



## Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

December 21, 1939 - February 5, 1969

Name: Hugh Leslie "Buzz" Sherburn

Rank/Branch: E5/US Air Force

Unit: 6994th Security Squadron

Date of Birth: 21 December 1939 (Weston OR)

Home City of Record: Vancouver WA

Date of Loss: 05 February 1969

Country of Loss: Laos

Loss Coordinates: 152600N 1064700E (approx)

Status (in 1973): Killed In Action

Category:

Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: EC47

Refno: KIA1

Other Personnel in Incident: Robert E. Olson; Louis J. Clever; Harry T.

Niggle; Clarence L. McNeill; Homer M. Lynn Jr.; Walter F. Burke; James V.

Dorsey Jr.; Rodney H. Gott; Wilton N. Hatton (all reported KIA)

Source: Compiled by Homecoming II Project 01 September 1990 from one or more

of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources,

correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews.

Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK 1998.

REMARKS: \*\* NOT ON MISSING LISTS \*\*

SYNOPSIS: The Douglas C47 was designed as a transport, gunship, and

electronic or regular reconnaissance aircraft, depending on the

configuration. The aircraft served in World War II and served French forces in Indochina in the 1950's, and returned to Vietnam at the outset of American involvement there.

On February 5, 1969, an EC47 (electronic surveillance) departed Pleiku Airbase, Republic of Vietnam on a tactical reconnaissance mission over Laos.

The aircraft crew included LtCol. Harry T. Niggle, Capt. Walter F. Burke, Major Robert E. Olson, Major Homer M. Lynn Jr., MSgt. Wilton N. Hatton, SSgt. Rodney H. Gott, TSgt. Louis J. Clever, SSgt. James V. Dorsey Jr., SSgt. Hugh L. Sherburn (radio operator on the aircraft), and Sgt. Clarence L. McNeill. The last radio contact with the aircraft was at 8:10 a.m. at which time it was located about 21 miles west-northwest of the city of Chavane in Saravane Province, Laos.

When the aircraft failed to make a scheduled stop at Phu Bai Airport near

Hue shortly before noon, search efforts were initiated to locate the aircraft. During the remainder of the day and for six succeeding days, extensive communication and ramp checks were made, as well as a visual search of the area from the last known position of the aircraft through its intended flight path. Because no information was forthcoming which would reveal the whereabouts of the missing aircraft and crew, the search was then terminated.

In the fall of 1969, the wreckage of an EC47 was located in a jungle-covered mountainous area in the approximate last known location of Sherburn's aircraft. The wreckage site was searched, and remains and a number of items were recovered. These items were later correlated to Sherburn's aircraft.

The Department of the Air Force believes that the aircraft was faced with a sudden airborne emergency since the right wing of the aircraft was found some 500 meters from the main wreckage site. It was believed that the engine

caught fire causing the wing to separate from the fuselage while the aircraft was still in the air. Further, the Air Force states that although the crew members had parachutes, it is unlikely that the apparent suddenness of the emergency would have permitted anyone to abandon the aircraft. The absence of emergency radio signals further diminished the hope that any of the crew members could have survived.

At this time, the Air Force declared the ten men onboard the aircraft to be dead, and so notified the families. The remains found at the crash site were interred in a single grave at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis. Military officials told eight of the families that the remains of only two individuals had been identified, but would not reveal those identities to them. (It is assumed that the families of the two individuals identified were informed.)

In February 1970, the Sherburn family was informed that the remains found at the crash site were skeletal and commingled, and that Air Force identification specialists were unable to determine that they had a composite of ten individuals -- and were unable to establish the identity of any of the remains.

About the same time the crew of the EC47 was being interred in St. Louis, another mass burial was conducted, containing 18 USMC and Navy personnel. On

January 28, 1973, PFC Ronald Ridgeway, one of those 18 "dead and buried" servicemen, was released alive from a POW camp in Hanoi. The U.S. had not known that he was a prisoner of war.

