

RONALD ALAN ROSS

Class 2-68

is honored on Panel 16W, Row 9 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: RONALD ALAN ROSS
Wall Name: RONALD A ROSS
Date of Birth: 7/25/1946
Date of Casualty: 10/31/1969
Home of Record: MUSKEGO
County of Record: WAUKESHA COUNTY
State: WI
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: CAPT
Casualty Country: SOUTH VIETNAM
Casualty Province: QUANG DUC



CPT Ross was killed in action while serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 5th Battalion, 22nd Artillery, I Field Force Vietnam at FSB Kate. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action during the Battle for LZ Kate.

Memories of a good friend!

I served in Vietnam with Lt. Ross. We spent a month together on an LZ on the Cambodian border. He was a great friend and loved by all. His life and death touches me to this day.

Posted by: Everett Rice
Relationship: We served together
August 9, 2011

An Old Friend

Ron and I were friends at Nha Trang before we were sent to units near LZ Kate. He was a wonderful man, a friendly fellow with true commitment and courage...someone who enjoyed life, loved America and served with honor. He will be remembered by everyone who knew him.

Posted by: Thomas Miles -- Major, USA (Ret.)
Relationship: We served together
September 26, 2009

Remembering Ronnie

Ronnie Ross had the biggest heart of anyone in the 5th Bn, 22nd Arty, and he was the most popular junior officer. Ronnie, I got the order to stand by as I was to go to LZ Kate. Somehow you went instead of me and paid the ultimate price soon after arriving at that surrounded fire base. I think about you every day, and how brave you were.
Thank you

Posted by: 1st Lt Tom Klein
Relationship: We were close friends
April 29, 2009

Ronald is buried at Highland Memorial Park, New Berlin, Wisconsin



**22nd Field Artillery
Coat of Arms
"Labore et Honore" (With Industry and Honor)**

From the Battle for LZ Kate By Reginald H. Brockwell

Note: Fire Support Base Kate was one of three FSB's in a triangle configuration set up for mutual support of each other and the Bu Prang Special Forces camp near the Cambodian border. Artillery batteries were split among the firebases and FSB Kate had two 155mm Howitzers and one 105 MM Howitzer.

Each firebase was occupied a company of Montagnards with their Special Forces advisors were inserted. At Kate a company advised by Team A-233 from Ban Don with their Special Forces advisor SFC Arbizo and a company from Team A-236 from Bu Prang advised by CPT Barham secured the perimeter. In the beginning of this operation, there was little activity on the firebases except the normal fire mission in support of Camp Bu Prang and its patrols. Later intelligence offered a reason for this in that the NVA had not done a reconnaissance of the area for several weeks and were unaware of the three new firebases. Upon discovering the locations of these three firebases, things began to change. On Oct. 27 SGT Dan Pierelli, a 22 year, old relieved SFC Arbizo. CPT. William Albracht, the executive officer at Bu Prang, arrived the following day to relieve CPT Braham, who was leaving for R&R. CPT. Albracht took over as senior ground commander at Kate. He was 21 years old at the time. This coincided with the NVA recognizing the new threat from the firebases and their determination to address that threat. At this time there were about 27 U.S. artillerymen on Kate along with Albracht, Pierelli and about 150 Montagnards.

On 28 October, CPT Albracht and SGT Pierelli started saturation patrols and an intensive effort to fortify the perimeter. Around 9 to 10 p.m., the Montagnards set an ambush site on a hill between Kate and the Cambodian border. This hill became known as "Ambush Hill". It was about 800 meters northwest of Kate. It was bald with the exception of a small clump of trees on top and the base was surrounded by jungle. The approach to Ambush Hill from the bottom of the hill on Kate's north side led through a 10-12 meter gap in the jungle. The clear part of the gap and hill consisted of waist high grass. About midnight a firefight broke out on the hill. The Montagnards soon returned reporting "many VC"; however, they had actually encountered the lead elements of a large NVA force. Spooky(C-47 gunship) was called in to work around Ambush Hill and the two 155MM and one 105MM Howitzers fired around the area.

