

## 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.

Marine Corps Major Norman K. Billipp was born on March 14, 1945, in Milwaukee and attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he was enrolled in the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps Program. Upon graduation, he was commissioned a second lieutenant of Marines in June 1966. After completing officer Basic School in Quantico, Virginia, Billipp was ordered to Naval flight training that started at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida.

He was considered a highly talented pilot who volunteered for extra flights in order to complete his flight training ahead of his contemporaries. Norm Billipp received his wings as a Marine Corps aviator at Naval Air Station, Kingsville, Texas, in early 1968. On joining the Fleet Marine Force, then-first lieutenant Billipp flew the single-seat, A-4 Skyhawk jet. Once qualified in that aircraft, he departed for a one-year combat tour in South Vietnam. After flying the A-4 Skyhawk for the first half of that tour, he next flew the O-1G, Bird Dog, a two-place propeller observation aircraft, with Marine Observation Squadron-6, based at Quang Tri Air Base in the northern part of I Corps, South Vietnam.

On May 6, 1969, while flying with the call sign “Seaworthy 17,” Norm Billipp failed to return from an observation mission along Route 9 between Khe Sahn and the South Vietnam border with Laos. In addition to always-present enemy antiaircraft fire, bad weather was considered to be a factor making flying dangerous on that day. An exhaustive air search over two days after May 6th found no sign of Billipp or his aircraft. Hostile action in the area of the suspected loss prevented ground searches.

Following unsuccessful searches, Norman Billipp, of Milwaukee, and his aerial observer, John Hagan, of Savannah, Georgia, were listed by the Marine Corps as missing in action. In the years that followed and while listed as missing in action, both Marines

were promoted to major. Further still and over 25 years after the loss of Billipp's aircraft and its crew, two United States investigations and excavations at possible crash sites in Laos yielded aircraft debris, crew-related materials, and human remains.

After identification of the aircrew human remains found in these excavations, remains of Major Norman Billipp and his aerial observer were returned to their families for burial in the United States. Pilot Norman Billipp was 24 years old when lost in 1969. Aerial observer John Hagan was 23 years old. Their names are on the Vietnam War Memorial at panel 25W; Norm Billipp is in row 9 and John Hagan is in row 11.

The Committee wishes to thank Gerry Miller, USMC Retired and member of POST 126 – Brillion for contributing this story. Please contact Tom Ingram, Chairman, State POW/MIA Committee at [tingram5@wi.rr.com](mailto:tingram5@wi.rr.com) or Robert Miller, Vice Chairman at [bmillerplake@charter.net](mailto:bmillerplake@charter.net), 262-279-6429 if you have any information to help our endeavor. Thank you !