

The Night Frank Frangella gave his life for A Battery
August 17, 1969

The legend of Sgt. Frank Frangella lives on through the men in A Battery, 2/32 Battery whose lives he saved on a frantic night in August of 1969 and through a nephew who hadn't even been born when his uncle made the ultimate sacrifice for his fellow soldiers. The nephew, Vincent Felicione, recently emailed the Proud Americans website, hoping to have Frank Frangella's story posted as a reminder of the extreme courage his uncle displayed during a surprise attack on Fire Support Base St. Barbara, which was located a few clicks north of Tay Ninh City and Nui Ba Den mountain.

"My uncle was given the Silver Star for his actions that night at the base when he was killed," Vincent Felicione wrote webmaster Chuck Healey. "I wasn't even born yet when this happened. I was sent this story via email from other Proud Americans and would like to have them posted on this site."

The story was written by Steve Green, a radio operator for A Battery. It was titled "He probably saved us all."

The text of Green's story follows:

"I was a radio operator for Alpha Battery, 2/32 arty where SFC Frangella was a cook. On the night of August 17, 1969, the 25th Infantry Division was pulling guard on our berm. About 3 in the morning, we began to receive heavy rocket and mortar fire. The infantry panicked and fled the berm, leaving behind one of their wounded and an unprotected 107 recoilless rifle.

"The berm was quickly taken over by Charlie. While the rest of us were figuring out what was happening, SFC Frangella ran to the east berm, alone, and drove Charlie back down the other side. He then climbed up on top of the recoilless position and was returning fire when I came out of my bunker.

"They said later that Frank died of multiple fragmentation wounds but I say he was shot in the head by a cover team for the sappers that were trying to blow our No. 2 ammo bunker with a rocket propelled missile (RPG). Frank not only kept that from happening, but he also kept Charlie from turning that 107 recoilless around and killing us all.

"The reason Frank died is because he had to lean over the edge of his fighting position to get a line of sight on that gook with the RPG, thus exposing himself to their riflemen. It wasn't until we saw Frank roll down the hill that we knew what to do. We took grenades and lobbed them over the berm and drove Charlie back into the minefield.

"Somebody, probably our captain, shot the gook with the RPG and killed him.

"Had it not been for Sgt. Frangella holding them back at the cost of his own life, just long enough for us to get it together, a lot of us would have died. I would be dead.

"Frank knew what he was doing but in his mind he had no choice. There was no one else around and he had to take the chance. He looked like anything but a soldier, but he was so fierce in combat, he drove back an entire sapper squad team by himself.

"I have now enjoyed 51 years living instead of 17, thanks to Frank's actions. May I now call you Frank, Sergeant Frangella? Thanks for putting yourself between a bunch of frightened kids and certain death, Frank. How many of us did you save that night? No Saint has ever done more for his fellow man."

In a subsequent email, Steve Green goes on to tell Vince Felicione that this was not the only time Frank stood up for his fellow soldiers.

“On the 11th of August, the week before, we were hit pretty hard and Frank was out there as usual in the middle of it all.”

Green describes Frank as a “funny man who made us laugh a lot. He used to make fun of this huge First Lieutenant who was into martial arts. The lieutenant was a body builder and Frank was tiny beside him. It was like watching Abbott and Costello. Frank was all the time feeding us meals and making us laugh and keeping our morale up while inside – totally hidden – there was this fearless warrior.

“Frank knew when he climbed that berm he wasn’t coming down. How does a man do that? No hesitation. No doubt. Just go ... they make movies of these things ... but this was no movie.”

Green closed his email by saying “I know Frank was decorated (with a Silver Star) for what he did. If he didn’t receive the Medal of Honor, he got cheated.”

If any readers of Frank Frangella’s exploits think the same thing, please post your comments on this website’s email button. It’s just another way of keeping SFC Frank Frangella’s memory alive.