

Son of Kentucky was doctor to all



Leitchfield native, Vietnam vet subject of tribute

By **RON FISCHER**
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
EDITORS NOTE: After Ron Fischer, a retired lawyer for U.S. Steel, received an invitation to his high school reunion in La Crosse, Wisconsin, last year, he began making plans to attend. And as he did so, he said he thought of a friend and former high school classmate, Russell Haas, who was killed in action in Vietnam.

"I wondered how he died and so I started the research for an article in tribute to him," Fischer, who lives with his wife in the Pittsburgh area, said. "I located some of the Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry who served with him and were with him when he died. When these Soldiers learned that I was researching for an article about Russ they invited me to attend the 1-50th reunion at Fort Benning in April of last year."

The research from the trip helped complete the story Fischer wrote about his friend, which was published in the La Crosse Tribune's Memorial Day edition last year (<http://bit.ly/1SSiwa0>). It also included the story of Bruce Sims, the 19-year-old medic who gave his life trying to save Haas.

During that trip to Fort Benning many of the Soldiers he spent the weekend with told him an interesting story of another man. "I met many former medics while researching the story about Russ and Bruce," he explained. "They spoke very glowingly of the doctor whom they had served under in Vietnam and they suggested I may wish to write about him. My interest was piqued."

The retired steel lawyer from Pittsburgh traveled to Leitchfield, Kentucky, where this doctor the medics spoke of, was from. It was there that he met and interviewed the daughters and many of the former colleagues and friends of Dr. Ray Cave. The following is the first in a three-part story of Cave, as written and submitted to the Gold Standard by Ron Fischer in tribute to a doctor he never knew, but whose efforts did not go unnoticed.

SON OF KENTUCKY- DR. RAY CAVE, M.D. January 1968

A Kentucky-born Ray Cave looked up from his just vacated table at the battalion aid station, Landing Zone Uplift base camp, Vietnam, medics approached with a litter borne Soldier who was obviously in the end stage of hemorrhagic shock. The wounded Soldier's lower legs had been blown away and he appeared listless. The medics lifted the casualty onto the table and Army Capt. Cave went to work. He knew his job was to stop the bleeding and help the breathing. He inserted



CAPT. (DR.) RAY CAVE (LEFT) WITH MEDICS at LZ Uplift battalion aid station.

Photo provided by retired Lt. Col. Charles McAleer

Hippocratic Oath. Cave had stabilized and medevac'd the wounded Soldier. No one needed mention to him that the patient whose life he had just saved was an enemy soldier who had been recovered by Soldiers of Cave's 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Regiment (Mechanized).

July 1967

Combat medic Pvt. Toby Milroy, from Seymour, Indiana, remembers meeting Cave at Fort Hood, Texas, along with other members of 1-50's medical platoon. Cave was to serve as 1-50's battalion surgeon. By the time of Cave's introduction to members of the medical platoon, Milroy had been indoctrinated about the chain of command. Officers issued orders, non-coms and enlisted men obeyed those orders. Yet Cave did not comport with Milroy's previous impression of officers. From the start, the doctor engaged his charges in conversation about their hometowns and interests. He did not rely on his rank to establish the param-



CAPT. (DR.) RAY CAVE IN VIETNAM with civilian patients.

eters of their relationship. Cave's informality and easy cordiality stood out. Milroy was more nervous at the prospect of his deployment to Vietnam than he would have admitted. Here he was at 19-years-old, responsible to save wounded G.I.s in combat, under fire, with only 10 weeks of medical training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to prepare him. Sure, he had been taught how to do intravenous feeds, apply hemostats to stem blood flow, inject morphine and apply tourniquets, but those tasks required steady hands and concentration. He and his fellow trainees

RAY CAVE'S ROOTS

That Cave easily related to members of his platoon would not have surprised any of his

neighbors and friends in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. He was the boy who grew up enjoying fishing, baseball and music—particularly the trombone. Ray excelled academically in high school and was popular among his classmates.



CAPT. (DR.) RAY CAVE IN VIETNAM with civilian patients.

Photo provided by Cave family

In Cave's senior year of high school, as a favor to his grandmother, he chauffeured a family friend's daughter and her date to a party during their community dance. Cave was attracted to the pretty lady, who was two years younger. Family lore does not record the name of the young lady's date that evening only that Ray and Frances remained together as a loving couple till a fateful afternoon some 42 years later.