On the morning of 29 Oct. FSB Kate took some incoming rockets and mortar rounds. One artilleryman was wounded. CPT Albracht, SGT Pierelli and about 40 Montagnards went out on patrol to the ambush site to check enemy activity. There they found an NVA pith helmet and blood trails. They followed the trails to where the Montagnards had made contact the night before. Albracht was near the front of the column and Pierelli was in the middle. As they peaked the hill near the site and started down, the column was fired upon from about 30 meters within the tree line. As they fought their way to the treeline for cover Albracht called for air support. On regrouping they determined they had three wounded and one missing. CPT John Strange (Pterodactyl 10) from the 185th Recon Aviation Company and a Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) came on station. The gunships arrived, worked over the area and Albracht decided to try a flanking

maneuver to determine what they had encountered. The LOH pilot informed them that the NVA were moving to cut them off and they better leave. As they began moving back up Ambush Hill, one of the pilots called that he had found the missing Montagnard either dead or wounded. With the column providing supporting fire and SGT Pierelli firing an M-79 Grenade launcher, CPT Albracht and about three of the Montagnards went to retrieve the body. Under intense fire they retrieved the wounded man who had been shot in the head; however, he died before reaching Kate. The two pilots reported again that there were targets everywhere and that a large force of NVA was trying to encircle the column and that they had better move quickly to get off the hill. The column then withdrew back to Kate. The battle had started in earnest now as mortar and rocket fire began to pound Kate. The base was fired on by mortars, recoilless rifles, RPGs, B40s and later in the battle there was evidence that 85 and 130mm field guns and even 105mm Howitzers from both Vietnam and a tea plantation/army camp in Cambodia. The tea plantation, which was clearly visible on the horizon, was an assembly point for the NVA throughout the battle. Anti-aircraft fire from 37mm guns and .51 caliber machine guns made resupply and medical evacuation hazardous. Air Force Major George Lattin, the Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and Forward Air Controller (FAC) flying out of Gia Nghia and several other army and air force observation planes, stayed on station to help control artillery and air strikes. Major Lattin worked tirelessly and exposed himself to much danger in helping the men on Kate and later at the Bu Prang siege. B Troop 7/17 Cavalry out of Gia Nghia was also assigned to provide hunter-killer teams. It was obvious that Kate was surrounded and vastly outnumbered. CPT Albracht requested reinforcements and received about 40 more CIDGs from A-234 at An Lac before heavy incoming prevented any more of these insertions. One of the 155mm Howitzers and the 105mm Howitzer were knocked out with several wounded. The water trailer was also destroyed. This precipitated another heroic action by supporting helicopter crews. The 155th AHC's Falcon 2 and Falcon 9 gunships were called about dusk just as they had gotten back to Ban Me Thuot to return to Kate to cover Dustoff 63 who was in route to pick up five wounded. One of the wounded was a Montagnard who had been wounded by a sniper while he manned a listening post. He was being brought back in to Kate. The others were artillerymen who had been wounded when their gun was knocked out. As they orbited Kate in heavy fog waiting for the wounded man from the listening post to be brought back they began to run low on fuel. Finally, everyone was ready, and the Dustoff was talked into the pad. Just as the dustoff sat down, one of the advisors yelled "Incoming Mortars! Get out, Dustoff" as they heard the rounds leave the tubes. The Falcon gunships could see nothing through the fog so they were helpless to lay down suppressive fire. Suddenly the Dustoff pilot in an excited, high pitched voice yelled "Dustoff 63 coming out to the east". Immediately three mortar rounds impacted. Falcon 2 asked if they were going to try to go back in and Dustoff 63 responded that they did not need another try. In those few seconds they had loaded five wounded and gotten away. CPT Albracht was also wounded in action on Kate during one of the helicopter evacuations. As a side note, FSB Helen which had been under attack from a multi-battalion size force was evacuated in the afternoon of the 29th.

The following day, 30 October, heavy incoming started about 6:30 a.m. The artillery tubes that were working fired direct fire in support. A ground attack about 9:30 a.m.

