



March 2011, Issue 25

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~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



2/503d trooper doing what he does best during November '66 practice jump in South Vietnam.

(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon 2/503d)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 1 of 44



Springtime: A Reason And A Season For Hope

By: Rev. Dr. Ronald R. Smith
1st LT/FO/B/2/503d



I love March. March is, at the very least, the beginning of spring. Indeed, spring officially begins on the 20th of March, although in our more northern regions it's hard to think of spring with ice and snow still on the ground.

March also sends me back to my tenth grade English class at AC Flora High School in Columbia, S.C. We read William Shakespeare's play, Julius Caesar. In Act I, Scene 2, the soothsayer bids Caesar, "Beware the Ides of March." Ides was the 15th day in March, as well as May, July and October -- and the 13th day in the other months (it's complicated!). But if the Ides of March is almost the beginning of spring, then it must also be near the end of winter.

Recently, Disney released the third in a series of films about Narnia, the mythical land of C.S. Lewis. Lewis, who in his middle years was a devout and committed atheist, set out to disprove Christianity. In the process, however, he became a convert and one of the staunchest followers and defenders of the Christian faith in the 20th century. His books, *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, *A Grief Observed* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are still among best sellers nearly fifty years after his death.

In the first book of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, "*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*", when the Pevensi children first arrive in Narnia by walking through the wardrobe, they discover a curse is on the land. The curse has a very real manifestation; it's always winter and never Christmas. Winter has become the perennial season. The whole land is plunged into a dark night of the soul. But when the children begin to hear the mysterious, thrilling, earth-shaking news, Aslan is on the move, they are intrigued. The great king is back, he's already at work and what he's planned will change everything. Winter gives way to spring; the snow melts; the ice breaks; the cold lifts; the trees blossom -- and of course, this is symbolic of a new beginning for us as well. This is a great Biblical theme. When God moves, creation itself responds. Just as creation mourned when Christ was crucified -- the darkness at midday, the earth shaking -- it exalts when Christ is risen, the ultimate act of spring for human beings and also the whole creation.

Springtime comes after winter. It is a season of hope and renewal. For some of us, the winter symbolizes the difficulties of recovering from war, death, loss, and

grief. Spring offers hope, renewal and new life. Trees recover their leaves and flowers burst forth in a plethora of colors and shapes. The light of day is longer. The sun comes up earlier and sets later. Springtime: The season of hope springs eternal. Spring is full of hope.

When I think about hope, I'm reminded of these words from the pen of the apostle, Paul:

Romans 4:25-5:11 *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The sufferings and perseverance through our personal winters, cultivates and develops character and hope. Hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. With God there is always the opportunity for a new beginning.

An object of His grace,

Ron

Ron's message of hope and a new beginning is appropriate this month as commencing with the April edition he will be passing the holy reins of our newsletter to Chaplain Conrad "Connie" Walker, COL (Ret), former 2/503d and Brigade Chaplain with the 173d who, in '66/'67, joined us on numerous operations in Vietnam. On behalf of our 2/503d troopers, we wish to thank you, Ron, and your number one able and dedicated assistant, Ms. Ginny Gray, for sharing your messages of hope, faith and benevolence these past many months. *Airborne Reverend, good job LT!*



Azusa Vietnam War vet will be first soldier since war to visit bloody battle site

By Ben Baeder, Deputy Metro Editor
San Gabriel Valley Tribune
February 2, 2011



Wambi Cook, 64, of Azusa, a Vietnam Veteran from the 173d Airborne Brigade, poses for a picture at his home in Azusa, Wednesday, February 9, 2011. Wambi Cook is one of about 100 men who served in the battle of "Dak To" during the Vietnam War. (Photo by James Carbone)

Wambi Cook grew up next to the University of Pittsburgh football stadium. When the home team scored, he could hear the roar of the crowd. So he knew this had to be a dream.

There was no way he was really hearing the same loud crescendo in a Vietnamese jungle. He closed his eyes, knowing that when he opened them, the imaginary sound of the approaching hoard of North Vietnam Army regulars would disappear. It didn't.

He and about 70 men of Company A of the 173rd Airborne Brigade opened fire. After a few more attacks by the North Vietnamese, Cook looked around and realized he was the only U.S. soldier still able to fight. Everyone else was dead or severely wounded.

Cook, who is now 64 and lives in Azusa, couldn't believe how many charges the North Vietnamese mounted. *"I thought, 'They can't. I can't believe this is real. They can't be doing this again.'"*

That fight - the Battle of the Slope - took place June 22, 1967. Seventy-six soldiers of the 120-member company were killed, including several from friendly fire. Historians believe U.S. forces may have been outnumbered 15 to one. Five months later, Cook took part in the Battle for Hill 875. Most of his company was killed or injured.

A few days after the November battle, Cook wrote his mother: *"Mother, I've never been so nervous in all my 10 months over here. I jump at every unordinary sound. I don't think I can take it anymore. June 22 took a lot out of me, but I never expected the same thing to happen again. The Lord almighty has seen fit to let me live again."*

Now Cook and two old friends are visiting the central Vietnam area of Dak To where the battles took place. He will leave Monday, and, in an unexpected move, the Vietnamese government is allowing Cook and his friends to visit Hill 875. As far as anyone knows, the three men will be the first Americans to visit the site since the close of the war.

"I don't know if we'll actually get to do it, but it's on the itinerary," said Cook, noting officials could call off the visit with no explanation.

Making a second trip

It's his second trip to Vietnam. In 2008, he was allowed to see the site of the Battle of the Slope, but Hill 875 was off limits.

"I really don't know what changed, but at least it's on the schedule," he said.



U.S. troops move toward the crest of Hill 875 at Dak To in November, 1967 after 21 days of fighting, during which at least 285 Americans were believed killed. The hill in the central highlands, of little apparent strategic value to the North Vietnamese, was nevertheless the focus of intense fighting and heavy losses to both sides. (AP Photo)

When he tells people he's going back to the site of the battle, he gets one of two reactions, he said. Some say they would never go back. Others wish they could go, but say they don't have the means. *"For me, it brings a lot of peace,"* said Cook, a retired private school principal. *"I'm not trying to exorcise any demons. It gives me a sense of calm. A sense of fulfillment."*

(continued....)



Since Vietnam loosened controls on its economy in the 1990s, the southeast Asian country and the United States have built a solid relationship, said Peter Zinoman, an associate professor of history at UC Berkeley who specializes in southeast Asia. *"Most analysts think that at the moment, the (relationship with Vietnam) is the strongest it has been since the war,"* Zinoman said.

The United States and Vietnam have something in common - they're both worried about the growing power of China. Both countries like having someone to turn to for trade, he said.

Soldiers fuel tourism

The Vietnamese have been especially friendly toward U.S. war veterans, he said. Former soldiers have been at the vanguard of a growing tourism industry between the two countries. However, the central highlands area of Vietnam around Hill 875 is a hub of unrest. Ethnic minority groups have been making trouble for the Vietnamese government. In addition, the area is very remote. Those are the most likely reasons that tourists were kept away, Zinoman said.

"My guess is it was not because of anything to do with the war or history," Zinoman said. *"Those are regions in the highlands where there have been a lot of domestic populations that have been causing unrest."*

For the 173d, the area is sacred ground. The brigade suffered horrible losses throughout 1967, but they were able to drive the North Vietnam Army regulars out of the area.

As many of the soldiers get older, they are starting to rekindle camaraderie through meetings and reunions. One such meeting is at 11 a.m. Saturday at AMVETS Post 113, 14910 E. Los Angeles St., Baldwin Park. Dubbed the "Sky Soldiers," the group on Saturday will celebrate the 44th anniversary of the only combat jump in South Vietnam, which took place Feb. 22, 1967. Among those killed in action the day of the jump were John Salter of Pico Rivera and Selvester Vasques of Azusa, according to the Society of the 173d Airborne Combat Brigade.

Cook and the rest of the area men who served in the 173d are reaching out to any fellow veterans and their families in hopes they will attend Saturday's event.

For Cook, time - along with looking at old letters he wrote to his wife and mother - has given him a chance to get perspective on the war.

He was cocky before Dak To, he said. *"The 173d had kicked a lot of ass down south. We never lost,"* he said. *"But there wasn't that same confidence after that first repel on June 22."* For him, the battles of Dak To remind him of his mortality and it makes him thankful to be alive to watch his six children grow up.

Search for a hero's family

Cook also wants to find the family of the man who saved his life.

He and fellow soldier Bill Reynolds were honored for running into fire during the June 22 battle to rescue injured medic Rick Patterson. But there's more to the story.

North Vietnamese soldiers killed the two

soldiers assigned to give cover fire to Reynolds and Cook. Then Reynolds was shot and unable to walk. Cook was desperate. He and Reynolds had been ordered to leave their weapons behind so that they might be able to more easily carry Patterson. *"All hope was lost,"* he said.

Then they saw medic David Heller charging toward the enemy with an M-60 machine gun. Heller was within 10 feet of Cook and Reynolds when a bullet tore through his head and killed him. But the brazen display spooked the enemy enough to give Cook time to run up and grab a rope to drag his friends to safety.

"Heller was kind of a misfit," Cook said. *"I really didn't know him too well."* Cook retrieved Heller's body, and the slain man was given the Bronze Star. Cook would like the honor upgraded.

"He's from South Boone, Colorado, I'll never forget that," he said.

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[Reprinted here with courtesy of Mr. Ben Baeder, Deputy Metro Editor *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*]

Note: In next month's issue of our newsletter will be a feature story of Wambi and his buddies' return to the summit of Hill 875.



Assault on Hill 875



PTSD ANONYMOUS

I also saw SSG Sal Giunta's involvement during the Super Bowl. No one can doubt his contributions to the Herd and the country .

Dr. Scott Fairchild's byline (February issue, pages 45-46 of our newsletter) is spot-on. The impact of complex combat stress (or whatever is PC now) is chronic with direct impact on the quality of life of many of our Sky Soldiers and other combat vets.

After ten years of experience and observation, it is clear that we need to excise some new options, particularly at the community level. I believe the 173d Abn Bde National needs to champion the use of its local chapters to do more in a coordinated fashion across the nation. We need to partner with United Way with its national web network (and Combined Federal Campaign funding) to establish a true, KISS oriented, customer targeted clearinghouse where folks can get contacted with real humans ASAP.

We know that the Herd and the Special Forces Association have forward operating bases (Chapters) across the country and overseas. Along with other motivated organizations, i.e. United Way, etc., a lot could be done if supported. The numerous DOD and VA web sites do not contribute such a clearinghouse, i.e. <http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov> does not fulfill this simple and direct need.

The *National Council on Disabilities* report, March 2009, highlights this on pages 49-50 of that report.

Doc Hicks and others of us in the Tacoma/Fort Lewis area came to this conclusion some time ago and created the following concept to offer some sort of local support groups for those we saw, and continue to see, with multiple DXs following multiple deployments.

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~ Looking for Buddies ~

Brother Sky Soldiers:

A local 'nam Sky Soldier is trying to find the family of, or anyone that might have known **Amado Valencia**.

Amado was a KIA in '69. His family lived in Bakersfield, CA at some point. He had a sister, Lucy Valencia, who was subsequently married and moved (?) back to Texas. Amado also had a couple brothers in the service, ABN, possibly. One brother was called 'Boy'.

One of our troopers really wants to try and locate the family. If anyone has any info, please RSVP.

Many thanks.

Dave Glick
B/2/503d

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AMADO ACOSTA VALENCIA
SP4 - E4 - Army - Selective Service
173d Airborne Brigade
KIA Binh Dinh, South Vietnam
Hostile Ground Casualty
May 15, 1969
Panel 24W – Line 22

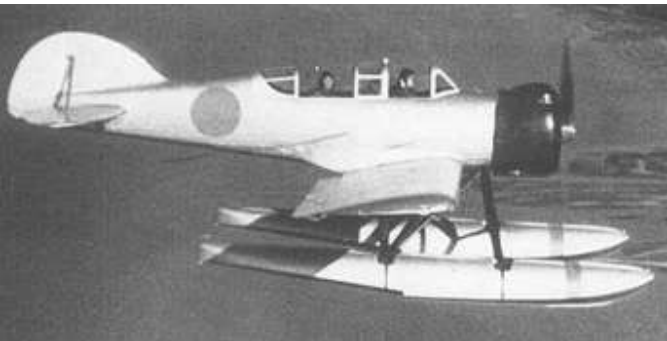


The Day Japan Bombed Oregon

By: Norm Goyer

September 9, 1942, the I-25 class Japanese submarine was cruising in an easterly direction raising its periscope occasionally as it neared the United States coastline. Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor less than a year ago and the Captain of the attack submarine knew that Americans were watching their coastline for ships and aircraft that might attack our country. Dawn was approaching; the first rays of the sun were flickering off the periscopes lens. Their mission; attack the west coast with incendiary bombs in hopes of starting a devastating forest fire. If this test run were successful, Japan had hopes of using their huge submarine fleet to attack the eastern end of the Panama Canal to slow down shipping from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The Japanese Navy had a large number of I-400 submarines under construction. Each capable of carrying three aircraft. Pilot Chief Warrant Officer Nobuo Fujita and his crewman Petty Officer Shoji Okuda were making last minute checks of their charts making sure they matched those of the submarine's navigator.



The only plane ever to drop a bomb on the United States during WWII was this submarine based Glen.

September 9, 1942: Nebraska forestry student Keith V. Johnson was on duty atop a forest fire lookout tower between Gold's Beach and Brookings Oregon. Keith had memorized the silhouettes of Japanese long distance bombers and those of our own aircraft. He felt confident that he could spot and identify, friend or foe, almost immediately. It was cold on the coast this September morning, and quiet. The residents of the area were still in bed or preparing to head for work. Lumber was a large part of the industry in Brookings, just a few miles north of the California Oregon state lines.

Aboard the submarine the Captain's voice boomed over the PA system, *"Prepare to surface, aircrew report to your stations, wait for the open hatch signal."* During training runs several subs were lost when hangar doors were opened too soon and sea water rushed into the hangars and sank the boat with all hands lost.

