



Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

January 2011, Issue 23

~ 2/503d Photos of the Month ~ 45 Years Ago, January 1966

Dust Off of wounded 2/503d trooper on 2 January 1966, Operation Marauder in the Mekong Delta.



Bn CO, LTC George Dexter with RTO Connelly at LZ Wine, 2 January 1966.



Jan '66. C/2/503d CO, Capt. Tom Faley with Capt. Bencer, Sgt. Belcher and men inspect captured enemy materiel.

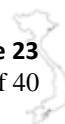
You can see all issues of our newsletter to date at either of these web sites:

www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php or http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / January 2011 – Issue 23

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New Year, New Beginning

By Rev. Dr. Ron Smith
1LT, FO, B/2/503d

The month of January is named after Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. Janus was symbolized by a man with two faces--one looking back, and the other looking ahead. Some people have trouble looking ahead with hope, because they keep looking back and moping over mistakes of the past. Their outlook for the future is dim and their enthusiasm is dampened. But there is no use "crying over spilled milk". History is likely to repeat itself if we keep on groaning over failures of the old year, or continue complaining about the injustices that we have suffered in the past. Nothing is ever gained by continually grieving over the past.



The heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the astonishing statement that,

"In Christ we have a new beginning".

Read again how Paul presents these wonderful words of a fresh, new beginning:

"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against him."
[II Corinthians 5:16-19^A]

January is a great time to make a fresh start.

Competitors in track and field or swimming events want to avoid a "false start". If one individual comes off the block or the diving platform early, then all of the contestants are called back to line-up for another attempt. A "false start" is called when one participant "jumps the gun" to have an unfair advantage. Too many "false starts" will disqualify the competitor from the race.

Each of us has had "false starts" in life. There have been times when we have started out in a certain direction and wished we could turn back and make a fresh start. Too often, however, we simply stumble on seeking to make the best of a poor beginning.

At the beginning of a New Year, we often make feeble attempts to get on the right track. "New Year's resolutions" is our name for those usually aborted efforts. What is needed, of course, is a brand new start--a clean slate.

There is a proven way to erase our "false starts" and actually begin again with a new life. Jesus Christ explained that fresh start to a distinguished teacher who had come to visit him, making this startling statement:

"I tell you the truth; no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again." [John 3:3]

Jesus says a new life requires an unmistakable, radical transformation--a new start that compares with birth.

You may have wondered about your erratic past and been dissatisfied with a spotty record. If only you could make a new start. Some of us want to "quit smoking." Others might want to "quit drinking." A few might want to "quit using profanity." For some of us, we want to "quit viewing images of individuals in erotic, suggestive poses or video screens." For others, we want to "begin anew with a better relationship with our spouse, or perhaps our parents or even our children." And many of us might want to "shed ten, or twenty, or thirty pounds." The goal is to stop eating certain foods and exercise more.

The gospel is not just an opportunity to simply quit a bad habit or start some new, good habits--it is an entirely new life. It is like being born all over again. It is a real fresh start. To anyone who will acknowledge that his or her life has been marred and unworthy, God offers a possibility of a fresh start, a new birth and a new life. This takes place when you admit your need and trust Jesus Christ, who died for your sins, and receive Him in your life as your new chief executive officer. A few verses later in John, chapter three, we have the most famous verse in the entire Bible, John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

That new start can be yours at the very moment you trust Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, writing about this, says in II Corinthians, 5:17:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come!"

We can erase all of the false starts by placing our lives in the hands of God through Jesus Christ. A truly fresh start and Happy New Year comes from Jesus Christ.





VA Launching New Personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is piloting new, personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbooks. The handbooks are tailored to provide enrolled Veterans with the most relevant health benefits information based on their own specific eligibility. In essence, each handbook will be written for the individual Veteran.

“These handbooks will give Veterans everything they need to know and leave out everything that doesn’t apply to them,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *“Our Veterans will now have a comprehensive, easy to understand roadmap to the medical benefits they earned with their service.”*

In addition to highlighting each Veteran’s specific health benefits, the handbook also provides contact information for the Veteran’s preferred local facility, ways to schedule personal appointments, guidelines for communicating treatment needs and an explanation of the Veteran’s responsibilities, such as copayments when applicable.

“Enhancing access isn’t just about expanding the kinds of services VA provides. It also includes making sure we do everything we can to ensure Veterans have a clear understanding of the benefits available to them so they can make full use of the services they have earned,” Shinseki said.

The new handbooks will initially be available only to certain Veterans in Cleveland and Washington, D.C. areas.

Following the pilot phase, full implementation is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2011 for across the country.

Additional information, go to va.gov/healtheligibility or call VA’s toll-free number at **1-877-222-VETS (8387)**.



Hooking Up

This is Jake Singer. I was with A Company 2/503d from '67 to '69, and am looking for Cpt. Michael R. Jennings at that time.

singerjake@hotmail.com

Who are these three sharp lookin' Sky Soldiers from Bravo?



Chargin' Charlies' Guidon

Charlie Company guidon listing names of NCOs and officers of C/2/503d who presented it to then Capt. John “Jack” Leide, MG (Ret), in 1967.



Can Anyone Help Our CAV Brother?

I was told by a member of the Association that you might be able to guide me in the right direction to find this 18"H x 24"W photo of the 173d Abn Bde flag with streamers. I was presented this from another Sky Soldier many years ago and he has since passed on. While recently moving, I busted the glass-framed picture and scratched the color film very badly. I would like to replace it since it has a lot of sentimental value to me.

Joseph Socie, E-Troop, '67-'68

grnbrt@zoominternet.net



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The Military Coalition VETERANS Committee Legislative Goals for 2011

Tuesday, December 21, 2010

Legislative Goals for 2011

from Paul Sutton

http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-4139756/TMC-Veterans-committee-legislative-goals.html

TMC VETERANS Committee Legislative Goals For 2011

Presumptive Service-Connected Eligibility for Agent Orange Exposure, Blue Water Navy

- * Monitor Institute of Medicine's (IOM) independent review of research of "blue water" Vietnam veterans' health and Agent Orange-related diseases.
- * Blue Water Navy Agent Orange Legislation. Support introduction of legislation, if necessary, to award presumptive service connection for veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam during that conflict.

From George Claxton

Ever since the initiation of the "Agent Orange/Dioxin" problem, thousands of studies have been undertaken to prove and disprove the dilemma that science has been burdened with. When one study is introduced that shows a positive connection between Agent Orange/Dioxin, another study is published to deny the suggestion.

The projected reality of this type of conjecture is confusion and a perception that the problem cannot be alleviated either way. It would be incredible to believe that these poisons (dioxin like) do not rake havoc on veterans and other gullible victims. After all the International Agency for Research on Cancer has said that 2,3,7,8-TCDD, PCB 126, and 2,3,4,7,8-Pentachlorodibenzofuran are all HUMAN CARCINOGENS. There is one consistency, however, and that is a correlation of negative studies from the people whom have the most to lose by seeing the poisons banned.

DOW Chemical Company is one manufacturer that created products that contain dioxin like compounds. They (DOW) have done many studies on these products or by-products. I think you have the right to judge on the motives behind these studies. Therefore, I suggest to you that you walk over to your computer and look on the Internet for a blog titled "DIOXINSPIN"

(http://www.dioxinspin.com/flawed_science.htm.)

After you have printed it all out, I'm sure that you will be sadly awakened to the reality of the massive problem in the world concerning dioxin like poisons.

Faithfully submitted, George Claxton

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]

HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY TO COL. "RAWHIDE" BOLAND COMMANDING OFFICER 1/503d



Colonel Boland in Yuma, AZ.

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We are saddened to report the passing of Nora Sinclair, wife of our buddy, Cowboy chopper pilot, Tony Geishauser.



Tony, our thoughts are with you, Nora and your family.





173d REUNION ITINERARY

(Tentative, subject to change)



June 22 -- Wednesday

1200 - 2000 Registration
1300 - 0100 Hospitality Room
1300 - 2200 Vendors
1800 - 2000 President's Reception



June 23 -- Thursday

0900 - 1200 Board of Director's Meeting
1000 - 1700 Registration
1000 - 2200 Vendors
1300 - 2400 Hospitality Room

June 27 -- Friday

0730 - 0900 Gold Star Reception & Breakfast
0900 - 1500 Registration
1000 - 2400 Hospitality Room
1000 - 2200 Vendors
1000 - Board buses for trip to Fort Sam Houston
1030 - 1500 Tour Fort Sam Houston
1700 - 2300 BBQ, Mariachis, Dance at Maverick Plaza



June 25 -- Saturday

0900 - 1100 Registration
0900 - 1200 General Membership Meeting
1000 - 1200 Ladies' Brunch
1000 - 2200 Vendors
1000 - 1200 Hospitality Room

BANQUET DINNER

1815 - 1850 Cocktails
1900 - 1910 Post Colors
1930 - 2035 Dinner
2035 - 2130 Speakers & Awards
2130 Retire Colors
2135 - ??? Entertainment & Dancing

Maverick Plaza

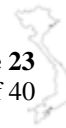
June 26 -- Sunday

0830 - 1000 Continental Breakfast
1030 - 1130 Memorial Service, Arneson River Theater
1130 - Reunion closing. Depart or stay and see more of San Antonio.



The Alamo

Reunion web site: <http://www.skysoldiers.com>





173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION ~ REUNION 2011 ~



22 June – 26 June 2011, San Antonio, TX

Hosted by Texas Chapter 13

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

Unit served with in the Brigade _____ Dates served _____

Circle Shirt Size: S M L XL 2XL 3XL Male/Female _____

Exact hat size _____ (Note: A cowboy hat will be given to the 173d member above if Registration Form and hat size are received by March 1, 2011.

Guests:

Circle Male or Female and Shirt Size for each guest

Name _____ Relationship: _____ M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL

Name _____ Relationship: _____ M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL

Name _____ Relationship: _____ M / F size S M L XL 2XL 3XL

Registration/ Event Fees

- ___ \$173.00 per Association Member
- ___ \$125.00 per Guest
- ___ \$125.00 per Gold Star Family Member
- ___ \$ 75.00 per Active Duty Soldier (Not on Orders)
- ___ FREE Active Duty Soldiers on Orders (i.e., Command, Color Guard)
- ___ \$ 75.00 per Vendor Table
- ___ FREE Gold Star Brunch – 173d Gold Star Families
- ___ Brunch Ladies Brunch (Included with registration)
- ___ Please check if planning to attend.
- ___ \$ 15.00 Trip to Fort Sam Houston per person
- ___ \$ 15.00 Sky Soldier Adoption Program “Have a meal on me” for active duty soldiers



Hilton Palacio del Rio, San Antonio, Texas

\$ _____ Total Enclosed

Make Checks Payable to: [Texas Reunion 2011 – 173d Airborne Brigade](#)

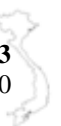
Mail Checks to: John Rolfe, 100 Oleander Road, Comfort, TX 78013



For Hotel Reservations: Hilton Palacio del Rio, \$119 + tax per night. Call 1-800-HILTONS and request the group rate for The 173d Airborne Brigade Association, Inc., or use the unique group code ABA.

Overflow Hotel: Menger Hotel, \$119 + tax per night, Call: 1-800-345-9285 and request the group rate for the 173d Airborne Brigade Association.

To Register Online, visit www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011



The Battle of Dong Tre, RVN

December 27, 1967

Hello my Dustoff Friends. It has been 43 years ago today, December 27, 1967, since the fierce battle at Dong Tre, Vietnam, II Corps, BQ 899792. The 173d Airborne, A, B and D companies of the 3rd Battalion, 503rd Infantry began a helicopter combat assault. They landed next to a battalion of North Vietnamese Regulars that were dug in on the hill above the LZ. I, medic SP4 Neal Stanley, was flying with Dustoff90 Aircraft Commander 1LT Jerry Roe, pilot WO1 John Lama, and crewchief SP5 Levander Watson. Flying "first up" that day, we were returning from another mission when we heard our 50th Med Det (Hel-Amb) commander, Dustoff96 Major Ron Jones, radio Dustoff Operations telling of the severe situation and to get all the Dustoff crews out to the SF camp at Dong Tre, which was five miles from the battle. Major Jones' crew was pilot 1Lt. George Wiles, medic SP5 Gerald Sterns and crewchief PFC Hugh Howell. Dustoff98 with aircraft commander WO2 Clifford Watson, pilot CPT Ron Porta, crewchief SP4 Russell Wright, and medic SP4 Ric Painter made one pick-up and took two bullets into the chin bubble of the aircraft.

