



Dennis Haines
C 3/7 199th Infantry Brigade
WIA December 6, 1968
Dr. John Baldwin
Chief of Surgery
24th EVAC 1968



After being drafted and sent to Vietnam Dennis Haines was assigned to the 199th Infantry Brigade. He was with C Company 3rd Battalion 7th Infantry. On December 6, 1968 guarding the perimeter of a Viet Cong Village with the mission of not allowing anyone in or out. He heard a child or a baby crying and when he turned and looked in that direction his life changed forever. He recalls seeing the door of a hooch opening and seeing a flash. The next he remembers is being in the arms of his good friend John who was telling him he did good and he was proud of him and how proud his fiancée, Gail, would be of him. He also heard another voice telling him to hang on the chopper will be here anytime. His wounds were critical he was shot twice on the right side of his head by an AK47. He was in and out of consciousness and losing a lot of blood. He did not remember being loaded onto the chopper or being carried into the 24th EVAC . Dr. John Baldwin Chief of Surgery at the 24th EVAC at that time did remember Dennis and how severely his brain was damaged on that side. He said "it was incredible that he was still with us." The night Dennis was brought to the 24th EVAC Hospital they were receiving dozens of other wounded GI's . All surgeons were extremely busy trying to patch up their patients and move on to the next, that was the order of business on this very busy night at the 24th. Not all cases fitted into that plan and Dennis was one of those. All of the brain surgeons were operating and since Dennis was not given much hope of being able to survive anyway, he was wheeled behind a curtain with little hope. Dr. Baldwin was a chest and heart surgeon that for a brief moment was not standing at an operating table. It was at this moment that both of their lives changed forever. It was very rare that a neuro surgeon would approach a chest surgeon and ask him to take one of their cases since they were so backed up. DR. Baldwin was asked and replied "yes". Dr. Baldwin said that" when I walked up to Dennis I thought oh my gosh what am I doing, and I just felt that this was one that was worth trying." And try he did. Dennis was taken out from behind that curtain and Dr. Baldwin operated on Dennis that December night, fixed him up as he puts it as best as a chest surgeon could. He said he never thought much about it after that day. That was until about thirty five years later when the following e-mail showed up in Dr. Baldwin's inbox.

Dr. Baldwin, I saw your post on the 199th Infantry website. I would have been a patient in the 24th EVAC while you were there. I was wounded December 6, 1968. I was shot twice in the right side of my head, paralyzed on my entire left side, causing permanent visual field loss in both eyes. I had to see if you were there right at that time you would remember me. I'm living proof that you all did a terrific job in taking care of us guys.

And just like that a moment in time tucked away as a memory resurfaced. Dr. Baldwin said "I remembered that operation on that guy that the brain surgeons were too busy to do." To this day Dennis still believes that what Dr. Baldwin did that night was phenomenal. In 2004 Dennis and Dr. Baldwin were reunited. It was a ceremony for Dennis the recipient of the Images of Bravery Award, nominated by none other than the man who saved his life from behind that curtain.

Dennis E. Haines
24th Evacuation Hospital Patient
Images Of Bravery Award

IMAGES OF BRAVERY AWARD

Nominee: Dennis E. Haines

Member, VVA Chapter 391, Sonora, California

Dates of Service	October 6, 1967 - March 13, 1969
Branch	U.S. Army
Decorations	Good Conduct Medal, Viet Nam Campaign Medal, Viet Nam Service Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Viet Nam Cross of Gallantry Medal, Purple Heart
Occupation	Supervisor of the Engineering, Facilities Planning and Construction Division, Milton K. Hershey Medical School, Pennsylvania State University
Family Status	married, two grown sons, one finishing college
Home Address	200 S. Forge Road Palmyra, PA 17078, (717) 838-6073



It is with great honor we submit the name of Dennis E. Haines for the "Images of Bravery Award, 2004". Dennis was eighteen, had finished high school and was working on an Associate degree in Architectural Engineering when he was drafted in October 1967. On the night of December 6, 1968, as an E-4, he was leading his squad toward a suspected VC-occupied village. Two AK-47 rounds struck and blew away the right side of his head, and he was quickly brought to the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh, where Drs. [John Baldwin](#) (a sponsor) and Floyd Robinson operated on his brain. After a stormy post-operative week, it was apparent he would live, and he followed the usual path to Japan, then on to Walter Reed, where he was retired in March 1969 with 100% disability. Further surgery to place a plate in his skull and two more years of intense rehabilitation followed, but despite this, Dennis has essentially no use of his left leg or arm, and stands only for important events with the aide of a locking steel brace. He is unable to drive even "a handicapped equipped" vehicle, so that all transportation must be public or from loving friends and family.

