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# STEPHEN C BRUNTON

Ukiah

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Petty Officer Third Class Stephen Cornell Brunton was the fourteenth casualty. He was assigned to US Navy Forces Vietnam, River Assault Squadron-11 (RIVRON-11)/River Assault Division 112 (RIVDIV 112). As a Boatswain's Mate his duties involved steering the boat while patrolling rivers and canals in US Navy river boat ASPB-112-2 in the Mekong Delta. Since 1966 there was a US Army and US Navy partnership called the Army-Navy Mobile Ravine Force where the two services combined forces and worked together to prevent the Viet Cong from moving supplies through the region. The boats with infantrymen on board were World War II Landing Craft Mechanized, LCM-6, that had been modified with rebar and armor to resist rocket attacks and machinegun fire. The Assault

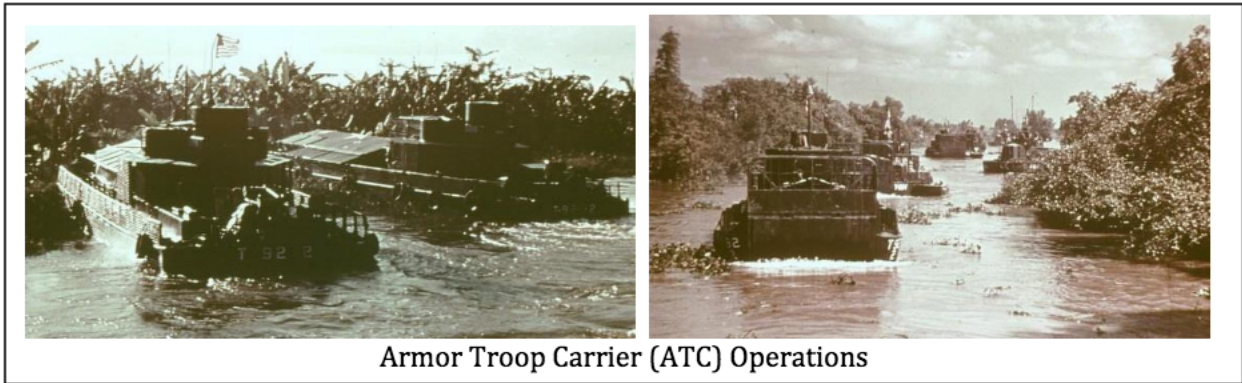
Support Patrol Boats were called "Alpha" boats and they led the way for the larger and slower Armor Troop Carriers. PO3 Stephen Brunton began his tour in Vietnam on March 22, 1968.



**August 18, 1968.** Sunday morning PO3 Stephen Brunton's ASPB-112-2 river assault boat was leading a column of river assault craft with troops of the 4/47 Infantry embarked in the task force that followed behind. PO3 Brunton steered the lead boat north from the Mekong River into the mouth of the Hai Muoi Tam Canal. Sampans tied to the bamboo wharf bobbed in the wake pushed out from the boats. The tide continued to ebb and the canal narrowed, slowing progress. No local Vietnamese were seen on the river making the experienced boat Captains anxious and orders were shouted to be ready on the machineguns.

Suddenly, the lead Alpha boat, (Brunton's boat) was fired on first in an explosion of smoke and debris as machinegun fire and rockets ripped into her port side. Muzzle flashes appeared through the smoke rising on the riverbank and automatic weapons fire raked the boats on both port and starboard. All the boats in the column returned fire. Deadly B-40 rockets struck the troop boats.

It was an ambush set up by elements of a Viet Cong main force battalion. The troop boats were in the "kill zone." This would become known as, "The ambush on the Hai Muoi Tam Canal."



Armor Troop Carrier (ATC) Operations

“The enemy conducted an ambush from heavily fortified positions in the dense vegetation on both banks. The ambushers poured an intense volume of recoilless rifle, automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenade fire into the lead units in an attempt to stall the column in the kill zone of the ambush in the narrow canal. Petty Officer Brunton quickly realized the imminent peril to his boats and their embarked troops, and calmly and skillfully pushed his boat up the canal in the face of a barrage of rocket fire delivered from 20 to 25 meters away. He continued to lead the column through the ambush until enemy rocket fire caused the deaths of Petty Officer Brunton and the 20mm gunner, and severely wounded the boat captain.” (From Citation: Bronze Star with Valor device, announced posthumously)



Bronze Star with  
“V” Device

Gunfire eased as the boats moved north and out of the kill zone. Then the firing stopped and there was a sudden silence. Helicopter Cobra gunships arrived overhead and the troops disembarked to pursue the enemy. The battle would last the entire day with the Army elements receiving sporadic fire lasting into the night. Dust-Off Hueys for the wounded and the Cobra gunships were fired upon continuously, with one Dust-Off helicopter being shot down. When it was over, the Americans had five killed and 82 wounded in the battle.

The Gunner’s Mate who was killed with Petty Officer Stephen Brunton was PO3 Edward Robinson Darville III from Hialeah, Florida and he too was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor device posthumously.

In 1976, Brunton Hall was dedicated in his honor at the U.S. Naval Training Station in San Diego, CA providing quarters for 500 Navy personnel. The local newspaper noted at the time, PO3 Stephen Brunton’s memory is “now enshrined in Navy annals and in raised large letters in the newly commissioned Brunton Hall.”



Overall, there were four thousand and nine hundred fourteen servicemen who died from artillery, rocket or mortar attacks in Vietnam.

Stephen is resting in the Ukiah Cemetery, Ukiah, California.

