

POW / MIA PROFILES

The purpose of the State POW/MIA Committee is to “provide increased awareness of POW / MIAs, to organize the Department and Posts’ POW / MIA activities and to provide education to the public”. To realize this duty a profile of a WI resident who is or has been classified as POW / MIA will be presented each month for your reflection. It is with great respect that we present this month’s Profile.

MADISON MIA MARINE COMES HOME AFTER 40 YEARS. Richard Fischer was 19 years old when he enlisted in the Marines in 1966. A graduate of Madison East High School, he attended one year of college at UW-Madison before announcing to his family he wanted to join the military. His grandparents and mother tried to talk him out of it, recalled his sister, Ann Fischer. He was the only remaining son in his immediate family. His father, John, and two brothers, Jay and Carl, were killed in a car crash on a family vacation in 1958.

One year later, in 1967, Richard was in Vietnam serving as a machine gunner in M Company, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Division. His sister Ann Fischer remembers being told he was only going to be doing clerical work but Richard begged his supervisor to serve in the field. In January 1968, his unit -- M Company, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Division -- was setting up an ambush in the village of Ky Minh in the Quang Nam province. LCpl Fischer got separated from the other Marines. When his unit realized he was missing, they searched for two or three days, stopping only when ordered. Ken Fields, a Corporal, stated that the only information they got was from an old woman that said Richard had been shot and buried but she didn’t know where.

His status was officially changed to "killed in action, body not recovered " in 1978. The Fischers held a small memorial service and dedicated a gravestone to him at Forest Hill Cemetery, but the grave remained empty. In 2004, after several interviews and trips to the province where LCpl Fischer was last seen, what were thought to be his remains were excavated. Several small bones, some fragments and two buttons is all that was found. Submission to the Department of Defense DNA Registry and Laboratory for analysis over the next few years finally resulted in a DNA match after a genealogist

located Ann Fischer. She received the word in September 2007 bringing much needed relief and closure on years of lingering questions. Unfortunately, Richard's mother, Eleanor had passed away in 2002 without knowing the fate of her son.

On November 19, 2007, GySgt Richard Fischer was buried with full Military Honors at Forest Hill Cemetery at the headstone dedicated to him in 1978.

The Committee welcomes any information that any Legionnaire may have on one of our WI Veterans who are or have been POW/MIA from any conflict. Please contact Tom Ingram, Chairman, State POW/MIA Committee at tingram5@wi.rr.com or Robert Miller, Vice Chairman at bmillerplake@charter.net, 262-279-6429 if you have any information to help our endeavor. Thank you !

NOTE – CAPTION FOR PHOTO:

This is one of the last photos taken of Dick Fischer before he disappeared, seen here with a sign for his unit in Vietnam. (Fischer family)

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