

HONORING a fallen soldier

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 24 May 2012 16:05 -



Doug Ristine's name added to war memorial

Douglas Ristine didn't live in Gothenburg but his father did.

One known connection to the local community is that Doug spent time here when he visited his grandparents, Cecil and Elsie Ristine.

That was enough to compel Korean War veterans Jack Ostergard and Bob Bullock to have Doug's name engraved on the local veteran memorial at Lake Helen recently.

"He listed Gothenburg as his place of residence," Ostergard said on a windy spring day at Lake Helen. "The least we can do is put his name on the stone."

When Doug died in South Vietnam, on April 3, 1968, his father Paul, a World War II pilot, was living in Turkey. Paul spent many years working for Northrup Aviation Company of Los Angeles, CA, and Tuna Fleet, in California, before returning to Gothenburg where he managed Adventureland Video in North Platte, according to the Gothenburg Area History book.

At the time of Doug's death, the Army specialist fourth class was only 21 years old.

Information about Doug, from the Vietnam memorial, said he was wounded in the province of Binh Dinh on April 2, 1968, by non-hostile means, or intentional homicide, and died the next day,

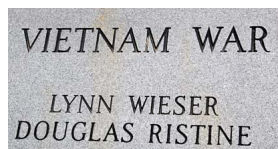
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Earl Lynn, of the Dawson County Veteran's Office in Lexington, said he thinks intentional homicide means death by friendly fire or that Doug was killed intentionally by "one of our own."

Gothenburg is listed as Doug's home of record and his religion, the Church of Christ.

In a 1968 newspaper article about the death, it states that Doug "spent some time in Gothenburg before entering the service three years ago."



He had served in Vietnam for 18 months before his death and was buried in Parksburg, WV.

Doug was a nephew of the late Burton Ristine and Thaine Ristine of Gothenburg.

Bullock said Paul Ristine belonged to the American Legion, like he and Ostergard, and was "a nice fella."

Neither Ostergard or Bullock knew anything about Doug Ristine until Ostergard visited a traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial in North Platte.

"I asked the guy running it if he could show me the name of the boy from Gothenburg," Ostergard said. "I was looking for Lynn Wieser but he said 'There's two.' "

Ostergard said he didn't believe the man, who was insistent that Douglas Ristine (spelled Rustine on the traveling wall), was from Gothenburg.

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After researching the fallen Vietnam veteran, with help from Jim Nelms and the Internet, Ostergard discovered that the soldier who died in Vietnam was actually Doug Ristine.

“It was misspelled on the traveling wall,” he said.

Because Ristine died while in the service, Ostergard talked to his long-time friend and fellow veteran Bob Bullock, adjutant of the local American Legion.

“It was a good idea,” Bullock said.

With some money in

legion coffers, the veterans hired an engraver from Kansas who sandblasted Ristine’s name into the stone last week.

The memorial includes the names of local veterans who died while in military service.

Ostergard said a special ceremony to honor Doug and others whose names appear on the memorial, is planned at a later date.

Bullock describes the memorial as “the best thing that ever happened to me.”

He and Ostergard were instrumental in raising money, in a two-week period, for the stone that bears the names of fallen veterans. An American, Nebraskan and POW/MIA flag flutter above the memorial.

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Anyone with more information about Doug Ristine is asked to contact The Times at 537-3636 or news@gothenburgtimes.com.

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