

RODNEY YANO

Vietnam War Sergeant First Class

Air Cavalry Troop,
11th Armored Cavalry Regiment U.S. Army

Dec. 19, 1943 – Jan. 1, 1969

Kealahou, Hawaii



Known affectionately as 'Pineapple,' Yano was born along the Kona Coast of Hawaii in the town of Kealahou. In 1961, Yano left school early to join the Army. Known as a fun-loving guy with a serious side, Yano rose to the rank of Sergeant First Class. Yano's colleagues were not surprised that he died putting others before himself. During his second tour in Vietnam, Yano was served as a crew chief in the Air Cavalry Troop, 11th Armored Cavalry, the famed Blackhorse Regiment.

On that day in Bien Hoa, Vietnam, Yano performed his duties of crew chief aboard the command and control helicopter. Yano and his crew were returning suppressive fire to an entrenched enemy in a dense jungle. While marking enemy positions with smoke and white phosphorous grenades for field artillery units, a grenade went off prematurely inside of the helicopter, covering Yano with burning phosphorous and leaving him severely wounded. Ammunition and other supplies began to ignite, and white smoke began filling the helicopter. Although partially blind and unable to use one of his arms, Yano displayed extreme bravery by hurling blazing ammunition from the helicopter. In taking such action, Yano inflicted additional wounds upon himself to protect his crew from further injury and avert any deaths. Yano persisted until his helicopter was rendered safe. The additional wounds inflicted upon Yano resulted in his death later that day.

The Citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor reads: "By his conspicuous gallantry at the cost of his life, in the highest traditions of the military service, SFC Yano has reflected great credit on himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army."