



January-February 2016, Issue 65
Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

50 Years Ago....When They Were Young & Paratroopers



ABOVE, Đồng Tháp Mười, THE PLAIN OF REEDS: Fifty years ago on 2 January 1966, the 2/503d conducted an aerial assault onto hot LZ Wine in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta to commence their role in Operations Marauder & Crimp. A year later on 22 February 1967, the 2nd Battalion along with Sky Soldiers from attached units would make their historic combat jump during Operation Junction City. *Airborne, All The Way!* (Web photos)



We Dedicate this Issue of Our Newsletter in Memory of the Men of the 173d We Lost 50 Years Ago in January & February 1966

"It is our job to remember."

Mark Carter, 173d LRRP/E-17th

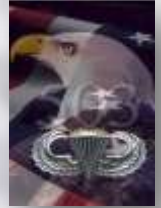
Wallace Edwin Baker
1/2/66 B/2/503



Ruben Cleveland Alston
1/2/66 HHC/2/503



Jerry Nelson Hughes
1/10/66 E-Troop



Gerald Levy
1/2/66 B/2/503



Walter Edwin McIntire
1/2/66 B/2/503



John William Thomas
1/10/66 C/1/503



Gary Franklin Lewis
1/2/66 B/2/503



Johnny H. Leake
1/2/66 A/2/503



Jose Gotera Birco
1/11/66 A/1/503



Larry Joseph Nadeau
1/2/66, HHC.2.503



Robert George Smith
1/2/66 A/2/503
(Virtual Wall states Charlie)



Arthur Cavanagh
1/11/66 A/1/503
(Virtual Wall states C/1/503)



Jerry Wayne Morton
1/2/66 B/2/503
(Virtual Wall states 3/319)



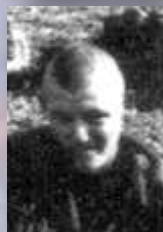
Juvenio Torres-Acevedo
1/2/66 B/2/503
(Virtual Wall states Alpha)



Richard C. Amato
1/11/66 A/1/503



Elliott Lynn Merkle
1/2/66 B/2/503



Noel Michael Bartolf
1/2/66 B/2/503
(Virtual Wall states HHC)



Joseph Earnest Hipp
1/11/66 A/1/503
(Virtual Wall states C/1/503)



Jack Denton Bixby
1/2/66 B/2/503



George E. Geoghagen
1/2/66 C/2/503



Noble D. McGehee
1/11/66 A/1/503



Raynald Jimenz Amador
1/11/66 D/16th



Jack Elsworth Locke
1/26/66 A/2/503



Lamar D. Frederick
2/26/66 A/2/503



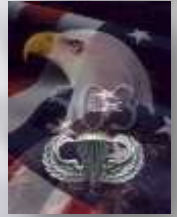
Willie James Robinson
1/11/66 A/1/503
&
William E. Jordan, III
1/11/66 A/1/503



Simmie Bellamy, Jr.
2/26/66 A/2/503



Irvin Clarke, Jr.
2/26/66 A/2/503



Marvin Bonney Smith, Jr.
1/11/66 A/1/503
(Virtual Wall states
C/1/503)



Robert L. Hoskins, Jr.
2/26/66 A/2/503



Johnson Francis Frank
2/26/66 A/2/503



Gerald Lee Dailey
1/11/66, A/1/503
(Virtual Wall states
HHC)



Clarence Mitchell
2/26/66 A/2/503



Thomas C. Brewer, Jr.
2/26/66 A/2/503



Richard Earl Harper
1/12/66 B/2/503
(Virtual Wall states
C/1/503)



William M. Tarbell
2/26/66 A/2/503



Charlie Daniels
2/26/66 A/2/503



Anderson Harold Key
1/12/66 B/1/503



Elmer Eugene Berry
2/26/66 A/2/503



Edward Stephen Graves
2/27/66 A/2/503



Laurence Nelson Sousa
1/15/66 D/16th



Jack Landen Himes
2/26/66 A/2/503



Joseph John Reilly
2/27/66 A/2/503



Raymond L. Bowen, Jr.
1/24/66 HHC/2/503
(Virtual Wall states
A/Bde Admin)



Ronald C. Cavinee
2/26/66 A/2/503



Timothy Wayne Aikey
1/2/66 B/2/503



Sources: 173d Society
KIA List & Virtual Wall

Thirty Days Left

by Craig Thompson | [Permalink](#)
December 15, 1996

Some of the details have become clouded with time. But this is how I remember it. Not for the squeamish.

On May 3, 1969, I had 30 days left on my tour. When I first got in-country, infantrymen were pulled out of the field and given an assignment in the rear when they had 30 days left on their tour. This was "short." That had changed, at least in our unit, though by the time my turn came around in 1969, we stayed in the field until their last week or so.

That morning I was just one day closer to home.

Late April and early May of '69 had not been a good time for B/2/503d 173d Airborne Brigade. Not that anytime was good.

We had a lot of turn-over in April -- guys rotating home and of course casualties. From April 27th (when Rodger Koefod was killed in an ambush) through May 3d, I think we took casualties every day. By May 3d probably one third (maybe more) of our company was made up of guys with less than 30 days in country.



Recent photo of Craig

Rodger Magnus Koefod Corporal



**B CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Moscow, Idaho
July 07, 1948 to April 27, 1969**



Five of the new guys were in my squad. Three of the five were: PFC Gary Wright; PFC Chambers (I hate to admit it but I can't remember Chamber's first name); and Corporal "Dickie Bird" Byrd. They all came into the company mid-April. Before they got there, my squad had been reduced to basically a fire team. With the replacements, we went up to a full-sized rifle squad.

Byrd, being a Corporal, became one of my team leaders. He was on his second tour of RVN. Almost a year earlier (May 6, 1968) as part of B/2/503d 173d ABN BDE, he had been wounded when a 750 lb. bomb fell 300 meters from the intended target onto Bravo's position. Byrd had been evacuated to Japan and then transferred to the 82nd at Fort Bragg. Now he was back with Bravo.

Chambers and Wright had taken the traditional route to 1st tour service with the Herd -- Basic, AIT, Jump School, 30 days leave and then *"Good Morning Viet Nam."*

On the morning of May 3, our three platoons (Lima, Mike, November) were taking different routes towards a rendezvous point several clicks to the east.

Well, Mike Platoon hadn't gone very far when they came into contact with a small VC unit (one BAR and maybe 3-4 SKS/AK). No one was hit by small arms fire but during fire-and-maneuver one of our guys tripped a wired frag left behind by the VC and Mike Platoon had two guys hit (though not especially seriously).

November (my platoon) went about a half click past Mike to the left with a tree line for cover and then got on line and attempted to flush the VC towards Mike. Didn't work. The VC had gone farther than we thought and weren't caught between the two platoons.

So the CO decides we should keep moving east with Mike trailing us.

A few hours later, Lima reaches the rendezvous point (the east end of a small village) before the rest of us, and reports that they have found an empty ammo can (the kind that M-60 ammo came in) sitting on the side of the road (more of a path really) at the west end of the village. I remember groaning when I heard that. If they knew it was empty, it meant that someone had been stupid enough to have looked inside -- and was damn lucky not to have blown to bits by a booby-trap.

After a short break, we move out as a company with Lima taking lead. They hadn't gone very far (probably only a few feet past where the ammo can was found) when their pointman sets off a mine and has both legs blown off below the knees.

(continued...)



After Dust-off, November takes point and headed southeast.

About noon the company stops in place and breaks for lunch. Mike Platoon (with the CO) is just south of the road about 300 meters to the north. Lima is about a hundred meters behind us to the west. November had been moving in line with 1st squad on point and 2nd squad trail. About 75 meters or so to the south, across a dry paddy, there is a creek bed. I tell Byrd to send an OP out to a clump of trees along the creek bed. He decides to go himself and takes Wright and Chambers (who carries a radio). Everyone else drops their ruck and starts to eat (actually half ate while the others kept watch, etc.).

I look over to where Byrd and the others are. They are standing on a dyke a few meters from the trees. Wright is in front bending over something, Byrd's maybe ten feet behind him and Chamber's right next to Byrd with the radio on his back.

My RTO (Dave Wimer) tells me that Byrd's on the horn and they've found another ammo can.

And in a flash of fire with smoke and billowing dirt, Gary Wright and the others went away.

I immediately took off running towards them yelling at Wimer to call in Dust-off.

Jerry Cromer and Roy Wills are only a few steps behind me with our Platoon medic (Ken Workman) a few meters behind us. Everyone else in the squad is confused -- they don't know what's going on and most of them thought our guys had stumbled into a minefield or been hit by a mortar round or had walked into an ambush with a command-detonated mine. Some reluctance to rush out into the open in any of those cases, but in minutes that seemed like hours they came out to where we were.

SSG Bernard Jones (Acting Platoon Sergeant) organized the other two squads and what was left of my squad took care of their comrades as best we could. I don't remember telling anyone to do it, but two guys immediately went past us to the creek bed to provide security (there was a very good chance that Charlie was there just waiting for the medivac chopper to show up).

The rest of us helped Doc as best we could.

When Cromer, Wills and I got on the spot there was no trace of Wright. Byrd was on what was left of his back and God Almighty he seemed to be conscious and ranting -- but his lips were turning blue. He looked like the scarecrow in the Wizard of Oz after he was torn apart, except instead of straw there's nothing but raw hamburger from the breastbone down. Doc gives him a

shot of what must have been morphine and moves on to Chambers.

I don't know if morphine is something to give a guy going into shock (I suspect not) but Doc probably saw that Byrd was dead even if he hadn't yet drawn his last breath.

One of the guys starts to patch up Byrd anyways.

Chambers is in better shape. He's not conscious at least, but his guts are torn up as well and he has a sucking chest wound.

The medivac chopper arrives and I stand out in the paddy directing him in; but he won't come to where we are. The pilot's afraid that we are in a minefield and he won't even hover over it. So we use ponchos to carry Chambers and Byrd to where the chopper will hover (wouldn't land even there) a hundred meters away. Byrd died in the chopper. They did emergency surgery on Chambers back at LZ English and then sent him to Japan (more on this later). Later that day we find out that Chambers wasn't wounded from shrapnel from the mine -- his wounds had been caused by Byrd's bones.



"The Dust Off wouldn't land closer than 150 meters from the spot where they got hit because of their fear of mines and automatic weapons fire. I'm one of the guys carrying the stretcher -- fourth from left." Craig

(Photo by a trooper from Mike or Lima Platoon)

(continued....)



And what of Gary Wright? We were pretty sure he was dead but since we hadn't found his body, there was still a chance that he was wounded and alive. I can remember thinking that there couldn't be many things worse than lying wounded, helpless, abandoned by your squadmates, waiting for the VC to come.

So after Byrd and Chambers were medivaced we started searching for Gary in the bushes along the creek bed, in the creek bed, in the clump of trees.

SSG Jones found him. Jones motioned me over to the clump of trees and pointed upwards. In the tree was the ragged remains of an American uniform that had been impaled upon its branches by the force of the blast.

No body, no equipment, no blood. That uniform and a small bit of flesh in part of a jungle boot (only the heel portion remained) also wedged in the branches was all that we ever found of Gary. We wrapped the flesh up in an empty LRRP ration bag and it went back to English with our CO (who had been summoned by the Battalion CO).

I broke down and cried. A good part of it was that I was short and for those of you who were team leaders, squad leaders, platoon leaders you know that your world revolves around taking care of your people. 30 days left in-country I had just had 3 men killed (at least that's what I thought). And I cursed myself for letting Byrd take two cherries with him.

And another part of it was the thought of Gary being aware of what was happening to him as his brain disintegrated in the explosion. A horrifying thought at the time and the image of that uniform and what it meant has haunted me throughout the years. Oh I don't have bad dreams or flashbacks or any of that -- but when I hear people talk blithely about places like Iraq or Bosnia or Pax Americana or sending the troops for IMO casual reasons, I get very very angry.

Whatever war may be to such people, it's a tattered uniform in a tree in Vietnam to me.

Gary Wayne Wright

Specialist Four

B CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,

173RD ABN BDE, USARV

Army of the United States

Hayes, Virginia

November 05, 1950 to May 03, 1969



My sweetheart, my friends, my kids on occasion will ask me why I don't just let the war go? They don't understand just how much I have done that -- but somethings won't ever go away. And I'm not even sure that they should.

A few hours later we are brought back to LZ English to standdown for a while. It has been a rough day and morale is shot.

At dinner, SSG Jones comes up to me and says that the Captain wants to put me in for a Silver Star, Doc and Cromer in for Bronze Stars, and the rest of the guys who came out in the first rush for ARCOMs for going out into a minefield to try and save our comrades.

I tell him that I don't deserve or want anything for this but I give a statement that supports awards for the others.

Most of us get drunk at the EM club that night; we have a memorial service the next day and the following day we are back in the field.

Up until about a month ago, I sort of assumed that Chambers had died in Japan. I had no real reason to believe this other than he was tore up so bad that I couldn't imagine him surviving. However in searching through Tom Holloway's database I cannot find any Chambers that comes close to being the man who was wounded on May 3, 1969. This means that he survived. God bless you Chambers wherever you are.

I had a hard time locating "Dickie Bird" in the database. The closest match I could find has the date of death two weeks early and in the wrong province. But there's no question that Byrd died that day.

I had also wondered whether or not Gary Wright had been listed as MIA for a while since we didn't recover his dog-tags, ID card, or body. The database shows that this didn't happen. Thanks to Tom Holloway for his work.

To fallen comrades,

Craig Thompson

B/2/503d, 173d ABN BDE, RVN '68-'69

Source:

www.pbs.org/pov/regardingwar/stories/thirty-days-left.php

[Sent in by Dian Koefod, sister of Rodger Koefod, KIA]



~ Photos from the Sister of Rodger Magnus Koefod, B/2/503, KIA 4/27/69 ~

Thanks to Dian Koefod for sharing with us these photos from her brother Rodger. In her note which accompanied the pictures, Dian stated, ***"My wish is that these soldiers be identified by loved ones or other soldiers...So be it. Thanks for posting all these photos."***

In our reply to Dian we stated we would include the photos in our newsletter and pass them on to the 173d Society for posting on their photo collection web site in hopes someone will recognize themselves or others. We also expressed our philosophical belief our photos from Vietnam are not our own but belong to all of us, and unless shared will likely go missing for all time. It's assumed all photos here are of B/2/503 troopers. Ed

In memory of Rodger Magnus Koefod, these photos are presented courtesy of his sister, Dian:



"Left: Dave Harper; Middle: "Doc" Robert Evalt (medic); Right: Rodger Magnus Koefod. All identified in photo."



