

# Combs Hall

Compiled by Cameron Binkley, 16 August 2014

Building 627 - Combs Dining Facility

SFC Alfred H. Combs, USA, 1931-1965. Killed in action in the Republic of Vietnam, awarded Silver Star. Graduated from DLIWC Vietnamese course in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

Photograph IA.POM.2011.122-05

Presidio of Monterey, Building 627 and Building 629, Company A and Company C Barracks. Note: Company C was housed in Building 627, later known as Combs Hall. (CAB), 1966.<sup>2</sup>

Sfc. Alfred H. Combs studied Vietnamese at DLIWC in 1964 and was killed in Vietnam in 1965. DLIFLC barracks and dining facility "Combs Hall" is named in his honor.<sup>3</sup>

Sfc. Alfred H. Combs, KIA 25 June 1965 is listed on the DLIFLC Vietnam Memorial Plaque.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility of closing Combs Hall arose in May 1993 and family contacted Army about issue. Jack Combs, son of Al Combs, was apparent contact.<sup>5</sup>

Plaque for Sfc. Combs earned both the Silver Star and the Bronze Star during his tour in the Republic of Vietnam, Purple Heart. He was a graduate of the DLIWC Vietnamese Course of Instruction in 1963.

On 30 June 1970, the Defense Language Institute West Coast officially named Company A Barracks, Building 627, "Combs Hall" to honor Sfc. Alfred H. Combs, Jr., who was killed in action in the Republic of Vietnam in 25 June 1966. Combs graduated from the DLIWC Course in Vietnamese in 1963. The plaque on the building was unveiled by Mrs. Joan Combs, widow of Sfc. Combs. During the ceremony, Col. Kibbey M. Horne, Commandant of DLIWC, spoke and stated: "The Army is more than numbers, it is people. It is therefore appropriate that our buildings be should be named for our distinguished graduates who died while serving our country valiantly."<sup>6</sup>

Vietnam Wall Memorial Information about Sfc. Combs:

Alfred Henry Combs, Jr., was born Sunday, 11 January 1931 and was from Seaside, Ca. He was a while male Caucasian and married. He served in the Regular U.S. Army as a Sergeant First Class (E7) with the MOS 11B4P and was a military advisor. His SN was 12291842.

Combs started his tour in the Republic of Vietnam on Sunday, 27 January 1963, and was killed in action from hostile action by ground bomb explosion on Friday, 25 June 1965. He was 34. (Wall location is Panel 02E-Row 017.)<sup>7</sup>

MOS Codes of Vietnam Era: When the individual had advanced schooling or held a special training skill, a "Special Qualification Identifier" (SQI) replaced the last digit of his MOS. This letter indicated the individual's special qualification (e.g., If an MOS was 11B4P, this indicated that the soldier was an Infantryman [11B] NCO [4] Parachutist [P].)

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<sup>1</sup> Memorializations Listing for the Presidio of Monterey and the Ord Military Community, Revised July 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Photo of Combs Hall, entry from PastPerfect.

<sup>3</sup> James McNaughton, email to Art Gebbia, 30 December 1998, in RG 5-05, FF5.

<sup>4</sup> Vietnam Plaque List of Names, RG 5-04, FF1.

<sup>5</sup> Historian's Notes in RG 5-05, FF1.

<sup>6</sup> "DLIWC News—Plaque, Honors for Deceased Grad.," *Panorama*, 10 April 1970, pg. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Vietnam Wall internet site, reported 13 January 2001, in RG 5-05, FF1.



Summary from Archival Info:

Sfc. Alfred H. Combs, Jr., hometown was Seaside, Ca., and his family continued to live in the area up to 1993 (and apparently still today). Combs graduated from the DLIFLC West Coast Vietnamese Course of Instruction in 1963. He arrived in the Republic of Vietnam as a military advisor on 27 January 1963. He was an infantryman with parachutist qualifications. Combs was later killed in action by ground explosion on 25 June 1965. While in Vietnam, he earned both the Silver and Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. He is listed on both the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington, DC, and on the DLIFLC Vietnam Memorial Plaque honoring DLIFLC graduates. On 30 June 1970, the Defense Language Institute West Coast officially named Company A Barracks, Building 627, "Combs Hall" to honor Sfc. Alfred H. Combs, Jr. The plaque on the building was unveiled by Mrs. Joan Combs, widow of Sfc. Combs. During the ceremony, Col. Kibbey M. Horne, Commandant of DLIWC, spoke and stated: "The Army is more than numbers, it is people. It is therefore appropriate that our buildings should be named for our distinguished graduates who died while serving our country valiantly."

Recommendation on Name Change per John Elliott, DPW, request of 16 September 2014:

