

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 1ST BATTALION 44TH ARTILLERY
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96269**

Mrs. Mary Faye Thomas
Route 5
Lenoir City, Tennessee 37771

1 APR 1970

Dear Mrs. Thomas

May I express to you the regret and deep sorrow felt by the men of this unit over the recent death of your son, Mitchell.

Mitchell was a squad leader on one of the two Duster crews guarding the vital Khe Gio Bridge. In the early morning hours of 12 March 1970, an enemy force attacked. In the attack, the enemy penetrated the position and threw a grenade into Mitchell's bunker. Your son picked up the grenade and took it out of the bunker. The grenade detonated, killing him instantly. By his brave deed, Mitchell saved the lives of other squad members in the bunker. They in turn bore faith with his memory by valiantly participating in the successful defense of the bridge.

I always enjoyed spending time at Khe Gio with your son and his squad. They were obviously one of the best in the battalion and a great source of pride. It was only two days before that they had been singled out for special praise by higher headquarters because of their high state of readiness. Mitchell was constantly striving to make them more proficient and more alert because they were his crew, on his Duster, and he was proud of them.

In the relatively short time Mitchell had been with us, he made many friends and was both liked and respected by all. I hope you will find consolation in the knowledge that your grief is shared by all members of this command.

Memorial services in Mitchell's honor were delayed several days so that men from his battery that were in the field could attend. The service was conducted at 1300 hours on 16 March 1970 by a Baptist chaplain. Major James D. Burns, in the Battalion's Artillery Memorial Chapel at Dong Ha. One of Mitchell's crewmen read the eulogy while on the altar your son's helmet rested above the United States flag. A brass plate commemorating your son was later placed in the memorial chapel. This plaque joins those honoring the other brave men of this battalion who have given their lives for their country.

The sympathy of all personnel of this command is extended to you in your time of sorrow.

Sincerely yours,

**RICHARD L. MYERS
LTC ADA
Commanding**