

Hagan, John Robert (Bob), 3rd Platoon

22 August 1945 – 06 May 1969

Arlington Nat'l Cemetery, VA

Major John Robert Hagan was born on August 22, 1945. His hometown was Savannah, GA. He attended Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN earning his BS in Civil Engineering in June 1967.

While at Vanderbilt, John was in the NROTC program with a Marine Corps option and attended the USMC 6-week Bulldog Platoon Leaders Class (PLC) Program, between his Junior and Senior years, at MCB Quantico, VA.

Bob accepted a regular commission upon graduation from Vanderbilt University and reported to Officers Basic School Class 1-68 Alpha Company 2nd Platoon, in June 1967. Late in the course, Mike received his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) assignment of 0301, Basic Infantry Officer and orders to report to Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, Western Pacific Ground Forces following graduation. The class graduated on 22 November 1967.

Arriving in Danang in January 1968 his ultimate assignment was to G Company, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment (G/2/9). Finishing up his first tour in Vietnam, Bob signed up for a six month tour extension as an AO in VMO-6. On the 6 May 1969, Bob's plane failed to return to base. A search effort was conducted to no avail. Bob was listed as MIA. On 29 March 1996 his remains were recovered and returned to US soil and interred at Arlington Nat'l Cemetery. John was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for his actions in Vietnam.

USMC Resume:

TBS Class 1-68 Alpha Company, 2th Platoon June-Nov 1967

Vietnam: Jan 1968 – May 1969

Company G, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, first tour
VMO-6, 2nd tour

Timeline: 06 May 1969 crashed – MIA; 31 March 1978 presumed dead; 29 March 1996 Remains recovered and returned to US soil; 01 Nov 1996 remains identified; remains interred at Arlington Nat'l Cemetery

Silver Star, Purple Heart

John Robert Hagen was awarded a silver star for gallantry in action during the Vietnam War.

*"The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star Medal to **John R. Hagan** (257666152), Second Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with Company G, 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division (Rein.), FMF, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on April 19, 1968. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit and steadfast devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Second Lieutenant Hagan upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."*

Personal Reflections about John Hagen:

From John Ames, 8 Apr 2015:

Bob [John Robert Hagen] and I ran into each other (literally) outside BOQ 711 in NAS Jacksonville, Florida on 15 July 1963. (Amazing I can remember things such as that and not remember what I did two days ago!) We were NROTC Midshipmen, Bob attending Vanderbilt University, my attending the University of Louisville. We were at NAS Jax for a week of Anti-Submarine Warfare training as part of the NROTC's 3rd Class Midshipman Cruise to the Med. Friendship at first sight! Plus we were on the same ship DD866, The USS Cone, along with several other of our future TBS classmates, most notably Bob Newlin and Bob Packard.

We spent about two months in the Med, with great ports of call, Valencia, Marseilles, Ajaccio and Naples, before heading back across the Atlantic to Norfolk/Charleston. A fun time, (sometimes) for 18-19 year old college guys. However, the NOT-FUN-TIMES helped convince Bob and me to take the Marine Option.

During the Summer of '65 we hooked up again in Little Creek, VA for amphib training, followed by NAS Corpus Christi for pre-flight training. Once again, we were in the same companies, and, once again, some fun and some Not-So-Fun Times.

Summer of '66 had us at OCS Quantico. Fewer fun times, but we got through it together across the squad bay from each other in the 2nd deck of the old white barracks right next to the train tracks by the air station. Cheever bunked above Bob; Mike Evans was above me.

Bob could run forever but the ropes and pull up bars were NOT Bob's friends. To add to the three times/day ritual of pull ups before/after chow, candidates from 1st platoon would scramble to get out of Hagan's file, since we all had to hand in the "up" pull up position until all in the file completed the pull "up." After Bob's two, any more pull ups were problematical – plus the instructors, to great and often humorous delights, berated his efforts i.e. ("Hagan it looks like you're having a baby").

We made it to getting "released" at 0330 on 3 September '66. Free at last, until next June when we converged to Class 1-68, TBS!