They shut down at Dong Tre to examine the damage to the aircraft. With air support from F-100 jets and helicopter gunships, Dustoff96 and Dustoff90 crews made multiple trips into the hot LZs to rescue the wounded. We took them to the airstrip at Dong Tre



Neal with his Dust Off, 1967.

where they were off-loaded onto our other choppers for the longer trip to the 91st Evac Hospital at Tuy Hoa. Thirty-nine men were wounded and twelve were killed that day.

Two years ago I researched the 173d Airborne website to find the names of the twelve men who were killed that day. Below is a poster that I place at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, The Wall, in Washington DC every day that I am there. I have been a National Park Service Volunteer at the Wall the past three years and have met many men of the 173d Airborne who remember the battle of Dong Tre.

Please raise a toast and say a prayer for these brave men.

Neal A. Stanley
nastanley@aol.com



A tribute to the men of the 3rd Bn, 503rd Inf, 173d Abn Bde who were killed and wounded in the fierce battle at Dong Tre, II Corps. December 27, 1967

Panel 32E

PFC John R. Arrington -- Columbus, IN....Line 68
SP4 Richard N. Eddy -- Buffalo, NY....Line 74
PVT Michael D. Fuller -- Des Moines, IA....Line 72
PFC Francis D. Greenwood -- Oxford, IN....Line 72
SP4 Bruce Hall -- Midland, TX....Line 72
PFC Mose Hegler, Jr. -- Magazine Point, AL....Line 72
CPL Ted D. Holliman, Jr. -- Greensboro, NC....Line 73
PFC Dan T. Klindt -- Astoria, OR....Line 76
PFC Irville J. Knox -- Sturgis, MI....Line 76
CPL Michael J. Minor -- Columbus, OH....Line 79
SGT Ben Owens -- Indianapolis, IN....Line 79
CPL Gary R. Schwellengbach -- Chico, CA.... Line 81



DAPPER ED



Dr. Ed Carns, Recon/Alpha Co., 2/503d, '66-'67

In last month's issue of our newsletter, we asked, *"Who is this dapper 2/503d trooper?"* Here's what you said:

"Ed Carns, MD, former Platoon Leader in A/2/503 is the be-spectacled, suited individual about which you seek an identity."

Roy Lombardo
B/2/503d

Roger that Roy. You're the first in, you win the prize!! You get to buy me a rum and coke the next time we hook up. Congratulations Ranger!! Ed

The photo in question is Ed Carns, he was my platoon leader in HHQ Recon in '66-'67. Great guy. He is now a doctor and living in Ft Sill, OK."

Pat Bowe
Recon/2/503d

"Ed Carns was my platoon leader in Recon in 1966. He was a big reason a lot of us made it home. Much to our regret he was promoted to Captain and put in charge of a line company. He was a great leader and a greater person. It was an honor to have known him. He is a medical doctor now."

Joe Lamb
Recon/2/503d

"That's Ed Carns. His birth date is Dec 12. He was born at West Point, NY. His father was a Calvary officer there. Toward the end of Junction City I, we were doing long sweeps every day going out of the fire support base at the same area. On our return one day just as we were in sight of the FSB, Ed called a company formation. Everyone is WTF? He ripped us a new asshole for getting loud and sloppy. I first saw Ed at a reunion in Chicago during the eighties. About six or seven guys from A Co. were talking to him and I reminded him of that day. When I quoted him verbatim, he got a good laugh as did we all. *'How many times have we been down that fucking trail? You think you own that fucking trail? You think your fucking asses are golden?!'* The wrath of Captain Carns! I was in the back of my Platoon and I can tell you the pucker index was intense. Shit, we thought Charlie was bad, don't piss off Carns! As we ended our meeting, I said to Ed, *'I know I speak for all of us...we would have followed you anywhere!'* The look on his face in reply was priceless and a reinforcement of the honor to have served with him. He was a great CO. He was wounded April 12th or 13th when we went into a hot LZ. He spent a few months in the hospital in Japan. Eventually he was medically discharged and put himself through med school. For many years he was a E.R. MD and has spent two or three weeks a year going to third-world countries volunteering on medical missions. We are fortunate to have people like Ed in our ranks."

Bill Nicholls
A/2/503d



Ed Carns, second from right, in company formation at Camp Zinn.





173d Airborne Brigade Memorial DVD



The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation DVD of the memorial dedication at Fort Benning, GA held June 1, 2010, is now available for purchase. Order early for Christmas! What a great gift to give a Sky Soldier buddy, the family of a Sky Soldier and those who served with the 173d.

All monies raised from the sale of DVD's will go to the perpetual care of the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial. This is not the power point slide presentation which was circulated, but a video, in DVD format, which is over one-hour long and covers the entire dedication ceremony.

If you need further information please contact Craig Ford, Treasurer, 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation, email: cford1503@frontier.com or call Craig at: [425-422-7976](tel:425-422-7976)

~ DVD Order Form ~

Please send check or money order to the address below and
payable to the:

173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation
(please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____



Number of DVD's ordered ____ at \$20.00 per DVD: \$ _____

First Class shipping for one or two DVD's is \$2.00 total:* \$ _____

Priority Mail shipping for three or more DVD's is \$5.00 total:* \$ _____

Check or money order enclosed for this total amount: USD \$ _____

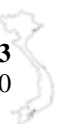
(Please email Craig for postage rates to outside North America)

Please mail to:

173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation 17207

76th Avenue, W., Edmonds, WA 98026 U.S.A.

~ Please allow two (2) weeks for delivery ~



ELEANOR GRACE ALEXANDER

Captain, Army Nurse Corps
85th Evacuation Hospital at Qui Nhon

Alexander was born Sept. 18, 1940. She grew up in Queens, New York and moved with her family to River Vale in Bergen County. She graduated with a nursing degree from D'Youville College in Buffalo in 1961. She worked as an emergency room nurse in upstate New York and as an emergency room supervisor in New York city. Her friends knew her as Rocky.

She decided in 1967 to join the service and go to Vietnam as a nurse before she had any family obligations.

Rocky interviewed with all four branches of the service before deciding on the Army Nurse Corps. Only the Army would guarantee her a tour of duty in Vietnam. After six weeks of training at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, she was shipped to Vietnam on June 6, 1967. She left behind a cedar chest with Fieldcrest towels and a gown, for the wedding she hoped to have one day.



Rocky

Alexander was assigned to work as a surgical technician at a 250-bed hospital on the outskirts of Qui Nhon, in the Central Highlands.

In November 1967, she volunteered to go with other medical personnel from the 85th Evac to Dak To, a town 60 miles north. American troops were involved in intense battle there. Alexander and the others worked long days patching up the wounded.

Alexander became the first and only New Jersey woman killed in Vietnam on the last day of that month, when her work in Dak To was through. On completion of their duties they were returning to Qui Nhon in a C-7B Caribou. During approach into Qui Nhon, the pilot was advised the airfield had gone below landing minimums due to low clouds, rain and limited visibility. The pilot accepted a divert to Nha Trang but crashed into a mountain-side about 5 miles south of Qui Nhon. Everyone aboard the aircraft died, including 4 air crewman and 22 passengers.

She was awarded a Purple Heart. The top nursing medal at her alma mater is named for her. So are a football field and a street in her hometown.

Alexander is buried in a family plot in St. Andrew's Cemetery in River Vale.



Thanks Ladies, Wherever You Are

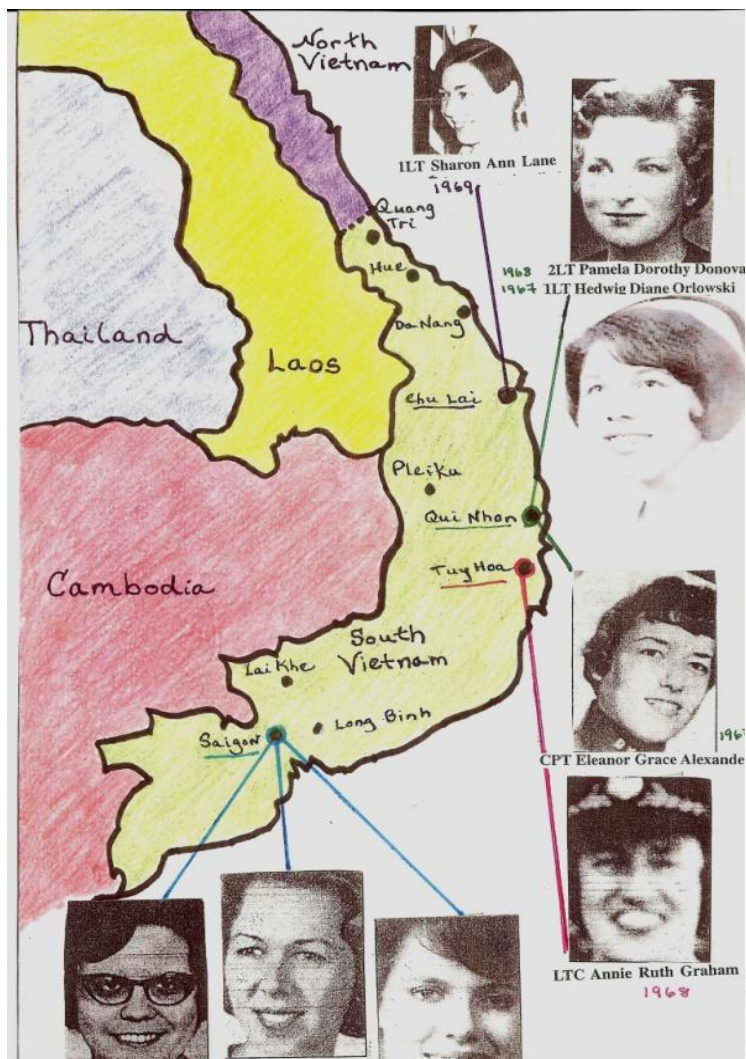
Years ago Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d, '66-'67, and I were traveling to the Tampa area early one morning to attend the funeral of 2/503d Command Sergeant Major, Ed Proffitt. We had time available so we decided to stop for breakfast at a Denny's. We were both wearing our 173d ball caps.

Sitting a few tables away were two ladies in our age group dressed in military nurse's attire. We all exchanged smiles, and they soon finished their meal and left.

Shortly thereafter Bill and I called the waitress over and asked for our check. The young girl told us, "Those two ladies paid for your meals."

Thanks ladies, wherever you are, and, Welcome Home sisters.

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d, '65-'66



AIRBORNE MUSEUM NEW LOOK

If you have not recently visited the Airborne and Special Operations Museum located in Fayetteville, NC, you will probably not recognize its entrance. Thanks to the Airborne and Special Operations Museum Foundation and the City of Fayetteville, the Museum has a new look!

As you emerge from the Museum's front door, you will see two newly emplaced statues and surrounding the area, a new Veterans Park. Part of an initiative to "spruce up" Fayetteville, the Park is part of a major face lift being applied to the area.

Anyone who has been stationed at or visited Fort Bragg should easily recognize the first statue. The venerable "Iron Mike" has left the Post and now proudly resides in front of the Museum. At a greater distance in the Veterans Park is a newly sculptured rendering of General Hugh Shelton, donated by Ross Perot. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shelton is one of our own, having served in the Herd in Vietnam.

Engraved pavers similar to those located on the front and rear patios of the Museum may be purchased through the Museum Gift. The Gift Shop also has a wide array of Airborne items that are suitable for gifts year round.

A trip to the Airborne Museum is a "must make" to see the Herd Vietnam era diorama as well as Sky Soldier artifacts from the Vietnam and Iraq/Afghanistan eras. The Museum itself is a remarkable structure that will be enjoyed by Sky Soldiers and family members of all generations.

Ken Smith
A/2/503d



"Wartorn 1861-2010"

New Documentary Chronicles Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from Civil War to Iraq & Afghanistan



A new documentary, *Wartorn 1861-2010*, airing on HBO, chronicles the lingering effects of war on military veterans throughout American history, from the Civil War through today's conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Directed by Jon Alpert and Ellen Goosenberg Kent, *Wartorn* addresses the issue of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the psychological damage inflicted by combat on a number of levels - first, that the problem of PTSD isn't new and is far more pervasive than officially acknowledged. Second, that treatment is challenging, and third, escaping some kind of psychological impact may be impossible for anyone who sees combat.

