

Elaine Bower's Senate Committee Feb.4, 2020

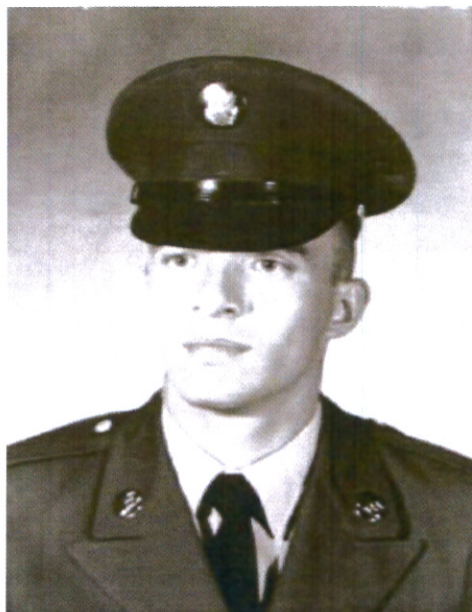
Let me thank you, the committee and Elaine Bowers, for the opportunity to speak to this legislative body for the purpose of requesting the naming of the five mile portion of US Highway 77 that runs from the western edge of the city of Blue Rapids to the eastern edge of the city of Waterville. We are requesting the Highway be dedicated as "Corporal Allen Oatney and SP4 Gene Meyers Memorial Highway." My name is Roger Edwards and it is an honor and privilege to represent the American Legion Post 169 and Post 332.

I know firsthand of this time in our American history. I served with the USMC in Vietnam along with approximately 3 million other Americans that answered their country's "call to duty." In retrospect, it was a strange war with strange strategy. I feel deeply that it is up to us today to honor these two men out of the 54 thousand plus that "gave their all." They will live forever in the hearts of their loved ones and it is only fitting that our communities remember them as young men that "gave their all."

Thank you,

Roger Edwards ROGER EDWARDS

Commander, American Legion Post 169



Corporal Allen E. Oatney

Corporal Oatney was born on Oct 4, 1949 and graduated from Valley Heights High School in 1969. After graduation he was drafted into the U.S. Army via the Selective Service System and received training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and Fort Ord, California. After training, he returned to Waterville to marry his high school sweetheart, Maxine Anderson, on February 21, 1970, before deploying to Vietnam.

He arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on March 10, 1970 leaving behind his wife who was with child. He was assigned to D Company, 5th Battalion, 12th Infantry, 199th Light Infantry Brigade conducting operations in Cambodia when on June 22, 1970 he was killed by hostile enemy small arms fire.

Allen spent most of his life in and around the Manhattan and Waterville communities. He was baptized in the Methodist Church in Waterville in 1952. He loved hunting and fishing and was a member of the 4-H club and football team. He was employed by the COOP elevator in Barnes when he was called up to serve his country.

Funeral services were held on June 30, 1970 at the Methodist Church in Waterville. He was buried in the Riverside Cemetery in Waterville, Kansas with full military honors provided by a honor guard from Fort Riley.

His son, Toby, was born after his father's death.



SP4 Gene A. Myers

Specialist Fourth Class Gene A. Myers was born on May 21, 1948 in Marysville while his parents were living in a farm north of Beattie. As an only child, his family moved to a farm near Barnes where he attended Barnes High School before moving again to Waterville where he graduated from Waterville High School in 1966. After graduation, his family moved to St. Marys where he worked at a local lumber company until he was drafted by the U.S. Army under the Selective Service System leaving for training in April of 1968. He received training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and Fort Ord, California and arrived in Vietnam in September of 1968. He was assigned to C Company, 2nd Battalion, 16th Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. Throughout 1969, his unit performed numerous and varied missions. It was during one of these operations on June 9, 1969 that SP4 Myers was killed by hostile enemy small arms fire in the Binh Duong province of South Vietnam.

Gene spent his life in rural Kansas working on the family farm. He was a quiet, devout person who got along with everyone. Affectionally known as "spotty" by his friends he enjoyed being with his family and hunting and fishing. He was a member of the Barnes Christian Church for many years. He played football and basketball. In his last letter home to his parents he remarked "Keep the home fires burning,...I am coming home," having only 88 days left in his tour of duty.

His funeral services were held at the Barnes Christian Church on June 22, 1969. He was buried in Riverside Cemetery in Waterville with full military honors provided by an honor guard from Fort Riley.