

U.S. Army SGT Richard Dean Covert Jr. *Died February 14, 1971*



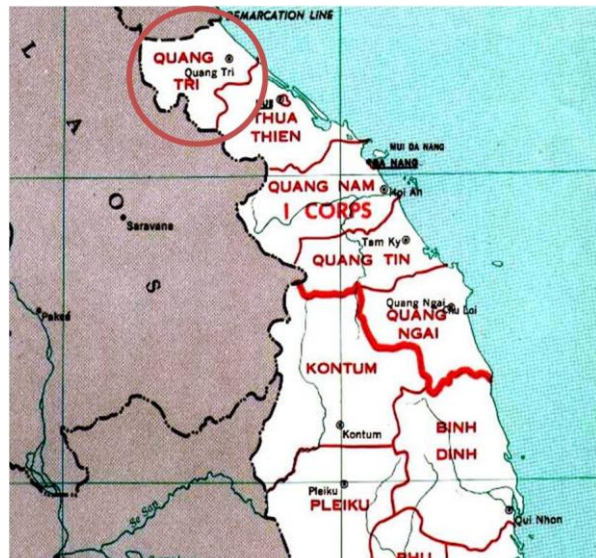
Richard Covert Jr. was born on June 17, 1951 at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. His family moved to Pleasanton, CA when he was about six years old. He attended elementary school and graduated from Amador Valley High School. He was a great baseball player and participated in track and field and excelled in the pole vault.

After high school Richard joined the Army, went to basic at Fort Lewis, WA and AIT at Fort Leonard Wood, MO where he was trained as a combat engineer (MOS 12B40). Richard attended the NCO Academy where he met Alfonso Varela and earned the rank of Sergeant E5.



On December 5, 1970 Richard began his tour in Vietnam with Company A, 7th Engineering Battalion, 5th Infantry Division (Mech). The unit was sent to Quang Tri in Quang Tri Province, located on the DMZ border.

Between January 29 and February 7, 1971 Richard's unit became part of Phase I of the Lam Son 719 Operation. Tanks, personnel carriers, self propelled artillery and engineer equipment pushed west along Route 9, securing and rebuilding the road as they went. Upon reaching the Laotian border and establishing strong defensive positions the 1/5 had done its initial job and Phase I of Lam Son 719 was finished. As this portion of the operation was winding down the unit was making its way back toward Quang Tri as part of a battalion size movement. It was during this time Richard met up with Sergeant Alfonso Varela and another buddy that just received a six pack of tall Coors cans in the mail. They thought this was the perfect occasion to break them out and share them. So all three did while sitting in Alfonso's APC that evening. Alfonso recalls, "Richard was a little tipsy, he was a quite soft spoken guy, but he kept saying I can't believe you don't know where Pleasanton is." They talked and enjoyed the evening and





each other's company. The next morning as the unit was moving they were taking small arms from a wooded area down the hill. Sergeant Alfonso was heading down to check it out with another track and a Sheridan light tank, when his vehicle threw a track. Richard's APC went instead. As they approached the wooded area Richard's track was hit by a RPG, and on February 14, 1971 (Valentine's Day) Richard died as result of his wounds at the age of 19. He was laid to rest at San Mateo Cemetery.

Richard had 2 brothers, three sisters, his mother, and father who were so devastated by his loss, that the father moved the family far away from Pleasanton. Although Richard apparently loved Pleasanton enough to talk about it with his buddies, it had too many reminders of him and the tragedy for the family to endure.