

NCO Stories

A selection of Valor



Sgt. William W. Seay

Citation to award the Medal of Honor

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, Sgt. William W. Seay distinguished himself while serving as a driver with the 62nd Transportation Company, on a resupply mission on Aug. 25, 1968.

The convoy with which he was traveling, carrying critically needed ammunition and supplies from Long Binh to Tay Ninh, was ambushed by a reinforced battalion of the North Vietnamese Army. As the main elements of the convoy entered the ambush killing zone, they were struck by intense rocket, machine-gun and automatic weapon fire from the well concealed and entrenched enemy force.

When his convoy was forced to stop, Seay immediately dismounted and took a defensive position behind the wheels of a vehicle loaded with high-explosive ammunition. As the violent North Vietnamese assault approached to within 10 meters of the road, Seay opened fire, killing two of the enemy. He then spotted a sniper in a tree approximately 75 meters to his front and killed him.

When an enemy grenade was thrown under an ammunition trailer near his position, without regard for his own safety, Seay

left his protective cover, exposing himself to intense enemy fire, picked up the grenade, and threw it back to the North Vietnamese position, killing four more of the enemy and saving the lives of the men around him.

Another enemy grenade landed approximately three meters from Seay's position. Again, Seay left his covered position and threw the armed grenade back upon the assaulting enemy.

After returning to his position he was painfully wounded in the right wrist; however, Seay continued to give encouragement and direction to his fellow soldiers.

After moving to the relative cover of a shallow ditch, he detected three enemy soldiers who had penetrated the position and were preparing to fire on his comrades.

Although weak from loss of blood and with his right hand immobilized, Seay stood up and fired his rifle with his left hand, killing all three and saving the lives of the other men in his location.

As a result of his heroic action, Seay was mortally wounded by a sniper's bullet.

Seay, by his gallantry in action at the cost of his life, has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



Ambush at Ap Nhi

By Richard E. Killblane
Transportation Branch Historian

August 25, 1968, was a typical monsoon season day. The clouds hung low, making flying helicopters dangerous, while intermittent, hard rain drenched the area.

A large resupply convoy of 81 trucks from the 48th Transportation Group departed Long Binh Post, near Bien Hoa, Vietnam, to resupply the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, located just seven miles from the Cambodian border.

At 11:45 a.m., the convoy entered the quiet village of Ap Nhi. The convoy passed what looked like a column of Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers marching along the north side of the road adjacent to the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation, known locally as Little Rubber.

The lead vehicles of the convoy had started to leave the village, and the ammo and fuel vehicles were alongside the column when the supposed-Army of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers opened fire on the convoy. The soldiers turned out to be Viet Cong.

Two fuel tankers began to burn. In front of them, 30 trucks sped away, following standard operating procedure, leaving 51 trucks stranded in the mile-long kill zone. The enemy then set two ammunition trailers on fire at the rear of the convoy, sealing the trucks in place. The drivers climbed out of their vehicles and took up defensive positions either behind their trucks or in a ditch along the road.

When the convoy stopped, Spc. William W. Seay, a 19-year-old driver from the 62nd Transportation Company, who later earned the military's highest honor for his actions, immediately jumped out of his truck and took a defensive position behind the left rear dual wheels of his truck. Spc. David M. Sellman, also of the 62nd, in the truck behind Seay, followed. Another driver joined them, and the three battled the enemy fighters.

When the North Vietnamese assault reached to within 10 meters of the road, Seay, who was the closest, opened fire, killing two of the enemy soldiers. Sellman shot one enemy soldier just 15 meters in front of him before his M16 rifle jammed. The Soldiers, however, had successfully turned back the first enemy assault.

Then, Seay spotted a sniper in a tree approximately 75 meters to his right front and killed him. Within minutes, an enemy grenade rolled under the trailer within a few feet of Sellman.

Without hesitation, Seay ran from his covered position while under intense enemy fire, picked up the grenade and threw it back to the North Vietnamese position. Four enemy soldiers jumped up from their covered position and tried to run when the grenade explosion killed them.

Minutes later, another enemy grenade rolled near the group of Soldiers. Sellman kicked it off the road behind him. After it exploded, another enemy grenade rolled under Seay's trailer.

Again, Seay left his covered position and threw the armed grenade back at the enemy. At the same time, Sellman shot an enemy soldier crawling through the fence. After returning to his



Courtesy photo

U.S. Army helicopters land in a field during the Vietnam War.

position, Seay and Sellman killed two more North Vietnamese Army soldiers trying to crawl through the fence.

Suddenly, a bullet shattered the bone in Seay's right wrist. Seay called for Sellman to cover him as he ran back to the rear looking for someone to treat his wound.

Seay located Lt. Howard Brockbank, Spc. William Hinote, and four other drivers in a group.

One man applied a sterile dressing on the wound, but it did not stop the bleeding. Hinote then tied a tourniquet around Seay's wrist with his shirt. Seay continued to give encouragement and direction to his fellow Soldiers.

Hinote mentioned his concern about Seay's shattered wrist. Seay told him to stay alive and not to worry about him.

"Take it easy!" Seay admonished the Soldier. "Don't waste your ammo — we may run out. What will we do then; stand up and fight them with our fists? I wouldn't be any good at that!"

Weak from the loss of blood, Seay moved to the relative cover of a shallow ditch to rest. After another half-hour of fighting, Hinote brought him some water.

Then, Seay noticed three enemy soldiers who had crossed the road and were preparing to fire on his comrades. He raised to a half-crouch and fired his rifle with his left hand, killing all three. Suddenly, a sniper's bullet struck Seay in the head, killing him.

The battle continued for nearly nine hours. Around 9 p.m., an armored cavalry troop finally arrived at the rear of the column and forced the enemy to withdraw.

Seven drivers lost their lives in the ambush, 10 more were wounded and two were taken prisoners. Of the relief force, 23 were killed and 35 wounded. This was the first large-scale ambush for the 48th Group.

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action, Seay was posthumously promoted to sergeant and awarded the Medal of Honor.