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## Jimmy Bedgood

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Vietnam Veterans Final Project

Bailey Ballard, Christina Bugg, Jordan Stewart

MSCM 4950: Vietnam War in the Media

Professor James Sciffman

According to Honor States, Sergeant Jimmy Bedgood was born on May 20, 1946 in Wrightsville, Georgia. According to a May 28, 2011 article in the Dublin Courier Herald, Bedgood was a highly intelligent man and was able to skip some courses in school and worked hard to support himself financially. He played football at East Laurens High School and ultimately graduated from there in 1964. According to Ancestry, Bedgood had two half brothers in addition to his brother Robert. Half brother Donald Lee Bedgood was born in Emanuel, Georgia on September 2, 1952 and passed away in 2016 while his second half brother, Billy Wayne Bedgood, was born in Georgia in 1957 and passed away in 2010.

Bedgood enlisted from Milledgeville, GA into the United States Army and entered the service through the regular military December of 1964. According to Kevin Bedgood, his son, Sergeant Bedgood enlisted so his brother, Robert Reynolds, would not have to and because he saw it as his patriotic duty. In addition, Bedgood preferred to enlist over being drafted to make sure he was going into the branch and field he wanted. After training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina, Bedgood would be transferred to Fort Hood, Texas where he remained until his first tour in Vietnam began on March 24, 1967. At this time, according to the Dublin Courier Herald, Bedgood was assigned to the "Big Red One," the first Division of the United States Army.

In Vietnam, Bedgood held the rank of Staff Sergeant rank with a specialty in Light Weapons Infantry. His service number assignment was 14875003 with the 18th Military Police Brigade, 716th Military Police Battalion, Company C 52nd Infantry. According to his son, Bedgood was proud to be a soldier and a ranger in particular. Kevin stated, "I am told that in that time, not all those assigned to ranger units went through formal ranger school before going to Vietnam. My father did. One of the responsibilities my dad had was to help teach these untrained people in tactics including knife fighting, a task my dad was especially good at, according to those he served with in Charlie Company 2/16." Many, including Bedgood's son and fellow soldiers, expressed that Bedgood was very proud of his service.

While in Vietnam, Bedgood received three Purple Hearts, a Combat Infantryman Badge, four Bronze Star Medals, a Marksmanship Badge, a National Defense Service Medal, a Vietnam Campaign Medal, a Vietnam Service Medal, an Army Presidential Unit Citation, a Vietnam Gallantry Cross, and an Army Good Conduct Medal.

The Dublin Courier Herald records that Bedgood received his first Bronze Star Medal on June 14, 1967 after he was able to successfully wipe out a ten-man Viet Cong patrol and a second enemy patrol without any American casualties. The article further noted that another Bronze Star Medal was given after Bedgood sacrificed his own safety to expose himself to live fire while reaching for a machine gun emplacement. The article states, "Bedgood stood up straight and began firing directly in the direction of the incoming enemy fire, eliminating the threat to himself and his men."

In awarding another Bronze Star Medal to the Staff Sergeant, the United States Army cited, "His aggressiveness and quick thinking prevented extensive injuries to his men while driving out the enemy." The citation salutes Sgt. Bedgood for his actions which reflected great credit to himself and to the 9th Infantry Division." His fourth Bronze Star Medal was awarded to him during the Tet Offensive for heroic acts with one of the medals carrying a V symbol marking him with Valor.

Bruce Cook, the machine gun driver for Bedgood, retells the story of how Bedgood gifted him his Combat Infantry Badge (C.I.B.). Cook remembers that he was joking about wanting a medal to impress women when he gets home. He articulated that Bedgood told him, "You do your best here and get home alive and tell them what you did and that's all you need." Later, he stated

as they were relaxing, he heard the ripping of material and found out that Bedgood had torn the C.I.B. (Combat Infantry Badge) off his uniform. Cook states that Bedgood told him, "There is your first medal, wear it proudly." Despite Cook's efforts to refuse the gift by stating he was an M.P. and not authorized to wear it, Bedgood stated, "I just authorized you, now keep it."

