

JAMES CHRISTOF BECKER

Class 1-69

JAMES CHRISTOF BECKER
is honored on Panel 8W, Row 113 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: JAMES CHRISTOF BECKER
Wall Name: JAMES C BECKER
Date of Birth: 4/18/1944
Date of Casualty: 8/15/1970
Home of Record: PALESTINE
County of Record: ANDERSON COUNTY
State: TX
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: 1LT
Casualty Country: LAOS
Casualty Province: LZ
Status: MIA



1LT Becker was assigned to the 71st Aviation Company, 14th Aviation Battalion, 16th Aviation Group, Americal (23rd Infantry) Division. He was flying a UH-1H Helicopter on a reconnaissance team extraction mission in Laos. Because of the difficult terrain in the area of the planned extraction, the recon team was to be lifted out by ladder. The helicopter hovered 50 feet over the pickup zone and dropped the ladder from the right side of the aircraft. Five of the team members climbed onto the ladder, and the helicopter began to lift off. At about 100 feet the aircraft began to receive small arms fire and crashed. The five team members were stripped off the ladder by the trees as the helicopter descended. Two crew members survived the crash were extracted. No attempts were made to return and recover 1LT Becker and the other crew member that died because of the location and hostile forces in the area.

Remembering a Hero

James Becker was a pilot with the 71st Assault Helicopter Co, The Rattlers and Firebirds. He was flying a slick in Laos on Aug. 15, 1970 when his helicopter was shot down while on a mission to extract troops. He and the door gunner, Peter Schmidt, were trapped in their helicopter. A rescue attempt was not allowed since we were in Laos at a time our government denied we were there. It is unknown if they survived or not. I wear both of their POW/MIA bracelets still, today. They will not be forgotten.
Steve Mackey 71st AHC Chu Lai 3-70 to 3-71

Posted by: Steve Mackey
Relationship: Served with Lt. Becker
April 25, 2000

From www.flyarmy.org

BECKER JAMES CHRISTOF

Name: 1LT James Christof Becker

Status: Body Not Recovered from an incident on 08/15/1970 while performing the duty of Pilot.

Age at death: 26.3

Date of Birth: 04/18/1944

Home City: Palestine, TX

Service: FA branch of the reserve component of the U.S. Army.

Unit: 71 AHC, 14 CAB

Major organization: Americal Division

Flight class: 69-28

Service: FA branch of the U.S. Army.

The Wall location: 08W-113

Short Summary: While on LRRP extraction, the aircraft crashed on its right side killing Becker and the gunner.

Aircraft: UH-1H tail number 69-15375

Country: Laos

MOS: 1981 = 19 Rotary Wing Aviator (Unit Commander)

Primary cause: LAOS-BNR

Major attributing cause: aircraft connected not at sea

Compliment cause: vehicular accident

Vehicle involved: helicopter

Position in vehicle: pilot

Vehicle ownership: government

Started Tour: 06/15/1970

"Official" listing: helicopter air casualty - non-aircrew

The initial status of this person was: missing in action - bonified

Length of service: *

Reason: aircraft lost or crashed

Casualty type: Hostile - died while missing

married male U.S. citizen

Race: Caucasian

Religion: Disciples of Christ

The following information secondary, but may help in explaining this incident.

Category of casualty as defined by the Army: battle dead Category of personnel: active duty Army Military class: officer

This record was last updated on 06/06/1996

Helicopter UH-1H 69-15375

Information on U.S. Army helicopter UH-1H tail number 69-15375

The Army purchased this helicopter 0570

Total flight hours at this point: 00000048

Date: 08/15/1970 MIA-POW file reference number: 1657

Incident number: 70081525.KIA

Unit: 71 AHC

Laos

UTM grid coordinates: YC509163

Original source(s) and document(s) from which the incident was created or updated: Defense Intelligence Agency Reference Notes. Defense Intelligence Agency Helicopter Loss database.

