

DECLASSIFIED

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3d ARRGp Hist, Oct-Dec 66

1. (U) In the late afternoon of 18 October 1966, Crown Bravo (HU-16, SN 517145) on orbit mission (Det 1-3-78-18 Oct) over the Gulf of Tonkin failed to return to home base at Danang. Control agency became aware of possible emergency because of lack of operations normal reports from Crown Bravo at 1700L and 1730L. Organized search began that evening and continued until 1820L on 25 October 66 with no sightings or findings reported. Aircraft was assigned to 37 ARRSq and had a total of seven crewmen aboard. Loss of the HU-16 amphibian was reported as missing due to hostile action.

70-1627	15 May 75	21st SOS	Cambodia	Knife 22	Terry D. Ohlemeier	David W. Greer	Michael C. Wilson	Norman A. Paul		Marines into the western b run into the beach. the air caused a fuel lead. Unable attempted to return to its s was forced to make an em
70-1628	24 Jan 75	21st SOS		Knife	Gary C. Hall	Bryan A. Rye	James K. Hurley	Garry W. Hermanson		

Rescue HU-16 SEA Losses

Tail Number	Date	Unit	Location	Call Sign	Pilot	CoPilot	Navigator	Flight Engineer	Flight Engineer	Radio Operator	Pararescue	
51-058	3 Jul 65		NVN									Not in USAF listing, Grid kilometers off the coast of N information
51-5287	19 Jun 65											Not is USAF Listing, No Gr
51-0071	14 Mar 66	33rd ARRS, Tan Son Nhut AB	NVN	Crown Bravo	Westenbar	W.E. Hall	D.S. Price	C. Jackson		Robert L. Hilton	James. E. Pleiman	Aircraft lost while flying re 64-0740, Maj J. Peerson, pil both recovered. The aircraft survivors, was hit by enemy abandoned the aircraft and i crewmembers and the crew U.S. Navy helicopter, it is a individuals went down with the crewmembers reportedly and were buried by the Nort be the buried remains were 1988. These remains were i March 1989.
51-7145	18 Oct 66	37th ARRS, Danang	NVN	Crown Bravo	Ralph H. Angstadt	John Henry S. Long	Inzar W. Rackley Jr.	Robert L. Hill	John R. Shoneck	Lawrence (NMT) Clark	Steven H. Adams	The aircraft was on a SAR to a Navy ship he was retur This was the last contact wi aircraft or crew was ever fo

Rescue HH-43 SEA Losses

Combat Loss of Personnel

Mission 1-3-78-18 October 1966. It began in a routine manner as so many others had for Major Angstadt and his crew of the HU-16B, 51-7145. The Major was scheduled to fly a precautionary orbit over the Gulf of Tonkin to aid fighter pilots who might require assistance.

The fear that all was not well with 7145 was born when one of those "Operation Normal" reports was not received. A search, which was begun immediately and was suspended on 26 March, never revealed any information on the fate of 7145 or the seven Rescuemen aboard.

A list of the crewmen who are missing follows:²⁵

<u>Crewmen</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Angstadt, Ralph H., Maj	RCC	37th ARRSq
Long, John H. S., 1st Lt	Copilot	37th ARRSq
Rackley, Inzar W., Jr., Capt	Nav	37th ARRSq
Hill, Robert L., TSgt	7 FM	37th ARRSq
Clark, Lawrence (NMI), SSgt	) RO	37th ARRSq
Adams, Steven H., A2C	3 PJ	33rd ARRSq
Shoneck, John R., SSgt	3 FM	Det 7, 38th ARRSq

Mission 9-38-31-29 October 1966. This was a helicopter mission for the medical evacuation of wounded

25. TSgt Philip N. McKinnon, ARPCB.

REMEMBERING STEVE

He Went to War and Never Came Home

by CMSgt. Vickie M. Graham
photos courtesy of Cindy Barnard and Bruce Adams

On Aug. 5, 1988, 21 years after her fighter-pilot husband was killed on a mission over North Vietnam, Vickie Stephensen laid to rest the remains of the only man she ever loved. "This is it," she thought to herself as Col. Mark Stephensen's casket slowly descended into the grave. "It's finally over. This is the period at the end of the sentence."

