

Stan Sargent
Corporal, First Cavalry Division¹
Tour in Vietnam began December 30, 1970 –
Wounded in Battle April 20, 1971 near Gia Ray, South Vietnam
Died April 21, 1971

Stan was awarded the Silver Star (third highest medal awarded by US military)² for engaging a heavily entrenched enemy force and providing machine gun covering fire so wounded comrades could be evacuated. Stan was wounded during the fighting and died the next day.



Stan Sargent –Vietnam 1971
Delta Company -“Angry Skipper” - 2nd Battllion, 8th CAV, 1st Cavalry Division



Stan Sargent – Gia Ray, Vietnam
Delta Company -“Angry Skipper” - 2nd Battllion, 8th CAV, 1st Cavalry Division

“Stan Sargent helped save a lot of lives that day keeping his machine gun going while the rest of us could be taken back to the rear. Stan was a true hero. He was one of the finest soldiers I ever served with.”

Staff Sergeant Stan Dillon
“Range” Platoon Senior Non-Commissioned Officer

A personal communication from Stan’s Company Commander in Vietnam --William D. Neal:

“This (the day of the firefight) was the toughest day I ever had in the entire 22 months I spent in Vietnam, of which 20 were spent in the bush with combat units. The one consolation I have is that both Stan Dillon and Bill Bott also believed we had come across a moving unit, and not one dug into a very well defended base camp. Stan Sargent was among the four men that were killed that day. The stream where this action took place is named Suoi Gia Ui. The location is about 2 kilometers north of QC 1 (National Highway 1), and 12 kilometers southeast of Gia Ray village and Núi Chua Chan (Chua Chan mountain, where Fire Support Base Mace was located.)

¹ Delta Company, “Angry Skipper”, Second Battalion, 8th CAV - A unit of the 3rd Brigade (Independent), 1st Cavalry Division. Angry Skipper was organized into three maneuver platoons - 1st (White Skull), 2nd (Rifle Range), and 3rd (Wild Cat). Stan Sargent was an Assistant Machine Gunner in Rifle Range Platoon.

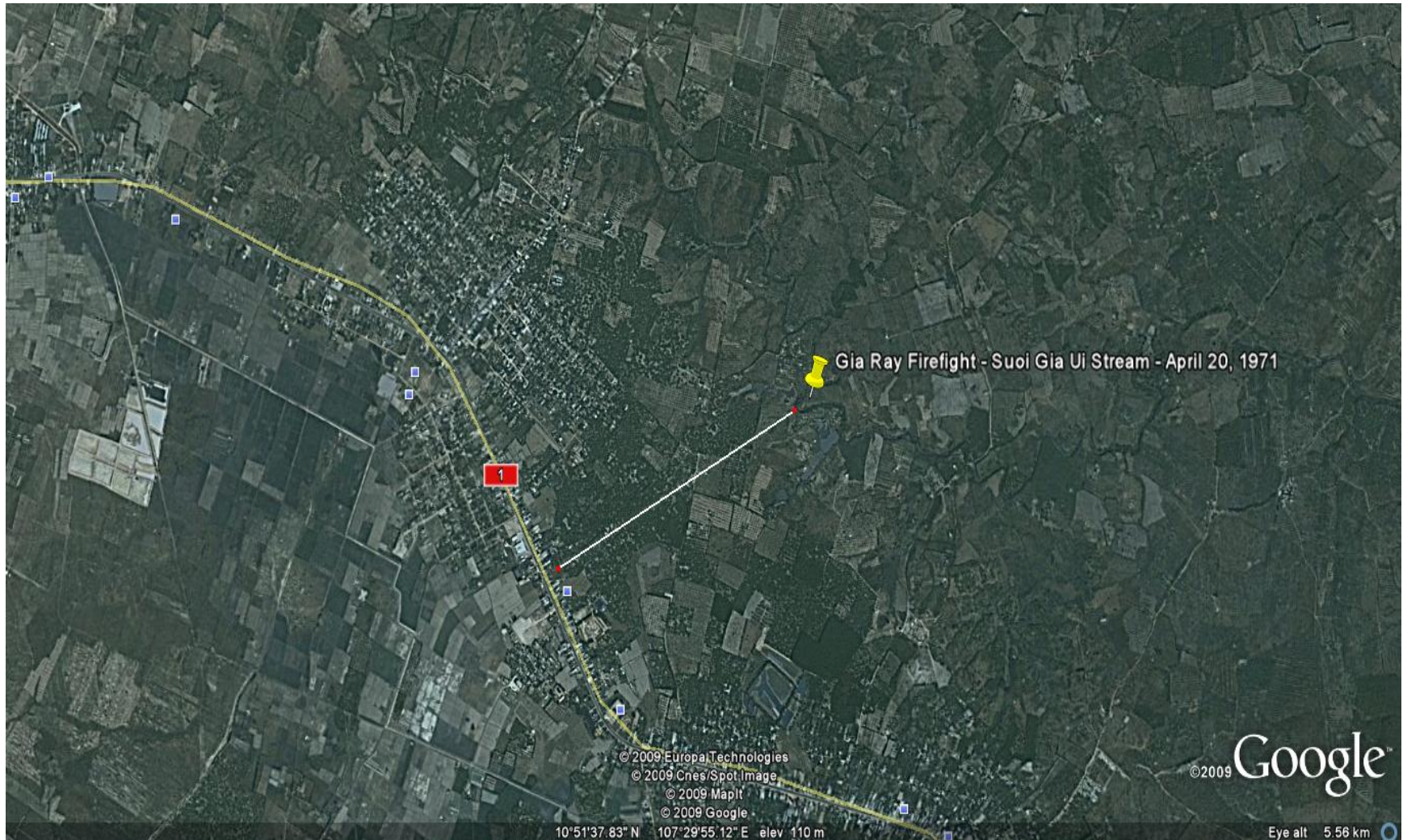
² The Silver Star Medal is the third highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the United States Armed Forces. It is awarded for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States who, while serving in any capacity with the U.S Armed Forces, distinguishes him or herself by extraordinary heroism. The required gallantry must have been performed with marked distinction.