They married two weeks after Frances' high school graduation. Ray sold his trombone to buy Frances' wedding ring and they moved to Bowling Green where Ray earned a degree in

Obstet, remembers their medical training as intensive. Oberst said medical students worked long hours, particularly during their hospital rotations, and their junior and senior years 30 percent of their training was surgery-related. The University of Louisville Hospital was nationally known for its trauma center which had been established in 1911. Cave and his classmates learned in the operating room at the elbow of renowned surgeons such as Dr. R. Glenn Spurling, who had earlier served as the first chief of surgery at Walter Reed Hospital. And at the personal request of Beatrice Patton—re-

ferred in August 1967 from the 2nd Armored Division to the 1st Air Cavalry division, already deployed in Vietnam. Troopers within the 1-50 wore the vaunted 1st Air Cavalry shoulder patch, and the air mobile 1st Cav would now have the overland mobility and punch earlier missing from its arsenal.

USNS General John POPE Capt. Ray Cave along with the rest of the battalion boarded the troopship, "USNS General John Pope," in Oakland, California and began a three-week voyage to the Republic of South Vietnam. The "Pope" was designed for maximum capacity, not for comfort. Officers were paired in rooms about the size of walk-in closets. Cave's roommate was Company B, commander, West Point alumnus Capt. Dick Guthrie (U.S.M.A. '63). He would later retire as an Army colonel. Upon learning of Ray's passing many years later, Guthrie wrote of the doctor as a "blend of consistency and openness..." Company A commander, Capt. John Topper, who hailed from Santa Claus, Indiana and retired as an Army colonel, remembers lengthy conversations with Cave in the day room about medicine. Topper had started out as a medic and so shared Cave's interest in medicine. He was impressed with Cave's breadth of knowledge, but was even more impressed with how down to earth he was.

For more photos and text from this story visit <http://bit.ly/1TA34LW> or—<https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortknokky/albums/72157668012912761>

Doctor treated Soldiers same as local patients

Leitchfield native remembered for Vietnam service

By **RON FISCHER**
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

EDITORS NOTE: This is the second in a three-part story about Leitchfield, Kentucky's Dr. Ray Cave, who served in Vietnam as the battalion surgeon for the men of the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry. The following is the story of Cave, as written and submitted to the Gold Standard by Ron Fischer in tribute to a doctor he never knew, but whose efforts did not go unnoticed.

Rendra Riggs of Clarkson, Kentucky remembers her mother bypassing more established physicians to travel from their home in Upton to young Dr. Ray Cave's office in Leitchfield. Her mom suffered from a long, painful lung which had been misdiagnosed by her previous physician. Riggs remembers the throng of people in Cave's waiting room. She also remembers his kind, correct diagnosis and timely treatment.

In those days before Medicare and Medicaid, many patients could not afford Cave's services. They would learn not to worry. He treated them without charge and did so quietly without drawing attention. He and his family fit in well with the community, were widely respected and appreciated. Eventually the family had expanded to include daughters Beth and Cara. Life was good. Then, in July 1966, Cave was inducted into the U.S. Army. He was commissioned a captain and was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry. In 1967 the 1-50th had an authorized strength of 900 Soldiers, split among four field companies, tactical and special staffs. Cave's medical platoon, 26 in number, consisted of head-quarters' contingent and individual combat medics assigned to each of the platoons within the four field companies.

The battalion was equipped with and was expert in the use of, armored personnel carriers. The APCs were tracked for overland mobility in rigorous terrain and were each equipped with a 50 caliber and two M60 machine guns. While at Fort Hood, the 1-50 was administratively transferred to the Central Highlands in the midst of hostile hamlets and enemy troop concentrations. The North Vietnamese main supply route, the Ho Chi Minh trail, fed directly into this area. The primitive base camp was a square, half-mile piece of dirt, mud and more mud. Continually under threat from enemy attack, Uplift's perimeter was marked with three rolls of concertina wire stacked in pyramid style. Fire posts were set up with machine guns inside the perimeter to repel attackers; outside the wire there were additional foxholes to serve as listening posts and to give warning for troopers.

Each month Cave's medics treated the 45 miles of highway between Uplift and the 85th Evacuation Hospital at Qui Nhon to barter for supplies. Not only did the battalion aid station receive necessary supplies, but troopers in from the field knew they could count on Cave and his medics for a steak and beer whenever they visited the dirt-floored "patio" beside the battalion aid station. And when began to drag him back toward cover when he, too, was shot down. For his actions, Sims posthumously received the Silver Star.

