



ADEL COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 1969

JOHN L.
MCCLURG

MAY 1, 1951 · AUGUST 17, 1970
19 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, 17 DAYS



JOHN JOINED THE UNITED STATES ARMY ON AUGUST 19, 1969 AT AGE 18 AND WAS A MEMBER OF DELTA COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION, 327TH INFANTRY, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION STATIONED IN THE THUA THIEN PROVINCE IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

AT APPROXIMATELY 9:30 A.M. ON 17 AUGUST 1970 JOHN HAD JUST EXITED A HELICOPTER DURING A COMBAT ASSAULT MISSION INTO A MOUNTAINOUS AREA TWENTY MILES WEST OF HUE. AN ENEMY BOOBY TRAP, WHICH WAS HIDDEN ON THE HELICOPTER LANDING ZONE, WAS IN ADVERTENTLY DETONATED, AND JOHN WAS KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION. HE DIED INSTANTLY OF HIS WOUNDS.



Tribute to John McClurg

In January 1970 during a resupply our platoon received 3 or 4 replacements, one of which was a kind of gangly blond kid, who would change my life forever. That boy, just 18 years old, was John McClurg, from rural Iowa. He was assigned to my squad, 1st squad of the 2nd platoon of Delta Co., 101st Airborne Div. I really didn't like getting new guys, or Chemies as we called them, but we needed replacements. Getting new guys meant a lot of instruction about what they really needed to know, and they could be a dangerous burden in a firefight. I told John to stay with me and to listen to what he was told and to ask questions of anyone.

Since I was from Des Moines, Iowa we started talking about home and then about our personal lives. I broke one of my own rules about not getting close to anyone, but you couldn't help it with John. His personality was a magnet to anyone and we became very close. John learned fast and soon became a very good combat soldier.

Unbeknownst to us something happened back in Iowa that made us even closer. My wife and his mother both worked for the same company in Des Moines and by chance met each other there! My wife mentioned that I was in VN, and John's mother told Sandy that her son was in VN and took out her letter from him. When Sandy saw the letter she knew that John and I were together. They wrote us about it and we both laughed about it and wrote to them back saying we had already met.

I soon became too protective of John, which was not far from the rest of my squad. I believe John recognized this, and became the platoon RTO for Lt. Donahue, our platoon leader. We still talked a lot but he wasn't under my command. This took a lot of stress off me and I knew John became the RTO because he was that type of a friend.

We talked about home and what we were going to do after the war, our love lives, cars, but most importantly our families. We had plans made that probably would have taken a life time to do. One thing that we really gave each other a bad time about was our cars and we planned a race between his Mustang and my Pontiac. I ran that race one night with someone else's Mustang, about a month after John's funeral. I won that race but there was no joy in winning. But at least I fulfilled one plan that we had made together.

John was that type of person that you instantly liked. He liked everyone and he performed his duties beyond the call of duty. I doubt that anyone who knew him did not like him.

John was killed August 17, 1970 during a combat assault. Upon the landing he exited the helicopter and a booby-trapped artillery shell was accidentally set off. It took John's life and that of another, plus wounding two others. This took place a month after I arrived home in Iowa. When I got the news I was in disbelief, but sadly it was true. The world had lost one of its finest young men who could have gone on to do so much.

Above the Rest.



Sergeant Jerry Strait
Delta Co., 1027th Infantry
101st Airborne Division VN1
Vietnam 69 - 70

I served with John in Vietnam with Delta Company, First Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division.

Through the heat of the summer and the cold of the monsoons in the jungles of Vietnam John was a Delta Brother that epitomized the true spirit of the 101st Airborne Division. Day after day, month after month, we endured the things that only an infantryman could understand. Above all else we fought for each other knowing full well that some would not make it home.

On the fateful day of 17 August 1970, I happened to be back at base Camp Eagle when a radio call with the names of the KIA's came in. John was one of them. He was supposed to come in for a "stand down" (rest time) but they had one more short patrol to accomplish when he was killed by an enemy booby trap. It was that day that I paid my last tribute to him at Graves Registration; went through his personal items to send home, and typed that dreadful letter home to his parents that the company commander signed.

So 40 years later the Brothers of Delta Company once again honor John McClurg. He was so young and so full of life but he did as his country asked him to do. He served in the United States Army in a distant land and paid the ultimate price.

Above the Rest.



Sergeant Alan Hayashi
Delta Co., 1027th Infantry
101st Airborne Division
Vietnam 70 - 71

I knew John "Mac" McClurg's Platoon Leader with Delta Company, 1/327 Infantry, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. In fact, Mac was my RTO (Radio/Telephone Operator) and as such we spent a lot of time together. I can only say the best things about Mac. In addition to being highly competent and professional, Mac had a great sense of humor and was a pleasure to be with - even in the boondocks of Vietnam. Mac was a great representative of his family, his school, his town and the State of Iowa.

