



USARV

JOHNNIE MARVIN AYERS

173rd Support Battalion, 173rd Engineer Company
Specialist 5th Class, E5, RA11609058, MOS 94B2P
Home of Record: Elkview, WV

Date of Birth: October 4, 1949, Age at time of loss: 19, Single
173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate), Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam
Start of Tour: March 6, 1968, Date of Casualty: January 17, 1969, Days in Country: 317
Casualty Type A1, MFW, Panel 34W - Row 019



173RD AIRBORNE
BRIGADE

Specialist 5th Class Johnnie Ayers was a Cook (Food Service Specialist) with the 173rd Engineers and “volunteered” to accompany our “A” Company on a mine sweep of Highway 19 west of the An Khe Base Camp. Although not officially “assigned” to the 1st of the 50th, we list him on our memorial regardless, since he died in a combat situation while in a volunteer capacity with our Infantry Unit.



Highway 19 was made infamous by the slaughter of the French Regimental Task Force G.M. 100, Groupement Mobile No. 100, or, "Mobile Group 100" in the Mang Yang Pass just west of the location of Ayers’s death but at the end of the French Indochina war years before. The scene is re-enacted at the beginning of the motion picture “We Were Soldiers”.



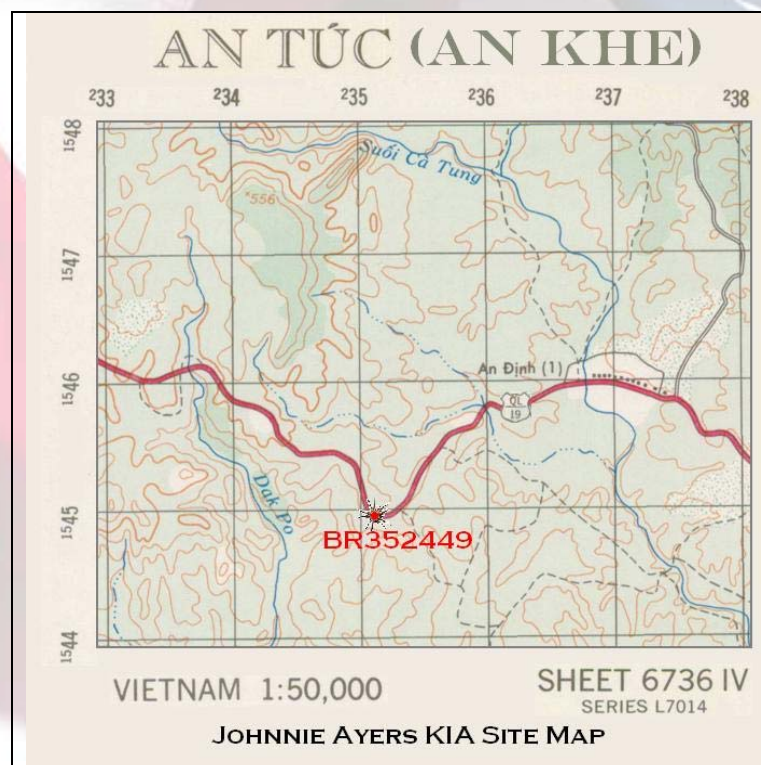
173RD SUPPORT
BRIGADE
173RD ENGINEER
COMPANY

The Daily Staff Journal for the event reads: ““A” Company, 1st of the 50th, at BR352449, on a mine sweep, was ambushed by an estimated two squads of VC/NVA, employing small arms, automatic weapons and B40 Rockets”. Ayers was the only man killed, but 4 other men were wounded. 2 enemy soldiers were killed and their weapons captured in the U.S. counterattack.

A map of the location is below with the coordinates indicated.



SPECIALIST 5TH
CLASS



Continued...

The West Virginia State Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Website offers information on Ayers, but no photo. Based on their information, I searched for the Cemetery where Ayers is reported to be buried, Belcher Cemetery in Pinch Ridge, West Virginia, but could not find the site. I did find a "Pinch Ridge Road outside of the town of Elkview, where Johnnie Ayers's Parents lived at his death. A photo of this serene country road is shown below.



AWARDS AND DECORATIONS



Airborne Jump Wings (Basic Parachutist Badge)



**Purple
Heart**



**National
Defense**



**Vietnam
Service**



**Vietnam
Campaign**