



MEDAL OF HONOR:

Capt. Larry L. Taylor



Biography



Hometown: Chattanooga, Tennessee

Unit: D Troop (Air), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division

Military Occupation (MOS): Fixed-Wing Pilot

Commissioned: June 1966

Deployments: Vietnam from August 1967 to August 1968



Larry Taylor was born in 1942 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He grew up in a family and community that emphasized the importance of military service. His great-great-grandfather fought in the Civil War, his great-uncle in World War I and his father and uncles in World War II.

He joined the U.S. Army Reserve Officer Training Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Upon graduation in June 1966, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve, then joined the regular Army in August, volunteering as an armor officer.

After graduating the U.S. Army Armor School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Taylor quickly realized he was better suited to be a pilot than an armor officer. He had already obtained a fixed-wing pilot's license before joining the Army and thought that experience would make it easier to learn rotary-wing flying. After receiving permission to train as a helicopter pilot, he attended the U.S. Army Primary Helicopter School at Fort Wolters, Texas, and then advanced helicopter training at Fort Rucker (renamed Fort Novosel in 2023), Alabama, where he qualified as an Army aviator in June 1967.

Taylor served in Vietnam from August 1967 to August 1968, flying some of the first Bell AH1-G Cobra attack helicopters in combat. Serving with D Troop (Air), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, Taylor flew over 2,000 combat missions in UH-1 and Cobra helicopters. He was engaged by enemy fire 340 times and was forced down five times. The U.S. Army awarded him at least 50 combat decorations, including the Silver Star, 43 Air Medals, a Bronze Star and two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He also received the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star.

Among his many harrowing operations, the most dangerous and frightening took place on June 18, 1968, when he rescued a four-man long range patrol team at significant risk to his own life. For his heroic actions that night, the Army awarded him the Silver Star, which President Joe Biden upgraded to the Medal of Honor in 2023.

Taylor concluded his military service as a captain with the 2nd Armored Cavalry in West Germany. After his Army service, he operated a successful roofing and sheet metal company in Chattanooga and was involved with several veterans' organizations. He has also been a generous donor to charitable nonprofit organizations in the Chattanooga area. Taylor and his wife, Toni, reside in Signal Mountain, Tennessee.



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Battle Narrative

Then-1st Lt. Larry L. Taylor distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Troop D (Air), 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, on June 18, 1968, near the hamlet of Ap Go Cong, Republic of Vietnam. On that night he flew one of two AH-1G Cobra helicopter gunships sent to support a four-man long-range reconnaissance patrol team that had been surrounded and was in danger of being overrun.

Taking off from their Phu Loi base, Taylor and his wingman arrived at the contact site just northeast of Saigon a few minutes later. Once overhead, Taylor radioed the patrol team and asked the four Soldiers to mark their location with flares. Using the illumination as a reference point, he and his wingman strafed the enemy with mini-guns and aerial rockets. Braving intense ground fire, the two Cobra gunships continued to make low-level attack runs for the next 45 minutes.

With both helicopters nearly out of ammunition and the enemy still closing in, Taylor reconnoitered the escape route the team intended to take. He concluded that the four Soldiers would be overwhelmed if they tried to reach their evacuation point near the Dong Nai River.

Returning to the patrol team's location, Taylor learned that a plan to rescue the Soldiers with a UH-1 "Huey" helicopter had been canceled because it stood almost no chance of success. Running low on fuel, with the patrol team nearly out of ammunition, Taylor decided on a bold and innovative plan to extract the team using his two-man Cobra helicopter, a feat that had never been accomplished or even attempted.

He directed his wingman to fire his remaining mini-gun rounds along the eastern flank of the patrol team and then return to base camp. Taylor fired his own remaining mini-gun rounds along the team's western flank, using his Cobra's landing lights to draw the enemy's attention while the patrol team headed southeast toward a nearby extraction point Taylor had designated.

When the team reached the site, Taylor landed his Cobra under heavy enemy fire and with complete disregard for his personal safety. The patrol team climbed aboard, sitting on the rocket-pods and skids, and Taylor carried them to a safe location before landing them back on the ground.

Taylor's conspicuous gallantry, his profound concern for his fellow Soldiers, and his intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.



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Unit History - The 1st Infantry Division

The unit was organized in New York City on June 8, 1917, from Army units previously stationed from the Mexican border to New Jersey. Initially formed as an expeditionary division, it deployed in stages over the next six months to France, where it joined the American Expeditionary Forces under the command of Gen. John Pershing. The 1st Division was the earliest American unit to see action in World War I and remained in the thick of the fighting until the Armistice on Nov. 11, 1918. At the close of the war the division adopted its iconic Big Red One patch, which is still worn today by Soldiers from that unit.