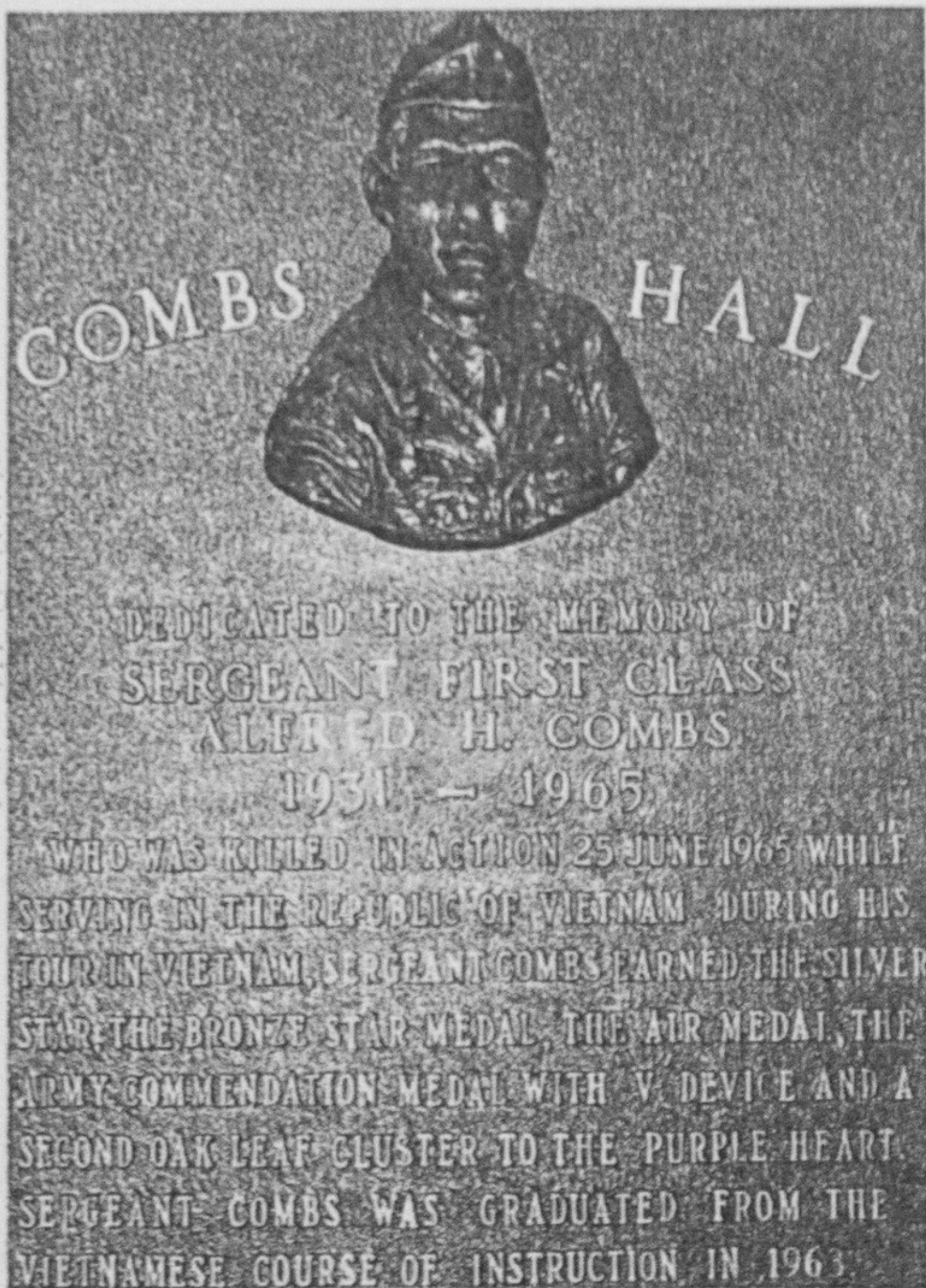
Combs Hall is named to honor a local veteran who died heroically serving his country as a combat soldier and military advisor and was in part qualified for that activity by having graduated from the DLIWC course in Vietnamese in 1963. Building 627 was at the time it was named, a U.S. Army barracks, which also contained a dining facility that only subsequently became known as "Combs Hall," but the entire building was named after Sfc. Combs, not just the dining facility. DLIWC named Combs Hall after Sfc. Combs because he was a combat veteran and DLIWC graduate. There is no special association connecting Sfc. Combs to the dining facility located in Building 627 found in the available records. Normally, there is no reason to change the name or decommission a plaque on an Army-owned building due to structural modifications. Building 627 will continue to operate after construction and the new dining facility has no tie to Sfc. Combs—it's just a new building going up on POM. I would say, therefore, that changing the name of Combs Hall or surrendering its plaque would be inappropriate. In my opinion, Building 627 should remain Combs Hall and the plaque should remain (although it may need to be relocated due to the construction). However, because the building is inhabited by U.S. Air Force personnel today, the Command may wish to consider renaming the building after an USAF graduate and transferring the current name to the new dining facility. I do not know if any regulation pertains to this, that would be a JAG question. I would say, as a historian, that I'd recommend against this idea because of the confusion it inevitably causes when a name long associated with one building is moved to another on the same post. This is similar to what happens when buildings are renumbered or given new addresses. I would avoid it without a good reason. So, my recommendation is to do nothing, i.e., keep the current name, Combs Hall, on Building 627.

Cameron Binkley



# DLIWC NEWS

## Plaque, Honors For Deceased Grad.



**MEMORIAL PLAQUE** to Sergeant First Class Alfred H. Combs Jr., unveiled by Mrs. Combs at a dedication ceremony at Combs Hall.

(U.S. Army photo by Pfc Geren)

In a special dedication ceremony held March 30, Company A Barracks Building 627, Defense Language Institute, West Coast Branch (DLIWC), officially became Combs Hall. The building is the second of many permanent buildings at DLIWC scheduled to receive a name.

Colonel Kibbey M. Horne, commandant, said, "The Army is more than numbers, it is people.

"It is therefore appropriate," he said, "that our buildings should be named for our distinguished graduates who died while serving our country valiantly."

Mrs. Joan Combs, widow of Sergeant First Class Alfred H. Combs Jr., unveiled the memorial plaque which bears her husband's name.

Sgt. Combs was killed June 25, 1965, as a result of hostile action while serving in Vietnam. While there, the former DLIWC student earned the Silver Star, the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device and a Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart. He received three Gallantry Crosses and two Medals of Honor from the Republic of Vietnam.