*For Cindy Barnard and Bruce Adams, there is no period. Their brother, MSgt. Steve Adams, disappeared over North Vietnam on a rescue mission **Oct. 18, 1966**. Today, he is one of 2,264 Americans still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia.*

Like all those whose fate is unknown, Steve is more than a name etched in granite on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. He was a fun-loving kid from the Iowa Corn Belt who strapped on manhood and headed off to war.

He's still gone, but not forgotten by the younger brother and sister who still wait. Although they realize Steve may not have survived, their memories do.

This is how they remember him. . . .

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Steve as a high-school student in Spencer, Iowa.

We lived in Spencer, Iowa, which is somewhere between the middle of nowhere and the middle of everything," said Cindy, 41, an elementary-school music teacher and the middle child in the Adams family. "Steve was six years older than I was, but if he ever complained about his little sister tagging along, I never knew it. He was very protective and took care of me when the older kids got a little rough. He'd show me off to his friends and did the same with Bruce."

Steve was 9 years old when Bruce was born and like most big brothers, showed his little brother the ropes of Midwestern childhood. "He got a kick out of teaching me how to sneak into the fairgrounds through a hole in the fence," said Bruce, 38, a dentist. "And it was Steve who introduced me to Playboy."

Born to Jean Chamberlain Adams and Gale Ernest Adams at 11:15 a.m. on Sept. 25, 1944, Steven Harold Adams weighed in at a hefty 9 pounds, 8 ounces and was 24 inches long. World War II captured the day's headlines, and "Going My Way" grabbed four major academy awards that year, including best picture.

Steve took his first steps at 10-and-a-half months, according to an entry in his baby book. "You have pretty teeth, but suck your thumb," his mother wrote.

Then Grandma Ruth Adams died when he was only three, and Jean scribbled, "It was quite a shock, even to a little boy. You thought God was mean to take her, and also you thought the airplanes would bump into her up in heaven."

Gale, the town's Wonder Bread man, delivered bakery goods on a route so familiar he could've driven it blindfolded. At day's end, he'd bring home a doughnut or Twinkie for each of his children, saying the corner grocer had somehow "forgotten" them on the truck. Jean, a homemaker, happily flung open the doors at 613 W. 11th St. to the entire gaggle of neighborhood ragamuffins.

"Our parents were wonderful role models for us," Cindy recalled. "We didn't have a lot, but we were comfortable. If there were any money problems, we were never told. That's just the way it was. We enjoyed a stress-free childhood where Midwestern values of church, family and respect for others were the foundation of our lives."

The family lived in a small, white Cape Cod-style home on a tree-lined street where Dennis the Menace could've wreaked his unending mischief on poor Mr. Wilson. A basketball hoop above the single-car garage provided hours of hotly contested games of H-O-R-S-E,



Steve at 2 1/2 years old with his dad, Gale, who was not only the Wonder Bread man, but a wonderful father.

and a small pine tree on the front lawn — now more than 80 feet tall — suffered collisions with out-of-control bikes and trikes boring down on it at breakneck speed.

The back yard boasted a large enclosure where Steve raised and bred fantail pigeons, which he showed at the county fair with moderate success. Aquariums containing tropical fish — which he also bred and raised to show at the fair — were stationed at strategic points throughout the house. Beyond the back yard, acres and acres of cornfields, which later gave way to grazing land for cattle, served as fertile playgrounds for inventive games of hide-and-seek.

"Whenever a tree fell, we'd make forts and huts out of it," Cindy recalled from her choir room at Davis Middle School in Evanston, Wyo. "We'd play outside until dark, when Mom would call us into the house for supper."

Tucked into the northwestern corner of Iowa where the Little Sioux and Ocheyedan Rivers meet, Spencer's townsfolk didn't worry much about kidnappers, drug dealers and drive-by shootings in the '50s and '60s. Heck, there were only about 10,000 people, and everybody knew everybody else. At Halloween, the kids didn't even have to check their treats for nasty things like razor blades or straight pins.

Gangs? Well, they weren't like the gangs you see in the news today. The most trouble any kid from Spencer ever got into was soaping the post office windows, T.P.-ing the trees at the high school or tipping over some farmer's outhouse.

"My fondest memories were our vacations at Arnolds Park on Spirit Lake," Cindy said. "It was only 17 miles from Spencer and right on the Iowa-Minnesota border, but people from all over the country would spend the entire summer there."

So did the Adams family. They'd hitch up the camping trailer and tow it to their favorite campsite shortly after school let out for the year.

