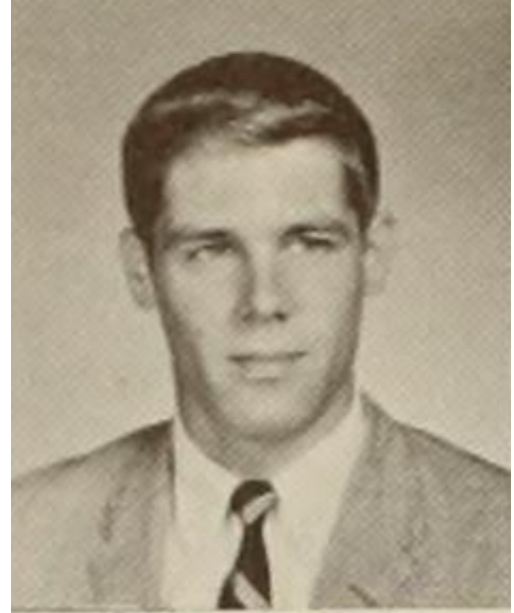


## Called Up

In 1967, the United States military inducted more than 228,000 young men through the Selective Service draft. One of them was Alan Spence Kohn of Columbia.

Alan Kohn was a graduate of Dreher High School and enrolled at Clemson in 1965. He “was the type of person you remember for all good reasons,” wrote high school classmate Rip Blanchard. “He respected people regardless of their background and social standing.”

Friend and high school classmate, William Wessinger, recalled that Alan had a particular interest in automobile mechanics. Wessinger described Kohn as serious, but fun and counted Alan among the “finest people I have known.”



Wessinger, who would go on to become a medical doctor, attended The Citadel “and did very well academically.” He recalled a conversation with Kohn in which the topic of grades came up. “I well remember him looking at me and asking, ‘You still making those good grades?’ It hurt for me to tell him, ‘Yes.’” Kohn’s grades were not as strong—and grades were a key factor in a local draft board’s willingness to grant educational deferments. “I counseled him to go ahead and enlist, so that he could possibly have some choice of military occupational specialty, assignment, etc. I reiterated that, with his love of mechanics, heavy vehicle maintenance was a good possibility. He shook his head, saying he would go with the draft, ‘cause that’s only two years, and enlisting would be three years.’”

Kohn’s number was called and he was drafted. He was selected for training as an 11 Bravo, an infantryman. In mid-November 1967, Specialist Four Kohn arrived in Vietnam and was assigned to Company C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry had been activated at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii in 1941 and earned the distinction as one of the first Army divisions to see combat in World War II when it was attacked by the Japanese on December 7. The 25<sup>th</sup> had participated in four campaigns in the Asian-Pacific Theater during World War II and by the time of Kohn’s arrival, was once again fighting in the region, this time north and west of the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon.



In late January 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive, infiltrating large numbers of troops into the south, attacking Saigon and other major cities. Kohn and the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry beat back Viet Cong efforts to seize Tan Son Nhut air base and assisted in defending Saigon.

In March, the 25<sup>th</sup> was operating in Gia Dinh province, South Vietnam's main industrial area surrounding Saigon. On Tuesday, March 26, Specialist Four Kohn was killed in action by enemy small arms fire.

Alan Spence Kohn was awarded the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Palm, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and Combat Infantry Badge. He was survived by his parents and buried in the Prosperity Cemetery. He is memorialized on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC and the South Carolina Vietnam Memorial Monument in Columbia. An eternal flame candle, given in his memory, burns at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Columbia.

