

Russell Price Robinson, T-59

26 Mar 1939 – 23 March 2000

(aged 60)



MARINE STAFF SGT. Russell P. Robinson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe E. Robinson of 2045 Jefferson, has been awarded his second Air Medal.

The medal was given because of "outstanding achievement in aerial flight, and for courage and devotion to duty in the face of hazardous flying conditions."

Information from The Commercial Appeal, Thursday, August 31, 1967.

I Russell Robinson might as well have a stamp on his forehead that says "Property of the United States Marine Corps."

Even in civilian clothes, he is a Marine. His shoulders dominate his small frame, and his stomach is flat, without an ounce of fat, though he is 27 years old, and obviously eats well.

Russell Robinson is a high school dropout.

Shot down by high school English in his senior year at Tech High, Russell enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1959. Today, almost eight years later, he has a service record any Marine might envy, a staff sergeant with a bright future in the Corps.

Sergeant Robinson talked quietly in the home of his father-in-law, Claude L. Fulcher, at 880 Inez. He leaves Memphis Dec. 15. On his way overseas, he is looking forward to it. His children have already been told that Santa

Clause is going to come two weeks early this year because Daddy is going to Vietnam.

They will share their early Christmas with the Fulcher's and with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Robinson of 2048 Jefferson. The children are Karen Ann Robinson, 6, and Claude Robinson, 4.

Fresh from 30 months as a drill instructor at Parris Island, SC., Sergeant Robinson used this duty assignment to explain his feelings about the Corps:

"It's a real challenge - - - the most enjoyable tour I've ever had was this past 30 months. You could see something there in each kid. You had to get them away from Mommy's apron strings; you teach them to think for themselves, but to think as a team."

Sergeant Robinson is a helicopter mechanic and a crew chief. In Vietnam, he hopes to go back to doing what he likes best, flying as a crew member aboard the Marines UH-34 helicopter.

"But no matter what job you've got in the Corps, you're basically a rifleman. If our plane was shot down, there's be four of us. We'd all foot soldiers. We'd all still be working as a team for survival. The pilot, he'd be a foot soldier just like the rest of us. That's what teamwork is all about."

His first overseas assignment was to Bermuda in 1961. 1 He was assigned to a ship taking station in the Atlantic in the path of Liberty Bell 7, just in case the Mercury space shot carrying Virgil Grissom missed its assigned target area. After the landing, they steamed back to Bermuda, and then home to New River, North Carolina.

In October 1962, he was at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. His unit was one of the last to return before the Cuban blockade began. He received his first meritorious promotion, to corporal, during the Cuban missile crisis.

His training as a drill instructor "helped me become a better NCO. It taught me a heck of a lot about leadership, showed me the relationship between the NCO and his subordinates. Now (in his 13-month tour of duty in Vietnam) I'll have a chance to put that into practice."

The boy who flunked high school English is now the man who has been through drill instructor's school, enemy evasion school and helicopter mechanic's school and has a military certificate for a high school diploma.

"I always tried, and I'm still trying to get any kind of schooling I can in the Marine Corps.

Information from The Commercial Appeal, Monday, November 28, 1966.