Wartorn traces the history of the malady that has been known variously as "insanity," "melancholia," "shell shock," and "combat fatigue" since first being identified in the 19th century. From the Civil War right up through the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, families, the military, veterans' organizations, physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists have struggled to deal with the consequences of soldiers' experiences in combat and the effect those experiences can have on their minds.

The film focuses on the current controversy within the military and civil society over the existence, effects of, and treatments for PTSD. The filmmakers interview military officials, doctors, vets and their families, focusing in particular on the current wave of suicides within the ranks of veterans of the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**[Sent in by Christine McMillan,
wife of Mike McMillan 4/503d]**



This is an extract from **Military.com** and should go a long way to help our troops when they can see a 2 Star has PTSD and dealt with it.

[Sent in by LTC Scott Fairchild, PsyD, 82nd Abn (Ret)]

General Speaks Out About His PTSD Battle



Maj. Gen. David Blackledge

While everyone else danced at a New Year's celebration to start 2008, Maj. Gen. David Blackledge couldn't stop picturing a suicide bomber blowing up the ballroom. After nearly losing his life twice during consecutive deployments, Blackledge rarely felt safe. He couldn't shake the nightmares. He couldn't control his temper. He couldn't focus.

"I started to think, well, this is just the way it's going to be," Blackledge said.

But later that year, after his routine physical, he described his symptoms to a doctor.

Classic post-traumatic stress disorder, the doctor said. He sent Blackledge to behavioral health, where he saw a psychiatrist and a psychologist. They confirmed the diagnosis and told the general they could help.

Now Blackledge -- commander of the Army's Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command -- is

speaking publicly about his invisible wounds to let other warriors know their reactions to combat are normal.

PTSD is one of the signature injuries of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A 2008 Rand Corp. study estimated that as many as 300,000 veterans of those wars suffer from PTSD or depression. Yet it remains difficult to persuade troops to get the help they need.

Reluctance

An Army report released this summer said Soldiers who need mental healthcare the most are the least likely to seek treatment. They worry it will hurt their career, or they will appear weak.

Blackledge was unsure how speaking to a psychiatrist would affect his career. He said his first psychiatrist promised to be careful when taking notes so the sessions wouldn't come back to haunt the general.

Now, five years later, he's defying the culture of military silence and openly talking about his own troubles.

"We have our warrior ethos. Sometimes that can get in the way of helping us recognize that we need some help," Blackledge said.

"War is an abnormal event and it's a traumatic event. These kinds of issues are normal reactions. If you're struggling with that and it just doesn't seem to be getting better, there's help available."

Leaders have taken steps to reduce the stigma of seeking mental healthcare, including adding counselors to primary care clinics and embedding them into units with the troops.

But personal experiences shared by someone with Blackledge's stature will be a necessary part of changing the military culture, said Kathy Beasley, a retired Navy nurse who now works with the Military Officers Association of America.

"We've put a lot of energy into those campaigns. But I think leaders who have actually experienced it, and are able to come out and talk about it, to me is the most powerful tool that we have," Beasley said.

"It's going to take people like him at those levels to assure others, particularly junior Soldiers, to be comfortable to come forward and express the fact that they might need help."

(continued....)





MG Blackledge, a trooper ready to blast.

Iraq invasion

Blackledge was part of the invading force that went to Iraq in 2003. Ten days before his 14-month tour was set to end, he traveled in a three-truck convoy on a mission to meet tribal leaders. The convoy came under attack, and Blackledge said his interpreter was shot in the head. The truck rolled over several times, breaking Blackledge's back.

He and another Soldier crawled out of the truck and into a firefight, using a ditch for cover. As Blackledge returned fire, he said, he saw the last truck in the convoy explode. It had been shot in the gas tank. Blackledge escaped and spent 11 months recovering from the broken back and other injuries.

Almost immediately, Blackledge said, he had trouble thinking about anything besides the ambush.

He spoke with a psychiatrist several times at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The psychiatrist told him to think of the event as a movie, and to turn the movie off in his head. But the bigger focus, Blackledge said, was on healing his body.

Three days after a medical board cleared him for duty, Blackledge learned he was going back to Iraq. *"In my case, it didn't give me the mental recovery time to really get past the post-traumatic stress I'd experienced,"* he said.

During the next deployment to Iraq, Blackledge said, he was in Jordan to meet with a team of Soldiers there.

He and the team had just eaten dinner at their hotel in Amman. As they were walking through the lobby, Blackledge said, a suicide bomber set off his blast close

enough to knock the general off his feet. The bomb killed dozens and wounded hundreds. Blackledge had a whiplash-type injury that took months to heal.

Blackledge said he had thought he was safe outside Baghdad, but the explosion taught him otherwise. It added another layer of stress. *"It just made you kind of feel like you weren't safe anywhere,"* he said.

Not even at a party years later, in the United States, on New Year's.

"It wasn't really until I came back from that tour that I realized this stuff really isn't going away," Blackledge said.

He'd become outraged in traffic, or in arguments with his wife. The anger, he said, would be disproportionate to the problem. Blackledge, an avid reader, couldn't finish a book. His attention span wouldn't allow it.

And the nightmares persisted

Since Blackledge mentioned his problems to a doctor in 2008, he has undergone therapy with psychiatrists and psychologists. Blackledge said he still deals with some of the symptoms of PTSD, but he knows now how to handle them.

Soldiers and their families should treat the emotional damage of war as seriously as a broken leg or a bullet wound, he said.

Blackledge said he hopes his story can help Soldiers get past the stigma and realize it's OK to ask for help.

"No one's going to think less of you," he said.



~ THE FACES OF PTSD ~

General Blackledge is just one of the faces of PTSD. The following article, *Heal the Warrior*, is an interesting and telling report about our country's combat veterans and, for many, their struggle with Post Traumatic Stress. For more than 30 years I viewed those claiming the illness as mostly scrofflaws, guys looking for a free ride. "Get over it! The war is over." We've heard this from our civilian friends and even relatives, and sometimes other vets who believe they have steel balls; yet we know for too many of us the war is never over even though we want it to be over. That was my view until one day, and seemingly out of nowhere, that devil of an illness bitch-slapped me big-time. Our war returned and returned to my doorstep with a vengeance, and I've yet to be able to shy it away. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of our friends from WWII and Korea tell us of their lifelong battle with the illness (shell shock, battle fatigue, whatever the hell they called it then), most, unfortunately, having gone without treatment their entire lives. And many of you, as did this old RTO, remain in denial, needing help yet not knowing help is needed or available; as you move from one job to the next, one marriage to the next, one nightmare or sleepless night to the next, or one lost relationship with a friend or son or daughter to the next....you know the drill. Throughout the following report you'll see faces, mine and those of our buddies, all PTSD survivors. Thanks to these warriors for allowing us to include their images as testimony by men who walk with PTSD every day of their lives, yet men who've confronted that devil and through treatment and often the caring understanding of a spouse or partner or good buddy have found some peace with their souls. The faces you see here are the faces of PTSD, from the unwashed to Field Grade officers – their faces no different than yours. As Jack "Jackattack" Ribera so aptly pondered, "Putting a face on the monster makes him less powerful. In unity there is strength." Brothers and sisters....you ain't alone, and help is available. Ed

"In war, there are no unwounded soldiers."

~ José Narosky ~

HEAL THE WARRIOR, HEAL THE COUNTRY

Breaking the cycle of war making: our country will not find peace until we take responsibility for our wars.

By Edward Tick

Guilt, shame, slaughter without purpose, alienation from homeland and life itself—this was the legacy that Günter passed on to his son Walt from his World War II combat service in Hitler's Wehrmacht. Walt, "the only child born in freedom," was born in the United States shortly after his parents emigrated here from Germany. Growing up in the Cold War 1950s, Walt longed to be an All American boy, but was always the Indian to his friends' cowboys and the "Kraut" to their G.I. Joes.

When he turned 18, Walt enlisted and volunteered for Vietnam. "I wanted to finally be one of the good guys," Walt said. "Service in the American military in a righteous cause would expunge my family's past and earn our place in society." He could not know



Jerry Wiles
B/2/503d



Jack Ribera
A/2/503d

that, instead, he would return with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), feeling less than ever like "one of the good guys."

The Warrior's Path

Our troops do not enlist because they want to destroy or kill. No matter the political climate, most troops seek to serve traditional warrior values: to protect the country they love, its ideals, and especially their families, communities, and each other. If they must kill or be killed, they need transcendent reasons to do so.

Throughout history, the only reason for fighting that has survived moral scrutiny is a direct attack with real, immediate threat to one's people. PTSD is, in part, the tortured conscience of good people who did their best under conditions that would dehumanize anyone.

Almost all cultures, past and present, have had warriors. They have also had complex stories and rituals to help them recover from combat and guide them through the life cycle.



Mike Sturges
A/2/503d



Jim Stephens
B/3/319th

(continued....)



The occurrence of warriors is so universal that depth psychologists understand Warrior to be one of our foundational psycho--spiritual archetypes.

In traditional cultures, boys and men studied a "warrior's path." In these societies a warrior was not the same as a soldier; not merely a member of a huge, anonymous military institution used for the violent execution of political ends. Rather, warrior was one of the foundational roles that kept societies whole and strong. Warriors were fundamentally protectors, not destroyers.

People respond to the same call today. Michael, a Marine who served in Afghanistan, proudly declares that at age 18 he was the first in his state to enlist after 9/11. Nick, an army officer who served in Iraq, enlisted because of a lifelong desire *"to be like Hector defending the gates of Troy."*

Warriorhood, however, is not so valued or nurtured in modern society. "Warrior" is not even a recognized social class. A veteran, especially one with disabilities, appears to many, and sometimes to him or herself, as a failure in terms of normal civilian identity. Michael fears that, as an experienced combat veteran, the only place on the planet he now fits is in the French Foreign Legion.

The Echoes of War

War abroad fosters war at home. When we go to war, we inevitably bring its violence and horror back to our homes and streets. We cannot help it.

Rather than feeling that he had restored his family's honor, Walt spent years ravaged by nightmares, homeless, abusing drugs and alcohol, and sitting with a shotgun in his mouth trying to find the will to end it all. He married and had children, then divorced and neglected



Craig Ford
C/1/503d



Mike McMillan
A/4/503d



Bob Clark
5th Special Forces



Jim Dresser
A/HHC/2/503d



Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

his kids. He could not keep a job. He could not come home.

War echoes down the generations. Known or hidden, we all carry the wounds of war. Walt was wounded by his father's history. His children were wounded by his.

When a veteran has PTSD, his or her entire family and community are inevitably affected. The individual symptoms of PTSD—sleep disturbances, substance abuse, depression, and problems with intimacy, employment and authority—are the same symptoms that are epidemic in our society. When we take a close and unprotected look, we see: we are a nation and a planet of wounded warriors, their offspring, and their neighbors.

Cleansing the Warrior

War poisons the spirit, and warriors return tainted. This is why, among Native American, Zulu, Buddhist, ancient Israeli, and other traditional cultures, returning warriors were put through significant rituals of purification before re-entering their families and communities. Traditional cultures recognized that unpurified warriors could, in fact, be dangerous. The absence of these rituals in modern society helps explain why suicide, homicide, and other destructive acts are common among veterans.

In Viet Nam Walt had exhumed bodies of enemy dead from mass graves and reburied them. He felt like he had dirtied and damaged his soul. Nick declared that, though he had wished to be a great champion of his people, *"all they gave me was this dirty stinking little Iraq War."*

In traditional cultures, warrior cleansing was often guided by shamans, and particular shamans presided over "warrior medicine."



Don Rockholt
A/2/503d



Rick Fred
HHC/2/503d



Wambi Cook
A/2/503d



Lew Smith
HHC/2/503d



Among his many offices and honors, for example, Sitting Bull served as Medicine Chief of the Hunkpapa Warrior Society, responsible for overseeing the spiritual lives and well-being of the society's warriors. Sitting Bull considered this to be the most important of all the offices he held. Walt entered individual and group psychotherapy for combat veterans. It helped to tell his stories, have his feelings and losses confirmed by other vets, and receive honor as part of a brotherhood. But he was in search of more cleansing, blessing, and soul healing than traditional therapy could provide. He eventually partnered with a Native American woman. He studied her culture, and participated in sweat lodges and other traditional rituals. He attended a Pow Wow where he was honored as a returned warrior. He was accepted by the Native community far more than he had been by mainstream America.