(Rodger's photo collection continued....)





"This photo was in poor shape. My brother Rodger Magnus Koefod second from left. I do not know who the other soldiers are." Dian Koefod



Above two photos developed January 1969.



"Vietnamese boys Unidentified. Soldier on the left Unidentified. Soldier on the right Rodger Magnus Koefod."

Thank you Dian.



Viet Cong Youth Fights To End, Chained to Gun

By George Esper
Associated Press Writer

SAIGON – A teen-age guerilla was found shackled at the neck to his 50-caliber machine gun during fighting last week in the Communist D-zone jungle stronghold 35 miles north of Saigon, Army officers said.

The shackle, connected by a heavy chain to the 75-pound weapon, prevented the youngster of about 15 from retreating before a company of U.S. 173rd airborne troopers.

The boy helped keep most of the Americans pinned down during a five-hour battle, said Capt. Clay N. Mobley, of Charlotte, N.C. He displayed the shackle at a news conference.

The boy was killed by a grenade.

How Reds Keep Men at Posts

Capt. Clay N. Mobley of the 173rd Airborne Brigade displaying a shackle which he said was found around the neck of a young Viet Cong machine gunner chained to his weapon in the D Zone near Saigon. The shackle prevented the 15-year-old gunner from retreating and he was killed by a grenade.



Capt. Clay Mobley
(AP Radiophone)

The Communists have been known to chain their men to their weapons as a disciplinary measure in cases where a soldier has either lost a weapon or retreated on his own in combat. But this is the first time U.S. officers have come back with the chain and shackle.

The body of another young guerrilla, about 15 or 16 was found tied by rope to a tree.

"I don't know what the purpose was," said Lt. Col. John J. Walsh, Jr., the 2nd battalion commander. But, he said, the Communists may have wanted to leave the boy behind to harass American troops.

Communists snipers frequently tie themselves to trees to free both hands for shooting.



L-R: "C" Company CO, Capt. Tom Faley; Bn XO, Major Willard Christensen; and Bn CO, LTC John Walsh during Operation Silver City in the "D" Zone jungle prior to the battle at LZ Zulu Zulu on 16 Mar 66 described in this report.

(Photo courtesy of Tom Faley)

Walsh, a native of Upper Darby, Pa., whose family now lives in Baltimore, said his soldiers also saw women and children pulling Communist dead and wounded off the battlefield.

He also said a wounded prisoner identified 90 percent of his 400-man unit as North Vietnamese regulars. Other American officials said these men may have been added gradually to a Viet Cong battalion as it suffered combat losses. The prisoner died several hours later, Walsh said.

Source:

Washington Star, March 22, 1966

(Photos added)



Two POWs at LZ Zulu Zulu; it was reported neither survived.

(Photos courtesy of
Jerry Patterson, C/2/503)



ZULU-ZULU **(Operation Silver City)** **REUNION**

“On March 16, 1966, during Operation Silver City at landing zone Zulu-Zulu in the heart of War Zone ‘D’, one U.S. paratroop battalion suddenly found itself surrounded by a reinforced enemy regiment. At the end of the fiercely fought five-hour battle, although outnumbered 3-to-1, the paratroopers could claim one of the most significant victories in the war.”

~ Time Magazine

2/503 arrive LZ Zulu Zulu, 15 Mar 66

On the afternoon of March 15, 1966, Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d arrive LZ Zulu Zulu in the “D” Zone jungle following battles with the enemy the days before. Early the next morning, on March 16th near 7:30 a.m., they would be attacked on all sides by a superior enemy force fanatically determined to overrun their battalion. In recognition of their courage, determination and sacrifice in defeating the attacking forces, the 2/503d would be awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

(Photo by RTO Wayne Hoitt/HHC/2/503)

NOW, 50 years later, men of the 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), ‘Sky Soldiers’ (from all 173d & attached units) and family members, will meet in Cocoa Beach, FL on March 15 & 16, 2016, to share memories and to honor their fallen during Operation Silver City and the Battle at Zulu Zulu. No agenda, no formal meetings, no schedule, no registration fees..... just paratrooper brotherhood.

Lodging: You might visit www.trivago.com/Hotel to see 36 hotel options in Cocoa Beach, all not far from the VFW. Daily shuttle service along A1A to the VFW is available. (Area Airports include Orlando & Melbourne Airports)

The Command Post for this informal gathering of Sky Soldiers will be the *Gunnery Sergeant Elia P. Fontecchio Memorial Post ~ VFW Post 10148* at 150 Minuteman Causeway, in downtown Cocoa Beach, FL. Remember, *there is no agenda.*

A breakfast will be served at the VFW Post between 7:30 a.m. to Noon on Wednesday, March 16 at the Post’s normal rate per person. No reservation needed.

A steak dinner will be served at the VFW Post on the evening of March 16th between 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., at the Post’s normal rate. Please send an email to rto173d@cfl.rr.com to confirm the number in your party planning to attend the dinner meal. A confirmation number specifying your meal time will be emailed to you...this meal service is available only to those holding confirmations. The Post does not accept credit cards, but has an ATM.

See you in Cocoa Beach, and All The Way!



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 10 of 83



INCOMING!



~ Honoring Nguyen Phuc ~

Thought I would let you know as I saw the photo of Phuc in the newsletter.

Our chapter will be purchasing a tile in Phuc's name/ memory for the allied VN War Memorial being built in Washington State.

Do you happen to have the specific date on which he was KIA?

Any other information? i.e. village he was from, etc?



**Phuc in the "D" Zone, Sept. '66
KIA, Dak To, June '67**

(Photo by Smitty)

My long-time friend Thai (173d interpreter who also served with the 2nd Battalion) had a lot of information but he passed last summer. I am still having a tough time with that as we were very close.

We are in the "fund raising stage" which I am sure will take a few years but will send you a photo of the tile and memorial if completed while I am still around!

Take care my friend and thank you for the newsletter. I enjoy it very much.

**Steve Konek, Sr.
173d Bde HQ**

Hi Steve. As you know, Phuc and I were good friends and hootch buddies during my year with the 2/503. Unfortunately, our relationship was mostly built around humping the boonies, getting drunk together at Camp Zinn whenever possible, and combing the streets of Bien Hoa in search of entertainment between operations. Sadly, I know nothing of his personal life outside those endeavors.

Copying a few buddies to your note who were friends of Phuc, one, George (Scotty) Colson, HHC & B/2/503, a hootch buddy of ours in '66, whom on his second tour was with Phuc when he was killed during The Battle of the Slopes. Hopefully they can fill in some of the blanks for you.

Phuc was a hard charger, a daring soldier, and a good man. I have only fond memories of him.

Good on you for honoring Phuc.

**Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503**

~ It's A Duty We All Have ~

So, I'm sitting at my favorite watering hole having a glass of vino and dinner after playing western music at a ranch down in southern Arizona. Long day, decent vino, good food.

I'm half watching the TV behind the bar. They're doing a piece on the traveling Viet Nam Wall that just came to town. As I'm watching they focus on the Wall and there's the name of Donald Sanders of Recon who died on Junction City II. My chest hurt and I realized how much this affects us all.

I always get the feeling that it's my duty to remember these guys. Sanders was about 19, had a wife, and a kid that probably never knew him.

I do so appreciate you guys.....ATW.....Kraut!

**Gary Kuitert
Recon 2/503**



L-R: Gary "Kraut" Kuitert, Recon HHC; Gerald Mitchell, HHC 1st Sergeant; and Dickie Wright, Recon HHC.

Donald Ray Sanders

Private First Class

B CO, 1ST BN, 503RD INFANTRY

173RD ABN BDE, USARV

Army of the United States

Elmendorf AFB, Alaska

January 21, 1947 to March 25, 1967

DONALD R SANDERS is on the Wall

at Panel 17E, Line 47



(Incoming continued....)



(Incoming concluded)

~ A Four-Legged Son-of-a-Bitch ~

I never fail to find something in the *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter* that engages me on a visceral level.

Op Ord 25-65 was a significant event for me (Pages 79-81, Issue 64). At its conclusion I remember hearing that we denied the VC some significant tonnage of rice they were in the habit of taking from farmers in the area. As I remember, we were the first unit into that area, and we pretty much wiped out the whole goddam regiment.

I was still in the rigger platoon then. We made up loads on pallets for LOWLEX drops to the boonie rats. These loads we usually jerked with extraction chutes out the back of Caribou, or its larger cousin, the Bison, operated by the Aussies. One or two riggers flew with each load. Some loads we dropped out of C-123s with medium velocity G-12 parachutes. These had canopies of various colors; the theory was to signify what was in the load by the color of the canopy...we never bothered with that convention, though. We dropped these from about 500 feet.

One afternoon I flew five missions. The first two or three drops were marked by a couple of VC, one on each end of the run, who peppered our aircraft with automatic weapons fire. Me, the other rigger on the plane, and the Air Force crew chief all crowded together on the chain locker at the forward end of the cargo bay—the rounds went through the aircraft like it was made of paper, and it sounded like someone banging on the skin with a hammer. Little holes winked open top and bottom when the rounds hit. It was surreal.

At the beginning of the run I had to stand near the rear of the cargo bay. When the pilot hit the green light, I would yank a lanyard to drop the nylon fence that restrained a dozen or so loads, then the pilot tipped the nose of the aircraft up so the loads could fall out over the tail gate. We would drop the loads in groups, making two or more passes over the LZ each chalk.

I wore a monkey strap—a belt with a static line that hooked to the static line cable in the aircraft—which kept me from falling out the back of the plane when the pilot did his thing. On the second pass the pilot tried to twist the C-123 out of the way of the second VC gunner, sort of a nose-up corkscrew tactic. This is where I lost my footing and dangled in the air over the tailgate until the pilot leveled off. I wasn't in any real danger of falling out of the aircraft, but you couldn't tell that to my pucker factor.

We went back to the runway at Bien Hoa for another load, then another, until it was too dark to drop. At

some point, the crew chief told us that he got word from the pilot that the boonie rats had found the VC that were shooting at us, and took care of them.

On every pass I could see our boonie rats lining the drop zone—which as I remember, was a dry paddy. They were a scraggly bunch, muddy. But we knew what was happening out there, and it was almost a sacred duty to get the ammo and food to those guys. I know that I felt guilty for being able to go back to the relative safety of our company area in Bien Hoa, while these guys slept in the mud.

This op was a four-legged son-of-a-bitch. I seem to remember the term D-500 for the MF VC regiment. The Herd killed almost all of them, and it was expensive in our own casualties. The VC used it as a tactical model for their future encounters with Americans, especially the Hump, and up north, when they took on the 1st Cav. This op was one of the things that caused me to volunteer for the LRRP platoon a few weeks later, so I could get my fair share of abuse.

I'd appreciate it if you'd send me the whole Op Ord After Action Report.

Once again, good job.

Mark Carter
173d LRRP, E-Troop

Note: The Op Ord 25-65 After Action Report was emailed to Mark as he requested, and thanks to Jim Williams, B/2/503, it's available to anyone via email upon request to rto173d@cfl.rr.com

~ From The Other Side ~

Just wanted to express my appreciation for the story about Miss Tao and her family.

Theirs is a story that should also be recognized. We were all stuffed into the same meat grinder by competing isms.

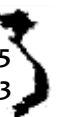
I doubt that Phuc or Mahn or Tien (2/503 Scouts/ Interpreters) would agree and that always bothers me when I try to see both sides of the issue. But I'm sure I'm not the first to wrestle with these thoughts.

Good health and happiness for Christmas and the New Year,

Jim Bethea & Family
HHC/2/503



TAO
a Viet Cong soldier
(Issue 64, Pages 20-21)



Late one night, in 1994, I had this need to jot down feelings that I could not express aloud. What follows is the expression of those feelings as my way to voice a moment of melancholy.



Augie (R) in the boonies. As one of our troopers so rightly stated, "Home is where you dig it".

~ REMEMBRANCES ~

Republic of South Vietnam, Central Highlands, Dak To Area, 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade Separate, November 19, 1967. A Hill called 875.

The battle for Hill 875, minute details are difficult to recollect as are the names and faces. The main event and its aftermath, vividly alive.

Most of the participants were young, strong, bold, alive, conditioned to act.

Fearing the unknown of when? Of were? Of who? Of how? Not of why?

Morning.

The slow ascent, the measured steps. The peculiar stillness of nature. The greenness of the place. Suddenly, the noise, the smoke the smell the sweat, the shouts, the short rounds.

Dusk

The errand bomb, the cries, the pain. The fight to survive. Hot, dirty, hungry, thirsty, almost at the crest.

Fearing and unable to move up or down. Mangled bodies, lost dreams, no more pleasures. Less than half as many as when we started.

Shattered hopes, odious faces. Men barely alive.

Moans, cries, pleas, reassuring words. Search for food, search for water among the litter.

"Maintain the perimeter, Friends are coming."

Thanksgiving Day

November 23, 1967

Remnants of 2nd battalion aloft, Fire Base, Turkey Dinner. *"Hey soldier, shave before you eat."*

Welcome back Augie.

Twenty seven years later, Older, heavier, slower. Fortunate, more fortunate than many,

Today less inclined to accept Hype and make believe. Less inclined to Shout *"yes sir"* with no questions asked.

Time dulls and obscures the past. Time heals?

The wounds are not visible. The healing process slow and incomplete. It may always be incomplete, for the survivors.

Surviving with their remembrances.