comprised of 500 NVA was beaten back by the Montagnard infantry, direct fire from the one artillery piece left and Joker gunships from the 48th Aviation Company. Air Force F-100 jets dropping 500 pound bombs also flew in support. One gunship was shot down by enemy RPG fire that hit the tail boom sending the ship out of control. The crew, consisting of CW2 Nolan Eugene Black, CW2 Maury William Hearne, SP5 Douglas Hugh Lott Jr. and SP4 Clyde Lee Roy Canada, was all killed on impact within sight of the firebase. Because of the increasing danger, this marked the end of helicopter gunship support during daylight hours. Future air support would come only from jets. After the assault, the 105mm Howitzer was replaced by a flying crane. CPT Albracht spotted an artillery piece firing at Kate. He used the tracers fired from his M-16 to guide the 105mm Howitzer to a direct hit causing some secondary explosions. The firing of tracers as marking rounds became an effective, yet dangerous way to let the FAC know exactly where to put marking rounds for airstrikes. The jets worked all day with napalm and 500 lb. bombs keeping the NVA at bay. Three other gunships and one CH-47 were hit by ground fire with the CH-47 dumping its load of supplies into the jungle. Resupply was becoming a problem. Both small arms ammunition and water were running low. Each time a supply helicopter or dust-off came in; it took heavy cover from gunships to keep the NVA from shooting it down. A supply helicopter finally dropped another trailer container of water and the Montagnards now concerned more with survival than discipline all rushed for it. CPT Albracht held them in check, making them go one at a time. After the Montagnards, the artillerymen got their water. About 7 p.m. the NVA launched a massive attack that was held back by jets plus Spooky. The NVA were still able to penetrate the perimeter. 1LT Mike Smith of 1/92 Artillery was wounded and evacuated. Up until this time the artillery had been underutilized so the artillerymen told Albracht and Pierelli that they would start developing their own Harassment and Interdiction targets and begin firing more for self preservation. During the night one of the artillerymen accidentally shot another in the arm. SGT Pierelli was called to help. First Aid had been administered by the artillery medic. Pierelli told him to give the man, who was in great pain, another shot of morphine, he marked his forehead with an "M", and then he had him evacuated. During the evening of the 30th, FSB Martha, which had been under constant small arms attack, was moved back inside the Duc Lap compound. FSB Kate was now the main target.

On 31 Oct. things got worse. Albracht and Pierelli were constantly moving about the perimeter checking defenses and trying to observe enemy movement. During darkness the men could see flashlights and hear the NVA "digging in" closer and closer. The jets continued to work the area but after every airstrike the base would be shelled again as if to say "We're still here". About 10 a.m. the firebase was told to take extreme cover as the B-52s came in to drop 2000 lb. bombs. This Arclight(B-52 strike) once again broke up the NVA attack plans and bought the FSB time. The hot shrapnel from the airstrikes would rain down on the defenders. The 23 rd ARVN Division continued to refuse to provide any reinforcements. This began to demoralize the Montagnards who discussed leaving. Kate was being hit from 360 degrees. There were constant artillery battles with the howitzers firing both direct and indirect fire. Finally, both 155mm Howitzers had been knocked out and the 105mm Howitzer could only fire at a limited elevation. The artillerymen were now being used mostly as infantry. The lack of sleep and constant

firing was taking its toll with some of the men becoming immobile from stress. Two of the artillerymen broke under the constant strain and had to be evacuated. **During one barrage as CPT Albracht and 1LT Ron Ross were running from bunker to bunker across the base, 1LT Ross was hit by shrapnel from a B-40 rocket and killed. CPT Albracht commented that he had died in his arms while he tried to stop the bleeding. Added to this tragedy of Kate was the fact that 1LT Ronald Alan Ross 5/22 Artillery had recently been notified that he had become a father. Sleep was limited to 2-3 hours each night. During the night, sometimes, everyone would get on the radio for comfort. Spooky 41 (The Alabama Boy) was constantly reassuring that all would turn out alright but from Bu Prang and Ban Me Thuot the outlook was becoming bleaker.**

