

Sgt. Bruce Dale Jones Memorial
October 5, 2012
Rabb Cemetery, Evergreen Alabama
by: Newell Swartz, past VSPA president

Good Morning everyone. My name is Newell Swartz. I am past president of the Vietnam Security Police Association. I would like to start by honoring Sergeant Bruce Dale Jones, and acknowledging the presence this morning of Sgt. Jones' family member and Aunt, Ms. Angela McGee. Also present, Mayor Wolff of Evergreen, with members of the city council, Reverend Jackson, Navy Chief James Windham, Sheriff Booker and deputies from the Conecuh County Sheriff's Office, Patriot Guard Riders, and you my brothers of the VSPA. No occasion should ever occur at a veteran's grave without invoking the blessings of the Deity. DAV Chaplin Jackson please step forward for the Invocation.

Sgt. Bruce Dale Jones was one of 58,178 men and women whose lives were lost in the Vietnam War, and are today listed by names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., more familiarly referred to as "The Wall." However, being one of 58,178 – each number a person as real as Sgt. Jones – does not lessen the heartache of his loss to his family, friends or the community of Evergreen. Nor does it lessen the loss to the VSPA that among those were 111 United States Air Force Security Policemen, including *Sgt. Bruce Dale Jones*, of the 377th Security Police Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Airbase, South Vietnam. We are here today to honor Bruce for his service to his country. Some would think we have arrived forty-years too late at this gravesite. But members of the Vietnam Security Police Association are of the opinion that it is never too late to recognize one of our brothers ... for as long as a man is remembered he is not really gone to us. We know this sentiment is shared by the city of Evergreen and Conecuh County, because you have honored fallen warriors on a new veterans' monument, not far from this cemetery, that bears the names of warriors killed in action or line of duty from World War I to this very day. That monument itself played a key role in our association finding Sgt. Jones, as we were able to actually read his name on the online photo of the monument.



At our reunion this year, Sgt. Jones's name will be read for the first time from a list of 111 names of Security Policemen who lost their lives while serving our country in a combat zone during the Vietnam War. That list is placed on an unoccupied reserved-table containing a single place-setting, a glass and a rose, in their memory.

Present with us today are several people I would like to mention in the order of their involvement in locating Sgt. Jones after all these years. First is Ed Daubert, a former Security Policeman who was stationed at Tan Son Nhut with the 377th Security Police Squadron. Ed has been involved for several years in trying to locate former members of the 377th. Charles Penley, also a former member of the 377th, has painstakingly compiled records of the 377th over the past several years.

Then there is Don Poss, webmaster/Communications Director for the VSPA. Don, who was stationed at Da Nang Airbase in Vietnam, is the man who keeps the VSPA together through his creation of an award winning website. Don, with the invaluable assistance of his Brother, Larry Poss, an Army veteran, has compiled stories, photos, duty rosters, records of attacks on bases, and records of members of the VSPA who served during the Vietnam War. All this information has been accumulated from men who served there, consisting of photographs they took, letters they wrote, after action reports, duty rosters, etcetera. But the important question that brings us all here today was first posed by Ed Daubert: “What happened to Bruce Jones?”

The 377th Squadron had hundreds of men assigned at any given time, so it was possible to serve for a year and never personally know all the troops. After several inquiries on his own, Ed approached Charles Penley and Don Poss. Don was finally able to trace Bruce back to Alabama where he contacted another Vietnam veteran, Navy Chief James Windham. James proved instrumental in confirming “The Sgt. Jones” named on the monument was indeed “Our Sgt. Jones.” Chief Windham then verified the gravesite of Sgt. Jones, and has assisted in locating family members and in coordinating our visit with the city of Evergreen. James and his wife restored Bruce’s head stone and gravesite. This is how members of VSPA came to this place today ... and now we get to “why” we are here.

