

Cover Patrol

Chances are that George Mims of Summerton wasn't very familiar with Vietnam when he arrived on the Clemson College campus. Perhaps he would have recognized it as French Indochina. Vietnam had been a colony of France before World War II when Japanese occupation superseded French authority. After the war, the French attempted to reclaim the country only to be defeated in the pivotal battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. After French withdrawal, North Vietnam was controlled by the communist-backed Viet Minh while the United States provided financial and military assistance to South Vietnam. By the time George Mims graduated from Clemson in 1963, the Kennedy administration had embarked on an escalation of assistance that would dramatically increase US military personnel in South Vietnam—and would soon include Mims.



George Ivison Mims, Jr. majored in electrical engineering. He participated fully in student life as a member of the Glee Club, Mu Beta Psi national music honorary fraternity, the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, and Kappa Delta Chi fraternity. He worked as a hall supervisor, served as vice president of the YMCA, and was a member of the Baptist Student Union and the Skin Diving Club. He was also an Air Force ROTC cadet where his outstanding record earned him membership in the Arnold Air Society.



Mims was commissioned as an Air Force officer and trained as a weapons system officer, flying in the back seat of the F-4C Phantom II fighter. Mims was assigned to the 433rd Tactical Fighter Squadron of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. The Wing was commanded by World War II ace Colonel Robin Olds.

As American involvement in Vietnam intensified, the 433rd was deployed to Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand. From there, the squadron's fighters engaged in combat operations including bombardment, ground support, air defense, interdiction, and armed reconnaissance missions.

Mims' first combat mission came on December 20, 1965 when he was assigned cover patrol duties accompanying F-105 fighter-bombers on a mission to destroy a railroad bridge northeast of Hanoi. Mims' aircraft took a direct hit from a surface-to-air missile. Mims was initially listed as missing in action and classified as a prisoner-of-war. In April 1973, as American prisoners-of-war were repatriated, Mims' status was revised to killed in action. Captain Mims' body was never recovered.

George Mims was remembered as "a fine Christian, Southern Gentleman" by hometown friend MaryAnne Grayson Moore. His college friend Bill Moore described Mims as "the kind of man that your mother would want you to associate with in life."

George Mims was awarded the Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Palm, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. His name is inscribed on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. A memorial marker was placed in Summerton's Evergreen Cemetery. Captain Mims was survived by his wife, his parents, a brother, and a sister.

