

SB 91
Honoring Sgt Gary Lee McKiddy
A True American Hero

Dear Legislatures and fellow Americans:

I am asking for your support for SB 91, a bill that aims at honoring a true American Hero. The person that is referenced in the bill was my oldest brother, Gary Lee McKiddy.

Gary Graduated in 1968 from Miamisburg High School, and soon after was employed by General Motors at their Delco Moraine Division in Dayton and had also enrolled at Wright State University. Landing a good paying job at GM allowed him to earn enough money to purchase a brand new 1969 Chevelle. It wasn't long after he had met a young lady who he fell madly in love with. He played a guitar, was the lead singer in a band and was living life to the fullest.

However, the United States was involved in a war in Vietnam and Gary was among the age group that was being drafted. While his draft lottery number was high enough that he wasn't going to be called, he felt an obligation to serve and volunteered for the draft.

After completing his basic training, Gary volunteered to go to Vietnam and on October 9, 1969, He was assigned to a clerk's job with the 1st of the 9th Air Calvary Helicopter unit.

Gary loved to fly and after constantly requesting to do so, he was trained as a door gunner on a small recon helicopter called a loach.

He took his fist flight on October 29th which also became his first combat mission. The helicopter Gary was flying in, became under intense enemy fire. Gary leaned out of the helicopter exposing himself to the enemy allowing him to identify where the shots were coming from. By doing so, he was able to engage and destroy the enemy. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with the V device for heroism and Valor.

The following week he had received a Bronze Star with an Oakleaf cluster for heroism. It was his first of 4 Bronze Star. In the same week Gary was awarded an Air Medal Heroism, and he went on to fly over 600 combat missions and was awarded 27 Air Medals all with the V Device for Valor and Heroism.

On May 6, 1970, while on a scouting mission inside of Cambodia, the helicopter he was flying in. came under enemy fire and several rounds had penetrated the transmission, causing a loss of fluids.

The pilot was trying to fly the wounded chopper back to base when the transmission seized and the helicopter dropped from the sky

The leaking transmission fluid caught fire and the helicopter burst into flames shortly after crashing.

Gary McKiddy was in the back of the helicopter and was not strapped in. He either jumped or was thrown from the helicopter upon impact and was safe and free from harm. However, the pilot and copilot were trapped inside the fiery wreckage and the ammo inside observers said, looked like

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bottle rockets shooting out at random from the inside.

In a total disregard for his own safety, Gary ran back to the helicopter and somehow was able to extract the copilot Jim Skaggs from the fire and carry or drag him to safety.

Ignoring his own safety and going above and beyond the call of duty, Gary went back to the inferno a second time in an effort to save the pilot. He entered the helicopter through the door that he had just removed Skaggs from, and was attempting to pull the pilot out, the fuels cells of ammo blew up killing both men.

Gary was nominated for the Medal of Honor the General who was going to assure he received it, General George Casey was killed a few weeks later and the award was downgraded to the Silver.

Jim Skaggs, the man whose life my brother saved, has been lobbying and pushing for over 51 years to have Gary awarded the Medal of Honor, and has been joined in this endeavor by dozens of those who served with Gary in Nam, along with several family members.

In 1999, The Army named a Barracks Sgt Gary Lee McKiddy Memorial Barracks, and during the ceremony our family met with 30 soldiers who were in Vietnam at the time of the crash.

My Brother did not go off to war to win medals - or to die. Gary McKiddy went to Vietnam because his country asked him to go, and he fulfilled his commitment to serve and protect our nation. In Vietnam, Gary's dedication towards the men and women with whom he served, his brothers in arms, was without reservation, and his time in that country was marked with distinction and valor. Although he was only in Vietnam for just under 7 months, he had flown more than 600 combat missions and been decorated with 39 medals, 31 of which included recognition for acts of valor or heroism.

What he did next was an action that his country did not ask him to do nor would any company commander have ordered him to do. The facts are incontestable as to my brother's heroism.

My pride in my brother his accomplishments and sacrifice, are boundless. My efforts are a reflection of this emotion, and a deep and complete desire to see that our great nation fully recognizes Gary's courage, loyalty and sacrifice.

My family and Jim Skaggs believe, with all of our hearts, that the naming a section of ST RT 725 in honor of him will serve as a testament to our nation's appreciation for Gary's actions that were truly "above and beyond the call of duty."

In closing let me leave you with this point, Our Vietnam Veterans went through a terrible time when they returned home. There were no parades, no large groups of folks at the airports to say

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Welcome Home, and many still struggle today from PTSD or have health issues attributed to the environment they lived and breathed in while there.

It's never too late to pay tribute to those who served and those that lost their lives, knowing that this great country has not forgotten them and the sacrifices they made for our Freedoms. By dedicating a highway in honor of Sgt Gary Lee McKiddy, a Hero who served in Vietnam, is another chance to show our Vets that they are not forgotten, and we will never forget!

With your support, this quest can and will be accomplished and as Jim Skaggs says in his letter "It is simply the right thing to do"!

Again, thank you and God Bless

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