At 2:00a.m. on 1 November, an emergency resupply mission was carried out with 5 gunships and 4 slicks from the 155th Aviation Company. Each slick carried about 1000 pounds of supplies and the mission was successful. Before dawn incoming began again from all directions and continued. Ground probes increased dramatically. The remaining artillerymen with no tubes to tend became spirited infantrymen. Most everyone was walking wounded and the dead were stacked in body bags like cordwood on Kate's LZ. Early in the morning an Air Force reconnaissance plane intercepted a message from the NVA that a large force was being assembled to overrun Kate. The same morning it became obvious that the NVA had the base zeroed in as a barrage moved from south to north hitting several bunkers. During this time LT Mike Smith returned to the firebase and alerted the group of their predicament which they knew only too well. CPT Albracht continued to try to get a relief force to the firebase but when a Mike Force unit tried to put down nearby they had to withdraw under heavy fire. More Arclights from B-52s hit in the distance around Kate for protection. Suddenly Kate was being hit with airburst from a 105mm Howitzer or a 130mm gun from Cambodia . The enemy's heavy artillery had started. This was the last straw as the men were beginning to believe that none of them would get out. CPT Albracht asked MAJ Lattin, who was flying cover, to call in a strike on the gun but Lattin replied that it was "across the fence" in Cambodia and he would have to declare a tactical emergency. Albracht replied that this was such an emergency and MAJ Lattin did the rest. Since it was obvious that Kate was no longer a firebase but an impact area as CPT Albracht described it, he asked for immediate reinforcements or permission to abandon the base. This request went through channels and the 23 rd ARVN Division was still unresponsive as far as offering reinforcements or allowing the firebase to be abandoned. Albracht sent his request through Special Forces channels who began planning for another Mobile Strike Force (Mike Force) insertion. The F-100s and now an A1E Skyraider began to strafe the base of the hill. By this time the Montagnards informed Albracht that they were leaving the firebase and the Americans could come with them or stay. Further contact with Special Forces hierarchy yielded a decision late that afternoon by the ARVN command to accept Albracht's decision to abandon the firebase. Preparations were begun to escape and evade that night. CPT Albracht informed the Montagnards of the plan. Australians attached to the U.S. Army Special Forces would lead a Mike Force relief team out of Pleiku. A Spooky and Shadow(C-119) gunship would be on station at 9:00p.m. to cover the escape. The 155th Aviation Company airlifted a relief force from the 252 and 253 Mobile Strike Force

companies to an insertion point about 2-3 kilometers northwest of Kate. However, when they got about one kilometer northwest of Kate they ran into heavy contact and withdrew into a defensive perimeter. The defenders at Kate saw the Mike Force coming into the insertion point and were able to contact them. SGT Pierelli contacted Shadow and informed them that he was placing an infrared strobe in the center of the firebase so that they could see the area they needed to circle with fire. When a check was made, Shadow which had infrared capability reported they saw the strobe. The artillerymen destroyed all remaining equipment and sensitive material with thermite grenades. Then everyone assembled on the north end of the firebase which was the only side with a gentle slope. Upon hearing that the aircover from Spooky would be delayed because of mechanical problems, Albracht walked to the south end of the firebase where he heard what he thought were NVA moving up into the wire. As he went back to the north side the NVA walked another mortar barrage from south to north. One more Montagnard was killed. At the same time the NVA popped an illumination flare that illuminated the entire firebase. At this point they felt they could not wait any longer. The air cover was supposed to continue firing around the firebase to make the NVA believe nothing was happening and the base was being defended. The Skyraider, low on fuel and ammunition, continued to make passes to keep the NVA at bay. As they started down the slope through the wire, someone hit a trip flare and everyone thought this was the end. They dropped to the ground but miraculously nothing happened. As they moved forward in a column, the Montagnard pointman stopped at the gap separating Ambush Hill from Kate for fear of an ambush. Because of lack of time and choices, Albracht took the point. SGT Pierelli with his always calm demeanor covered the withdrawal with the back half of the column. Well into the gap the pointman took the lead again but instead of skirting the left of Ambush Hill, as called for in the evacuation plan, he went right. Albracht figured he might know something the others didn't and the majority of the column was committed, so he followed. After leaving the gap, they entered the pitch black jungle. Sure enough the original route had a machine gun emplacement near the top of the hill. The heavy machine gun atop Ambush Hill opened fire but it was shooting too high. Albracht originally thought this was Spooky but after confirmation he realized it was the NVA .51 cal. machine gun. The troops who had not entered the jungle ran to avoid the enemy fire. Despite a major effort by Pierelli and Albracht, about half the Montagnards had panicked, scattered, and run leaving Albracht, Pierelli, the artillerymen and about 20 Montagnards. This is where SGT. Pierelli feels that PVT Michael Robert Norton may have become missing in action (MIA). It should be noted that one of the artillerymen followed the separated Montagnard contingent at this time, since he could not tell who was who in the dark; however, he made it back to Bu Prang with them safely following a different route. Spooky was now on station and on order began firing on the top of the hill. The column reformed with Albracht near the front and Pierelli near the middle. With all the confusion, Albracht was not sure about their location but continued to move in what he thought was the right direction. About thirty minutes into the escape and evasion, Pierelli heard someone call "Sarge, we're lost". SGT Pierelli stopped everyone and told them not to make a sound. He realized that the back half of the column had become separated from the front but he could hear movement in the distance. He told the remaining men to stay quiet and hang on to the web gear of the person in front of them. There had been a little ambient light when they

