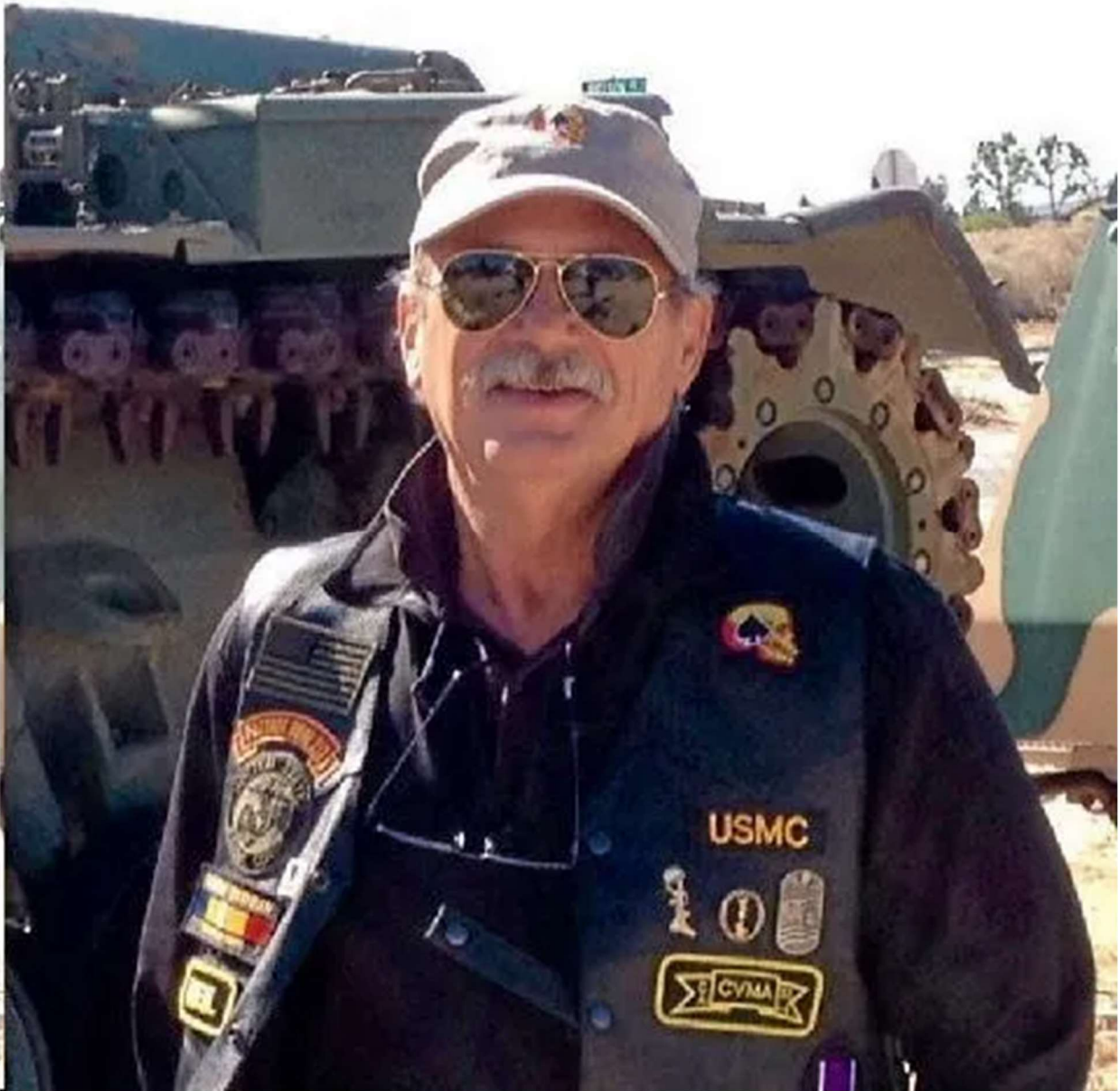


Neil Talbert



SCOTTS VALLEY >> Retired Lance Cpl. Cornelius “Neil” Talbert, 69, of the U.S. Marine Corps was struck and killed by a car Friday while riding his motorcycle south on Highway 17 near Redwood Estates.

A decorated veteran of the Vietnam War who suffered extensive wounds in combat, Talbert spent much of his life reaching out to other wounded soldiers and pursuing his passion for BMW and Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Described as a “typical kid,” Talbert spent a great deal of time outdoors camping, hiking, canoeing and surfing.

Atypical, however, was a youth spent in far-flung locations such as Panama, Japan, Hawaii, Seattle, Pensacola, San Diego and Ames, Iowa due to his father’s naval career.

In 1963, Talbert and his two younger brothers moved to Pasatiempo, outside Santa Cruz, and eventually attended Soquel High School. However, before graduating, Talbert entered the Marine Corps.

On May 28, 1968, Talbert was one of 88 Marines of Foxtrot company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment who were engaged by an North Vietnamese Army battalion of more than 500 men near Khe Sanh. During the fighting, known today as the [Battle for Foxtrot Ridge](#), 13 Marines died and 44 more were wounded; in addition, 230 enemy soldiers were killed.

“Neil woke up in a hospital in Japan and, at the time, assumed the rest of his regiment were dead,” said brother Haran Kandadas, who changed his name from Peter Talbert.

“After he came back to the States, he spent a year in Oak Knoll Hospital up in Oakland.”



Talbert's left foot had been shattered by gunfire; his right knee had been destroyed; he suffered shrapnel wounds in his back; and he had bullet fragments in his right arm, which caused nerve damage. He also suffered from a profound case of PTSD, which made it difficult for him to be social, according to Kandadas.

Despite these injuries, Talbert worked for the University of California for nearly 10 years before devoting his time to helping other veterans and riding his beloved motorcycles.

A lifelong rider, Talbert favored BMWs and Harley-Davidsons, but also owned a Vespa scooter he enjoyed riding. He was an early member of the BMW Motorcycle Owners of America and rode extensively with the unaffiliated Santa Cruz Harley-Davidson owner's group after bonding with other Marines. Over the years, he participated in numerous long distance rides to raise awareness for U.S. military veterans and the Wounded Warriors organization, including a 2008 cross-country trip to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.

“He took charcoal rubbings of 16 names on the wall of friends he had served with in Vietnam,” said Kandadas. “It was 40 years to the day after he was injured.”

When Santa Cruz police detectives Sgt. Loran “Butch” Baker and Elizabeth Butler were shot and killed in the line of duty in 2013, Talbert designed a memorial insignia featuring a black banded Santa Cruz Police Department shield that officers and the public displayed prominently for months.



NEIL TALBERT

Born: Feb. 9, 1947.

Died: July 22, 2016.

Home: Scotts Valley.

**Occupation: Retired lance corporal,
Marine Corps.**

Survivors: Girlfriend, Sally Hess; two brothers, Haran Kandadas (Peter Talbert) and George Talbert; son, David Talbert; daughter, Alison Talbert; cousin, Marcia Talbert, stepmother, Patricia Talbert and step-sister Cindy Rutan.

Services: Oakwood Chapel, 3301 Paul Sweet Road;
Date and time to be determined. For more
information, contact [Santa Cruz Memorial](#) at 831-426-
1601.



Retired Marine Lance Cpl. Neil Talbert, right, frequently went on long motorcycle rides to raise awareness for veterans' groups. Also pictured is friend Iraja Siva-Das, who served with Talbert in Vietnam.