

Kennedy, James Edward
Dates in the 57th - 1969
SP4 – Door Gunner
Birth Date: January 2nd 1950
Woodbury, NJ
Killed In Action
Body Never Recovered
Date: December 22nd 1969
Cambodia - Laos



KENNEDY, JAMES EDWARD

Name: James Edward Kennedy

Rank/Branch: SP4/US Army

Unit: 57th Aviation Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group

Date of Birth: 02 January 1950 (Woodbury NJ)

Home City of Record: Pine Hill NJ

Date of Loss: 22 December 1969

Country of Loss: Laos (some records say Cambodia)

Loss Coordinates: 152029N 1072941E (YA678975)

Status (in 1973): Missing In Action

Category: 2

Acft/Vehicle/Ground: UH1C

Refno: 1539

Source: Compiled 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 in 1998.

Others In Incident: Donald D. Burris (missing); Timothy A. Purser, John H. Hunsicker (rescued)

REMARKS:

SYNOPSIS: On December 22, 1969 SP4 James E. Kennedy, door gunner; WO Donald D. Burris Jr., pilot; WO John H. Hunsicker, aircraft commander; and SP5 Timothy A. Purser, crew chief; were the crew of a UH1C helicopter (serial #66-00587) on a combat support mission when it developed mechanical problems and crash landed.

Official records differ as to the location of the crash. U.S. Army casualty and Joint Casualty Resolution Center records indicate that the crash was in Cambodia, yet Defense Department, State Department and other records indicate that the crash occurred near the border of Attapeu and Saravane Provinces in Laos, some 30-35 miles north of the closest point in Cambodia. Coordinates 152029N 1972941E are that location. The locality of YA678975 is undoubtedly Cambodia. It is possible that their combat support mission was in Cambodia, and the subsequent rescue flight took a circular northwesterly course around the mountains in northern Cambodia along the Laos border, circled back east towards Dak To (its destination), and that some records pinpoint the actual location of loss at the beginning of the flight, while others record it during flight.

Regardless, when the aircraft landed, Burris, Purser and Hunsicker had survived the crash, but they could not locate the door gunner, James Kennedy. WO Hunsicker and WO Burris escaped through the left cargo door uninjured. They found the crew chief (Purser), who had also scrambled free of the wreckage. He had a broken arm. A search of the general area around the crashed helicopter revealed no trace of SP4 Kennedy, and he was not trapped in the wreckage. (As door gunner, and at a position on the side of the main cargo area of the aircraft positioned at an open door, Kennedy may have decided to bail out of the descending aircraft, or may have fallen, - although the gunners were generally strapped in to the frame of the helicopter so this seems unlikely - thus becoming separated from the others.)

Minutes after the helicopter crashed, a recovery helicopter arrived in the

area and lowered ropes with McGuire rigs attached through the dense jungle to the downed men. The survivors were not trained in the proper use of this equipment, and SP5 Purser fell out of his rig a few feet off the ground. WO Burris and WO Hunsicker remained in their rigs and were lifted out, and the helicopter started toward Dak To, with the two rescued men still on the ropes. Five minutes into the flight, Burris lost his grip on the rope and fell from an altitude of from 2500 to 3000 feet. The rescue helicopter continued to the nearest landing area.

A search and rescue team was inserted into the crash site area and recovered Purser, who was injured. The team searched widely for SP4 Kennedy, but found no trace of him, and concluded their search on December 25. No search was made for Burris because of the lack of positive information to pinpoint his loss site and the hostile threat in the area.

Burris and Kennedy are two of nearly 2500 Americans who did not return from Southeast Asia at the end of American involvement there, including nearly 600 in Laos. The Pathet Lao publicly stated they held many American prisoners, but not a single American serviceman held in Laos was ever released. In Cambodia, there were substantially fewer missing than in Laos or Vietnam. Cambodia has publicly offered to return the bodies of a number of American servicemen to the U.S. (in fact, MORE bodies than are officially listed as lost there...), but the U.S. has no diplomatic relations with Cambodia, and will not acknowledge the offer officially. The U.S. is unusually silent on the matter of men lost in Laos and Cambodia.

At the end of the war, military officials expressed their shock and anger that only 591 Americans were released when hundreds more were expected. Word of Americans still held captive has continually come in. At the end of 1988, a U.S. Government report stated that the U.S. has conducted "over 250,000" interviews and analyzed "millions of documents", yet still maintains no proof exists that Americans are still held.

Meanwhile the Burris and Kennedy families wonder if they will ever know what happened to their men - if they are alive - or if they are dead.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/99327356/james-edward-kennedy#view-photo=71784470>



SSG: KENNEDY JAMES E
57 AVN CO NJ

<https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/1990395/honolulu-memorial#view-photo=29338744>

SSGT James Edward “Jimmy” Kennedy

BIRTH	2 Jan 1950 Woodbury, Gloucester County, New Jersey, USA
DEATH	22 Dec 1969 (aged 19) Cambodia
CENOTAPH	<u>Honolulu Memorial</u> Honolulu, Honolulu County, Hawaii, USA Show Map <i>* A structure erected in honor of someone whose remains lie elsewhere.</i>
PLOT	Courts of the Missing
MEMORIAL ID	99327356 · View Source

In Memory of..... SSGT. James Edward Kennedy.

*** Staff Sergeant Kennedy was a member of 57th Aviation Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, 17th Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade. On December 22, 1969, he was the door gunner of a Bell Huey Utility Helicopter (UH-1C) on a combat support mission near the border of Attapeu and Saravane Provinces in Laos, when the aircraft developed mechanical problems and crashed landed. He was declared Missing in Action. His remains were not recovered. His name is inscribed on the Courts of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial.

You may be gone, no longer living on this earth; but you will live on - in the memories of your family and friends. There will always be a part of you living in those who knew you. You will live on because we remember you!

JAMES EDWARD KENNEDY - Army - SSGT - E6

Age: 24

Race: Caucasian

Date of Birth Jan 2, 1950-Military-Woodbury,NJ.

From: PINE HILL, NJ

Religion: BAPTIST

Marital Status: Single - Parents: Father, James O. Kennedy, Born 1925 in NJ and Mother, Margaret Kennedy, from NJ. (who are now deceased) and a brother.

Military shows he is married to Sandra J. Kennedy of NJ. Uncles and Aunts: William H Kennedy, Ruth A Kennedy, Raymond N Kennedy, Evelyn J Kennedy, Walter J Kennedy.

* Grandparents: Samuel Kennedy, Born 1883/1884 in Penn.(FAG 128208085) and Grandmother, Alice W Kennedy, Born in Scotland/Mass.(FAG 128208035).

***** I added a photo of his name on Pine Hill, NJ War Memorial. I can't find any marker for him. This was my husbands hometown and I believe he was a classmate of my brother. My older brother was in Vietnam the same year. He made it home but died young from drug use that started over there. Thanks for caring about our veterans. Connie and Wayne Clark

Added by Connie Clark on May 26, 2016 7:38 PM

***** Alice Hinderliter - Cousin

Jim - You have, never been forgotten.

***** Tom Kennedy - Cousin - Chesapeake, VA.,

***** Elaine Ratliff - Cousin

Lindenwold, NJ., 08021, USA

SSGT - E6 - Army - Regular - 1st AVN BDE

Casualty was on Jan 11, 1974

In LZ, CAMBODIA

Hostile, died while missing, HELICOPTER - CREW

AIR LOSS, CRASH ON LAND

Body was not recovered

Panel 15W - Line 81

Others In Incident: Donald D. Burris (missing); Timothy A. Purser, John H. Hunsicker (rescued)

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