

SAMUEL KAMU TOOMEY III

CLASS 5-60

is honored on Panel 37W, Row 15 of
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Full Name: SAMUEL KAMU TOOMEY III
Wall Name: SAMUEL K TOOMEY III
Date of Birth: 12/30/1935
Date of Casualty: 11/30/1968
Date of Death: 11/30/1968
Home of Record: INDEPENDENCE
State: MO
Branch of Service: ARMY
Rank: MAJ
Casualty Country: LAOS
Casualty Province: LZ
Status: MIA



Major Toomey was serving as a Special Mission Officer, Headquarters, MACV-SOG. He was returning from a patrol aboard a Vietnamese CH-34 helicopter that was hit by 37mm antiaircraft fire ten miles East of Tchepone, Laos. The aircraft fell out of the sky from 3,000 feet and exploded upon impact with the ground. No ground search was initiated at the time because the crash site was located in a "Denied Area."

Fellow Soldier

Sam & I were classmates in FA Artillery OCS Class 5-60. He is missed by his classmates and will not be forgotten.

Posted by: Andrew M. Gay
Relationship: We served together
January 26, 2003



An Honored Hero

MAJ Samuel K. Toomey, III, Independence, Missouri, Special Mission Officer, Headquarters, MACV-SOG, missing in action since November 30, 1968, ten miles East of Tchepone, Laos, when returning from patrol aboard a Vietnamese CH-34 helicopter that was hit by 37mm anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft fell out of the sky from 3,000 feet and exploded upon impact with the ground. No ground search was initiated at the time because the crash site was located in a "Denied Area." Other US Personnel aboard the UH-34 that day were:

SFC Arthur Edward Bader, Jr., Atlantic City
SSG Richard A. Fitts, Abingdon, Massachusetts
SFC Gary R. LaBohn, Wixom, Michigan
SFC Michael H. Mein, Cape Vincent, New York
SFC Klaus D. Scholtz, Amarillo, Texas
CPT Raymond C. Stacks, Memphis, Tennessee

From "Green Berets At War", copywrited by Shelby L. Stanton in 1985, reprinted in 1987 by Presidio Press.

There is an addendum to the above information.

On May 23, 1990, these seven American soldiers' remains were buried in a common grave in Arlington National Cemetery after they were recovered from the crash site in March 1989. Pentagon Officials presumptively identified them after the U.S. Army Identification Laboratory at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, was able to positively identify the remains of one soldier known to be aboard the aircraft at the time of the crash.

The remains of that one soldier, SSG Richard A. Fitts, Abingdon, Massachusetts, were buried there earlier in 1990. His name is listed with the six other Green Berets on the group's grave marker because of the possibility of some of his remains being mixed with the rest of the group buried there.

On July 15, 1991, Ms. Lou Anne LaBohn, the sister of SFC Gary R. LaBohn, obtained a minor victory over the Pentagon when officials agreed to remove SFC LaBohn's name from the marker. The new marker was paid for by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Ms LaBohn will continue to push the National League of Families of POWs and MIAs in Southeast Asia, to take a stand against the military policy of closing the books on entire missing crews based, "...on only one identification."

This information was taken from press releases by Arlington National Cemetery.

Posted by: Robert Surbaugh
December 2, 2002

In Honored Remembrance

From a contemporary press report: March 26, 1990:

The Army believes that the remains of Major Samuel K. Toomey III were among those laid to rest Friday in a group burial at Arlington National Cemetery. But Toomey's parents still have not given up hope of seeing their son alive again.

"Until we see a body, it will be difficult to convince us that he's really dead," said Samuel K. Toomey Jr., a retired Army colonel who lived in Independence, Mo., for years before moving to Sun City, Ariz.

"As a parent you always have hope. I can't give up that stand. Neither can my wife."

Samuel Toomey III disappeared in 1968 when his helicopter was shot down over Laos. Last year, searchers returned with evidence from the crash site, and experts were able to identify the remains of one of the nine crew members. The rest of the evidence was inconclusive, so the Army and relatives agreed to have a group burial. The burial "was one of the most beautiful experiences we've ever had," Samuel Toomey Jr. said Sunday night.

"We're very pleased with what the Army did."

Toomey's refusal to abandon hope stems partly from his experience during the Korean War, where he commanded a battalion. After the Chinese attacked his soldiers, he declared one of his company commanders killed in action. Searchers found nothing on the battlefield except the commander's dog tags and watch.

But about five years later, Toomey ran into the commander while walking down a hallway in the Pentagon. The soldier had been captured by the Chinese and later was released.

