



9TH INFANTRY
DIVISION



50TH INFANTRY



"E" COMPANY



MASTER
SERGEANT



INFANTRYMAN

JOSEPH MELVIN JONES

"E" Company (Long Range Patrol), 50th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division
Posthumous Promotion to Master Sergeant, E8, RA17283080, MOS 11B50

Home of Record: Eastman, GA

Date of Birth: May 16, 1929, Age at time of loss: 38, Married
9th Infantry Division, Bien Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam

Start of Tour: January 9, 1968, Date of Casualty: April 16, 1968, Days in Country: 98
Casualty Type A1, MFW, Panel 50E - Row 016

Master Sergeant Joseph Jones was Killed In Action on 16 April, 1968 while accompanying the 10-man long range reconnaissance Ambush team of Staff Sergeant Johnston Dunlop on what was to be Dunlop's final mission. The team had set up an ambush near Ap Binh Son, along a main Viet Cong supply route. When a heavily armed enemy platoon walked down the trail, a claymore mine ambush was set off. The numerically superior enemy force was too large to be entirely caught within the ambush's "kill zone" and a fierce firefight ensued. In the initial volley exchange, Master Sergeant Jones was severely wounded. Although the wounded Jones was pulled to safety by Staff Sergeant Johnston Dunlop under a hail of enemy fire, he died of his wounds. Dunlop also died of wounds received in the effort to save Jones. Dunlop was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his valorous actions.



Master Sergeant Jones had lost an older brother, Corporal James B. Jones in the European Theatre of World War II. He aspired to be like his brother who died while serving with Company B, 1st Ranger Battalion, US Army. A fellow E/50 Infantry veteran, Hilan Jones stated:

" Joseph 'Top' Jones was a first class soldier and a real First Sergeant who gave it all for his men. It was an honor and a privilege to serve with him."

In the book "Bonding of Warriors", author and former LRRP Bob Hernandez chronicled the action that took the lives of Jones and Dunlop:

"On April 16, 1968, a mission was sent down for two teams to set an ambush in an area around the Binh Son Plantation, where in the preceding weeks there was sightings of heavy enemy activity. Team one was made up of First Sergeant 'Top' Joseph Melvin Jones, SSGs Johnston Dunlop and Greg Nizialek, with Specialist Four Phil Katsis, Mattie Mathews and James Counts. Team two consisted of Specialists Four Wayne Fentress, Jack Delaney, Eugene Richardson, Richard 'Little Jonesy' Jones, and George E. Kozach, Jr. filling out the team. The teams hoped to ambush, and disrupt the movement of men and supplies in the area. Initial plans called for a 7:30 AM insertion but unforeseen circumstances delayed them until almost 8:30 AM. Behind schedule, the teams were inserted and quickly moved to the selected position.

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Team two was on the left flank of the ambush where Fentress and Richardson began putting the claymores in place as Delaney, 'Little Jonesy,' and Kozach provided flank and rear security. The claymores on the left portion of the kill zone were in place and armed. Simultaneously Katsis was placing the claymores on the right flank of the kill zone, while Dunlop was to insert the blasting caps and arm them. 'Top' Jones, Counts and Nizialek were providing all around security on the right flank. Before the ambush was completely set the VC came into view of the men on the right flank of the ambush. Normally the VC parade down the trails with an 'I own the jungle' attitude...weapons slung over their shoulders...singing and talking loudly. 'Charlie' was alert this day. They came quickly, weapons at the ready, and spotted the LRRPs before entering the kill zone. Automatic weapons fire from both sides broke the quiet of the morning that day and when the smoke cleared 'Top' Jones was dead, SSG Dunlop was seriously wounded, and SP 4 Counts was shot in the forehead.