The price of freedom is not free. A famous man once wrote that “The tree of liberty has to be watered from time to time with the blood of patriots.” Many of us volunteered for military duty and some even volunteered to go to Vietnam; however none of us volunteered to give up all our hopes and dreams or our lives. Sgt. Bruce Jones was a volunteer. He came from Evergreen, Alabama, a small town with a rich history of young patriots.



There are twelve young men from this town and county who, along with Bruce, served in Vietnam and gave their lives over a short five year period.

Following our one-year tours in Vietnam, many of us promised to keep in touch with some of our closest friends, but with very few exceptions that did not occur. There were several reasons, the most

important one was that our lives changed as we came home; got jobs, married and raised families. Also partly because some memories of the war were too painful to think about, and to think about one aspect of Vietnam was to remember others. Also, during the 60's and 70's there was a lot of bitterness and division among the American people about the Vietnam War itself. However, as we grew older, all of us began to reflect back over our lives and there was something missing we could not put a finger on ... like an unfulfilled longing. Then back in 1995, a small group of former Air Force security police from the Vietnam War came together and formed the Vietnam Security Police Association. It was a brotherhood where nobody had to justify what they did in Vietnam. Nobody had to justify their service with some heroic war story, although we do have our share of true heroes. We were just a bunch of men who served in a place called Vietnam or Thailand, and we had some powerful allure to remember the war years ... and in some cases come to grips with events that occurred there.

Vietnam Veterans did not receive a Welcome Home, or a parade, when the war ended. Many returning veterans were even publically ridiculed for their service. Through the years, Vietnam Veterans began a new tradition, whereas when meeting another Vietnam War veteran, we would honor his service by saying, "Welcome Home." You may hear that said even today as veterans greet each other. As new members joined the Vietnam Security Police Association and first hear the words "Welcome Home", there were very few of us who could hold back the tears ... we were truly home with our comrades in arms once more.

Some VSPA members have made it their personal quest to locate as many of the former 20,000 veterans of the Air Police/Security Police units as they could. Today, more than 10% of those war veterans are members or contacts of our great association. Although for some, memories of the Vietnam War years are still too painful to join any veterans' group. Nevertheless, we share a special bond and most of us have found that you are not whole again until you reach out to the brothers you served with. That was best expressed in 1968 by Vietnam veteran Tim Craft, who wrote: *"For those who fought for it, life has a different flavor the protected will never know."* For us, that *'flavor'* ... that *feeling* ... includes locating the gravesites across the United States of our fallen brothers we served with who made the ultimate sacrifice.

In addition to over 58,178 lives lost, many more were wounded in body and mind. War is nothing but sadness and tragedy, but the goal for which it is fought for, even today, is freedom. And freedom means living life to its fullest potential ... and making a better world for our friends and loved ones. Those who have given life and limb in this cause did so because they wanted for us to be happy and in full pursuit of the life that the Good Lord has given us. Yes, it brings back sad memories to recall the loss of a loved one and how much we still miss them. But our time on this earth is brief, much briefer for some than others. That is God's Will. We have faith that Sgt. Bruce Dale Jones is in the arms of the Lord and that he rejoices that we have all come together today to honor him and to comfort each other.

I would like to specifically thank the members of the Junior ROTC for their participation here today and their commitment to maintain the graves of the veterans who rest here. Veterans everywhere and especially here today, are proud of you. We are also thankful for the spiritual guidance and display of civil leadership by the citizens of Evergreen. Last but not least, we thank the veterans, past and present, of Evergreen, and the families who supported and continue to support their military service.

The town of Evergreen has led the way for the nation as a shining example of the patriotism of all her citizens, young and old, and in so doing, has fulfilled the words from the Eternal Rest prayer. Where ever Veterans repose: "Eternal rest, grant unto them O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon them..." *May it always be so for Sergeant Bruce Dale Jones.*

God Bless you all, and thank you for your heartfelt Welcome Home for our brother in arms this day ... Sgt. Bruce Dale Jones.