

**EYEWITNESS STATEMENT of
DUANE SWANSON of events of
3 April 1969**

I am Duane Swanson and I served with Sgt Ed Eaton in 1969 with Company B, 3d Bn. 60th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division.

On 3 April 1969, Ed Eaton asked for volunteers to accompany him and Captain Perkins, our company commander, on a night raid. After our briefing at the airstrip in Dong Tam,, we took off and in a little while we landed in a rice paddy about a 100 meters from a small village. After the 2 helicopters left, The captain and Ed lead us into the village. We made an extensive search but found no enemy males. The captain made the decision to end the search and led us back to the landing zone. We waited some minutes in that exposed paddy while the helicopters flew off to refuel. Meanwhile we detected movement and noises in the tree line and ditches on 3 sides of the paddy, about 100 meters away.

When the helicopters returned we turned on the strobe light to mark our location and began to receive some fire. The captain told us that when the helicopters landed to get in immediately. As they landed the wood lines opened up with numerous muzzle flashes. They were ablaze, but we got in and took off.

When we were at altitude and out of range of the Viet Cong fire, the captain called for a head count in our aircraft and the other helicopter. He was told that a man from the other helicopter was missing. Our aircraft and the other one went back in to get him.

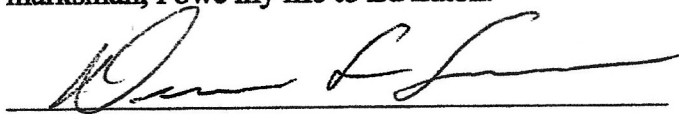
As we made our approach I could see many muzzle flashes and tracer fire and the sound of the small arms got louder as we got closer to the village. I was on my seat near the door, holding my M79 grenade launcher and the tracers were getting closer. We got hit and the aircraft pitched up and turned on its side and I fell out. I hit the mud as the aircraft fell on top of me and I ended up in the same door I had fallen from.

I must have been knocked out and as I regained consciousness I could see stars out the other door, above me. I freed my arm that was buried in the mud, but then an excruciating pain hit me and I could not use my right arm at all. I heard rifle fire and rounds hitting the aircraft. I realized I had to get out and saw no one inside and that the aircraft was smoking. I crawled thru the cockpit door and as I did a rifle was stuck in my face. I thought it was a Viet Cong, but it was Ed Eaton. He touched my injured arm to help me out but I screamed in pain and so he told me get out of the cockpit and sit next to him so he could keep track of me. He then resumed firing at the tree line. He asked if I had any M16 ammunition as he was getting low on ammunition. I didn't because I had been carrying the M79 and a .45 pistol, but had lost both in the crash.

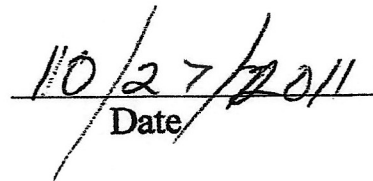
I watched him aim and take his time as he was shooting, making every shot count. He was the only one of our group firing back at the many muzzle flashes. He was very calm

and deliberate as he looked for targets. He was one man against many. In a few minutes I moved toward a noise towards the tail of the crashed aircraft and found someone who seemed to be caught under the fuselage. I tried to help him out using my un-injured left arm. I thought it was the captain but wasn't sure. Shortly afterwards the pain got so bad that I passed out. When I awoke, Ed was loading me on a Cobra gunship. I awoke again as it landed at the MASH hospital landing zone--Ed had been strapped me to the side of that gunship with my belt.

While I was conscious I observed Ed Eaton as he single handedly defended the survivors of the crash. I knew that he was keeping them away from us, but they were closing in because their muzzle flashes were getting closer. It was his courage and determination that kept us from being overrun by the enemy. He risked his life for us and merits the highest award of the United States Army. Because of his selfless courage and skill as a marksman, I owe my life to Ed Eaton.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Dennis L. Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Signature

A handwritten date "10/27/2011" written over a horizontal line.

Date