

Names On The Wall: The Boys From South Street

by Lynne Belluscio

I received an e-mail last night with a reference to the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington. The website www.VirtualWall.org allows you to search by state and town as well as last name. If you search New York State, LeRoy, you will find the one LeRoy casualty of the Vietnam War, Harry L. Van Alst, Jr. Coincidentally, his sixty-fourth birthday would have been today, July 20, 2011.

He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Van Alst who lived at 70 South Street. He had a younger brother William and five half sisters and two half brothers. He graduated from LeRoy High School in 1966 and would have been in town this last weekend for their 45th alumni reunion.

He had enlisted in the army after graduation and had been stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado until he was deployed to South Vietnam in July 1968. He arrived on July 24th and was stationed in Quang Tri Province, south of the Demilitarized Zone. He was due to be discharged in November.

According to the profile on the website he was a Specialist Fourth Class, in Company B, 1st Battalion, 11th Infantry Division. Tragically, less than two months after his arrival in Vietnam, on September 11, he was killed by artillery fire. His body was returned to LeRoy and the funeral

was held at St. Mark's Church with full military honors, the Rev. Canon Plumley officiating. The American Legion Color Guard was led by Commander Carl Snell and the Botts-Fiorito Post was represented by Frank Strobel. The pall bearers were from the 101st Artillery of the Air Force Station in Lockport. Honorary bearers were Mike Miller, Doug Robinson, Tom Ryan, Barry Scott, Don and Bill Pangrazio.

I talked with Mike Miller today and he said he grew up a couple of doors down from Harry. They were good friends and Harry had been home on leave when his unit got called up. Harry was a chef for his unit, and his captain told him that he didn't have to go to Vietnam, but Harry wanted to stay with his unit and went overseas.

Harry is the only LeRoy casualty listed on the Memorial Wall, however, Gary C. Scott, who grew up in LeRoy, down the street from Harry at 91 South Street, was another casualty of the Vietnam War. Gary was born on July 11, 1945 and graduated from LeRoy High School in 1963. He attended Syracuse University and received his 2nd Lieutenant's Commission in June, graduating at the top of his ROTC class.

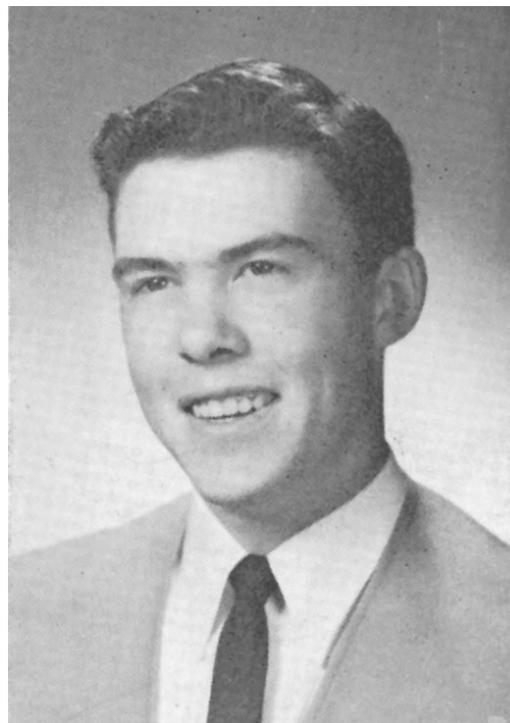
He had his choice of military branches but chose the army. He was stationed at Fort Benning,

Georgia and began his tour of duty in Vietnam on December 14, 1967. He is listed as serving in Company A, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. He led a 101st Airborne Division platoon. A few days past his third month in Vietnam, on March 29, 1968, he was killed by hostile fire in an ambush in Thua Thien Province. His family had moved from LeRoy so his name is found

in the Rochester listing of the Memorial Wall.

In 2003, the *Democrat and Chronicle* published a story about the award given to a LeRoy High School graduating senior in Gary's name. The award was established in 1969, but the funds ran out in 1984. Fourteen college friends wanted to reestablish the award and pledged donations to continue the Gary A. Scott Award. Scott's leadership qualities are reported

in a 2002 book by Bernard Edelman, *"Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam."* Scott's radio man wrote home: "My platoon leader, Gary Scott, 2nd lieutenant infantry, was in command. Lt. Scott, a Negro from Rochester, New York, graduated recently from the University of Syracuse. I was very close to Lt. Scott. I was his radio operator. He was a fine man, a good leader." The



Harry Van Alst, Jr.

story goes on to say that Scott questioned why war was being waged against an impoverished enemy 10,000 miles from his home.

Both men grew up in LeRoy, only a few houses away from each other. Their names are now engraved on the black Memorial Wall in Washington, having paid the ultimate price in service to their country.



Gary Scott

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