**Augie Scarino
"C" Co. 2/503
Jan. '67 - Jan. '68**



"Hill 875 – The Smell Of Death"

(Web photo)

A number of buddies who survived the battles for Hill 875 said they've never since celebrated Thanksgiving nor eaten turkey. We understand them. Ed



A Cobra Encounter In Vietnam

By LTC Curtis E. Harper, USAR (Retired)

December 29, 2001

In December of 1968, I was assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Platoon, 1st of the 50th Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade in Binh Dinh Province, South Vietnam. I was an infantry platoon leader and our job was to perform search and clear patrols and set up ambushes for the enemy. Many times while on patrol we would encounter snakes. Some members of my platoon told of snakes crawling over them during nighttime ambushes, having no idea whether the snake was venomous or not. That could make for a long night.



On January 23rd, 1969, we were patrolling in the Vietnamese central highlands, southeast of the infamous Mang Yang pass. My infantry platoon was working on a search and destroy mission and it was a cool, sunny morning. We were in a high plateau area that had been fertile farmland years prior, before war had forced the people to move to settlement areas. The area was overgrown with large fields of elephant grass and half acre patches of thick vegetation. The jungle was trying desperately to take back over, but fires started by artillery and bombs held back the growth of grass and jungle.

The area was criss-crossed with feeder trails and bunker complexes that were used by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). Our mission was to patrol an area looking for signs of the NVA and establish multiple ambushes on the trails when we did. We moved with stealth, so as not to attract attention to our position, which was difficult with a thirty-man platoon. Imagine for a moment, that you are there with me.

This morning we are moving slowly in a tactical column through a regrowth of elephant grass that is knee to waist high. Our point man is a short wiry individual from Minnesota nicknamed "Shorty". He moves slowly for a few meters, stops, squats down, scans everything ahead, looks back at me, gives a "thumbs up" and moves again. We all hold our breath each time he does this. I follow approximately forty meters behind Shorty, with the rest of the platoon in trail of me. This area has been a hotbed of enemy movement and we are ever aware of their possible ambushes. Also, our nerves are on edge, as we have had numerous scares over the past few days from encountering wild boars, deer, snakes and even a tiger that had walked down a road just 100 meters from one

of our ambushes. The difference here is that crying out in surprise can cost you your life.

SUDDENLY - the point man freezes - I hand signal a freeze to the rest of the unit and they automatically disappear down into the grass into prone defensive positions. I am now ready to fire my M-16 to cover our point man. Eerily, he starts walking backwards toward me, not moving his gaze off of his immediate front. As he gets to me, I whisper excitedly, "What is it?" Shorty answers in a loud shaken voice, "**Snake, big snake!**"



Since he is obviously unnerved by this situation, I push him back to the rest of the platoon and signal that I will check out this "big snake". Having dealt with snakes most of my life while growing up in south Georgia, I feel this is nothing I can't handle and move slowly forward checking out the grass ahead of me. When I have moved about forty meters, the hair on the back of my neck stands straight up as a hooded, Monocled cobra rises angrily out of the grass 8 feet in front of me. With a sound like a high-pressure air hose leaking and its head at the top of the two-foot high grass, the cobra quickly lets me know that I am on his turf.

The rattlesnakes back in Georgia have not quite prepared me for this fearsome display, and since my valor has already retreated, so do I. Moments later I have a quick conference with the platoon Sergeant and we decide to move out in a different direction, giving the cobra a very wide berth. And this time we move out with a different point man.

Some weeks later, the point man "Shorty" went on a 5-day R&R to Hong Kong and was never seen again.

About the Author:

LTC Harper served one tour of duty in Vietnam and was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. Immediately afterward, he was an instructor at the Florida Ranger Camp at Eglin Air Force Base where he taught, among other things, venomous snake orientation to Ranger students. LTC Harper also wears the Ranger Tab, Special Forces Tab, Master Parachutist, and Combat Infantryman Badge.



Source:

<http://www.venomousreptiles.org/articles/66?venomsid=5jrm6ic037dmvjagb27te4f1f6>



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 14 of 83



1st Battalion



50th Infantry

*Served in Binh Dinh Province May '68 - Sep '69
with the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)*



"An Khe taken prior to operations with remaining taken at APB Carol at Dam Tra O Lake operating as an amphibious unit."



Men of Alpha Company, 1st Bn, 50th (Mech) Inf, reel off Highway 19, ten miles west of An Khe, to quell sniper fire from the wood line. The mechanized element pulls road reaction for the 173rd Airborne Brigade along the busy supply route.



"NVA weapons captured by Alpha Company, 1/50th Mech."



"ONE ROUND COMING UP – Mortar platoon for the 1st Battalion (Mech), 50th Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade begins a fire mission on suspected NVA movement after contact has been made by the ground elements of the mechanized unit near An Khe."

(Photo by SP5 William Bontemps)

Photos source:

<http://www.173rdairborne.net/1st50th.htm>





Distinguished and Honorary Members of the 503d Infantry Regiment

The Army's history is portrayed in terms of great battles fought and won. While some historians prefer to discuss the movements of corps and divisions on the battlefield, the essence of many battles are found in the actions of Regimental units. One such storied Regimental unit is the 503d Infantry Regiment.

Not everyone can serve on active duty in the 503d Infantry Regiment. However, Army Regulation 600-82 provides a venue for appointment of deserving individuals who have perpetuated the history and traditions of the Regiment as Distinguished or Honorary Members of the Regiment.

In 2015 the following were accorded that honor: Colonel Matthew McFarlane, Colonel William J. Butler, SGT Kyle J. White, SSG Ryan M. Pitts, LTC (Ret) Joseph E. Flesch, Henry Galindo, COL (Ret) Peyton F. Ligon, LTC Patrick Wilkins, LTC Robert "Todd" Brown, CSM Charles L. Burrow, CSM David A. Dougherty, COL Michael L. Foster, CSM Richard Clark, and Debora Yashinski.

The above named individuals join the ranks of distinguished service members such as GEN John Deane, Jr., GEN Wayne Downing, GEN Henry Shelton, MG John R. D. Cleland, COL Richard Boland, COL George Dexter, COL Al Rascon, MAJ Walter Rosso, MAJ Jack Tarr, CSM Ted Arthurs, CSM Lawrence Okendo, CSM Edward Proffitt, CSM Vincent Roegiers, SP4 Don Michael, SP4 "Lew" Smith, PFC John Barnes, PFC Carlos Lozada and a host of others who have perpetuated the values and the honor of the 503d Infantry Regiment.

A question frequently asked is *"What is the criteria for this recognition and how can I nominate someone for it?"* The answer is simple.

AR 600-82, Chapter 5-3 sets the criteria for selection of a Distinguished Member of the Regiment as well as for a Honorary Member of the Regiment.

"...The primary mission of these special appointees is to perpetuate the history and traditions of the Regiment/Corps, thereby enhancing unit morale and esprit."

"Distinguished Members of the Regiment may include active duty or retired officers, warrant officers, enlisted personnel and civilians (non-retirees). Examples would be a prior enlisted member of the Regiment recognized for his or her active duty accomplishments or a distinguished member from the civilian community with former service in the Regiment. All DMOR must have served in the Regiment/Corps."

"Honorary Members of the Regiment are soldiers, their spouses, or individuals who have made a contribution or provided a service to a Regiment but who are not members of the Regiment making the presentation. Recognition of Active Army, USAR, or retired soldiers and civilians is appropriate."

Nominations for designation as a Distinguished or Honorary Member of the 503d Infantry Regiment are submitted in narrative form.

Nominations must include a brief biography of the individual being recommended and a letter explaining the rationale for the award.

The records and accomplishments of the individuals recommended for designation as Distinguished Members of the Regiment during their terms of service with regimental units should be of a quality that merits consideration for this designation. Their service and contributions to the Regiment and to their civilian communities following termination of active service should continue to be commendable. Those recommended for designation as Honorary Members of the Regiment should share similar dedication to the Army, the Regiment and the communities in which they reside.

Recommendations may be submitted by email to kvsmit173@gmail.com or sent to

Col (R) Kenneth V. Smith

124 Tugboat Lane, Summerville SC 29483

TO BE CONSIDERED FOR RECOGNITION IN 2016, ALL RECOMMENDATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED/RECEIVED BY 31 JANUARY 2016.

~ Just one of our 503rd Distinguished Members ~



**Robert B. (Bob) Carmichael, LTC (Ret)
2/503 Bn XO/CO, '65/'66 RVN**



GIs Dream Up Bikini Ambush

By Horst Faas

WAR ZONE C, Vietnam, March 15 (1967), (AP) – The big bikini bushwhack is more than a year away, but intricate training exercises already are being held.

With hushed voices and occasional ominous chuckles, men of a U.S. paratrooper reconnaissance platoon huddle in the jungles of War Zone C and conjure up the bushwhack-ambush operation.

It is set for Daytona Beach, Fla., Easter weekend, 1968.

Faces daubed with greasepaint, tattered combat uniforms camouflaged, they will deploy on the sands of Daytona.

They will set up listening outposts, spotters, signal wires, trip flares, and maintain -- so they say -- the serious dedication to purpose they have shown in ambushing the Viet Cong.

"Except," says one master planner, "we'll be looking for bikinis instead of VC. I do hope the boys remember to be cautious. They've been in the jungles so long they're liable to get pretty aggressive there on the beach."

All this lighthearted planning for the ambush, part of an elaborate stateside reunion, is in stark contrast to the raw and rigorous life these men lead in Vietnam.

THE PLATOON comes close to fighting guerrillas on guerrilla terms.

They always operate deep in enemy territory. They have been in the field all but six weeks of the last 10 months.

They are wildly unconventional but brilliant and extraordinarily disciplined guerrilla fighters.

The platoon sergeant is SSgt. Marcus N. Powell of Atlanta, Ga. He was with the 20th Special Forces of the National Guard at Orlando, Fla., and asked for active duty to come to Vietnam.

At 35, Powell is the outfit's granddad.

"If you're 23 years old in this bunch," he says, "you're an old man."

Most of the members are 18 or 19.

Each man in the 49-man platoon is a volunteer and there is a waiting list to join. It is easier to get out than get in. A trooper tired of the rugged life can simply ask to be let out, and he is. Not many ask.

MISSIONS normally last at least four days.

"From the moment we move out of base camp, we're in enemy territory," Powell said during a mission.



SSGT. MARCUS N. POWELL (L), ATLANTA, SHOWS PFC THOMAS COHEN WHERE TO ASSEMBLE AFTER GETTING OUT OF HELICOPTER. Vietnamese Action Took Place South of Song Be River; Cohen Is From Moore, S.C; Powell Is Known as Granddad of This Outfit. (AP Wirephoto)

They had applied brown and green greasepaint to all exposed skin, and camouflaged their jungle uniforms to blend into the undergrowth.

None wore conventional steel helmets -- they might clank. Each man had fashioned his own headwear: An old Foreign Legion cap, a Vietnamese Buddhist Boy Scout hat, a U.S. Special Forces green beret, a floppy Australian bush hat.

They pushed through the thicket with advance teams of three or four men in front, communicating with hand signals.

At the slightest sound, every man dropped flat. Only eyes moved as they scanned the trees and brush.

Moving again, the two point units alternated in front positions. One stopped, set up an ambush, then the other pushed past it and set up another ambush.

The ambush, which the platoon calls a bushwhack, is a favorite technique.

Three and four-man ambushes were set out all around the perimeter when the platoon stopped in late afternoon. Only men at the center could smoke or eat.

CONVERSATION was minimal. When the radio was used men whispered into it with hands cupped over the mouthpiece.

(continued....)



Half the outfit stayed awake at all times. Night security devices were set out. Flares popped into the air and exploded with illumination when a wire was tripped. A web of sensitive wire was strung around the perimeter with the ends connected to several receptacles like a small cigar box. A twitch on the wires set the box humming.

Like the Viet Cong, the recon men saturated their area with boobytraps.

The conventional recon job is to stay clear of the enemy. The 173rd is to gain intelligence and stay attacks whenever the men feel they can win. If the opposition is too large, they may harass and confuse the enemy, then pull out and call in artillery and air strikes.

In all cases, they immediately leave an area after a fight.

The platoon never has been badly hurt, but nearly every man with the unit has been wounded in fights scattered over months.

The current membership is confident their know-how and skill will see them through Vietnam. They expect a big turnout at Daytona Beach.

Source:

The Atlanta Journal, Wednesday, March 15, 1967



We don't know if Recon ever held their Bikini reunion in Daytona Beach, FL, but some of those troopers did get together again in 2000, at the 173d Brigade reunion in Rochester, MN. Seen here L-R: the late Col. Bob Sigholtz, 2/503 Bn CO, with the late Recon trooper Jim "Skid" Skidmore, along with Recon troopers Dave Kies and Col. Marcus Powell. Ed



Recon Wildcats signage, circa 1968

HORST FAAS

Horst Faas was a German photo-journalist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner. He is best known for his images of the Vietnam War.



Horst Fass in Vietnam, 1967

Born in Berlin, Germany on 28 April 1933, Faas began his photographic career in 1951 with the Keystone Agency, and by the age of 21 he was already covering major events concerning Indochina, including the peace negotiations in Geneva in 1954.

In 1956 he joined the Associated Press (AP), where he acquired a reputation for being an unflinching hard-news war photographer, covering the wars in Vietnam and Laos, as well as in the Congo and Algeria. In 1962, he became AP's chief photographer for Southeast Asia, and was based in Saigon until 1974.

His images of the Vietnam War won him a Pulitzer Prize in 1965. In 1967 he was severely wounded in the legs by a rocket-propelled grenade. In 1972, he collected a second Pulitzer, for his coverage of the conflict in Bangladesh. Inside Bangladesh, photographer Rashid Talukder considered it too dangerous to publish his photographs and he released them more than twenty years after Horst's photographs had appeared.

In 2012 the subject of his iconic photo (a soldier at Phouc Vinh airstrip) is claimed to be Larry Wayne Chaffin, a soldier with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, who was on defense duty (18 June 1965) during the Vietnam War.