You could hear the change of sound as the bow of the I-25 broke from the depths, nosed over for its run on the surface. A loud bell signaled the "All Clear." The crew assigned to the single engine Yokosuki E14Y's float equipped observation and light attack aircraft sprang into action.



The aircraft carried two incendiary 168 pound bombs and a crew of two. The "Glen" was launched via catapult from a I-25 class Japanese submarine.

They rolled the plane out its hangar built next to the conning tower. The wings and tail were unfolded, and several 176 pound incendiary bombs were attached to the hard points under the wings. This was a small two passenger float plane with a nine cylinder 340 hp radial engine. It was full daylight when the Captain ordered the aircraft to be placed on the catapult. Warrant Officer Fujita started the engine, let it warm up, checked the magnetos and oil pressure. There was a slight breeze blowing and the seas were calm. A perfect day to attack the United States of America. When the gauges were in the green the pilot signaled and the catapult launched the aircraft. After a short climb to altitude the pilot turned on a heading for the Oregon coast.

Johnson was sweeping the horizon but could see nothing, he went back to his duties as a forestry agent which was searching for any signs of a forest fire. The morning moved on. Every few minutes he would scan low, medium and high but nothing caught his eye.

The small Japanese float plane had climbed to several thousand feet of altitude for better visibility and to get above the coastal fog. The pilot had calculated landfall in a few minutes and right on schedule he could see the breakers flashing white as they hit the Oregon shores.

Johnson was about to put his binoculars down when something flashed in the sun just above the fog bank. It was unusual because in the past all air traffic had been flying up and down the coast, not aiming into the coast.

(continued....)





Warrant Officer Fujita is shown with his Yokosuka E14Y (Glen) float plane prior to his flight.

The pilot of the aircraft checked his course and alerted his observer to be on the lookout for a fire tower which was on the edge of the wooded area where they were supposed to drop their bombs. These airplanes carried very little fuel and all flights were in and out without any loitering. The plane reached the shoreline and the pilot made a course correction 20 degrees to the north. The huge trees were easy to spot and certainly easy to hit with the bombs. The fog was very wispy by this time.

Johnson watched in awe as the small floatplane with a red meat ball on the wings flew overhead, the plane was not a bomber and there was no way that it could have flown across the Pacific. Johnson could not understand what was happening. He locked onto the plane and followed it as it headed inland.

The pilot activated the release locks so that when he could pickle the bombs they would release. His instructions were simple, fly at 500 feet, drop the bombs into the trees and circle once to see if they had started any fires and then head back to the submarine.

Johnson could see the two bombs under the wing of the plane and knew that they would be dropped. He grabbed his communications radio and called the Forest Fire Headquarters informing them of what he was watching unfold.

The bombs tumbled from the small seaplane and impacted the forests, the pilot circled once and spotted fire around the impact point. He executed an 180 degree turn and headed back to the submarine.

There was no air activity, the skies were clear. The small float plane lined up with the surfaced submarine and landed gently on the ocean, then taxied to the sub. A long boom swung out from the stern. His crewman caught the cable and hooked it into the pickup attached to the rollover cage between the cockpits. The plane was swung onto the deck. The plane's crew folded the wings

and tail, pushed it into its hangar and secured the water tight doors. The I-25 submerged and headed back to Japan.

This event, which caused no damage, marked the only time during World War II that an enemy plane had dropped bombs on the United States mainland. What the Japanese didn't count on was coastal fog, mist and heavy doses of rain made the forests so wet they simply would not catch fire.

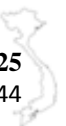


This Memorial Plaque is located in Brookings, Oregon at the site of the 1942 bombing.

Fifty years later the Japanese pilot, who survived the war, would return to Oregon to help dedicate a historical plaque at the exact spot where his two bombs had impacted. The elderly pilot then donated his ceremonial sword as a gesture of peace and closure of the bombing of Oregon in 1942.

Reprinted with courtesy of Aircraft Marketplace blog
<http://acmp.com/blog/the-day-japan-bombed-oregon>

[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA]



~ More on The Jump ~

In last month's issue of our newsletter (Pages 13-16), we included recollections on the Junction City combat jump. Following are recollections which came in too late to be included. Ed

Jump Wings With A Star

As usual, I really enjoyed the latest newsletter. Regarding your coverage of the combat blast for 2/503; two things stick in my mind. One, CWO Howard Melvin, head of Riggers in C Co. (S&T) was making his fourth or fifth combat blast and, two, the merchants in Bien Hoa were selling jump wings with a combat jump star a week or so ahead of the jump. So much for OpSec. AATW

Steve Haber
C/2/503d



Beautiful downtown Bien Hoa 1966
How do I love thee? Let me smell the ways.
(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d)

Silver Wings Upon Her Breasts

You might remember that we were supposed to make three practice jumps before the February 1967 combat blast. We made two and then the third was cancelled because the enemy had mined the drop zone. On the combat jump one of the guys was hung-up in a tree hanging so high up that he would have died if he jumped. To make this as bad as it could get a VC was shooting at him and we were all hollering for him to swing back and forth.

A Chinook finally blew him out of the tree as a last resort. His chute opened just in time. A Platoon from Bravo company got ambushed. VC had a 50 cal and

there was nothing to hide behind bigger than a broomstick. Napalm was called in or no one would have made it out.

On the way to Vietnam we flew on a commercial 707. We had a stewardess named Gloria. She was barely 5 foot 2 but nature had been good to her and she had enormous breasts. She was great. She broke out the booze and talked one-on-one with I believe everyone on the flight as we flew up over Alaska toward Vietnam.

Someone took a shooting expert badge and hung it on her right breast near the nipple and within a short time about a dozen tags were added to the badge. At this point someone put another badge on the other breast and there soon was an equal number of tags hanging from both breasts and she came down the aisle looking like a stripper coming down a runway. She hugged almost everyone when we got off the plane and tried to give the badges and tags back. Nobody would take 'em. I hope she's still got 'em. Funny what you remember.

Lonnie Mitchell
B/2/503d

Looking for a 173d Yearbook

My name is John Bryant. I served with the Rangers and then the Public Information Office from 1970 till our unit stood-down and came state side. I extended my tour in-country and stayed behind when the Herd came home.

Due to our stand-down we rushed the last magazine to print. We did not get it in time to distribute it in Vietnam. It was to be given out when our unit reached the states. This issue had a split front page with a Freedom Bird and a pair of Boonie Boots on it. The back page was of a member from 2nd Bat as he sat watch over the mountain leading into the Sequoia Valley. He was seated on a rock with his rifle at port-arms. The green mountains were in the background with a cloud blanket covering the valley.

I didn't come stateside with the rest of the unit, and was reassigned in-country. I did a lot of work on that yearbook and never got a copy of it -- 40 years later I might never get a copy. I was hoping you might ask those who receive the newsletter to Will me their copy. If they have one that is boxed-up and they never look at it or want to clean house and pass it on; I'd love to get a copy of it. Many of the photos in the Journal were taken by me including the back cover.

I know this is a long shot, but it's the only shot that I have!

John Bryant, Rangers
john.bryant19@yahoo.com



SGT. NASTY

From Iva Tuttle, spouse of Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503d

It was with great regret and sorrow that we read of the passing of Sgt. Nasty. We knew him as Carl Asbury instead of Ernest, but that's nothing unusual with the way the Army handles names.

Just wanted to share a story with you about him and the first time we actually met.



In 1994, we attended our first reunion in Sacramento, California. After the reunion, Wayne mentioned that since we had moved to Canada he hadn't been in touch with any of his buddies from C Company 2nd Batt. By that fall, a number of them had been found and talked to. The list was growing every day it seemed – slowly at first, but gradually we were getting more and more names. In 1995, at Rochester, it was decided that we'd keep working and try to get some of the guys together from '66-'67, at least to attend the reunion at Anaheim and have a kind of mini-reunion there.

At the 1996 reunion, there were about 30 men – quite a few who hadn't seen each other since Vietnam – that were together. We had gotten two adjoining rooms so there was enough room for everyone to sit and visit and have a safe place to just hang out and reminisce. As a result of that reunion, we came home with another list of names. Men were talking and not realizing they were mentioning names they had thought were forgotten.

During the next year, more time was spent trying to locate men. Some wanted to be found, others didn't. Some wouldn't talk, some just wanted someone to listen. One of the men we found was George Foote who mentioned his Sergeant – a man by the name of Carl "Nasty" Asbury. He told us how he was wounded on Hill 875 and how Sgt. Nasty was wounded too, and how great this guy was and he would follow him anywhere. He did not tell us that he thought Sgt. Nasty was KIA so the search began.

A few weeks later, a man answering the description returned a phone call I made to Joshua Tree, stating he was Sgt. Asbury. He told me that all his buddies had been casualties of Hill 875. I said, *"Well, I got your name from a man by the name of George Foote who lost*

part of his foot on 875." Carl hung up the phone without another word.

I called Foote and told him that I thought I'd found Sgt. Asbury. I had a contact number and would try again and see if Carl wanted to talk to him. That resulted in another hang-up because Foote thought Asbury was KIA -- both swearing the other had been removed in a body bag.

I was used as a go-between for quite a few days with a lot of the conversations coming from the bottom of a bottle before I could talk them into talking to each other. It was almost reunion time in Tucson and it was mentioned to them that we were going, we would have a suite again and it would be a safe place to meet.

The result was that on the way to Tucson, Foote picked up Asbury and miraculously they arrived in Tucson. There were many bottoms of bottles – most of the time Asbury would end up in the chair in our room for the night. Our son, David, took him on to protect him and keep him safe and make sure he was okay. Even to diving under a table at the banquet when the shoot-out occurred.

One day when I went into the room to check on Carl, I told David he didn't have to stay there watching him all the time. David looked up at me with tears streaming down his face and said, ***"Mom, do you realize that all these men were younger than I am now when they were going through that hell? I do have to stay here."***

The morning of the memorial service, Carl came up to me after the service and told me 'thank you' and started to walk away. He stopped, came back and said to 'tell David thank you, and if he had to ever go back to war, he wanted my son to have his back.' I don't know how much bigger a compliment a parent could have.



Iva & Wayne Tuttle

We kept in touch for quite awhile until he went back to his bunker. He and Foote spent a lot of time together – even went to Mexico for a while. Carl, I hope you have your peace. Know you were loved and remembered by a young man that looked on you as a hero – as the young man you once were.



CSM Vincent D. Roegiers

Sadly, I must inform you that CSM Vincent D. Roegiers died on Thursday, 27 January at about 1700 hours. CSM Roegiers was suffering from Alzheimer's.

The Funeral was held on Tuesday, 1 February at 1030 hours at Saint Elizabeth Ann Seaton Catholic Church in Fayetteville, NC.

Mrs. Roegiers' home address is 126 Glen Almond Court, Dunn, NC 28334-2856. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations to the American Cancer Society.

Following is CSM Roegiers' biography. I cannot attest to its complete accuracy but I believe it is close.

May he finally be at peace.

Ken Smith
A/D/2/503d



Vincent D. Roegiers **Command Sergeant Major** **U.S. Army, Retired**

Command Sergeant Major Vincent D. Roegiers was drafted in March, 1945, and underwent basic training at Camp

Livingston, Louisiana. He subsequently attended the last Airborne Class conducted at Fort Benning during World War II. Following completion of Airborne training, CSM Roegiers was assigned to the 13th Airborne Division at Fort Benning.

CSM Roegiers was reassigned to the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg in late 1945, where he served in numerous positions from 1945 through 1955. Following this Airborne assignment, he rotated to the Federal Republic of Germany where he served with the 2nd Armored Division at Mannheim.

On a typical Airborne track, CSM Roegiers returned to Fort Bragg after his Germany tour. From 1958 through 1960, he served with A Company, 505th Parachute Regiment, and then as a Division Operations Sergeant with the 82nd Airborne Division.

In 1960, CSM Roegiers was transferred to Okinawa. From 1960 through 1963, he was assigned to the 503d Airborne Battle Group (Forward) of the 25th Infantry Division. When the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was formed in March 1963, CSM Roegiers was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry (Airborne), where he served until 1964.

Completing his Okinawa tour in 1964, CSM Roegiers returned to the United States and was assigned to 4th Student Battalion (Airborne), at Fort Benning, GA, where he helped train Airborne soldiers. In 1967, he was reassigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade, then deployed in the Republic of Vietnam. He served as CSM of the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry and then as CSM of the 173d Airborne Brigade.



In 1968, CSM Roegiers returned to the United States and was detailed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. From 1968 through 1969, he served as CSM of the 4th Cadet Regiment, and was subsequently selected as CSM of the United States Corps of Cadets, a position he held from 1969 through 1973.

Following his tour at West Point, CSM Roegiers deployed to Korea where he served as CSM of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from 1973-1974. Redeployed in 1974 to the Home of the Infantry, CSM Roegiers served as Command Sergeant Major of the United States Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, GA, until his retirement in 1979. CSM Roegiers retired with 34 ½ years of service in the United States Army.

CSM Roegiers' numerous awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with "V" device (with 3 OLC), the Air Medal (w/ 2 OLC), the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device (w/ 3 OLC), the Good Conduct Medal (w/ 10 OLC), the World War II Victory Medal, the American Theater – Mediterranean Campaign Medal, the National Defense Medal (w/ 1 OLC), the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (w/ 4 stars), the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), the Presidential Unit Citation, the Meritorious Unit Citation, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and the Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Unit Citation. CSM Roegiers wore the Master Parachutist Badge and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

Rest easy, Command Sergeant Major, job well done.





Henri Huet/Associated Press: American soldiers held a memorial service for seven men of the U.S. 101st Airborne in a clearing near a former French rubber plantation in Lai Khe, South Vietnam, December 1965. The photograph is part of the “Henri Huet: Vietnam” exhibition at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie.

