



Artist's depiction of Ashley with his Medal of Honor.

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Originally from Wilmington, N.C., Eugene Ashley Jr. grew up in New York City. It was there he joined the Army in December 1950 to serve in Korea.

By 1968, Ashley was a 36-year-old sergeant first class serving in Detachment A-101, C Company, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), as the senior Special Forces

advisor in a camp in Lang Vei, Vietnam. With a mission of training and equipping locals, the camp became a target of North Vietnamese forces, who began their attempts to capture it in January 1968.

Early in the morning Feb. 7, North Vietnamese tanks rolled into the base. Finding themselves quickly overwhelmed, most American and Vietnamese survivors managed to escape the camp. However, a small force became trapped in a bunker and was relentlessly harassed with grenades and tear gas.

At dawn, Ashley organized a force of about 100 Laotian soldiers, who had escaped their own overrun camp, to mount a rescue attempt. Despite the Lao-

tians' reluctance to fight against the North Vietnamese, Ashley led five "vigorous assaults against the enemy, continuously exposing himself to a voluminous hail of enemy grenades, machine gun and automatic weapons fire," his award citation later said. During the fifth charge, Ashley was shot in the chest, yet continued until he became unconscious. He was killed when an enemy artillery round landed nearby. However, because of his efforts, those in the bunker were soon after rescued by a 50-man force of Marines.

For his "resolute valor" and "critical diversionary pressure," Ashley was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously in December 1969. ■



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