

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 Veteran 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.

Two Navy Veterans share the focus of this month’s profile. At 0900 hours on February 5, 1968, a P3 “Orion” aircraft assigned to Patrol Squadron 26 at U Tapao Airbase, Thailand, left on a “Market Time” mission over the Gulf of Thailand.

On board are AOC Donald L. Gallagher, Sheboygan and LtJg. Roy A. Huss, Eau Claire. Other crewmembers included Armando Chapa, William Farris, Donald Burnett, Thomas Jones, Homer McKay, James Newman, Melvin Thompson and Lynn Travis. They were scheduled to return to base at about 0900 hours the next morning.

As antisubmarine warfare was all but unknown in Vietnam, these P3 teams were frequently used on search missions. The electronic “ears” and other technical equipment suitable for target marking fit well with these types of missions. Sometimes they assisted in attacks on small enemy watercraft. Shortly after midnight on February 6, the Orion reported a surface contact. Two hours later it reported another contact further east. The last report received from the Orion was after 0300.

An emergency communication alert for the aircraft was declared shortly after daybreak and a full search and rescue (SAR) was initiated. In the late afternoon of February 6, wreckage and debris were sighted and identified. On February 7 SAR operations terminated at sundown. Salvage operations were conducted from February 11 through March 21. The investigating officer concluded that the Orion had impacted with the water, that the aircraft had been completely destroyed, and that all of the crewmembers had died instantly.

The Orion had gone down approximately 50 miles off the shores of South Vietnam’s An Xuyen Province in the Gulf of Thailand. The crew is considered “buried at sea” but is officially listed as killed/body not recovered.

The POW/ MIA Committee wishes to thank www.pownetwork.org for their permission to use the information in this profile. 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 !