



Specialist 7 THOMAS E. BURKHART
U.S. Army – Vietnam War

Thomas E. Burkhart served in the United States Army from 1970 – 1974 – volunteering for service in the Vietnam War despite being offered a deferment for vision issues. He served in the US Army predominately as a perimeter guard and in reconnaissance missions. The 1st Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery was deployed along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in support of the January 30 – March 24, 1971 Operation Lam Son 719 Offensive - when the U.S., and their ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) counterparts, attacked the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The Battalion made one of the longest night time road marches of the Vietnam War driving & marching the convoy and troops 192 miles in only 12 hours. During one such night time patrol the 1st Bn, 82nd Field Artillery fired between 7,000 to 9,000 rounds during a 10 hour fire fight – the NVA knew they were coming before they arrived and ambushed. Specialist 7 Burkhart and another soldier were pinned down during that night time attack and were able to call in support fire from Dong Ha and Khe Sanh the following morning. For his meritorious service he was awarded the Bronze Star. He also earned the Vietnam Service Medal, Army commendation medal, Vietnam commendation medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. Although Tom made it home, he suffered from PTSD, ischemic heart disease and lung cancer – all direct results of the traumatic action and/or the agent orange defoliant exposure in Vietnam. However, he always said serving his country was one thing that brought him great pride.

A 1969 graduate of Mercer High School, Specialist 7 Burkhart received his bachelor's degree at Geneva College and his Master's degree from Westminster College. He was a psychological services counselor at the State Correctional Institution in Mercer and a professor & behavioral health counselor at Beaver County Community College.

Specialist 7 Thomas Burkhart succumbed to complications of lung cancer on March 1, 2015. He is survived by his wife, Linda; a daughter, Cristina Burkhart and her fiancé Keith Hittle, Mercer; two sons, Robert and his wife Wendy, and Thomas A. Burkhart and his wife Amanda, all Mercer; his mother Patricia Burkhart; a sister Cheryl Greaves; a brother, Norman Burkhart and his wife Pattie; his mother-in-law, Patricia Higgins; and three grandchildren, Zachary, Jake and Madeline.

He was a supporter of the Wounded Warrior Project; a member of the Mercer Veterans of Foreign Wars; a member of the Free & Accepted Masons Hebron Lodge, Erie; Scottish Rite's New Castle Consistory; and the Erie Shriners.