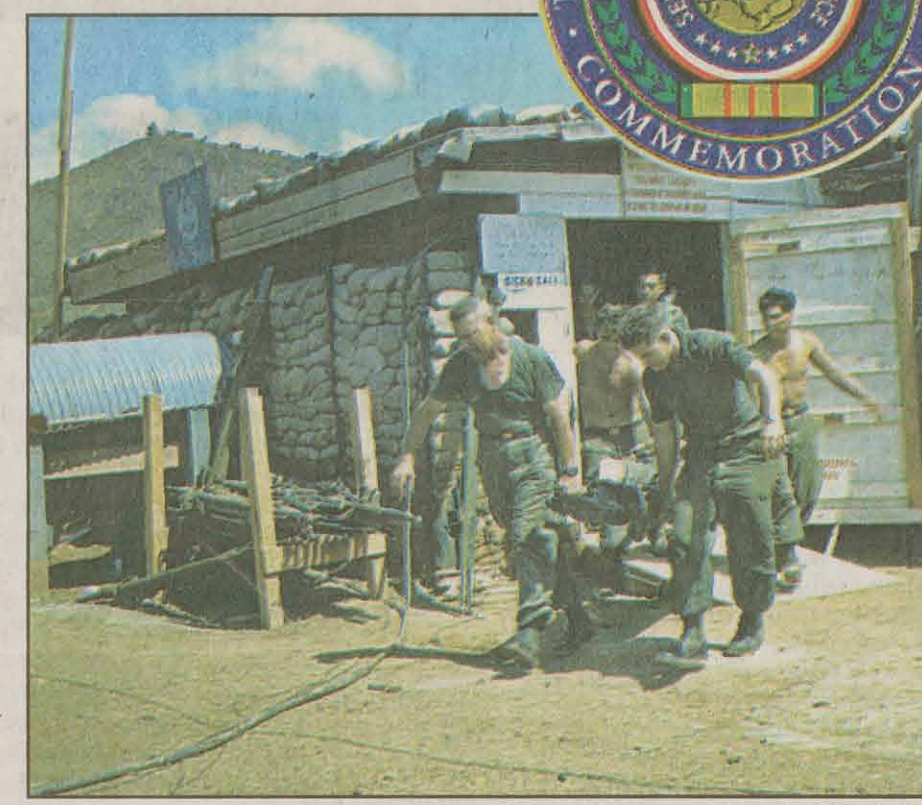
During Cave's tour as the battalion's S-2 intelligence officer, recalls the battalion commander, Lt. Col. Chuck McAleer, the 1-50th had a heavy casualty rate was not surprising. The 1-50 was a stepchild. It served under the 1st Air Cavalry till March 1968, then the 4th Infantry Division for a month before transferring to the 173rd Airborne Brigade. For each of its parent units, the 1-50 was the fire brigade, the unit which because of its mobility and fire power was called upon time and again to meet the latest enemy threat.

Haas' march was pinned down by the North Vietnamese outside Thuan Dao as enemy fire became even more intense, especially coming from a hedgehog some 25 yards away. The platoon took second seat to no other unit. Through their "on the job" training provided by Cave, they progressed; so much so that when Cave had an

During most of Cave's service in Vietnam, he and the battalion were based at Landing Zone Uplift, a base camp situated in



A CIVILIAN AID STATION OUTSIDE THE LZ UPLIFT AREA of operations that Dr. Ray Cave created for the local residence. He let his more experienced medics run the station and would visit it when he could.



A COMBAT CASUALTY IS EVACUATED from LZ Uplift battalion aid station, to be "choppered" to surgical hospital-85th evacuation hospital at Qui Nhon. This hospital at Qui Nhon was where Dr. Ray Cave spent most of his time.

Eventually, Haas sprang into action as troopers attempted to give him covering fire while he raced toward the hedgehog, grenades in hand. Haas covered most of the 25 yards to the hedgehog before he was cut down by enemy fire. Within seconds the unarmed medic, Bruce Sims, was running to Haas. Every other man in the platoon concentrated his fire on the hedgehog. Sims rushed Haas and began to drag him back toward cover when he, too, was shot down. For his actions, Sims posthumously received the Silver Star.