"I was shocked," Toomey said. "I told him, 'You're supposed to be dead.' "

Posted by: Michael Robert Patterson
April 5, 1999

The following is from www.pownetwork.org

TOOMEY, SAMUEL KAMU III

Remains Returned - ID Announced 08 February 1990

Name: Samuel Kamu Toomey III

Rank/Branch: O4/US Army

Unit: Armor, Special Operations Group, Headquarters, MACV-SOG, (some accounts list Toomey as "Special Missions Officer")

Date of Birth: 30 December 1935 (Honolulu HI)

Home City of Record: Independence MO

Date of Loss: 30 November 1968

Country of Loss: Laos

Loss Coordinates: 163852N 1062514E (XD515410)

Status (in 1973): Missing In Action

Category: 4

Refno: 1333

Other Personnel in Incident: Gary LaBohn; Michael Mein; Klaus Scholz; Raymond Stacks; Arthur Bader (all missing); Richard Fitts (remains returned)

Source: Compiled by Homecoming II Project 01 April 1990 with the assistance of from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK 1998.

REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: Major Samuel Toomey was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on December 30, 1935. He entered the Army in April 1956 after service in the Marines. In Vietnam, Toomey worked with Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG) which was a joint service high command unconventional warfare task force engaged in highly classified operations throughout Southeast Asia. The 5th Special Forces channeled personnel into MACV-SOG (though it was not a Special Forces group) through Special Operations Augmentation (SOA) which provided their "cover" while under secret orders to MACV-SOG. These teams performed deep penetration missions of strategic reconnaissance and interdiction missions in Laos and Cambodia which were called, depending on the country and time frame, "Shining Brass" or "Prairie Fire" missions.

On November 30, 1968, Sgt. Richard A. Fitts, Sgt. Arthur E. Bader, Cpl. Gary R. LaBohn, SSgt. Klaus D. Scholz, Maj. Samuel K. Toomey, Cpl. Michael H. Mein, 1Lt. Raymond C. Stacks were passengers aboard a Vietnamese Air Force CH34 helicopter (serial #14-4653) as their team was being transported to

their reconnaissance mission area in Laos. Details of their mission was classified at that time, and remains classified in early 1990. However, information received from some of the family members indicates that the mission was related to disarming an enemy munitions store. This same account includes the information that Maj. Toomey was a chemical warfare expert. Other information states that he was a communications officer. Toomey's family identified his job as one that he could not talk about, but that he was an "Advisor to the Special Forces."

The helicopter was flying at 4,000 feet when it was struck by 37mm anti-aircraft fire, went into a spin, crashed in a mass of flames and exploded. The helicopter crashed about 10 miles northwest of Khe Sanh, just into Laos east of Tchepone. The crash site is in heavy jungle, near a stream. From the time the aircraft was hit until the time it impacted out of view, the helicopter was under observation and no one was seen to leave the aircraft during its descent. No ground search was initiated because the location was in a denied area. Later visual search indicated that the pilot's hatch was open, and his helmet was seen 25-30 feet from the helicopter, but no survivors or bodies were seen. All the personnel aboard the aircraft, however, were not declared dead, but were declared Missing in Action, which was procedure when no proof of death existed.

In March 1988, the area in which the helicopter crashed was excavated by a joint Lao/US technical team. Human remains consisting of 17 teeth and 145 bone fragments, none measuring over two inches, were recovered. The remains were returned to the U.S. Army Central Identification (CIL) in Hawaii.

On January 3, 1990, it was announced that the remains of Richard Fitts had been positively identified from the material recovered at the crash site. That identification was determined by the government's conclusion that two of the 17 teeth belonged to Fitts. Fitts' parents, after having an independent analysis conducted on the teeth, felt assured that the teeth belonged to their son, and subsequently buried them in Boston, Massachusetts. The remaining 15 teeth and 145 bone fragments were said to be unidentifiable.

Barely a month later, on February 8, 1990, the Department of Defense announced that the remainder of the crew had been positively identified and would be buried, along with the Vietnamese crew, in a mass grave in Arlington National Cemetery. Fitts' name was included on that tombstone along with the other Americans because the Pentagon believed some of the bone fragments belonged to Fitts. Thus, even though the remains were scientifically unidentifiable, the cases were closed on these individuals.

The following is from www.taskforceomegainc.org

TOOMEY, SAMUEL KAMU

Remains Recovered 26 March 1989; Identified 7 February 1990

Name: Samuel Kamu Toomey III

Rank/Branch: Major/US Army

Unit: Armor Headquarters,
Military Assistance Command Vietnam,
DaNang, South Vietnam

Date of Birth: 30 December 1935 (Honolulu, HI)

Home of Record: Independence, MO

Date of Loss: 30 November 1968

Country of Loss: Laos

Loss Coordinates: 163852N 1062514E (XD515410)
[Click coordinates to view \(4\) maps](#)

Status in 1973: Missing in Action

Category: 4

Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: CH34 "Seahorse"

Other Personnel In Incident: Gary R. LaBohn; Michael Mein; Klaus D. Scholz; Raymond C. Stacks; Arthur E. Bader and Richard A. Fitts (missing)

REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: One of the earliest helicopters employed in Southeast Asia, and the primary Marine Corps helicopter used during the early years of the war, was the Sikorsky UH34D Seahorse. This aircraft was already quite old when they arrived in the battle zone. However, both the US and South Vietnamese military found them to be extremely effective throughout the war.

