

Etsitty's perilous tour of duty

Written by by Tom Hartsock Sun Correspondent
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Corporal Van Etsitty had a dangerous job for the short time he spent in the Army. Drafted in 1967, he had less than a year's training in infantry tactics before being sent to Vietnam, where he was assigned to a Recondo Team under the leadership of Staff Sergeant Ed Ryan, the squad leader.

After four-five months of being inserted by helicopter into jungle areas for reconnaissance and to actively disrupt the enemy, the team landed in the middle of an NVA encampment. Enemy fire raked the helicopter before it could set down, and one of the first bullets claimed Etsitty, the radio operator.

Ryan, now a Doctor of Forensic Psychology, praised Etsitty for his toughness and ability to always look forward, never questioning orders or the politics of the war. For his service in Vietnam Ryan received a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars with Valor device, and two Purple Hearts. He now works part-time with groups like Vietnam Veterans of America, giving seminars on PTS and testifies in court as an expert witness on psychological matters.

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