



CONGRESSIONAL
MEDAL OF HONOR
FOUNDATION



**Saving Lives at All Costs –
Kontum Province, South Vietnam, 1970**

Gary Beikirch followed his high school sweetheart to college in 1965. Within two months, she broke up with him, and he dropped out, figuring to get even with her by enlisting in the Green Berets. During his advanced training, Beikirch decided to become a medic.

By the summer of 1967, he was in Kontum Province, Vietnam, as part of the 4th Special Forces Group. His 12-man team was assigned to Camp Dak Seang, a village of Montagnard tribesmen in the Central Highlands -- a beautiful jungle environment of triple canopy forests, where tigers and enemy soldiers hid in the lush vegetation. The Montagnards were fiercely independent fighters who wore loincloths and had aligned themselves with the U.S. war effort. Accompanied by the Special Forces team, they conducted raids into Laos to disrupt North Vietnamese supply routes down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Early on April 1, 1970, a huge force of North Vietnamese attacked Camp Dak Seang. The Special Forces team called in gunships whose constant fire over the next few hours was the only thing that kept the camp from being overrun.

In the early part of the assault, Sgt. Beikirch manned a 4.2-inch mortar. When it was destroyed by an enemy mortar round, he took over a machine gun, covering his Montagnard assistants as they treated wounded villagers. Then, seeing a fellow Green Beret go down, Beikirch ran through heavy fire to help the man, until he himself was hit by mortar shrapnel, which struck near his spine and paralyzed him. Beikirch got his Montagnard "bodyguards" to carry him through withering enemy fire so that he could treat the fallen villagers. He was hit in the side as he gave mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a Montagnard fighter, and then he was shot in the stomach. Bleeding heavily and barely conscious, he continued to fire on the enemy from his litter as his "bodyguards" dragged him from one position to another.

Some time later, Sgt. Beikirch passed out; he came to in a bomb crater awaiting evacuation by helicopter. He was taken to Pleiku and from there to Japan, and finally to the Valley Forge Medical Center, where he stayed for six months, slowly relearning to walk.

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Gary B. Beikirch

*Sergeant, U.S. Army
Company B
5th Special Forces Group,
1st Special Forces*

BORN: August 29th, 1947
Rochester, New York

ENTERED SERVICE:
Buffalo, New York

BRANCH: U.S. Army

DUTY: Vietnam War





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Released from the Army in August 1971, Beikirch spent a year wandering around the country before experiencing a spiritual rebirth that led him to

the White Mountain Seminary in New Hampshire. There, he went to school and lived as a recluse in a cave he discovered while hiking in the rugged country nearby. In the early fall of 1973, while still at the seminary, a letter arrived in his post office box in town, asking him to be at a pay phone on a certain date and time for an important call. When the call came in, the voice on the other end of the line told Beikirch that he was being awarded the Medal of Honor. President Richard M. Nixon presented the medal to him on October 15, 1973.

Beikirch finished the seminary in 1975 and had a job lined up to work in a missionary hospital back in Kontum Province, where he had served in the Army five years earlier. But Vietnam fell to the communists before he could get there. Instead, he became a pastor in a New Hampshire church

for a while, then decided to earn a master's degree in counseling. For more than 20 years, he has worked at a middle school in Rochester, N.Y.