I annually lead healing journeys back to Viet Nam, and there, too, vets report feeling more welcomed and honored by their former foes than they have ever felt at home.

A Double Wound

Sitting Bull and his warriors, and other bands from innumerable traditional cultures, were never plagued with self-doubt about the value of their mission, as many of our soldiers are today. In order to do battle with a whole heart, the danger and threat to one's home must be real, and the people must experience it as immediate and about to threaten their total existence; there must be no alternative. A people and their warriors must be in unity.

The effect of that unity shows in Nguyen Van Tam, known as Mr. Tiger, a robust, friendly, and serene man of 87 living in Viet Nam's Mekong Delta. He is a veteran of wars against the Japanese, French, and Americans. Though at war for a quarter century, he has no disturbing symptoms. *"We Vietnamese,"* he says,



Vic Marciano
Recon/D/1/503d



Dave Glick
B/2/503d



Harry Cleland
HHC/B/2/503d



Dale Olson
A/2/503d



Gary Prisk
C/D/2/503d

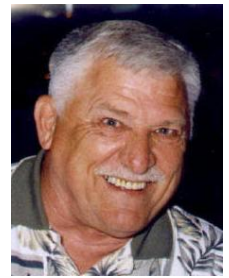
"do not have PTSD because we never hated Americans. We only fought to protect our families and homes from invaders."

When, to the contrary, wars are based on false pretenses, a moral vacuum results. As Martin Luther King, Jr. observed, troops then experience *"not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war,"* but also *"cynicism to the process of death, for our troops must know after a short time that none of the things we are fighting for are really involved."*

Walt explained, *"I didn't realize until it was too late that I was just like my father—a good man fighting on the wrong side for the wrong cause."* Moral trauma is at the core of PTSD. An idealistic and sincere young soldier discovering that he is in fact fighting for false or distorted political, economic, or historical agendas can experience deeper and more complicated psychic wounds than those traditional warriors experienced.

The severity and extent to which veterans suffer with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a direct response to our culture's blindness about war's true cost. PTSD is the expression of the anguish, dislocation, and rage of the self as it attempts to cope with its loss of innocence, reformulate a new personal identity and cultural role, and awaken from massive denial. Veterans with PTSD are people whose belief systems have been shattered. We can better understand PTSD as an identity disorder and soul wound rather than a stress and anxiety disorder, as it is presently classified. War dehumanizes anyone it touches, but especially a veteran who questions the cause he served.

Most conventional therapies teach healers to avoid talk of morality. But war is inherently a moral enterprise and veterans in search of healing are on a profound moral journey.



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Bob Fleming
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Bill Metheny
HHC/4/503d



Don Kamandulis
173d Bde S-1

(continued....)



Healers and communities must walk with them. As a society, we must honor those wounds in ways that recognize their depth and degree of psychic suffering.

Lifting the Burden

Warriors in traditional societies served the need for protection, and all that was done was done in the tribe's name. They had rituals transferring responsibility for actions during warfare from veterans to the entire culture. Ultimately leaders, not ordinary troops, were held responsible for the results of battle and for the deaths that occurred.

Our veterans cannot heal unless society accepts responsibility for its war making. To the veteran, our leaders and people must say, *"You did this in our name, because you were subject to our orders, and because we put you in untenable and even atrocity-producing situations. We lift the burden of your actions from you and take it onto our shoulders. We are responsible for you, for what you did, and for the consequences."*

Walt received this acceptance from Native American communities. In my seven trips to Viet Nam, and with every veteran and civilian I have met who has visited Viet Nam since the war, the Vietnamese people have offered such acceptance and forgiveness to any American returning to the country to reconcile. In contrast, since Afghanistan, Michael says, *"I still love America, but America does not love me."*

Without this transfer of responsibility, the veteran carries war's secret grief and guilt for us all. Too many veterans collapse into a silent suffering disability and thus serve as our broken scapegoats while the rest of us proceed with "business as usual." In contrast, during my healing retreats, veterans tell their stories, civilians speak of their lost loved ones, and everyone shares their damaged values and broken dreams. Finally, our vets enter the center of our circle



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Dennis Begley
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and civilians pledge to accept responsibility for any harm done in their name and to help carry the veterans' stories for the rest of their lives. By sharing this burden we become a community united in service to war-healing.

Healing for All

We wish, as the gospel song says, *"to study war no more."* But scholars count over 14,600 wars in the last 5,600 years of recorded history. War is so epidemic in its occurrence, devastating in its impact, and lasting in its aftermath, that we must study it and tend to it and treat it. If we are to return war to its proper place as a last defense when absolutely necessary, we must heal the wounds of our soldiers and communities. We cannot achieve peace-making without first achieving true and comprehensive war-healing.

Walt finally put away his shotgun and quit drinking. He enjoyed a successful relationship with his new partner and was adopted by her tribe and its warrior society.



Leo Pellerin
A/2/503d



A.B. Garcia
HHC/2/503d



Dominick Cacciatore
A/2/503d

GENERATIONS OF VALOR



More faces?

(continued....)





Korean War. "I'm here for you buddy."

He took up a spiritual path that restored his belief in the goodness of life and order of the universe. He volunteered with more disabled veterans, visiting the infirm at his regional V.A. hospital and helping create annual veteran reunions. Both in therapy and beyond, we created rituals that allowed this soldier to find healing. The Native American and veteran communities helped support and bring this warrior's wandering spirit home. In turn, Walt became a devoted advocate for other veterans more wounded than he. The disabled veteran became an elder warrior.

But war completed its damage. Only in his 50s, Walt died of Agent Orange-related cancer last year.

We cannot heal from war without involving the entire community and society, and without invoking transpersonal help. We must develop modern rituals that acknowledge the additional wounds caused by war fought for non-defense reasons. Much as we might disagree with a war, our rituals must include purification, public storytelling, and community acceptance of responsibility for what the soldier has done.

These war-healing rituals and practices serve us all. They bring home to us the need to break the cycles of war-making and violence both within the individual soldier and within the society. When we return to our veterans their silenced voices, when we accept our true

responsibility as individuals and communities, we will no longer see war as an adventure or a legitimate tool of power politics. Then, perhaps, we may see that all over our country and world, we share the same legacy of war-wounding. When we join together to address those wounds wherever they appear, we will finally "study war no more."

I asked Walt's permission to tell his story during our farewell visit in the hospital where he was dying of Agent Orange cancers. He was surprised at first, but finally said, "I was afraid my life was worthless. But please tell my story. Please make it mean something. Maybe it can help some other poor souls avoid my fate."

About Edward Tick

Edward Tick wrote this article as part of *A Just Foreign Policy*, the Summer 2008 issue of *YES! Magazine*. Mr. Tick is author of *War and the Soul* and three other books. He has worked with veterans for three decades and is director and senior psychotherapist of *Soldier's Heart: Veteran's Safe Return Initiatives*.

ABOUT YES!

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www.yesmagazine.org/justforeignpolicy

[This article was sent in by Dr. Scott Fairchild, PsyD, Baytree Behavioral Health.]



NOTE: We've given this tale by the young, daring Captain some coverage in a couple of earlier issues. But, given the special reports on PTSD herein, this book review is timely and is being included in spite of that Dogface still owing me 10 rums and coke!!! Cap, let's call it an even eleven. Ed

Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt

By Capt. Gary Prisk
C/D/2/503d

A book review by Francisco Auet, M.D., Psychiatrist,
Panama City, Panama

Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt is an exceptionally well written book about the psychology of surviving. Disturbing on many levels, tender yet chaotic, *Digger's...* backdrop is the war in Vietnam, and yet *Digger...* is not as much a war story as it is a compelling tale of the survival of man's spirit in the chaos of the lowest levels of war.

A truly extraordinary story told by a narrator with a powerful voice, *Digger...* steadily builds on a matrix of conflicting emotions and psychological conflicts—the making of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A chronicle of the systematic decay of the human spirit, of being too long in the throes of combat, *Digger...* should be read and studied by all mental health professionals currently helping patients with PTSD and those who may deal with PTSD in the future.

A primer sought after by psychiatrists and resident psychiatrists, *Digger...* should be mandatory reading for undergraduate and post-graduate medical students.

Gary Prisk has written a layered narrative that shows rather than tells a story about an Army Infantry Lieutenant, Lieutenant Edward Hardin, who uses his caring spirit, as if an arm he wraps around his men, to push his men forward and protect them while he relies on that same caring spirit to simply survive.

From the carnage his unit suffers before he enters the hospital with a fever-of-unknown-origin (FUO) to the end of his brutal existence, page by page the reader becomes immersed in the chaos of war. In and out of the vines, Lieutenant Hardin grows closer to his men. Scene by scene the reader follows the morphing of Hardin's resolve as he questions and replaces traditional measures of war's success and boils his own measure down to one consuming purpose—the survival of his men. Even when a recurring fever-of-unknown-origin gives him a medical pass away from the war, he cannot abandon his men. Their survival had become his reason for being.

With the facility few writers possess, Gary Prisk introduces the reader to characters so deeply mired in the mud of yet another war, the reader begins by resisting the true nature of these men. Initially, *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt* is not easy to read. The story seems chaotic until the reader realizes Lieutenant Hardin's war was chaotic.

Somehow the author has created a story with the sensibility of a poem, or testament—a picture of the vivid, tumultuous reality of war for those who were not there.



At times the reader will laugh and then a few short sentences later cry. Careening from scene to scene, at times the reader will wish the story line was less frenetic, less realistic, or more comfortable. But that's part of the beauty and the genius of this book.

Challenging the reader to understand how an infantryman adjusts his measure of success, the author shows the reader why the infantryman gives his last full measure trying to find substitutes for his reason for being.

Those who have the pleasure of reading *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt* will gain life-saving insights into mental survival in times of chaos or challenge.

Reading this book will be a catharsis for the reader's soul. #####

Available on www.Amazon.com



THIS TIME WE WIN: REVISITING THE TET OFFENSIVE

By James S. Robbins
Encounter Books

Reviewed by Gary L. Larson



Two U.S. military policemen aid a wounded fellow MP during fighting in the U.S. Embassy compound in Saigon, Jan. 31, 1968, at the beginning of the Tet Offensive. A Viet Cong suicide squad seized control of part of the compound and held it for about six hours before they were killed or captured.
(AP Photo/Hong Seong-Chan)

Commonly held misconceptions about the Tet Offensive, a series of attacks by Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese forces during the Vietnamese holiday of that name in 1968, have credited it as a pivotal victory for the communists in the Vietnam War. But was it indeed a win for the enemy?

Conventional wisdom holds that Tet was the turning point in public perception of this war, as its purposefulness to our geopolitical interests was called into question. That might well be so, but a public presumption that Tet was a triumph for the enemy is mightily challenged in "This Time We Win," (amazon.com) a groundbreaking new book by James S. Robbins.

Mr. Robbins, editorial writer on foreign affairs at *The Washington Times*, painstakingly retraces the bloody clashes and their aftermath, shredding the notion that the offensive was a victory, other than Pyrrhic, for the VC and its allies, the regulars in PAVN (the People's Army of North Vietnam). Using the enemy's postwar documents, Mr. Robbins maintains that Tet weakened it to the point of near collapse, severely wounding the insurgents' infrastructure.

That is not how it was portrayed in American media. In reality, Tet was a desperate push to foment revolt among the South Vietnamese to kick out those American "lackeys," Mr. Robbins asserts. Ironically, that failed strategy became a rallying point for anti-war sentiment on the U.S. home front. Tet rekindled enemy hopes for a crack in American resolve, leading to the United States' abandoning its "imperialistic aims" and South Vietnamese allies.

A depleted force of VC, wracked by desertions from disastrous asymmetrical warfare, was reeling after Tet. A dispirited PAVN, far from home, with supply lines stretched, was losing men faster than replacements could be sent down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Attacks were aimed at taking, if not holding, key defense posts in the South, including, notably, a takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. There, a ragtag attack was thwarted in the courtyard by U.S. Marine Corps guards and Army military police. Death was dealt to all attackers. Yet one report had the embassy "breached."



First Lt. Gary D. Jackson of Dayton, Ohio, carries a wounded South Vietnamese Ranger to an ambulance Feb. 6, 1968 after a brief but intense battle with the Viet Cong during the Tet Offensive near the National Sports Stadium in the Cholon section of Saigon. (AP Photo/Dang Van Phouc.

