



Samuel George Tiller Jr.

November 23, 1928 - September 8, 2024

(RET) SFC Samuel George Tiller, Jr.

I, Samuel George Tiller, Jr., was born on November 22, 1928 to the late Vide Tiller and Samuel George Tiller, Sr. In addition to myself, from this union, there were nine children born: Olivia Dorsey, Howard Tiller, Inez Connor, Lola Taylor, Bessie Braxton, Anna Hynson, Agnes Tiller and Delores Wiggins.

When WWII started on December 7, 1941, I was 13 years old. They had a logo out saying, "Join the Army and see the world." I said to myself, "That is where I'm going when I turn 18." When I was in the ninth grade in high school, I decided to quit school and work in and out of small jobs. My last job was at the Vita Food plant in Chestertown, Maryland. At the time I was 17, so I set my age up to 18 and signed up for the draft. I was drafted February 6, 1946. The rest is history. I got my GED while in the United States Army.

I spent 21 years, 2 months and 12 days in the Army, including 14 years 2 months and 25 days overseas. After retirement, I worked for the United States Air Force for 22 years and 9 months at Fort McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey.

When the Korean War started in 1950, I was in Nuremberg Germany, and had been there since November 1948. I rotated back to the states in March 1952. I had been gone for over four years. I went home on leave and after returning from leave I went to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. I was a Private E-1 truck driver.

After talking to some of the soldiers who had been in Korea, I went and talked to the First Sergeant about going to Korea. He told me he would put my name

on the list. Within two weeks I was on my way. Once in Korea, I received my same job as a truck driver. I then went to speak to the Sergeant about getting into a line company.

He advised me that I would have to see the Company Commander. I reported to the Company Commander and told him that I would like to go to a line company to make some rank. He stated, "They were killing soldiers on the line," and I told him, "I will take my chances." He sent me to the line! I was promoted to Private 1st Class and he said "Good Luck."

I joined my outfit on Heartbreak Ridge. There were many nights I cried and spent many nights in a fox hole. I didn't think I would make it out alive.

Someone was on my side! After one year, I left as a Sergeant First Class E-6. I left Korea and went to Japan for one year. Of all the places I've served, Japan was the best!

When the war started in Vietnam, I was in Fort Dix, New Jersey. I volunteered once more and I told my wife I was going over there to save money to come back to buy a house. Before going to Vietnam, I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for six weeks of special warfare training.

In Vietnam we got two checks every month, one with G on it that we could cash and the other one was sent home. I did buy the house, but I'll tell you, "I went through hell." In Vietnam I was assigned to a Vietnamese outfit. A captain and interpreter and myself lived with them and ate what they ate.

We were at a training center for four weeks. After it was over, the Major who was in charge invited the Captain, the interpreter, the Vietnamese Sergeant, and myself for dinner. I asked the interpreter, "What kind of meat do we eat? " He replied, "RAT", and I never asked again!

Another time we were moving from our village to another, and we stopped to get something to eat and drink. The Captain, the interpreter, the Sergeant and I were sitting at a table eating watermelon. Someone on the other side of the road, who was upstairs in the building, threw a hand grenade where we were sitting. The interpreter yelled, "Grenade!" We all hit the floor! The only thing that saved us was that the person who threw the hand grenade did not pull

the pin all the way out. We headed up and moved a half a mile down the road and set up camp for the night. The interpreter told us they were after the Americans. There were only two of us, the Captain and myself. The next morning they were going back to the village to get something to eat. The captain asked me if was I going and I stated, "No", I'll take my rain check. Another time, we went to a village where headquarters was, and I ran into a friend of mine from back at Fort Dix. I was glad to see him. It was a Captain and my friend in a Jeep. The Captain, the interpreter and myself were also in a Jeep and we talked for a few minutes. We asked where we could find something to eat and they told us a place to go. The Captain, the interpreter, and myself went there and got something to eat. There was a bike sitting next to a door, closer than the one we came in. I started to go to the door, but something told me to go out the one I came in . Later that day we ran into my friend again. They asked, "Did you find the place?" We said, "Yes." They said, "That bike was booby trapped and someone set it off!" My friend said to me, "You are going to fool around over there and get killed!"