left the firebase but in the jungle it was now pitch dark. He led his half of the column in the direction of the sound and after stopping, listening, and reorienting several more times he caught up to the front of the column. Pierelli's calm professionalism had averted a potential disaster. At one point, Albracht heard movement in the opposite direction about 10 meters from them. He contacted the Mike Force telling them he had detected their movement only to be told that the relief column was not moving and this was an NVA force. The group walked from a little past 8 p.m. until after 11 p.m. before they found where they thought the Mike Forces had established a perimeter. After the column stopped for a while, SGT Pierelli worked his way forward and found CPT Albracht. Although they were close to the Mike Force it took another 30-40 minutes before Albracht could coordinate moving into their position without being shot by friendlies. Albracht had to cross a 50-60 meter open field to get to the clump of trees where the Mike Force had formed a defensive perimeter. The Mike Force would not acknowledge Albracht until he was in their midst for fear he had been compromised. He was then told to get everyone in quickly as there were NVA everywhere. After another hour of waiting, the Mike Force took over and moved out walking from after midnight until noon before making it to Bu Prang. Radio contact between the Kate defenders, the Mike Force, and the air cover was essential to the successful completion of this escape and evasion. MAJ Lattin often flying that air cover plotted their course northwest from Kate into Cambodia, then turning west and finally back south into Bu Prang. He also helped coordinate air cover from the Skyraider to fire behind the column so that following them would be difficult. Later that day an airstrike using F-4s and 2000 lb. bombs was called in on FSB Kate, eliminating anything that was left. Upon arrival at Bu Prang the men of C/5/27 Artillery realized that they were missing PVT. Norton. Over the next several weeks numerous searches were conducted for him without success. He was posthumously promoted to Sergeant First Class (SFC) and declared a casualty of the war May 1, 1978.



The following is from a personal memorial page created by William Sperry and is used with his permission. Ron sent the photographs to William during his tour in Vietnam. The Memorial to Ron is located at <http://ronaldalanross.com/>





My Best Friend

I got to meet Ronald Alan Ross while stationed at Vint Hill Farms Station, an Army base outside of Warrenton, Virginia. We immediately became close. He was one of the two kindest people that I met while in the Army and it was not difficult to keep in touch with him when he left for OCS and I left for Sinop, Turkey.

After graduating from OCS, he went through extensive combat training. He was stationed in southern California at Fort Irwin. We were fortunate to get to see each other for several months before he was finally assigned to a tour in Vietnam. I stayed with Ron until his flight left the ground from Travis Air Force Base. I let his Mother and Father know that all went well and he left on time and without incident..

He began his tour December 29, 1968. I quickly wrote my first letter written to him in Vietnam and he told me it was the first one he received from family. We began planning the coming home party we would have when he came home. I would receive my last letter from him that was written on October 31, 1969. Since time was getting close to his arrival for the party that I immediately wrote back. Two weeks later I received a letter from the Defense Department with my letter enclosed. Ronald was killed by hostile small arms fire on October 31, 1969 in the Quang Duc province of South Vietnam. His body was recovered. It took me several hours before I could call his Mother and Father. They told me that they tried to get in touch with me but were unable to do so. They had his funeral that day. I still treasure all the letters he wrote to me before his tragic death.

He was killed as a First Lieutenant and posthumously promoted to Captain. Ronald's wife arranged for a military funeral and he was buried in the Field Of Honor portion of the Highland Memorial Park, Muskego, Wisconsin on November 15, 1969.

Ronald is survived by his wife Trisha, and his son John Anthony who was born while Ron was in Vietnam. On many occasions, he told me how much he loved his wife and new son and I just wish he could have met that little trouper he called his son before his life ended so abruptly.

Ron is also survived by his mother Katherine, father John, and his two younger brothers, Gerald and James. It was not difficult for me to figure out why he was such a wonderful person. He had a mother and father and family who were so kind and considerate of others it stood to reason that he would inherit this same kindness.

My relationship with Ronald was way too short. He always told me that we can express feelings because life is too short and we may never get the opportunity a second time. That made our time in life together complete.

By the way, Ronald also has one older brother Willie.
(That was me)
Bill Sperry

Please visit: www.ultimatesacrificeheroes.com