Faas died on 10 May 2012, in Munich, Germany due to complications from paraplegia. ###

Small world: Our niece in Germany, a purser for Lufthansa German Airlines, is friends with the doctor who cared for Horst Faas until his passing. Ed



2/503rd & LANDING ZONE ENGLISH

By Thomas Ayers, Colonel (Ret), A/2/503

~ Precis ~

The 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade was stationed at Landing Zone English from March 1968 through November 1970. The earliest recorded death in the Battalion during that period was that of SP4 Robert E. Jackson of Bravo Company on 04 March 1968, while the last was that of SP4 Leonard A. Lanzarin of Alpha Company on 04 November 1970.



Leonard Lanzarin, KIA

In those 33 months, 111 "Sky Soldiers" of the 2nd Battalion died of combat-related causes.

~ Background ~

The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) began arriving in South Viet Nam on 11 September 1965. They established a Divisional base camp at Camp Radcliff in An Khe, western Binh Dinh Province, but their three combat brigades spent much of their time in the Bong Son Plain and An Lao Valley of northern Binh Dinh. The Cav's 1st Brigade built a brigade-sized facility in the Hoai Nhan District, just above the town of Bong Son; they named it Landing Zone (LZ) English.

The Communists initiated the great Tet Offensive on 30 January 1968. By its conclusion on 31 August, at least 49,324 armed combatants had been killed: 1,536

US, 2,788 ARVN, and 45,000 NVA/VC. The sheer magnitude of this Offensive prompted the permanent relocation of the entire 1st Cavalry Division from Binh Dinh Province in II Corps to Quang Tri Province in I Corps. The vacuum at Camp Radcliff was filled by the 4th Infantry Division, which thereafter operated in western Binh Dinh; the 173d Airborne Brigade inherited the Bong Son Plain.

At the time of the Tet Offensive, the 173rd Airborne Brigade's 2nd Battalion was at Camp Radcliff ~ refitting and retraining after becoming combat ineffective during the Battle of Dak To and Hill 875. While the Battalion sustained 87 killed, 130 wounded, and three missing in that Battle, it incurred no combat deaths during the initial phase of the Tet Offensive. The Brigade's 1st and 4th Battalions, however, were both decisively engaged in the fighting around Tuy Hoa in Phu Yen Province: the 1st sustained 54 deaths, while the 4th lost 23.

~ Enemy Situation ~

Binh Dinh Province had been an area of strong enemy activity since the days of the French Indo-China War. In his book entitled *The Men Of Alpha Company*, LTC(R) John D. Chapla wrote that *"It was the last province to be ostensibly evacuated by the Viet Minh in 1954, but there remained a strong infrastructure which formed the nucleus of subsequent insurgent activities. The area proved to be a lucrative center for Viet Cong activity, due to the close proximity of heavily-vegetated mountains to the densely-populated coastal plain ~ with its always ready source of supplies and recruits. Continuously, the trained Viet Cong district and guerrilla forces defied government attempts to gain control of the area and win support of the people"* (Chapla, p. 45).



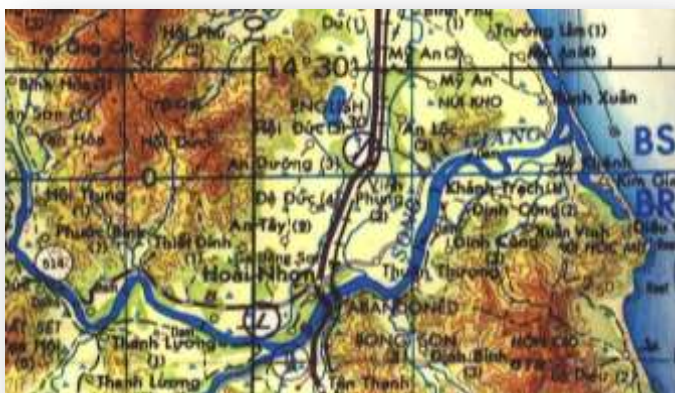
"Aerial view of LZ English. Highway 1 is at the far eastern edge. The airstrip parallels the Highway. The helipad is visible at the far western edge. The 2nd Battalion's compound is located close to the center of the LZ."

(continued....)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 19 of 83



"Shown on this map is a portion of northern Binh Dinh Province in South Viet Nam. In the center is LZ English. To the North/up is LZ North English, to the East/right are the Tiger Mountains and the South China Sea, to the South/down are the Bong Son Plain and LZ Uplift, and to the West/left is the An Lao River Valley. For 33 months in a row, this was the 2nd/503rd's area of operations."

~ Friendly Situation ~

By the beginning of March in 1968, the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, had moved to LZ English and begun combat operations in the Bong Son Plain. The great majority of the 173d Airborne Brigade's assets followed suit in short order. As a "separate" brigade, it had over 10,000 personnel, assigned or attached. In addition to the 2nd/503rd, the following were eventually based at LZ English: Brigade Headquarters, 3rd/319th Artillery (one battery), N/75th Infantry (Ranger), E/17th Cavalry, Casper Aviation Platoon, 39th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon, Company D (Maintenance) of the 173d Support Battalion, among many others.

Over time, the 173d Airborne Brigade duplicated the 1st Cavalry Division's operational/political "footprint": 4th Battalion occupied LZ North English in Tam Quan District, Brigade Headquarters and the 2nd Battalion occupied LZ English in Hoai Nhan District, while 1st and 3rd Battalions occupied LZ Uplift in Phu My District. The 173d Support Battalion moved from Camp Radcliff to Phu Tai (north of Qui Nhon), and its Charlie Company (S&S) settled at Cha Rang Valley.



"'Second to None' ~ motto of 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment."



"Here is the front entrance to the 'head shed' of A Company, 2nd/503rd Infantry. In late 1970, the head-men were CPT William Ryan and 1SG Willard Dockery (three-tour veteran of the 2nd/503rd's Combat Jump)."



"Visible here are the Company 'head sheds' on the left, the 'transient quarters' for each Company on the right, the rappelling tower in the November Ranger compound in the middle distance, and eastern slopes of the An Lao Mountains in the far distance."

~ Missions ~

During the 33 months that the Brigade and the 2nd/503rd occupied the Bong Son Plain, they had three principal missions: combat operations (March 1968-April 1969), training South Vietnamese territorial forces and pacification operations (April 1969-January 1970), and combat operations (January-November 1970)....

(continued....)



....LTC Chapla wrote that *"pacification meant that three of the four infantry battalions were tied down in sectors of the Brigade's area of operations ~ living in squad-sized elements in villages and hamlets, training rural and popular forces, and conducting local security operations and patrols"* (p. 54).



"Visible beyond the concertina wire is the compound for the 2nd/503rd Infantry. The higher row of buildings on the right are the Company 'head sheds,' while the next row down are the 'transient quarters' for each Company when not in the field. The Tiger Mountains are visible in the far distance; the South China Sea is just beyond them. Also present is the omnipresent iron-rich red dust."



"Live by Chance, Love by Choice, Kill by Profession" ~ motto of Company N, 75th Infantry (Ranger)."



"Crew of an M-551 Sheridan Light Tank leaving the compound of Troop E (Airborne), 17th Cavalry Regiment."

~ Field Strength ~



**LTC(R) Anthony B. Herbert, Bn Cmdr.
7 April 1930 ~ 7 June 2014**

In his book entitled *Soldier*, one-time 2nd/503rd commander LTC(R) Anthony Herbert wrote that *"The 173d was the largest brigade in Viet Nam, with over 10,000 men attached to it...There were five combat battalions in the Brigade, but not one of them had more than 600 physically present for duty. Out of a total of 10,000 men, then, there were no more than 3,000 at the [combat] battalion level...No company in any [infantry] battalion in the Brigade had more than seventy-five men physically present and ready to go...So, on an average day, the 173rd Airborne Brigade could field approximately 800 men ~ if all of its [infantry] battalions were out"* (p. 140). As such, the average "tooth-to-tail" ratio was .8:10!

The inauguration of Richard Nixon on 20 January 1969 and new policies designed to fulfill his campaign pledge to end US involvement in the War had direct effects on 2nd/503rd. One of them was the change in missions mentioned above: *"training South Vietnamese territorial forces and pacification operations."* Another effect was an ever-increasing reduction in the number of parachute-qualified replacements.....

(continued....)



....If in earlier times one company could field seventy-five men, the numbers decreased more and more from 1969 on. For example, when I reported for duty with A/2/503rd in August 1970, there were just two officers in the Company (namely, the Commander and the Executive Officer), not five. And much of the time when we went to the field, there were only 24 of us in the 3rd Platoon! A third effect was a radical decrease in helicopter support. In earlier times, entire companies would be transported at once; by late 1970, it was not uncommon for a platoon to be moved into/out of the field by one Huey.



"Crew of Gunship #61 taking off from the helipad on the western edge of LZ English. Crew member flashing 'V' sign. 'Peace, Brother!'"

~ Combat Tactics ~

With the move to LZ English came a change in tactics. Prior to March 1968, the norm was battalion-sized operations: with one company held in reserve, three companies would deploy together, disperse and search during the day, and then co-locate at night.

From March through November 1968, the norm became company-sized operations. With one company held in reserve (i.e., berm duty), the three line companies were assigned separate, non-supporting missions ~ and within a given company, it deployed as a unit, platoons conducted separate night ambushes, and the next day the company re-grouped with itself and moved on.

From November 1968 through April 1969 and again from January-November 1970, the Battalion practiced saturation patrolling ~ otherwise known as "Hawk Teams." With one company held in reserve (i.e., berm duty), the other three companies were assigned separate, non-supporting missions. Within a given company, the headquarters element and the three platoons conducted parallel patrolling operations ~ and within a given platoon, it deployed as a unit, squads

conducted separate night ambushes, and the next day the platoon re-grouped with itself and moved on. One platoon wouldn't see the others until the patrol ended, and a single platoon might operate independently.

One time, some sharp-eyed Artillerymen on Fire Base Tape in the An Lao Valley spotted some VC in the open to the north of their location. They fired a few rounds and called for the 2nd Battalion's "Reaction Platoon;" 3/A/2/503rd was on call. Twenty-four of us were airlifted ~ six at a time ~ onto the Valley floor. As we searched for signs of enemy activity, night fell. So there we were...one tiny platoon in the home ground of enemy regiments...we could smell the nuoc mam... discipline was tight that night! Next day, we had the honor and pleasure of humpin' back to Tape.



"Shown here is a portion of the western defensive berm at LZ English. Beyond the concertina wire are the burned-out remains of a downed Chinook helicopter, a tiny village of farmers and their rice paddies, a portion of the Bong Son Plain, as well as the eastern or seaward slopes of the An Lao Mountains."



"Here are two members of the 39th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon (Airborne) on a road/mine-clearing operation on Highway 173, east of LZ English."

(continued....)





"Here is an aerial view of the An Lao River, Valley, and Mountains. In the photograph, the River runs from the North/top to the South/bottom. This was the home ground of various North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong Regiments. It was also the scene of bitter fighting between those Regiments and US Special Forces teams, elements of the Korean Tiger Division, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the 4th Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division's 3rd/506th Infantry, the 1st/50th Infantry (Mechanized), and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. That's determination!"

~ The Experience ~

With the move to Binh Dinh came other changes. Instead of fighting North Vietnamese regulars using conventional tactics in battalion-sized operations, the 2nd/503rd began fighting Viet Cong guerrillas using conventional tactics in company-sized operations. With the introduction of "Hawk Teams," the Battalion developed the option of fighting the guerrillas using unconventional tactics ~ thereby taking-back some of the initiative as to where and when to fight.

One time, A/2/503rd was airlifted by Chinook to Fire Base Laramie ~ about half way between LZ English and FB Tape. Our mission was to engage the enemy using saturation patrolling. CPT William Ryan (the Company Commander) had divided the Company's area of operations into three parallel sectors. Over the next eight days, each platoon was to move out of Laramie, up and over the eastern crest of the An Lao Mountains down to the Valley floor, where it would be picked-up by chopper and flown to Tape. 3rd Platoon had the right flank, 2nd would be about one click to the left, 1st would be about two clicks to the left.

Each of the 24 men in 3rd Platoon carried his own personal weapon, extra ammo, a claymore or radio battery or machinegun ammo, four days' worth of C's, poncho liner, and whatever else was deemed necessary. We carried one machinegun, but no mortar. Humping out of Laramie in daylight, we moved to our

designated sector and settled into a temporary position that was covered and concealed. Using map study and short recons, Sergeant Zeno Dupree (the Platoon Sergeant) and I picked good night ambush positions on nearby trails. After chow and sunset, we moved into our squad-sized ambush positions ~ silently, stealthily.

LTC Herbert wrote that:

"The purpose of an ambush is, plainly and simply and precisely, to kill. It takes little skill ~ but it does require patience, good discipline, and courage. You must be silent, keep your weapon ready, and stay alert. When they come, you slide the safety off silently, blow the claymores, and open up with everything you have. You fire at every moving object until there is nothing left but dust, and then you break it off and sit and wait some more ~ just as quietly as before, just as patient, just as alert. At daylight, you search for the bodies, take care of your wounded, and move out." (p. 146)

(continued....)





"Here is an aerial view of terrain typical in the An Lao Mountains. As if the VC and their booby traps and fear of maiming and death weren't enough, there's also the heat and the humidity and the rain and the mud and the wait-a-minute vines and the ants and the mosquitoes and the terror and the adrenalin and the cordite and the blood and the fatigue and that ever-lovin' ruck. Fuckin' A!"