Among war photographers, the name Henri Huet once ranked alongside Robert Capa. He is remembered, by those who knew him, as among the bravest, the most soul stirring, the most tragic of his class of shooters. Now a new generation of Parisians and tourists have a chance to view his haunting work at “*Henri Huet: Vietnam*,” running Feb. 9 through April 3 at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie (5/7 rue de Fourcy; 33-1-44-78-75-00; www.mep-fr.org) in Paris’s Fourth Arrondissement.



Henri in Vietnam.

Curated by *The Associated Press*, for whom Huet worked for many years, and Huet’s niece, the show will highlight work produced by Huet while embedded (before we knew the word) with troops in Southeast Asia, as well as the work of a handful of his contemporaries.

War Photographer Remembered at Paris Show

By Sarah Wildman

In Transit

February 1, 2011

The show marks the 40th anniversary of Huet’s untimely death in a helicopter explosion above Laos on Feb. 10, 1971 — a crash that took the lives of three other photojournalists: Larry Burrows of *Life* magazine, Kent Potter of *U.P.I.* and Keisaburo Shimamoto of *Newsweek*.

The former A.P. bureau chief in Saigon, Horst Faas, and Huet’s niece, Hélène Gédouin, an editor with the French publishing house Hachette, were determined to restore Huet’s legacy, and bring an awareness of his work to the public. Mr. Faas and Ms. Gédouin first put together an exhibition, as well as a book, of his work in the small French city of Perpignan. The Paris exhibition is a significant expansion on the first show, including several never-published photos.

[Sent in by Paul Epley, 173d Bde PIO]



If only it were true...



General Vo Nguyen Giap

A report has been circulating for years through email, I just received it again the other day, stating General Giap and North Vietnam were on the verge of surrender before America's decision to pull-out from Vietnam, which is interesting, if it were true, but it isn't. Here's the text of that urban legend: Ed

General Giap was a brilliant, highly respected leader of the North Vietnam military. The following quote is from his memoirs currently found in the Vietnam War Memorial in Hanoi:

"What we still don't understand is why you Americans stopped the bombing of Hanoi. You had us on the ropes. If you had pressed us a little harder, just for another day or two, we were ready to surrender! It was the same at the battle of TET. You defeated us! We knew it, and we thought you knew it. But we were elated to notice your media was helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields. We were ready to surrender. You had won!"

General Giap has published his memoirs and confirmed what most Americans knew. The Vietnam war was not lost in Vietnam -- it was lost at home. The same slippery slope, sponsored by the US media, is currently underway. It exposes the enormous power of a Biased Media to cut out the heart and will of the American public. A truism worthy of note: ... *'Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media for they will destroy your honor.'*

All research I've conducted, and it's readily available on countless university, government and historian's web sites and books, including first-hand interviews with the General, claim the very opposite. In fact, one can surmise he would never give up and they would prevail.

Interestingly, he was surprised the Americans never employed nuclear bombs to bring the war to an end.

Vietnam War historian: Giap made no such statement

According to Clemson University history professor Edwin Moise, General Giap never wrote or stated any such thing. From Moise's comprehensive Vietnam War Bibliography:

The most relevant statement I could find that is actually attributable to General Giap was uttered in a 1989 interview with Morley Safer, as excerpted in *The Vietnam War: An Encyclopedia of Quotations* by Howard Langer (Greenwood Press, 2005, p. 318):

"We paid a high price [during the Tet offensive] but so did you [Americans]... not only in lives and materiel.... Do not forget the war was brought into the living rooms of the American people. ... The most important result of the Tet offensive was it made you de-escalate the bombing, and it brought you to the negotiation table. It was, therefore, a victory....The war was fought on many fronts. At that time the most important one was American public opinion."

While Giap did not discount the importance of anti-war protests in the U.S. as contributing to America ending the war, I've found no credible source stating Vietnam was ever near surrender.

"In his most recent statement on the matter, a 1996 interview conducted for a CNN series on the Cold War, General Giap attributed the Communists' eventual military victory to their *courage, determination, wisdom, tactics, intelligence and sacrifices, along with Americans' lack of knowledge about the Vietnamese nation and its people*, but he said nothing about a defeated Vietnam preparing to give up the effort before U.S. protesters changed the course of the war."

You'll recall Ho Chi Minh telling the French they too would never win, as Vietnam was prepared to lose 10 men to everyone Frenchman killed, and then, no doubt, send 10 more.



Paris peace talks

Someone once said, *"Everyone is allowed their own opinion, no one is allowed their own facts."* Ed





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](http://www.texasreunion2011.com)

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





Donut Dolly Book Set For November

I wonder if you can include this in our newsletter. A couple years ago I invited this woman to speak at one of our vets' PTSD meetings. She was just starting her book then.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

Friends:

Hooray! My publisher, University of North Texas Press, has informed me that my book, *Donut Dolly: An American Red Cross Girl's War in Vietnam*, will be published on November 11, Veteran's Day, 11-11-11. I'm so excited.

Here's an overview:

Donut Dolly ***An American Red Cross Girl's*** ***War in Vietnam*** **By Joann Puffer Kotcher**

Donut Dolly puts you in the Vietnam War face down in the dirt under a sniper attack, inside a helicopter being struck by lightning, at dinner next to a commanding general, and slogging through the mud along a line of foxholes. You see the war through the eyes of one of the first women officially allowed in the combat zone.

Kotcher was once abducted; dodged an ambush in the Delta; talked with a true war hero in a hospital who had charged a machine gun; and had a conversation with a prostitute. She found answers to the questions: What is it really like in a war? What will a soldier say to a girl while sitting in a bunker with shells flying overhead? What did the men think about the war? Why would a man risk his life to save another? The answers will surprise you.

Number Six: North Texas Military Biography and Memoir Series

Joann Puffer Kotcher
Donut Dolly
American Red Cross
Korea '64-'65
Vietnam '66-'67

There were three categories of Red Cross Workers in Vietnam.

SMH "Service to Military Hospitals." These women and men worked in the hospitals directly with the patients, doing a combination of social work and recreation therapy.

SMI "Service to Military Installations."

These women and men were the Red Cross social workers who arranged compassionate emergency leaves and received and passed on communications from the families back home regarding births, deaths, and emergencies.

SRAO "Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas." These women were the Donut Dollies. Their job was to provide "a touch of home in a combat zone." They brought games and Kool Aid and a respite from thinking about the war to men in the field.

####





Lowell Wesley Stevens, Sr. Paratrooper Extraordinaire *Rest Easy Trooper*

FAYETTEVILLE – MSG Lowell Wesley Stevens, Sr., 69, of Fayetteville, made the leap into eternity on Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2011. Lowell arrived on this earth as the first child of a coal mining family on July 8, 1941, in Putney, W. VA. He was the son of the late Elmer and Opal Young Stevens. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Larry; and his sister, Jean. He was named after both of his grandfathers, Lowell H. Stevens and John Wesley Young. Lowell was the first one in his family to graduate from high school, but had only two options after doing so; go to work in the coal mines, which had killed his dad, or join the U.S. military. His father had served as a machine gunner in Europe during the last stages of World War II with the 376th Infantry Regiment of the 94th Infantry Division and was immensely proud of his Combat Infantryman Badge. On July 29, 1959, Lowell entered the U.S. Army, having enlisted for Airborne unassigned. He graduated from Jump School in February 1960, and six years later he was a master parachutist. Later on, he added HALO and HALO Master Wings to his chest. From December 1959 to May 1963, he was a proud member of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY. In May 1963, he volunteered for Special Forces training and completed the course with MOS 112 (Heavy Weapons Infantryman) in November of that year. In November 1963, Lowell was assigned to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) located on Okinawa and performed the duties of the Heavy Weapons man on A-Detachments. He served on Detachment A-312 from Company C on a six month TDY mission to South Vietnam from June to December 1964. From May to July 1965, he was a squad leader in the Recon Platoon of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment. In October 1965, Lowell was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in South Vietnam. Between this date and August 1972, Lowell completed a total of 71 months with the 5th Group in Vietnam. His duties included serving on A-Camps, MACV SOG, Mike Force company commander, and instructor at MACV Recondo School. He served for a total of six years and five months in Vietnam. After Vietnam, he was assigned once again to the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) on Okinawa for 18 months. In April, he was assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg. During the last eight years of his military service, he performed the duties of the team sergeant on Operational Detachments. In his opinion, nothing in the Army was greater or more important than the team sergeant on an

ODA. After retiring from the Army on March 1, 1980, he was an owner and operator of a new Peterbilt truck, leased to trucking companies that specialized in hauling steel and machinery until July 1983. During these 3 ½ years, he traveled the continental United States and visited with his rig all but two of our states. He enjoyed seeing our country from the vantage point afforded him by the cab of his truck. In July 1983, he started work on Camp Mackall as the range control representative. He took an intense interest in the history of Mackall and for more than 27 years, he endeavored all but daily to learn the rich history of the "home of the Airborne during World War II." He said many times that his service in Vietnam and his time at Camp Mackall defined his life and provided a degree of contentment that few men ever realized. On Sept. 1, 2010, Lowell retired from civil service on Fort Bragg with more than 47 years of enjoyable service with the federal government. Although he did not like to enumerate the awards he received while in the Army, it is customary to do so, so here it goes: Silver Star Medal (three awards), Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (six awards), Purple Heart (two awards), Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge and a handful of "I was there" awards. He was most proud of his Vietnam Campaign Medal, which indicated that he was awarded 16 campaigns out of a total of 17 awarded for the entire Vietnam War. He is survived by his sister, Frances Stevens James and husband Cecil, of Thomson, GA; his wife of more than 35 years, Emiko; son, Lowell Jr. and wife Lauri; daughters, Natalie Stevens and husband Bart Palmer and Cheryl Stevens Mericle; two grandsons, Chance Palmer and Brandon Stevens; and two granddaughters, Brooke Stevens and Chasity Palmer, all of Fayetteville. Memorial services were held in Fayetteville on Monday, Jan. 31, 2011. Interment followed at Sandhills Veterans Cemetery in Spring Lakes with full military honors.



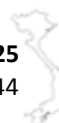
Published on the Special Forces web site:
<http://www.sfa62.org/>

[Sent in by Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d]



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 16 of 44





~ Sky Soldier Extraordinaire ~

Chaplain/Pastor Conrad N. (Connie) Walker



Pastor Conrad N. (Connie) Walker was born in Herrick, Illinois. He attended elementary school in Illinois, and graduated from Grant Community High School in Fox Lake, Illinois where he excelled in student leadership and athletics. He graduated from the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. After four years of study, he graduated from Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota and was ordained a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. After seminary, he was called as pastor of Shiloh Lutheran Church in Elmore, Minnesota. In September 1962, he was called by his church to Active Duty as a U.S. Army Chaplain. While in seminary, and as a parish pastor, he served in the U.S. Army Reserves and the Minnesota National Guard.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker served at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 101st Airborne Division; Vietnam, 173d Airborne Brigade; Fort Benning, Georgia, Student Brigade (Airborne, Ranger, Pathfinder School); Fort Hamilton, New York, Advanced Chaplain School; Thailand, USARSUPTHAI and Special Forces; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Command and General Staff College; Fort Hood, Texas, 1st Cavalry Division Chaplain; Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Post Chaplain and Faculty Resource; US Forces Korea, Eighth U.S. Army, Command Chaplain United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command; Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Post Chaplain; Kaiserslautern, Germany, 21st Support Command, Command Chaplain; Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Fifth Army Chaplain. He retired from active duty on 1 November 1990, to accept a call as Senior Pastor at MacArthur Park Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas. After serving as parish pastor for five years, he began his new mission of Worldwide Retreat Ministry.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Valor, Legion of Merit and Purple Heart for his pastoral mission under hostile conditions



in Vietnam. He is a Master Parachutist, having made many hundreds of jumps with the troops, to include one combat jump with the 173d Airborne Brigade.

He spent many years as an outstanding athlete. He played guard for the University of Washington Huskies, and had opportunities to play professional football and box professionally upon graduation, but followed the call to enter seminary to further prepare to be a pastor. He was a heavyweight boxer for nine years, holding titles in the Midwest and on the West Coast. He coached boxing throughout his Army calling.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker and his wife, Ann, are the parents of five adult children. They have ten granddaughters, ten grandsons (four currently on Active Duty), one great grandson and six great granddaughters. His family has accrued a combined total of over 120 years of meritorious and distinctive service with the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

He is a member of the Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America. He is co-author of the dynamic book about his life story and bold witness, *"The Leapin' Deacon"* – The Soldier's Chaplain. The forward is written by General John Vessey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Chaplain/Pastor Walker and Ann continue in Retreat and Spirituality Ministries, Pastoring and Mentoring seminars, Prayer breakfasts, Banquet speaking, and Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer Professional Training and Leadership. He is presently serving as National Chaplain Emeritus for the Military Order of the Purple Heart and International/National Chaplain Emeritus for the 173d Airborne Association, and most recently accepted our invitation to share his message each month in the *Chaplain's Corner* of our newsletter.



Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Presents:
Florida's 24th Annual
Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion

The Nations Largest Veterans Reunion
Supported by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.- VVOF.org

May 5, 6, 7, 8, 2011

Additionally, come visit The Vietnam Traveling Memorial WALL May 1 - 8, 2011

LIVE MUSIC

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Also visit the Reunion Web Page at:
floridaveteransreunion.com

Meet Your Vet Brothers & Sisters
All Veterans, Families and Public Invited

Wickham Park
321-255-4307 - Melbourne, FL
Take I-95 to Exit 191 or old Exit 73
No Coolers, Glass or Pets allowed
in the Reunion Area

Per Wickham Park: Golf Carts Permitted
for the Handicapped Only And Must
Abide By FL Highway Laws

Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall
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dmwassmer@yahoo.com



Pathfinders Pathfinders

Before our successful Pathfinder Reunion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in June 2007, a small group of 101st retired and active duty combat veterans (Danny "Bear" Rozier, CSM Shawn "Jump or Die" Jones, Steve "Brainiac" Campbell and Pat "Dirt Ball" Dougherty) worked closely together to father that historic gathering and formalize an idea for a national organization of Pathfinders.

