

STEVEN NEIL BEZOLD

Class 25A-67

STEVEN NEIL BEZOLD
is honored on Panel 40W, Row 52 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: STEVEN NEIL BEZOLD
Wall Name: STEVEN N BEZOLD
Date of Birth: 6/12/1944
Date of Casualty: 10/29/1968
Home of Record: MCKITTRICK
County of Record: MONTGOMERY COUNTY
State: MO
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: CAPT
Casualty Country: NORTH VIETNAM
Casualty Province: NZ
Status: MIA



CPT Bezold served with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 94th Artillery, 108th Artillery Group as an Aerial Observer.

Steve and I served together in Viet Nam

Steve Bezold and I served together in the 108th Artillery Group at Dong Ha, South Viet Nam. Our mission was flying as Aerial Observers (A/Os) in the back seat (behind the pilot) of an O-1E single engine fixed wing observer aircraft called the "Birddog".

Our job was, among other things, to fly the North Vietnam side of the DMZ and adjust artillery and naval gunfire on targets while the pilot both flew the aircraft and called in high performance aircraft (jet fighters) to drop bombs or make strafing runs.

Flying in a Birddog under fire was a delicate balance of risk. If we flew too high and too far North, we'd be in the trajectory of 37 & 57 MM Anti Aircraft; too low and we'd be a good targets for quad 50s (four 50 caliber machine guns). Being shot at with both was the norm, not the exception.

On the day Steve and his pilot, Major Don Harrison (#40W-53 on the wall, next to Steve) were shot down, they were flying west of the coastal flat land in hilly terrain. They spotted something and went a little lower to take a look. What they didn't see was a quad 50 on the hillside. They were trying to climb out of the area (gain altitude) when they were hit and, because their airspeed was slow due the climb, they made an easier

target then usual; they were also too close to the ground to dive and effectively maneuver (our only defense when under fire).

This information is put together from interpretation of radio transmissions, surveillance photos of the positions of the quad 50 & aircraft, and the characteristics of the aircraft. No one was there to see them go in.

In less than 2 hours I flew the spotter mission and found the aircraft. The fuselage was intact, but there were no radio transmissions, and we could not see either the quad 50 or any movement on the ground. We spent the entire 3 hour mission trying to spot survivors or enemy movement before we had to RTB (return to base) for fuel.

Both Marine and Army units volunteered to go in after them, but there was no intel to identify where they were, and the area was in the heart of the bad lands.

Two days later (10/31/68) we constructed a 4' iron cross (crucifix), put a streamer on the top to keep it upright, and dropped it over the site.

The next day, 11/1/68, President Johnson called a bomb halt on North Vietnam and we were not allowed in North Vietnam airspace for 3-4 weeks.

In about two weeks we received an unconfirmed report that an unnamed marine unit (pathfinder or LLR [Long Range Recon]) had gotten to the site and confirmed that:

- a. the fuselage was intact
- b. there were no bullet holes or blood in the cockpit.

I left Viet Nam in early December of that year and have no further information that I can contribute.

CPT Steve Bezold and MAJ Don Harrison remain MIA to this day.

Steve remains in my heart and my thoughts. I have been to the "Wall" and wept by my comrades name on more than one occasion, and will undoubtedly do so again.

Posted by: John McPartland
Relationship: We served together
September 13, 2004

Still not forgotten

Steve was a good soldier, and a good friend. We served together in the 108th Artillery Group, Dong Ha.

Posted by: Rich Marrocco
Relationship: We served together
September 8, 2006

From www.pownetwork.org

BEZOLD, STEVEN NEIL

Name: Steven Neil Bezold
Rank/Branch: O2/US Army
Unit: HHB, 2nd Btn, 94th Artillery, 108th Artillery Group
Date of Birth: 12 June 1944 (Hermann MO)
Home City of Record: McKittrick MO
Date of Loss: 29 October 1968
Country of Loss: North Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 165627N 1065614E (YD063739)
Status (in 1973): Missing In Action
Category: 2
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: O1G
Refno: 1314
Other Personnel In Incident: Donald L. Harrison (missing)

Source: Compiled by Homecoming II Project 15 June 1990 from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK 1998.

REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: On the afternoon of October 29, 1968, 1LT Donald L. Harrison, pilot, and 1LT Steven N. Bezold, observer, were flying in a Cessna O1G Bird Dog observation plane (tail #57-6027), with another O1G on an artillery adjustment mission over the DMZ.

As the two planes entered the mission area, they were briefed by departing aircraft who had been receiving anti-aircraft flak from the northern edge of the mission area. Lt. Harrison worked the southern end of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) while the other aircraft went north to try to find the source of the anti-aircraft fire.

The northern aircraft, while observing for a pair of fighter aircraft on a gun position, had a malfunction and could not mark the target, so the observer pilots agreed to trade area locations. During the change, as the aircraft passed each other, 1LT Harrison's plane was hit in the left rear cockpit area, between the pilot and the observer. The aircraft continued straight for a few seconds, and then started a slow descending right turn. The turn became tighter as the descent rate increased until impact. There were no radio transmissions from Harrison's plane after it was hit.

Due to approaching darkness, and the difficulty in locating the crash site, only an electronic search could be made that night. The next day, the downed plane's wing and fuselage were located and vehicle tracks around the wreckage were seen. It appeared

that the wreckage had been moved to a more visible location in order to draw rescue aircraft into a trap. As aircraft went near the wing, intense anti-aircraft fire was received. No contact was ever made with the crew. The area was never searched because of intense hostility in the area.

When 591 Americans were released from Vietnamese prisons at the end of the war, Bezold and Harrison were not among them. They are among nearly 2400 who are still missing in Southeast Asia.

Tragically, over 10,000 reports relating to Americans prisoner, missing, or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia have been received by the U.S. Government, convincing many experts that hundreds of Americans are still alive, waiting for their country to come for them. Steven Bezold and Donald Harrison could be among them. It's time we brought our men home.

Donald Harrison was promoted to the rank of Major and Steven Bezold to the rank of Captain during the period they were maintained missing.