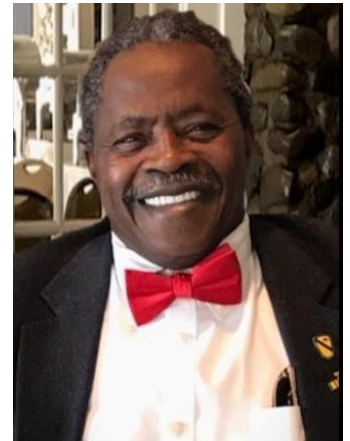


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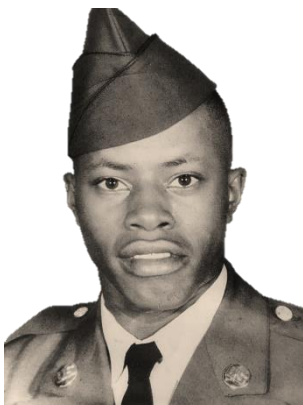
African American Vietnam Veteran Receives POW Medal After Fifty-One Years

Fifty-one years after being taken prisoner by the Viet Cong, Charles Simmons, an African American Vietnam Veteran, received the US Armed Forces POW Medal. In November, the General de Lafayette Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution, commemorated Charles' award and service at the chapter's Veterans Luncheon. Charles was the special guest of chapter member, Kathy Cox, who shared Charles' story at the luncheon.

Three years ago, Mardi Lehe, had suggested that Kathy invite Charles to the Vietnam Veteran's Commemoration at the Indiana Veterans Home. Charles accepted the invitation and afterward, Kathy and Charles kept in contact. He shared with her stories of his time in Vietnam, but one thing that stood out; Charles had never been awarded the POW medal he had earned in 1968. Eventually, Charles asked Kathy to write his story. She began researching his story and in 2019, Kathy found Captain William H. Babcock. Charles and Capt. Babcock had been together in Vietnam for only a few hours back in 1968, but the experience they shared that day is the thread that will forever bind them. Kathy contacted Capt. Babcock and learned more about that fateful day.



Charles Simmons, Vietnam Veteran, POW Medal recipient.



Charles Simmons, SP5 (T)
- US Army

Charles served in B Troop, 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, a Reconnaissance Unit of the 1st Cavalry Division in the United States Army. He was an advanced aircraft mechanic, however, on the evening of January 30th, 1968, Charles was given a new assignment for the following day - helicopter door gunner. Charles said, "When I was given those orders, that was the moment when God illuminated in my mind, like a neon sign, those words my mother posted above the kitchen door in our home... JESUS NEVER FAILS. I prayed the Lord's Prayer all that night and asked God to save me. Little did I know that in just a few short hours, I was going to need Him desperately."

The morning of January 31, 1968 arrived. Capt. Babcock served as the aircraft commander of the armed Huey gunship helicopter. Onboard were listed three other crew members: Co-Pilot, WO1 William Lee; Crew Chief, Specialist Richard Delgado; and an "unnamed door gunner". That unnamed door

gunner was SP5 (T) Charles Simmons. The crew was on a combat mission performing visual reconnaissance of a battle site. Quickly, they came under intense hostile ground fire causing severe damage to the helicopter. “I could feel the heat of the bullets as I was being shot at,” said Charles.



William H. Babcock,
Captain - US Army

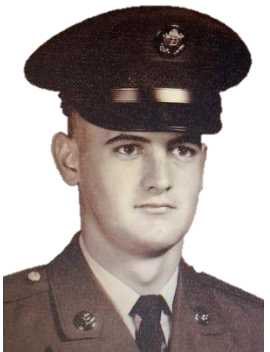
The aircraft soon became difficult to control and they were forced to land in a rice paddy near the Perfume River. They were a short distance from the city of Hue which was under siege from the Viet Cong. Shortly after the ship landed, enemy mortar shells began falling around them. With their ammunition soon expended the four US soldiers were overrun by the Viet Cong. The 4 men were taken from the ship. “I cannot begin to explain what was in all our minds,” said Capt. Babcock. One group of Viet Cong began pushing and shoving the Americans around with their rifles, while another placed explosives inside the ship.

