



**Donald Raymond Bonko Co H-1**

*We met Bonk plebe year, when we gazed with awe and respect at the "U.S.'s" on his collar. It did not take long for his actions, both on and off the football field, to prove that our respect was well founded. As time passes we will long remember his cheerful inspiration, his sound advice, and his "Flirty" picnics.*

**Born** – 16 Dec 1936, Ohio.

**To USMA** – Came from Lorain, OH. Appointed by Ohio 13<sup>th</sup>. Nickname – “Bonk”.

**Died** – 26 Nov 1965 (age 28) Killed-in-Action (KIA), Vietnam. Buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

**Military Awards** – Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

**Schooling** – Unknown.

**Family** - Wife – Marge Bonko Watson – 2 daughters – grandchildren

**Contact** – Marge Bonko Watson, Address 2352 Cleveland Boulevard, Lorain, OH 44052, Phone 440-288-2826, Email unknown.

Don served on active duty in the Army (Artillery) for 3 plus years until his untimely death in Vietnam in 1965. Don served in Vietnam with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, (the Big Red One), in October 1965. The Division began combat operations on 1 November 1965 in the Phu Loi – Lam Son area approximately 60 miles north of Saigon. Less than a month later, on 26 November 1965, Don was reported as killed-in-action (KIA) in a single vehicle ambush.

Don’s duties as an artillery liaison officer between the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division Artillery and the 5<sup>th</sup> Army of Vietnam (ARVN) Division required that he coordinate plans between the U.S. artillery and ARVN forces. This involved travel between the various units / secure areas. Such was the case when Don’s vehicle was ambushed shortly after he left the Vietnamese Division Headquarters compound. A fellow Army football player near the scene of the ambush reported that Don’s driver heroically managed to turn the vehicle around, escape the ambush and return to the Vietnamese compound where the American Advisory Team administered aid to Don, awaiting medivac. But to no avail, his wounds were mortal. Knowing Don’s personal determination and willingness to fearlessly confront any challenge on the football field or in life head-on, his decision to make such a journey into unsecured territory at extreme personal risk is totally in keeping with the man we knew.

Footnote - His “final play” was in keeping with the life he led.