Also: 1657 ()

Loss to Inventory

Crew Members:

G SP4 SCHMIDT PETER ALDEN BNR

P 1LT BECKER JAMES CHRISTOF BNR

REFNO Synopsis:

BECKER, JAMES CHRISTOF Name: James Christof Becker Rank/Branch: O2/US Army Unit: 71st Aviation Company, 14th Aviation Battalion, 16th Aviation Group, 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) Date of Birth: 18 April 1944 (Oxford NE) Home City of Record: Palestine TX Date of Loss: 15 August 1970 Country of Loss: Laos Loss Coordinates: 154943N 1070111E (YC509163) Status (in 1973): Killed/Body Not Recovered Category: 3 Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH1H Other Personnel in Incident: Peter A. Schmidt (missing); Michael D. Christ; Raymond W. Anderson (both rescued) REMARKS: SYNOPSIS: On August 15, 1970, 1Lt. James C. Becker, pilot; CW2 Raymond W. Anderson, aircraft commander; SP4 Michael D. Christ, crew chief; and SP4 Peter A. Schmidt, door gunner; were flying a UH1H helicopter (tail number 69-15375) on a reconnaissance team extraction mission in Laos. Because of the difficult terrain in the area of the planned extraction, the recon team was to be lifted out by ladder. The helicopter hovered 50 feet over the pickup zone and dropped the ladder from the right side of the aircraft. Five of the team members climbed onto the ladder, and the helicopter began to lift off. At about 100 feet the aircraft began to receive small arms fire and crashed. The five team members were stripped off the ladder by the trees as the helicopter descended. After the crash, CW2 Anderson checked the two crewmen on the right side of the aircraft, noticing that 1Lt. Becker was upright in his seat, however, it seemed that he had hit his head into the overhead instrument panel in the force of the impact. Becker's helmet was gone, and there was blood on the floor. CW2 Anderson stated that Becker did not appear to be breathing. Anderson then unsuccessfully attempted to free Schmidt from the right gunnel. He noted no blood on Schmidt, but stated that Schmidt did not appear to be breathing. SP4 Christ checked SP4 Schmidt and noticed that he was breathing, and in short gasps, and was losing a great deal of blood. Christ had dislocated his collarbone, so was unable to free Schmidt from the wreckage. Christ and Anderson returned to the pickup zone and were extracted. No attempts were made to return and recover Becker and Schmidt because of the location and hostile forces in the area. Although no other personnel are listed as missing from this incident, the fate of the team members on the ladder remains unknown. They were either recovered (dead or alive), or were indigenous personnel (and would not be listed on U.S. casualty lists).

This record was last updated on 05/25/1998



From www.pownetwork.org

I was 1Lt. Becker's platoon leader at the time of this incident, attest to his family. 1Lt. Becker and CW2 Anderson were flying a covert mission at the time of their loss. During this time in 1970 the 14th C.A.B. and the 71st A.H.C. were charged with providing aircraft to perform insertion and extraction missions for CCN (Command Control North) a covert operations group (1). I was flying a re-supply mission for the 196th Inf. BDE. out of Kham Duc, approximately three kilometers east of the Vietnam, Laotian border. Although 1Lt. Becker & CW2 Anderson were operating on a secure radio frequency, their mayday call was broadcast in the clear. I was sitting at the POL point at Kham Duc, checking our aircraft for bullet holes, since we had just taken fire on our previous mission while coming out of the landing zone. The infantry commander came out to our ship and informed us that he was sending out troops that we could insert to secure the area where 1Lt. Becker's aircraft had gone down. I immediately cranked and prepared to load the packs. Other Rattler and Minute Man aircraft were arriving and refueling for the insertion and a gun team alerted. After a few minutes, we were informed by radio that we were "not to return to the crash site and not to insert American troops". The infantry commander protested to Americal Division HQ and was threatened with court martial if he did not obey. Some weeks later CW2 Anderson brought a newspaper from home to the 71st Officers club. The headlines read something like "Laotian officials Protest at UN over US troops operating in neutral Laos". .. and the US categorically denied the allegations. Therefore, I believe that 1Lt. Becker and Sp4 Schmidt may have been captured by Laotian communist troops and not Vietnamese. Both of these individuals may have been rescued or at least recovered had division headquarters given the approval.

I have been unable to locate these survivors through all the veterans groups of which I am associated, (Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, 71st Association) to gather more details.

Michael J. Beaumont (former Capt. US Army)