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GENERAL DYNAMICS
A small force of South Vietnamese irregulars and their American advisors would face impossible odds and emerge victorious due to the leadership of...

JULY 1964.

ROGER DONLON

Rogers Hugh Charles Donlon was born at home, during the Depression, in the small town of Saugerties, New York.

He was the eighth of ten children.

Faith kept the family close.

Roger, would you like to say grace today?

His father instilled in him the value of hard work.

It is no disgrace to be poor, son. But it becomes mighty darn inconvenient at times.
HE FOLLOWED HIS OLDER BROTHERS INTO MILITARY SERVICE; FIRST JOINING THE U.S. AIR FORCE AND THEN THE ARMY.

IN THOSE DAYS IT WAS REFERRED TO AS THE "PEACETIME" ARMY.

IN 1963 HE JOINED THE U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES—the Green Berets.

HIS PEACETIME WAS OVER.

DE OPRESSO LIBER.

SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM WERE TASKED WITH HELPING TO TRAIN AND ORGANIZE THE CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUP, SOUTH VIETNAMESE PARAMILITARIES, TO FIGHT THE INSURGENT VIET CONG.


TELEPHOTO: SOUTH VIETNAMESE HOMELAND DEFENSE DEFENSE MOVEMENT.

SOMETHING’S COMING OUR WAY, I CAN FEEL IT.

IT WAS 2:30 IN THE MORNING WHEN DONLON FINISHED HIS WALK AROUND THE BASE’S PERIMETER.

THEY WERE ASSIGNED TO AN OUTPOST CALLED NAM DONG, JUST A FEW MILES FROM THE BORDER WITH LAOS.

THIS FORWARD DEFENSIVE POSITION WAS HANDED BY THREE HUNDRED SOUTH VIETNAMESE AND A SECURITY FORCE OF SIXTY NUNG* FIGHTERS.

*NUNG ARE ETHNIC CHINESE LIVING IN VIETNAM.

HE WAS CHECKING THE DUTY ROSTER WHEN HE HEARD A FAMILIAR, UNWELCOME SOUND.

MORTAR!
A willy peter round dropped right on the mess hut.

The white phosphorus soon had the entire structure ablaze.

A furious rain of mortar rounds and grenades covered the camp.

Enemy snipers picked out targets backlit by the flames.

Grab as much ammo as you can.

I'll call Da Nang.

Exposed to a storm of shrapnel and fire, Donlon directed men to their defensive positions.

Get to your posts! Lay down fire! We need illumination rounds!

They faced a force of nearly 900 VC, Cong that night.

Traitors among the South Vietnamese units stacked the odds even higher.

They're in the wire!
DONLON SPOTTED AN EVEN BIGGER THREAT—a sapper team with satchel charges at the main gate.

HE ELIMINATED THAT THREAT.

BUT THE VC KEPT COMING.

DONLON STAYED ON THE MOVE TO DIRECT THE FIGHT.

BUT HE WOULD SUSTAIN SERIOUS WOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT.

GET OUT! BACK TO THE COMMO TRENCHES!
COME ON, POP! TIME TO GO.

A MORTAR BLAST STRUCK AS DONLON TRIED TO DRAG MASTER SERGEANT GABRIEL "POP" ALAMO TO ANOTHER DEFENSIVE POSITION.

DONLON WAS KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS. HE SUFFERED A CONCUSSION AND SERIOUS WOUNDS TO HIS LEFT SHOULDER. POP ALAMO WAS KILLED.

DONLON DRAUG THE MORTAR TO A NEW POSITION.

HE USED HIS T-SHIRT TO MAKE BANDAGES FOR THE WOUNDED.

YOU FELLOWS ARE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN STILL FIGHT.

SAVING THE LAST PIECE TO STEM HIS OWN BLEEDING.
HOUR AFTER HOUR, HE MOVED FROM POSITION TO POSITION TO GIVE ORDERS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE MEN IN HIS CARE.

*HIGH-EXPLOSIVE ROUNDS*

FIRE M.E.A.* TO THE EAST!

WHEN IS HELP COMING?

JUST HOLD ON. IT’S SPICY OUT THERE. BUT WE’LL MAKE IT.

YOU’RE ALL SHOT UP. HOLD STILL AND I’LL FIX YOU UP.

IT WAS JUST A TWINGE. THERE ARE MORE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. ATTEND TO THEM.

IN THE DARKEST MOMENTS BEFORE DAWN, THEY HEARD AN ENRAGE ABOVE THE DIN OF BATTLE.
The flare ship brought hope as well as light.

The enemy tried one last tactic.

Can you pick it up by the sound?

I think so.

Lay down your arms, all we want is the Americans!

The Viet Cong withdrew, covered by periodic sniper fire.

It was time to reorganize the camp defenses and treat the wounded.
RELIEF STARTED TO ARRIVE THE NEXT MORNING. IT HAD BEEN SEVEN HOURS SINCE THE ATTACK STARTED.

CAPTAIN DONLON LOST GOOD FRIENDS THAT NIGHT, INCLUDING AUSTRALIAN WARRANT OFFICER KEVIN CONWAY.

FOR THE AMERICANS, BOTH POP ALAMO AND SGT. JOHN HOUSTON LEFT PREGNANT WIVES AS WIDOWS.

ALAMO AND HOUSTON WERE POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS.

EVERYONE ELSE ON THE TEAM RECEIVED SILVER STARS OR BRONZE STARS WITH "V" DEVICES FOR VALOR.

WE'LL NEED ANOTHER STRETCHER, SIR.

GENERAL WESTMORELAND PRESENTED DONLON WITH A PURPLE HEART IN VIETNAM.

ALL THE SURVIVING MEMBERS OF TEAM A-72G WERE AT THE WHITE HOUSE WHEN PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON BESTOWED THE NATION'S HIGHEST MILITARY AWARD.

I HOPE YOUR EXAMPLE, CAPTAIN DONLON, WILL HELP TO INSPIRE OTHERS.

THE END
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