Although the relatives found little hope in Ridgeway's return, some thought it entirely possible that others might have escaped with Ridgeway. How many others, some family members wondered, had been captured without the U.S.

finding out?

If such a thing could happen to the Marine and Navy group, what about the EC47 lost in Laos? Unfortunately, when the war ended, no American held in Laos was released. The U.S. has not negotiated the freedom of a single man the Pathet Lao asserted they held prisoner in Laos.

The U.S. Government has never changed its position on the Marines, Navy and

Air Force personnel interred in mass graves in St. Louis, and has continued to state unequivocally that they were killed in action because the families could not produce proof otherwise. Although the government lacked positive evidence that most of these men were dead, its assumption that they were dead overruled any assumption that they might be alive. The Marine Corps has admitted that some of those "buried" men could have been captured, but that

it is doubtful. Even though considerable doubt surrounds the identification of the men buried in St. Louis, and, indeed, some of them might have survived, official status change has been denied.

Since the war ended, over 10,000 reports of Americans prisoner, missing or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia have been received by the U.S. Government.

It would not be erroneous to speculate that if the U.S. received a first-hand, live sighting report on the men "buried" in St. Louis, that report would be debunked because they are all "dead."

Although many experts who have reviewed the largely-classified information relating to Americans still missing in Southeast Asia have concluded that hundreds of them are still alive in captivity, the USG cannot seem to make up its mind. Meanwhile, how many wait for their country to come for them?

Who will look for these men?

The crew of the EC47 was in a Missing in Action classification from February until October, 1969.

Hugh L. Sherburn had been in the Air Force eleven years and was nearing the end of his third tour of Vietnam when his aircraft went down. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster; the Air Medal with fifth Oak Leaf Cluster, and Purple Heart following his loss incident.

# Tribute Wall



“ 2 files added to the album Jane Doolittle



Bateman Newport LLC - June 29, 2023 at 09:54 AM

QM

“ Welcoming Home TSgt Hugh Leslie Sherburn on July 24, 2015 and Memorial Service pics from July 25th are now posted. <http://www.vietnamwar.ourwarheroes.org/sherburn.htm>

Q Madp - August 26, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GP

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

Gary and Jan Power - July 23, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

David and Virginia Moffitt. welcome home Buzzy - July 18, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

Theresa Helms may you rest peace ty for your service - July 12, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RS

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**Ron Morgan, President, Vietnam Veterans of America Oregon St** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**Shelley Bruce McGuire** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

J6

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**jams shaurette usmc/us army 60-74** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KH

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**Keith & Gail Harley** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JD

“ *Welcome Home TSgt Sherburn, a Hero to us all. Rest in Peace, Sir.*

-----  
**Jane Doolittle** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LL

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**Liz and Bob Hawkins and Lads** - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JD

“ *Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn*

-----  
**Jane Doolittle** - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DG

“ So looking forward to bringing you home, to celebrate your life, and remember all the little adventures we got to share. I have had a great time learning more about my favorite Uncle, and what your role was as you served our country. I am so proud of you. May you rest in peace and welcome home.

Deanna Helms Gray - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

WS

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

William & Robin Sherburn - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RJ

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

Ralph and Wanda Janes - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GG

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

George Gray - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RH

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

Robert and Joan Helms - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DG

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

Deanna Helms Gray - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

PC

“ I was told a story about Hugh Sherburn. It seems there was a fire in the barracks Hugh lived in. Over and over Hugh went into the smoke and flames to help fellow airmen in harms way. After everybody was out it was noted Hugh had gone missing. A few moments later Hugh emerged from the smoke with the refrigerator from his barracks room precariously mounted on his back. It seems Sherburn did not want to loose his supply of cold beer. Welcome Home TSgt Sherburn.

---

**Paul Clever** - July 09, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BN

“ Hugh (Buzz) Leslie Sherburn

---

**Brian Norris** - July 01, 2015 at 12:00 AM