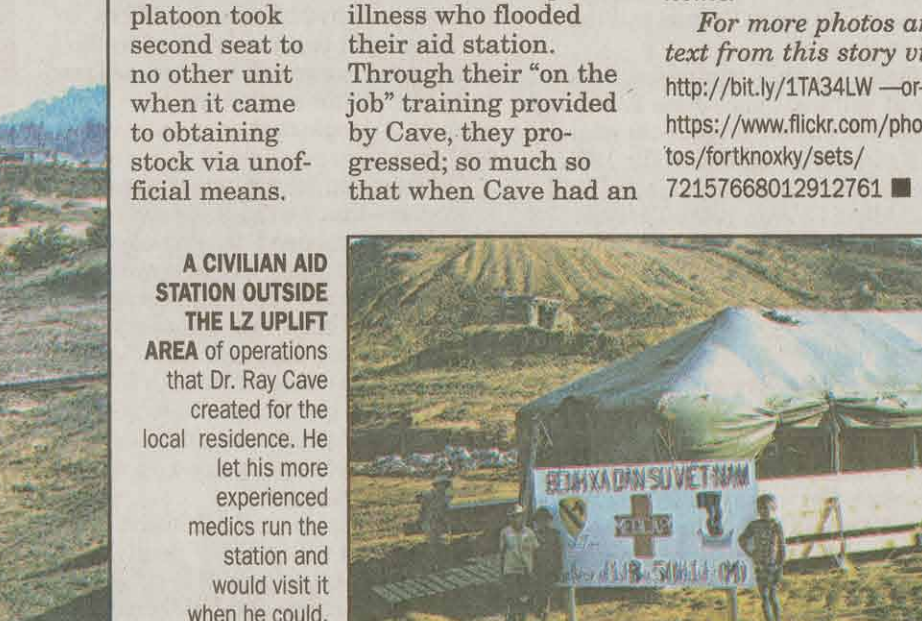
outgoing barrages were called "red splashes"—but at some point each day the doctor would share his thoughts with his wife and family while hunched over a desk with pen and paper.



THE MEDICS OF 1-50TH BUILD A bunker at LZ Uplift.

Capt. Charles McAleer, who would later retire as a lieutenant colonel, served as the battalion's chief medical operations officer and worked closely with Cave. He remembers watching Lt. Bob Ballard, the cheerful executive officer with the Louisiana drawl, charge forward before suddenly going down. Milroy rushed forward to render aid. Just as he reached the prone Ballard, he heard automatic weapons fire from behind and saw an enemy soldier go into fatal spasms not more than 5 feet in front of him. Someone, Milroy never found out who, had just saved his life.

Next week's edition of The Gold Standard will feature the final part of the three-part story of Leitchfield's Dr. Ray Cave, his time in Vietnam and his return home. For more photos and text from this story visit <http://bit.ly/1TA34LW> or—<https://www.flickr.com/photos/fortknokky/sets/72157668012912761>



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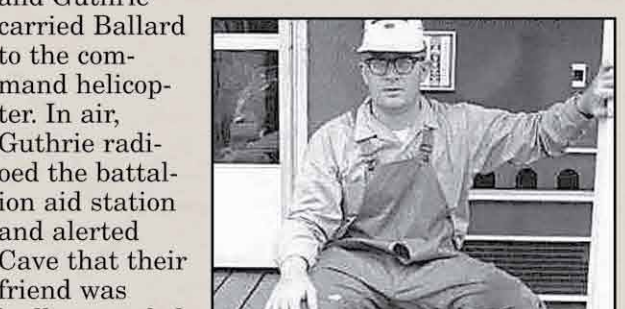
Vietnam vet continued med practice at home

Leitchfield native remembered for compassion

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The enemy's lifeless form collapsed into the spider hole which had earlier shielded him from view. Lt. Bob Ballard was motionless. He had been struck with an RPG from such close range that the missile had not detonated when it struck him. Soon Capt. Dick Guthrie, Cave's roommate aboard the "Pope," was there. Toby Milroy and Guthrie carried Ballard to the command helicopter. In air, Guthrie radiated the battalion aid station and alerted Cave that their friend was badly wounded and in need of a miracle. Minutes later the helicopter landed at Uplift's helipad, close to Cave and the awaiting medics.



DR. RAY CAVE WITH HIS CAT FOR THE DAY. Cave was an avid fisherman and enjoyed quiet moments on the water with his favorite hobby.

First, I must have a loving wife of about 32 years of age. I would expect her to be able to cook, sew, iron, wash clothes, and be a good housekeeper. I would also prefer that she be interested in sporting activities such as bowling and fishing. The children must be all females, cute, loving, vivacious, and in the approximate age ranges of 3 to 8 years. I would prefer approximately three daughters. The county town should preferably have a population of around 3,100.

