

knowledge to the rest of the world the sacrifices they made by military service, and the sacrifices from their families," said Inspector Tony Boyle, who helped develop the idea for the ribbon. "The ribbon acknowledges both."

James Kline

Policing was in Jimmy Kline's blood. His father, the late William Kline, was a police sergeant.

Jimmy Kline lived with his parents, two older brothers and sister in Burholme. His mother still lives in the same home.

Jimmy Kline graduated from Cardinal Dougherty in 1961 and studied political science at La Salle College.

At the end of his junior year, on Father's Day in 1964, his father died of a cerebral hemorrhage. A few months later, Jimmy withdrew from college and applied to be a police officer.

He was assigned first to the 7th District in Northeast Philadelphia, then to the 25th District in North Philadelphia, where his father had been assigned.

After barely a year on the force, he was drafted.

"Had his father lived, I think everything would have been different," said his mom, Helen Kline. "He probably would have stayed in school because his father wanted all of his sons to have a college education."

Staying in college at that time meant a draft deferment. Police officers were exempted from military service, but the exemption didn't go into effect until about six months after Jimmy was drafted, said his sister Helen White.

Helen Kline remembers her son's reaction when he got the draft notice.

"He said, 'I don't want to go,'" she recalled, her eyes filling with tears with the old memories.

Jimmy was a Spc. 4 in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry, in the 199th Infantry Brigade. He went to Vietnam in October 1967, and was stationed near Saigon.

"Don't worry about me. I'll be alright," his first letter to his mother read.

He saved the details for his Uncle Walt, a World War II veteran.

"We don't have front lines over here like you did," he wrote his uncle. "We can never be sure the VC [Viet Cong] ain't behind us or on the sides."

His letter, dated, May 13, 1968, said he'd been shot in the knee —

"It took a hunk of meat off my knee cap, that's all. It doesn't bother me that much." He didn't tell his mom about the injury.

Back home, his sister was preparing to marry her boyfriend. They chose Oct. 4, 1968, as the wedding date so her brother could be there. It would have been the end of his tour of duty.

But the day after he was shot in the knee, he ran into trouble.

It was a dark night with heavy rain, according to military accounts. Jimmy was an assistant machine-gunner and was helping to secure the perimeter of his company's base camp when a large Viet Cong force attacked.

The enemy took control of several bunker positions, and during the fierce battle that followed, several U.S. soldiers were wounded and stranded in the open.

Kline — limping from his knee wound — left his safe position and braved enemy gunfire to help six of his injured comrades out of harm's way. He then began checking for other trapped soldiers, discovering two wounded Americans pinned in an enemy-held bunker.

He attacked the bunker, killing two enemy soldiers. Then Viet Cong bullets cut him down.

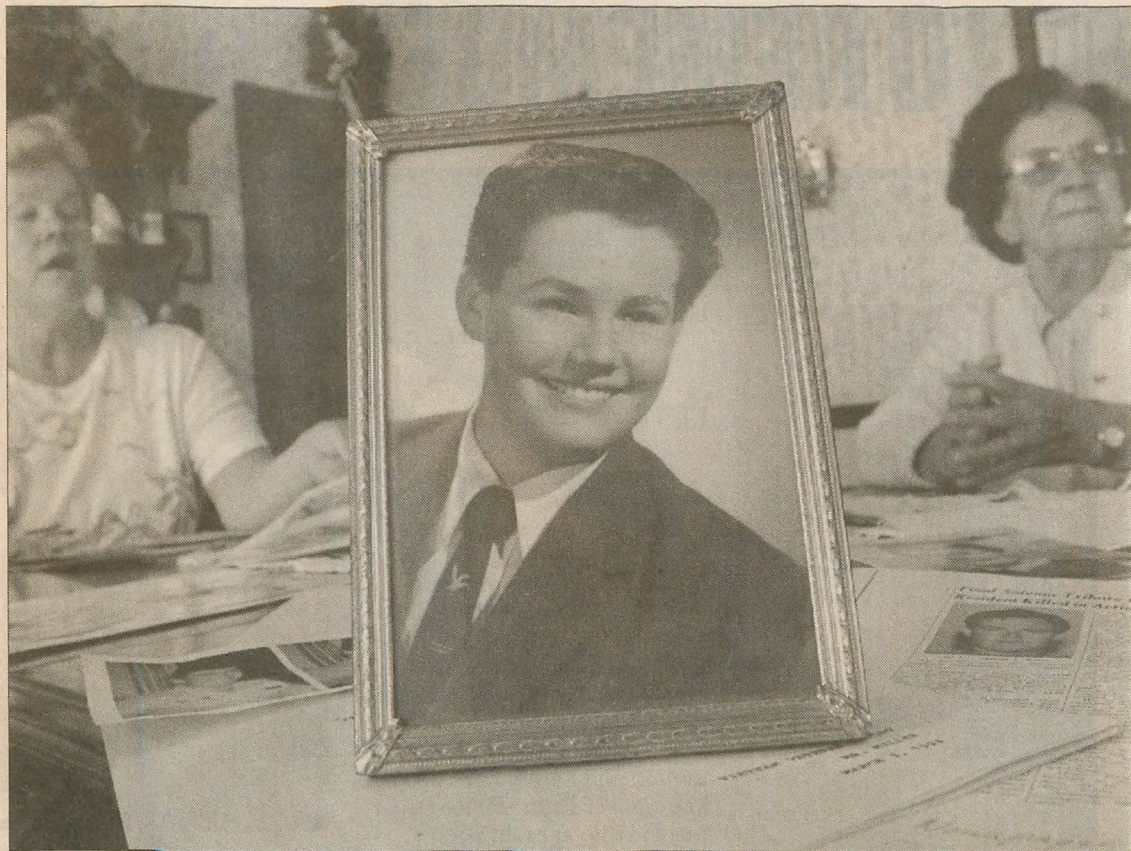
"Specialist Kline's extraordi-

nary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army," says a letter awarding him the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously.

"Why did he have to be so good-hearted?" his mother whispered.

"He was only a son. A student. He never got to be an uncle. A husband. A father," said his sister, Helen White, 59. "So there's a lot of roles in our lives we've been able to enjoy and experience and he has not."

His sister named one of her sons in his honor.



JENNIFER MIDBERRY/Daily News

Kline's sister, Helen White (left), shown with her mother, Helen, said, "There's a lot of roles in our lives we've been able to enjoy and experience and he has not."