Military Assistance Command Vietnam - Studies and Observation Group (MACV-SOG) was a joint service unconventional warfare task force engaged in highly classified operations throughout Southeast Asia. The 5th Special Forces channeled personnel into MACV-SOG through Special Operations Augmentation (SOA) that provided their "cover" while under secret orders to MACV-SOG. These teams performed highly classified, deep penetration missions of strategic reconnaissance and interdiction that were called, depending on the time frame, "Daniel Boone," "Salem House," "Shining Brass" or "Prairie Fire" missions.

Oscar Eight was the code name given to a sector of eastern Laos located in rugged jungle covered mountains approximately 25 miles northwest of the infamous A Shau Valley, Saravane Province, Laos. The area encompassed the junction of Highway 92, which was a primary north-south artery of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and Highway 922, which branched off and ran directly east where it crossed into South Vietnam at a strategic point near the northern edge of the A Shau Valley. Oscar Eight was also located at the southeastern end of a large and narrow jungle covered valley that had two primary roads running through it, one on each side of the valley. Highway 92 ran along the west side and Highway 919 along the east. A power line ran parallel to Highway 92 and sometimes crossed it. In addition to the roads and power line, the Hoi An River also flowed through the valley passing the road junction roughly 1 mile west of it.

More aircraft were downed in this sector than any other place in Laos. This was because burrowed deep in the hills of Oscar Eight was North Vietnamese General Vo Bam's 559th Transportation Group's forward headquarters. It was also the Ho Chi Minh Trail's control center and contained the largest NVA storage facility outside of North Vietnam. Oscar Eight was defended by consecutive belts of anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) guns of all sizes that were not only stationed on the ground, but also mounted on platforms in the trees, were expertly camouflaged and manned by bunkered infantry.

Small reconnaissance teams clandestinely operating along the Ho Chi Minh Trail frequently found large caches of enemy ammunition that was impossible to carry away or destroy on the spot. General Jack Singlaub, Chief of Operations for MACV-SOG, devised a plan to sabotage these caches. Codenamed "Project Eldest Son," "Italian Green" or "Pole Bean" depending on timeframe, cleverly sabotaged AK-47 and mortar rounds that would blow up in weapons killing or wounding enemy troops when fired was inserted into the caches. Eldest Son 82mm mortar ammo usually came in heavy crates of four rounds each, which made it too heavy to routinely transport during ground operations. The bulk of Eldest Son ammunition was disseminated through the construction of false caches in areas known to contain real ones.

On 30 November 1968, Major Samuel K. Toomey, 1st Lt. Raymond C. Stacks, Sgt. Richard A. Fitts, Sgt. Arthur E. Bader, Cpl. Gary R. LaBohn, SSgt. Klaus D. Scholz, and Cpl. Michael H. Mein comprised a seven-man, all-US reconnaissance team who were passengers aboard a South Vietnamese Air Force CH34 helicopter (tail #14-4653), call sign "King Bee." The team was being inserted into Oscar Eight on a mid-day Project

Eldest Son mission to build a false ammunition cache. In addition to the special operations team, the helicopter was crewed by an allied pilot and co-pilot, and carried a dozen cases of 82mm mortar ammunition.

The insertion helicopter was part of a larger flight of aircraft that included attack helicopters as escorts. Major Toomey, the team leader, was assigned to Armor Headquarters, MACV while the rest of the team members were assigned to MACV-SOG, Command and Control North (CCN).

At approximately 1200 hours, the King Bee helicopter was flying at roughly 4,000 feet when it was struck by a single 37mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) round fired from a concealed NVA AAA battery. Other flight members watched in horror as the transport helicopter caught fire, went into a spin, crashed and exploded into the dense jungle on the south side of a rugged mountain just north of Route 9, a main infiltration route used by the NVA. According to one witness, "There wasn't anything bigger than a cigarette butt that hit the ground. It just went off like a nuke."

The crash site was located in heavy jungle that was densely populated with NVA troops and civilian villages near a stream that separated the mountain range to the north and a long narrow valley to the south roughly 10 miles west of the Lao/South Vietnamese border and 13 miles southeast of Tchepone, Saravane Province, Laos. The crash site was also 24 miles due west of Khe Sanh, South Vietnam and 26 miles south of the demilitarized zone that separated North and South Vietnam.