The explosives went off causing a number of unused rockets inside the ship to explode. Everyone scrambled for cover. In the chaos, they had separated into two groups about 100-200 feet apart. As the four American captives were led toward Hue the sound of rescue helicopters cut through the air. Capt. Babcock turned to see where the helicopters were, and as he turned, he witnessed the Viet Cong fatally shoot Lee and Delgado.



Richard Delgado, SP 4 -
US Army

US Army helicopters swooped in, gunfire erupted and somehow, amid all the confusion, Capt. Babcock and Charles were rescued by US forces. They were flown to Hue Phu Bai, a military airfield and hospital, which was also under attack from the Viet Cong. This was the first day of the TET Offensive, a campaign of surprise attacks by the Viet Cong against military and civilian targets throughout South Vietnam.



William R. Lee, WO 1
- US Army

After talking with Capt. Babcock and learning more about their story, the discussion of the POW medal came up. Capt. Babcock, who indicated that he had finally received his medal in 1998, provided his written account of the events and helped guide

Kathy through the necessary steps to help Charles get his POW medal. Kathy prepared the paperwork, which included the Application for Correction of Military Record. All would be mailed to the Army Review Boards Agency in Arlington, Virginia. Congressman Jim Baird helped to expedite the process. Two months after the application went out in the mail, Charles received his POW medal on Oct 7th, 2019.



Capt. Babcock had never known the name of his door gunner, and had always wondered how he weathered the experience. He could hardly believe after 51 years; Charles had finally been located. Likewise, Charles had always wondered what had happened to his Captain. The day after Charles received his medal, a “Video Chat” reunion took place between Charles and his Captain. Babcock helped connect Charles and Kathy with Richard Delgado’s brother, Victor Delgado, and his niece, Cecilia Luna, who live in California.

From the moment Kathy first met Charles, he made it perfectly clear that there is only ONE reason he survived that perilous day – it was God’s protection which saved his life. In May of 2019, Captain Babcock wrote to Kathy Cox with a profound message: “I remember Charles’ calm under duress; an inspiration to us all.” What an example of faith under fire.

Captain Babcock was totally devoted to the cause of finding his crew members once he’d submitted paperwork to the Department of Defense in the late 1990’s, when he recommended, he and his crew be added to the list of POW’s and MIA’s in Southeast Asia. Three of his four crew members, or their families have now received their POW medals. Babcock received his medal in 1998. Victor Delgado, received his brother Richard’s medal in 2008. It would take 29 years to locate and learn the name of the unknown door gunner, Charles Simmons, who received his POW medal in 2019. The family of the last crew member, William Robert Lee, has now been located after a difficult search, which brings this story full circle. “It has been exciting, rewarding, and above all, a deep honor to have had a role in this journey,” says Cox. Captain William Babcock, in corresponding with Richard Delgado’s niece, Cecilia Luna, on February 1, 2020 writes “It is hard to believe that after all these years Charles Simmons has been located and also the relatives of William Robert Lee. Could not have happened without you and Kathy Cox. From the bottom of my heart I thank you both so very much.”



(L-R) Charles Simmons, Vietnam Veteran and POW Medal recipient with Kathy Cox, General de Lafayette, DAR.

For more information on this story, contact Kathy Cox at: kwcoxartist@aol.com.

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The chapter was founded in 1894, and is dedicated to preserving history, promoting patriotism, conservation and historic awareness in our community, and securing America's future through better education for children. Membership is established through approval of documentation of direct lineage from an American Revolutionary War Patriot. For more information, please contact our regent at generaldelafayette@gmail.com or find us online at: <https://generaldelafayette.wordpress.com>.

The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1890 to promote historic preservation, education and patriotism. Its members are descended from the patriots who won American independence during the Revolutionary War. With more than 177,000 members in approximately 3,000 chapters worldwide, DAR is one of the world's largest and most active service organizations. DAR members are committed to volunteer service having served more than 12.5 million hours in communities throughout the world during the past three years. To learn more about the work of today's DAR, visit www.DAR.org or connect with DAR on social media at facebook.com/TodaysDAR, twitter.com/TodaysDAR and youtube.com/TodaysDAR.