

Woodard Jr., William Charles
Dates in the 57th – 1971 - 1972
CW2 – Pilot
Birth Date: March 2nd 1944
City, ST
Died After Tour Date: April 24th 1973
Fort Hood, TX



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William Charles Woodard Jr.
Military rank: CW2

Status: DAT - 24 Apr 1973

There is more information about this person on the [VHPA web site](#).

Flight Class(es):
71-21

Call Sign(s):
PANTHER

Unit(s):
57 AHC (71-72)

Branch of Service:

AR

WOODARD WILLIAM CHARLES

CW2 William Charles Woodard was a potential VHPA member who died after his tour in Vietnam on 04/24/1973 at the age of 29.1 from A/C Accident

Seattle, WA

Flight Class 71-21

Date of Birth 03/07/1944

Served in the U.S. Army

Served in Vietnam with 57 AHC in 71-72

Call sign in Vietnam PANTHER

This information was provided by Ben Brown, TAGCEN Casualty database.

More detail on this person: Steve and I were in the same company in Vietnam, and we flew Chinooks for C Co, 159th ASHB, 101st Airborne Div. When we each came home, we ended up in the same unit a Ft Hood as instrument instructor pilots. I believe that was A Co, 227th AVN Bn, 1st Cav Div.

As IP's, we did relatively little in the way of field maneuvers, as compared to the other companies in the battalion, but we had to go "camp out" as we used to call it from time to time. Steve was short in the Army, as he had applied for the LAPD as a helicopter pilot, and he had been accepted. He was doing his last few days before leaving the Army and going to Los Angeles.

Our company was part of an exercise, which may have been the Gallant Hand 1973 operation mentioned in the entry. I don't remember a name. We were to make a combat assault in front of an area on Ft Hood that they called Black Mountain. They had set up bleachers out there, and we sometimes did shows" for dignitaries when they visited Ft Hood. On this day the Secretary of Defense was going to be there. We practiced the CA the day before, and worked on the timing with all of the other gunships, tanks, artillery and so forth. We had a flight of six UH-1's.

On the day Steve was killed, he was flying with CW2 William Charles Woodard, Jr. We called him "Woody" of course. As we got ready to go out to our staging area near Black Mountain, we got word that the whole area was socked in. As the weather around the airfield at Ft Hood proper was clear, we were surprised, but thought that meant we would scrub the CA for the show. Instead we were told that

we were going to move the CA to another area just north of the Ft Hood cantonment area called Lone Mountain. That is close to Anderson Mountain, but Lone Mountain is where the midair occurred. We were told that there would not be any gunships or tanks or artillery at the new location.

I don't remember who was leading the flight, but he went and got a briefing, then came back to tell us that Lone Mountain was a long narrow mountain with a saddle between two peaks that was wide enough to accommodate only two aircraft at a time. We would go in with three flights of two aircraft, drop off our pax, circle around and come back in to pick them up again and leave. We went out there and practiced doing this twice. Steve and Woody, and me and the CW3 maintenance guy flying with me (I don't remember his name anymore), were the last two aircraft in the flight, Yellow 5 and Yellow 6.

Because we didn't get much practice flying formation as IP's, we swapped off flying lead and wing while we practiced this CA. Steve and Woody flew lead dropping the troops off, and I flew lead when we went in to pick them up. As I said, we practiced this twice for timing, waited a few minutes and then went in to do it for the show".

Drop off went smoothly. We flew off to the north and out of sight, then swapped lead and wing and went back in to pick them up again. I called Yellow 5 & 6 in", the troops jumped on, and I called Yellow 5 & 6 out and we left. About thirty seconds after takeoff, my crew chief got on the intercom and said "Sir, an aircraft just blew up in midair back behind us!" I called Yellow 6 and told them I was going to make a slow right turn because an aircraft had blown up behind us.

Yellow 6 didn't answer.

I called them again as I finished the turn and looked down to see a UH-1 inverted and crashed below me, and something else burning about fifty yards away from the Huey. I knew then why Yellow 6 was not answering me.

I landed between the Huey and the burning thing, which turned out to be an OH-58. My crew chief jumped out with a fire extinguisher and put out a flaming body that was laying a few feet away from where we landed. Within a few seconds, four troops came running towards us carrying another soldier with them. They threw him on a seat in back, my crew chief jumped on top of him to hold him inside, and we flew him to Darnell Army Hospital on Ft Hood.

After dropping off the injured soldier, we flew back to the crash site and helped the soldiers who were pulling bodies out of the wreckage. The crew chief flying with Steve and Woody, Jim Vogt, survived but had severe head injuries. Steve and Woody were killed when they hit the ground. Troops on the ground who witnessed the midair told us that the Kiowa just flew up the side of the hill and smashed into the bottom of the Huey as we took off from the saddle.

So you can see that a "blinding rainstorm" had nothing to do with the accident. The weather was clear enough around Lone Mountain to fly the CA without problems. The only rainstorm may have been around Black Mountain. The only "blindness" involved was changing the show location at the last minute, and I've always guessed that no one bothered to notify the unit that was operating in the area that we were coming.

I read a notation that said that the flight leader observed the Kiowa but did not inform anyone else in the flight that it was in the area. That is news to me, as I never heard that story after the accident. The fact that no one told us about other traffic in the area is certainly correct. We had seen no other aircraft anywhere near Lone Mountain during the practice runs or the flight in to drop off the troops for the real thing. The fact that nobody on my aircraft saw the Kiowa means that it was hugging the side of the mountain and flying up from underneath us as we took off, just as the troops on the ground told us later.

As you can see, this accident affected me, and I remember it well even after all these years. You see, the Secretary of Defense cancelled his visit to Ft Hood that day.

From: Ben Brown, CW2, US Army, 1969 - 1974

This information was last updated 05/18/2016

Please send additions or corrections to: HQ@vhpa.org VHPA Headquarters