Association for our young Pathfinders who are currently ordered to multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Pathfinders of Today

The stress on our young troopers and their families is unrelenting. Our soldiers return from war to the problems of reconnecting with loved ones and finding a place within a family that has learned to live without them. Our membership of young and old warriors wanted the NPA website www.nationalpathfinder.com and Flickr account to provide a means for Pathfinders to stay connected to their families and the Pathfinder Brotherhood.

With this website, the NPA Officers and Governors are attempting to accomplish these important goals. If you haven't joined the National Pathfinder Association, you will find instructions on our web site. If you have questions or comments concerning the NPA, please explore the Contact tab of our website. You can expect a quick and helpful response.

"The Year of the Pathfinder"



2011 Convention

*Sponsored by the
National Pathfinder Association*

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino
Las Vegas, Nevada

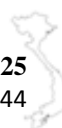
July 19-23, 2001

nationalpathfinderassociation.com



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 19 of 44



Pathfinders of yore.

Two years later at the 2009 Pathfinder Reunion, this same working group presented a rough draft constitution and bi-laws which was conditionally approved by all Pathfinders present. The attendees also voted in a Slate of Officers and Board of Governors with the mission to obtain a legal Charter for a "National Pathfinder Association (NPA)."

The charter membership of the new Association wanted a professional organization that would provide a meeting place for old warriors to come together and embrace their comradeship. They also wanted a life-long





On Arlington National Cemetery

I would like to share some very positive news on our continuing efforts to fix what's broken at Arlington National Cemetery.

It was last June when many of us first heard about Arlington's reliance on paper records and maps, and the systemic disorganization and shameful errors that inevitably resulted. I think all of us were especially shocked and appalled to learn about dozens of instances of misplaced or misidentified remains at the cemetery.

As an American, a Virginian, a member of the Senate and as the proud son of a World War II Marine veteran, I thought it was important to take action to try to correct these problems.

So last August, we announced a unique agreement with the Army. Several of our leading Northern Virginia technology companies assigned their brightest problem-solvers to work with the Army to honestly assess the back office disaster at Arlington, and recommend a responsible path forward.

We already knew that Arlington Cemetery officials were relying on hand-written files, paper maps and 3-by-5 index cards, which was an entirely inadequate system for responsibly tracking the 300,000 military heroes buried at Arlington and the 6,000 military funerals conducted there every year.

Senator Warner, with members of NVTC and representatives from Arlington National Cemetery, announced the release of an assessment of problems at the cemetery.

As a result of this assessment, we now know there were other disappointing management issues at the cemetery:

- Arlington relied on a single fax machine and an inadequate telephone system, which created a difficult and frustrating bottleneck for thousands of families trying to send death certificates, service records, letters of confirmation and other important documents.
- This continued reliance on pencil and paper records required families to produce duplicate documentation that in many cases already existed in the Pentagon or VA computer systems – but for

some reason these computer networks were not linked.

- Funeral urns containing the remains of our nation's military heroes frequently were stored on top of file cabinets, in closets and on spare desks at Arlington for extended periods of time, labeled with a temporary, hand-written sticker, awaiting the arrival of the appropriate funeral and burial paperwork.
- Arlington grave markers frequently arrived with misspelled names or other inaccurate information because hand-written records were illegible or incorrect.

Now, it is clear these management issues and workflow challenges existed at Arlington National Cemetery for years, even decades -- and they certainly won't be solved overnight.



But this business plan prepared by members of the Northern Virginia Technology Council provides the Army with a clear roadmap to bring Arlington National Cemetery into the 21st Century digital age.

If implemented correctly, these recommendations will honor the sacrifice of those men and women who are buried at Arlington. This business plan also will go a long way towards restoring the faith and the confidence of those families who have entrusted the remains of their loved ones to Arlington.

An assessment of this quality and depth typically would cost a client hundreds of thousands of dollars, but it is important to note that these Virginia companies and NVTC provided this public service for free. I want to publicly thank them for this great example of corporate citizenship.

The Army already has replaced the management team at Arlington, and Army leaders say they have taken preliminary steps to address several of the problems identified in this report.

But let me be clear: my interest in fixing what's broken at Arlington does not end today. I consider it my responsibility to stay focused on these issues, and to continue to press the Army to follow-up quickly and appropriately, so that we can put this disappointing chapter behind us.

Best,

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

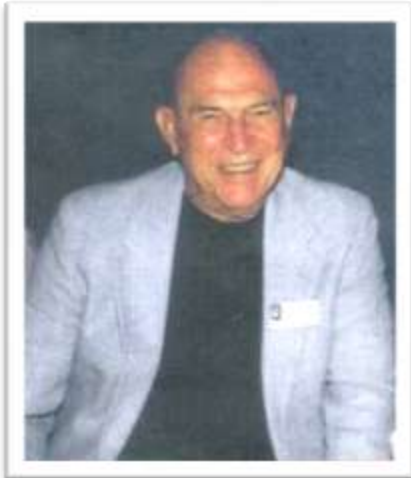




ALMOST AWOL or, 503rd Paratroopers Don't Make Good Sailors

By Chuck Breit
503rd PRCT, WWII

I had just turned 19 and I was on the Island Fortress Corregidor in the Philippines. The date was February 20, 1945, or close to it. I was never much on dates and places. I was in the Regimental Headquarters Company Demolition Squad, 503rd PRCT. My job was to carry the 64# flame thrower. I was 6' and 185 pounds so they figured I was the man for the job.



Trooper Chuck

On this particular day we were assisting a rifle company in taking a Jap held concrete bunker that looked out over the bay. It was on the edge of the cliff near top side at about 400'. On the side toward us was a steel door and on the side facing the sea were three openings for firing at an attacking force.

Bob Boundy fired his bazooka and it blew the door wide open. Johnny Banks, my BAR man, fired a burst at the opening to give me covering fire so that I could make a run at the bunker. When I reached the door area wind was coming out the open door in a blast. I couldn't fire into the wind so I ran to the top of the bunker figuring I could use it in the openings on the side toward the sea.



Chuck ready to blast*

***[Among his many exploits after his army service, Chuck was a stunt flyer and that handsome devil also worked as a stand-in for Clark Gable. Oh, the parachute he jumped onto Corregidor is on display in the WWII exhibit in the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning GA].**



503rd Troopers landing on "The Rock"

Before I could get in position to fire, the rifle squad got in my way so I threw a phosphorous grenade into the opening and the Japs began charging out. I began firing with my .45

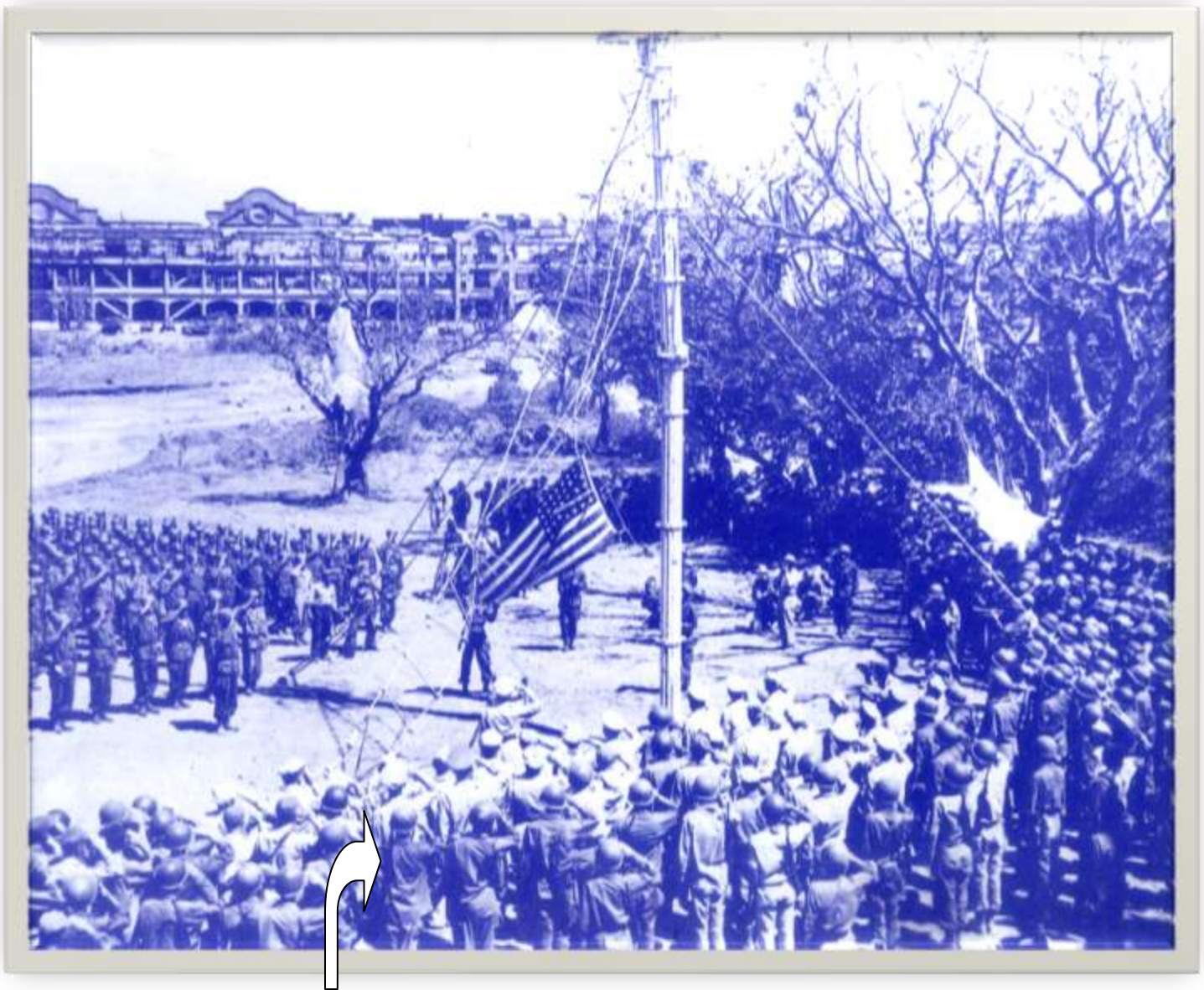
automatic until it was empty. A Jap with his saber raised over his head was coming at me and before I could reload, John Banks cut him down. His saber dropped at my feet. John looked at me and said, "*I think that one is yours*".



Two troopers....Chuck & Jim

(continued....)





L-R: John Banks & Chuck Breit during the raising of the American flag while serving as body guards for General MacArthur upon his return to Corregidor.

On our way back to top side we were fired on in an open area. We ran to make our way to a hillside at the end of the field. I was getting very tired as we reached the hillside. When I got near the top a man reached down, got hold of my shoulder harness and pulled me up. His name was Jim Wilcox, and needless to say we became very good friends.

About 8 months later on Negroes Island, the war had already ended. Jim was being sent home on a boat from Negroes. I was being sent to Japan to be sent home. Out in the harbor off the beach were 3 or 4 LSTs. When they loaded me onboard, I picked up a folding cot and on this large tank deck I picked out a spot, unfolded my cot and put my duffle bag on top. I went up on deck and found that they were not leaving until the next day because they had more men from the 40th Division to load.

As soon as the sun went down I dove in the water and swam to shore, about 300 yards. I went to where Jim was staying and got some dry clothes. We went out for a good dinner and an evening of fun. Then, before morning we went back to the beach and borrowed a small boat and rowed out to the LST.

I climbed up the anchor chain and found I was looking down a rifle barrel from the wrong end. I explained things to the guard and waved goodbye to Jim. What I didn't realize at the time was that because of the boats swinging with the changing tide, I was on the wrong LST! I didn't know this until a few hours after I got onboard. By then it was too late, they were already hauling anchor for leaving. We were heading for Manila and all four boats were going to the same place.

(continued....)





**503rd buddies on Negros Island 1945, from left:
Jim Wilcox, Bob Boundy & Chuck Breit**

When we got to Manila, all 4 boats were docked at piers next to each other. I heard someone yelling, "*Chuck! Chuck!*" and here at the pier right next to me was the boat I should have been on. I made my way over and one of the guys said, "*You missed roll call this morning, but the captain put you down as present.*" Just then someone grabbed my shoulder and said, "*I knew you would show-up somewhere.*" It was Captain Rambo.

He said he couldn't let me get away with this and that I would be on KP duty for the rest of the trip. The ships are only set-up to feed the crew in the mess hall so with me inside, I was able to pass food out through the port holes when needed. This was what the Captain had in mind when he put me on KP. Leave it to a paratrooper, always thinking ahead. Jim didn't know about any of this until we got together back in the states.

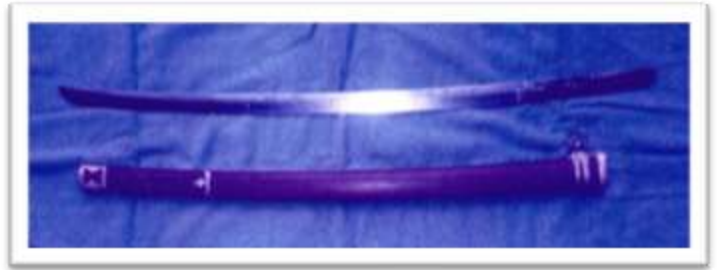
We don't see each other very often, Jim lives in Washington, near Seattle and I live in Florida about 90 miles north of Tampa, but we talk to each other on the phone about an hour each week. When Jim and I get together he still looks like that guy that pulled me over the top of the hill more than 65 years ago. And now we both have lovely wives to take care of us.



**Chuck & Dee Breit at
173d reunion in 2010.**



**Joan & Jim Wilcox
in Everett, WA**



**The Japanese saber dropped at Chuck's feet on
Corregidor, now on display at the National Infantry
Museum at Fort Benning.**

####



Extract from 2d Bn S-3 Journal of 3 November 1945

All men under 60 points are transferred to 11 AB EDCMR Nov 3. Lucky bots as they are still airborne. Well even if our colors are being taken home by any Tom, Dick, & Harry the few of us remaining still have our boots and wings.

