

is honored on Panel 30E, Row 102 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: EDWARD REYNOLDS
NAYLOR JR
Wall Name: EDWARD R NAYLOR JR
Date of Birth: 6/8/1941
Date of Casualty: 11/28/1967
Date of Death: 11/28/1967
Home of Record: DENVER
State: CO
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: 1LT
Casualty Country: SOUTH VIETNAM
Casualty Province: DINH TUONG



1LT Naylor was killed in action when the helicopter he was flying in was shot down during an aerial observation mission for Division Artillery, 9th Infantry Division. He had extended his tour of duty for six months to take one of the Aerial Observer slots with 9th DIVARTY. His tour of duty began on December 1, 1966 and he was killed in action on November 28, 1967. The pilot of the OH-23G (Raven) Helicopter, 1LT David R. Blackburn, a graduate of Field Artillery OCS Class 14-66, was also killed in the crash.

Ed Naylor, certainly one of the best

Ed and I went to OCS together and were then assigned to the same artillery battery in the 9th Division, where we became good friends. In Viet Nam we were both attached to infantry companies in the 2d Bde. 3/47th inf. as artillery forward observers. In Sept. 67, as we were nearing the end of our tours in Nam, Ed decided to extend his tour in Viet Nam by six months and was given 30 days leave before reporting back for the additional six months. I never saw Ed again after he went on his leave; by the time he returned to Nam I had been rotated home. Ed was one of the finest people I've known. I remember most his good humor, intelligence and courage. He was an exceptional man, and I miss him.

Posted by: Joe Hastings
April 17, 2006

In Memory of A Friend and Fallen Comrade

I was friends with Ed from basic training right through OCS and then training the 9th Inf. Div. and shipping over to 'Nam and serving as FO's with the 9th Inf. Div. I think of him often and I regret that due to his untimely death he was unable to live a full life to apply his fine talents and qualities of character.

Posted by: Bob Carlson
June 2, 2005

To a Friend

Ed and I served and hung out together as forward observers in the 3rd Battalion, 34th Artillery in the 9th Division at Ft. Riley Kansas. We shipped out together with the 3rd Brigade and arrived together by ship in Vietnam in late December. I later went on to become a DivArty Air Observer, and when my tour of duty was up in October 1967 Ed took my place supporting the Mobile Riverine Force. He was killed in the same helicopter I flew in every day one month after I departed South Vietnam. There but for the Grace of God go I. He was a fine human being and an outstanding officer who I will never forget.

Posted by: Ed Ross
June 1, 2000

MEMORIAL DAY

May 29, 2006

By Ed Ross

This year, as I watched the Rolling Thunder cavalcade ride their motorcycles into Washington D.C., the sight of so many aging Vietnam veterans like myself reminded of another Memorial Day 31 years ago.

Memorial Day 1975 was just one month after the fall of Saigon. Television news programs were still playing the film footage of that lone Huey helicopter atop the American Embassy evacuating the last remaining Americans. It was just over two weeks since May 12 when Cambodian Khmer Rouge forces had captured the merchant ship S.S. Mayaguez and May 15 when the U.S. Marines had conducted a successful rescue attempt, which did little to soften America's collective pain. I was a Regular U.S. Army Captain assigned to the Headquarters, 500th Military Intelligence Group, Hawaii. My wife and I lived in Pearl City, in the hills overlooking Pearl Harbor. It had been over four years since I'd returned from my second tour of duty in Vietnam, still, the memories of my experiences there remained fresh in my mind.

You can imagine how someone who was making a career of military service and who had served two tours of duty in Vietnam might have felt when such an unpopular and divisive war ended so ignominiously. It made me doubt a lot of things, not the least of which, it made me doubt myself. It also made me think of the men I served with who had been killed in Vietnam, men like First Lieutenant Edward Reynolds Naylor, Jr., 26, of Denver, Colorado.

Ed and I were forward observers together in the 3rd Battalion, 34th Artillery, in the 9th Infantry Division. We were there in June 1966 when the 9th was reactivated at Fort Riley, Kansas. We shipped off together in December 1966 on the U.S.N.S. General William Weigel when the division deployed to Vietnam. On the ground in South Vietnam, we served as forward observers in different infantry companies in the 3rd Brigade before I became an air observer with the 9th Division's Mobile Riverine Force. We saw each other regularly between operations.

There were only nine air observers in the division, precisely the number of the H-23 helicopters assigned to division artillery headquarters. They were coveted positions, despite the fact the H-23s were slow, unarmed, and as easy to hit with small arms fire from the ground as a low flying duck with a shotgun. We lost 5,000 helicopters in Vietnam. I couldn't foresee that at the time, but the abundance of helicopter crash sites and burnt helicopter carcasses around airfields should have given me a clue. Still, a young artillery officer considered the job a step up from that of forward observer with an infantry company. You had more control over things and flying in a small open-door aircraft was reminiscent of flying in a World War I biplane. Your feet certainly stayed a lot dryer—until you went down.