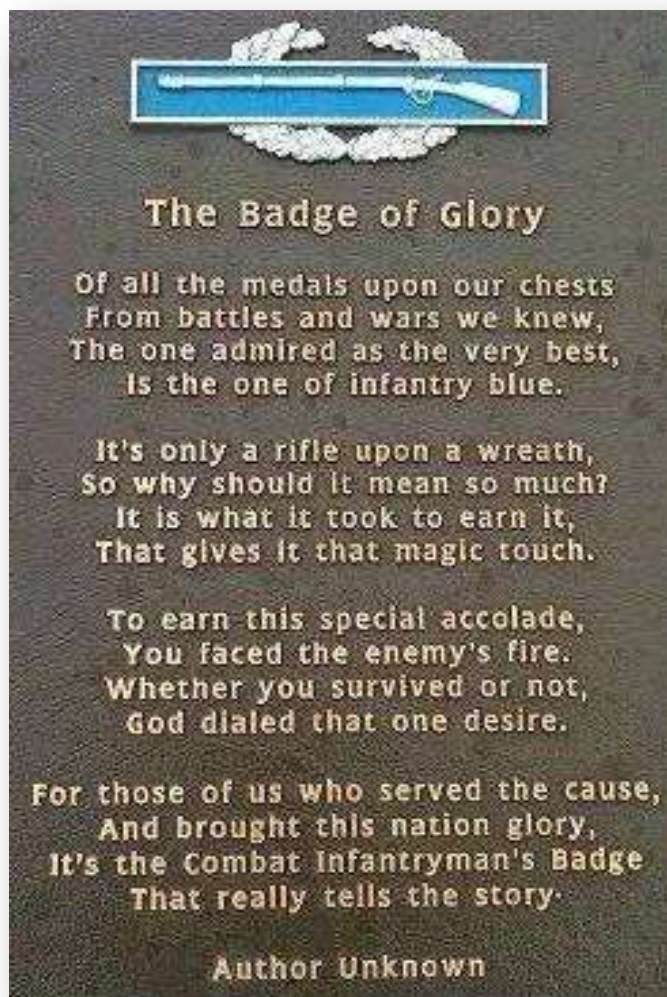


"In the Bong Son Plain, a Vietnamese farmer walks on a paddy dike next to newly-planted rice stalks as far as the eye can see."



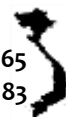
"In the Bong Son Plain, acres and acres of nearly-ready-to-harvest rice stalks surround a tiny village of Vietnamese farmers."

For the "Sky Soldiers" in 2/503rd, our lives consisted of a seemingly never-ending *"series of small, sharp, sudden, close-range, no-notice, no-name, no-glory firefights and ambushes"* (Chapla, p. 51). But the sheer intensity of all this brought about ~ indeed demanded ~ extremely-high standards of personal and soldierly discipline to ensure not only mission accomplishment, but also Platoon and personal survival. We lived like animals and became animals, hunting other humans. All of this also brought about a seldom-seen form of integrity, trust, and caring for one another. No matter what the race or the religion or the rank, most "Sky Soldiers" would literally kill to protect or rescue another Platoon member. SGT Harlan Spencer (A/3/503rd) once asked: *"What are you worth to me, what would I be willing to risk to rescue you?"* (Chapla, p. 98). Most "Sky Soldiers" of 2nd/503rd Infantry answered, *"Everything!"*



(NOTE: The map image and the three aerial photos are "borrowed" from the internet; I took all of the other photos. Thomas Ayers)

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Jan Schalavin (1938 - 2015)

Jan Schalavin, 77, passed away peacefully at Providence Hospital on Nov. 27, 2015, in Anchorage, Alaska. A celebration of life will take place on Feb. 20, 2016, at 2 p.m. at the Eagle River VFW Post 9785.



CSM Schalavin was born in Varalja, Hungary, on Feb. 20, 1938, to Joseph Schalavin and Katarina Tollaczi, of Hungary, both deceased. He enlisted in the Army on April 13, 1959. After basic training he was assigned to the 506th PIR at Ft. Campbell, Ky. He advanced to PSG in the 101st Airborne Div, and the 173rd Airborne Bde as well as the 1-36th Inf and 3rd Armor Div. Jan was an Army Ranger. He served as an instructor in the Ranger School, as well as being the first ever 1SG for Company C, 2nd Ranger Bn. He was a graduate of the Sergeants Major Academy, class #4 in 1978. He served as Sergeant Major of the ROTC Program at Southwest Missouri State College, CSM of the 1st Ranger Bn from May 1979 thru April 1982; and CSM of the 173rd light Infantry Bde (Sep) from April 1982 thru January 1985. After that, he served as the CSM of the Infantry School in Ft. Benning, Ga. He was then assigned to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii as the CSM of the 25th Inf Div. Ranger Schalavin served a tour in Korea, two tours in Germany and three tours in Vietnam. He was on the ground at Desert One in Iran 1980. His awards include the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars for Valor and one for Meritorious service, the Purple Heart with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Palm and the Meritorious Service Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters. He was authorized to wear the Combat Infantry badge, the Ranger Tab, the Master Parachute badge and the Expert Infantry badge. CSM Schalavin retired in 1993, after serving his country proudly for 35 years. He was the epitome of being a Ranger, and the consummate soldier and NCO. As a senior NCO, he "took care of his boys." He was a father, grandfather, leader, mentor and the best kind of friend a person could ever have. He touched so many people's lives all over the country. He will forever remain in our hearts. He is survived by his daughter, Brooke Schalavin; and grandkids, Beau Janos and Chloe-Anne Schalavin-Romero of Eagle River. He truly was a "one of a kind" man and will be sorely missed. Rest in Peace.

[Published in *Alaska Dispatch News* on Dec. 16, 2015]

Pic Found on the Web



Proud Sky Soldier Charles Brown next to 173d Abn Bde sign.

Sky Soldiers strengthen European partnerships through aerial delivery



U.S. Army 1LT Kristina-Noel N. Donahue, jumpmaster of the 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, inspects Sgt. Gabriel C. Michaud's equipment before an airborne operation at Aviano Air Base, Italy, Dec. 2, 2015.





Creates On-Line Self-Help Site

The Department of Veterans Affairs just stood up its new Online Self-Help Interactive site. Below is their explanation of the program and all their links.

Interactive Online Resources for Veterans Looking for Tips on Parenting, Stress Management and More!



Are you a Servicemember or Veteran who sometimes finds yourself angry, stressed out or in need of parenting advice? The **Online Self-Help Resource Center** was developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs specifically for Servicemembers and Veterans to help you handle stress, make better decisions, deal with parenting issues unique to the military lifestyle and manage anger effectively.

Available completely online with no sign-up or registration required, the *Online Self-Help Resource Center* does not collect personal information. It can be used by anyone, anywhere and there is no cost. You can work through the modules at the time, pace and place of your choosing.

Developed with extensive input from male and female Veterans of all eras, the *Online Self-Help Resource Center* provides tools to manage the challenges of being a military parent, the transition to life after the military as well as everyday stressful problems and situations. You learn life skills through an interactive online environment featuring videos, exercises and stories from real Veterans.

The *Online Self-Help Resource Center* consists of three different self-help services:

Parenting for Servicemembers and Veterans:

Designed to help manage everyday parenting challenges as well as those specific to military and Veteran families. It provides practical information on ways to communicate with children, how to discuss deployments and methods to positively discipline children. It even explains how to interpret specific emotions and behaviors that children may show at a variety of ages ranging from age 0 to 18.

Moving Forward: Overcoming Life's Challenges:

Provides tools and skills to effectively solve problems, overcome obstacles and achieve your goals. It is especially helpful if you are facing life changes and stressful situations such as transitioning out of the military, moving, financial difficulties or relationship problems. It offers practical tools like developing an action plan to follow when you are feeling overwhelmed to help you reduce stress and negative emotions, increase optimism and find creative solutions.

Anger and Irritability Management Skills (AIMS):

Teaches you ways to help manage your temper and respond more positively and effectively to difficult people and events. The online therapy can help you reduce or prevent angry reactions, teach you to identify your personal anger triggers and warning signs and help to plan and prepare for instances when you do become angry or stressed. By the end of the course, you will have developed a personalized anger management plan that applies what you have learned to real-life situations.

For more information and to take the courses, visit

www.VeteranTraining.va.gov

Courses were developed by Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Web Services in collaboration with Department of Defense National Center for Telehealth and Technology.

[Sent in by Gary Newman, USN, VVA/FL]

(Photo added)

Leaving no one behind

The first step in preventing suicide is recognizing and understanding the warning signs.

"Families and friends are often the first to notice when a veteran or service member is going through a difficult time," said Dr. Caitlin Thompson, Deputy Director of the VA's suicide prevention program. *"The most important thing that any veteran or service member and their families should know is that we care – we're here to listen. Taking the first step to reach out – whether that's a call, text, chat or conversation – can lead to veterans finding the care that they've earned and deserve."*

Learn More Online

To reach the **Veterans Crisis Line**, call **800-273-8255** & press **1** to talk to a live person, chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net/chat or text **838255** for free, confidential support. This crisis line is open 24 hours a day year-round. Source: *DAV Magazine*, November/December 2015



Doc Remembers A Doc Buddy

Billy Soza was from a really old Phoenix, Arizona family from before it was Phoenix, an original land grant family from the Mexican government. He was proud that his family was here before it became the USA.

He was a teenager when he joined the U.S. Army and went Airborne, smart enough to be a medic on testing, and bilingual, too. Billy was a combat medic with the 2/503, mostly with Recon. I don't have details on his day to day at LZ English, but he was 2nd Bat and I had already DEROS'd.



Billy "Doc" Soza in the Boonies

On return to CONUS and separation he became a Phoenix Police Officer, rising to Detective and SWAT leadership levels, a first-rate, honest, hard-working guy. He stood for what was right.

Like all of us he was beset with devils. He and his wife Pam came to our house in AZ many times for both 173d Chapter meetings (he was President for many years) and personal 'cook-outs'. His passing left holes deep in the hearts of all who knew him.

Billy worked with Col Bob Sigholtz locally in establishing and furthering the Thunderbirds Chap 173d Abn Assoc. He was a very strong veterans' advocate, literate and well-respected. His campaign to eliminate Homeless Veterans in Phoenix and AZ was a success, a model adopted by city, state and eventually many other states. Billy championed service to patients and especially their families at local Phoenix VA's.

While I was finishing up my AF career at Keesler AFB in Biloxi (where we met) he had me search the bulletin boards for a good car for his daughter. I found several and forwarded info/contact data to him. Excellent vehicles being sold by troops deploying, not clunkers.

I had a life (1.5 year-long) threatening illness (spontaneous diverticulitis perforation of colon with sepsis and hemorrhage). My family was told I wouldn't make it, twice...awoke one day in ICU with a Parish priest giving me Last Rites...WTF? This was at the time of Billy's eventual fatal troubles and my family kept it away from me until after I had recovered; Billy had already been buried at the National Cemetery. I was taken there by family in a wheelchair and was lying on his grave sobbing (only time). It was a new burial and grave, dirt still soft, just a number and a tiny 173d flag marking the spot.

I was and still am heartbroken that I was unable to be at his side and do anything to help. I am convinced I could have turned things around.

I will refer you to others who knew him better and longer than I. Bob Madden, current President of our Chapter, Bill Reynolds (875 vet) and Adjutant, Cyril (Cy) Bassett, and Reggie Yates (Chapter Chaplain and new President of the largest Vet association in AZ and Member of AZ Military Hall of Fame).

I hope that the Chapter will be able to come up with cogent background information on Billy, skirting the unbelievable. Bill Reynolds is a 173d Hill 875 veteran, and an excellent writer, editor and photographer.

In fond memory of Billy Soza. Doc,

Tim Cloonan, COL (Ret)
Bde Surgeon, 173d Abn, RVN



Doc Cloonan at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL

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The 3d Radio Research Unit, 1st Detachment, 173d Airborne Brigade



Ground-based Radio Direction-Finding was a dangerous mission, because it required the operator to be so close to the transmitter in order to obtain a good fix. However, it was one of the primary missions of Soldiers of the 3rd RRU early in the unit's deployment to Vietnam. (Web photo)

Soon after the 173d Airborne Brigade arrived at Bien Hoa Air Base in May 1965, it was decided by Army command to send an intelligence support unit from the States, to be attached to the 173d. Within days, a communications intelligence unit of fifty men capable of field operation was deployed from Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The unit personnel and full equipment, including five large tents, four three-quarter trucks fitted with communications intercept gear in rear-mounted vans, four jeeps with trailers, portable generators, gas cans, barbed wire, cots, air mattresses, mosquito nets, M-16's, and two machine guns arrived in three days by an airlift of seven C-130's. It was obviously a high priority action, as was the deployment of the 173d.

The unit arrived Tan Son Nhut Air Base and spent about two days at the 3d Radio Research Unit while checking out equipment and loading all gear into the jeeps and trailers for the thirty mile trip to Bien Hoa Air Base.

The intelligence unit became the 3d Radio Research Unit, 1st Detachment, with the 173 Airborne Brigade, and arrived at Bien Hoa in mid to late May of 1965. The purpose of attaching the unit to the brigade was to monitor enemy communications in the area of Bien Hoa Air Base, primarily live voice communication, and to provide intelligence support to the 173d.

It surprised me at the time that the entire unit was advised not to discuss our activities with members of the brigade. We had our own camp surrounded by three coils of barbed wire. We had chow and took showers with the brigade, but otherwise operated out of sight for security reasons. It was not surprising therefore, that no one at the reunion last year in Rochester, Minn. recognized the unit, 3d Radio Research Unit, 1st Detachment, except General Williamson that is, who commented,

"Oh sure, you guys were up there near the end of the runway surrounded by barbed wire. There were only two or three people in the whole brigade who knew where you were or what you were doing."



Brigade Commander, the late General Butch Williamson leads march by men of his brigade through downtown Rochester, MN in 2000 at 173d reunion. During the war, the City of Rochester had 'adopted' the 173d Airborne Brigade, and on this day thousands of people lined the streets of their city welcoming their Sky Soldiers home.

(continued....)



Of the fifty men in the unit, all were enlisted except the unit commander, a first lieutenant. Of the 49 enlisted men, the majority were people at grades E-5 to E-7, and most of those were highly experienced career men. There were so few PFC's and E-4's, that E-5's, myself included, were added to the guard roster. We had four guards on each night from dark to 6:00 AM. Two guards walked the perimeter of the camp in opposite directions, and the other two were on watch in the bunkers where the machine guns were mounted. We changed positions every hour.

As for the operations, I remember that the interpreters spent long hours in the vans with ear phones on searching the intercept radio channels for live voices. Each van was equipped with a reel-to-reel tape deck which allowed us to record live voice conversations. We could then replay the tape over and over and slow down the speed to translate the message for significant information. I was never aware of the channels of communication to the brigade.