Coming home half the man he once was, he remembers being booed and cursed at the airport and shunned by some of those kids who had once been his friends. On April 5, 1969, between hospitalizations, Dennis married the girl to whom he had become engaged before leaving for Viet Nam. They purchased a house, in which he still lives, raised two sons, and the marriage lasted seventeen years. Over time, the situation became a growing burden and sadness for his wife. The experiences of his months in combat and lengthy rehabilitation had made him a different person than the one she had kissed goodbye in 1968. "I want Dennis back the way he was before leaving for Vietnam instead of the one who came home," she said. Seven lonely, independent years later, in 1995, he found his present wife, Barbara, "who never knew me differently than I am now." His sons are great kids, the married older boy has presented him a grandson and the younger is a junior at Penn State, majoring in psychology.

The VA was very helpful in 1970, by getting him into an entry-level job at the new Hershey Medical Center at Penn State. For ten years he supported his wife and two sons at this job, studying at night to get as much education as possible in the new field of "computer design". He discovered that the computer didn't care if he was paralyzed on the left side, and using his still intact left brain and skilled right hand, Dennis became extremely proficient at drafting, planning

and space-organization. Armed with samples of his work, he approached the Medical Center's Engineering Department, won that executive position and became a pivotal force in designing the burgeoning new hospital complex. "This has been a challenging and continual learning process and now my position also incorporates coordinating renovation and construction projects from beginning to end."

In 1992, he was diagnosed with Hepatitis C, no doubt from the nearly twenty blood transfusions we gave him following his initial injury. The current chemotherapy regimen is difficult and often exhausting, but Dennis gets to work each day, and bears no bitterness to either the men who drafted him or those who shot him, forever changing his life. He could have come home, lay down and quit; instead, he chose to fight and wage what is obviously a life-long struggle to prevail against his disability and his memories. His contributions to family, community and to fellow veterans would be impressive for any individual, but to have accomplished all of this as a hemi-plegic, from a wheelchair, is unbelievable. He is exemplary of what constitutes true bravery: courage, persistence, loyalty, duty, honor, country and family. It is, indeed, our pleasure to introduce this great veteran from Chapter 391 to the selection committee.

Mr. Haines Activities following his Viet Nam Service include:

- Member, Hershey American Legion Post 386 (1969-present), Commander in 1975
- Life member: Disabled American Veterans
- Life member: Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Life Member VFW Post 9639, Shellsville, PA (1996-present), Commander in 2002-2004
- Member, Ronald McDonald House of Hershey
- Supporting member, Hospice of Central Pennsylvania
- Member, VVA Chapter 391
- Youth Soccer Coach for ten years in his community
- Director, Hepatitis C Support Group, Penn State/Hershey Medical Center
- State-Certified VFW Service Officer
- Numerous non-profit and church charitable organizations

Sponsor's addendum: Dennis and I were re-united in 2002 by a chance meeting on a Viet Nam veterans' website. To be able to bond as surgeon and accomplished patient after 36 years has been emotionally uplifting and gratifying beyond description for both of us. (JNB)

Robert Law III, President VVA Chapter 391

John N. Baldwin, MD FACS, Board Member Chapter 391
Former Major USA, Chief of Vascular and Thoracic Surgery
24th Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh, 1968-1969

Dennis Haines
199th Light Infantry Brigade C 3-7, 1968



Is the Word Inspirational Big Enough?

Dennis was medically retired from the Army in 1969. His incredible Bravery which led to a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star for Valor, and years of long recovery which took him to computer design, gave him the opportunity to be one of the chief architects who built the then new Hershey Medical Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dennis received a presentation from fellow workers prior to his retirement on December 29, 2006. The plaque on the statuette reads: "Dennis E. Haines - 36 Years of Service - Penn State University".

Since retirement, at age 65, he gave hundreds of volunteer hours in the VA Hospital near his home in Palmyra PA. He also has been a regular participant in the annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

