

Crashed Occurred 29 Jan 70

KIA 31 Jan 70 Cpt Donald L Swanson

KIA 8 Feb 70 Sp4 Mahlon R Arnett

KIA 14 Feb 70 Phillippe L Las Hermes

Captain Donald Swanson (Phoenix 16) was instrumental in setting up the Phoenix Officer's Club. He always had a big smile when he was tending bar at the Phoenix club. He was the flight lead of a Phoenix flight to pick up a team of combat engineers who had cut a landing zone in the jungle that morning. General John Wright, the CG of the 101st decided to have a landing zone per grid square. The mission would require that when you got to the assigned position, you hovered the aircraft in position while the engineers would repel out of the aircraft with their equipment and then cut the landing zone. A RPG had hit his aircraft in the LZ and Swanson and Las Hermes lifted the aircraft out of the landing zone. It flew for a hundred yards, fluttered, then fell toward the jungle covered mountain foothills. Warrant Officer Jack Glennon couldn't believe that anyone could survive the crash. Crew chief Mike Amos jumped from his seat in the tumbling Huey. Remarkably Amos survived the fall and was picked up by a Medevac Huey the next day. La Hermes died on the hospital ship or in Japan on February 14, 1970. Specialist Mahlon R. Arnett was listed as Missing In Action. It was ironic that "Frenchy" Las Hermes received his draft notice from the French Army that fall. He boasted in the club, "What are they going to do to me if I don't show up, Send me to Viet Nam". Also Philippe's father had served at Dien Bien Phu with the French Foreign Legion.

From "History of Company"

Gary Earls beegee@abraxis.com

From: "robert c scarbrough" <robertcscarbrough@earthlink.net>
To: <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Subject: Re: Swanson Arnett LasHermes
Date sent: Fri, 12 Apr 2002 11:11:04 -0700

Ken, here is what I know about Swanson/Las Hermes. The day they were KIA, I had been flying the mission with Don and the rest of the crew. The mission we were working on was a pure bullshit mission equivalent to painting rocks and policing the company area in basic training. Some genius in battalion decided that we needed some improved landing zones the first and second ridgeline outside of camp Evans. The absurdity of this was even more exaggerated when the "improved" landing zones were marked with white sand bags in the shape of an H and white painted tires.

We were hauling equipment (chain saws) in and out of the area on long ropes, maybe 200 ft or so. We spent the whole morning hovering around doing this. There was a very small contingency of tree-cutters on the ground. We broke for lunch and went back to Evans. I wanted to go to the PX, so I ask Philippe to fly for me. Philippe wanted to build time so that he could become a Concorde pilot and agreed to finish the afternoon with Don. An RPG hit under/near the aircraft, but apparently not a direct hit. They took off trying to fly out. I don't know if the aircraft was on fire when they took off, but at treetop level (I was told) the flames were pouring out of the aircraft and inside the open doors. Ultimately they crashed killing Don, Las Hermes died on the hospital ship from complications of severe burns. Amos jumped out at treetop level and survived (he used this strategy twice). I am not sure what happened to Arnett since I have heard more than one version and don't know which version is correct.

Robert Scarbrough

From: BOBPHONX57@aol.com
Date sent: Sat, 13 Apr 2002 20:14:25 EDT
Subject: Re: Swanson Arnett LasHermes
To: phoenix50@neb.rr.com

Ken,

I was on the lift, chalk four or five. We had rappelled pathfinders in the LZ earlier in the day and were coming back in the afternoon with troops to make the switch. Swanee was lead and took an RPG in the right side while at a hover. (You couldn't land because it was on the side of a hill and lots of stumps.) He pulled pitch and ended up settling into the trees a few hundred meters away. The next two chawks went to secure the crash sight and I picked up the gunner, Arnett, who was blown out of the aircraft, and one of the troops from the LZ. I flew them directly to the hospital ship. Arnett died within 24 hrs.

Bob Sauer