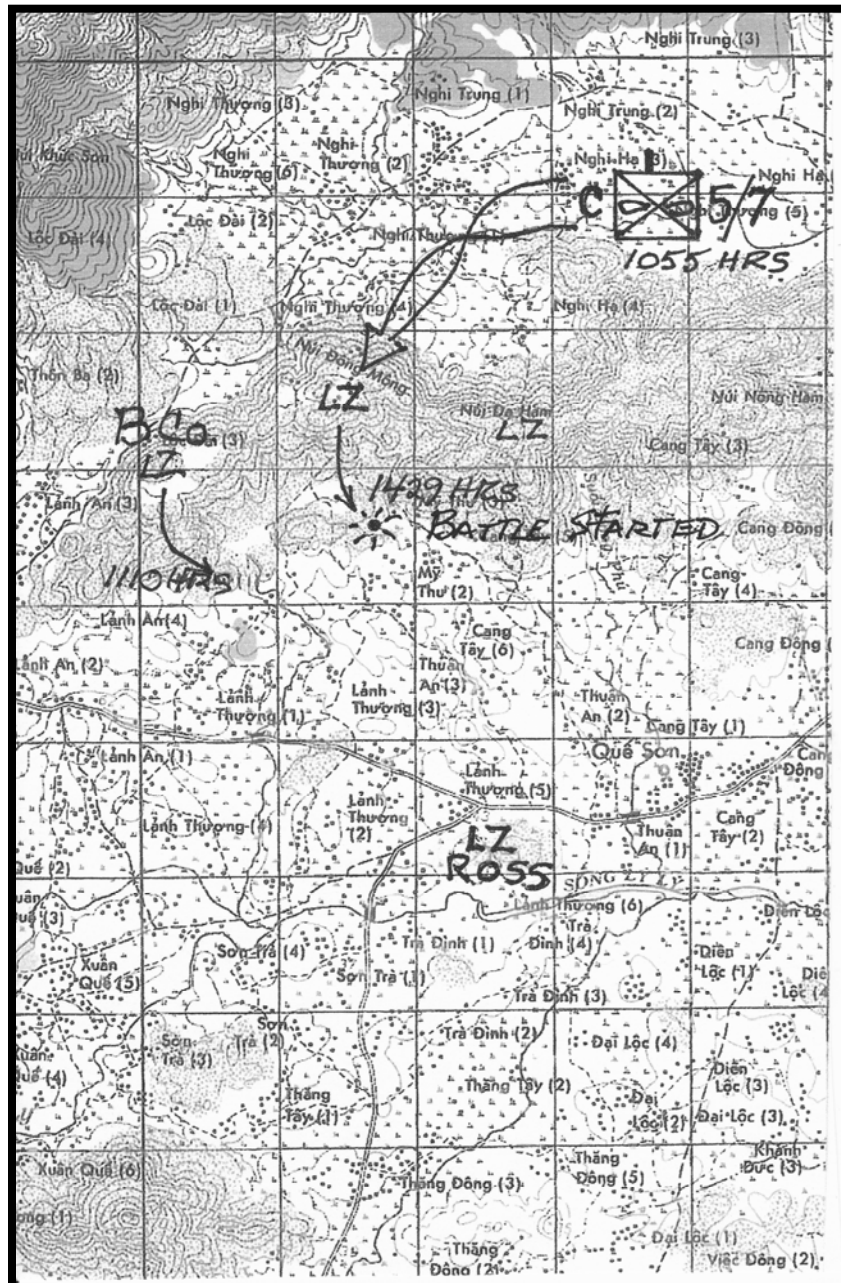


SILVER STAR MEDAL AWARDED TO PFC JAMES CASTALDI

On January 12, 1968, 1st Platoon of C Company made contact with a well-concealed, large NVA force in the Que Son Valley, which grew into a brutal battle and lasted all afternoon into the dark. Beating back the enemy force and retrieving this platoon eventually involved three platoons of C Company, and elements of B Company and A Company. At the end, three men were killed and many men were wounded. Bill Port was grievously wounded, captured by the enemy, and later died of his wounds as a POW. Bill Port received the Medal of Honor posthumously, nine others received the Silver Star (two posthumously) and a like number received the Bronze Star with V.



Lost in this epic battle was recognition of one of its most heroic soldiers, Pfc Jim Castaldi. He held his ground throughout the long and brutal fight, fighting the enemy with his M-60 machinegun until the ammo was gone, and kept fighting with a pistol.