“Locate the city of Xuan Loc in Long Khanh province and follow QC 1 initially south, then east for about 20 kilometers, you will see where it intersects QL 333 near Núi Chùa Chan. QL 333 goes into Gia Ray village. Continue on QC 1 for about 11 kilometers. Then go due north until you hit Suối Gia Ui (about 2 kilometers). That is approximately where the battle took place.”



Firefight is believed to have taken place somewhere within the circle on map near the Suoi Gia Ui stream. Gia Ray coordinates are approximately 10° 51' 37" N - 107° 29' 55" E.

This is the same area near Gia Ray village from Google Earth. Placemark is at approximate area of the firefight.



Telephone interview with Stan Dillon, Stan's Platoon Sergeant, October 2005.

"We were at First Calvary, 40 men lifted with gear, we were put down and started following a truck road and crossed a little creek and our boots got wet. We set up for lunch. We were three squads and we set up a perimeter. Second squad went down the creek and ran into a group of Viet Cong taking a bath in the creek. Stan's squad was told to go down there. A German Shepherd (used to sniff out booby traps) ran ahead of the platoon. Stan was in the lead platoon. Firing started from a bunker complex. Many were wounded. Stan and machine gunner started firing. There were explosions. I was wounded. Stan and the machine gunner stayed on their gun and held down the VC. The machine gunner (Joe Hall??) was killed. Stan took over the machine gun (he had been the Assistant Machine Gunner) and provided covering fire so we could evacuate the dead and wounded. I was shot three times and had shrapnel wounds from claymore mine. One of the bullets hit a Bible in my shirt pocket – the bullet stopped at 2nd Corinthians 5:7 – '... for we walk by faith, not by sight.' Stan was hit by shrapnel from a claymore mine detonated in the tree canopy. I remember flying out on the helicopter with Stan – he wasn't conscious. He died the next day."

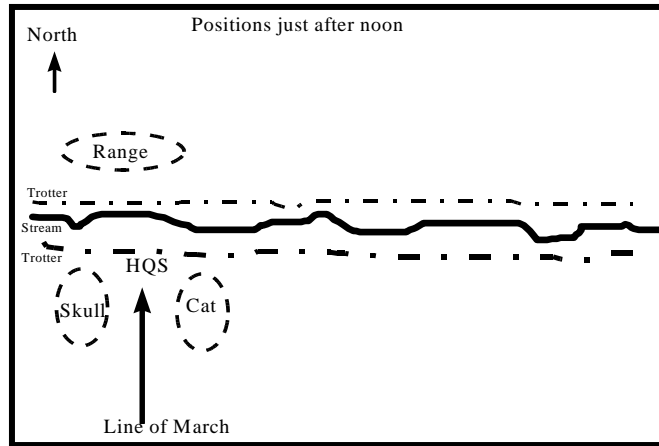
Photos of Gia Ray and area from Internet – <http://www.147thhillclimbers.org/0034.jpg>



