

To:

Chair Green, Vice Chair Greenspan, Ranking Member Sheehy,
and Committee, Re: Sexton testimony

First of all, I'd very much like to thank this Committee, for allowing common citizens like myself, an opportunity to have a voice in this matter. My name is Donald L. Cordle, I am at this point 68 years old, and have been a resident of this small town since 1955. I, along with Sgt Sexton and 47 others, graduated from Berlin Heights High School, in June of 1967. Sgt. Sexton was the class president of our senior class. Outgoing, and friendly, he became what most would call my best friend. After high school, he and I attended a small business college in Oberlin, Ohio, carrying a 14 hour class load, all while holding down a 40 hour a week full time job. This went on for two years until we graduated there in June of 1969. This is the time where we bonded closer than some brothers.

Sgt. Sexton, originally came from Maysville, Kentucky, and arrived in Berlin Heights for our freshman year in high school in 1964. After high school, and business college, Sgt Sexton landed a job at the GM plant in Sandusky, Ohio in the accounting department. In October of 1969, we both got our draft notices on the same day, getting inducted into the United States Army, at the Cleveland induction center a month later standing side by side, on November 13th 1969.

From there, we were transported to Ft. Campbell Kentucky for basic training, where we spent the next eight weeks in the same training company, remaining the very best of friends. At the end of that training cycle, Sgt Sexton got his orders for artillery training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and I received mine for infantry training at Fort Polk, Louisiana. One of my biggest regrets is that was the last time I ever got to see him. I continued my infantry training and eventually arriving in my final destination, A company, 2nd battalion, 502nd Infantry, 101st Airborne Division.

Sgt. Sexton was a very intelligent young man, and after training at Fort Sill, he applied for, and graduated from the Army's non-commissioned officer school while he was there. I arrived in my unit the first week of May, 1970, and for the first seven months or so, I lost track of Sgt Sexton. I physically lived in the jungle for weeks at a time, and he did not arrive to his unit until March of 1971, when I was within a month or two of coming home. We had started to correspond a couple of months before that, so I knew where he was, and when he would arrive. His tour in Vietnam ended almost as quick as it started. Being a crew chief on a 155mm mobile howitzer meant that he had to physically get inside the gun, and pull the lanyard to fire it. Within his very first week of being in-country, that's exactly what he did, but the only problem was that the gun had a faulty round loaded, and it blew up inside the breach, killing Sgt Sexton, and Clyde Thomas, who was standing directly behind the breach. I apologize for being so graphic, but everyone, and I mean everyone, needs to know exactly how our young men actually die when they go off to war. This is a very sobering thought, as his personal sacrifice is the reason for this proposed memorial to begin with, and I thought it should be included in my statement. Also, Sgt Sexton was married to Patricia Sexton, and their son was born the same day he died. To my knowledge, Sgt Sexton was the only one from Berlin Heights that lost his life in Vietnam. This one is personal though, because he was my best friend, I've never forgotten him, and I live, as most in this community do with his memory every day. In 1975, on Memorial Day, there was a small ceremony at our war memorial here in Berlin Heights. There are maybe five or six names on that memorial from World War II, but none from Vietnam. That day, Sgt Sexton's name was added to that memorial with a small bronze plaque, and the date of his death, March 15th, 1971. I felt so very honored to be a part of that, being called to take part in the honor guard with full dress uniform. This provided somewhat of a closure for me, but in reality for his family, there was no actual closure, as he never returned home.

Somehow in transit, Sgt Sexton got misplaced, mislabeled, or something, because his body has to this day never returned home. I, along with many others in our small community, feel that naming a small stretch of highway after Sgt Sexton, after so many years have passed, is only fitting and it would be a lasting memorial to his name, and his sacrifice. Everyone reading this, regardless of your political stance, should understand, that the very air of freedom that you breathe, is made possible by the countless young men that are not afraid to serve our state, and our great country in any capacity they can... To quote an old cliché but so very true, "Some gave all, ALL gave some"

Once again, I would like very much to thank the State of Ohio, the legislature, and particularly this committee and it's chairman for allowing me to take the time to write this incredible story. Thank you all, and God Bless our men and women that are serving, or have served in the past.

Sincerely,

Donald L. Cordle