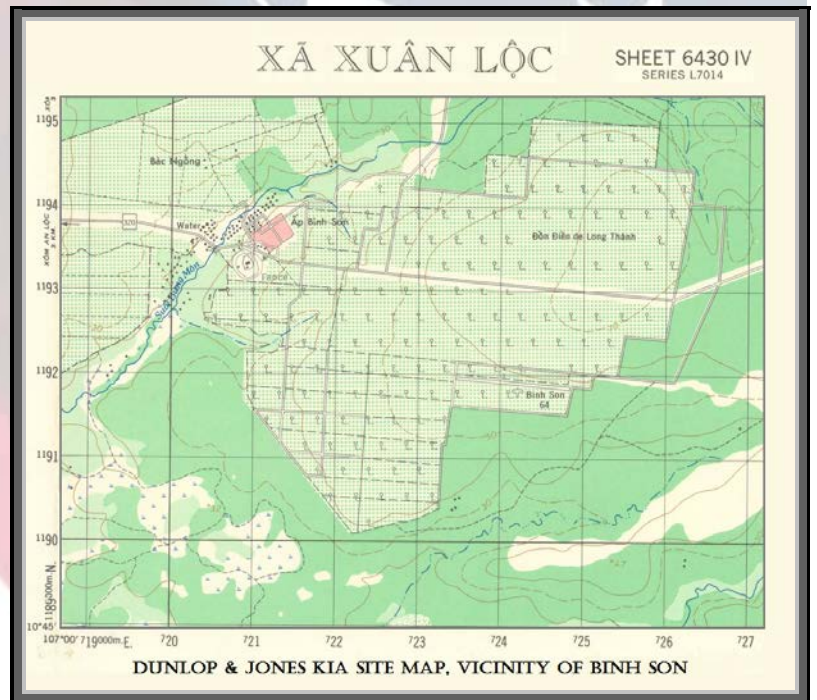
The initial volley of small arms fire hit Katsis's rucksack and set off a yellow smoke grenade. The blast of the claymores knocked Delaney into a tree. He turned and began to fire into the smoke on the right flank of the ambush. A VC near 'Top' was looking directly at him and Delaney saw him and fired. 'Five tracers in a horse shoe shape came at me, I knew I was dead, all I heard was 'Pop, Pop, Pop, Pop!' 'To my surprise, I was still standing' said Delaney. Loading his fourth magazine into his M-16 he continued to fire as the smoke was starting to clear. There were six to eight dead VC laying on the trail.

Delaney was checking the trail to make sure all the VC were dead as the rest of the team was moving Counts and Dunlop to the LZ. Fentress, Nizialek and Delaney then pulled Top's body down into the riverbed. About that time all hell broke loose! It sounded like 100 VC were on line shooting at them. Bullets were flying everywhere. Trees were cut down by the heavy volume of small arms fire, RPGs, and grenades! The only thing between them and the VC was the riverbed. They dragged 'Top's body down the riverbed, placed him under some overhanging brush, then camouflaged and booby trapped his body. They were unable to bring "top" out, but would return later to retrieve him. They low crawled for over 100 yards to the LZ.

At the LZ, Fentress had them consolidate their magazines into a pile. Two were loading and shooting into the wood line. Delaney carried 31 High Explosive (HE) rounds for his M-79 grenade launcher, using it as a mortar with the rounds hitting 50 to 100 yards into the wood line. Specialist Fentress applied a field dressing to Dunlop's wounds and administered morphine as they moved to the LZ for extraction. Delaney carried Dunlop to the chopper. Once aboard the chopper Dunlop succumbed to his wounds. A door gunner shot three VC that ran out onto the LZ. As the gunships rolled in, the team marked the enemy positions with tracer rounds. Rockets devastated the wood line and the pick-up chopper came in at tree top level, swooped down, .and successfully extracted most of the patrol. Fentress and Mathews waited on the LZ for the second pick up chopper.

Unaware that there were two LRRPs left on the ground the VC emerged onto the LZ to scrounge any equipment or supplies that may have been left behind. Fentress and Mathews were able to direct th gunships and called in effective fire on the unsuspecting VC. Once back at Bearcat the choppers were refueled, while a reaction force made up from an Aero Rifle Platoon assembled on the helipad. They were guided back to the 'combat zone' by Fentress. Two additional VC were killed while 'Top's remains were recovered. Delaney was hit in the leg with shrapnel."

A map showing the area around Binh Son & the Rubber Plantation where Dunlop's Patrol engaged an Enemy Platoon is shown above.



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Joseph Melvin Jones is buried at Harnett Memorial Park, Auburn, Lillington, Harnett County, NC



AWARDS AND DECORATIONS OF JOSEPH JONES*



Parachutist Badge



Combat Infantry Badge, 2nd award



Bronze Star



Purple Heart



Army Commendation Medal



Good Conduct Medal



National Defense Medal



Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal



Vietnam Civil Actions Medal



Vietnam Service Medal



Vietnam Campaign Medal



Korean War Service Medal



U. N. Service Medal (Korea)