Sadly, the original C.I.B. was stolen along with Cook's wallet upon his return home. However, when Cook found out that the "Charlie" Company 2/16 "Mud-Soldiers" was having a reunion, he requested immediate authorization to attend. While there, Cook met Bedgood's son Greg and two of Bedgood's friends: Leo Inkelaar, since deceased, and Ron "Trash" Haley. After sharing the story of the C.I.B and how it was stolen, Trash then concocted a citation with his C.I.B. attached to it and had it signed by all the Veterans at the reunion. Greg presented it to Bruce Cook who now has it framed on a display in his home. Cook remarked with gratefulness that the C.I.B is his favorite medal he received in Vietnam and the only one he displays in his home.

Bedgood was able to return home during his service in Vietnam for a 30-day-leave, in March of 1968 after his second tour. According to the Dublin Courier Herald, Bedgood was returning to Vietnam to ensure that his brother, Robert Reynolds, did not have to go. However, Cook said in an interview that Bedgood was a man that someone could easily get attached to and who knew his 'stuff' as a soldier. According to his description of Bedgood, he was a soldier that was a 'Brother' to everyone and someone who would easily sacrifice their life to help save one of his companions.

Bruce Cook, who is also known as "Flower Power" and "Cookie," was present the night that Bedgood was killed. According to Cook, he convinced Bedgood to ride with him on May 5, 1968 in Gia Dinh, Vietnam due to distrust of another gunner. Cook noted that Bedgood, for the first time, pulled rank to be able to ride with Cook that night. On the morning of May 6, 1968, the pair received a call over the 716<sup>th</sup> MP Bn. Communication radio from another gun jeep driver. The other driver reported that he was pinned down and drawing heavy fire from N.V.A. (North Vietnamese Soldiers). Cook and Bedgood were met by three other gun Jeeps and succeeded in getting the pinned down driver out, but heavy fire was then directed on them.

Cook said that Bedgood told him he was hit. Cook instructed him to sit down and that he would send someone to dress the wound. Cook said that he sat about 5 feet from Bedgood in a ditch when he heard a loud explosion go off after he walked away. Cook was able to grab Bedgood by his collar and ask him if he was alright but Bedgood responded by saying, "No, they got me Bruce." The pair's Jeep was taken out by a rocket propelled grenade and they used the two remaining Jeeps to get out and receive help from the Air Force. However, the impact ultimately ended Bedgood's life at the age of 21 and left nine soldiers of the 'C' company wounded.

"The most important thing I would like to be remembered about Jimmy is that he was an honest caring person and a brother to all he met," Cook said. "Very smart in soldiering and was a leader that you would trust with your life and you would trust to make the right decision when things got tough. I think about Jimmy every day and still wish it had been me instead of him."

According to Ancestry, if Jimmy survived the war, he would have returned to eventually be an uncle to ten children from both of his half brothers. Donald Bedgood would go on to have seven children while Billy would have three.

Sgt. Jimmy Bedgood was buried with full military honors in the Andersonville National Cemetery, leaving behind two children, Kevin and Greg Bedgood, and his wife. When visiting

the memorial in Washington D.C. his is on Panel 55E, line 39 which is along the bottom of the wall.

#### Resources

<http://dublinlaurenscountygeorgia.blogspot.com/2011/05/jimmy-bedgood.html?m=1>

<https://www.honorstates.org/index.php?id=261714>

<https://www.macon.com/news/local/military/article30235200.html>

<https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/3216/JIMMY-BEDGOOD/>

<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/7084821/person/640766910/story>

