

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



SERGEANT FIRST CLASS WILLIAM M. BRYANT

Inducted May 2016



Sgt. 1st Class William M. Bryant was born on February 16, 1933 in Cochran, Georgia. He joined the Army in 1953, and by 1969, he was serving as a sergeant first class in Company A, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in the Long Khanh Province, Republic of Vietnam.

On March 24, 1969, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant led a company of South Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Group troops during an intense attack by North Vietnamese forces. He was fatally wounded by enemy fire during the engagement. Sgt. 1st Class Bryant was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the attack.

His citation reads: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sgt. 1st Class Bryant, assigned to Company A, distinguished himself while serving as commanding officer of Civilian Irregular Defense Group Company 321, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Mobile Strike Force Command, during combat operations. The battalion came under heavy fire and was surrounded by the elements of three enemy regiments. Sgt. 1st Class Bryant displayed extraordinary heroism throughout the succeeding 34 hours of incessant attack as he moved throughout the company position heedless of the intense hostile fire while establishing and improving the defensive perimeter, directing fire during critical phases of the battle, distributing ammunition, assisting the wounded and providing leadership and an inspirational example of courage to his men. When a helicopter drop of ammunition was made to re-supply the beleaguered force, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant with complete disregard for his safety ran through the heavy enemy fire to retrieve the scattered ammunition boxes and distributed needed ammunition to his men.

During a lull in the intense fighting, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant led a patrol outside the perimeter to obtain information on the enemy. The patrol came under intense automatic weapons fire and was pinned down. Sgt. 1st Class Bryant single-handedly repulsed one enemy attack on his small force and by his heroic action inspired his men to fight off other assaults. Seeing a wounded enemy soldier some distance from the patrol location, Bryant crawled forward alone under heavy fire to retrieve the soldier for intelligence purposes. Finding that the enemy soldier had expired, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant crawled back to his patrol and led his men back to the company position where he again took command of the defense.

As the siege continued, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant organized and led a patrol in a daring attempt to break through the enemy encirclement. The patrol had advanced some 200 meters by heavy fighting when it was pinned down by the intense automatic weapons fire from heavily fortified bunkers when Sgt. 1st Class Bryant was severely wounded. Despite his wounds he rallied his men, called for helicopter gunship support and directed heavy suppressive fire upon the enemy positions. Following the last gunship attack, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant fearlessly charged an enemy automatic weapons position, overrunning it and single-handedly destroying its three defenders. Inspired by his heroic example, his men renewed their attack on the entrenched enemy. While regrouping his small force for the final assault against the enemy, Sgt. 1st Class Bryant fell mortally wounded by an enemy rocket.

Sgt. 1st Class Bryant's selfless concern for his comrades, at the cost of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army. The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School headquarters building, Bryant Hall was memorialized in his honor.