In time, a pattern in the frequency of live voice communications became observable and there were people in the unit who studied this. The verbal contacts were usually not random, but followed a pattern of communicating on the hour, quarter-hour, or half-hour. To my knowledge, this was the first attempt in Vietnam to intercept the enemy's live voice conversations, and certainly, it was the first attempt by a field unit.

Unlike most others in the brigade, we had three hot meals a day and a cold shower. We ate at the brigade mess, which was equipped with stand-up plank tables and over-head canopies for shelter from the rain. The food was great, and of course mail-call was always a welcomed event.

The unit continued to exist under various names during the entire tour of the brigade in Vietnam. The unit grew in size but remained a surprisingly well-kept secret, known by few.

I hope the article adds to the history of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

Sp-5 Scott C. Brewer
3d RRU, 1st Dthmt, 1965



Close, But Not Fatal

SAIGON (UPI) – You can't tell Lt. Ralph Southard of Red Oak, Okla., he doesn't have a guardian angel.

Southard, a paratrooper with A Co., 2d Bn, 173d Airborne, was slightly wounded in the buttocks during the recent fighting in Binh Duong Province.

But he stayed behind to help evacuate other more seriously wounded.

During the fighting, he heard a thud in the dirt about 12 inches from his foot. It was a 60mm mortar round – a dud.

Southard looked at the dud round, then glanced at the sky, said

"Thank you, Lord,"

and walked on to help another American.

Source:

Pacific Stars & Stripes, Sunday, March 6, 1966



Ralph Southard, XO, A/2/503d
1937 - 2011

"1Lt Ralph Southard quickly grabbed me by the stacking swivel and got me headed in the right direction. The advice he offered, the guidance he furnished, the compassion he showed, and the kindness he always displayed to me, greatly assisted this rookie officer just joining A Company to transition to and accomplish my duties in a war zone I will never forget his example. God bless him!"

Bob Guy
 A/HHC/2/503d, 1966-67



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 29 of 83



Following is a list I received recently from DPAA of case's they have either added or reopened in their search for the remains of those still missing from the Vietnam War. If appropriate could this list be included in the next newsletter? The names of the missing are in parenthesis for each case. Matt Kristoff has asked me to help pass this list around to as many Vets as possible because the records for many of the SOG missions were destroyed in the 1970's. If anyone has information on these cases they can contact Matt directly or me and I'll see the information gets to him.



Jim McLaughlin
335th AHC
(Cowboys)

jomclaughlin@comcast.net

Executive Summary

SOG/SOF-Related Cases Needing Assistance*

Case 0109	13 JUL 65	South Vietnam
	Det B-52/Delta, 5 th SFG(A), (Gallant, Taylor)	
Case 0353	2 JUN 66	South Vietnam
	F-4C, USAF, (Rosato)	
Case 0476	28 SEP 66	South Vietnam
	SOG, RT Montana, (Taylor)	
Case 0513	4 NOV 66	South Vietnam
	Det A-302, 5 th SFG(A), (Hunt)	
Case 0598	21 FEB 67	Laos
	SOG, (Borja)	
Case 0608	6 MAR 67	Laos
	SOG/B-50/Omega, (Carpenter)	
Case 0630	24 MAR 67	South Vietnam
	ODA-302, Mike Force, (Hallberg, Stewart)	
Case 0902	9 NOV 67	Laos
	SOG, RT Massachusetts, (Kusick, Baxter)	
	HH3E, 37 th ARRS, USAF, (Maysey, Brower, Clay)	
Case 0930	29 NOV 67	South Vietnam
	Det A-341, 5 th SFG(A), (Millner)	
Case 0944	21 DEC 67	Laos
	SOG, RT File, CCN, (Scurlock)	
Case 1106	27 MAR 68	South Vietnam
	SOG, RT ???, CCN, (Calhoun)	
Case 1154	2 MAY 68	South Vietnam
	Det A-109, 5 th SFG(A), (Englander)	
Case 1164	8 May 68	South Vietnam
	281 st AHC (supporting Proj Delta), (Condrey, Dayton, Jurecko, Jenne)	

Case 1191	23 MAY 68	Laos
	SOG . RT Idaho, CCN, (Lane, Owen)	
Case 1321	13 NOV 68	South Vietnam
	Geotronics Co., (Erskine)	
Case 1322	15 NOV 68	South Vietnam
	SOG, RT New Hampshire, (Birchim)	
Case 1325	13 NOV 68	Laos
	SOG , RT Vermont, (Copley)	
Case 1340	13 DEC 68	Laos
	C123K, USAF (Albright, Fanning, Clarke, Dailey, Donahue, Walker)	
Case 1351	29 DEC 68	Cambodia
	SOG, RT Vermont, (Scherdin)	
Case 1380	11 FEB 69	Cambodia
	SOG, RT Hammer, (Kroske)	
Case 1411	20 MAR 69	Laos
	SOG, RT Copperhead, (Davis)	
Case 1493	27 SEP 69	Laos
	57 th Aviation, (Huntley)	
Case 1521	12 NOV 69	Laos
	A1H, 602 nd SOS, USAF, (Helmich)	
Case 1641	29 JUN 70	Laos
	A7A, CVW 19, (Aldern)	
Case 1647	4 JUL 70	Laos
	SOG, RT Colorado, (Bookout)	
Case 1681	4 DEC 70	Laos
	SOG, RT Washington, (Green)	
Case 1692	15 JAN 71	South Vietnam
	Co A, Det B-43, 5 th SFG(A), (Harwood, Kinsman)	
Case 1696	29 JAN 71	Laos
	SOG, RT Colorado, (Mixer)	
Case 1744	27 APR 71	South Vietnam
	UH-1H/SOG, HF, CCC, (Krupa)	
Case 1747	17 MAY 71	South Vietnam
	UH-1H, C Co, 158 th Avn Bn, (Pearce, Soyland)	

In addition, we would also like to speak with any Army Security Agency (ASA) personnel, and any SOG S-2 personnel.

Note: This is just an Executive Summary; see full 22-page document for details on each case, and the case-specific information that we are seeking. For more information

Contact: Matt Kristoff at DPAA
Matthew.Kristoff2.civ@mail.mil
 or at (703) 699-1240

Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency
"Fulfilling our nation's promise"
<http://www.dpaa.mil/>



Sky Soldier's chaplain in Vietnam visits 173rd Airborne Brigade as a cardinal

By Army Staff Sgt. Opal Vaughan

"It is often difficult to dedicate time to [my faith] with the operation tempo in this brigade," said Arevian. "But [O'Brien] was convincing in his conviction to the importance of spiritual health, whatever religion or faith one practices – as it relates to mission readiness."

The cardinal, who also served as the Archbishop for the Military Services, encouraged the brigade's paratroopers to never apologize for serving their country.

"Don't ever be defensive or apologetic in your role as a member of the military," O'Brien said. ***"There is a great deal of patience involved in contributing to peace. You all sacrifice your lives and give a great deal of service to your country."***

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VICENZA, Italy – Roman Catholic Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, grand master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, visited with paratroopers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and their Families for a holiday service here Dec. 14, 2014.

O'Brien, a former U.S. Army chaplain who served a tour with the brigade in Vietnam from 1971 to 1972, was invited to speak at the 173rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion's winter ball.

"I feel very much at home at the 173rd," said O'Brien. *"Serving in Vietnam was very demanding but fulfilling...I hated to leave the military service. But sometimes you have to do what you're told to do. If I were 30 years younger I would serve all over again."*

The cardinal serves and lives in Rome, preaching the message of courage and strength, and service before self.

O'Brien was inspiring, said 1st Lt. Matthew A. Arevian, the battalion air operations officer for 173rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, who served as the cardinal's escort officer. *"He spoke to us a great deal about the importance of the military [vocation] and the weighty responsibility to combat unjust actions."* He also spoke spiritual fitness, which is part of the Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family – along with physical and mental fitness – designed to increase the resiliency and enhance the performance of Soldiers and their Families.



"Milton Olive Chapel" at Camp Zinn, '65-'67, named in memory of Milton, B/2/503 Medal of Honor recipient.





For the Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate)

The Battle of Nui Cung Chap

By Leigh W. Smith

June 15, 1998



LT Leigh Smith, 22 March 1971

INTRODUCTION

At the end of March and the beginning of April, 1971, the South Vietnamese and U.S. Armies were reeling from their losses in Laos and along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) from Operation Lam Son 719/Dewey Canyon. In this country, American public opinion was both shocked and divided over the recent conviction and sentencing of Lieutenant William Calley for the massacre of civilians in My Lai, South Vietnam.



The iconic photo of the massacre at My Lai. (web photo)

There were reports in the media of dereliction of duty, “fraggings” (the assassination of appointed leaders), and ineffectiveness of the ground forces in Vietnam. While these facts were true in general they were not true for all units. Several major U.S. ground combat units in Vietnam continued to fight the war with aggressiveness and purpose. One such unit, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, fought well around the Nui Cung Chap mountain ridge in western Phu My District, Binh Dinh Province, South Vietnam (-) from March 19 to April 10, 1971. This is the story of that Brigade and that battle.

Binh Dinh Province was the most populated and largest province in South Vietnam (-). Located on the coast in the center of South Vietnam, it contained rice paddy flood plains near the coast and rugged mountains in the interior. The main highway (QL 1) connecting North and South Vietnam ran inland through the province from north to south between the coast and the mountains. The bulk of the population lived along the highway and adjacent rice-growing areas. Binh Dinh Province was a major stronghold of the communist Viet Minh during the French-Indochina War (1945-1954) and had a large communist element at the beginning of the American involvement in Vietnam. In fact, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) destroyed the 18th Viet Cong Regiment during a series of battles in Binh Dinh Province in 1966. (-)



Soldiers of the 1st Cav (Airmobile) disembark Huey on combat operation in 1971. (Web photo)

(continued....)



Since 1969, elements of the 173rd Airborne Brigade were assigned a pacification mission in the coastal areas of northern Binh Dinh Province to root out the Viet Cong. By 1971, American military withdrawals had reduced troop strength to 139,000 soldiers, marines and airmen in Vietnam. (-) The 173rd Airborne Brigade was beginning to cut one Infantry battalion from its rolls, when losses for the South Vietnamese operations in Laos required a South Vietnamese Infantry regiment to be moved from Phu My District, Binh Dinh Province to near the DMZ. (-)

I: The Situation



North Vietnamese Army Regulars (NVA). (Web photo)

Elements of the 2nd North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Infantry Regiment were resting in Base Area 226. (-) With the departure of the 40th South Vietnamese (ARVN) Regiment and probably under orders from the 3rd NVA Division, the 2nd NVA Regt began infiltrating from Base Area 226 into the western area of the Phu My District. There were three avenues of approach into the populated areas of the Phu My District. After negotiating the Soui Ca Valley (-), one avenue of approach was to travel northeast through the pass at the head of the Soui Ca Valley; a second avenue of approach was to travel southeast through the open rice paddies of southwestern Phu My District; and the third was to travel over the rugged Nui Cung Chap mountain ridge to reach the populated areas of the Phu My District and QL. (-) To fill the void, the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade was airlifted to Phu My District to replace the 40th ARVN Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Robert G. Hertel, a Kansan, commanded the battalion for the first part of



Aerial view of the Soui Ca Valley, 1971. (Web photo)

the operation and Major (MAJ) Gary A. Riggs was the Operations Officer (S3) for the entire operation. The continuity of the operations was maintained by the fact that MAJ Riggs remained the Operations Officer for the entire battle. Their plan was to have the battalion's four rifle companies conduct interdiction and saturation patrolling along the base of the Nui Cung Chap mountain ridge, at the pass at the head of the Soui Ca Valley, and along the southwestern portion of the District where the 40th ARVN Regt has been located. They provided for fire support from 81mm mortars at a centrally located point called Fire Support Base (FSB) Moon, directly east of the ridge line on a small hilltop in the center of the area of operations. (-)

II: Preliminary Moves

The battle and "game of cat and mouse" began on the night of March 22, 1971 when 1st Platoon, Company D ambushed an element of NVA infantry in the Soui Ca Valle Pass (-) Because this avenue of approach was blocked, and there was little cover and concealment on the second avenue of approach, it appears that the 2nd NVA Regt leadership decided to force passage from its base area to Phu My District by the third avenue of approach, which was going over the rugged and forested Nui Cung Chap mountain ridge. (-)

On the morning of March 31, 1971, 1st Platoon, Company D was attacked with small arms fire, rocket-propelled and hand grenades resulting in wounding seven U.S. paratroopers. The 1st Platoon recovered one enemy body and grenades. Lieutenant (LT) Bauman received the Bronze Star for Valor for leading his platoon against the enemy attack. Company C was sent to support Co. D from the north....

(continued....)



....Two platoons of Co. C ran into heavily defended base camp, 600 meters from Co. D, where one U.S. paratrooper was killed (Billy Ray Parnell) and a Lieutenant and three paratroopers wounded. Sergeant (SGT) Charles Fisher received the Bronze Star for Valor for rescuing one of the paratroopers who had been wounded forward of the company (-) on March 31, 1971.

The next day Company C returned to the area to find their dead paratrooper and an unoccupied enemy base camp with 30 bunkers, each having overhead cover and interconnected with telephone wire. Because of the incidents on the 31st of March, the Brigade leadership alerted two companies of the 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry to be attached to the 2nd Battalion. Other than 2nd Platoon, Co. A shooting one NVA soldier, April 1st passed quietly.

III: The Man Battle

Co. D was conducting its resupply on April 2, when six rounds of 75mm Recoilless Rifle and small arms fire scattered the men, fortunately no one was hurt. Later in the day a small patrol from 2nd Platoon, Co. B was climbing the main mountain (Nui Cung Chap). A fleeing target ran away from them further up the mountain and the patrol pursued. Near the top the staccato sounds of small arms fire enveloped the patrol. The pointman, Private Joe Youngerman was killed and three others were wounded.

Retreating from the contact, the others regrouped with 1st Platoon Co. B. This element also tried to take the hill getting to within 30 meters of the enemy bunkers when a heavy volume of fire prevented further movement. After two more attempts they were forced to withdraw (-).