Mr. Robbins recites case after case of such off-the-mark reporting: Tet was not, as depicted, a surprise attack. There was no "intelligence failure." Battle plans had been captured. High-level PAVN defectors and VC turncoats put even defenders on alert. Such readiness set the stage for horrific blood losses to attackers, counted in waves in futile frontal attacks that failed utterly. (Of an estimated 84,000 attackers, more than half - 45,000 - perished in Tet, according to postwar records).

Truong Nhu Tang, VC war minister, called Tet a "staggering loss." It was a "major irony," he wrote, that such a defeat "was transformed by our propaganda into a brilliant victory."

(continued....)



Tet was a boxcar-odds gamble, Mr. Robbins concludes, a resounding tactical and strategic defeat for the VC and North Vietnam, itself jarred by air attacks that pinpointed targets with, some say, only pinprick success. Lyndon B. Johnson's concept of "limited war" and "gradualism" backfired, giving the enemy breathing room. No all-out bombing of the North took place until late in the war, ordered by Richard M. Nixon, mainly to free our prisoners of war. Mission accomplished, finally.

In the war-torn South, unsustainable losses caused doubters in Hanoi to suggest tossing in the towel. They were for negotiating with the "lackeys," perhaps to win by other means, over time, by guerrilla actions, but no set-piece battles. Dead set against this option was hawkish Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, architect of the war, who had the ear of iconic Chairman Ho Chi Minh, veteran of the French defeat in his homeland.

Few knew a "peace faction" in Hanoi wanted to quit. Settlement terms were discussed openly, even in the closed North Vietnamese government press. But the hawks in Hanoi's Politburo won: Tet was launched, perhaps significantly, on Ho Chi Minh's 77th birthday - a blood-soaked gift for the aging chairman?

Mr. Robbins argues convincingly, as did Mark Moyar in "Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965," that media created, perhaps inadvertently, a wrongful perception of Tet. "Charlie," as then-young GIs called the elusive VC, and his North Vietnamese comrades accomplished in Tet, by losing badly, what they could not do on the battlefield - stirred brewing American anti-war passions. Until then, polls showed widespread if not deep support for "LBJ's war" - if not for his overly optimistic generals and his defense secretary, Robert McNamara, the headstrong ex-auto executive.

Americans' lack of resolve became our Achilles' heel, Mr. Robbins concludes, for losing a war actually won, and won repeatedly, on the battlefield. The "peace movement" stoked by dour war assessments ("unwinnable," was it?) likely prolonged the conflict, a view held by Mr. Robbins and other Vietnam War scholars. Significantly, more than half of U.S. combat deaths occurred after Tet of 1968, when victory, it seemed, was at hand.

Another casualty, particularly among the military, was trust in media. Before that, a certain respect was engendered by "the press." After Vietnam reporting, mostly from the safety of Saigon hotel balconies, a distrust, even disgust, among us GIs surrounded our perception of civilian media. It continues today, a sad legacy of the Vietnam War, incited again by coverage from Iraq and now from Afghanistan. Military folks may well ask, "Whose side are they on?"



South Vietnamese Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the national police, fires his pistol into the head of suspected Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem, also known as Bay Lop, on a Saigon street, early in the Tet Offensive on February 1, 1968. (AP Photo/Eddie Adams)

Led by the avuncular Walter Cronkite, mainstream media in the Republic of Vietnam *"defined battle(s) in a way that favored the enemy, regardless of the facts,"* Mr. Robbins writes tellingly. One military man curtly said, ***"The Viet Cong can't beat us, but the New York Times and CBS-TV can."***

Some criticism can be laid off on media as a straw man, but not all, in this writer's opinion.

Media bias was found in coverage *"through choices of which stories ran and how they were to be edited,"* Mr. Robbins writes. Early in Tet, a single defeatist story line emerged in mainstream media: "Disaster in Vietnam!" (Shades of war in Iraq 40 years later?)

Journalists *"took every opportunity to belittle the U.S. effort in Vietnam [and] trumpet its failures and shortcomings,"* Mr. Robbins writes. A one-sided picture emerged. To "friendly" media, it seemed as if the U.S. military could do no right. (Shades of Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad?)

For a serious student of this war's brutish realities, Mr. Robbins' book is a don't-miss read. He tells a story not wholly revealed, until now, ripping shibboleths about the Vietnam War. Mr. Robbins plays a key role in a new revisionist school of military historians. Because, well, because history relies on facts, on immutable facts, truth unvarnished and not spun, if we are to learn from it. Mr. Robbins takes us a giant step in that direction.

Gary L. Larson is a retired magazine editor and former U.S. Air Force combat correspondent in Southeast Asia (1964-65).

[Sent in by MG Jerry Bethke, HHC/2/503d]



MILITARY UPDATE

Historical look at benefits reveals trends

November 30, 2010

By Tom Philpott

Proposals to raise VA health care fees for some veterans in efforts to curb federal budget deficits, causes some to conclude that veteran benefits are under attack.

Bernard Rostker, former undersecretary of defense for personnel and now a senior fellow at the RAND Corp., has a more optimistic perspective on how America cares for and compensates its wartime veterans.



His original premise, he said, was that veterans' care and benefits today reflect a deeper attachment to the force, the result of moving from a military of conscripts after the Vietnam War, to a more professional force comprised of volunteers.

But as he completed volume one, covering the Colonial era through World War II, Rostker said he found the premise to be wrong. Much of what's being done today for veterans of the all-volunteer force is "rediscovering" what's been done before.

One exception, he said, are the unprecedented resources aimed at the invisible mental wounds, reflecting more medical knowledge, the nature of current wars and an attitude shift, even since the Persian Gulf War.

Otherwise, the infusion of money and staff for veterans' care and benefits fits an historical pattern, Rostker said, noting the nation's deep appreciation for those who fight for country and suffer wounds or illness.

Other patterns emerge, Rostker said. Government support tends to deepen with budget surpluses. Benefits tend to improve as veterans age, their ranks thin out, and enhancements become more affordable.



Home from France....WWI

For more than a year Rostker has researched what will be a two-volume study on the treatment of veterans and their survivors, going back to before the Revolutionary War, with a special focus on wounded warrior care.



Staff Sgt. Brian Mading, 29, of Bonita Springs, Fla., and fellow 173d paratroopers negotiate rough terrain down a mountain in Afghanistan, taking 10 hours to descend it.

Wars bring change too. The Department of Veterans Affairs budget has more than doubled since U.S. troops invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 -- from \$51 billion then to \$114 billion in the fiscal years that ended Sept. 30. VA spending is set to climb another 10 percent this year, to \$125 billion.

(continued....)



Persian Gulf War



Vet groups laud a 25 percent rise in VA spending since President Obama took office. Some contrast that largess to the Bush administration difficulty in June 2005 when it had to request a \$2 billion supplemental for VA to meet pressing health care obligations. Some veterans groups had called the original budget that year “tightfisted, miserly” and “woefully inadequate.”

Rostker avoids such comparisons. But his research might inform cost-conscious politicians about the perils of scrimping on veterans.

President Franklin Roosevelt made such a misstep, he said, while trying to pull the nation out of the Great Depression. At his urging, Congress in 1933 passed the Economy Act, which cut deeply into veterans’ benefits. Roosevelt told the American Legion convention “the mere wearing of a uniform” in war should not entitle a veteran, and later his survivors, to a pension for disabilities incurred after he left service.



President Franklin Roosevelt signs declaration of war against Japan.

The backlash was strong enough that the following March, Congress overrode Roosevelt’s veto and restored most benefits it had cut a year earlier.

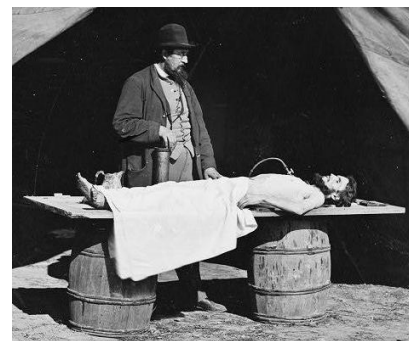
The Continental Congress in 1776 first recognized responsibility for wounded veterans, voting to authorize half pay for life to anyone who lost a limb or their ability to earn a living due to the revolution. By 1805 Congress approved pay for disabilities developed years after a veteran left service.

By 1818, with federal coffers flush with tariff money, the Department of War gave pensions to anyone who served in wartime, not just disabled,

Ten years later Congress settled complaints of Revolutionary War veterans by granting 850 surviving officers and soldiers full pay for life.

Rostker noted too that in 1833 Congress first approved “concurrent receipt” – payment of both an “invalid pension” and service pension. In 1836, Congress extended pension eligibility to widows and children of Revolutionary War veterans, adding enormously to the cost. The last spouse eligible for that Revolutionary War pension died in 1906, Rostker said.

The Civil War Pension Law of 1862 was viewed as the most generous any government had ever adopted, Rostker said, allowing disability payments for injuries or ailments incurred as a direct result of service. It set up a medical screening system, though reliance on hometown doctors led to rampant fraud and soon a purging of the rolls, Rostker said.



Civil War medical treatment

Payments to surviving spouse and children could exceed what veterans got. The last Civil War pensioners lived well into the 20th Century.

The study will span newer, more controversial periods including Gen. Omar Bradley’s reform of the VA after World War II, Korea and Vietnam and Gulf War Syndrome.

Through history, Rostker said, “*you see the generosity in many ways. You see it in the amount of money given, in the change of eligibility standards. And recently in the understanding of the mental aspects of conflict.*”

To comment, send e-mail to milupdate@aol.com or write to *Military Update*, P.O. Box 231111, Centreville, VA, 20120-1111

(Reprinted with permission of Tom Philpott, *Military Update*. Photos added to report).



CASPER PILOT STILL HOVERING AFTER ALL THESE YEARS



Casper pilot Phil Johnson and his helio.

Several years ago my brother and I purchased this Army trainer (TH-55) from an elderly farmer in Eastern Oklahoma. His doctor had advised him that it was time to quit flying. Wayne had never been in the service but he sure loved that little helicopter. We used a flat bed to get it back to California. I am afraid we'd still be en route if we flew it back. Leaving the ranch it felt like we were taking his only child.



Heading to new home out west.

We keep it at a small airport near our homes, about 40 miles north of Los Angeles. Several Casper's have been up in it. *Sky Soldier Magazine* ran an article of fellow Casper Pilot Art McBride taking a ride. Since we got spoiled since Fort Walters, RPM control is everyone's main problem in the beginning. We all spend way too much time looking at the instruments. During flight school you knew by the sound what the RPM was.



Phil's mom, Betty, ready for lift-off on her birthday.

Here's a couple pictures, including one of my mother on her 90th birthday. She really wanted to go up on her 90th, and did real well! Take Care

**Phil Johnson, CW02
Casper Aviation, '69-'70**

HIS FIRST SALUTE



L-R: Dennis Morris, 2d LT Daniel Morris & Robert Will.

I was invited by Dennis Morris, whom I served with in C/3/503d in 1969, to the commissioning ceremony of his son Daniel to exchange the first salute with the new Lieutenant. Dan was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the US Army National Guard.

Dan was active duty Army for 6 years as a non-com and rose to the rank of Staff Sgt. He was Jumpmaster qualified and served in Iraq with the Special Forces. After separation he attended school at the University of Florida and the Army ROTC program. He was commissioned on April 30, 2010 and graduated the following day with a Bachelor's degree in Business Management. You know his parents are very proud of him and I was honored to attend.

**Robert Will, SGT
C/3/503d**



VISIT TO NORMANDY



I'll try to make a long story short. Several years ago our Casper group invited Max Cleland to be our keynote speaker at one of our reunions. He was head of the Veterans Administration at the time and a Vietnam vet who lost both his legs. I really felt he gave a great speech and I think most would agree. Several of us have stayed in contact with him over the years.



Phil raising American flag at Normandy Cemetery

President Obama appointed Max as Commissioner of American Battle Monuments Commission. Max contacted Hans Hooker, superintendent of the Normandy Cemetery and in turn I was invited to raise the flag.

In Vietnam I was a Chief Warrant Officer with Casper Platoon during the '69/'70 time period all at LZ English. I ended up logging more time in the LOH Flying Inferno

than in the Huey. I keep in contact with Don Bliss (Casper CO) mostly on Facebook, he's sure a nice guy.



