

THEY SERVED IN SILENCE



The Story of a Cryptologic Hero AIC Paul W. Anthony



The Mission of the 6924th was to conduct Airborne Radio Direction Finding Missions operations to provide direct support to MAC V for the employment of tactical forces against enemy forces.

From the History of the 6994th Security Squadron (Introduction)

AIC Paul W. Anthony was born on May 27, 1949, in Charlotte, North Carolina. He attended the local schools and spent a year at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte before enlisting in the U.S. Air Force in March of 1969. He told a friend that he wanted to "go to Vietnam and serve." Military life agreed with him and his family was extremely proud of his service. During his initial training as a Communications Center Specialist he met and married fellow Air Force member Sgt. Carol Ann Sanderson.

After training, Paul was assigned to the U.S. Air Force's Security Service, an organization created to provide and protect cryptologic-related communications to gain foreknowledge of enemy intentions and save lives. It was this mission that brought him to Vietnam and "The Tigers," of the 6924th Security Service Squadron. Activated in 1965 at Da Nang Air Base, the members of the 6924th were expert at collecting and analyzing critical signals-intelligence-based information to the troops in the field. Due to its location, the squadron and installation were frequently subjected to enemy rocket and mortar attacks.

Paul reported to the base on April 8th, 1970, and was assigned to the classified area of the site's communications center to perform critical cryptologic duties. He wasted no time getting settled and going through the usual orientation process. By the eighth, he had completed the requisite paperwork and training and was anxious to get started. According to a fellow airman, that evening Paul came on duty at 12:30, highly motivated and looking forward to his first night of operational work.

Tragically, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops chose that night to shell 33 Allied installations in the region, including Da Nang Air Base. 90 minutes or so after he came on duty, the center was hit with eight 140 mm rockets, one of which made a direct hit on the area where Paul was working. Immediately after the strike, Marine Corpsmen quickly scaled the barb wire fence surrounding the area to render assistance. Their efforts saved the group's shift supervisor, who also had been in the area, but the blast proved fatal to Paul. For his service and sacrifice that night he received the Purple Heart. He was the only member of the 6924th Security Squadron to be killed in action during the Vietnam War.



Paul's story was particularly heartbreaking. Despite having achieved his goal of serving in Vietnam, he sadly, and tragically met his death on his very first night of duty. His wife, who was planning to transfer to Hawaii in hopes of meeting Paul there during a break during his tour of duty, would never see him again. They had been married 88 days.

Jim Hartman, a fellow 6994th "Tiger," spoke for a great many people when he noted that "None of us got a chance to know you very well and consequently I hope you and your family haven't felt that we have ignored your memory because of that. I hope they understand that we think of you and that night often and that regardless of whether you were with the 6924th a few days or the full year, we still consider you one of us and you will always remain so."

Ron Kessel, a fellow airman and friend, perhaps said it best: "its (sic) Veterans Day 2003 and I've been thinking of Paul and some friends and many others who never came home. ...I don't think any of us will ever forget the night he was killed or the following few days. The war touched us all that night and I think each one of us will carry those feelings forever. We think often of him and all those who gave their lives."

Paul also left behind loving parents and three sisters who would always cherish his memory. He was also remembered by his Air Force comrades. In his honor, a monument dedicated to his memory was constructed near the 32nd Intelligence Squadron at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii.