In spite of the witness' graphic description of the King Bee's shoot down, later an aerial visual inspection of the crash site documented that the aircraft did not disintegrate at altitude and fall to the ground. Search and rescue (SAR) personnel saw that the pilot's door was open and his intact undamaged helmet was seen 25-30 feet from the helicopter's reasonably intact, burned wreckage. SAR personnel visually searched in and around the crash site for signs of survivors, but found none. No ground search of the crash site was possible due to the location being deep within enemy-held territory. At the time the aerial search was terminated, all seven Americans were listed Missing in Action.

In March 1988, a joint team under the auspices of the Joint Task Force for Full Accounting (JTFFA) traveled to Saravane Province to excavate the King Bee's wreckage. Early in the excavation process, the team confirmed the site was that of the Seahorse when they recovered a dog tag bearing the name and related data of Major Samuel Toomey. In addition to aircraft wreckage and personal equipment, the JTFFA team recovered 17 teeth/parts of teeth and 147 small bone fragments, none measuring more than 2 inches in length.

After examination by the Vietnamese Office Seeking Missing Persons personnel, the bone and teeth fragments were turned over to US control and transported to the Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CIL-HI). After completing its examination, CIL-HI staff was able to positively identify only two teeth as belonging to Dick Fitts. On 3 January

1990, US officials formally announced his remains were positively identified. The remaining 15 teeth/tooth chips and 147 fragments were individually unidentifiable. In spite of that fact, on 8 February 1990, the Defense Department announced that the remaining six Americans were also positively identified.

On 13 January 1990, the two teeth positively identified as Dick Fitts were buried with full military honors in Mount Vernon Cemetery, Boston, Massachusetts. On 23 March 1990, the remaining 15 teeth and bone fragments site were interred as a group burial in Arlington National Cemetery. The families of Arthur Bader, Michael Mein, Raymond Stacks, Samuel Toomey Gary LaBohn and Klaus Scholz accepted the US government's premise that the recovered material constituted the recoverable remains of their loved ones, along with the remains of the Vietnamese aircrew, and agreed to the group burial. This acceptance was accompanied by a degree of uncertainty and many unanswered/unanswerable questions. SSgt. Fitts name was included, but the names of the Vietnamese pilot and co-pilot were not included, on the Arlington headstone since CIL-HI believed some of the co-mingled remains were his.

Seven months after the burial, on 29 October 1990, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Interim Report was publicly released. After reading this well-footnoted document; Lou Ann LaBohn, SFC LaBohn's sister and Primary Next of Kin, realized she had made a mistake by accepting the government's premise that her brother was "remains recovered" based solely on the positive identification of only one team member. She immediately notified the Department of the Army of her decision and requested that her brother's name be removed from the headstone in Arlington National Cemetery.

In January 1991, the Department of the Army answered her request stating that his name could not be removed without defacing the stone. She was informed "if she wanted a new marker erected without her brother's name, she would have to pay \$1,810.25 for it." The letter added, "irregardless of whether his name remained on the stone or not, as far as the Army was concerned, her brother had been accounted for." In February, copies of all the correspondence between Lou Ann LaBohn and the Department of the Army concerning the removal of Gary LaBohn's name from the headstone were sent to US Senators Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Bob Smith (R-NH). Two months later, she received a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs informing her that "a new headstone without her brother's name would be erected at no cost to her." On 12 July 1991, 16 months after the mass burial, the original headstone was removed and the new one installed.

In June 1991, a formal ceremony was scheduled to change the cross, the symbol denoting a POW/MIA to a diamond, the symbol denoting one who was Killed in Action/Body Recovered and Body Not Recovered on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC for men now considered accounted for including Gary LaBohn.

Once again his sister made telephone calls and wrote letters of protest to various officials requesting that her brother's cross not be changed to a diamond. Military and

government officials acknowledged the wisdom in her words, "This does not mean that I believe he is alive, it just means that proof of his death has never been found. To allow this change to take place would open the doors for future alterations that may not be based in fact" and left his cross unchanged.

In 1992, a National Security Agency (NSA) correlation study of all communist radio intercepts pertaining to missing Americans, which was presented to the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs in a classified format, was finally declassified and made public. According to this document, at least one North Vietnamese radio message was intercepted and correlated to this incident. The NSA synopsis states: "On 30 Nov 68, one US helicopter was downed while delivering food to troops in the area of Sam Neua, Laos." The intercepted communiqué did not comment on the fate of those on board the aircraft.

For Dick Fitts, Arthur Bader, Michael Mein, Raymond Stacks, Samuel Toomey and Klaus Scholz, their fate is considered resolved and their families and friends have some peace of mind in knowing where their loved ones lie. For the family of Gary LaBohn, there is no peace of mind. Lou Ann LaBohn succinctly stated her message to families facing similar identifications of unidentifiable remains, "I want to let other families know they can do something about this. They don't have to be railroaded into accepting an ID when one really can't be made."