German gun emplacements at Normandy

Here are some photos that I think Rangers might be interested in. What a hell of a job they did at Utah Beach!! Really set high standards for future Rangers to follow which I know for a fact you guys did.



Utah Beach seen from gun emplacement

Could you please let all the Rangers know that if they ever plan a trip to that area, that they contact me and I will get them in contact with Hans Hooker. They will really receive the VIP treatment and it will be something they will never forget.

(continued....)





I asked Hans if he could show me his grave. In the next picture his assistant, Greg, is rubbing Omaha beach sand into the headstone so we can see his name better.



He then places two flags, American and French at the foot of the headstone. Hans then conducts a very formal ceremony in which he presents the flags to me to be delivered to my friend.



The bottom of the flags will always have Omaha sand on them. He then took us down to the exact location where the landing craft hit the beach. By the time it was over I really felt I knew this man -- just amazing.

Phil Johnson

Caspers, '69-'70

casperpgj@yahoo.com

Town of Sainte-Mere-Eglise.....D-Day battle

The early landings, at about 0140 directly on the town, resulted in heavy casualties for the paratroopers. Some buildings in town were on fire that night, and they illuminated the sky, making easy targets of the descending men. Some were sucked into the fire. Many hanging from trees and utility poles were shot before they could cut loose. The German defenders were alerted.

(continued....)

Tributes

I thought you guys might find this kind of interesting.

A friend of mine asked me to take a picture of his uncle's headstone, John Allison, while at the cemetery. He was with the 49th Engineer Group. According to witnesses no one got off the landing craft, an artillery shell hit them as the door was opening.



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / January 2011 – Issue 23

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A famous incident involved paratrooper John Steele of the 505th PIR, whose parachute caught on the spire of the town church, and could only observe the fighting going on below. He hung there limply for two hours, pretending to be dead, before the Germans took him prisoner. Steele later escaped from the Germans and rejoined his division when US troops of the 3rd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment attacked the village capturing thirty Germans and killing another eleven. The incident was portrayed in the movie, *The Longest Day* by actor Red Buttons.

Later that morning, about 0500, a force led by Lt. Colonel Edward C. Krause of the 505th PIR took the town with little resistance. Apparently the German garrison was confused and had retired for the rest of the night. However, heavy German counterattacks began later in the day and into the next. The lightly-armed troops held the town until reinforced by tanks from nearby Utah Beach in the afternoon of 7 June. There were other notable soldiers in the Allied assault on the town.

Today, these events are commemorated by the Airborne Forces Museum in Place du 6 June in the centre of Ste-Mère-Église and in the village church where a parachute with an effigy of Private Steele in his Airborne uniform hangs from the steeple. Bullet holes are still visible in the church's stone walls. Inside, there are stained glass windows, with one depicting the Virgin Mary with paratroopers falling in the foreground.



Though injured and deafened by the church bells, Private Steele survived his ordeal. He continued to visit the town throughout his life and was an honorary citizen of Ste. Mère Église. The tavern, Auberge John Steele, stands adjacent to the square and maintains his memory through photos, letters and articles hung on its walls.

Steele died of throat cancer on May 16, 1969 in Fayetteville, NC, just three weeks short of the 25th anniversary of the D-Day invasion.

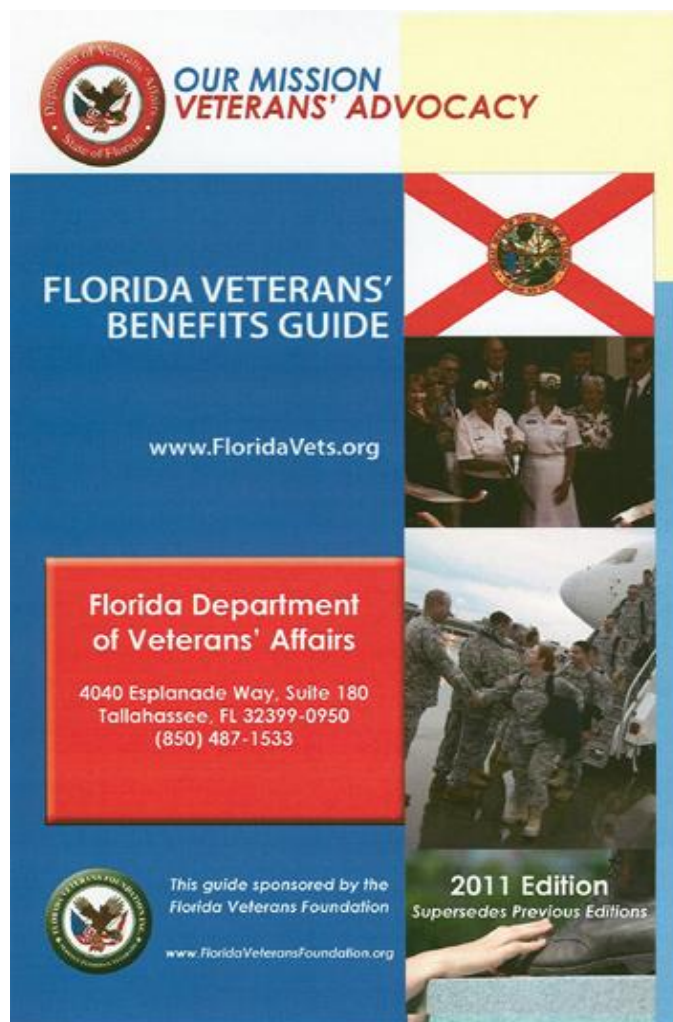
Florida Publishes State Veterans' Benefits Guide

TALLAHASSEE -- The 2011 edition of the *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide* is being released by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The 24- page guide, sponsored by the Florida Veterans Foundation, provides information about federal and state veterans' benefits and how to obtain them.

Copies of the guide are being distributed to county veteran service offices, VA facilities and state colleges and universities.

An online version of the guide is being posted on the FDVA website at www.FloridaVets.org.



~ AFTER ACTION REPORT ~

MARKHAM VALLEY

REPORT OF OPERATIONS

26 OCT 1943

EXTRACT ONLY

APO 929

Headquarters
503d Parachute Infantry
26 Oct. 1943

SUBJECT : Report of Encounter with Enemy Forces.

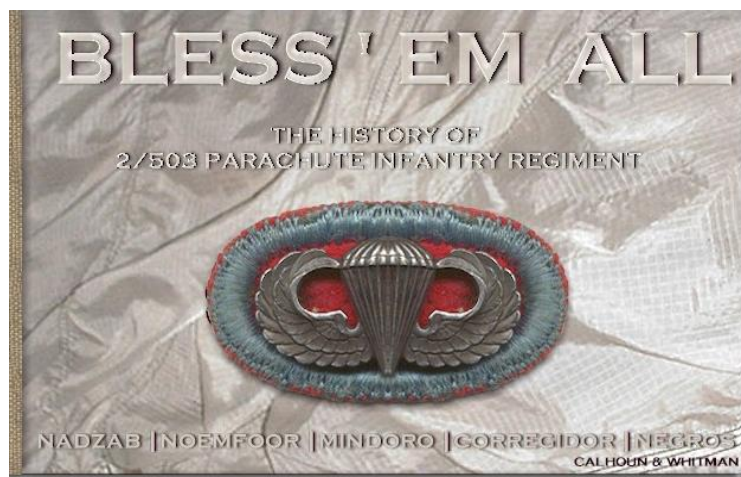
TO: The Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Washington D.C.

In compliance with paragraph 10, AR 345-105, dated 18 November 1929, the following report of the Parachute activities in operation against Japanese forces in the Markham Valley, 5 September 1943 to 19 September 1943 is hereby submitted.

1. **GENERAL:** The 503d Parachute Infantry was employed in conjunction with the 7th Australian Division and the 9th Australian Division in an air-sea and ground offensive against Japanese forces in the Markham Valley, New Guinea 5 September 1943 to 19 September 1943. The mission of the 503d Parachute Infantry was to seize the Nadzab E/L Strip and prepare it for use in landing of Airborne Australian troops and to close the western inland approaches of the Markham valley.
2. **DEPARTURE:** Due to the splendid co-operation of the Fifth Air Force and the 54th troop Carrier Wing, all departures were effected smoothly. All planes had been properly fitted for parachute drops, viz, doors taped and all excess accoutrements removed from the interior prior to arrival of the troops.



The troops arrived at the airfield and were at their assigned planes two hours prior to take-off. During this period, parachutes and equipment were fitted on the individuals. Fifteen (15) minutes prior to take-off, all men were seated in the planes with parachutes and full equipment on.



At 0825 hours, 5 September, the take-off was started. The rendezvousing of the eighty-two (82) transports required forty-five (45) minutes. When all elements were in formation, the flight to the drop area was started.

3. **FLIGHT AND DROP:** The flight was flying three (3) battalion columns in a formation of six (6) planes echeloned to the right rear and thirty (30) seconds between elements. After flying for one (1) hour, the first check point (Tsili-Tsili) was passed. At this point, all men were stood up in the plane and equipment checked. Twelve (12) minutes later, the Markham River, the second check point, was passed and the men stood in the door. In three (3) minutes the troops were jumping and in four and one-half (4½) minutes, eighty-one (81) transports were emptied. Each battalion landed on their assigned jump fields and proceeded immediately to their assembly areas.



Photo inscription: *Hurry Up and Wait - Standard army procedure in effect prior to the Nadzab Jump.*

(continued....)





503rd PIR jump onto Nadzab, September 5, 1943

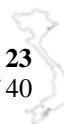
4. **GROUND ACTION:** The ground action proceeded as planned. The 1st battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry seized the Nadzab E/L Strip and commenced its preparation to receive airborne troops. The 2d and 3d Battalions, blocked all approaches from the North and East and established a network of extended patrolling. Very little activity was encountered. The 2/2 Australian Pioneer Battalion joined the 1st Battalion at 1800 hour, 5 September 1943, to take over the preparation of the strip. The original strip was 1500 feet long and had remained unused for twelve (12) months. This strip was improved and extended to 3300 feet. The 1st battalion then set up a perimeter defense around the strip to protect the 2/2 Australian Pioneer Battalion and the natives working with them. The Airborne troops, in C-47 airplanes, began to land at 1000 hour, 6 September 1943, 23½ hours after the jump was made.

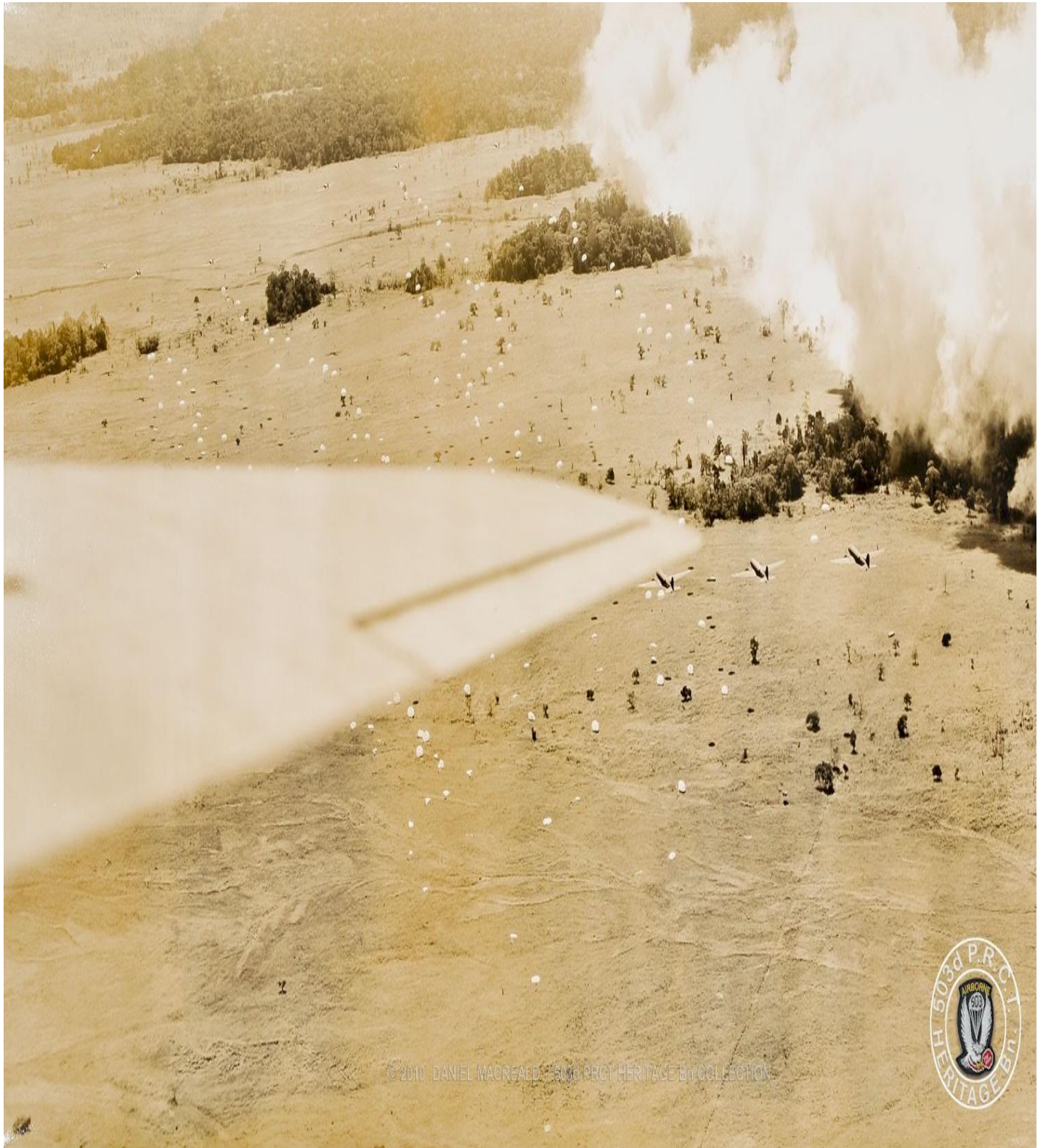
On 8 September 43, the 25th Australian Brigade had arrived and had replaced our 3d Battalion who were then withdrawn to the vicinity of the strip.