Bill Port (L) and Jim Castaldi (R) in Que Son Valley

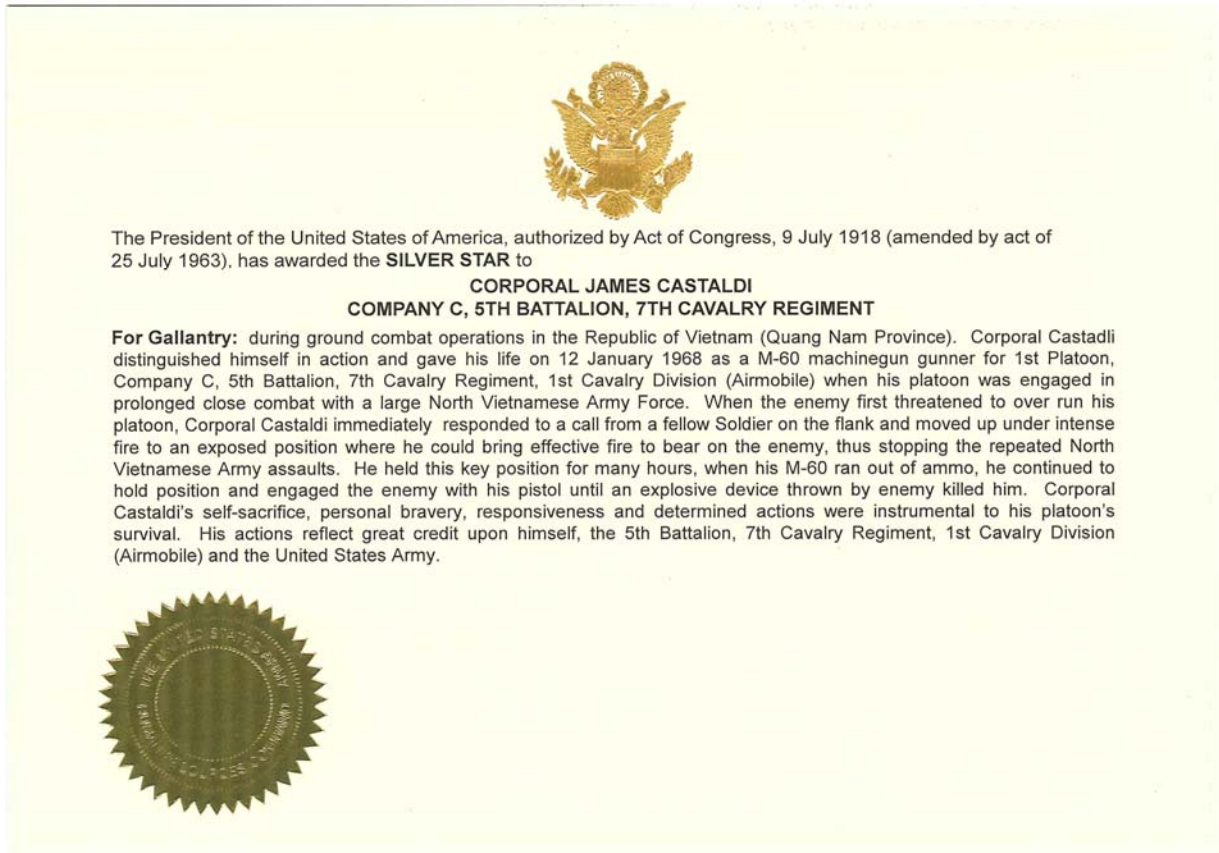
Trooper Dean Davison – *“Castaldi and I were covering the north side. Jimmy was a brave young man, and after he ran out of M-60 ammunition, he stayed with me armed only with his S&W .38 pistol. His final act was shooting an NVA soldier in the chest who was throwing a satchel charge at us. Jimmy was blown into the brush, instantly killed in action.”*

Platoon Leader Tom Golden – *“With disregard for his own safety, Castaldi moved to the flank closest to the enemy positions and helped repel the NVA assaults. Castaldi’s heroic actions throughout the battle enabled the platoon to hold off enemy assaults and gave them incentive to hold their position until eventual withdrawal under darkness.”*

RTO Ronnie Casteel – *“One of the four injured in our initial engagement was our machine gunner, Chuck Adams. Dean Davison asked James Castaldi to take over the MG. He did so without question. Dean positioned James to cover our far left.”*

James held this position for some five hours. When we pulled out, James held until he was the last man left.”

More than a few of us are haunted by brave young soldiers who were killed in Vietnam, and whose heroic acts of courage went undocumented. For Tom Golden, platoon leader at the time of the battle, Jim Castaldi was such a man. After Golden reconnected a few years ago with Mike Davison, the C Company commander, Mike took the initiative to fully account for that battle in January 1968. Through Mike’s efforts to submit a documented award recommendation forty-seven years later, with the critical testimony from several of Jim’s platoon mates, the Department of the Army has approved the award of the Silver Star to James Castaldi.



DA FORM 7550, OCT 2005

Jim Castaldi was a draftee from Camden, New Jersey. He was 25 when he was killed in action, and is buried at Beverly National Cemetery in Jew Jersey. His name lives on forever, carved into The Wall on Row 38 of Panel 34.

Fast Flanker 3
9 February 2015