Pictures  
Courtesy of Bruce Cook



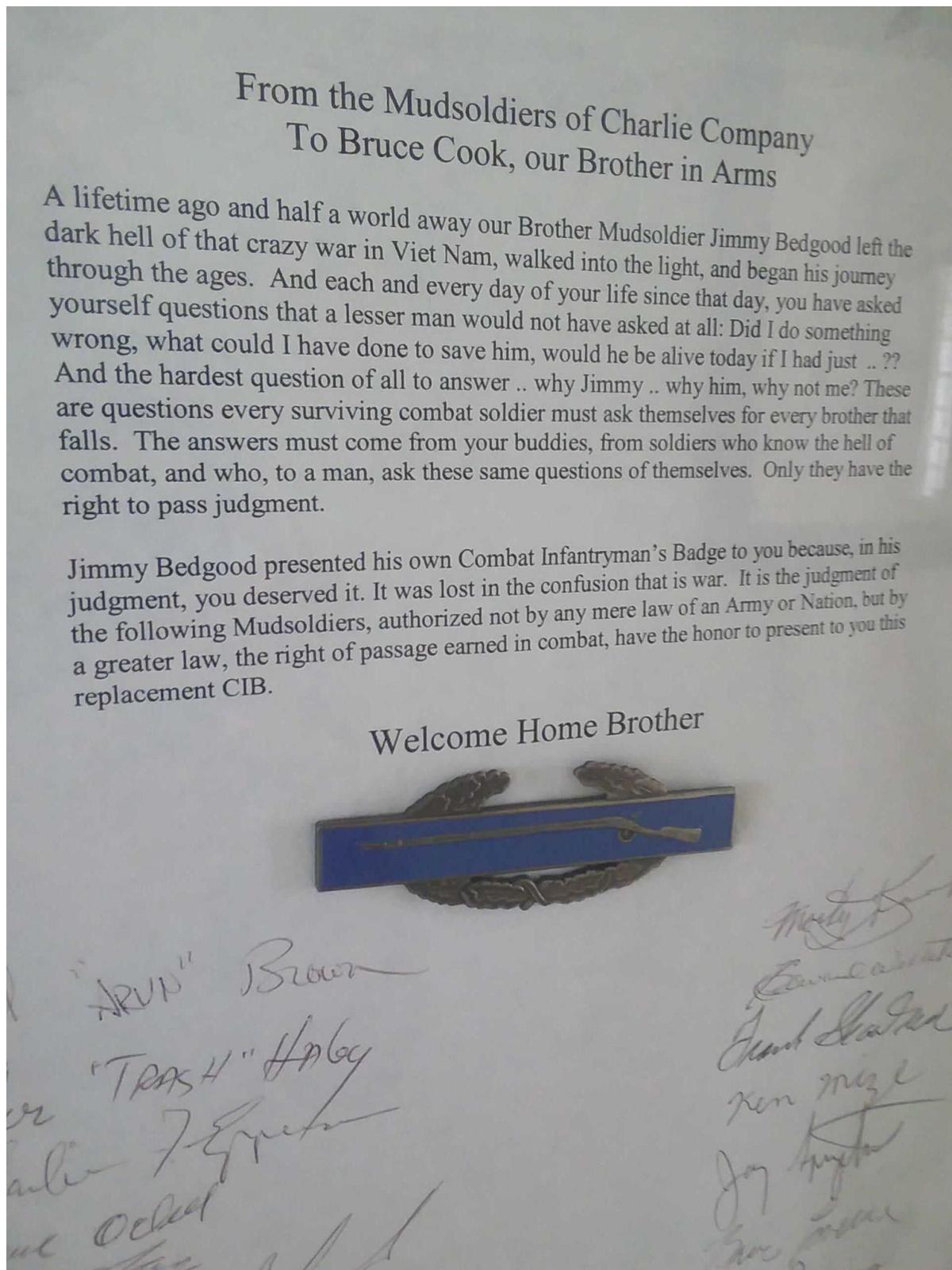
Jimmy Bedgood in the first infantry.



The C.I.B. Bedgood gave to Cook.



Bruce Cook in the Vikings T-Shirt, Jane his wife, and Buddy Jim at rifle range in Vietnam.



The C.I.B. presentation letter had it signed by all the Veterans at the reunion that was presented to Cook in replacement of the lost original C.I.B.

Pictures

Courtesy of Ancestry

| <span style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 2px 5px;">Detail</span> <span style="padding: 2px 5px;">Source</span> |   |
|--|---|
| Name:  | Jimmy Bedgood                               |
| Death Age:   | 21  |
| Birth Date:  | 20 May 1946                                 |
| Death Date:  | 6 May 1968                                  |
| Internment Date:   | 17 May 1968                                 |
| Internment Place:  | Georgia, USA                                |
| Cemetery Address:  | Route 1, Box 800 Andersonville, GA<br>31711 |
| Cemetery:  | Andersonville National Historical Site      |
| Plot:  | Section P Site 243                          |
| Notes:   | Ssgt Co C 52 Inf 716 Mp Bn 18 Mp Bde<br>Rvn |

