Loc battle was his 23rd birthday.**



**Looking into the back of a track - Armored Personnel Carrier.**

In the end Ron and the others were medevac'd out. Ron was choppered to the 12th Evacuation hospital at Cu Chi where they removed most of the shrapnel from him. "I spent a few days there and then was sent to a convalescent hospital in Cam Rahn Bay for a few weeks." Around the second week of September he returned to Lai Khe and Bandido Charlie. He had less than a month left in Vietnam. Ron has little recollection off his remaining time in Vietnam.

A new First Sergeant tried to make Ron go out into the field but Captain Greenwall stood up and said "No" Ron never had to go back out. Ron went up for promotion and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant just before his tour of duty ended in Vietnam. He left Vietnam 11 October 1969 and arrived back in the US on 13 October. When he awoke on the morning of the 14th there was three inches of snow on the ground, a big change from the jungles of Vietnam. He was on leave staying at his folks in Spicer until the first week of November.

Page 6 The American Traveler

## An Loc Action Involves 1/16

By MSG Stephen R. Babers  
(17A 10)—The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry (Mech) "have been up and around An Loc doing their thing for the past few weeks. Since commencing Operation Kentucky Company with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment on August 4, the "Iron Rangers" have taught NVA elements to think twice before engaging.

Besides daily reconnaissance missions, the Iron Rangers have conducted combined operations with Army of the Republic of Viet (ARVN) units.

The Iron Rangers have decreased the number in the enemy ranks by 90 since the operation began. Some 94 have been killed, five have been detained and one soldier rallied to the side of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth G. Cuyler's "track-mounted infantrymen" received an early welcome from NVA when they arrived at Night Defensive Position Eagle II. What the enemy did not know was that the "Iron Rangers" eat dinner, make rounds for breakfast. The next day, as a thank-you note, the 3d Platoon from Company C and attached Army of the Republic of Vietnam elements conducted air assault operations in the northwest of An Loc. These NVA were killed, four were detained and one rallied. Some 42 rounds of 120 mortar ammo were captured before nightfall.

An early morning search on the following day found another 20 NVA bodies waiting for the undertaker. "Charles" promptly accepted the invitation to play and stomped 24.5 rounds of three "miles" into NVA "Chander IV." But also, he who gives must also receive. The Iron Rangers put on a little demonstration of track power and killed another 21 NVA in the west of An Loc that afternoon.

The NVA, deciding that the 17th played a little rough for them, turned toward the ARVN units at NDF Eagle I. They did not know the Iron Rangers were everywhere. The ARVN soldiers found another 25 NVA bodies in the wire at Eagle I as dawn broke on the 16th. These men blew themselves up with hand grenades.

ELEMENTS of the 1st Battalion, 16th mechanized Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, team with ARVN forces in a sweep through the dense rubber trees near An Loc, nine miles from the Cambodian border. The unit has had daily contact with NVA forces since the sweep began on August 11th.  
(Photo By SPS Orgie Hall)



Ron Mackedanz, Mike Nelson and Dave Komes, on the way to Vaughn Tau, October 1969. (Getting short, Thanks, Phil.)



"Poker Party, infantry style" Mike Nelson, Greg Goldenstein and Norm Hardin. (check out Goldies hand.)





**Various photos of Ron Mackedanz in Vietnam. He served in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969 with the 1st of the 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. He recieved two Purple Hearts for wounds in combat.**

After his leave he headed for Fort Carson Colorado where he was assigned to the Headquarters Company, 10th Infantry, Fifth Infantry Division working in a communications unit. Fellow Bandido Greg Goldenstein and Chuck Richards were also assigned there. Ron and Janet lived off post in Colorado Springs from November until his discharge. Ron was discharged 15 May 1970 as a Sergeant.

After Vietnam Ron took advantage of the GI Bill and went to college. He attended Marketing Management classes at the Willmar Vo-Tech and went to work retail for a few years. He then went back to school for Accounting and Ag Management. He worked for Production Credit Association for about 9 and a half years, but when the farm crisis of the 1980's happened, he was left unemployed. After working odds and ends jobs he went to work for Burlington Northern in 1989. In 1993 he became an engineer and ran trains through central Minnesota. After suffering with the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Ron worked with the VA and is now retired working on his memoirs of his days in Vietnam.

