



Lieutenant Colonel (Dr) Steven Kruse  
Medical Corps  
United States Army

Vietnam May 31, 1968 – June 15, 1969

LTC Kruse was drafted into the United States Army, Medical Corps, in 1967. After training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, he was deployed to Vietnam on May 31, 1968.

**“I had a month’s training at Fort Sam before assignment. The training covered military protocol and a bit about the mission of the Medical Corps physicians in Vietnam. It was all interesting, but one experience was highly nonmedical – I was one of the oldest and highest-ranked physician draftees in the group, and as such got to drill our unit of about forty or so individuals in marching maneuvers and military formations.”**

The first half of LTC Kruse’s tour was spent at LZ (Landing Zone) Baldy, headquarters of the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, an element of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, 30 miles south of Da Nang. Here, LTC Kruse was in a clearing station, part of a three-doctor team receiving casualties and treating illnesses. As the ranking medical officer, he was appointed commander.

**“There was hardly a day that we didn’t see at least a few war casualties, a lot of them Vietnamese civilians.”**

**“A Huey was kept ready to go at the helipad, and one of my least favorite recollections is hearing it start to wind up for takeoff in the middle of the night. That meant we would be receiving clientele shortly, with who knew what – sometimes a soldier with a fever (usually malaria) to some of the most horrible wounds I’ve ever seen, or ever want to.”**

The second half of his tour, he was assigned to hospitals, first at Qui Nhon and then Nha Trang.

LTC Kruse’s tour ended on June 15, 1969. He returned home to his wife, Frances, and his six children.

**“I don’t have any medals, not even a campaign ribbon. No one mentioned a word about such when I was being discharged, I was in a hurry to leave, and I decided whatever might be available, I didn’t want it. No one has ever asked me about this, not even our children, but I have had my answer all ready – ‘no medals for saving lives, just for taking them’- not too fair, but good for deflecting further conversation. If anyone deserved a medal, it was Frances, for being alone with five kids for what was a very long year.”**

\*source: Vietnam 1968-1969, Steven Kruse