

## **KIA 17 May 1970**

### **WO1 Dale A Pearce CW3 David P Soyland**

On May 17, 1971 a call was made by the Redskins for any available slicks to assist in a Prairie Fire (hot extraction). Warrant Officer David P. Soyland and his co-pilot, Warrant Officer Dale Pearce were called by Phoenix Operations to respond. As the aircraft, UH-1H, #67-17607 was in the Landing zone, it was taking heavy anti-aircraft fire. The door gunner, Special 4 Gary Allcorn reported later that WO Pearce's hands jerked upward to the sky as if he was hit. As the aircraft crashed, Allcorn was ejected. Allcorn later regained consciousness and was later rescued by Special Forces team as well as the crewchief, Specialist 5 Parker. The body of Dale Pearce was unable to be extracted from the wreckage. Allcorn reported that he saw a figure with a white T-shirt running down a ridgeline with the NVA firing at the individual. Special Forces surmised that Soyland attempted an escape and was killed by the NVA. His body has never been recovered. There are seven different NVA witnesses concerning Soyland's actions.

From "History of Company"  
Gary Earls [beegee@abraxis.com](mailto:beegee@abraxis.com)

### **Eye witness Statement by Gary Allcorn**

Downed acft 67-17607, 17 May 1971  
Pilots: David Soyland and Dale Pearce  
CE: Spec 5 Harold (Skip) Parker  
Gunner: Spec 4 Gary Allcorn D/158

The day started off as a quiet and uneventful one. SP Allcorn from, D/158, was flying as gunner that day along with Mr. Pearce and a Lieutenant (don't remember his name). The day consisted of re-supply missions with no action. We had landed, approx 1600-1700, and shut down, the gunner and I closed up the acft and were on the way to secure the M60s. Mr. Pearce met us and told us we had another mission (Prairie Fire), Mr. Soyland was right behind him. We lifted off and flew north (as I remember a flight of two with gun support). When we got to the AO, there was not a LZ available. We were circling in an area, believe it was a small valley, and got the call to come in. I recall heading for LZ and flying over a hill. I do not recall taking any fire at that time. The next thing I remember was coming to up against the XSMN bulkhead and covered with branches. The helicopter was upside down, canted on the left side, tail boom gone, and the cockpit was demolished. It was daylight,

so I was unconscious through the night. I could not walk, my M60 was gone, the gunner's M60 was still attached to the acft and I was trying to get it. I did not see anyone in the cockpit and from my position could not see anyone around the acft. All of a sudden, someone yelled "anyone down there" and then I heard individuals taking in Vietnamese and figured this was it. A Green Beret came up behind me and asked if I was all right, scared the living shit out of me. They pulled me out of the chopper, administered immediate first aid, and I went out on STABO rig. I remember arriving at Quang Tri Evac and then nothing else until I was in Danang (saw SP Allcorn, don't think he knew me). I went from Danang to Guam for two weeks then Ft. Devens, Massachusetts for 9 months. Upon release from Devens, went to Ft. Hood, where I ran into the flight platoon sergeant, SFC Mitch (not sure of last name spelling), Dave Drinkwater (CE), and Dave Daily (gunner). Between these three I was able to find out more of what happened, it was at this time I heard that Mr's Soyland and Pearce did not make it. In 1976, while sitting at the ROD and GUN club at Ft. Devens, Ma. a Green Beret came up to me asking questions about Viet Nam. He was the soldier that pulled me out of the acft; he told me that they did not find the pilots. His name was Rowdy Yates; he was an SFC then and later retired CSM. He never paid for a drink if I was there. In 1988 during Air Assault training, I over heard an MAJ and CPT talking about Vietnam, when I approached the MAJ, he told me that he had just signed in to the unit, the day we went down, believe his name was Caruthers (something like that). In the 90's I checked the U. S. Army Gold Book and found acft 67-17607 listed as destroyed (Combat), the aircraft was not worth recovering from the crash site.

Gary Allcorn