The Australians continued their push down the Valley and on 14 September 43, the 3d Battalion was sent forward to protect their L of C and to prevent enemy infiltration to their rear. The main body of the Japanese Forces had at this time evacuated LAE and were withdrawing to the Northwest. This body encountered the 3d Battalion at 0600 hour, 15 September 43, and the Battalion immediately set up a defensive position to prevent their breaking through. A detailed account of this action is attached herein as enclosure #2. (not included herewith. Ed)

The vigorous and aggressive patrol action of this unit resulted in a few encounters with enemy patrols. The Japanese patrols always withdrew and in several instances, large amounts of equipment was abandoned.

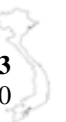
(continued....)





Nadzab jump.

(continued....)





5. **EVACUATION:** a. The 1st Battalion was evacuated by air to Port Moresby on 14 September 43 after the arrival of the 25th Australian brigade with instructions to prepare for another mission.

b. The 2nd Battalion and regimental Headquarters Division was evacuated on 17 September 43.

c. The 3d Battalion was evacuated on 19 September 43.

6. **MISCELLANEOUS:** a. The morale of the men was excellent. The general attitude was one of determination. The men were disappointed in that they had been ordered not to be used were Infantry could be employed and were required to remain behind while the Australians pushed down the Valley.

b. One (1) plane load of fifteen (15) men did not jump because the crew chief was taking off the door, it blew out and was hanging on the side of the plane. It would have endangered the life of every man who would have tried to jump.

c. One (1) man did not jump as he fainted when the men were preparing to jump. No man refused to jump on this mission.

7. **RESULT:** a. The prescribed mission assigned to the 503d Parachute Infantry was carried out most successfully.

b. The casualties were as follows:

Killed in action - Eleven (11)

Wounded in action - Forty-three (43)

Note: This report is included here unedited from:

http://corregidor.org/BEA503/Reports/Markham%20Valley/markham_post_report.htm



G'Day Mate! Hey buddy!

(All photos courtesy of Daniel MacRaild)



YOMITAN DROP ZONE, OKINAWA



I'm attaching a series of pictures of a 2/503 jump on Yomitan in 1965 (with inscriptions). I served with the 1st Special Forces on Okinawa for almost two years before joining the 173d. According to my Jump Log, I made a total of 24 jumps on Yomitan, 14 with the Special Forces and 10 with 2/503. Of my Special Forces jumps, three were night jumps and 8 were equipment jumps. All ten of my 2/503 jumps were with equipment. Most of the Special Forces jumps were from helicopters while almost all the 2/503 jumps were from C-130's.

Frankly, I don't remember anything unusual about any of those jumps. I never had to pull my reserve, never was in danger of tangling with another trooper in the sky, and the wind was never high, so I never sprained an ankle or got dragged. However, on my one off-island jump with 2/503, on Taiwan during Exercise Sky Soldier in October of '64, the wind was high and I got dragged clear across the DZ before getting my chute collapsed.

George Dexter, Col. (Ret)
Bn CO, 2/503d

I jumped three times on Yomitan. Never hit the runway. I think my friend, Jesse Harris, lost his helmet and hit his head on the runway and was in the hospital for a while. I remember getting up so damn early and it was dark when we jumped, at least once. I guess that was considered a night-jump exercise. It seems to me the land on either side of the runway was potato fields.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d



"What I'd give for a nice sandy Drop Zone." (George Dexter)

(continued....)





"The smoke was there too."

(George Dexter)

I had arrived on Okinawa from the 25th in Hawaii. Had been off jump status for a few years. A NCO was assigned to give me pre jump. We walked over to the 34 foot tower, he looked at me and said, *"Do you know what that is?"* I said, yes. *"O.K.,"* he said, *"we are finished here."* Next thing I know is I'm looking down between my legs at Yomitan. I probably jumped on Yomitan 10 times -- something to remember.

Ron Thomas
HHC/2/503d

It does bring back memories. I believe Yomitan was a Jap air field during WWII.

Rick Jerman
HHC/2/503d

I was the Command Sergeant Major (CSM) of 1st Bn, 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa from Jan '89 to Apr '91. I made a HALO jump on Yomitan Drop Zone while stationed there.

Gary Baura, CSM
173d & US Army Special Forces

I can remember we used to have to go out there for rock stacking duty. We picked up all the coral rocks and put them in piles so you didn't get injured doing a PLF on top of them as they were laying all over the place. You

could slip away from the piles for day jumps but night jumps were *Real* fun. Then the local farmers would scatter the rocks all over the place, I guess they didn't like some of us jumping in their fields that bordered the DZ. They probably thought if the rocks are scattered we wouldn't be jumping in...LOL

Right before we went to Vietnam we went out there to jump from a helicopter that looked like a flying Banana. Everyone was told to get a vigorous exit to clear the wheel....well one guy didn't and got hung-up on the wheel and they tried for quite a while to shake him off. They finally decided to slowly lower the chopper to the ground and at about (looked like) 75 feet the wheel turned and released his chute and he hit like a ton of bricks -- I can't remember who it was. Anyone recall who it was?

Chuck Guy
4.2 Motar Platoon HHC/2/503d

I remember well my seventh jump getting dragged down the runway on that so-called drop zone.

Ron Woodley
A/2/503d

(continued....)



After jump school at Fort Bragg, with those beaches they called drop zones, my graduating class was sent to the 101st at Fort Campbell. This was April 1958. When the buses arrived at the Campbell repl depl, there were a bunch of NCO's (each with a fancy swagger stick) banging on the sides of the buses, exhorting us "cherries" to get the f#@k off the bus and into formation. They then proceeded to inform us that there had been five jumpers killed on the "best" drop zone at Campbell (Yamoto?) earlier that day! They then roughly described the difference between the beach like DZ's we were trained on and the horrors we had to look forward to on the DZ's at Campbell. They kept asking if we wanted to quit the Airborne before they wasted their time by assigning us to our new units. A few guys took them up on that offer.

I was assigned to Echo Company 1/506th (Easy Company of WWII and *Band of Brothers* fame). A few weeks later I got to make my "Cherry Jump". It was to be on Los Banos DZ, one of the smallest and roughest at Campbell. And, because the Air Force was experimenting with some new wind and radar systems, we would be jumping from 2500 to 3000 feet instead of the then standard 1250. We were told that because of the "experimental" nature of this particular drop, we were not allowed to "slip" our chutes toward the DZ. We were told to just enjoy the ride and land wherever we happened to come down. When I exited the aircraft and looked around, I couldn't see anything that looked like a drop zone! Nothing but trees below me as far as I could see! I came down through the trees and luckily got hung up with my feet just touching the ground. Since I had not seen anything that looked like a DZ, I gathered my chute from the trees and started walking in the direction the planes were flying. Took me about an hour to reach the assembly area.

Six years later I got to experience the pleasures of jumping on Yomitan on Okinawa. That was a scary SOB! Concrete runway and airplane parking spaces.



"Love that concrete."

(George Dexter)

And only about 8 seconds long before you would end up on radio towers or in the South China Sea. I don't remember exactly how many times I jumped in the year I was on Okinawa, but, I do know I hit that runway twice! Does anyone believe it is actually possible to make a perfect parachute landing fall? I did it the first time I hit that runway! Balls of the feet. Calf. Thigh. Buttock and Pushup Muscle. Never even felt the ground until I was running around the canopy to collapse it!

The second time I hit the runway was even better. When I realized there was no way I could avoid it, I also realized that the wind was from my rear and not too strong. I was able to make a standing/running landing and didn't even fall down.

That's my story about Yomitan, and I'm sticking to it!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d

Hardest DZ I ever jumped. Coral would cut you up. I preferred water jumps to landing on that damn runway.

Bob Clark
1st, 5th & 7th Special Forces
(RTO Smitty's brother)



NO HIDING PLACE FROM NEW U.S. ARMY RIFLES THAT USE RADIO-CONTROLLED SMART BULLETS

Weapon hailed as a game-changer that can fire up and over barriers and down into trenches.

Soldiers will start using them in Afghanistan later this month.

The U.S. army is to begin using a futuristic rifle that fires radio-controlled 'smart' bullets in Afghanistan for the first time, it has emerged.

The XM25 rifle uses bullets that can be programmed to explode when they have travelled a set distance, allowing enemies to be targeted no matter where they are hiding.

The rifle also has a range of 2,300 feet making it possible to hit targets which are well out of the reach of conventional rifles.

The XM25 is being developed specially for the U.S. army and will be deployed with troops later this month, it was revealed today.

The XM25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System has a range of roughly 2,300 feet - and is to be deployed in Afghanistan this month.

The rifle's gun sight uses a laser rangefinder to determine the exact distance to the obstruction, after which the soldier can add or subtract up to 3 meters from that distance to enable the bullets to clear the barrier and explode above or beside the targets.

Soldiers will be able to use them to target snipers hidden in trenches rather than calling in air strikes.

The 25-millimetre round contains a chip that receives a radio signal from the gun sight as to the precise distance to the target.

Lt. Col. Christopher Lehner, project manager for the system, described the weapon as a 'game-changer' that other nations will try and copy.

He expects the Army to buy 12,500 of the XM25 rifles this year, enough for every member of the infantry and Special Forces.

Lehner told Fox News: *"With this weapon system, we take away cover [from enemy targets] forever. Tactics are going to have to be rewritten. The only thing we can see [enemies] being able to do is run away."*

Experts say the rifle means that enemy troops will no longer be safe if they take cover.

The XM25 appears to be the perfect weapon for street-to-street fighting that troops in Afghanistan have to engage in, with enemy fighters hiding behind walls and only breaking cover to fire occasionally.

The weapon's laser finder would work out how far away the enemy was and then the U.S. soldier would add one meter using a button near the trigger. When fired, the explosive round would carry exactly one meter past the wall and explode with the force of a hand grenade above the Taliban fighter.



The army's project manager for new weapons, Douglas Tamilio, said: *"This is the first leap-ahead technology for troops that we've been able to develop and deploy."*

A patent granted to the bullet's maker, Alliant Techsystems, reveals that the chip

can calculate how far it has travelled.

Mr. Tamilio said: *"You could shoot a Javelin missile, and it would cost £43,000. These rounds will end up costing £15.50 apiece. They're relatively cheap."*

Lehner added: *"This is a game-changer. The enemy has learned to get cover, for hundreds if not thousands of years. Well, they can't do that anymore. We're taking that cover from them and there's only two outcomes: We're going to get you behind that cover or force you to flee."*

The rifle will initially use high-explosive rounds, but its makers say that it might later use versions with smaller explosive charges that aim to stun rather than kill.