The first patrol estimated that a reinforced NVA platoon with three supporting machine-guns occupied prepared positions along the top of the ridge. Soon the ridge was hit with multiple air strikes. During the evening continuous harassing and interdicting artillery and mortar fire was placed on and around Nui Cung Chap ridge by Battery A, 3rd Battalion 319th Artillery from LZ Crystal and Mortar Platoon, Co. E, 2nd Battalion, 503rd In from FSB Moon.

Late in the evening Co. D, 4th Battalion, 503rd In was airlifted into a Landing Zone across the back of the ridge. On the 3rd of April, Co. B began slowly moving up the slopes of the mountain, foot by foot, ready for action. 3rd Platoon, Co. B was sent to the left to sweep around part of the ridge that commanded the enemy's

position. As the other elements of Co. B approached the top, the NVA soldiers hurled hand grenades at the firing and moving U.S. paratroopers. 3rd Platoon, Co. B met light resistance. By this flanking action the enemy position on the hilltop was untenable.

3rd Platoon continued north coming down on the backside and flank of the enemy position. At this point the enemy broke and ran, some escaped down the western slope of the ridge. The battle took two hours from start to finish. 1st Platoon, Co. B had to fire and move under stubborn enemy resistance the whole way. Specialist Four Dennis A. Terchak, a 21 year old Lorain, Ohio native, crawled through elephant grass to within six feet of any enemy machine gun bunker and after waiting for the right moment assaulted the position. Killing the enemy crew he tossed the working machine gun to a few squad members who fired it on its former owners. By then the effects of the 3rd Platoon's flanking action caused the enemy to break and run. Eleven enemy lay dead around the hilltop with numerous blood trails traveling west indicating the enemy had dragged off other dead and wounded. Specialist Four Terschak was awarded the Silver Star for his actions. That phase of the battle was over. (-)

Elsewhere Co. D, 4-503d ran into a buzzsaw. 2nd Platoon, Co. D was the point. They walked into an ambush where a command-detonated series of anti-personnel mines were used against them. In the fight six U.S. paratroopers were killed and 24 wounded. The company spent four hours recovering and evacuating the wounded. The company then withdrew and tactical air strikes were called on the enemy positions. At the medical evacuation pick-up site, the company received five rounds of 60mm mortar fire. In response Co. A, 4-503 was airlifted in to block the enemy's retreat.



ROUGH COUNTRY – Paratroopers of Delta Company, 4/503d Infantry clear suspected enemy hideouts and assess damage done by B52 air strikes in Central Highlands west of Ban Me Thuot. (Photo by PFC Paul Sheehan)

(continued....)



Later, on April 4th, ten enemy dead were seen in the area. Having been thwarted in their attempt to reach the populated areas of Phu My District, it appears that the leadership of the 2nd NVA Regt. Decided to withdraw. The reinforced 2nd Battalion, 503rd In continued to press the enemy to completely withdraw from Nui Cung Chap mountains and by April 10th, the operation was successful.

IV: Outcome of the Operation

173d Sky Soldiers KIA 3/24/71 thru 4/17/71*

Gregory Martin Stone, HHC/2/503 3/24/71
 Albert Allen Vencel, E/3/503 3/26/71
 Kent Douglas Erickson, E/3/503 3/29/71
 Harris Lee Williams, D/3/503 3/31/71
 Billy Ray Parnell, D/2/503 3/31/71
 Michael Shea McLhern, C/2/503 3/31/71
 Joseph Michael Youngerman, B/2/503 4/2/71
 Arthur Best, D/4/503 4/1/71
 Gary Butt, D/4/503 4/3/71
 Robert Jesse Kiser, D/4/503 4/3/71
 Edward Joseph Rog, Jr., D/4/503 4/3/71
 Howard Otto Warbington, D/4/503 4/3/71
 Wayne Roy Borowski, D/4/503 4/3/71
 Larry Dean Suedmyer, III, A/1/503 4/4/71
 Paul Philip Cabe, D/2/503 4/5/71
 Donnie Carl Taylor, B/3/503 4/6/71
 Charles F. Thomas, IV, HHC/3/319 4/8/71
 Martin Terrance McDonald, HHC/2/503 4/10/71
 Greg Neal Henderson, C/2/503 4/10/71
 Jack Lloyd King, E/2/503 4/10/71
 Billy Gene Channel, B/3/503 4/10/71
 James Ronald Thomas, D/2/503 4/17/71

* Source: 173d Airborne Society KIA list

In terms of combat power the enemy had lost the equivalent of a reinforced platoon in dead (50 men). In comparison the 2nd Battalion, 503rd In had eight U.S. paratroopers killed with another eight killed from elements of the 4th Battalion, 503rd In. Whether or not the battle influenced the final outcome of the war is not relevant now. What is relevant is the fact that even late in the war (early 1971) U.S. ground forces sought out, fought, and defeated NVA forces even as the media proclaimed them ineffective for future operations. As Individuals, U.S. soldiers especially in rear areas had many problems in Vietnam



Albert A. Vencel
KIA

as U.S. involvement wound down; however, in this combat unit, they continued to fight to the end.



Kent D. Erickson
KIA

V: The Experiences of the Author and the Conclusion

The battalion was going back to the field after three months of security missions. I was working in the Headquarters' Operation Center as a Night Duty Officer. The night of March 21-22, 1971 while I was on duty I reported the enemy contact of 1st Platoon, Co. D to MAJ Riggs. I walked from the two joined CONEX Containers that made up our Operation Center with the naked fluorescent lights and musty, stale air into the cool night air with glaring lights suspended from poles on the perimeter of our base. I found MAJ Riggs in his hooch curled up on a field cot dosing still in his jungle fatigues. I nudged him and reported the contact. He stirred, got up and went to the Battalion Commander's side of the hooch.

At 0200 that night Captain (CPT) Garris, MAJ Riggs' assistant, came to the Tactical Operations Center and told me he would take over my shift and I was to get some sleep, and in the morning pack a rucksack and report to the helicopter pad to go out to Charlie Company as a replacement Platoon Leader....



Billy Ray Parnell
KIA



Joseph Youngerman
KIA



Arthur Best, KIA

continued....)



....He said they had lost some key people, a platoon leader and a platoon sergeant, earlier and they needed an experienced Lieutenant. I hoped this platoon would be better than the last company I was in. That company had problems with drug abuse and race relations mainly caused by three months of guard duty and the boredom from that kind of mission.

After 3 ½ hours of sleep I went to the C Co. orderly room to talk to Lieutenant (LT) Cross, the Co. Executive Officer. He gave me a Co. roster and a run down on the platoon I would lead. I also drew a rifle, a .45 caliber pistol, ammunition for both, and a case of C-rations. Back at my hooch I wrote a letter to my wife saying that I was going back to the field, that my letters would more infrequent, and that I would be all right. Then I packed my rucksack and went to the helicopter pad.

On the night of March 30-31, 1971 I was on a defensive ambush with three of my men 40 meters from the company command post. I had put out a Claymore mine which was aimed down a well-used steep mountain trail that ran north and south. I rested on an air mattress but did not fall asleep. The wind blew the tree branches and made it hard to pick sounds of any men moving on the trail. To the southeast I could see the strobe lights flashing where Phu Cat Air Base was located. I mused over my situation because I knew Air Force Pilots my age were having drinks in an air-conditioned bar with leather chairs and a bar-length mirror. I knew I had chosen my situation, but the contrasts in the different services' life style in Vietnam made me question my choice.



Gary Butt
KIA



Edward J. Rog, Jr.
KIA



Wayne R. Borowski
KIA



Larry D. Suedmyer, III
KIA

Early in the morning as I was gathering in the Claymore mine and picking up my air mattress and poncho liner I heard the sound of rapid rifle and machine gun fire accented with the muffled crump of grenade or mortar explosions in the distance to the south. I went back to the rest of the platoon where CPT Craig "Boy" Carson, USMA '68, told me that Co. D was being hit. SGT Fisher and his squad had just returned from their night ambush location and the rest of the platoon and Co. Command Post group were stirring from their night's sleep.

CPT Carson called LT Moro and me over to his little command group to issue an operation order. The troops called him "Boy" behind his back because he looked so young. Someone nearby was cooking their breakfast, so there was smoke from the small fire and a jungle mist intermingled with it that gave the setting a surreal appearance. CPT Carson had a jungle pullover sweater under his jungle fatigue jacket probably because of the chilly morning air. He issued a standard five paragraph order with a movement-to-contact mission to move on Co. D's location. My platoon would be in the lead. He did not elaborate on what we would do when contact was made and I did not ask.

I organized my platoon into two squads. Sergeant (SGT) Fisher would be the point squad (it was his squad's turn to be point and he was the best). Staff Sergeant (SSG) Dorne's squad would follow. I decided to take one M-60 machine gun and leave my platoon sergeant with four men and the other machine gun to secure the platoon rucksacks....



Don C. Taylor
KIA



Charles F. Thomas, IV
KIA



Martin T. McDonald
KIA

(continued....)



....Because of the unknown situation with the enemy I did not want to leave the stay-behind group without strong protective capability and strong leadership. I issued a brief order. We move out.



Greg N. Henderson, KIA

into the ridge. I wanted to stop and check out the tunnels, but decided to continue. As "Doc" Trent and I climbed out of the bomb crater, Fishers's squad opened fire. "Doc" Trent dove behind a fallen tree and hugged the ground. I dropped to the ground. I chuckled at "Doc" and asked him why he was crouching so low. He said that he had been wounded before in a friendly fire fight with a South Vietnamese Army unit and did not want to be hit again.



**James R. Thomas
KIA**



Greg, with his buddies.
(Photo posted on web by Janna Hoehn)

I fell in behind Fisher's squad with "Doc" Trent, the platoon medic, and in front of Specialist Four SP4 Novak and Private First Class (PFC) Gebula, the machine gun crew. We traveled south down an old well-used mountain trail in the direction of Co. D. We passed the place where we made contact with one NVA soldier two days earlier. The platoon (18 men total out of 33 authorized) was moving steadily. We were descending from a ridgeline to the flat coast plains. The trail was steep and the forest was thick around it.



**Jack L. King
KIA**



**Billy G. Channel
KIA**

A day before four USAF F-100 jets dropped 500 lb. bombs in the area we were traveling through now. The platoon passed through a bomb crater that had unearthed a couple of bunkers with tunnels extending



USAF F-100 on bombing run over Vietnam. (Web photo)

(continued....)



I moved up the line of prone men to Fisher's location. Fisher was wide-eyed and visibly shaking. He said the NVA went up the finger to the right. I looked around at the terrain. It appeared that a small flat area that extended to the left front. The bushes had been cleared out, but it was still hidden from above the forest. I also could see a bunker and personal equipment strewn around. I called the machine gun team up and placed it under Fisher's control. Everybody moved quickly and with a purpose. I told Fisher to defend to the right facing up the finger in the direction the enemy fled. I called SSG Dorne's squad up to pass through Fisher's position and set up to the left front of the flat area.



Then I radioed CPT Carson and recommended that he maneuver LT Moro's platoon out of the bomb crater and go up the hill to come in behind the enemy. Fisher warned me not to go into the enemy base camp any further. SP4 Ruble approached me to borrow my pistol. He planned to go in the bunker at Fisher's position. Earlier I had tossed two hand grenades in it, but they failed to detonate. I went over to Dorne's position where I saw an AK-47 at the bottom of another bunker. I was concerned about being surprised from this position, so I told Dorne to post two men further down the trail as security. Then expecting the action to be at Fisher's position I returned there.

Within seconds AK-47 fired at close range. A man cried out in pain. The fire was on Dorne's side of the platoon. I called out to Dorne to ask if he had all his men. He called back that two men were missing. They were the two posted as security down the trail. The two men, McLhern and Ward, had drawn fire from another enemy occupied bunker in front of Dorne's squad. McLhern cried out in pain *"Momma, Momma"*. The AK-47 fired again. McLhern cries stopped.

Now, I called for Fisher to join me. I called for the machine gun team to come up. I met Fisher forward of Dorne's squad and saw a grenade fly towards us. I dove behind a tree. Fisher tried to make it to the tree, but not in time. The grenade exploded. Fisher was wounded with scratches on his arm. He said he was OK. I told him to check the area to the right. I would cover him from the tree. I began firing my rifle.

Our machine gun was firing now. As I was changing magazines for my rifle I saw a soldier's boot to my left 15 feet ahead. I decided to try to reach him. I began crawling down the trail to the man. As I did, my entrenching tool got caught on the bushes on the side of the trail on the right. The bushes shook as I freed myself. I was within an arm's reach of the boot when a

AK-47 opened fire on me. Bullets hit the ground next to me. Dirt from them was kicked up in my face. I had a brief vision of my wife and children outside our home in Opelika motioning for me to go back.

At this point I decided to withdraw. I tried to push myself back up the trail, but I did not have the upper body strength to do it. I decided to flip on my back and swing around to crawl out. Just as I did the AK-47 fired again. This time I was hit just above the ankle of my left leg. It felt like white hot poker had been rammed through my and leg and someone with hot tongs was pulling my leg nerve making it hurt all the way to my thigh. I cried out and crawled back to the platoon radio operator. I called for a medic. "Doc" Trent came up. I said I hurt a lot. "Doc" Trent said he didn't have a lot of morphine, but he would give me what he had.

I told SSG Dorne to take charge of the platoon and I radioed CPT Carson the situation. Twenty minutes later CPT Carson and the rest of the company joined my platoon. I was treated then by the Co. Medic and later moved up the ridge to a clearing. A Medical Evacuation Helicopter started to come in, but was fired upon and flew off. I was moved again to another mountain side clearing and at dark evacuated by jungle penetrator to a Medevac helicopter. By 9:00 PM I was in surgery at the 67th Evac Hospital in Qui Nhon.



