

COMFORT AN CLOSURE – SILVER STAR FOR A FALLEN MARINE-

(The following story is included to illustrate how important sharing stories can be AND, in this case, an amazing ending.) This story began innocently over three years ago. Tom Sauer told my swimming partner “My brother was a Marine; he was killed in Vietnam.” One listener was my swimming partner and retired Marine Officer Dave Little. Tom and his family knew nothing of where or how his brother was killed. Dave Little decided to investigate further. Over the next 3 ½ years Dave Little investigated to locate some part of the story about 1st LT Phillip Sauer. Little told no one what he was doing. Starting with a small news story in Stars and Stripes News Little pieced together an account of the ambush that resulted in 1 LT Sauer’s death. The lone survivor of the ambush had talked to a reporter and the reporter had written about the ambush of a 4-man patrol moving to high ground near Khe Sanh RVN in April 1967. Almost 50 years later Little located the lone survivor and documented his story plus located the patrol reports in archives. Then Little researched and located the CO who sent the patrol out to recon NVA movements adding the CO’s statements to the lone survivor’s statement. Little then wrote a recommendation for award, added his documentation, and filed it with the Secretary of the Navy and patiently followed up over the following months. The Marines decided 1st LT Phillip Sauer should be awarded the Silver Star for gallantry before an armed enemy. Little never disclosed his work to me or anyone until the Marines contacted him and asked to speak to the family. In April of 2018, 51 years after a 30-man NVA unit ambushed the 4 Marines the family received the Silver Star awarded to 1st LT Sauer. Had the lone survivor not discussed his story with a reporter the rest of this story would not have happened. Little’s work brought comfort and closure to a family. The full article “Silver Star for a Fallen Marine” is on our website ussfrankknox.com. ED