

Ukrainian American Veterans' Contributions to America's Wars- Major Myron Diduryk

November 8, 2019 by Cadet Brandon P. Hrycak, University of California-Irvine, Class of 2020

I have just graduated this Summer from Army Reserve Officer Training Corps' Advanced Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky. During my senior year at college as I prepare for my commissioning in the United States Army at graduation next year, I am in awe of Ukrainian American Veterans' contribution to America's Wars in from its inception during the American Revolution, through to the War in Iraq, where my father, LTC (Ret.) Michael P. Hrycak, and his generation served.

Many Ukrainian Americans have served in the United States' Armed Forces, but an outstanding example of the contribution to the War in Vietnam, which stopped the global expansion of communism, is Major Myron Diduryk, who served in the United States Army from his commissioning in 1960 through his death by a sniper round in Vietnam in 1970.

Myron Diduryk was born in Muzhyliv, Ukraine, on July 15, 1938, and immigrated to the United States with his parents, Andrij and Isabella Newiacheny, in 1950. He attended Saint Peter's Preparatory School, followed by St. Peter's College in Jersey City, graduating in 1960 with a bachelor's degree in Physics, and commissioning as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. His life was typical of the Ukrainian Diaspora: he attended Plast, Ukrainian Boy Scouting, in Jersey City, and later as a "starshiy plastun" joined the Siromantsi Plast fraternity, as well as Ukrainian school. As a student, he worked during the summer at Soyuzivka, in Kerhonkson, New York, a gathering place for the Ukrainian Diaspora.

2LT Myron Diduryk served initially as a Platoon Leader in Europe, and deployed to Vietnam in 1965, as B Company Commander, of the 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry Regiment (2/7 Cavalry) of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). It was toward the end of the day on November 14, 1965, that Captain Diduryk, with his 120 Soldiers, arrived as a reinforcing company for Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore's 1st Battalion 7th Cavalry Regiment, after the Battle of Ia Drang Valley had initiated earlier that day at Landing Zone X-Ray.

Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore's 1/7 Cavalry had been sent to the East of the Chu Prong (Prong Mountain) of the Central Highlands by his 3rd Brigade Commander, Colonel Thomas Brown, to find two suspected North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regiments that had attempted to seize a Special Forces' camp at the Montagnard village of Plei Me. The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was a unit of the United States Army that had been reorganized and equipped to fly their Soldiers into battle utilizing helicopters. The Battle of Ia Drang Valley was the first major tactical employment testing this concept.

On the morning of November 14, 1965, LTC Moore had airlifted his battalion, as much as the helicopters could carry at a time, and was shaping the battle. By the afternoon he was fully engaged and had requested reinforcements, which CPT Diduryk's B Company 2/7

Regiment comprised. CPT Diduryk also had an exemplary Platoon Leader, Second Lieutenant Rick Rescorla, who had previously served in the British Army and had volunteered to serve in the Vietnam War. When the fighting became more intense the next day, LTC Moore shifted CPT Diduryk's B Company into reserve, and later committed them to reinforcing his C Company. CPT Diduryk immediately had his Soldiers dig foxholes, establish interweaving fields of fire, and then during the night he and 2LT Rescorla visited their positions and ordered them to fix bayonets. The next morning, November 16, 2019, Diduryk and Rescorla fought off three regimental attacks, outnumbered over eight to one, and didn't lose a Soldier but inflicted heavy NVA casualties. CPT Diduryk worked with LTC Moore and his Forward Observer to repeatedly illuminate and then attack with artillery and Close Air Support (CAS) all the attacking NVA formations. As later Lieutenant General Hal Moore and Joseph Galloway recounted in their memoir, *We Were Soldier Once, and Young*, "The Ukrainian Diduryk and the Englishman Rescorla," write the authors, "were destined, over the next 72 hours to become battlefield legends in the 7th Calvary - as much for their style as for their fearless leadership under fire." LTC Moore called Diduryk the "Mad Kozak" and Rescorla the finest Platoon Leader he had ever served with, including himself in the Korean War.

This is just one example of the quality of Ukrainian Americans that have served our great Nation, maintaining our freedom. Ukrainian American Veterans' Post 30, including founder Jurij Jacus, who was a friend and fellow Plast Siromantsi member, chose Major Myron Diduryk as their patron.