



SPECIAL TO THE PRESS GAZETTE



SID SAWYER | Press Gazette

Eustice Shiver was shot while flying a helicopter in Vietnam in 1967. Today, he is retired and lives in Pace.

EVERYBODY HAS A STORY

A Ghost Rider hero

Featuring
Eustice
Shiver



Eustice Shiver was born in Hardway, where he grew up on a tobacco farm, a non-smoker all his life. At 18, he left for Pensacola, because he always wanted to fly for the Navy.

Shiver was 23 when he was shot during combat in the Vietnam War in October 1967.

One bullet entered and exited his left arm to lodge itself into the neck of his fellow aviator sitting directly behind him, killing him instantly. The second bullet hit Shiver's left leg, breaking it, traveled down the bone shaft of his femur and stopped there.

It is still there today, slowly making its way down toward his ankle. Sometimes he feels stiff and drags his leg a little. He does not go easily through the airports security apparatus.

He was a young Army captain in an assault helicopter, his first tour in Vietnam, first time in combat, flying Scarlet Flights with the Ghost Riders. He flew first from Seattle to Saigon in a C1-30 Aircraft, while the war was raging. Once in Vietnam, the aviators removed their ID patches. Their missions were secret ones.

Shiver was with 11 airmen in his helicopter, one of two pilots flying over the Laos/Vietnam border, crossing narrow Laos all the way to the Mekong River. Flying way too fast to be shot.

Over Laos territory, while attempting to land the helicopter, at about 10 feet off the ground, the enemy fighters started to fire upon them, hitting Shiver and others, killing his sergeant on the spot and crippling the helicopter that started trailing black smoke while trying to fly back to safer space.

An Air Force pilot, Maj. Franck Armstrong, in a side Skyraider airplane, shot a napalm toward the

Vietnamese and cut off the attack by killing them all, allowing the helicopter with Shiver to escape.

"Armstrong's plane and its lone pilot crashed into a hillside in a ball of fire," presumably killing him, Shiver said.

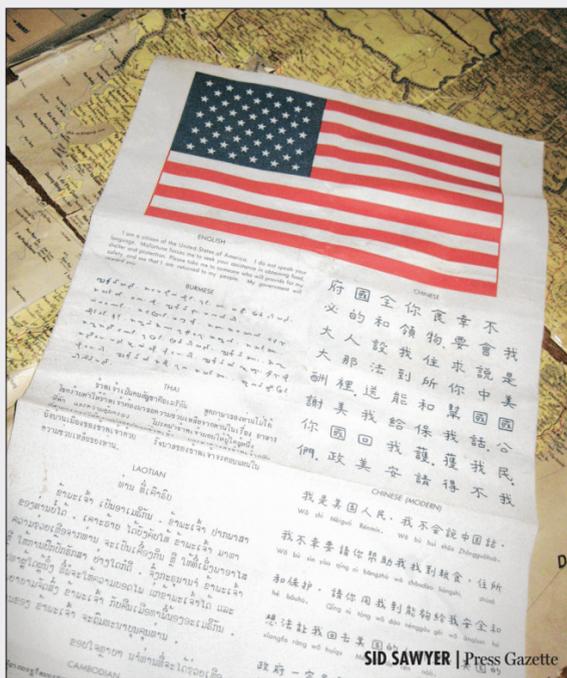
To this day, neither the man nor the plane has been recovered. After finding Armstrong's widow a couple of years ago, Shiver is now making it his life's mission to man a rescue search, to see if body remains or plane parts can be recovered — for closure for himself and for Armstrong's widow.

After the attack, Shiver stayed two weeks at the base's hospital, then was transferred to another naval hospital in Japan and ended up back home in rehab at Fort Gordon in Georgia.

He stayed in service, going back to Vietnam in 1970 for one year, but not in a combat zone. Then he came back to the U.S. and became an aviation advisor to reserve units in New Orleans. Then he worked in Fort Benning, Ga., an Army maneuver center, then at the Pentagon as an Infantry Fighting Vehicle Task Force commander. He spent 15 years in the National Guard in Wisconsin.

In 1982, he was sent to Korea for a couple of years as a division aviation officer. It was his last year flying. He went back to Korea in 1989-1990. Then he retired — sort of. He went on to the teach Junior ROTC at the Greenville High School for 17 years. In 2008, he finally retired for good.

Now a retired lieutenant colonel, Shiver researched Ghost Riders on the Internet two years ago. He found on Google that a few remaining team members were meeting every other year and decided



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Shiver discovered the helicopter he was shot in, years later at a museum in Camp Douglas, Wis. At left is the map every soldier carried when in combat zones in Vietnam.

of the wall: a Distinguished Flying Cross Medal (awarded in Vietnam for heroism), a Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart Medal and a dozen more.

He kept the nylon map with the American flag that he carried close to his heart under his flight suit, which says in several languages, dialects and pictograms:

"I am a citizen of the United States of America. I do not speak your language. Misfortune forces me to seek your assistance in obtaining food, shelter and protection. Please take me to someone who will provide for my safety and see that I am returned to my people. My government will reward you."

Everybody Has a Story is a regular column presenting citizens of the community. If you know someone you would like to see featured, contact the editor at ssawyer@srpressgazette.com.

to go to the next meeting. He had never heard of any of his fellow airmen since the 1960s. The meeting was at Dulles Airport in Washington, D.C., and there, he found his wingman.

He discovered that the Vietnam Helicopter Association has a list of helicopters by number. He drove his RV across several states to find his Ghost Rider 171, sitting in a museum in Camp Douglas, Wis.

He sat in the exact same pilot seat he was shot at during his fateful flight.

He still gets very emotional while recalling the Vietnam War ordeal.

At his home in Pace, Shiver wears cowboy boots with a Purple Heart polo shirt. He still has the steely look of a Paul Newman look-alike. He keeps a man-cave full of souvenirs and photographs. His medals are on display in a quiet corner

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