Extract from 2d Bn S-3 Journal of 6 November 1945

Many changes took place during the past week. More ack-ack boys arrived. On Friday the remnants of a damm good outfit left for the 11th ABD. The guys in the fifties will probably beat the high pt men home. Most of the fill ins look well fed, they won't be that way long if we continue eating 503d chow(?). New officers seem as if they'll be okay, tho' they lack the youth, & piss and vinegar of the jump officers. The training schedule for the week was discontinued. Next weeks training schedule looks rather nice. Who knows, maybe what's left of us will start living like humans again. Food is improving, showers are being put up and some clothes can be had. These A.A. boys have the right idea about living.

Just waiting for the boat. Morale high among all troops. As this is the last entry I'll close out by saying that I'm damm glad to be closing out. My biggest day is coming. Where's that discharge?

[Sent in by Paul Whitman, 503rd Heritage Bn web site]



World War II Artwork

Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA



Last Man Home

Nicolas Trudgian



The Jolly Rogers

Nicolas Trudgian



Welcoming Our Troops Home

I just returned from a week in Tucson but the week prior to that I spent a couple days in Italy with the troops. Roy (Lombardo) was supposed to attend but got snowed in, so it was just Herbert Murhammer and me.

As I cleared customs I saw Herbert's smiling face. He had driven down from Geneva where he and Annie live. We drove to the post, got signed in and discussed the evening activities with Cpt. Nagy. They knew Roy and the punch bowl would not make it, but wanted to conduct the punch bowl ceremony and borrowed the 2/503 punch bowl (smaller than ours). So we went to the liquor store and emptied the shelves.

I called Roy (waking him up) for the recipe for the Bravo Bull punch just to make sure and he sent what he had. Realize we had a 6 hour time difference. Herbert and I then returned and checked into our hotel. After a quick nap our escorts showed up and hauled us up to a restaurant located on the hill adjacent to the cathedral.

Herbert and I set-up the best we could for the ceremony. We put together a batch of "concentrate" to aid refilling the bowl. A couple of troopers presented us a bag of dirt from the Korengal Valley which will be placed with the Bravo Bull punch bowl. There was plenty of eating and drinking. Herbert and I were introduced. I played MC and told the troops a little of the BULL history which most of them already knew but enjoyed hearing it again.

They all knew the legend of Ranger Roy so I told a couple of stories about him, knocking off some of the luster. I told them when they were old and fat like us they would tell the story of Sergeant Paterson and the cow that committed suicide just as we tell the story of Clyde the queer monkey. I told them if they had problems of adjusting to civilian life, to seek help and that here are several agencies willing to help. Self medication with drugs and alcohol will only make things worse.

I had to announce that we did not have cups for the fallen. We would toast all the fallen, but not read the names. I could tell from the various list of names I had, that some were missing so I decided to not miss any and just salute all.

Troopers scrambled with their canteen cups when the punch was finished. Herbert and I set-up an assembly line so we were both serving the punch and it went pretty fast. Everyone was served, we did the toast. Then they scrambled for seconds. We went through 3 bowls of punch (\$150.00 of booze). With Herbert and a couple of the young troopers drinking the dregs as they passed the bowl around. They got most of the dirt, although we tried to stir it up as we served it.

If you have not seen this ceremony with these young troopers you cannot grasp the emotion of it. I had both my hands about shaken off. I was hugged until I was sore and my shirt was wet with tears. Most of which were not mine.



Jim (standing) with Sky Soldiers and their ladies.

Day two was a day of rest and recovery with Herbert and I attending a private dinner with Sal Giunta and 5 of his buddies and Leta, the 173d Lady. At the dinner she presented Sal a painting with him, our dinner companions and the 2 KIAs in the background. Dinner was in a Chinese restaurant and the girl who I asked to take the photo insisted on sticking her finger over the lens.

On top of all that, Sal snuck off and paid the bill!

Day Three we spent resting up and getting ready for the 2/503 banquet. Once again they did a great job. Herbert and I got to visit, be entertained and generally pampered by the young troopers. We sat in the center of the B company area which was a lot better than being off on a VIP table as previously done.

Jim Robinson
FO/B/2/503d



~ 75th Ranger Regiment Association Reunion ~

July 25 - 31, 2011

Fort Benning, GA

Lurps & Rangers of the 173d Airborne Brigade



Part of the lineage of the 75th Ranger Regiment:

173d Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol

74th Long Range Patrol

75th Inf. N/Company Rangers

74th Long Range Surveillance

Reunion Headquarters:

Holiday Inn

2800 Manchester Expressway
Columbus, GA 31904

Reservations: 706-324-0231

(Mention "75th Ranger Reunion" to receive special room rate of \$79. per night)



(All 173d and sister units welcome to attend)

Reunion Registration Rates:

Members: \$40.

Sat. Banquet: \$40.

Reunion Contact:

Robt. 'twin' Henriksen

Unit Director

360-393-7790

Our reunion will be held in conjunction with the
current 75th Ranger Regiment
Rendezvous and Change of Command

Tentative Activities:

- Visits to the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial and the National Infantry Museum
- Massive tactical jump by active airborne troops, Fryar Field DZ
- Ranger School Class Graduation
- Weapons displays by active military soldiers
- Bicycling along the River Walk & Horseback Riding
- Introduction to Yoga & Stress Reduction for Spouses
- Seminars on Veteran's Benefits & Navigating the VA
- 75th Ranger Regiment Association meeting & business meeting
- Fort Benning Change of Command ceremonies
- Be Airborne again – Jump at a small Alabama airport (Fri.)
- Banquet at the "Iron Works" historical building (Sat.)
- Ranger Hall of Fame inductee at River Center for Performing Arts. Carl Vencill is our nominee
- Services at Ranger Memorial – reading names of fallen heroes

90 members and several widows of KIA have already registered to attend. REGISTER TODAY! [RLTW!!](#)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 26 of 44

The Day I Was Shot Down by a Heat-Seeking Missile

**By Vince (Vien) Hoang
South Vietnamese Air Force**

I was honored when Jim Bethea and Lew Smith (both HHC/2/503d '65/'66) asked me to recount my stories from serving in the South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) during the Vietnam War. Much time has passed since that spring when I was shot down by a heat-seeking SAM missile, but my harrowing experience remains clear to this day.

It was more than 35 years ago when I reluctantly folded my flight suit, struggled to bury the anguish of war-torn memories, and started a new life in this wonderful country with empty hands. When I set foot on American soil I was the loneliest and poorest person in this country, yet I felt like the happiest man in the world for only two reasons: I was **ALIVE** and I had **FREEDOM!**

The challenges of starting a new life, with absolutely nothing to my name and after having left all my loved ones back home, were daunting and seemed frighteningly insurmountable. I still don't know how I managed to overcome them, but freedom is priceless, so the privilege of living in the United States was worth the sacrifice I had to endure.

After so many years, the dreadful images of war still replay vividly in my mind. Often I find myself sitting down alone in quiet afternoons, thinking about my unfortunate comrades who died during the war. I remember with bitter sorrow the many friends whose planes exploded out of the sky or plunged into the deep jungle, never to be found. My heart stings with remorse when I contemplate those who died in communist prisons or spent many years suffering under the brutality of concentration camps, where they were treated like animals.



Vince, with the Bureau of Reclamation, before going in a tunnel to investigate control equipment.

I have a brother who was a Vietnamese paratrooper and was injured several times during the war. He became disabled as a result and eventually died under the communist regime after the fall of South Vietnam. The communist government was extremely repressive and cruel, particularly towards those perceived as allies or supporters of the US.

It was my pleasure to meet Jim in Grand Coulee, WA and to learn that he was a former paratrooper who spent a tour of duty in Vietnam. I instantly felt like I'd known him for a long time. I would like to tell Jim and all of you who served in the Vietnam War of my gratitude and that you should be proud of your sacrifice in fighting for freedom. Despite the enemy's attempts to smear you, the distorted depictions by the press, and the many who turned their backs on you or betrayed you in the media, the Vietnamese people and all those in the world who love and yearn for freedom will always be grateful for your service.

One late afternoon in March 1975 (I do not recall the exact date), I was ordered to lead a flight of three F5 Freedom Fighter planes from Bien Hoa Air Force Base, heading to Nui Ba Den (the Black Virgin Mountain) approximately 50 miles away. Nui Ba Den is a 3,000 foot mountain, located 18 miles from the Cambodian border in the Tay Ninh province. The enormous natural edifice was formed from a pyramid of trees and solid granite, a simultaneously mysterious and important strategic military location.

The South Vietnamese infantry was camped near the summit of the mountain to protect the city, which the Viet Cong desperately wanted to attack in every way possible, but they had to first conquer the mountain.



Nui Ba Den, the "Black Virgin Mountain"

(continued....)





The F-5 Freedom Fighter. Not Vince's, but one like his.

The VC hurriedly amassed troops to storm and overrun Black Virgin Mountain, while ARVN troops engaged in fierce battles near the foot of the mountain.

Our flight faced intense enemy ground fire and the steep mountain slopes made it extremely difficult to navigate and attack precise targets on the side of the mountain to cause sufficient damage to the enemy. After making a couple of passes around the top of the mountain and after the FAC marked the target with smoke, I was able to assess accurate enemy locations. In the first pass I "rolled in hot" and dropped a 250 pound bomb on the target without any problem. However, in the second pass, after delivering a second bomb and while pulling the aircraft up to gain altitude, I heard a thunderous bang. I got hit by 37mm anti-aircraft a couple of times before, but this time was quite different. My aircraft shook violently, I knew immediately with a gut-sinking feeling that I had been hit by a missile. After that, all of a sudden, there was an eerie silence all around me. It was then the aircraft began to drastically lose speed and it became difficult to maintain altitude.

I knew that I had sustained enormous damage to my right engine. The instruments indicated that the left

engine's temperature was rapidly increasing and the needle was fast approaching the red zone on the temperature gauge.



English translation might go something like, "Oh shit!"

To eject or not eject?? The question popped up in my mind. The remaining engine could die anytime. I had to quickly assess the situation and to make the correct decision or I would face the consequences: possibly ending-up in the brutal hands of the enemy if I ejected, or potential death if stayed with my airplane.

(continued....)



I decided to stay with my F5 Freedom Fighter!



I still had two more bombs under my wing that I could not jettison -- it was a strict rule of engagement to not allow airplanes with unreleased bombs back onto an airbase, except in the case of emergencies. There was simply not enough time and it was too risky to fly the airplane to the free target zones, release the bombs and fly back to the airbase. I had to act quickly and decisively, so I gently controlled the aircraft and headed back toward Bien Hoa Airbase.

I wrestled with the aircraft, barely sustaining an altitude of merely 3,000 feet, but was only about 50 miles from the base so I decided to hold on to my airplane as long as I could. My goal was to land, but if things took a turn for the worse there was still enough time for me to eject.

I contacted the tower, and all emergency vehicles were waiting for me at the airbase. I lined up the airplane for landing approach a few miles from the runway for emergency landing (this is not a normal way to land a

fighter airplane) and I knew that I had little margin of error to land. If I flew below the flight path it would be nearly impossible to gain attitude and I would crash before reaching the runway. I had only one chance. I braced for the worst, but was determined to control the airplane with all my might. What was minutes seemed like an eternity. The precise moment my aircraft touched the ground is still a blur, but I had somehow made a safe landing. I had survived and the plane had survived with me. Even though it wasn't easy, yet I had made the perfect approach for landing.

After the airplane safely touched the runway, I could use the brakes for only a few seconds before I lost all hydraulic power, because the hydraulic system was broken after the airplane got hit by the missile. Without brakes and nose wheel steering capabilities, the airplane careened down the runway uncontrollably until it went off the runway and finally stopped when the front wheel became buried in the mud and grass.

I survived with no injuries, other than the emotional ones I carry to this day.



Vince, next to his Freedom Fighter after his safe and heroic landing at Bien Hoa Airbase.





Bachmann Removes VA Budget Cut Suggestion

Plans to remove \$4.5 billion budget cuts that would affect disabled veterans

February 4, 2011

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 4, 2011 — Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) posted a statement on her congressional website today that she would remove from consideration a \$4.5 billion suggestion that would have affected payments made to disabled veterans.



She had previously posted on her website a list of \$400 billion in suggested federal spending cuts, to include \$4.5 billion from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This elicited an immediate and strong reaction from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. on Jan. 28.

"We appreciate her listening to the VFW and others," said VFW National Commander Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Oregon.

[Sent in by Terry "Woody" Davis, A/2/503d]

The Congresswoman stated:

"One point on my discussion list was a \$4.5 billion proposal that would affect payments made to our veterans. That discussion point has received a lot of attention and I have decided to remove it from consideration. The problem of government spending must be solved, but not on the backs of our nation's war heroes. I have always been a proud supporter of the United States military and I continue to stand with our veterans. In the months ahead I look forward to working with our Veterans Service Organizations to ensure that we fulfill our commitments to those who sacrificed so much in their brave service for our country."

Read the congresswoman's full statement at:

<http://bachmann.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=223583>

Carl Lee Simpson, Jr.

Carl Lee Simpson, Jr., age 62, of Atkinson, died Wednesday, January 5, 2011, at his home.



He was born November 16, 1948, in Wilmington and was the son of the late Carl Lee Simpson, Sr. and Malla Bloodworth Simpson. He was preceded in death by Harry and Bessie Simpson and his sister, Patricia Ann Simpson Hylton. Lee was also preceded in death by his devoted and faithful companion, a German shepherd named Harley Heinz Munroe Simpson. Lee leaves behind his dear new Shepherd, Talon Von Beauregard "Bo" Voodoo Simpson, age 7 months.

