



COLONEL JERRELL E. HAMBY

12 Nov. 1932 – 1 Feb 1985

(U.S. Army 1958-1985)

Colonel Jerrell “Jerry” Hamby’s military career began with the Marine Corps where he served with the 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division during the Korean War from 1951-1953. After returning to Arkansas he earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Arkansas Polytechnic College (now Arkansas Tech University) and was commissioned an Armor 2nd Lieutenant through the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in 1958.

Known in some circles as “The Grizzly”, COL Hamby served in various staff and leadership positions including company commander with the 5th Battalion, 40th Armor at Fort Irwin in 1959; advisor to the 1st Troop, 6th Armored Cavalry Squadron, Army of the Republic of Vietnam from 1965-1966, ROTC instructor at Arkansas State University 1966-1969, executive officer with the 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 502nd Infantry in Vietnam from 1969-1970; commander of 2-63 Armor Battalion at Fort Riley, and Deputy Commanding Officer for training at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin.

Included in COL Hamby’s more than 20 awards and decorations are the Silver Star; the Bronze Star for Valor with three Oak Leaf Clusters; the Air Medal for Valor with the numeral 11; the Purple Heart with a Silver Oak Leaf Cluster; the Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters; the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Foreign Awards include the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (Division Level) and Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (Army Level), both for Valor.

COL Hamby’s highest award, the Silver Star, was awarded due to his actions on 29 April, 1970 while serving with the 2nd Battalion (Airmobile), 502nd Infantry, during combat operations in Thua Thien Province, Republic of Vietnam. When a platoon from the battalion made contact with an enemy force, Major Hamby immediately arrived by helicopter and moved to the point of contact. Assessing the situation, he found that an on-line assault on the enemy bunker was necessary. Leading the platoon, Major Hamby came under intense automatic weapons fire from the front bunker. Disregarding the enemy fire, he moved forward and single-handedly assaulted the bunker with his pistol and two hand grenades. After silencing the position, Major Hamby moved to a nearby bunker and was wounded by an enemy grenade. Despite his wounds, he assaulted the position and silenced it with his final grenade. Refusing medical evacuation, Major Hamby continued to lead the assault until the complex was taken.

Tragically, COL Hamby was killed in 1985 as a result of injuries received when his jeep overturned in the training area of the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin. In testimony to COL Hamby’s lasting impression on his soldiers, The Order of Hamby (also known as the “Grizzly Star”) was created as an internal award of the 32nd Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment. The award was intended to recognize “demonstrated tactical excellence and meritorious achievement”, two attributes that COL Hamby obviously embodied.

Along with a legacy of courage under fire and professional excellence, COL Hamby left behind his wife, Wanda DuMond-Hamby of Harker Heights, TX, four sons, Stevens Hamby of Little Rock, AR, Jerrell Hamby of Yuma, AZ, David Hamby of Burlington, WI, and Kurt Hamby of Orlando, FL; and a sister, Shirley Magie of San Marcos, California.