

Laszlo Rabel

1937-1968

Compiled by June Gossler Anderson Anoka Chapter DAR

Born: September 21, 1937

Budapest, Hungary

Entered Service: Hennepin County, Minneapolis, MN, 1965

Branch: U.S. Army

Team Delta, 74th Infantry Detachment

(Long Range Patrol)

173rd Airborne Brigade

Conflict: Vietnam War

Action: Binh Dinh Province

Republic of Vietnam

13 Nov. 1968

Date of Death: 13 Nov. 1968

Date of Presentation: 7 Apr. 1970

Burial: Arlington National Cemetery



Early Years

Staff Sergeant Laszlo Rabel was born in Budapest on September 21st 1937. He escaped from Hungary after participating in the failed 1956 revolution against Soviet-backed Hungarian Communist forces. Rabel is thought to have lost several family members and friends in the uprising and he eventually made it across the border into Austria and found refuge in the United States in 1957, enlisting in the Army in 1965. During his training he regaled his comrades with stories of his role in the uprising, one of which was retold in a letter written to him posthumously by a fellow soldier, Larry Warner, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 1966-1967, 5th Special Forces Group 1967-1968:

“Alas, Lazlo, I keep you in my mind and in my heart. I remember you well. When we were students together at the MACV Recondo School in Nha Trang in 1967, you were so much older than I was. I was only twenty years old, half way through the first of two tours In Country. You were 30.... On breaks, those of us who were students from the 173rd Airborne Brigade would gather together and tell stories. You regaled us with stories of the shock to your most innocent youth in Hungary in 1956, when you were a 19-year-old lad, being caught up in the Revolution that was brutally crushed. Your recounting of escaping and evading through Russian lines was a harrowing tale. I remember the twinkle in your eyes when you recalled how you took out a couple of Russians who were in your way during your escape to the West. Here it was 11 years later and you puffed up your burly chest with the pride of the opportunity to rid the world of

more Communists—and get paid for it. Your dedication and commitment to your mission and to your fellow soldiers both awed and inspired me....”

The War Years

Laszlo Rabel joined the US Army from Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1965, and by November 13, 1968 was serving as a Staff Sergeant in the 74th Infantry Detachment (Long Range Patrol), 173rd Airborne Brigade, MOS 11F-Infantry Operations and Intelligence Specialist.

There were a total of 536,100 U.S. soldiers deployed to Vietnam. Of that number 58,220 or over ten percent lost their lives in the conflict. Sixty-four percent of the survivors were wounded in action. On November 13, 1968 in Binh Dinh Province of the Republic of Vietnam, Laszlo Rabel sacrificed his life as well by smothering the blast of an enemy-thrown hand grenade with his body to protect his fellow soldiers. For this heroic action he was one of 256 American combatants, 170 of them Army, to receive the Medal of Honor, 63% of them posthumously.

Staff Sergeant Rabel's official Medal of Honor citation reads:

“For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. S/Sgt. Rabel distinguished himself while serving as leader of Team Delta, 74th Infantry Detachment. At 1000 hours on this date, Team Delta was in a defensive perimeter conducting reconnaissance of enemy trail networks when a member of the team detected enemy movement to the front. As S/Sgt. Rabel and a comrade prepared to clear the area, he heard an incoming grenade as it landed in the midst of the team's perimeter. With complete disregard for his life, S/Sgt. Rabel threw himself on the grenade and, covering it with his body, received the complete impact of the immediate explosion. Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his safety and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, S/Sgt. Rabel averted the loss of life and injury to the other members of Team Delta. By his gallantry at the cost of his life in the highest traditions of the military service, S/Sgt. Rabel has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.”

The Medal of Honor was presented to his wife Eva and daughter Eve at the White House by President Richard Nixon on April 7, 1970. In addition to the Medal of Honor Sgt. Rabel was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart posthumously. Rabel, aged 31 at his death, was buried in Arlington National Cemetery (Section 52, Grave 1326) in Arlington, Virginia. His name is inscribed on Panel 38W, Row 7 on the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington D.C.



Arlington National Cemetery

(Section 52, Grave 1326)

Sources:

A Veterans' Day Remembrance:

Immigrant MOH Records: USCIS.gov

Laszlo Rabel: militarywikia.com

Laszlo Rabel: mishalov.com

MOH Citations for Laszlo: homeofheroes.com

Specialforcesmoh.com

Virtual Vietnam Veterans' Wall of Faces Laszlo Rabel/Army: www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-faces