Surviving are his first born son, Carl Lee Simpson, III of Virginia Beach, VA, and second born son, Alexander "Alex" Murphy Simpson of the US Coast Guard stationed in Homer, Alaska; sister, Linda Simpson Wallace (Thomas) of Atkinson; nieces, Patricia Rand (Walter), Brandi Wagner (Dave), Jamie Wood and Misty Bingham; nephew, James Barry Hylton; great nieces and great nephew, Lucy Rand, Jack Wood and Sidney, Ainslee and Lilly Wagner; and many extended family and friends.

Lee served in the US Army in Vietnam with the rank of SP4, in E Company (RECON) 2/503d INF, 173d Airborne Brigade. He proudly received the Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars, National Defense Medal and Vietnam Campaign Medal, all reflecting his military valor.

Lee was a devoted and loving father, brother, and uncle who will be remembered by those who knew him, cared about him and loved him as a man with a heart of gold and who would do anything he could to help you.

Having served his country and working hard to provide for the needs of his family, Lee was retired most recently from NATCO, a contract provider of Underwater Geological Surveys for the Army Corps of Engineers, as a boat captain.

In his younger years he was passionate about hunting and fishing, but more recently he was content to observe and photograph wildlife. Lee loved to talk about all his youthful exploits and the people dear to him through life's experiences. As a young boy, after the death of his parents, Lee was raised in Atkinson by Bessie Holley Simpson and Harry Simpson as their son and was tutored and guided by Harry in the art of farming and loving the land.

Cherished memories of Lee will forever remain in our hearts.



Airborne, Lee. All the way Brother.



Incoming!!

A Special Request from a Trooper

Could you ask in your next newsletter if anyone out there has any pictures of me? I am fighting this cancer and would like to leave some photo to my daughter. Served from June '64 to May '66 with C/2/503d. Would really like to have some pics to leave her. Your newsletter has been my favorite reading over the past couple of years. AIRBORNE!

Jim Starrett

jimstarrett@rocketmail.com

On A Search & Find Mission

I am interested in reaching anyone on Major General Paul Smith's staff at brigade in April of 1966. Will appreciate anyone contacting me who can help.

Email: luapyelp@centurylink.net

Phone: 704-301-0278

Thanks!

Paul Epley
Bde PIO

#####

VA to Expand PTSD Therapy

February 28, 2011

In response to a Government Accountability Office report on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the Department of Veterans Affairs has decided to offer cognitive processing therapy and prolonged-exposure therapy to treat the disorder at its facilities. In cognitive processing therapy, the patient addresses conflicts by writing about the traumatic event in detail and then reading the story aloud repeatedly in and outside of session. For more information cognitive processing therapy and prolonged-exposure therapy, visit the VA's National Center for PTSD webpage.

VA Suicide Prevention Line

The journey after military service can be a difficult one. If you are a veteran in crisis or know of one who is, please call the VA's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line to speak with trained counselors, or find a Crisis Center near you.

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

~ Association News ~

Sky Soldiers:

Effective 1 February 2011, Dennis Hill is the new National Membership Secretary. Contact him at membership@skysoldier.org

If you have questions, please visit your local chapters' website or our national website at www.SkySoldier.org or contact your local chapter officers or our National officers at:

President@SkySoldier.org

VP@SkySoldiers.org

Treasurer@SkySoldier.org

Secretav@SkySoldier.org

Membership@SkySoldier.org

Chaplain@SkySoldier.org

Webmaster@SkySoldier.org

Editor@SkySoldier.org

GoldStar@SkySoldier.org



WHODAT?



Who is this young 2/503d trooper with the jump school haircut holding his M-79?



Brief Stories About VN Buddies

My Vietnamese story is remembering that while attending the 173d reunion banquet in Chicago, I think in 1995, in the beautiful old ballroom of the historic Blackstone Hotel, one of our waiters was Vietnamese and had fled the country to America during the fall of Saigon. One of the speakers mentioned that and fortunately there was no animosity from anyone at our table, unlike so much of it that I hear from vets who for some strange reason lump our ally South Vietnamese in with the ones we fought. Also, one of my cousins' daughter is married to a Vietnamese and they live in Las Vegas. We went to their wedding and I had no flashbacks of any kind and felt good that that family's Italian roots were embracing someone from another part of the world.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503d

I've had the privilege of working with several Vietnamese. Two worked with me at Boeing's plant in Portland, Oregon. One of them spent some time in a rehabilitation camp near Saigon after the war... he lived in a one-man open hole in the ground with no shelter for the better part of a year. The other was just a boy when we were there but he lived in Bien Hoa and his name was Hoa Bien...at Boeing we called him Hoa. Here at the Grand Coulee dam in Washington, we have a young electrical engineer named Henry Nguyen. He and Vince Hoang (see Vince's story on Pages 27-29 herein) took American first names that were similar to their Vietnamese names to help them fit in. Vince's first name was Vien. This is good.

Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d

Not a big deal but today I got a call at work from someone wanting to organize a non-profit trail fun run to benefit Medtrix, an organization to help supply clean water to people in Vietnam. He was a college student from a northwest University in Washington and was hoping to get about 400 people.

A few years back when I lost my job at United I volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and was set up as a sponsor for a Vietnamese family to help them jump through the hoops of getting a house. I tried for a while but ended up backing out of it because I wasn't available all the time I needed to be ...they were doing better than I and had more intelligence, he had a job as an engineer with Boeing and his mother was my age collecting social security and doing better than m. His wife was a stay at home mom and I was struggling to find work. I just did not feel I had anything to offer them. But I did put some time in helping to build a home, spackling etc.

Claudia Tobin
Sister of Larry Paladino

~ Wells Fargo to Refund Troops ~

Nearly 60,000 service members and veterans who have refinanced their VA mortgage loans through Wells Fargo, Wachovia and SouthTrust will receive refunds as the result of a \$10 million settlement in a class-action lawsuit, a Wells Fargo official said.



Those who may be eligible refinanced their loans between Jan. 20, 2004, and Oct. 7, 2010, Wells Fargo spokeswoman Vickie Adams said. On average, the refunds are expected to be about \$175., she said.

In about a month, Wells Fargo will mail letters to each eligible service member and veteran who has participated in the refinancing program, Adams said. The letter will include information about how to apply for the refund, and where to go for more information.
FloridaToday

~ True Story ~

An Amsterdam-based company wants to sell small blue helmets to NATO troops stationed in the Ivory Coast.

But these aren't miniature versions of the well-known headgear worn by NATO peacekeepers – the “blue helmets” are actually blue condoms, made by a specialty shop called Condomerie, with proceeds from the sales going to a local organization that jointly raises money for AIDS prevention and for a soccer tournament.

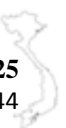
A first shipment from the “*Make Love, Not War*” campaign includes 2,000 condoms. *ArmyTimes*

**Couldn't find the blue helmet
on their web site, but found
this little guy. Ain't he cute?**



***"Show me a man that will
jump out of a plane and I'll
show you a man who
will fight."***

Jim Gavin website



~ 22 Rules of Life & Self Control ~

By A.B. (Aussino) Garcia
4.2 Platoon, HHC/2/503d, '65-'66
February 24, 1995

1. BELIEVE IN YOUR PERSON.
2. HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF.
3. HAVE RESPECT FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS.
4. TAKE PRIDE IN WHATEVER YOU DO.
5. ALWAYS BE HONEST AND SINCERE.
6. WHEN TALKING TO PEOPLE, ALWAYS LOOK 'EM IN THE EYES. FOR THE EYES REVEAL HIDDEN THOUGHTS.
7. BE COMPASSIONATE, AND CONSIDERATE TO YOUR FELLOW MAN.
8. NEVER TRUST THOSE WHO APPEAR TO BE TOO HONEST.
9. BE A GOOD LISTENER. (But refer to No. 10. below)
10. DON'T TAKE NO SHIT.
11. APPRECIATE YOUR CREATORS' GIVEN LIFE AND RESPECT YOUR ENVIRONMENT.
12. ENJOY ALL YOUR SENSES. (HEARING, SMELL, TASTE, SIGHT, LOVE, EMOTIONS AND CONTENTMENT IN LIFE).
13. BE THANKFUL FOR YOUR PEACE OF MIND, TO THE CREATOR.
14. WHEN YOUR DOWN AND OUT, SOMETHING GOOD ALWAYS HAPPENS.
15. ALWAYS BE POSITIVE IN THOUGHT AND SOUL.
16. GIVE CREDIT WHEN IT'S DUE.
17. NEVER BE ASHAMED TO EXPRESS YOUR EMOTIONS OR THOUGHTS.
18. WHENEVER YOU PROMISE SOMEBODY SOMETHING, ALWAYS COME THROUGH WITH YOUR WORD. FOR YOUR WORD SHOULD BE YOUR HONOUR.
19. YOUR WORD SHOULD BE HONOURED, TRUSTED, AND RESPECTED.
20. IF EVER YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, TRY TO SORT YOURSELF OUT IF POSSIBLE.
21. REMEMBER, THAT NOBODY KNOWS YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNOW YOURSELF.
22. APPRECIATE EVERY SINGLE BREATH THAT YOU TAKE, AND THANK GOD EVERY NIGHT FOR YOUR GIFT OF LIFE ON THIS WONDERFUL WORLD.

Good thoughts from a good trooper.

Remembering a Buddy

I just finished reading your Issue 13 (March 2010) and I saw a photograph of Ron Cavinee, although it was somewhat hazy. I am attaching another photo of him taken in late January '66 just a few weeks before his was killed. I don't know if you keep an archive of photos, but if so, please include this one.



Ron Cavinee, KIA

And thanks for the great article on Jack Ribera and Mike Sturges. The last time I saw Mike he was in the 93d Evac with a big chunk of leg missing. I visited Jack once while he was still in Walter Reed since Washington, DC is my home town. I remember he had a rubber band device on his hand as part of his recovery therapy. The next time I went to see him, he was gone. I am glad to see he and Mike are well.

Barry Grant
A/2/503d, '65-'66



Ronald C. Cavinee

Private First Class
A Co., 2nd Bn., 503rd Infantry Regiment
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
Army of the United States, USARV
11B1P: Infantryman (Airborne Qualified)
Crooksville, Ohio
March 30, 1944 to February 26, 1966
Panel 05E, Line 079



~ MEETING ON THE STREET ~

My wife, Reggie, and I were at an Italian restaurant in Melbourne, FL picking up a Go order a couple weeks ago. While she went inside to do the heavy lifting, I remained in our van parked outside. With the window down I heard a couple folks talking at the rear of the vehicle. They had noticed and were commenting on the 101st, 173d and 509th Airborne stickers on the mounted spare tire. The man and his lady noticed me sitting there and came over to talk. It was Sky Soldier LRRP Sid Smith and his bride. I later mentioned this chance meeting to good buddy Reed Cundiff because, like Sid, Reed had served with the 173d LRRP's. Reed's reply is below. For such a small unit which the 173d was, it's amazing sometimes how we all seem to meet Sky Soldiers all over the country. Ed

Sid is a good friend of mine. He was on Team 3 and I was Team Leader of Team 4, and the two teams shared a hooch and we were quite close. We were on two double I-team patrols together.

Sid was in on the big fight of our day. The new XO, Bob Stowell (who had done an excellent job as a platoon leader with 1/503d) went out with the team with Gary "Wolf" Lotze as their new Team Leader.

The entire team were original "Provisional LRRP" and had gone to Recondo Class 00. I have met two West Point classmates of Stowell's and they said they figured he would be the first flag rank from their class. I have also been told he was the best platoon leader in 1/503d.

They ambushed three guys (maybe two). It turned out that they were the poor slobs used as bait since they were hit from all four sides. Dave Liebersbach, now in Alaska, was called in under the heavy fire when he saw an entire enemy squad running towards them. He figured if he moved too soon he would be nailed. He waited until all 9 or 10 were charging, one behind the other, then stepped out and killed them all -- at least all of them went down and didn't have anything more to do with the situation since each shot probably went through 2 to 4 of them.

Everyone of the Sky Soldiers did incredible things and everyone except one had bullets in clothes, weapons or packs. The LT took three rounds in the chest. He figures they were 7.62 x 25 submachine gun rounds since they stayed in; 7.62 x 39 mm AK or SKS rounds would have been fatal.



Reed

I was talking with Forrest Kendall as he was unpacking the radio. He thought he had been hit during the fight since he felt warm fluid going down the back of his legs. Two bullets had gone through the canteen in one of the back pockets of his RVN airborne backpack, and one round went between the battery and his PRC-25 radio leaving nice little holes through the frame.

Gilmore, who was pointman, had a bullet go through the cerise panel when he was signaling the gunships, and while I was talking with him (at the artillery base camp near Nui Ba Dinh) he stated he had looked down at one of his boots and felt something burning -- a bullet had gone right through the sole of his boot as if a drill press had drilled through it.

Another guy had a bullet go through the buffer assembly of his M-16, basically putting it out of action but they had picked up two AK-47's. They went through 300 rounds each. They were cocky as hell for two days and then they realized that they had perhaps a 1% chance of making it through without being annihilated and basically fried. The team did not go out again although the guys went out with other teams.

Sid is a good guy. I forgot to mention that the action described here was probably the most decorated LRRP action in RVN. The LT received a DSC; Lotze, Liebersbach and Gilmore each earned Silver Star's, and Sid and Kendall were awarded Bronze Stars w/V -- all of them well deserved.

Reed Cundiff
173d LRRP



~ A Note From 22 February 2011 ~

Wow.....

It is a few minutes before 0900 (EST) but 44 years ago, at 0900 (local time in Vietnam), we exited those C-130s. Bravo Company, with the white engineer tape on our helmets, led the way as we were first out the doors to establish the LZ as LTC Sigholtz developed our portion of Junction City. I was proud of you guys then and am equally so today. Have a great day and to Harry (Cleland), as I pledged to you two years ago, I will dip into the Chivas Regal you sent and will toast to you all. Stay well and stay in touch.

