

James Francis Haider was born February 19, 1944, in Watertown, South Dakota, to Carl and Theresa Haider. He had four sisters; Dianne, Marilyn, Elaine, Janel, and two brothers; Jerome and Larry. James attended Holy Rosary in Kranzburg and graduated from Waverly High School in 1963. After graduation, James worked at Swift Meat Packing Plant and then Terrace Park. He was married on July 9, 1967, to Laocadia Gronke. They had a daughter, Lynnelle, whom James never got to see. He liked to farm, hunt, watch football, and visit family. "He loved life; he always said, 'Live it to its fullest,'" according to his wife, Leocadia. James Haider was drafted on December 3, 1967, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He was placed in Compay E, 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry, 11th America Division, and went overseas on November 12, 1968. In a letter dated June 8, 1969, a day before his death, Sergeant Haider wrote home; some of his letters are as follows:

We lost a few men lately but most of them were just due to injuries and got sent stateside. Say, don't relay this back home or they will have me dead in a week and I can't quite [illegible] that yet... ...We do have some pretty sights though. Like one day I was in this old man's [illegible] and he was showing me the area were going in and there was a rainbow on the ground. I never seen anything so pretty. A person could get some good scenery shots but to carry a camera that was good would be a waste for it wouldn't last a month in this weather....

On June 9, 1969, Sergeant James Francis Haider was killed in action in Nuoc Dang in Quang Ngai Province in Vietnam "while at a night defensive position when the area came under attack by a hostile force," according to the telegram sent by the Department of the Army on June 17, 1969. In an earlier telegram, the family had received word that James was missing

in action. His body was returned to the United States and buried with military honors at the Holy Rosary Church Cemetery in Kranzburg.

Sergeant Haider received the following medals: National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with one Bronze Service Star, Vietnam Campaign Ribbon, Expert Badge with the Recoilless Rifle, and automatic rifle bars, Sharpshooter Badge with rifle bar, and the Marksman Badge with pistol bar.

The Silver Star was given for his “gallant action in directing retaliatory fire on the enemy without regard for his personal safety, during which he was mortally wounded.”

For gallantry in action against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, Sgt. Haider distinguished himself by intrepid actions on June 9, 1969, while serving with the reconnaissance platoon of Co. E, 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry.

On that date, the platoon had moved into a tight defensive perimeter after two days of sporadic fighting. During this time, Sgt. Haider spotted the Flash from an enemy mortar tube and immediately alerted his comrades, giving the direction and range of the hostile position. As mortar rounds began landing around the night position, the enemy placed heavy automatic weapons fire on the platoon.

With complete disregard for his personal safety, Sgt. Haider maneuvered through the hostile fire to control and direct retaliatory fire. He then moved to an elevated area within the laager position where he could place more effected fire on the insurgents. Sgt. Haider remained in his exposed location until he was mortally wounded by an exploding mortar round.

His courageous action were instrumental in thwarting the enemy assault. Sgt. Haider’s personal heroism, professional competence and devotion to duty were in keeping with the

highest traditions of the military service and reflected great credit upon himself, the Americal Division and the U.S. Army.

The Bronze Star was made “for a previous action by Sgt. Haider in clearing a landing zone while under intense fire and assisting in the treatment and evacuation of the wounded.”

James is survived by his widow, Leocadia Mack, his daughter, Lynnelle (Stewart) Schramm, and their sons, Braeden James and Carson Thomas, his sisters, and one brother. In closing, Leocadia wrote, “He would have loved and spoiled his daughter and grandchildren.”

FALLEN HERO

JAMES FRANCIS HAIDER,

U.S. Army Sergeant

February 19, 1944 – June 9, 1969

Killed in Action at Benhet, Vietnam