

SGM JOE GARNER

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NCO Brief Outline: SGM JOE GARNER

1. Introduction. Good Morning L06, I am MSG Cunningham and for the next 10 minutes I will give you an information brief on SGM (r) Joe Garner. This briefing is unclassified.

2. Body.

A. Background: Pre military, family life, Growing up, Brothers and sisters, Mother and Father, events leading up to enlistment into the Military.

B. Military Duties: List and brief description of different military jobs held.

C. Specific Contributions

(1) 1960-1961 United States Army Parachute Team

(2) 1966 B-Team communications sergeant Ban-Don

(3) 1967-1968 NCOIC: POW Stockade Long Thanh (MACV-SOG)

(4) 1969-1970 Strata Team Leader under (MACV-SOG)

3. Closing.

A. Summary. In summary I covered SGM Garners civilian background, the different military jobs held, and specific contributions to mission accomplishment.

B. Questions: At this Time are there any questions

C. Conclusion: In Conclusion, "Is Joe Garner a hero? He certainly comes, as close to being a hero as anyone I know! However, I prefer to think of Joe as a 'professional Soldier' rather than a hero, a Soldier Who knows what it takes get the job done and gets it done without a thought that the act might Be considered heroic."

Major Richard J. Meadows, U.S Army (Ret.)

Joe Garner was born in Sherwood, Tennessee on May 6, 1934. He had 4 brothers and 2 sisters, one of which died of Pneumonia when she was one and a half years old. While growing up, Joe had a very dysfunctional childhood, by the time he was 17, Joe lived in 7 different houses, this actually helped out when it came to the military because he was already used to all of moving around. His dad was an alcoholic and frequently beat on the children and his mom, because of this, Joe spent most of his time out of the house playing in the Cumberland Mountains honing his shooting, tracking, and land navigation skills. He preferred the wilderness to that of the town or city life and contributes his love of the outdoors and time spent in the mountains to his successful military career. Besides being adaptive to the wilderness Joe was very athletic, he excelled at baseball, track and field, and was the captain of his eighth grade football team, another attribute he contributes to his military success. One of the family traditions in the Garner household was that when the male children became old enough to enlist into the military, with the parents consent, they enlisted into one of the services to help supplement the parents income, without this income the family wouldn't be able to survive; so in the summer of 1951 Joe, who was two weeks into football practice and two weeks from starting classes, came home from practice one day and sitting in the kitchen was his mom and the Air Force recruiter. A month later Joe was on his way to Air Force basic training.

The first Military duty Joe Garner held was in 1951 when he joined the Air Force working in the experimental field as an experimental test student, testing such items as

motion sickness pills. His next assignment was in Korea unloading wingtip tanks from railroad cars and pulling guard duty. After serving 3 years of a 4-year tour Joe Garner decided that he didn't like it in the Air force, discharged out the military, and moved to St Louis to work in a titanium processing plant. Joe worked in the processing plant for about a year and decided, along with some of his friends, to join the Army. In 1955 Joe enlisted into the Army and joined the engineers where he excelled at mines and demolitions. He did such a superb job that he was asked to stay at the school and become an instructor. Joe stayed at the school as an instructor for 2 years; in July 1957 he was ending his current enlistment and didn't know rather or not he wanted to stay in the military, when a Special Forces recruiter approached him. Six months later, Joe Garner graduated from Special Forces Selection, Jump School, and was on his way to Fort Bragg N.C to begin his illustrious carrier as a Special Operations Soldier. Some other notable duties Joe held was a B-team communications sergeant in Ban-Don, POW Stockade NCOIC in Long Thanh while assigned under the MACV-SOG, and a Strata Team Leader while assigned under MACV-SOG.