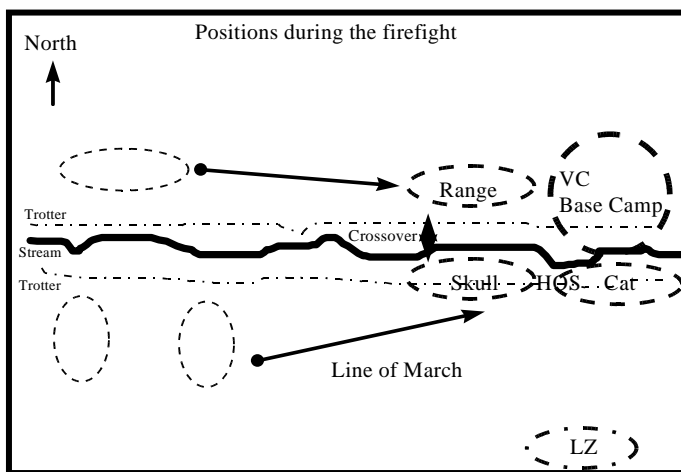
Company Commander William Neal has written an account of the firefight which provides more details including a hour by hour description of the fighting. Three platoons were under Neal's command on April 20, 1971, landed in an area near Gia Ray. Viet Cong were spotted near Suoi Gia Ui stream. Stan Sagent's platoon, Range, crossed the stream and came under attack. They had run into VC base camp and were hit with a wall of fire. The platoon suffered almost 90% casualties.³

³ Range only had three unwounded soldiers --3 KIA and 18 wounded, including the platoon leader, staff sergeant and all three squad leaders. The 3 KIA's were CPL James Melvin Cardwell, CPL Danny George Drinkard, and CPL Joseph Lindsey Hall. Cardwell and Drinkard had been walking point and caught the full blast of the NVA claymore mine. Hall had come forward to try to help out Dillon, who had also been badly hit by the claymore and shot three times. Hall was apparently killed by enemy rifle fire.

As things started, Stan's platoon was on the north side of the Suoi Gia Ui stream. As they went along the side of the stream going east, all hell broke loose. At least two Chicom claymores blew up accompanied by the screams of the wounded. The volume of small arms fire from both sides was really heavy - full automatic fire - all the way.



Intensifying fire from across the creek pinned down Cat platoon. The firefight on the north side was horrendous. SSG Dillon was wounded (Stan Sargent's platoon sergeant) and it was clear that Range was in very serious trouble and people on the north side were dead and dying. Skull platoon moved back down the stream to the west, cross over, and come in behind Range to get them out of there - and hold the crossing site no matter what. Cat platoon continued firing from the South.



The Company Commander William Neal said he remembered noting that, "... somebody on the north side was raising royal hell with an M-60 machine gun. I hoped it was one of ours. I remember thinking that maybe it wouldn't be too bad if we still had an M-60 engaged, though the volume of M-16 fire had become really weak." Two machine guns had kept firing and that allowed Range platoon to cross back over

the stream and join the main US force. Stan Sargent had been manning one of the machine guns. In the face of well entrenched enemy and absolute chaos with dead and wounded falling all around him, Stan Sargent held his ground and provided covering fire so that his comrades could be evacuated. Four members of Range platoon were awarded the Silver Star - the two men manning the other machine gun, Stan and Staff Sergeant Stan Dillon. Stan Sargent was wounded during the fight and died the next day.⁴ Stan Dillon credited Stan Sargent and an unnamed "machine gunner" with saving the lives of the wounded that day. Whatever happened, it apparently was a situation where a decision was made by Stan and others to stand and fight in the face of overwhelming odds.

⁴ The battle continued for another day. It was determined that Stan's platoon had run head on into the headquarters of the 83rd North Vietnam Army (NVA) rear service unit and their security detachment. An NVA rear service unit was equivalent to a US brigade headquarters and the security unit is typically the best and most seasoned fighters who are being given a break from their normal jungle fighting duties. The base camp had been extremely well built and laid out - double interlocking fires throughout with six feet and more of mud and log overhead cover.