Bravo 6 Ken Kaplan





IAVA ACTION FUND REPORT CARD



The IAVA Action Fund Report Card is the result of a two year process. Beginning with an annual survey of our members every December, the legislative agenda is formulated directly from those issues they deem a priority. IAVA then delivers these priorities during the annual *Storm the Hill* event in February when IAVA member vets meet face-to-face with lawmakers. IAVA and IAVA Action continue to advocate for key legislation, which address our legislative priorities, throughout the year through direct outreach to members of Congress, Congressional testimony, and media appearances. Finally, when a Congressional session concludes, we produce the Report Card based on key veterans' legislation that came to a vote during that session, grading every Senator and Representative on their level of support for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Visit http://iavaaction.org/report-card/a_team_d_list to see how your representatives and senators are rated in terms of their support or lack of support on issues important to the veteran community.

[Sent in by Hugh Imhof, N/75 Rangers]

Young Warriors. Are there any other kind?

Thought our guys might like to see some modern day warriors. This is Sergeant Rudy Rueda (with thumbs up) and his weapons squad saying thanks for the goodies. He's the guy we sent the care packages to. He's still in Afghanistan with the 101st but was previously in the Korengal Valley with Battle Company, 2d Battalion, 173d. He's one of the troops interviewed in the documentary *Restrepo*.

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d



Screaming Eagles still soaring.

Cong Scatter Like Scared Turkeys

Original source: home.att.net/~gkozdrum/fb173q.htm

LZ English -- Thanksgiving Day, while walking slack for a three-man 'reaction team', a 173d Abn Bde Reconnaissance Sergeant saw some turkeys, namely 10 Viet Cong. But the hunted saw the Sarge first, spraying Sgt. Charles G. Rolon with a burst of M-16 fire that slammed five rounds into his rifle but none into Rolon.

"We were walking up a mountain stream, cluttered with gigantic rocks that cut visibility down to about six feet," said the 25 year old Co. E, 2nd Bn, 503d Inf. Trooper. "Just as we made a turn up the winding stream, we met the VC Regulars, but as I raised my M-16 to fire, I saw the Red take aim and next my weapon was kicked out of my hands by his fire. I just happened to be carrying my .45 caliber pistol that day and I shot the surprised communist before he had time to reload." The contact occurred at extremely close range, the boulders and the twists in the stream concealing friendly and enemy movement.



At LZ English 1970, Charlie Rolon on left holding sniper rifle next to his buddy Dennis Wayne Baxley (KIA 8/9/70).

Rolon, from Jersey City, NJ and his team gave the enemy a goodbye burst of lead and feet, back to their parent unit, known as a six-man Cat team. The entire team, augmented with additional reinforcements, returned to the scene later in the day, but the Reds had dragged their dead and wounded away. Rolon and his reach-out team were credited with two enemy kills. He himself is mighty grateful to his weapon – it took two rounds through the magazine, one in the barrel and two that penetrated the rifle barrel.

[Sent in by Charlie Rolon, Sr., E/2/503d]



“Monty’s Walkers”

By Gary Prisk, CPT
C/D/2/503d

This story does not cover the 2nd Battalion. It is a story about my father, Omaha Beach, Field Marshal Montgomery and working for the British from Normandy to the Concentration Camp at Bergen-Belsen.

Referred to by Omar Bradley as “Monty’s Walkers,” eight men, Majors all, landed in Normandy charged as liaison officers responsible for tracking the progress and status of the invasion forces. Two were Americans.. Major Edward Prisk and Major John Frary... two were Canadians and four were Brits.

My father, Major Prisk, was charged with the 1st Infantry Division and the 29th Infantry Division and their collateral units. He kept penciled notes in his breast pocket during this period while charged with slogging along with the units each day and returning to Montgomery’s location the best way he could to give the information to Montgomery eye-to-eye.

The Major credited his survival on the landing to his LST getting stuck in the sand and his jeep sinking in a tidal pool.

Some fourteen liaison officers worked in this capacity through the European Campaigns. Shot down in a small plane in a remote area of France, Major Prisk had the opportunity to meet members of the French Resistance and spend three days tied to a chair in a warehouse basement while the fighters confirmed his identity.

Additionally he and his driver, PFC Francis Joseph Murphy of Boston, left Bastogne one day before it was enveloped because there wasn’t any hot chow.

As an aside, Murphy filled out his enlistment papers declaring that he drove a milk truck. He left out the part about the milk truck being pulled by a horse. A British female signals sergeant was assigned to teach him how to drive. The Major made him stand for a short-arm inspection.

Following are the hand-written notes for casualties 0001-2400 hours 11 June. Listed by officer and enlisted, by killed, missing and wounded. *Note there are no entries for the 1st Infantry Division.* Listed after the 11 June totals are the totals to date for all three categories, again by officers and enlisted. POW totals are also listed for the day and in total for the Omaha Beach Sector.

The pencil entries gradually peter-out at D+14 (June 20, 1944) and I assume a more uniform sequence of information was established by that time.

The image shows a handwritten casualty report on a grid. The title is 'OMAHA BEACH SECTOR'. The columns are 'Killed', 'Missing', and 'Wounded'. The rows are 'Officer', 'Enlisted', and 'Total'. The data is as follows:

| | Killed | Missing | Wounded |
|----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Officer | 8 | 116 | 14 |
| Enlisted | 417 | 57 | 1026 |
| Total | 425 | 163 | 1040 |

Below this, there is a section for 'PW' (Prisoners of War) with a list of names and numbers: 119, 40, 104, 144. To the right, there is a section for 'Total' with a list of numbers: 884, 135, 1097, 2116.

This next picture was taken after the battle of Arnhem near the town of Eindhoven, Holland. Major Prisk is seated on the left during a briefing Montgomery routinely conducted prior to dispatching his liaison team to the forward units. The American officers are in steel pots...the Canadians are in garrison caps...the Brits are in berets and one overseas cap. Two of the Brits pictured here were killed in action.



John Poston, the Brit in the center of the picture was killed two days after the war by a German Werewolf Team operating in Northern Germany.

(continued....)





These are the same men sitting for a photo for the *London Daily News*. Seated left to right are Major Sweeney, Major Hardin, Montgomery, Major Earle, and Major Howarth. Standing from left are Major Sharpe, Major Prisk, Major Poston and Major Frary.

This photo was taken just a few days before the snow began to fall in December 1944, with The Battle of the Bulge just around the corner.

For all you boys who worship the “Officer Efficiency Report” and the glory they left on your microfiche, below is the sum-total of Major Prisk’s efficiency report for landing on Omaha Beach and surviving the balance of the European Campaigns.

This one-paragraph, two-sentence tribute stood front and center in my father’s den. Note, it took two years to get this tribute into the major’s personnel file.



The text of the letter from Field Marshal Montgomery reads:

**War Office
Whitehall, London S.W.I.**

**Major General Edward F. Witsell
Adjutant-General
War Department
WASHINGTON 25 D.C.,**

Major E.R. Prisk, (O-330527) U.S. Army,

Major Prisk served with me as one of my Liaison Officers at H.Q. 21st Army Group from 17th May 1944 to 3rd July 1945. During this time, the efficiency with which he carried out his duties was of the highest order.

**(signed) Montgomery of Alamein
Field Marshal,**

20 June 1947. Chief of the Imperial General Staff

The Major died in July of 1967 at the YMCA after a boxing workout. He had been the 1932 West Coast Collegiate Welter Weight Champion from Washington State University.

The Major’s son,
Gary Prisk





The Grungy Grunt

In last month's issue of our newsletter (Page 12), we asked you to identify this Grungy Grunt with the nickname "Airborne" who is guarding those sandbags. He's our very own Richard Martinez from B/2/503d. We asked Richard to send in a Sit Rep:

Before Nam, while in High School (graduated '66), living then and now in Wasco, CA, I worked part-time for my dad at a Chevrolet Dealership Body Shop. When I returned home dad and I opened a small shop of our own (Dad was a WWII Vet. The VA sent him to school to retrain when he returned home).

Sadly...truthfully, I came home an addict -- medicating for obvious but unknown reasons at the time, which escalated gradually to include divorces, financial problems, lost practically everything. Finally, it all came to a Happy Ending in '98. Been living a some - what happier life -- drug free!! Now, being of a sounder mind and body, I have worked with other addicts and alcoholics. The local judge recognized this work and gave me a Community Service Award ... imagine that!

I bought a Harley sometime back and am living the American dream of some not all. I ride today for the Brothers that never will, with a POW - MIA patch on the back of my vest. I roll with a fellow Herd Brother I met a few years ago, Bob "Chopper Bob" Gore, who just happened to be in B/2/503d and the same platoon as I but a year later. His younger brother Jim was there with him. I arrived in-country December 5, 1967 and left December 4, 1968.

In the forty or so years since Vietnam I've struggled in the jungles of my memories, as many of my brothers have. I have been married twice. I have a son, Brian, from my first marriage, a daughter, Amberly, from my second marriage, and have been divorced since '91. She (Amberly) has given me three grand kids; Roman, who is 8, has aspirations of being a scientist and has the brains to do it with, Mike 5, will probably become a cage fighter ...mischievous and mean ... All Day!! Ashley 3, grandpa's little girl...she better become a NUN!

Richard "Airborne" Martinez, B/2/503d

173rd Airborne Brigade commander suspended

By Kevin Dougherty
Stars & Stripes, February 24, 2011

The Army has formally suspended Col. James H. Johnson III as commander of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which has about 3,300 soldiers in Italy and Germany. The Army took action Feb. 17, according to Col. Bryan Hilferty, chief of public affairs for U.S. Army Europe.



Colonel James H. Johnson, III

"He's been suspended," Hilferty said, declining to comment further since the case is under investigation.

In response to written questions, Hilferty characterized the suspension as temporary pending resolution of the probe. No one else has been suspended or relieved in connection with Johnson's case, he said.

Col. Kyle Lear, the deputy commanding officer of the 173rd, has been named as the interim commander, Hilferty said.

Johnson took command of the brigade in October 2008 and led it through a yearlong rotation to Afghanistan that ended late last year. The unit, which traces its lineage back to World War I, includes Salvatore Giunta, the first living Medal of Honor recipient for actions in the current wars. He received the medal for events in 2007.

The 173rd Brigade is based in Vicenza, Italy, and includes six battalions. Two battalions are in Vicenza, and four are in Germany, with three of them in Bamberg. The fourth battalion is in Schweinfurt.

Before becoming brigade commander, Johnson headed up the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment.



503d Medallion



To order your own medallion contact Paul Fisher. All profits go to the 173d Foundation and to a local food bank in New Jersey.

Paul R. Fisher, LTC (Ret)
3/503d Commo Officer, '69-'70
fisherppd@att.net

~ A String of Beads ~

I am after some necklace beads one of the brothers there (in the U.S.) made. He gave me a set and they are totally different than all the other necklaces. They are more Native American looking. The bigger beads are white, and the others are small ones in white, yellow, green and red as the colours of the South Vietnamese flag. From Down Under, thanks mates!

A.B. Garcia
4.2 Platoon, 2/503d, '65-'66
abugar@connexus.net.au

NJ Vietnam Vets Foundation Scholarships

Graduating seniors have until April 15 to submit applications and essays to qualify for scholarships offered by the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation. The \$2,500. scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors from New Jersey who plan to further their education either at a college or university or trade/technical school. For a scholarship application form, visit the the New Jersey Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Foundation website at www.njvvmf.org or call 732-335- 0033, ext. 100.

Scholarship Finder - Remember: Not applying for scholarships is like turning down free money. Get started on your search for scholarships today -- visit the Military.com [Scholarship Finder](http://Military.com).

***"To be sure of hitting the target,
shoot first then call whatever you
hit the target."***

~ Valorous Unit Award ~

Those who served in the ROCK, 2/503d - to include FUSION, C/3-321, B/4-39, and HHC, RSTB from 25 Jan 2008 to 30 July 2008 have EARNED the Valorous Unit Award. The PUC for 2007 is still pending. Congrats!

Bill Ostlund, COL
173d Abn Bde

HISTORY CHANNEL FILM ABOUT THE VIETNAM WAR



I'm conducting audio and video research for a History Channel production and am curious if any of your members have film/audio from their time in Vietnam. The film we're producing is *"Vietnam in HD"* and the 173rd is featured prominently in the film. Some vets might be familiar with our work on World War II, as we also produced *"WWII in HD"* for HBO

I'm searching for 8mm and 16mm film from in-country or the home-front between 1964-1975, in addition to any cockpit/ground audio recordings veterans may have and are willing to share. As a courtesy, we're also transferring any film reels to DVD for veterans, something that we've found helps bring these documents out of the attic to be viewed again for, most times, the first time in years.

Might you be able to help? Also, are you aware of who possesses the rights for the **"Have you heard of the 173rd"** song as well as the official march song?

Warmest Regards,

Doc Kane
773-660-4920
on project for **Vietnam in HD**
a Lou Reda Production www.louredaproductions.com

[Sent in by Roy Scott, 3/319th, 173d Society President]

Note: Believe the song he is referring to was written and performed by Richard Ware, A/2/503d, which includes the lyrics, *"Have you heard of the Herd, the 173d, Airborne Brigade..."*, and *"You know they came from the Rock, to punch out Ho Chi Minh's Clock"*. Ed



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 39 of 44

Our National Anthem

by Mark Corallo

So, with all the kindness I can muster, I give this one piece of advice to the next pop star who is asked to sing the National Anthem at a sporting event: Save the vocal gymnastics and the physical gyrations for your concerts. Just sing this song the way you were taught to sing it in kindergarten — straight up, no styling.

Sing it with the constant awareness that there are soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines watching you from bases and outposts all over the world. Don't make them cringe with your self-centered ego gratification. Sing it as if you are standing before a row of 86-year-old WWII vets wearing their Purple Hearts, Silver Stars and flag pins on their cardigans, and you want them to be proud of you for honoring them and the country they love — not because you want them to think you are a superstar

musician. They could see that from the costumes, the makeup and the entourages. Sing "The Star Spangled Banner" with the courtesy and humility that tells the audience that it is about America, not you.