The first major contribution Joe Garner made was from 1960-1961 while working with the United States Army Parachute Team. During this time, Joe was undergoing unit training at Fort Bragg N.C. When not undergoing unit training, Joe was jumping with what was known at the time as the Unites States Army parachute Team, which was an internationally competitive army freefall team. The Team had little to no funding, so most parachute modifications and training was paid for by Soldiers on the team and training was conducted after the Soldiers got off from their normal Jobs. During this time Joe and other members began making modifications to their parachutes trying to come up

with a better product for jumping. They would go to the Drop Zone, make any necessary modifications, jump the parachute, land, make more modifications, go up and jump again. Ultimately Joe and the Parachute team came up with what is now known as the “TU” standard parachute. This Parachute later became the T-10C, was used in HALO operations for the next 10 years, and is still used today.

The next contribution Joe Garner made was from 1966 to 1967. Joe was assigned as the NCOIC of a B-Team communications detachment in Ban Me Thout, responsible for handling communications support for 5 A-team camps covering more than 200 square miles of terrain. One of his primary missions was to get communications equipment out to those remote A-team locations so that the camps could maintain communications with division HQ’s, and other mission essential assets, such as mortar, artillery, and aircraft support. This caused Joe to spend allot of time on helicopters going from camp to camp, managing communications re-supply, and braving countless numbers of enemy fire that was trying to knock the helicopter he was flying in out of the sky. His dedication to mission accomplishment helped save many Soldiers lives when survival was dependant upon good communication.

The last major contribution I want to write about was happened in 1969 when Joe was assigned as a Short Term Recon and Target Acquisition (STRATA) Team Leader under (MACV-SOG). The difference between a regular SOF A-team and a STRATA team is the team make up. A STRATA team consisted of 10 Man teams with eight Vietnamese 2 Cambodians and 1 U.S. Soldier, where a regular A-Team had 5-6 U.S. Soldiers. The theory behind the STRATA concept was to decrease the amount of U.S. Soldiers crossing the borders and getting wounded, besides the fact that officially Soldiers unofficially

were not suppose to be working in that area of operations anyway. During this time frame, Joe and his team had been preparing for a prison rescue operation in North Vietnam. The morning that they were supposed to insert into their operation, they received a change of mission. An A-Team was pinned down and surround by a Battalion of NVA and HQ's was putting together a Strike Team to go in and help extract the A-Team out. The Strike Team consisted of Joe's team, two other teams that were working to the north, and commanded by a Major working in the SOG HQ's. The Strike Team inserted two Kilometers from the surrounded A-Team and began movement to the A-Teams position. Because of Joe's expert navigational skills, his team was selected to lead the strike team's movement. The Strike Team met some resistance as they were moving to their objective, but eventually broke through the NVA Battalion, and successfully extracted the surrounded A-Team helping to save the lives of 9 men. Right after the A-Team was extracted out, the Strike Force received another change of mission. This time, a marine company had been trapped on a hilltop for about 3 days and was receiving heavy casualties; they were almost out of ammunition and supplies, and if they didn't get help soon the entire company was going to be decimated. The Strike force was about 6 Kilometers from the Marine Company and Joe's team was selected to lead the way. About 36 hours later the Strike Force reached the base of the mountain and began encountering random enemy resistance, during one encounter, Joes team managed to capture an en enemy NVA. By the end of the second day the Strike Force was able to link up with marine company to help supplement their fighting positions. That night the NVA tried to attack the Strike Force and the Marine Company but the Marines and the Strike force successfully repelled the attack. The next day the Marine Commander was

noted as saying that “Last night was the first night in 5 days we didn’t received any casualties.” Over the next two days the Marine Company and Strike Force successfully extracted off the Hilltop. If Joes team and the Strike Force hadn’t came to the aid of the Marine Company, countless number of marines could have died, but didn’t due to Joe and the accompanying Strike Force.

In order to sum up Joes illustrious career I am simply going to end with a quote about Joe Garner from Major Richard J. Meadows, U.S Army (Ret.), a highly decorated Special Operations officer and NCO who received a battle field commission when he was a SGT. “Is Joe Garner a hero? He certainly comes, as close to being a hero as anyone I know! However, I prefer to think of Joe as a ‘professional Soldier’ rather than a hero, a Soldier who knows what it takes to get the job done and gets it done without a thought that the act might be considered heroic.”

Works Cited

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