U.S., Veterans' Gravesites, ca.1775-2019

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Name:              | Jimmy Bedgood  |
| Birth Date:        | 1946   |
| Gender:            | Male   |
| Race:              | Caucasian (White)  |
| Home State:        | Florida  |
| Casualty Country:  | Vietnam, Republic of   |
| Casualty Category: | Battle Dead  |
| Casualty Status:   | Hostile Dead: Killed Out-right<br>(previous)   |
| Casualty Date:     | 6 May 1968   |
| Cause of Death:    | Not Booby Trap Connected: None<br>Of The Above; Other Causes<br>(includes Animal Attack,<br>Lightning, Electrocution,<br>Malnutrition, Thirst, Exposure<br>(heat Or Cold), Collapsing<br>Structure/falling Debris, Fall<br>(parachute Or Otherwise), Assault<br>By Human Without Weapon, Non-<br>drug Poisoning (including Snake<br>Bite). |
| Report Date:       | 6 May 1968   |

U.S., Army Personnel and Dependent Casualties, 1961-1981

Interview #1

Interviewee: Bruce E. Cook a.k.a. Flower Power

Title: Military Policeman with the 716th MP Bn in Saigon, Vietnam & Machine Gun Driver for gunner Jimmy Bedgood

I: What was your name and title during the Vietnam War?

B: My name was & still is Bruce Cook & I was a PFC (Private First Class). At that time, my job was a Machine-gun Jeep Driver and Jimmy was my gunner.

I: Can you explain your nickname Flower Power?

B: Yes I found a plastic rose on a V.C. (Viet Cong) and placed it in the band around my helmet liner. Some of the other drivers and gunners started calling me "Flower Power" as that was the thing at that time. I was also known as "Cookie".

I: How did you meet Sergeant Bedgood?

B: I met Jimmy when I was a driver and he was the gunner on my jeep. We drove each other quite often and got to be friends. He was the type of person that once you met him, you could not help but become a "Brother". After the first time we were together and having talked with him it became evident that he knew his "stuff" about being in the situation we were in.

I: How long do you estimate that you knew him for?

B: I would estimate I knew Jimmy for about 5 months.

I: Do you know if Sergeant Bedgood had any nicknames of his own?

B: The only name I ever knew him to have was Jimmy. Never Sergeant Bedgood as we didn't go by rank just "Brothers".

I: Can you describe what kind of person and soldier Sergeant Bedgood was?

B: Like I said before, Jimmy was the kind of person that you got attached to as soon as you met him. As far as how he was as a soldier, he knew his "stuff" as he had gone through a lot on his first tour & I trusted him and his decisions, not just because of his rank but because he was very confident in his decisions and we would discuss situations before reacting.

I: Can you describe a few of your experiences with Sergeant Bedgood riding with you as a gunner?

B: One night we were sitting at a checkpoint and just talking. I said to Jimmy, "I would like to get medals like he had." He replied, "Why?" and I said "So I can go home and impress the girls."

He said, "You do your best here and get home alive and tell them what you did and that's all you need". Later on we were relaxed and just sitting there and I heard something like material ripping. I looked over at Jimmy and he had torn the C.I.B. (Combat Infantry Badge) off his uniform and handed it to me. He said, "There is your first medal, wear it proudly." I told him I was an M. P. and was not authorized to wear that medal. Jimmy said "I just authorized you, now keep it." I kept it in my wallet and when I got home I still had it.

My wallet was stolen at a place I worked at and the C.I.B was gone. I did receive other medals but that was the only one that I was proud of. When I found out that the first unit that Jimmy served with in Vietnam ("Charlie" Company 2/16 "Mud-Soldiers") was having a reunion in Branson, MO & that Jimmy's Sons (Kevin & Greg) would sometimes attend them, I emailed the person in charge to see if they minded if I attended. I was told that my wife and I were most welcome. We went and I met Jimmy's son Greg. I also met two of Jimmy's friends from that Unit. One was Leo Inkelaar since deceased & the other was Ron "Trash" Haley. We shared stories and I told them about the C.I.B. and that it was stolen. Ron then made up a citation with his C.I.B. attached to it and it was signed by all the Veterans at the reunion. Greg presented it to me. I now have it framed and it is the only medal that I display in my home. There are a lot of other stories that I could tell you, some sad and others joyful but I think that is enough for this time.

