

Those Lost but Not Forgotten from White Star

In April of 1961 Captain Walter Moon, SFC John M. Bischoff, Sgt Orville R. Ballenger and Sgt Gerald M. Biber comprised an Operation White Star Field Training Team (FTT-59) as advisors to the 6th Battalion, Royal Laotian Army (FAL). Operating 63 miles north of the capital Vientiane the 6th Battalion came under a heavy artillery barrage from the Pathet Lao (PL) who outflanked the FAL cutting off and overrunning FTT-59 and capturing Captain Moon. On 22 April SFC Bischoff and Sgt Biber tried to escape in an armored vehicle but according to reports were fatally wounded in the attempt. Sgt Ballenger escaped into the jungle and linked up with a group of FAL soldiers but was captured later by the PL. In captivity Cpt Moon tried to escape twice and was seriously wounded in his attempts. It was reported that because of his persistent resistance to captivity and escape attempts Cpt Moon was executed by his PL captors on 22 July 1961. With the signing of the Geneva Agreements on Laos, Sgt Ballenger was repatriated to U.S. custody in August 1962. Despite numerous attempts the remains of Cpt Moon, SFC Bischoff and Sgt Biber have never been recovered. For his bravery in the face of the enemy Cpt Moon was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and promoted to Major. Moon Hall, the billeting officers quarters at Ft. Bragg, was dedicated in his honor.

In December 1961 an FTT was formed from the Special Forces advisory Team at Vang Pao's Pha Khao military camp and sent to establish a remote training camp for Meo tribesmen at Moung Om. Sgt Theodore J. Berlett was the demolition specialist for the Team. On 28 January 1962, during a training demonstration to detonate a 3.5 inch rocket round, Sgt Berlett was tragically killed.

Sgt Raymond Parks was highly active in White Star Operations to train and advise the FAR, as an instructor at Laotian military schools and in training the Meo and Kha tribesmen in military weapons and tactics. On 14 July 1962, while on an aircraft to Saravane, his flight went missing. The aircraft with Raymond, the pilot (Alan Blewett) and an interpreter, despite numerous attempts, were never found.

LET THOSE THAT HAVE FALLEN IN BATTLE NEVER BE FORGOTTEN