Gale drove his bread route during the day while the kids swam and played. Steve, ever the protector, assumed the role of lifeguard and arbitrator in his father's absence. After work, Gale returned to the lake, where potluck dinner with the other campers became an almost everyday routine.

Little League offered an outlet for Steve's athletic prowess, and at 10 he'd already decided on a career. He wanted to be a scientist.

But academics didn't interest him much as a youngster. Teachers said the oldest Adams boy didn't pay attention in class and spent most of his classroom hours day-dreaming. It wasn't until years later that doctors discovered Steve had suffered a slight hearing loss as an infant — thought to be congenital — which could explain his seeming inattentiveness in class.

"Even so, he was an average student, preferring the social side of school rather than its academic program," Bruce said, chuckling as he read a high-school yearbook "award" for Steve's apparent ability to "make out continually until 1999."

"He was a popular, outgoing, carefree spirit, and I idolized him," Bruce added. "He loved animals, and I can still picture the day he called me up to his room, excitement ringing in his voice. When I walked in, he was lying on his back in bed with a big grin on his face. Our tabby cat had delivered its litter right on his belly!"

The two brothers spent hours in the garage, tinkering

with engines and making homemade go-karts. On one daring dash down Spencer's open streets, Bruce broke his leg at the wheel of Steve's little wonder machine. Not long after, they stopped their racing escapades, as Steve shifted his interests to more mature endeavors. Like playing baritone in the band and acting in what-ever play Gordon Liggett, the high-school speech teacher, directed.

"When Steve walked on stage, he virtually became the person he was portraying," Cindy said. "He could play comedy or drama, but I remember best his role as Happy in 'Death of a Salesman.'"

Sometime during Steve's sophomore year, his dad began suffering from complications of diabetes. Trips to the lake sapped his strength, and the following summer, Steve got a job pumping gas and fixing flats at Marv's Conoco. In taking on more responsibility, he spent less and less time at the lake and continued working after school and on weekends to help with the family finances.

In 1962, at age 37, his father died. Steve, a high-school junior, became the man of the house. Jean returned to school, eventually becoming a licensed practical nurse.

He dated Cindy Dalby, Janeen Berge, Patty Lake and Mary Hallaeur, the latter being his on-and-off steady. "Mary was a spontaneous, carefree spirit just like Steve," Cindy said. "She was a ski bum of sorts, wore very little makeup and when Steve left, she vowed to wait for him. To this day, she has never married."

Following graduation, Steve headed for Still River, Mass., to live with his Uncle Harley. "He'd saved up enough money to buy his pride and joy, a 1958 baby blue Chevy convertible," Cindy said, pointing to a picture of it in her family album. "He took a couple of college courses, but found no interest in school. Steve would be the first to admit he 'ditzed' around in school, but he was no dummy."

Vietnam was quickly becoming a household word, and in 1965, he enlisted. "I guess it's no surprise he volunteered for pararescue training," Cindy said. "He always enjoyed protecting people."

And surprising people. On a short break between training classes, Steve unexpectedly walked into the house and swore Cindy to secrecy saying, "Shhhh! Don't tell Mom I'm home." She was upstairs drying her hair

and didn't hear her son burst through the door.

"He loved doing things like that," Cindy said. "He had a mischievous bent and got a big kick out of it."

On another occasion, the baby-faced young man asked for some help with his macho appearance. "He couldn't even grow a healthy stubble," Cindy recalled. "So he asked if I could put some mascara on his upper lip to fill in his mustache!"

When he'd earned the coveted maroon beret of a pararescueman, he supported a few Apollo moon missions, standing by in case of an emergency. On Mother's Day 1966, he said goodbye to his family and headed for Okinawa as part of the rescue backup for yet another moon launch. It was during that assignment he was tasked for a temporary duty assignment, flying search and rescue missions. In Vietnam.

On Oct. 18, he departed Da Nang AB aboard an HU-16 Albatross. His mission: pick up a downed pilot about 80 miles off the China coast in the northern sector of the Gulf of Tonkin.

Two A1-E Skyhawks escorted the rescue plane, returning to base only after the pilot was safely on board the Albatross. The last radio transmission with Steve's



The Adams' kids (from left): Steve, Cindy and Bruce. They grew up in northwestern Iowa in the '50s and '60s where the worst "crimes" were soaping windows and turning over outhouses.



plane occurred at 5:45 p.m. Although flying in marginal weather, the seven-member crew gave no indication of trouble.