[Sent in by Sandra Smith, daughter in-law of editor]

And while you're at it, it's not "Or the land of the free," it's "O'er the land of the free." I think only vets and 6th graders should sing it at sporting events. Ed

The First Verse

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
what so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming?

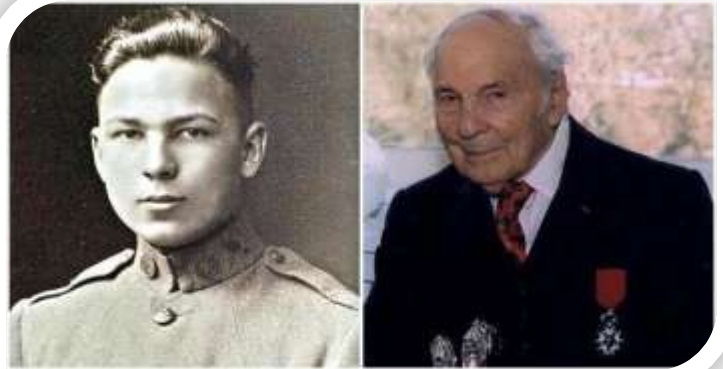
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous
fight,
o'er the ramparts we watch'd, were so gallantly
streaming?

And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
gave proof thro' the night that our flag was still there.

O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

Frank Buckles, Last Known U.S. Doughboy, Dies at 110

Advocated for National World War I Memorial in D.C.



A soldier from the *first* Greatest Generation

WASHINGTON – Frank Woodruff Buckles, who lied about his age to enlist in the Army in 1917 and became the last known U.S. veteran of World War I, died on February 27, 2011.

"We have lost a living link to an important era in our nation's history," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "But we have also lost a man of quiet dignity, who dedicated his final years to ensuring the sacrifices of his fellow 'Doughboys' are appropriately commemorated."

Burial with full military honors will be held at Arlington National Cemetery. Details about the funeral are expected to be released soon.

A long-time resident of Charles Town, West Virginia, where he had a farm, Buckles was born in Bethany, Missouri. He enlisted shortly after his 16th birthday and served in France and Germany.

At the start of World War II, he was a civilian working with a steamship company in the Philippines. He was imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner of war camp for three and a half years.

In his later years, Buckles became an advocate for the expansion of a little-known memorial to World War I Veterans from the District of Columbia into a national memorial.

More than 4,700,000 Americans served in the military during World War I. About 53,000 died of combat-related causes, while another 63,000 deaths were listed as non-combat.



The West Point Center for Oral History



February 18, 2011

Dear Sir:

The West Point Center for Oral History is currently working on an hour-long documentary film on the experiences of USMA's Class of 1967. Our production company, The Documentary Group, which was founded by Peter Jennings, is producing the project.

Two of the soldiers we interviewed for this documentary were Carl Savory and Fred Lowrey, graduates of West Point, and members of the 173d Airborne Brigade. We are urgently seeking footage and/or photos of Vietnam, and especially of the 173d Airborne Brigade in order for us to accurately depict their experiences. While Savory and Lowrey's appearance would be tremendously helpful, we are casting our wide net as wide as possible.

Are you aware of anyone within the unit or company who may have a repository of film footage (or photographs)? We are open to everything - film, photos, audio, etc - and hope that you will pass this email along to any potential contributors. Please note that all materials will be handled with the utmost care and returned to the owner in due time.

Thanks in advance for your assistance and contribution to an important addition to the historical record.

If you have any questions, comments, or clarifications, please contact Stephanie Chang at 212-456-5713 stephanie@thedocumentarygroup.com, and please cc me if sent through email.

Very Respectfully,

Amada Chavez
The Documentary Group
www.thedocumentarygroup.com
212-456-5886
amada@thedocumentarygroup.com

[Sent in by Tim Austin & Jack Price, 173d Airborne]

From their web site: The Documentary Group produces work based on a very simple principle: have faith in the intelligence, taste, curiosity and integrity of the audience. TDG was founded in 2006 by the core members of PJ Productions, following the death of legendary broadcaster Peter Jennings. The producers and directors, who were for many years the team behind Jennings' documentaries at ABC News, are dedicated to continuing the tradition of smart, important and innovative film-making. Their credits as individual producers and directors include hundreds of hours of network programming, independent feature documentaries, and original educational films.

Donald Reeder, 2/503d Trooper

Donald Reeder, a Southern California resident and a former member of the 2/503d in Vietnam about 1966-67, has passed away from his battle with cancer. He passed away on Saturday, February 19, at the VA Hospital in Long Beach, CA.



I don't know exactly which Company of the 2/503d he served with but it may have been B Co. When I met Reeder a few times many years ago, he lived in Corona, CA, and then he moved to Anaheim, CA.

Please let the members of the 2/503d know about the passing of Don Reeder. Thank you.

Ray Ramirez
Recon/4/503d

Note: We searched for a photo and additional details about Don but, unfortunately, were unable to find anything more. Ed

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

Sunday, March 27, 2011, is the "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day", and there will be a special event at the California High School Stadium, 9800 Mills Avenue, Whittier, CA 90604. Jose Ramos, who served in the 82nd and served with the 101st Abn. Div. in Vietnam is the guy behind this special celebration. Jose rode his bicycle from Irwindale, CA, in 2004, and was going to Washington, DC, to promote some a federal Resolution. For more information, people can go to whvvd@aol.com.

Ray Ramirez
Recon/4/503d

MOH Recipient Sal Giunta to end Army Career

It's been reported Sal has opted not to re-enlist in the army and will leave service this coming June. He and his wife, Jenny, will move to Fort Collins, Colorado where he plans to continue his education. From all of us with the 173d, we wish you and your bride well, Sal.



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 25

Page 41 of 44

Three Gold Star Mothers Honored

The pictures are of our South Florida All Airborne Chapter banquet where we honored 3 Gold Star mothers. From R-L are Velma, Gorgie and Marcela (Restrepo) mother.



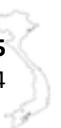
The next picture is the Restrepo family and Sky Soldiers Rivera, Diaz and myself Jose Perez Ortiz.



[Sent in by Jose Perez Ortiz, D/16th Armor]

Richard L. Wilson a Sky Soldier

Birch Bay, Wash. - Retired Army Master Sgt. Richard LeRoy "Dick" Wilson, has retired from this life and has gone on to live with his Heavenly father, his father, his mother and his young son. Richard was born on Nov. 12, 1936, in Yakima. He passed on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011, in his home in Birch Bay. He leaves behind his wife, Mary, of 45 years; his two sons, Jenlih and Randal; along with two half brothers and two half sisters. Richard served more than 20 years in the U.S. Army and did three tours in Vietnam, one with the 173d Airborne Brigade and two with the 5th Special Forces Group A Team 363 MIKE Force and "SOG." Richard holds numerous awards and citations such as the Bronze Star with "V" device (three awards), Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with "V" device, Air Medal, CIB and Master Parachutist. After his military career, Richard went to work for the North Carolina Department of Corrections as a guard at the state penitentiary in Raleigh, N.C., where he attained the rank of sergeant. Richard was generous to his friends and those in need. He will be missed by all who knew him.



Beware of Unclaimed Boxes in the Distance

There's a former 173d officer buddy of Vietnam vintage who continues to suffer with symptoms of PTSD. No, it's not our good friend Bill Vose, as some of you might assume. Vose has balls of Kryptonite, or so he believes, and wears a cammo'd shirt with a big red "S" on the front. No, this buddy is another equally brave soul who led us into battle in Vietnam. Yet, like many of us, for years he's conveniently stuffed that war deep down inside where it could do no harm, or so he had hoped. We'll call this trooper Major Joe, a different G.I. Joe than the one you read about in our last newsletter. Thought I'd share this note with you, a note sent him recently. Ed

Joe, you may not know how typical your story is, maybe you do. Since getting treatment myself (for PTSD) and trying to help others come in from the bush, I've learned something about it. Not unlike some of your peers, those guys who think they have steel balls, I simply believed *I did my service, nothing was owed me, PTSD is bullshit. See ya.*

My first introduction to the illness was at the Rochester reunion in 2000, my first ever. I walked away disappointed in my vet buddies who seemed fixated on percentage points the VA had or might award them. Just like some of your buddies, I too viewed it as a scam, guys looking for a free ride is all. Hell, I had been a business owner for over 20 years at the time, semi-successful, semi-educated, nothing was wrong with me.

Nothing, of course, except the heavy drinking, womanizing, three marriage separations, walking out on jobs after telling the boss to fuck himself with no job to go to, getting in fights; doing everything to hide from something at the expense of my wife and sons, when in reality, this old RTO was hiding from our war, but didn't know it then. Just like you, I had done such a fine job of burying it for 30 odd years.

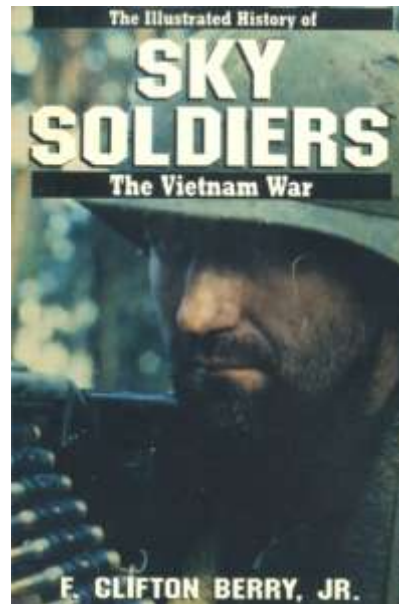
Three 2/503d troopers at 2000 Reunion in Rochester, MN. From left, the late Jim "Skid" Skidmore, Smitty, and Don "Rocky" Rockholt. Life was good.



Until that reunion I couldn't stand to be around vets, wouldn't admit being a vet, my kids hardly knew their dad was a vet. All the while railing at those poor souls on t.v. getting arrested for one thing or another. For a time there whenever the news in L.A. came on with some crime, I consciously hoped it wasn't *another* VN vet, yet often it was. *That's not me goddamit!!* I'd yell at the t.v. I saw what looked to be a familiar box in the distance.

My older brother Bob did three tours with the SF until they blew-out one of his eyes....last year, for the first time ever we sat down together and talked about our war experiences.

Sometime in the 80's my wife, Reggie, and I were in a bookstore in Miami. I happened to pick-up a little, paperback book entitled, "*Sky Soldiers.*" Hell, I thought, I served with that unit. After purchasing the book and taking it home, while sitting there in an easy chair I began to read about operations and battles



"Hell, I served with that unit." I had personally been part of. For no apparent reason I began to weep. Neither my wife nor I could understand it. I had found a box in the distance which had been hidden for so many years.

When the first Iraq war came off, I couldn't eat or sleep, hell I didn't even go to work -- just sat in front of that tube absorbing it all, drawn to it, fearing it....day after day I sat there eating war again. The lid of that box opened a tad.

Having achieved some measure of success with my business, I ran out and bought my dream car, a nifty little European 2-seater in '89, never thought I'd be able to get such a car. I found and put a 173d Airborne sticker on the rear bumper, but it wasn't placed there out of unit pride. No, it was a message to the asshole behind me, *"See! I'm a Vietnam vet and I'm successful! I'm not like those other bastards!!"* I was ashamed then of being a veteran. The lid of that box opened.

(continued....)



We went to NJ sometime after that to make a presentation to some company, I drove there from Miami. This was during winter and on the drive home late at night I stopped to visit *The Wall* for the first time. Near ten o'clock that night I stood there in the freezing cold yet not feeling cold in front of a buddy's



name, cursing at him for dying, telling him how sorry I was he died. On the long, non-stop drive home to Miami our war came back to me, Joe, and I wept for hundreds of miles. I tried to close that box, but it wouldn't let me.

Firing a secretary forced me to learn how to use email. I would spend every night searching for buddies and anything and everything about the VN war and the 173d. After hooking up with a few buddies from the 173d then more, I printed every reply from them, every word, literally thousands of pages -- they're here in a carton somewhere. I became obsessed. Then my first reunion followed by the first trip back to VN, to be followed by another. The box was opening quickly now.



Visiting our mistress, *Miss Vietnam*, at 3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan Son Nhut on our second trip back in '05. From left, Bill Vose, Gus Vendetti, Smitty.

My world was falling apart. I had eventually walked away from my business unable to tend to it, unable to focus, *everything* became VN; then separating again from my wife who didn't deserve it, this time for 6 years, and moved away from Miami by myself.

Drinking heavily again, actually I had never stopped; fighting with people when I had no reason to....lost and searching, but for what? Let's put on a 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, and then another! That'll fix things!! And then, Joe, the depression you mention sets in, big time, a real equalizer as you know. That box was fully opened now and it was sucking me into it and there was nothing I could do about it.



The first of two 2/503d reunions in Cocoa Beach.

I can't tell you how fortunate I was to meet Dr. Scott Fairchild down here, you've read about him. That Doc helped me make some sense of it all, not completely, but enough to save my marriage and enough to help me become a better husband and father and grandfather, although one son, my namesake, remains distant -- there's no question the Doc saved me some years. He taught me PTSD is *not* being crazy, it's precisely what it says it is, *stress*. And he taught me, for guys like us, if we don't confront that stress but instead bury it inside for years, it will eventually return and return to do damage.

Yessir, as your current activities do and most likely will forever remain *your* therapy, our newsletter, for the time being at least, is mine. That, and along with others, helping the brass and the unwashed find the path to their own peace of mind, or as close to it as possible -- from privates to company commanders to full birds. Even generals are not immune, like Major General Blackledge and the PTSD he carries his shoulder, they all carry their hidden scars. Yet, for many that All American has helped us find the path home. Too many, as you well know, have taken the easy path and continue to opt for that sad ending to their combat saga.

You do good work for your G.I.'s, Major. Watch out for any unclaimed boxes in your path, they're like punji stakes, they can be a real bitch. Here's a solution?

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Be well, Joe, dance like no one's lookin'. Smitty Out