When I became Company Commander, I offered to take Mac along with me, but out of loyalty to the men of his platoon Mac graciously turned down the offer. Shortly thereafter he was killed in action (KIA) against the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). I will never forget Mac. He's the type of person who made this country great.

Above the Rest.



Captain Dan Donahue
Delta Co., 1027th Infantry
101st Airborne Division
Vietnam 70 - 71

Forty years have passed since John gave the ultimate sacrifice and now, as I sit and think about what to say about him, so many things rush through my mind. As a small town Midwestern boy myself, we shared very similar upbringing and our views of the world were not too far apart. We talked farming, cars, and of course girls as we sat in the middle of nowhere.

As we walked up and down the mountains through days of endless rain, searing jungle temperatures or even the stress of enemy contact, he was always someone you knew you could depend on, to do whatever was needed to help everyone make it through that moment. He was a very good soldier who cared deeply about defending his country and the freedoms he held dear. He was not overly fond of the war part, but held fast to the concept that it was for the good of our country. His death was and is still one of the deepest sorrows I have experienced. His memories will live on in my heart and I am a better person for having known him.

I want to thank all of those who have done their parts in establishing this very fitting memorial to John and all of the other brave veterans that did not have the opportunity to return to their homes and the world they truly loved.

Above the Rest.



Sergeant Steve Breece
Delta Co., 1027th Infantry
101st Airborne Division
Vietnam 69 - 70

Memorial Service
For
Pvt. John L. McClurg
May 1, 1951 August 17, 1970

Sunday, August 23, 1970
2 P.M.
Methodist Church
Adel, Iowa

Clergyman
Rev. Orrin Potter
Rev. Wray Young

Soloist
Oris Hubbard

Organist
Mrs. Martin Brittain

Casket Bearers
Sgt. Jerry Strait
Roger Edwards
Mike Purkins

Tom Devore
Darwin Martin
Roger Sutherland

Military Honors
United States Army
 Ft. Leonardwood, Missouri

Place of Interment
Earlham Cemetery

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
The Walters White House
has announced
August 28, 1970

Dear Mr. and Mrs. McClurg:
It is with great sorrow that I have learned of the death of your son, Private First Class John L. McClurg.
All the hardships of war, the constant awe the losses of men such as your son... The only consolation I can offer is that the nation he died to serve shares your grief and will forever honor his memory.
I pray for the day when peace can be restored. I wish that sooner, there will be a special place in the hearts of his countrymen for those whose sacrifice made it possible for those others who have borne the burden of their lives.
Mrs. McClurg, my heart is in extending my deepest sympathy, and in the hope that the profound respect your son has so courageously earned will help sustain and comfort you.

Sincerely,
Richard Nixon

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd McClurg
Earlham, Iowa



327th Battlefield conditions:
We were what everyone referred to as "Scouts", a term we really accepted. I am not sure if it came from, but it was the group of soldiers that were most respected for what they did. We lived in the jungle for months at a time without ever seeing the base or base camp.
We were equipped with a M16 helicopter. This brought us our resupply of ordnance, cigarettes, c-rations, mail, water, and a hot meal.
We operated mostly in an area of the northern mountains that are similar in size to the Ozarks. We carried everything we had in backpacks on our backs. This amounted to weights of 70-100 lbs. on the first day of resupply and reduced gradually as we ate our meals or used our ammo. The days consisted of day long marches up and down the hills after following existing trails or cutting new ones ourselves. Of course as we traveled there had to be complete silence as we were in essence hunting our loss. The heat and humidity was so bad that ten minutes into your day it would be hard to find a dry piece of clothing or anything.
Meals were as you had time, a can of refried beans or mixed with another person's to create a pot of rice. Then as night approached we set up a defense position, a basic camp with strategic fire power in particular directions depending on our terrain. We would set out our day more mine and trip mines as an early warning and first line of defense and proper. Then we would take turns being on guard for an hour, sleep for two hours, then on guard again etc.
When there was a cloudy night or no moon the darkness was so intense that you could not see your hand in front of your face. We had to depend on hearing only. We would work a particular region looking for the enemy setting up ambushes and booby traps, always on the alert.
When our assignment would change they would bring helicopters in and whisk us away to another hilltop in middle of nowhere to begin the process again. Normally we would have about 10-25 people and you trusted each with your life because we were at anyone's hand.



John McClurg Sergeant Strait Sergeant Hayashi