As we all remember, Vietnam was going full blast, and we had crammed more training hours into less training days so the lieutenants could assume their duties as quickly as possible.

Bob, Al Greishaber and I were roommates, until 2 September 67 when, after Hagan's constant badgering me to get married, I did. Bob and Bob Waller came to Louisville to be in the wedding and part of the sword arch – Bob was our best man.

He charmed every member of my wife's South Carolinian-rooted family.

Bob was concerned that Vietnam would end before he got there, so when we graduated that Wednesday before Thanksgiving '67, he took minimal leave before heading to Westpac.

True to form he got to 3rd Mardiv around TET '68 and was given a platoon in G/2/9, mainly along Highway 9, Ca Lu etc., not surprising anyone getting a Silver Star in April '68, and, equally not surprisingly, two Purple Hearts along the way.

For the latter he was taken out of the field and brought to Dong Ha for an administrative job, I think, at Division. He hated it and he made everyone's life miserable until ultimately the powers that be approved his request to be an AO in a teeny O1G Bird Dog with VMO-6.

Bob enjoyed this job – I still have no idea how he fit his 6'5" body in the back of that, in essence, Piper Cub.

One special moment, 30 January 69, I was going to meet my lovely bride in Hawaii on R&R. Waiting in those long lines at Danang Airport to board the Continental jet to Honolulu, I noticed a huge red haired guy in an adjacent long line waiting to board a Pan Am jet. Sure enough, Bob Hagan, going home for his mandatory 30 day leave – he had extended his tour of duty for six months. He was not happy about this and tried not to go back to the USA, his choice of leave location.

But go back he did, and in doing so met a young lady and fell in love on his way to his home in Savannah.

We hooked up in late March '68 after his extension leave, whereupon he confided that for his first thirteen month tour, he just did his job - pretty loosely – not having a wife or girlfriend waiting on him, without familial or personal relationship pressures.

Now, in his words “Ski I ain’t gonna make it back partner – I have something I care about and want to live for.” It was one of, if not the last time I saw him (though we would chat from time to time when both of us were near comm.).

Prophetically, on 6 May 68 his observation plane was lost. I was rotating home right after that and called VMO-6 to say goodbye to Bob. The Duty officer said “There is no Lt. Hagan at this squadron,” whereupon I talked to the C.O. who confirmed Bob’s aircraft was lost and they had an intensive search underway.

Fast forward to May 2007, the lobby of the 5 Star Furama Resort in My Anh Beach, Danang, Vietnam. I had been invited to speak to Vietnamese Government & Business leaders on U.S. Chapter 11 reorganizations (my legal specialty). Seems U.S. companies were taking chapter 11 bankruptcies in the U.S. leaving Vietnamese companies holding the bag for millions of dollars. I lectured in Hanoi and Saigon, two cities I had never visited in '68-'69.

The third lecture site was Danang. I had “visited,” Danang, it was where by unit, 5th Comm BN HQ was located between MAG-16 and China Beach. Lo and behold a 5 star resort hotel was built directly over the 5th Comm BN site. The resort’s infinity pools were where the Ops bunker was.

I noticed four Americans at breakfast and heard “Gunnery Sergeant” mentioned. Later I ran into them in the lobby, and I found they worked for JPAC trying to locate the remains of our service members lost in the war. As we chatted, I asked “Dumb question, but can you give me any word on my best man, Bob Hagan. He was reported MIA 6 May '69.

Looking at his computer, he was shocked to see that the guy who worked in the DIG for the pilot and Bob’s remains in '94 was one, Bob Maves, who was just coming in the lobby – Mr. Maves amazingly remembered the find – it was the first dig he commanded.

What could be the chances of running into this JPAC team, in this luxury hotel built over my 5th Comm BN HQ, and having the very gentlemen responsible for bringing Bob’s remains home A miracle? I’d say so.

Bob’s remains were identified in 1996 and his internment then took place in Arlington National Cemetery, Section 37 Site 37.

So ends a “brief” synopsis of my personal reflections of my best friend, as well as best man, John Robert Hagan. Rest in peace, my friend.