

1Lt Gary L. Pace '69



The impeccable character Gary Pace developed in the small community of Sans Souci, just outside of Greenville, SC would later save his fellow soldiers lives. According to Steve, Gary's younger brother, the boys grew up playing basketball, football and baseball in the front yard or in the street. Steve always admired his older brother, especially when Gary would take up for his little brother. There were always plenty of other young, eager boys ready to play sports. Gary's 6'4" frame gave him an advantage on the Parker High basketball team. Gary was not only gifted in academics and sports, but he also was an integral part of the Parker High award-winning band as he performed on the snare drum.

Always interested in building things, Civil Engineering was a natural choice for his major at Clemson University. While at Clemson, a friend encouraged Gary to try out for the soccer team, even though he had never played soccer. Gary went out for the team and played on the 67-68-69 seasons and was voted ALL-ACC Second Team in 1969. During his years at Clemson, Gary was in Army ROTC. He was commissioned into the US Army upon graduation. He married Patricia Keller of Lancaster, Pa.



After assignments at Fort Jackson and Fort Belvoir, Lt Pace was assigned to B Company, 31st Engineer Battalion, 159th Engineer Group, 20th Engineer Brigade, US Army Vietnam. Most people thought that being an engineer, Lt Pace would not be in the direct line of fire but things turned out differently.

In February of 1971, the 31st Engineers were assigned to Fire Support Base Lanyard on the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province. The monsoons of the rainy season left a layer of mud over the entire base. The 31st Engineers were to build an entirely new base just across the road.

On the evening of March 30, 1971, Lt Pace was assigned Officer of the Guard for the evening. He was responsible for guarding a designated area of the base perimeter. At the time, the NVA trained elite attack units known as sappers. These small units of 3-5 men assault cells were used to seize key road and bridge assets, destroy installations, attack command and control centers, and plant explosives. The sappers attacked the FSB that evening and a captured attacker later revealed their plan of attack.

Originally, they were to attack on the lines defended by an ARVN Infantry company but when their own mortar fire started falling in their path, they moved their assault to the area occupied by the engineers. When the sappers attacked, their mission was to destroy the ammunition bunkers. The bases 8 inch, 175mm and 155mm howitzers were of little help during the attack. The sappers found themselves in the middle of an RPG screen and they started throwing satchel charges and firing at the engineers. According to the Citation to Accompany the Silver Star Medal, *“Leading his men into the fire base motor pool, First Lieutenant Pace encountered the sapper element in close combat. At this time, SP5 Kenneth E. Williams fell wounded, and First Lieutenant Pace moved forward into a hail of hostile fire in an attempt to withdraw SP5 Williams to safety. With complete disregard*

for his own safety, First Lieutenant Pace moved through the automatic weapons fire and exploding satchel charges. Upon reaching SP5 Williams, First Lieutenant Pace fell mortally wounded.”

In his heroic effort to save his fallen comrades, 1Lt Pace drew fire, which cost him his life but saved the lives of others. The character traits that Lt. Gary Pace exhibited throughout his life as a big brother, athlete, scholar, and soldier saved the lives of his fellow soldiers and brought great pride to his family, his community, his country and his fellow Clemson Tigers.

Once completed, the new Fire Support Base to replace Lanyard was named FSB Pace in memory of 1Lt Gary L. Pace.

<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/98058853/How-FSB-Pace-Was-Named>