In March 1967 when one of the original nine division air observers was shot down and killed I was selected, to fill his position. For the next seven months I lived on the USS Benewah, command ship of the Mobile Riverine Force, flying combat and combat support missions in H-23s and O-1 fixed wing aircraft. When my tour ended in October 1967 it created a vacancy for a new air observer. Ed Naylor extended his tour of duty for six months specifically to take my job. On November 11, 1967, Veterans Day, his helicopter was shot down, killing Ed and his pilot.

The man I replaced and the man who replaced me, along with 58,196 others, gave their lives in a war the American people and the United States Congress ultimately lost faith in and that we lost. On that Memorial Day 31 years ago, there were lots of doubts and questions but few good answers.

I remained in the Army another nine years before retiring in August 1984. By the time that day came, however, I had come to understand the meaning of Ed Naylor's death and the deaths of every other man or woman who has made the ultimate sacrifice in our country's wars. I thought much about it over those years until one day I had a blinding glimpse of the obvious.

The American soldier, sailor, airman, and marine will go wherever he or she is sent and will fight gallantly and ferociously for as long as he or she is asked to under whatever conditions he or she encounters. They will do this regardless of the tenor of the political debate at home or the reception they receive when they return. It may sound trite, but they will do it because the institution they are a part of and those who lead that institution believe in the fundamental truth that is the United States of America—government of the people, by the people, and for the people. They understand that they serve a constitution that invests power in elected civilian officials that exercise control of the military and through them they serve the American people. They will do what their commander in chief asks them to do because that's what, by extension, the majority of the American people ask them to do.

This simple but powerful truth is what makes the United States Armed Forces what it is. It's what our enemies worry about most. It's why, since Vietnam, they seek to weaken the will of the American people who ultimately command them because our enemies know that so long as they have that support they will prevail.

Yes, during Vietnam, as in other wars, some men refused to serve or did not serve honorably. The men and women of the armed forces reflect the complex and diverse American society of which they are a part. But as bad as things got during Vietnam, the central truth remained unshaken. The overwhelming majority of young men and women, like Ed Naylor, served honorably and did what was expected of them. The United States Armed Forces did everything that was asked of it, and more.

The United States today certainly is not unique in this regard. The world now has many constitutional democracies whose armed forces have and would valiantly defend their people. But the United States was the first, and without it and its armed forces many of those democracies likely would not exist. Today democracy is the prevalent form of government in the world. A few short decades ago this wasn't the case.

The United States Armed Forces have a proud expeditionary tradition, coming to the aid of embattled friends and allies around the world. In the wake of its presence democracy and freedom have flourished. Nevertheless, like with Vietnam, not all of those involvements have proven to be popular and have been opposed by segments of the population. Dissent and protest are the right of every American. They are among the cherished rights we fight and die to protect. But the men and women of the armed forces do not have the luxury of picking and choosing which missions to accept, nor can they know in advance how history will ultimately judge what they do.

In this sense then, every line-of-duty death of a member of the United States Armed Forces has meaning, regardless of how it occurs. Every death is a confirmation of the commitment of the armed forces to serve the American people, to protect and defend the American way of life, wherever and whenever they are ordered to do so. The elected representatives of the American people make decisions about when and where to fight. American military men and women accept those decisions and carry them out because they believe in and trust the constitutional underpinnings of our republic. This is no blind obedience to higher authority; no member of the armed forces is bound to obey unlawful orders, but a conscious acceptance of the meaning of the principals we believe in.

Memorial Day 1975 was an important one for me and I expect many other Vietnam veterans. It caused me to look inward and reflect on the conflict that dominated half of my military career. In doing so I came to better understand the sacrifices people like Ed Naylor and his family make. This Memorial Day weekend I hope you will take a minute to do the same



Hiller OH-23 Raven (File Photo)

Helicopter OH-23G 63-12823

Information on U.S. Army helicopter OH-23G tail number 63-12823

Date: 11/28/1967

Incident number: 67112828.KIA

Unit: 9 INF DIVARTY

This was a Combat incident. This helicopter was LOSS TO INVENTORY for Artillery Adjustment

While in Operations Area this helicopter was in Orbit at 1200 feet and 040 knots.

The station for this helicopter was Dinh Tuong in South Vietnam

Helicopter took 2 hits from:

Small Arms/Automatic Weapons; Gun launched non-explosive ballistic projectiles less than 20 mm in size. (7.62MM)

The helicopter was hit in the Main Rotor Blade System

Systems damaged were: TRANSMISSION, MAIN ROTOR SYS, PERSONNEL

Casualties = 02 DOI . .

The helicopter Crashed. Aircraft Destroyed.

Both mission and flight capability were terminated.

Original source(s) and document(s) from which the incident was created or updated:

Defense Intelligence Agency Helicopter Loss database. Survivability/Vulnerability Information Analysis Center Helicopter database. Also: OPERA, LNNF, FM232, CASRP (Operations Report. Lindenmuth New Format Data Base. Casualty Report.)

Loss to Inventory

Crew Members:

P 1LT BLACKBURN DAVID RAY KIA

OB 1LT NAYLOR EDWARD REYNOLDS JR KIA

War Story:

Sources indicate to the VHPA that these two men died in Dinh Tuong Province in the same aircraft while serving for a unit of the 9th Inf Div. The VHPA is very interested in knowing more about this event.

This record was last updated on 05/25/1998