It was a Sunday morning about 11:30 AM and the temperature was 100°. We received a message that the VC had overrun a village and we were supposed to go in and help them out. We got our gear and moved to the other end of the village, where we were staying in a big open field. The Army bought 20 helicopters, the second and third platoon loaded up first and took off. They were gone for about 15 to 20 minutes. The choppers returned back to our village.

The 1st and Headquarters Platoon loaded up and we took off. On the helicopter there were 250 caliber machine guns, one in each door with the operator. On the chopper we were on there was a radio operator, an interpreter, the Captain, myself and 10 Vietnamese soldiers. We took off and we flew for 10 to 15 minutes. The chopper started coming down and then the two machine guns opened fire on both sides. The closer we got to the ground the noise from machine guns and helicopters was so loud you could not hear

yourself think. The choppers got about a foot from the ground. The Captain and the right side door gave me a sign by nodding his head. I went out the left door and he went out the right door but the chopper never completely landed. Once we were off the chopper, we went to the rear of the chopper and hit the ground. The chopper always tries to land in the direction of where the firing is coming from. The chopper dropped us off and took off.

The VC was in the woodline to our left front, and there was a wood line to our rear so we started firing and moving. We came to a big ditch in the field, and we all jumped in the big ditch while making our way to the ditch. One of our soldiers was shot in his left leg and started to cry, so I picked him up and carried him to the other end of the hole.

There was an Army fighter plane in the sky. Our radio operator called the fighter plane and told him we were pinned down and trapped. The fighter plane operator called back and said, "Mark your position!" The radio operator threw a red smoke grenade and it started a fire in the grass around us. The fighter plane came around where the VC was in the Woodline and dropped us a Napalm Bomb. It lit up like the Fourth of July and the plane went out of there. I don't know who carried the wounded soldier, but it wasn't me at that time.

Now we were in the woodline and firing ceased and things became quiet. Now it's late in the evening and we received the radio call that there would be a flare ship in the air during the night. Once it was dark, the plane came and dropped the flare and it lit up like daylight. You could see anything once the flare was dropped and the VC shot 3 mortar rounds. This went on for a half an hour with the flare ship and the VC motor rounds.

Then we received a call that we're not dropping any more flares for the night. The radio operator called the flagship and told him "Good night." Everything quieted down for the night so we sent out patrols during the night and they reported back that the VC was still in the area. It was a quiet night.

The next morning at 9 o'clock or 9:30am at 100° everything was still quiet. The second and third platoon were about 400 yards from where we were and

we went across the field to join up with them. We were straggling along and everything was quiet. Once we got halfway, VC opened fire on us in an open field. We retreated back where we came from. Once we got back to where we had come from there were three soldiers who were wounded and could not walk. They were left out there alone. I told the Captain to tell the interpreter to have those men to put firepower on the VC and I will go get them so I brought them one at a time!

Now it's getting late in the evening and everything is quiet. We hadn't had any water or food since Sunday and it was now Monday evening. The interpreter and 4 to 5 other soldiers and myself wandered through the woods looking for water. We found a hole with water. It was not running water, but it looked real clear. I said to myself, "I'm going to get some of this water." I took my canteen cup out of my holder and filled my canteen. Americans in Vietnam had a survival kit so I took my two purification tablets to put it in the canteen and put my canteen back in the holder.

We headed back to the rest of the troops and I decided I was going to drink the water, but something told me in my head to strain the water so I took some out of my survival kit and placed it over the canteen cap and poured the water through the Gore. When I was ready to drink the water, I poured it in my canteen cup. There were two live bugs in the water. I was so glad I didn't drink that water!

It's now getting late in the evening, and they brought a helicopter in to pick up the five wounded soldiers. We had all the wounded together when the helicopter started to come down and then the VC started firing, so we started waving to the helicopter to leave and not to come any closer. The chopper came down and hit the ground and took off. As the chopper was gone, there were only four wounded soldiers left. One of the wounded soldiers jumped on the chopper before it took off. How he did it, nobody knows.

So the next morning it was Tuesday and we still had no food or water. So they brought the Vietnamese Colonel and an American major and two double blade helicopters with water and hard rolls. The soldiers were taking 5 gallon water

cans to fill up their canteen. They were wasting so much water. I pointed my rifle at the soldiers and yelled and told everyone to get back, and then I told interpreter to tell the squad leaders to line the men up, and give each man a canteen cup of water. If there was water left, we would fill our canteen. The major stated to the soldiers, "Sergeant Tiller, you did a hell of a job."