Mackedanz is a active member of the 16th Infantry Regiment Association and serves as editor of the association's newsletter: "Dagwood Dispatches". On 30 September 2005, Ron was awarded the Distinguished Member of Regiment award from the 16th Infantry Regiment Association.



**Ron Mackedanz today**



**Bandido Greg Goldenstein. Greg served in Vietnam with Ron and in Fort Carson. Greg was killed in a Automobile accident 18 May 1971.**

On 12 November 2010, Ron along with three other Combat Wounded Veterans were recognized with the American Patriot Award at the Willmar Auditorium as a part of the Veteran's Day observance.

The American Patriot Program Honor Award is an award given to honor military veterans through America's pastime, baseball. The award is designed to honor combat wounded veterans with a special, laser engraved baseball bat.

During the program, a brief summary of Ron's service was presented by Jon Lindstrand, and the award was presented by Wes Hazlett, national chairman of The American Patriot Program.



Ron, second from left, with the three other recipients of the American Patriot Award on 12 November 2010.

In addition to the award, Ron received a letter of appreciation from Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, a special handmade fleece throw with his branch of service on it, and other donated items in honor of his service.



In 2011, after 42 years, 6 members of Bandido Charlie company were recognized for their service in Vietnam. Four members were awarded the Silver Star, and two more awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device for action on 12 August, 1969. My friend, Ron Mackedanz, was one of those awarded the Silver Star.

Official Recognition would take place at Fort Riley Kansas in March 2012, but Ron, like the others, held local reenactment presentations for family and friends to witness the presentation of the awards.

USMHC had the honor of coordinating and planning the ceremony held in honor of Ron at the War Memorial Auditorium in Willmar, MN as a part of the Veteran's Day event on 12 November, 2011. Over 400 friends and family attended the ceremony, and Ron's longtime friend Command Sergeant Major Doug Hanson "pinned" the Silver Star on him.







On 9 March 2012 a special ceremony was held at Fort Riley Kansas to recognize the Bandidos for their service on 12 August 1969.

Ron attended the ceremony along with three other honorees. General Macwillie did the honors of pinning the men with their respective awards along with Lt Col Smith, Commander of the 16th Infantry Regiment.



The ceremony also included recognition for current Bandidos and other members of the 16th Infantry Regiment who had recently returned from deployment. It was a remarkable experience for Ron to be able to attend the recognition of those men of the current Bandido Charlie company and regiment.



At top, the certificate to go along with the Silver Star medal for Ron. Middle and bottom, Ron being pinned with the Silver Star at the Ceremony at Fort Riley. Above, Ron mackedanz, Steve Biernacke, Al Herrera, and Doug Ludlow after their "pinnings" at Fort Riley.

# DRAFTED



**GREETINGS—YOU HAVE  
BEEN SELECTED BY  
YOUR FRIENDS AND  
NEIGHBORS**

Ronald W. Mackedanz  
“Bandido Mack”

For almost a decade, Ron has worked on the memoirs of his experience in Vietnam. He wanted to share his story with others, and tried to put his memories together in book form.

In November 2012, “Drafted: Greetings- You Have Been Selected By Your Friends and Neighbors” was self published by Ron.

After years of work, he finally saw his hope to share his story come to light.

As an honor to USMHC, I was asked to write a testimonial to be included on the back cover of the book:

**“*Drafted* is one of the best first-hand accounts of the experiences of a Vietnam Infantry Soldier around. Mackedanz shares his unique and heroic journey as a civilian, soldier, and then Veteran, continuing to serve his fellow veterans even after the battles of his generation’s wars are over. He helps remind us all how much we as Americans owe our Veterans and current military personnel.”**

It was indeed an honor to be able to make that contribution to Ron’s efforts and his book is a fitting testimonial to his serv-

ice, and the men he served with. It is a remarkable story, and appropriate to be read by people of all ages.

Ron’s book is available for order via mail order. You can get your copy by mailing a request along with a check for \$20 to:

Kasota Lake Productions  
P.O. Box 251  
Kandiyohi, MN 56251





**Uniforms worn by Ron Mackedanz during his time in the US Army. Above is his dress uniform, top right is his Jungle Fatigues, and bottom right is his stateside fatigues. These were all donated by Ron in 2005.**

Ron first came to the Veteran's Day Display in November 2004. He was impressed and has since donated the above uniforms and become an active volunteer in the set-up and tear down of the display.