



SERGEANT ANTHONY LASSITER UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM

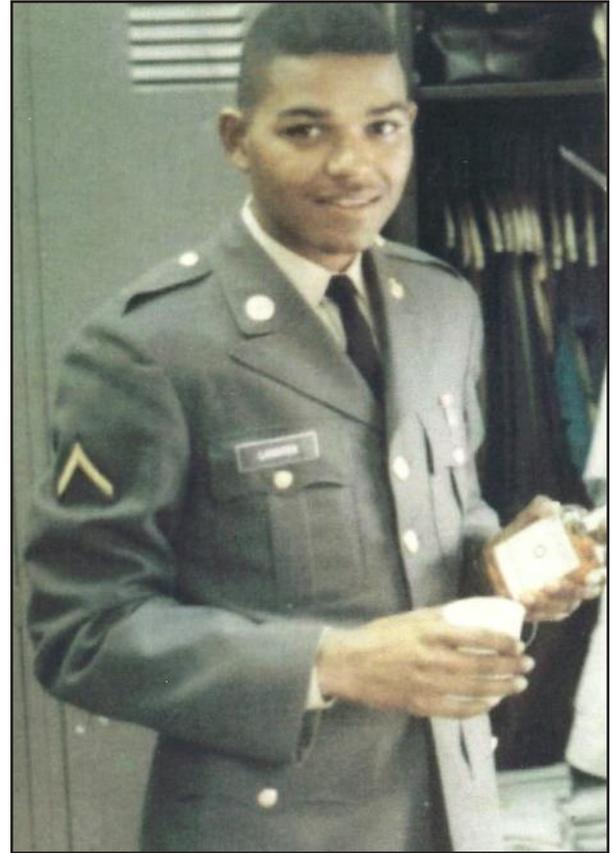
Anthony Lassiter was born in February 1947 in Beacon, New York. He attended his local high school, where he was the quarterback for his football team, and a member of the varsity wrestling and baseball team, playing 2nd and 3rd base. He graduated high school in 1966.

A witness to the Civil Rights Movement and the social tensions of the time, he was greatly inspired and influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy, and he greatly mourned along with his country when the two were tragically assassinated.

With the Vietnam War in full escalation, he enlisted in the United States Army. The time was April 1968, right after the Vietcong's Tet offensive. He recalls a good friend in the military that he greatly admired but lost his life in the war... Anthony's aptitude was evaluated and the Army decided that he possessed the intelligence and skills sets to become an electrician.

Upon his graduation from Basic Combat Training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Private Lassiter was stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco, California. There he was assigned to the "burial detail firing squad" unit where he performed the 21-gun salute at the funerals of fallen heroes brought back from the battlefields of Vietnam. It was a sobering experience for the young private not familiar with the hardships of war. It was not uncommon for 300 caskets to arrive every week.

In 1969, Specialist E4 Lassiter received his next set of orders and was given a 30-day leave to visit his family. After that he reported to Fort Lewis, Wash-



ington. He was then sent to the Republic of South Vietnam, where the terrible fighting there had already taken the lives of many brave heroes.

As Lassiter recalls, "I was going through a town, and on a fence was the head of a Vietcong soldier."

The cruelty of war hit home. "This is where I realized that the war was real."

After arriving at the Vinh Long Airfield in Vietnam, Specialist Lassiter was assigned to Bravo Company, 36th Engineering Brigade. His primary responsibilities included building helicopter landing pads for Cobra gun ships.

August 25, 1969 started out like most other days. Lassiter had just recently been promoted to sergeant. His company's morale was high. They were excited about their next assignment, building an airfield up north near the Dinh Tuong Province. They were in high spirits as they left Vinh Long in a convoy of thirty trucks.

"The morning of the 19th my company was on convoy up to Dinh Tuong to build helicopter installations for Cobra gun ships. We were just outside the

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Dinh Tuong Compound when hostile forces attacked us. The 5-ton dump truck, in which I was riding with five other soldiers, was hit with a Rocket Propelled Grenade. The RPG hit one of our guys in the back of his leg, severing it from his body. He was blown out of the truck; the leg remained inside the truck. I still have visions of Baker's leg in that truck," recalls Sergeant Lassiter.

"The rest of us received wounds from shrapnel to different parts of our bodies. My wounds were to my legs and side. I was evacuated by helicopter to Long Ben where I had surgery on my legs and then evacuated to Japan, where I had another operation on my left leg." Sergeant Lassiter believes his vehicle had been targeted, out of the line of 30 trucks, because his truck had an M60 machine gun mounted prominently on the front. Several of his comrades were lost in the RPG attack.

After Lassiter recovered in the Army hospital in Japan, his commander considered returning him to Vietnam to rejoin his unit. However, as his two-year enlistment was coming to an end, it was decided to send him home to the States. He recalls that the first thing he did upon returning home was to visit his family and friends, whom he had not seen for nearly two years.

Sergeant Lassiter was awarded the Purple Heart by his Company Commander and 1st Sergeant while he was in the Army hospital in Vietnam undergoing surgery. He received the Army Commendation Medal for his distinguished service during the period July 10, 1969 to August 23, 1969. He was honorably discharged from the Army in November 1969.

In January 1970 he went to work at IBM in East Fishkill, New York and after several years he became a manager. One of his favorite assignments was recruiting college students to work for IBM. He worked at IBM for the next 30 years.

Anthony Lassiter worked from April 2006 to June 2008 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He was a Shift Lieutenant in the Security Guard Force that protects the Corps of Cadets and the West Point community.

Anthony and his wife have two sons, Justin and Aaron. He has five grandchildren.

Anthony would like to take his family someday to visit Saigon, now re-named Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. He respected and admired the commitment of the South Vietnamese people. Anthony also remembers in particular one woman, whom the soldiers called Mama-San, a kind, cheerful lady who could always be depended upon to assist the soldiers in doing their laundry and keeping their barracks clean.

Mr. Lassiter is now retired. He serves his church and the community in volunteer activities.

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