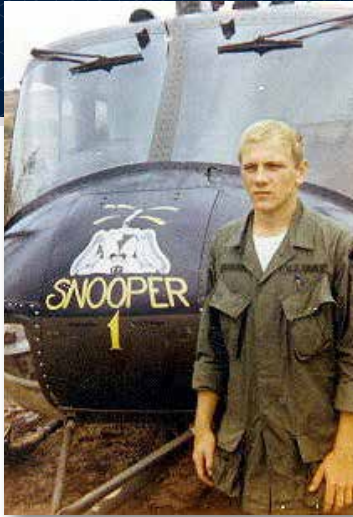


# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE

## The Story of a Cryptologic Hero SP4 Christopher J. Schramm



**"I enlisted in the Army and volunteered for duty in Vietnam... I owe it to my family, and my country to do what I can to make this a better world..."**

**SP4 Christopher J. Schramm in 1967, prior to deploying to Vietnam**

SP4 Christopher J. Schramm was born on October 10, 1946 in Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania in historic Bucks County. One of eight children in a family of Pennsylvania steel workers, he graduated from Bishop Eagan High School in 1965. He worked briefly at the US Steel plant in his hometown, and spent a short time at a Catholic seminary studying for the priesthood before deciding to enlist in the U.S. Army. After extensive testing, he was selected to serve in the Army Security Agency (ASA), the cryptologic element of the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era. After basic and advanced training at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts, he was assigned to his first duty station in Taiwan. After a year he was given the choice of returning to the States to serve in a regular army unit, or to remain in the ASA and continue to serve overseas. He opted to remain.

In 1967, ASA sought volunteers to serve in Vietnam and Chris was one of the first to raise his hand. He told his parents, "I volunteered for Vietnam because there is a job to be done." In the fall of 1967 he deployed, first to a land-based unit, but then transferred to the 371st Radio Research Company in support of the 1st Cavalry. Like similar ASA units, Chris and his fellow cryptologic professionals were dedicated to gathering the critical intelligence required to allow US and coalition forces to gain an advantage in the battle space, and ultimately to save lives. However, in transferring to the 371st, he had opted for more challenging and dangerous duty as a valued member of a team involved in "Project Left Bank." The program combined highly skilled direction finding with the lethal firepower of mobile airborne warfare. Begun in the summer of 1967, the initiative was under the direct operational control of the division commanders, and was carried out by three 1st Cavalry Division UH-1D "Huey" helicopters nicknamed The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.

Airborne radio direction finding had a distinct advantage over ground-based operations in terms of intelligence collection. Air operations could cover larger areas, and had the capacity to get in close to enemy units and locations. Once a target was located, firepower could be brought to bear. As part of this effort, Chris was airborne 4-8 hours a day doing what was required to get the critical information needed.

Ironically, on May 13, 1968 he would meet his fate, not in the air, but in a convoy traveling the 13 short miles from his headquarters at Phu Bai to Camp Evans. As the vehicles neared Thua Thien, one of the lead trucks hit a land mine, wounding several of his fellow soldiers. Chris was killed when he leapt off his vehicle to help the survivors and stepped on a similar device. His father tragically noted that "He was to have gone on a seven-day leave to Taiwan on May 15 - his first leave in 19 months... Another day and a half and he might have made it." For his courage and bravery that day he was awarded the Purple Heart and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross.



Chris was buried in Resurrection Cemetery in Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania. Years later, a former colleague who had served with Chris visited the Vietnam Memorial and left the following on a virtual tribute site: "I went to visit you and CPT Casey at the Wall today. You were too good, too decent for this world, but you showed us how to live in it. Thank you." On the same site, a family member wrote, "You are not forgotten, nor shall you ever be." It is in this spirit that we honor and remember the memory of SP4 Christopher J. Schramm, and his service, dedication, and sacrifice to his goal of "making this a better world."

