

My brother, Lance Corporal Mitchell L. Anderson, U.S. Marine Corps, is honored on that polished black granite wall, along with over 58,000 other names carved thereon. The list of names etched on the panels is endless – a roll call of the agony of war. Mitchell is near the apex, two panels to the right, about one-quarter of the way down (Panel 02E, Line 040). His engraved name is just beyond my reach as the tablets are higher there due to the greater number of deaths in that period.

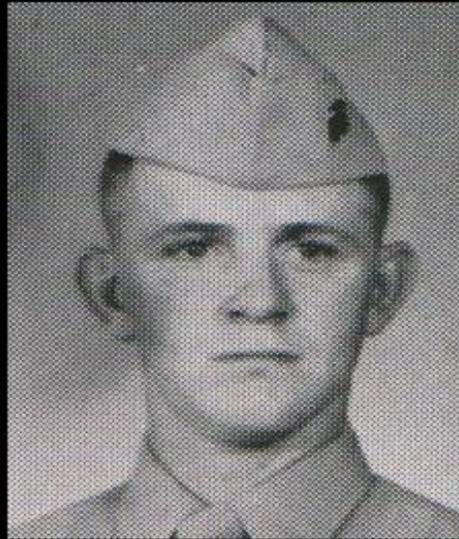
On Line 041 is Private First Class Joe M. Salinas, a fellow Marine in Mitchell's company from California – both had their young lives cut short by the Vietnam conflict – the two that represented the many. If you should visit the Wall, let "Mitch" and "Little Joe" know.

Years ago, when I first saw the Wall and located my brother's name... the tears fell like pouring rain. Every May of every year (and in between), I grieve. It has been 51 years since my brother left for 'Nam, never to return. My emotions are still raw and I'm unable to come to terms with his death. I miss my brother. I hope to visit Vietnam in the near future to walk where Mitchell walked. I'm not alone in my sorrow, as his fellow Marines told me on more than one occasion. One Marine buddy said, "A lifetime ago it seems these things happened. Our unit was together for a good while. We had it rough. I'm glad they [Mitch and Joe] are not forgotten. I felt so bad for them then, and still do. They were good Marines, as fit and sharp as any there...strong, never complained, always ready to go and do what had to be done. This I remember about them."

The Wall I remember



By Cerie
Kimball



Their sacrifice is not forgotten. Let us honor our fallen remembering their dreams unfulfilled and lives incomplete. They will live through us in our hearts and in our thoughts forever.

Mitchell with the casual saunter, carefree ways and ever-present humor looked so fine in his Marine uniform. I vividly remember that day in August of 1964 when Mitchell came home on his 30-day leave prior to reporting to The Republic of Vietnam. He arrived in a taxi on our dirt road with dust flying, got out, jumped the fence in his great-fitting uniform and said, "Hi." What a vision he was for a 12-year-old sister who had not seen her brother in several years! I recall every detail of Mitchell's arrival as if it were today.

Mitchell enlisted in the USMC on Nov. 20, 1962. Upon completion of recruit training in San Diego in May 1963, he was assigned to Echo "E" Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines,

3rd Marine Division. He quickly rose from rifleman to the position of Fire Team Leader. As his Commander, Capt. Frederic L. Tolleson stated, "Mitchell was a hardworking industrious young Marine with a bright future and was highly respected by both the officers and men for his professional ability. His happy, cheerful personality made him exceptionally popular with his fellow Marines."

After his leave ended, Mitchell departed our hometown of Miles City, Mont., boarding the Northern Pacific railroad to return to E

The Guidon (left) is an original 1965 flag of Mitchell's battalion. Their nickname, War Dogs, and their motto, "Ready for anything, counting on nothing." Semper Fidelis ~ always faithful

Company, San Diego. From there he participated in a four-week amphibious raid course and on May 22, 1965, embarked on board the USS Pickaway, an amphibious attack transport, departing to White Beach, Okinawa. On June 22, Mitchell transferred to the USS Okanogan and sailed for South Vietnam. He disembarked on July 6 via a tracked amphibious landing craft-vehicle onto Green Beach, south of Qui Nhon City (Binh Dinh Province). A coastal mountain area surrounding an important port and airfield, 275 miles northeast of Saigon and 190 miles south of Da Nang.

President Johnson intensified the war with offensive operations in early 1965 and by that summer as Marines landed – Vietnam underwent a "convulsive transformation" – with actions on both sides heating up and all hell breaking loose. These Marines, among



Marines fought monsoons, malaria, and the enemy. They were bone-tired from wading through jungles and nights spent in rain-filled foxholes, yet they never stopped giving their best. Qui Nhon 1965.

the first U.S. combat troops in ‘Nam, landed there early in July to save the city and drive the Viet Cong back into the mountains and valleys.

As reported in the *Pacific Stars & Stripes*, “On the opposite slope are jungled hills and dark valleys, the Viet Cong, danger and death. No lights show in the blackness to the west, only flashes that are simultaneous lightening and explosives.”



Battalion Aid Station. View from inside a hootch. Qui Nhon 1965. Photo by Scott McClellan, 2nd Bn 7th Marines.



Camouflaged commo bunker and tent. Qui Nhon 1965. Photo by Harry Sherblom, 2nd Bn 7th Marines.



throughout the evenings. Tollen-

son’s instructions to his marines, “Keep your eyes on ‘em and stay alert.”

At 1100 hours on July 19, 1965, Echo Company furnished a platoon for airfield security for the visit of the Secretary of Defense and the new U.S. ambassador. That night, Mitchell and his fire team were manning perimeter positions for defense of the battalion CP near Qui Nhon. About 0130 hours (July 20), enemy infiltrators probed their lines of defense. During the ensuing fighting, Mitchell and fellow Marine PFC Joe Salinas, in a two-man foxhole position, were struck by rifle fire and killed instantly. They had shipped out to ‘Nam early July only to be killed on July 20. He was two months shy of his 20th birthday.

Mitchell was the first Vietnam

Echo Company’s first assignment on landing was to establish defense of Green Beach. Later they had the mission of securing and defending the strategic Qui Nhon area, which included an American base near Pleiku, South Vietnamese Army headquarters, an airfield, port, and Highway 19 for supplies. Capt. Tolleson’s command post (CP) was the nerve center of E Company and to it came all the reports on radio checks, movement sightings, and casualty reports (like that of Mitch and Little Joe). Bursts of machine gun fire, distant sound of mortar shelling and the crack of rifle fire were heard



1st Platoon, Echo Company 217th, Qui Nhon, 1965. 1st MARDIV Association



(Left) Army Captain Cerie Kimball at The Moving Wall in Pennsylvania in 1995. The Moving Wall is the half-size replica of the Washington, D.C. Vietnam Veterans Memorial (bottom) and has been touring the country for more than 30 years.

Top and below: Cerie at her brother's grave site at Custer's Battlefield and National Cemetery in Montana

fatality for our hometown and was laid to eternal rest at Custer's Battlefield and National Cemetery in Montana. Joe was the first Latino to die in the conflict from Norwalk, Calif., where a memorial was built for him at city hall. They were Company E's first fatalities of the Vietnam War.

During writing and research for this article, I found evidence that Mitchell and Joe were killed by friendly fire, or as in military terms, fratricide. Changes in verbiage on documents raised my suspicions a few years ago on the true cause of their deaths – now there is validation from a declassified document. At this point, words fail me... this is fraught with so many thoughts, emotions, and pain that I cannot say more.

Taps: *Day is done, Gone the Sun, From the lakes, From the hills, From the sky, All is well. Safely rest. God is nigh.* 🇺🇸