We were now to go to a special force camp to be picked up by helicopter. So we were in a single file along the river. There was a path along the river, so we were going, and moving along the river when I stepped on the land mine with my left foot and it knocked me down.

Some of the shrapnel from the land of mine hit the Captain's left-hand. There were at least 20 men in front of me, but none of them stepped on the landline but me.

There was a Vietnamese in the river in a small boat. The interpreter yelled at the Vietnamese in the boat, and he came over to where we were walking and put the Captain, the interpreter and myself in the boat and took us to a Special Forces camp. When we arrived, they placed me on a chopper and flew me back to Saigon Hospital. I was there for 28 days. There was a Four Star General named Westmoreland in charge of all the American troops in Vietnam. After I got to the place where I could walk, I would go to the mess hall a block away. The United States Navy was in charge of the mess hall. It was the best food I ever had while being in the service.

General Westmoreland would come to the hospital every Sunday morning to ask how we were doing. I had never received any mail. Once Sunday morning I was standing and looking out of the window. I saw General Westmoreland come in the gate so I took my clothes off and got back in the bed. He asked how I was doing and I said, "Sir, as far as my health I'm doing good, but my morale is very low." He asked, "What seems to be the trouble?" "My wife writes to me everyday", I replied but I told him that "I have not received any mail since I've been here in the hospital." He said, "If you have any mail, I will get it over here for you Monday." Monday morning I went to the chow hall and

ate when I came back to my room, all my mail was on my bed. I had a note on my bed from someone within the hospital. They said when you get out of the hospital, do not go to your outfit, but come back to the headquarters. I went to the headquarters and the First Sergeant said, "the Colonel would like to see you." I reported to the Colonel and he chewed me out and told me I should've never spoken to a General Officer, so I told the First Sergeant. The General Officer was the only one who ever came to see me.

There were sergeants from Fort Dix who went to Vietnam together. We were all E-7's. Seven of the sergeants got promoted to E-8. I did not get promoted. I believe to this day the Colonel stopped my promotion.

Now comes the good days. We were getting ready to rotate and were at the terminal and they had some bombing so we were told not to bunch up. We loaded at a terminal and taxied out to the runway for security. Once we hit the terminal, the plane never stopped at the runway, it took straight off. Once the wheels got off the ground, I said, "Thank you Jesus!!!" We stopped in the Philippines and had a steak dinner. The next stop was California and then Philadelphia home free!

I was awarded "The Purple Heart Medal" for my heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force. I exposed myself to hostile fire by making several trips across an open field carrying wounded soldiers to a defensive position which is where I was injured, stepping on a landmine. I was not concerned about myself but rather for the safety of others. I was recognized as one who set a personal example which became an inspiration to all with whom I served. Additionally, I was recognized for the actions that kept the highest tradition of the United States Army, reflecting great credit upon myself and the military service.

Although the incredible journey of Samuel George Tiller, Jr. began on November 23, 1928 and ended on September 8, 2024, his life and legacy have left an everlasting impact on those whose lives he touched.

Samuel was affectionately known as Uncle Junior and Big Sam, the Fish Man!

For years, Samuel was known for frying his famous fish every weekend. To this day we do not know his secret recipe, even though he promised to leave it with us.

Samuel was preceded in death by his wife of 58 years, Mary Louise Tiller. He leaves to cherish his memory, his dearly beloved sister, Lola Taylor, age 101 of Chestertown, Maryland and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **14.** 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

New Christian Chapel of Love
26826 Big Woods Road
Worton, MD

Funeral Service

SEP **14.** 1:00 PM (ET)

New Christian Chapel of Love
26826 Big Woods Road
Worton, MD

Tribute Wall

LP

“ *LORI BUTLER PERRY lit a candle in memory of Samuel George Tiller Jr.*



LORI BUTLER PERRY - September 15, 2024 at 12:19 PM



“ *My condolences to the family.*



Denise Jones - September 13, 2024 at 08:07 PM

VP

“ *Voncille Phillips lit a candle in memory of Samuel George Tiller Jr.*



Voncille Phillips - September 12, 2024 at 12:45 PM

NW

“ *Niara Wilson lit a candle in memory of Samuel George Tiller Jr.*



Niara Wilson - September 12, 2024 at 11:36 AM

TW

“ *Sorry For Your Loss* ”



Thomas Widgeon - September 12, 2024 at 06:45 AM