

# VIETNAM

31st SPS  
Tuy Hòa Air Base

## Purple Heart Landmine!

submitted by Henry Lesher  
Sgt (Retired)  
(1969)

On August 23, 1969, while on perimeter patrol at Tuy Hòa AB, Republic of Vietnam I sustained a booby trap blast injury to my right foot. We were checking a problem on the south end of the base perimeter when this incident accrued. My partner James E. Buckelew immediately assisted me, radioed for Dust-Off medical helicopter and soon after I was flown to a field hospital for treatment. Eventually I came back to the States and to the Philadelphia Navel Hospital where I spent several Months and a series of operations on my foot. Finally in March of 1972 I was retired from the U.S. Air Force because of my disability.

After my initial operation, once I came out of recovery, a team of Officers came around to each of us in this big room and formally presented us with a beautiful certificate along with the Purple Heart ribbon. The following day once I felt a little better I was looking over my Certificate and discovered that they had me down as a Spec 5 in the Army instead of a Sgt in the Air Force. I told my attending nurse and she got one of the Officers from that unit and he told me that they would get it straightened out. He would contact the Air Force Unit that I was assigned to and I would have a corrected certificate as soon as possible.

I left the next day for a hospital in Japan for another operation, and then onto Philadelphia Navel Hospital where I received a series of operations. I guess because of all the confusion at the time in the middle of the War this *never got straightened out* and subsequently it *never got put in my military records about the Purple Heart*.

Back in May 16, 2002 I contacted my local Congressman Tim Holden to see if he could do anything for me. I gave him a copy of all the records that I had from back then and he in turn went through his Congressional Liaison Department of the Air Force Col. Pete Bruce. And on October 24, 2002 I was contacted by Tim Holden's Office that they had my Purple Heart and special Order and Certificate. Finally, **after 33 years, I got my Purple Heart** and it was made an official part of my permanent military record. I wanted to have a formal presentation from Tim Holden's Office but this never happened. Maybe something can be done in the future.

I trust this information is OK. I would like to thank you for all that you are doing on behalf of our cause. You guys are doing an outstanding job!!

Henry L. Lesher



*Ouch!*

*We Take Care of Our Own*

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