

American Legion Post 11-11 Paul B. –Post Historian Welcome Home, April 2014

## MSGT. Roy P. Benavidez Green Beret, US Army Special Forces Congressional Medal of Honor

This month, we are honoring a very special Hero and a very brave Soldier, Roy P. Benavidez. Roy was born near Cuero, Texas, son of a Mexican father and a Yaqui mother, thus Roy experienced a great deal

of prejudice about his ancestry growing up. When Roy was two years old, his father died, then five years later, his mother passed away. Roy then went to live with a grandfather, uncle and aunt. Roy worked two or three odd jobs, helping the family get by.

Roy entered the Texas Army National Guard in 1952 serving until 1955, and in June 1955 he enlisted in the regular US Army. In 1959 Roy married Hilaria Coy Benavidez, Roy then completed Airborne training and was assigned to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne at Fort Bragg, NC. Roy first went to South VietNam as an Advisor, but stepped on a land mine sustaining severe foot injuries. Doctors went on record to state that Roy would never walk again, let alone stay in the Army. But, Roy was a very stubborn soldier, he was in the hospital a year, and at night, he would crawl to a wall, then push himself up and do foot exercises.

After a year of hospitalization, Roy returned to training for the Special Forces, he qualified and was assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group. He returned to VietNam in 1968 along with his pains from the land mine injury. On May 2, 1968, a 12 man Special Forces patrol which included nine Montagard tribesmen was surrounded by the NVA. Roy heard the appeal for help, and flew out to the hot LZ, (Landing Zone). Sgt. Benavidez was severely wounded a number of times during the six hour firefight, in fact he suffered various injuries 24 times from shrapnel, bayonet inflictions, mines and bullets. Even after carrying wounded soldiers to waiting Medevac's, MSgt. Benavidez returned to downed choppers to recover classified documents carried by pilots. Roy was evacuated to Brooke Army Medical Center where he eventually recovered. He received the Distinguished Service Cross and four Purple Hearts, but in 1973 after more detailed accounts became available; Special Forces Lt. Col. Ralph Drake insisted that Sgt. Benavidez receive the Medal of Honor. President Reagan awarded the Nation's highest medal on Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez at a White House Ceremony in 1981.

For further reading on this incredible soldier, I recommend two autobiographical works: The Three Wars of Roy P. Benavidez, and Medal of Honor, A Warrior's Story. Even after the war, and in a state of 100% disability, Roy's benefits were taken away from him by Social Security. The benefits were returned after a congressional investigation and assistance from US Congressmen. And , yes there is a Roy P. Benavidez American Legion Post 400 in San Antonio, TX. To indulge in great military reading, I urge all Military Historian buffs to read Roy's story, a tremendous tome on a brave soldier. Special Forces Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez is buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in Texas.

Reference Credits: Wikipedia-Encyclopedia

"Medal of Honor, one man's Journey from Prejudice and Poverty"

"Three Wars of Roy Benavidez"