During World War II it was designated the 1st Infantry Division and was one of the earliest American divisions to reach England. The Big Red One played a crucial role in the invasions of North Africa and Sicily, landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day, and fought its way across France, Belgium and Germany until the end of the war on May 8, 1945. After the war, the division remained in Germany as part of the occupation force, and later as part of NATO. The division returned to the United States in 1955, redeploying to Fort Riley, Kansas.

In the summer of 1965, the Big Red One was the first full Army infantry division called to fight in Vietnam. Over the next five years, it saw constant action against some of the toughest Viet Cong and North Vietnamese units in the war. In April 1970 the division returned to Fort Riley, where it prepared for future conflicts by participating in the Reforger exercises in Germany and in desert warfare maneuvers at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.

In 1990-1991 the 1st Infantry Division deployed more than 12,000 Soldiers to Saudi Arabia in support of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The Big Red One was among the first to breach Iraq's western defense lines, and elements from the division earned a Valorous Unit Citation for the capture of Safwan.

On April 10, 1996, the colors of the 1st Infantry Division moved to the German city of Würzburg, and Soldiers from the Big Red One participated in contingency and peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo over the next several years. The division cased its colors in Germany on July 7, 2006, and returned once again to Fort Riley.

In the post-9/11 era, elements of the 1st Infantry Division have deployed multiple times in support of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and have played a crucial role in contingency operations across the globe. Today the 1st Infantry Division continues its service as one of the oldest and most-decorated organizations in the United States Army.



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MEDAL OF HONOR: Fellow Soldiers



David M. Hill - Biography

David M. Hill was born Feb. 2, 1948, in Visalia, California. He graduated high school in 1965 and attended a year of community college. Before his military service, he was a firefighter at the California Division of Forestry in Three Rivers.

Hill enlisted in the U.S. Army on Oct. 26, 1966. He completed basic training at Fort Ord, California in January 1967 and advanced training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, in March. By May, he graduated from the Scout Dog Handler School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Hill was deployed to Vietnam in July 1967, initially with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. By the end of that month, he was reassigned to the 41st Infantry Platoon in Phouc Vinh. Alongside his scout dog, Rex, Hill played a crucial role in the battalions of the 1st Infantry Division's brigades based in Phouc Vinh, Quan Loi and Lai Khe. He earned the rank of sergeant in November 1967. In 1968 he volunteered for the 52nd Infantry at Lai Khe and later served as a forward observer in Texas until he finished his Army duty in August 1969. Among his commendations are the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Silver Star Medal and the Army Commendation Medal.

After the military, Hill returned to Visalia, California. He earned an associate degree from the College of the Sequoias and a bachelor's in political science from California State University, Sonoma, in 1973. He also acquired a master's degree from California State University, Sacramento, in 1975. Hill married Loretta Marmaduke on April 6, 1974, and began working at the U.S. Commerce Department in Washington, D.C. in 1975, and transitioned to their San Francisco office in 1980, where he remained until 1983. Hill later joined LSI Logic Corporation as a customs and traffic manager, eventually becoming the corporate director of logistics by 1986. He retired in 2004 and moved to Dayton, Nevada. From 2006-2010, he managed the course at Genoa Lakes Golf Resort in Genoa, Nevada.

James M. Holden - Biography

Born on July 22, 1946, in Spencer, North Carolina, James Michael Holden moved to Charlotte in 1956. In 1967, at age 21, he was drafted into the U.S. military. His training took place at Fort Bragg (renamed Fort Liberty in June 2023), North Carolina, and Fort Polk (renamed Fort Johnson in June 2023), Louisiana. By 1968, he held the rank of staff sergeant and served as a platoon sergeant. Among his military recognitions are the Bronze Star for Valor and the Combat Infantry Badge, both awarded in 1968. He concluded his military service in 1969.

After the military, Holden earned an associate degree from Central Piedmont College. He then transitioned to a 38-year career in the furniture industry. His tenure at Action/Lane Industries saw him rise to the position of national vice president of sales, during which the company's revenue grew significantly. In 2010, after leaving La-Z-Boy in 2005, Holden founded Global Resource Inc., which represented multiple companies targeting markets in Russia and Eastern Europe. He retired in 2014.

Holden has written a memoir, "Told to Go," that focuses on his experiences as a drafted Soldier during the Vietnam War. He's a lifetime member of the Vietnam Veterans Association chapter in Chattanooga and has been featured in interviews for both the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and local TV stations.



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