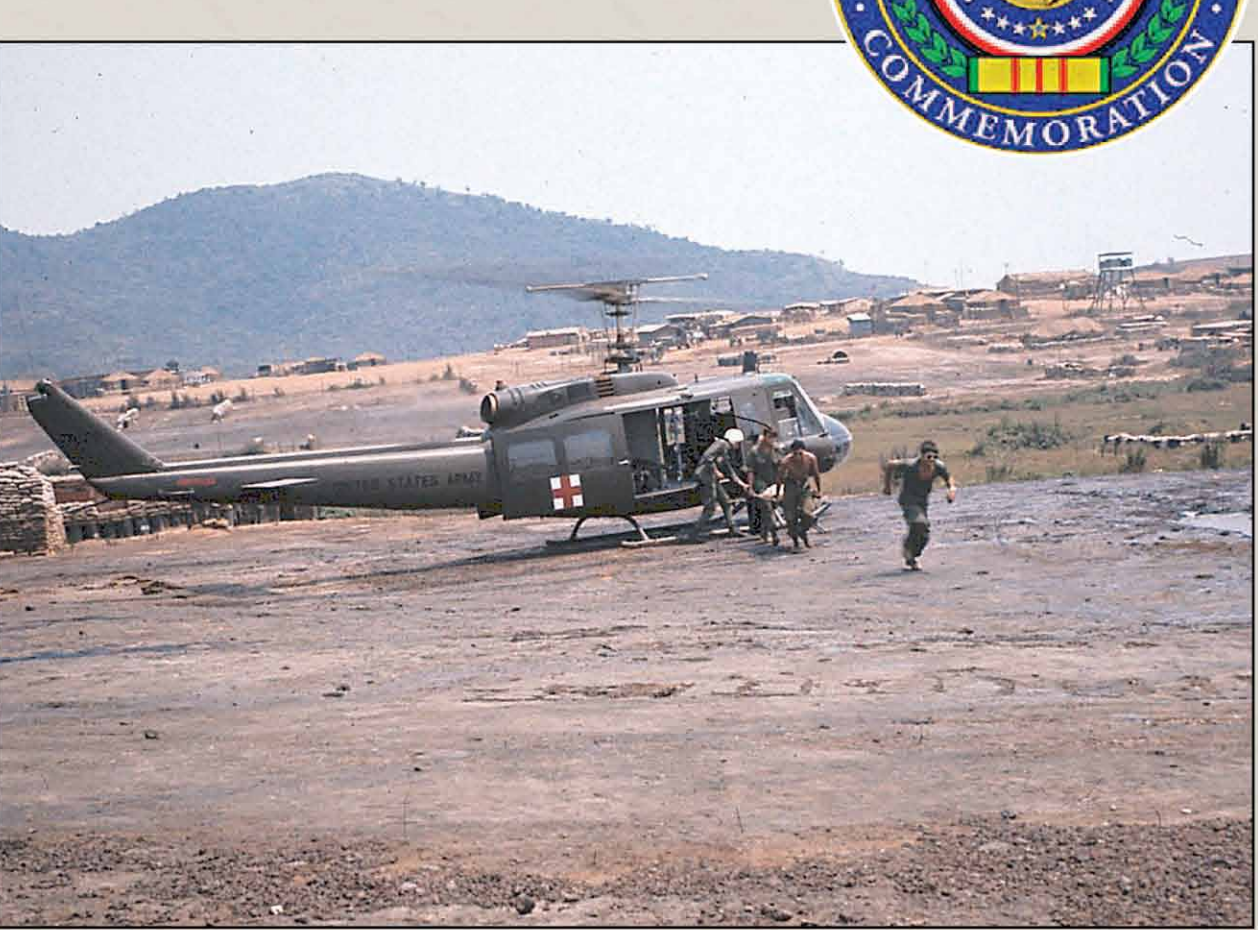
He would retreat for private moments to the operating room and explain to the doctors' lounge, but talking outside with ambulance drivers, technicians and nurses. He would retreat for private moments to the operating room and explain to the doctors' lounge, but talking outside with ambulance drivers, technicians and nurses.



SOLDIERS FROM THE 1ST BATTALION, 50TH INFANTRY, REPAIR an ambulance that was struck by a mine while transporting wounded in Vietnam.

