

First Man on the Battlefield

BY MARC LEPSON

Retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore, 94, died February 10 at his home in Auburn, Alabama. One of the nation's smartest, bravest, and most accomplished military leaders, Hal Moore—a life member of Vietnam Veterans of America—was best known for his courageous leadership at the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in 1965.

“There’s something missing on this Earth now. We’ve lost a great warrior, a great soldier, a great human being, and my best friend,” war correspondent Joe Galloway said at the general’s funeral. “They don’t make them like him anymore.”

In 1992 Galloway and Moore co-wrote *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*, an almost minute-by-minute retelling of the November 1965 actions at Landing Zones X-Ray and Albany, the fiercest components of the 34-day Battle of the Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam’s Central Highlands. Moore, then a lieutenant colonel,

led a recently arrived, below-strength, 450-man 1st Cavalry Division battalion. Within minutes after alighting at a supposedly safe landing zone, his men came under withering attack from the NVA’s 2,000-man 66th Regiment. The vicious fight lasted almost three days and left 151 Americans dead and 124 wounded.

For Hal Moore’s brilliant leadership and daring, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. “If ever a man were born to command a battle, it was Hal Moore,” journalist Stephen Hunter wrote.

I met him in 1999 at VVA’s Convention in Anaheim. He sat on a panel I moderated on the Battle of the Ia Drang. When I first shook hands with him, I said, “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Gen. Moore.”

He warmly replied, “Please call me Hal.”

But every time this former Army Spec.5 addressed him, I called him “General Moore.”

Rest in peace, Hal. ■



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