I: Were you with Sergeant Bedgood on May 6, 1968 when he passed? If so, can you please explain your perspective of what happened that day?

B: Yes I was. That is the part that bothers me the most. I talked Jimmy into riding with me the night of the fifth of May 1968 as I was supposed to have another gunner that I did not trust because of reasons I won't go into. Jimmy was supposed to be "Charge of Quarters" that night but I asked him if he would switch with this other guy and be gunner on my Jeep. The other guy was a "Buck" Sergeant (E-5) and Jimmy was a SSG (E-6) it was the first & only time Jimmy pulled rank on anyone that I know of. He didn't trust the guy either. We sat "checkpoint" that night. In the morning a call came over the 716<sup>th</sup> MP Bn. Communication radio from another gun jeep Driver. He was pinned down and drawing heavy fire from N.V.A. (North Vietnamese Soldiers). We, Jimmy and I, heard where he was located and went to get him out. We were met there by three other gun jeeps and succeeded in getting the pinned down driver out.

In the meantime they turned on us and we were drawing heavy fire. I was standing beside Jimmy and he said "Cookie, your hit" I told him that I was not, he said "look down at your leg." When I did, I saw that I was bleeding. Jimmy said, "Go sit down in the ditch & I'll have one of the other guys come and put a dressing on you." I sat down about 5 feet from Jimmy in a ditch when I heard a loud explosion about 2 seconds after I walked away from Jimmy and the Jeep. I turned around and saw Jimmy and grabbed him by the collar and asked him if he was alright. He replied "No, they got me Bruce." They took our jeep out with a RPG (rocket propelled grenade). We had two Jeeps that still ran and we got out of there with the help of the Air Force.

I: If there are any other stories or information that you would like to be known about Sergeant Bedgood, please share that with me.

B: The most important thing I would like to be remembered about Jimmy is that he was an honest caring person and a "Brother" to all he met. Very smart in soldiering and was a leader that

you would trust with your life and you would trust to make the right decision when things got tough. I think about Jimmy every day and still wish it had been me instead of him. This sixth of May it will be 53 years since he passed.

## Interview #2

Interviewee: Kevin Bedgood

Relationship: Son

Background: Bedgood submitted an article from the Dublin Courier Herald about his father and wanted the interviewer to refer any questions from the article back to him. These are the questions and answers in response to the article.

I: The Dublin Courier Herald article noted that your father was going to Vietnam so your uncle, Robert Reynolds, would not have to. Is this a true statement? Also, did your father have any other motivations that you know of?

K: That was correct, he initially enlisted for that purpose in part. The other part was that he felt it was his patriotic duty to serve his country. By enlisting instead of being drafted he ensured himself of going into the branch and field he wanted.

I: How do you believe your father felt about being a soldier?

K: My father was proud to be a soldier in general, and of being a ranger in particular. I am told that in that time, not all those assigned to ranger units went through formal ranger school before going to Vietnam. My father did. Others were assigned or were 'volunteered' to serve in ranger companies. One of the responsibilities my dad had was to help teach these untrained people in tactics including knife fighting, a task my dad was especially good at, according to those he served with in Charlie Company 2/16. He was proud of his service.

I: The article remarks that your father received two purple heart medals based on injuries he received in Vietnam. Do you know the stories behind each of these purple hearts?

K: I'm sorry, I don't know how he received those Purple Hearts but the article was incorrect he actually had 3, the 3rd being posthumous.

I: Many of the stories in this article discuss how your father would sacrifice himself for his fellow soldiers without regard to his own risks. Can you tell me more about what kind of person your father was and what would motivate him to act in this heroic manner?

K: My dad was a loving man to those he cared about. And besides his family, he cared very deeply for those he served with. During his last tour, he was over with an MP battalion (front line combat units weren't allowed in Saigon). The MPs had very few combat infantry trained soldiers at the time, but since the MPs were a military police unit and not a front line unit, combat infantry training personnel were allowed to serve with them.

The day of his death one of his junior MPs had come to him saying he had a bad feeling about his patrol that day and about the other soldier assigned with him. My father replaced that soldier and went with him himself. It was on that day they were called to aid some others under heavy fire. My father gave his life that day giving covering fire so that his partner could get himself and others safely to cover. Interestingly enough his obit said he was killed instantly but he lived a few moments, enough time to tell his partner to "tell my son I loved him". That man spent nearly 20 years trying to locate me but doesn't want his name mentioned.