"Ray Cave was a great doctor and an even greater human being, who truly cared for our Soldiers. Each and every one. ... We owe him our gratitude, our respect. May his soul rest in peace."

Vietnam vet continued med practice at home



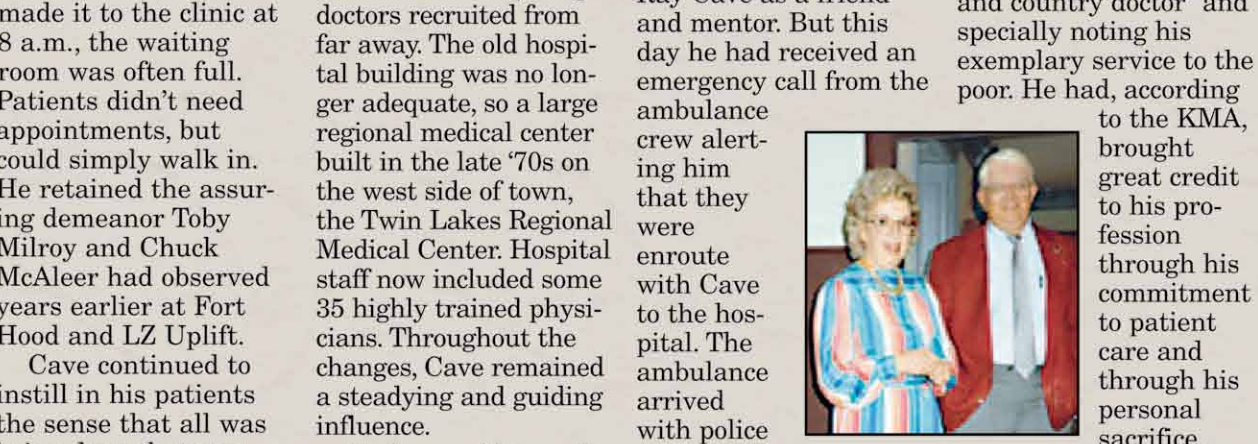
AN EVACUATION "CHOPPER" USED BY THE 1ST BATTALION, 50TH INFANTRY prepares to evacuate a casualty in Vietnam.

If your offer will meet most of these criteria, let me know and I will make definite plans immediately to accept your offer..."

Cave was separated from military service at Fort Lewis, Washington July 17, 1968 and returned to his family and home on Miller Avenue. Leitchfield had not changed during his time in service, but had Cave, at least not in any way that was discernible to his family and friends.

He rarely talked about Vietnam, about the bronze star for meritorious service which had been awarded him, the combat medical badge he had earned for having served in combat under direct enemy fire, about the friends he had lost or about his days at LZ Uplift.

His skills as a physician had been honed by his experience in Vietnam. His hospital rounds began at 4 a.m., and by the time he made it to the clinic at 8 a.m., the waiting room was often full. Patients didn't need appointments, but could simply walk in. He retained the reassuring demeanor Toby Milroy and Chuck McAleer had observed years earlier at Fort Hood and LZ Uplift. Cave continued to instill in his patients the sense that all was being done that was necessary, that to the extent humanly possible, he had everything under control. He still had the steady assuring voice, and the ability to communicate with a sympathetic hand on



(LEFT) CAPT. (DR.) RAY CAVE SPORTING HIS FLAT TOP AND GLASSES, STANDS WITH MEDICS and other Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry, at the "patio" near the battalion aid station in Vietnam.

the patient's shoulder. Cave's family flourished as a fourth daughter, Diana, was born in 1970. His practice grew and the group of physicians who had staffed Grayson War Memorial Hospital on East Market Street expanded to include talented young doctors recruited from far away. The old hospital building was no longer adequate, so a large regional medical center built in the late '70s on the west side of town, the Twin Lakes Regional Medical Center. Hospital staff now included some 35 highly trained physicians. Throughout the changes, Cave remained a steadfast and guiding influence.

Had any of his medics seen Cave in his later years, they would have recognized the same down-to-earth, skilled physician they had known at Fort Hood and LZ Uplift. During breaks at the hospital, he could most likely be found, not in the doctors' lounge, but talking outside with ambulance drivers, technicians and nurses. He would retreat for private moments to the operating room and explain to the doctors' lounge, but talking outside with ambulance drivers, technicians and nurses.

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—Retired Col. Dick Guthrie, as posted on the 1-50th Association's website