

**Belser, Joseph Henry Jr. (Joe), 4th Platoon**

15 March 1945 - 15 October 1989

Greenlawn Mem Park, W Columbia, SC

Joe Belser passed away on 15 Oct 1989, at the age of 44, of a heart attack in West Columbia, SC.

Joseph Henry Belser, Jr. was born in Fort Myers, FL to General Joseph H. Belser Sr. and Delores Huffstetler Belser. He had four siblings: brother Mark, and sisters Beryl, Dorothy, and Nanette. He received his Master's Degree at Florida State University and his law degree at the University of South Carolina. He married Penny Miller, and they had a daughter, Megan Louise. He was a Vietnam War Veteran and received the Silver Star, the Purple Heart with two stars, Combat Action Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation with Palm and Rifle and Pistol Marksman Badges. He attained the rank of Captain. A resident of West Columbia, SC, Joe passed away on 15 OCT 1989 at the age of 44 from a heart attack.

**USMC Resume:**

TBS Class 1-68 Alpha Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon June-Nov 1967

Vietnam: K/3/27 Dec 1967- May 1968

Hospital: Naval Hospital in Philadelphia

Post-Vietnam: Third Recruit Training Battalion PISC. He was a Series Officer in Golf Company from May 1969 until discharge.

Discharged <date> with the rank of Captain.

Awarded the Purple Heart with 2 Gold Stars.

Awarded the Silver Star

Following is the excerpt for his Silver Star.

"The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to **First Lieutenant Joseph H. Belser, Jr.** (MCSN: 0-101738), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as a Platoon Commander with Company K, Third Battalion, Twenty-Seventh Marines, FIRST Marine Division in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On 24 May 1968 during Operation ALLEN BROOK in Quang Nam Province, Company K was attacking the village of Le Bac (1) which was well fortified and occupied by a large North Vietnamese Army force. As the company approached the area it came under intense automatic weapons fire and two platoons were separated from the remainder of the company. Assigned to assist the besieged units and in an attempt to envelop the enemy, First Lieutenant Belser moved his reserve platoon to within 300 meters of the hostile positions when the Marines encountered heavy fire which inflicted several casualties, including First Lieutenant Belser. Calmly informing his men of the situation, and although seriously wounded in the arm, he courageously moved across the fire-swept area from one position to another, encouraging his men and directing their fire while simultaneously keeping his commanding officer apprised of the situation. Under his courageous leadership, his men successfully repulsed repeated attempts by the enemy to overrun their position. Assisted by a platoon from Company M, First Lieutenant Belser utilized supporting arms fire, hand grenades and a smoke screen to withdraw his platoon along with their casualties to the company perimeter. Informed that Company M was heavily engaged with the enemy and had sustained numerous casualties, he refused to be evacuated for treatment of his injury and organized a group of Marines to retrieve the casualties.

With complete disregard for his own safety, he made several trips into the fire-swept area until he was wounded in the leg by the intense enemy fire and subsequently evacuated. By his courage, dynamic leadership and selfless devotion to duty in the face of grave personal risk, First Lieutenant Belser inspired all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service." **Action Date:** 24-May-68 **Service:** Marine Corps **Rank:** First Lieutenant **Company:** Company K **Battalion:** 3d Battalion **Regiment:** 27th Marines **Division:** 1st Marine Division (Rein.), FMF

#### **Personal Reflections about Joe Belser:**

**Tony Pesavento, 31 Jan 2015:** Joseph H. Belser Jr. was originally in Kilo Co. but was in an automobile accident and got pretty busted up. He ended up in Alpha Co. and despite his last name beginning with a "B" he ended up in the 4th Platoon. He was an 0302 and was with K/3/27 in Vietnam Dec. 1967- May 1968. He received a Silver Star, Bronze Star, 5 Purple Hearts and lost his right leg just below the knee. We both ended up at Parris Island in 1969 and shared a house. He got out of the Corp in 72 or 73 as a Capt. He died of a heart attack in 1989 in Columbia, SC.