Combat Related Compensation [For 20 year military or military/civil service retirees only]

Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) for certain disabled Uniformed Service Retirees has been codified in law at section 1413a, Title 10, United States Code.

The law was enacted December 2, 2002, by Section 636 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-314, December 2, 2002). CRSC provides compensation to certain retirees with combat-related disabilities that qualify under the criteria set forth in the law. For additional information regarding implementation, eligibility and application, visit the Department of Defense (DOD) website at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/crsc/>

Concurrent Disability Pay:

Public Law 108-136, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004, contained a provision to restore the retired pay currently deducted from retirees' accounts due to their receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation (currently reflected on Retiree Account Statements as the "VA waiver").

This restoration of retired pay is known as Concurrent Disability Pay (CDP). It is applicable to all retirees who have a VA-rated, service-connected disability of 50% or higher with the exception of disability retirees with less than 20 years of service and retirees who have combined their military time and civil service time to qualify for a civil service retirement. The phased-in restoration will begin January 1, 2004, with the first payments arriving February 2, 2004. CDP will be direct deposited or mailed based on retirees' current retired pay and VA system information. The rates will automatically increase or decrease based on the percentage of disability reported by the VA: If rated at 100%, \$750.00. If rated at 90%, \$500.00. If rated at 80%, \$350.00. If rates at 70%, \$250.00. If rated at 60%, \$125.00. If rated at 50%, \$100.00. These amounts will increase each year until January of 2014 when eligible members will receive their full retired pay entitlement and their VA disability compensation with no reduction.

Please note that CDP pay cannot exceed gross retired pay. For example, a retiree who is rated at 100% as indicated above but whose gross retired pay is only \$631.00, will only have \$631.00 restored. For more details, visit:

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38CFR/BOOKB/PART3/S3_750.DOC

VA Processes First Claims for New Agent Orange Presumptives

New Program Speeds Approval for Vietnam Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has decided more than 28,000 claims in the first six weeks of processing disability compensation applications from Vietnam Veterans with diseases related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

"With new technology and ongoing improvements, we are quickly removing roadblocks to processing benefits," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *"We are also conducting significant outreach to Vietnam Veterans to encourage them to submit their completed application for this long-awaited benefit."*

VA published a final regulation on Aug. 31 that makes Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam and who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, ischemic heart disease, or a B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia eligible for health care and disability compensation benefits. With the expiration of the required 60-day congressional review on Oct. 30, VA is now able to process these claims.

Vietnam Veterans covered under the new policy are encouraged to file their claims through a new VA Web portal at www.fasttrack.va.gov. Vietnam Veterans are the first users of this convenient automated claims processing system.

If treated for these diseases outside of VA's health system, it is important for Veterans to gather medical evidence from their non-VA physicians. VA has made it easy for physicians to supply the clinical findings needed to approve the claim through the new Web portal. These medical forms are also available at www.vba.va.gov/disabilityexams.

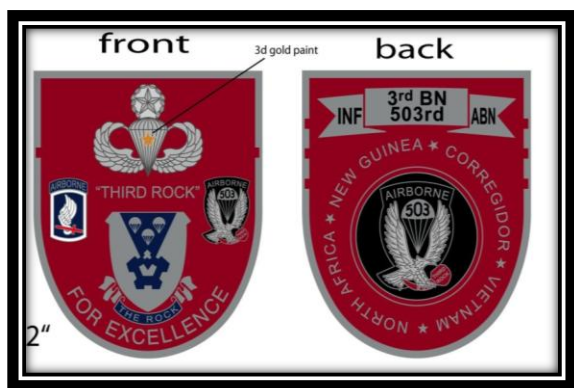
The portal guides Veterans through Web-based menus to capture information and medical evidence required for faster claims decisions. While the new system currently is limited to these three disabilities, usage will expand soon to include claims for other conditions.

VA has begun collecting data that recaps its progress in processing claims for new Agent Orange benefits at: www.vba.va.gov/VBA/agentorange/reportcard/index.html.

[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]



~ 3rd Batt Coins & Medallions ~



I would like to take this opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding about coins versus Medallions.

Because of the interest in the first batch of 3rd Batt coins I decided to fix one side of it and produce another 100 3rd Batt coins with the Bn hash marks on the front flash. The back remains the same with only one hash mark and it is still \$10.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

I have about 30 of those coins remaining.

The medallion is in the shape of the WWII 503rd patch. It is 2.5" long and 2" wide and 0.23" thick.

Because of its size and number of colors it cost more to produce so I raised the price to 20.00 plus 3.00 shipping. I know it is a bit expensive but my goal has not been to make money on either the coin or the medallion. Rather to give all the profits away. I have done that with the 3rd Batt coins and will continue to do so till all are gone.

Some fellow paratroopers have bought coins to donate them to other paratroopers, some have donated money to the poor and I reserved some to just GIVE away.

I plan to do the same with the 503rd Medallion. All profits will go to the 173d Society and Foundation and to a local Food bank. That is why I priced the Medallion at 20 bucks.

If I do not sell them then I will have a very large SINGLE Medallion collection.

In ANY event I cannot tell you how much joy I have received in this whole process. The men and women I have met make it all worthwhile.

Warm Regards, AATW

Paul Fisher, LTC (Ret)
HHC/3/503d

Cell (908) 489-0366
Home (732) 542-1598
Email: fisherppd@att.net

COWBOYS 1965-66

Chopper Soul

Ranger Rudy Teodosio
#49 1970-71 Team
Charlie and 27 year
military career, sent me
information on the 173d
ABN support chopper
from the 335th Assault
Helicopter Group called
"Cowboys (1965-66).
The information on the
chopper was first sent to
us by Bill Spies
(Patrolling page 51
lower right & 52).

The organization
responsible for this is
the Worldwide Rangers
Organization - check
them out!



We need more of such items
restored for the public and
veterans to look at as our era of Vietnam fighting must
never be forgotten.

HEY, I'd like to buy a non-flying Huey and place it on
my front yard and sit in the door having my mocha --
coffee and chocolate mixed together as we did in the
field / radio-relays and in our hooch's.

Going to find out when the bird will be officially
donated to the museum, at which point the Long Range
Reconnaissance Patrol members of our Unit who rode
this bird can be there as the pilots and our door-gunner
have been located.

Thought that all of you who will receive this will enjoy
reading about chopper "SOUL".

RLTW

Robert 'twin' Henriksen
173d Special Ops Unit Director
(Lrrp + Lrp + Rgr + Lrs)

Anet 247 - Worldwide Army Ranger's Vietnam
helicopter spreads "good cheer"





Worldwide Ranger's



Vietnam helicopter spreads "good cheer"

For the past few months, a Vietnam helicopter has been spotted "buzzing the trees" at various locations in Columbus, Ga., and Phenix City, Al.

Most recently, the UH1-D helicopter was seen with brightly-clad holiday elves sitting in the door gunner's position as she delighted hundreds of adults and children waving at her in the annual Christmas parade.

"Soul was her name when she was flown by the 335th Assault Helicopter Company -- known as the 'Cowboys' -- in Vietnam," said Ranger Bill Spies, a member of Worldwide Army Rangers, Inc. (WAR), which owns the helicopter.

Spies and fellow Ranger Charlie Craft, wearing Santa hats, waved at the crowd during the Christmas parade. Spies said he, Craft and "many others owe their lives to ships such as 'Ole 736'." Soul's tail number is 64-13736.

One of the workhorses of the Vietnam War, Soul was recently painted to look the way she did when she was flown in Vietnam. "Help for Heroes," a group from Seale, AL, painted the helicopter with supplies provided by WAR and Paul Voorhees from Ranger Joe's.

After being refurbished, the helicopter made her debut atop a flatbed in the November 13 Veteran's Day Parade in downtown Columbus. "During the parade, four active-duty Airborne Rangers from the Warrior Training Center and Ranger Training Brigade -- Sergeants Long, Bilts, Hickman and Spears-- demonstrated rappelling while hanging out the door," said Spies.

Soul also greeted soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division during a "Welcome Home" event held November 10 at the



Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) on Victory Drive in Columbus. Soldiers and their families were able to climb aboard Soul while she was on display.

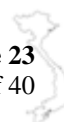
During the Veteran's Day Parade, Vietnam door gunner Milton Smith manned Soul's pilot seat while his grandson, Kyle, had the copilot's seat. Another Vietnam veteran, Ranger Tony Foster, along with one of his "battle buddies," were Soul's door gunners.

Larry Alexander, a helicopter instructor and pilot who flew 1,286 hours in Vietnam, drove the pickup truck pulling Soul during the Veteran's Day Parade. Alexander's son, Doug, a Gulf War veteran, and his grandson, Payton, also rode in the helicopter. "WAR president Willie Snow led Soul's float through the parade," said Spies.

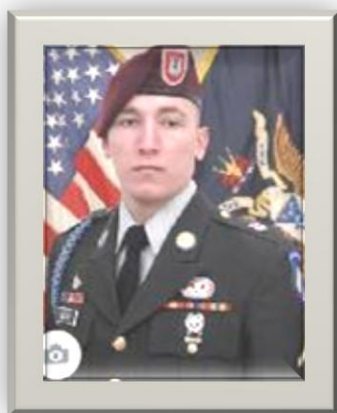
Soul's participation in the Veteran's Day and Christmas parades along with being displayed at the VFW were made possible "only by the efforts and donations of many people," said Spies, citing civilian Mark Smith, who volunteered to drive his pickup to pull Soul in the Christmas parade.

Above-L-R: Elves Sara Castillo, Chloe Spies & Samantha Castillo.

Right: Rangers (L-R) James Jackson, Charlie Craft, Bill Spies and Raymond Castillo.



**A SALUTE AND FAREWELL TO OUR SKY SOLDIER & RANGER BROTHERS
WHO MADE THEIR FINAL JUMP THIS PAST YEAR**



Nicholas S. Cook



Ronald Allen Tucker



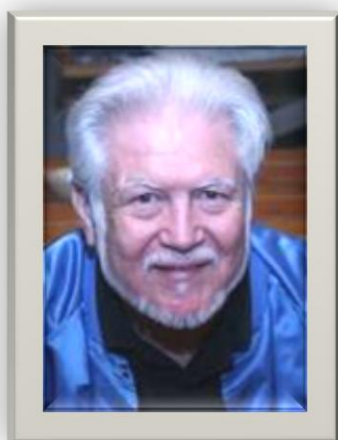
Frank Garcia



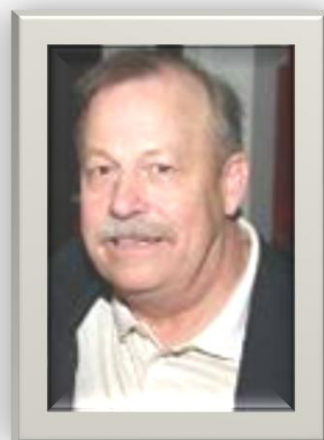
Dick Eckert



John Wills



Ruben Dimas, Sr.



John Nix



Louis Robert Fastuca



Butch Clark



Joseph Whiting Dimock, II

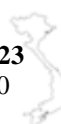


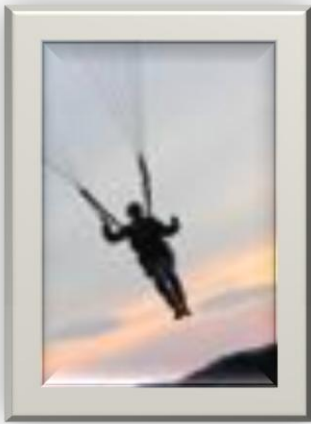
David Charles Dolby



Vinson B. Adkinson, III

(Sadly, continued....)





Terry Lee Robertson



Raymond C. Alcaraz, Jr.



Matthew Eric George



James Anthony Page



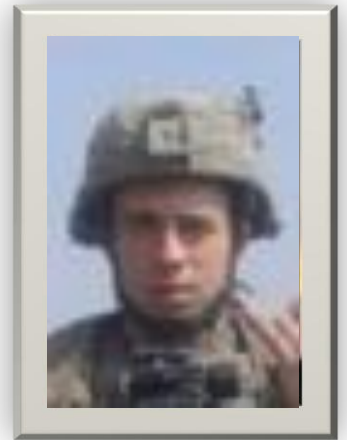
Robert Miller



Lance H. Vogeler



James A. Thorne



Lucas Tyler Beachnaw



Al Ealey



"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."

George S. Patton