I: In February 1968, just as the Tet Offensive was beginning, Sergeant Bedgood received his fourth bronze star for heroism. One carried a "V device" for unique valor. Can you tell me more about these medals?

K: I wish I could tell you, I honestly don't know. My uncle Robert has long since lost the original medal citations. I do know the V device was given for unique heroism with disregard for one's own personal safety in the face of the enemy, so I'm confident it would've been for something you or I would find heroic, although knowing my father, he would not have thought that, he would've thought it was just doing what he had to do to help save lives

I: In March of 1968, your father returned home for a 30-day-leave before returning to Vietnam for his second tour. Can you describe what you remember of this short time and how did you personally feel when he left again?

K: I was only 3 during this time, I have very very sketchy vague recollections of it. I remember his face, I remember him telling me goodbye. My first real memory that sticks with me about my father is him in his casket at his funeral.

I took some time to collect some things I picked up from people he served with over the years. First, I'll start with a few things I got from surviving members of Charlie Company who all took part in operation Abilene. While the rest of the guys would be heading out to party and drink on R and R my dad would stop by the PX and load up on snacks and cans of Spaghetti O's. They couldn't believe he would just eat them straight out of the can. He frequently led LRRPs (Long range reconnaissance patrols) and would be out for days at a time. He loved what he did and had often talked with one of his friends at that time about going down to South America as mercenaries after Vietnam. He was returning from a LRRP while the rest of the unit was under heavy attack during Operation Abilene and reportedly attempted to hijack a helicopter at gunpoint so he could join them in the fight. Please note, I'm not too sure about this one, I did hear it from his company commander at the time but that company commander had heard it from someone else.

I know my father loved his family. I know he loved me. He would have loved my brother too, but he returned that last time for Vietnam not knowing my mother had become pregnant with their second son. I travel to Andersonville nearly every Memorial Day to visit him graveside and catch him up on everyone as best I can. Sounds silly or maybe crazy but it's what I do.



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Veterans Project

Updated 12.3.19

Participant's name: Kevin Bedgood

Mailing address:

Phone and/or email: kevinbedgood0@gmail.com

I voluntarily agree to be interviewed for this historical study of Vietnam War veteran Sergeant Jimmy Bedgood. I understand that the following items may be created from my interview:

- an audio and/or video recording
- an edited transcript and summary
- a photograph of me
- copies of any personal documents or additional photos that I wish to share

I understand that my interview (and other items above) may be distributed to the public for educational purposes, including formats such as print, public programming, and the Internet. Also, I agree to freely share my interview (and other items above) under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. This means that I retain the copyright, but that the public may freely copy, modify, and share these items for noncommercial purposes under the same terms, if they include the original source information. In return, the interviewer promises to send one free copy of the interview recording, transcript, and related items to my address above. Any exceptions to this agreement must be listed below:

Permission granted:

Kevin Bedgood 04/27/2021  
Participant's signature date

Bailey Ballard 04/15/2021  
Interviewer's signature date



ORAL HISTORY RELEASE CC BY-NC-SA  
Veterans Project

Updated 12.3.19

Participant's name: Bruce Cook  
Mailing address:  
Phone and/or email: bec935@aol.com

I voluntarily agree to be interviewed for this historical study of Vietnam War veteran Sergeant Jimmy Bedgood. I understand that the following items may be created from my interview:

- an audio and/or video recording
- an edited transcript and summary
- a photograph of me
- copies of any personal documents or additional photos that I wish to share

I understand that my interview (and other items above) may be distributed to the public for educational purposes, including formats such as print, public programming, and the Internet. Also, I agree to freely share my interview (and other items above) under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. This means that I retain the copyright, but that the public may freely copy, modify, and share these items for noncommercial purposes under the same terms, if they include the original source information. In return, the interviewer promises to send one free copy of the interview recording, transcript, and related items to my address above. Any exceptions to this agreement must be listed below:

Permission granted:

Bruce E. Cook 04/15/2021  
Participant's signature date

Bailey Ballard 04/15/2021  
Interviewer's signature date