

KOBASHIGAWA, TOM YOSHIHISA

Name: Tom Yoshihisa Kobashigawa
Rank/Branch: E5/US Army
Unit: HHC, 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division
Date of Birth:
Home City of Record: Honolulu HI
Date of Loss: 05 February 1970
Country of Loss: South Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 163045N 1072824E (YD494093)
Status (in 1973): Returned POW
Category:
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH1H

Other Personnel in Incident: Daniel H. Hefel, John W. Parsels (returned POWs); James M. Lyon (missing)

REMARKS: 730327 RELSD BY PRG

Source: Compiled by HOMECOMING II and the P.O.W. NETWORK from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. 2020

SYNOPSIS: At 1530 hours on February 5, 1970, Capt. James M. Lyon, pilot, Capt. John W. Parsels, copilot, SP5 Tom Y. Kobashigawa, crew chief, and SP4 Daniel Hefel, door gunner, were flying a UH1H helicopter (serial #68-16441) on a maintenance mission from Hue to Phy Bai, South Vietnam.

When the aircraft was about 18 miles northwest of Hue City, the helicopter caught fire and crashed (due to a malfunction). Capt. Lyon was thrown clear of the aircraft and was burned extensively over his body and part of his right leg. His leg was severed four inches below the knee. The other crew members were also injured and could not take evasive action. They were captured at 1630 hours by NVA troops and spent the night near the crash site.

Throughout the night, the crew members heard their pilot yelling and moaning in pain. At 0600 hours, Capt. Lyon moaned and then a shot was heard from his position about 30 feet from the aircraft wreckage. No other outcry from Capt. Lyon was heard, and the others believed that he had been killed by the guard.

Two weeks later, Capt. Parsels was told by 1Lt. Lee Van Mac (an NVA commander at "Camp Farnsworth") that Capt. Lyon died from his wounds and was buried at the crash site. 1Lt. Lee Van Mac gave Capt. Parsels the personal effects of Capt. Lyon, including his ID card and several photos which appeared to be of Lyon's wife.

In late March, 1973, Parsels, Hefel and Kobashigawa were released from prisons in North Vietnam. In their debriefings, all three concurred on the

story that Lyon had apparently been shot. They considered it a mercy killing, because their pilot had been so seriously injured that they doubted that he could survive.

Curiously, the Vietnamese have not returned the body of Capt. James M. Lyon, nor have they been forthcoming with information concerning him. Tragically, Capt. Lyon has been a prisoner of war for nearly 20 years - alive or dead.

Even more tragic are the thousands of reports that continue to flow in indicating that some hundreds of Americans are still prisoner in Indochina. It's long past time we brought our men home.

Tom still lives in Hawaii.

MORE INFO <http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.php?recordID=972>