They were never heard from again.

"I can remember what I was wearing and what I was doing the day I learned he was missing," Cindy said. "I was walking home with my boyfriend, Ron Johnson, when Bruce rode up on his bike, screeched to a halt and shouted, 'Get home — NOW!' I told him to bug off — a typical response to a little brother."

When she walked into the house, her mother was in tears. "She had remarried during the time Steve left, and she and my step-father told us what had happened," Cindy said. "Worst of all, we were told by the government not to tell anyone because Steve was on a highly classified mission. We couldn't share our shock or grief with anyone — not even relatives. Thinking back on it, that was more than anyone should ask of another human being."

Why Steve Adams?

When POW/MIA bracelets first hit the runway in the late '60s, I looked specifically for one engraved with the name of an enlisted airman. It wasn't easy. Most of the names belonged to pilots shot down on missions over North Vietnam.

But near the bottom of the box containing dozens of silver bracelets, lay a single silver band etched with the words:

**S/Sgt. Steven Adams
10-18-66**

I'd found "my man." Like many who purchased the metal bands, I never removed it from my wrist, thinking something bad would happen to Steve if I did. It finally irritated my skin to the point where I was forced to coat the inside with clear nail polish — a small sacrifice compared to what Steve was experiencing. If he was still alive.

When Operation Homecoming kicked off at Clark AB in the Philippines, I hoped to see Steve step off one of the C-141s that brought our POWs their first taste of freedom. Assigned to the base at the time, I was determined to meet him and return his bracelet. If he was still alive.

But his name never appeared on the list of returning POWs. I'd often wondered what Steve looked like, where he grew up and what he was like. Then, this summer, I noticed a newspaper article containing his name. It also mentioned a brother, Bruce, who lived in Laramie, Wyo. I quickly called the information operator, hoping he was listed. My heart

beat faster as I dialed the number, silently thanking God that Bruce didn't live in New York City. But no matter, I'd have called every Adams in New York to find him.

I learned Steve also had a younger sister, Cindy, and worried they might not want to relive their grief by telling a complete stranger who Steve was and what he was like. A few weeks later, I visited them in Wyoming, looked at old scrapbooks, laughed at the stories from their childhood, held one of Steve's baby teeth in my hand and, yes, even shed a few tears with them.

In that regard, I consider myself lucky. Because unlike the thousands who wore POW bracelets and whose "men" never returned, I got to know the man on my wrist. I considered giving my bracelet to Bruce or Cindy, but decided to keep it. Steve's bracelet is safely tucked away now, waiting for him to come home and claim it. If he's still alive. . . .

— CMSgt. Vickie M. Graham



About a year later, the family received a call from an American Red Cross worker who had attended a closed-door meeting in which Steve's name was mentioned. "He's alive, well and presumed to be in a hospital in Southeast Asia," the caller said. "Upon exiting the aircraft, his left side was severely injured."

Within a few days, two Air Force casualty officers cautioned the family "not to listen to outsiders," Bruce said. "They told us that only a government source could be trusted. Now, I'm not so sure."

Ignoring their advice in an attempt to learn what had happened to her son, Jean notified a friend in the intelligence community who spoke with the caller and confirmed the information given to the family. She died from breast cancer in 1980 at age 56, never knowing the fate of her first-born son.

"My grandmother died of the same thing," Cindy said. "But I'll always believe the stress surrounding Steve's disappearance speeded up the disease. Looking back, with my parents dying so young and Steve missing when I was still in school, you know, Bruce and I were robbed. By the time I was 30, I had no parents and only one brother instead of two."

It's been 27 years since Cindy or Bruce saw their brother. And no one knows when they'll find out what happened to him. They're frustrated and bitter, wanting only to know the truth.

"I wish more than anything that Steve would walk through that door right now," Cindy said. "But I realize that's probably not going to happen. I wonder how long it will be before we find out what really happened. If we ever do."

Until then the questions remain. Because of that, for Cindy and Bruce, and especially for Steve, there is no period at the end of this sentence ❊

Steve (upper left) played baritone in the school band. That's him standing on the left. Like most young men, Steve's pride and joy was his car (top), a baby blue Chevy convertible. Steve as a two-striper (right) wearing his hard-earned maroon beret.