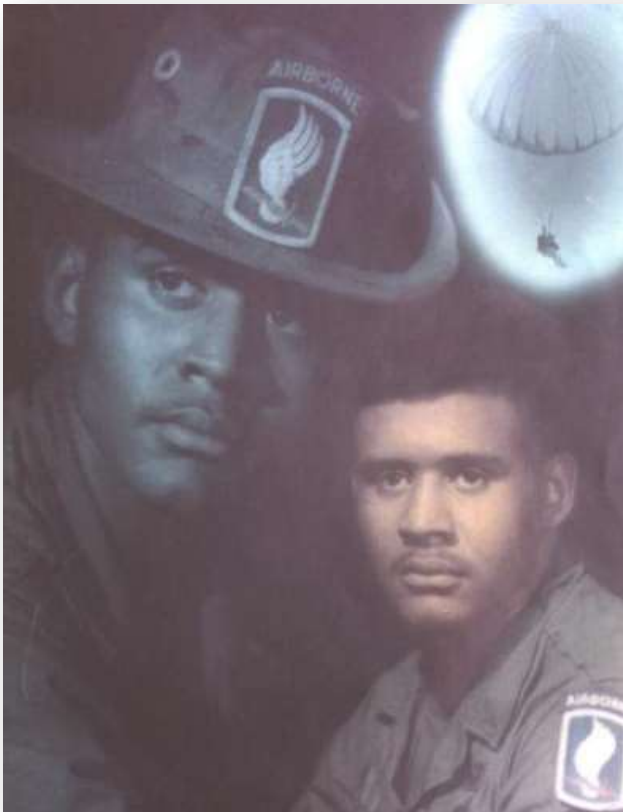
Dust Off in Vietnam. (Web photo)

Ward was rescued by Fisher who stayed in front of the platoon all day. CPT Carson called in Gunships and Artillery, but made no progress against the entrenched enemy. The next day McLhern's body was recovered and the company found an extensive enemy base camp with 30 bunkers in a 300 meter by 500 meter area. Luckily it was unoccupied.

(continued....)



In assessing my motivation and that of my men I think there are three factors. I think that Fisher was motivated by trying to help his buddies. This was seen in the fact that many times he would walk point for his squad. He had been wound on an earlier tour to Vietnam and he had some horrible looking scars on his chest, but he was not more than 22 years-old. He served in Vietnam for his men. Another factor of motivation at this point in the war was the volunteer who sought to be where the action was. McLhern and I both had that type of motivation. McLhern volunteered for Vietnam from a safe, easy assignment as an Army Band musician at Fort Meade, Maryland. I volunteered for Vietnam in order to gain experience in my chose profession. The third factor in the motivation of the combat soldier during this period was patriotic service to the U.S. I think War fought and followed orders because of this factor and because he trusted his leaders.



Michael S. McLhern, KIA

In 1971, the war was in its final phase for American ground participation, the "grunts" who beat the bush never let their country down and fought with valor to the end. The failure in Vietnam was the failure of political will to win the war and the country's negative public opinion.

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[Sent in by Col. Ken Smith, A/D/2/503]

(Photos added, except LT Smith's photo was included)
[Other referenced material annotated with (-) excluded]

From The Virtual Wall



02 Nov 2003

Bob was one of six soldiers killed 4/3/71 by enemy fire and claymore mines. The battle occurred in Military Region II, approximately 30 miles NW of Qui Nhon in the Soui Ca Valley, ten miles inland from the South China Sea. He was in Company D, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry.

He was my first true love. His mom sent me back all of the letters I had sent to Bob in Viet Nam, my last few came back unopened because he didn't live to read them. I have every letter he sent me.

Bob was a talented musician, a wonderful pianist, a gentle soul. He hated the war, but loved the Vietnamese people whom he wrote about.

Bob took me on a walk through the woods in New Canaan, Connecticut, before leaving for Viet Nam. He had me close my eyes. He led me by the hand with his thumb holding my thumb down as he always did when we held hands. As we continued, the path we were on began to "crunch" more and more. When we reached our destination he had me open my eyes. We were in the middle of an abandoned quartz quarry which shone brilliantly in the sunlight. The crunching path had been the mica in the dirt leading to the quarry. Bob said that he would knock a piece of the beautiful quartz off for me to keep, but that the beauty was in the depth of the rock, not in any individual small piece. The beauty of Bob was his depth ... depth of gentleness, depth of affection, depth of loving concern for those he loved.

I have missed him terribly. One never gets over the loss of their first true love or leaves the hopeful dreams of a life together easily behind.

I thank Jehovah God for his mercy and loving kindness. I know I will see Bob again in the resurrection when all the pain and sorrow that today's world brings will be forgotten. Rev 21:1-5. Mom Kiser will be back with her son Bob and his brother Phillip who also lost his life in Vietnam on a third tour, though civilian.

Submitted lovingly and respectfully.
(Unsigned)

Quartz from Connecticut.
Bob's home state.



~ He Was Young & Brave & A Paratrooper ~

Martin "Doc" McDonald, Sky Soldier Extraordinaire

MCDONALD, MARTIN TERRANCE

Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d
Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment,
173rd Airborne Brigade
Date of Action: April 10, 1971



Doc McDonald, Sgt.
15 December 1950 - 10 April 1971

Citation:

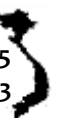
The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Martin Terrance McDonald, Specialist Fourth Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. Specialist Four McDonald distinguished himself by exceptionally



valorous actions on 10 April 1971. On that date Specialist McDonald was serving as a medical aidman for a six man reconnaissance team on an offensive mission in Phu My District, when the team was taken under fire by an estimated platoon-sized enemy force. The enemy-initiated contact included rockets, machinegun and automatic small arms fire. In the initial hail of fire, the team leader was severely wounded, and the remainder of the team was halted a short distance away, leaving him in an open, vulnerable position. Specialist McDonald, although wounded himself during the initial contact, realized the extreme danger his team leader was in and, with total disregard for his personal safety, exposed himself to the intense enemy fire and ran to the aid of his fallen team leader. He then placed himself between the team leader and the enemy and began returning fire. An incoming rocket landed nearby, wounding him for the second time as the force of the explosion knocked him to the ground. He immediately recovered and rolled over on his team leader to protect him from the enemy fire. Realizing that further movement was impossible, Specialist McDonald stood up between the enemy and the severely wounded man and began placing accurate semi-automatic fire upon the enemy positions, until he was mortally wounded by an enemy rocket. Specialist Four McDonald's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Department of the Army, General Orders No. 32
(August 3, 1972)

Home Town: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Army works to open Vietnam War exhibit

August 31, 2015

By David Vergun

CARLISLE BARRACKS, Pa. (Army News Service, Sept. 1, 2015) -- The top of an ordinary-looking plywood box was adorned with lovely bamboo that resembled a cushy seat cover. But looks can be deceiving. Anyone sitting or standing on the box would be in for quite a nasty surprise. It concealed a Viet Cong-style punji pit.

A man standing next to the box flipped a switch that triggered the top of the box to open. Inside were sharp spikes protruding upward.

Chad Reynolds, a combat veteran who served in the Army from 2004 to 2011, designed the box and the contraption after studying enemy punji pits that were dug during the Vietnam War. He spoke to veterans who had observed them.

He said that during the war, Soldiers sometimes stepped on these well-camouflaged trapdoors, which caused them to fall into a punji pit and be impaled on bamboo spikes, which were often coated with poison.

The punji pit and many other items from the Vietnam War are part of the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center's new Vietnam War exhibit: *"Courage, Commitment and Fear: The American Soldier in the Vietnam War,"* set to open Nov. 10.

Forty artifacts, some 80 images and several interactive exhibits will give visitors a realistic and immersive experience of the war, said Kris Hickok, museum technician at the Heritage Center. There will also be a film, *"Our Journey Through War,"* of Vietnam War veterans telling their own personal stories.

The opening date is the day before Veterans Day and the exhibit is also timed to open just before the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Ia Drang. Fought Nov. 14-18, 1965, it was the Army's first major battle of the Vietnam War, he said.

For researchers or historians who want even more in-depth material, the Heritage and Education Center contains some 74,000 artifacts, including artifacts from Vietnam, located in 12,000 square feet of warehouse space.

Additionally, there are hundreds of oral and written histories of Vietnam veterans collected over the years in the archive, Hickok said. Hickok has led the Vietnam exhibit work that has been in progress now for two years.

Jack Giblin, chief of the center's visitor and education services, said that visitors can also see exhibits and

research veterans stories from other time periods throughout Army history, not just Vietnam.

Most of the artifacts in each exhibit are tied to Soldiers' stories and experiences, he said.

VIETNAM EXHIBIT PREVIEW

The center's staff provided a construction tour of the Vietnam exhibit at their fabrication shop, where workers were creating special effects.

Reynolds, the museum's technician, was working on a "spider hole," popup device. He explained that if a visitor pushes a button, a Viet Cong mannequin pops out of a hole. Reynolds said he designed the hydraulic scissor lift that moves the figure up and then back into the hole.

The exhibit could have been activated by a motion sensor, but the idea was rejected because it might trigger a reaction from a veteran with post-traumatic stress, he said, adding that the entire exhibit was reviewed for sensitivities in conjunction with Vietnam veterans.

Another interactive item that will be displayed is a U.S. bunker bomb with liquid inside, which visitors can pick up and hold. Reynolds added that if it gets dropped, it won't explode.

Nearby were other items, including jungle shrubbery, a bamboo Viet Cong prisoner transport cage and items that will go with a tunnel-rat display.

Some of the items that will be included in the exhibit are located in the center's conservation facility. Unlike the exhibit items in the fabrication shop, the items here are artifacts, Giblin said.

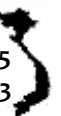
These were items donated by Soldiers. The conservators clean and prepare the items for display and, when necessary, restore the items to museum quality, Giblin said.

Hickok showed some of the items in the conservation lab that will be in the Vietnam exhibit.

A souvenir jacket owned by Spc. Joe Monroe, who served in I Corps in Da Nang from 1968 to 1969, is one such item. Hickok said Monroe, an Army truck driver, made it safely back to the United States and donated the jacket to the center.

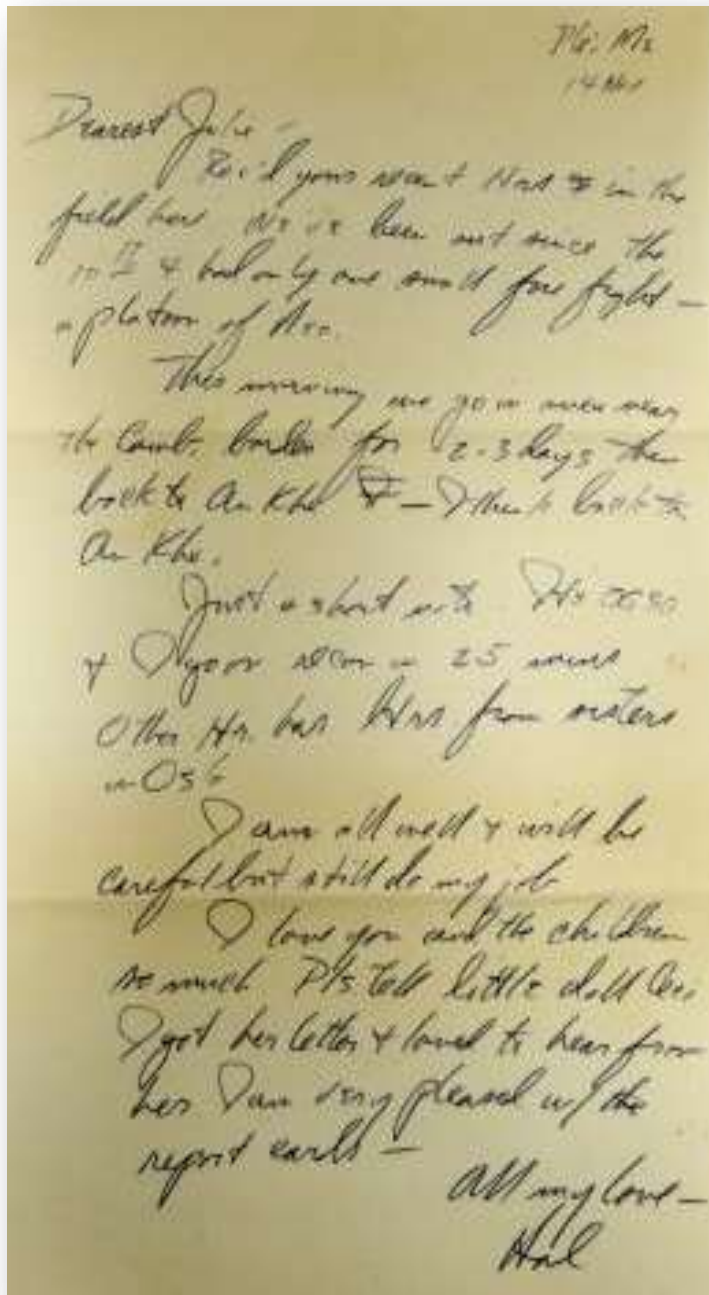


(continued....)



There was a helmet cover with graffiti, including a peace sign. The peace sign seemed to be a popular symbol during the second half of the conflict, Hickok said.

Lt. Col. Hal Moore wrote a letter to his wife four hours before he went into battle at Ia Drang, Hickok said, showing the letter and the air mail envelop it came in. Moore commanded 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment during the battle.



There were also enemy artifacts including a Viet Cong's hand-drawn map of Newport Bridge near Saigon. Hickok said the map was used by the enemy during the 1968 Tet Offensive. The attack on the bridge was unsuccessful and a U.S. Soldier found it on a captured enemy combatant.

Another artifact was an inert Molotov cocktail. Hickok said the enemy would use any weapon they could get their hands on or make. Since the Molotov cocktail is an artifact, it will be in a case display.

An interesting item was a bicycle wheel from a bicycle a North Vietnamese soldier used to transport supplies on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It's more robust than a modern bicycle, he said, since the tire is made of solid rubber and can't go flat.



ALL SOLDIERS CAN TELL THEIR STORIES

Giblin said all Army Vietnam veterans - as well as Army veterans from other wars or even noncombat vets - are encouraged to tell their own stories and have them become a permanent record at the U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center, where they will be invaluable to researchers, historians, genealogists and others.

The center began collecting surveys from veterans during the Spanish-American War in 1898 and has been doing so ever since. The problem, Giblin said, is that the surveys were so many pages long, 15 to 20 pages, that many veterans were discouraged from filling them out.

Because "collecting Soldier history is important to us, we decided to shorten the survey to eight pages," he said. That was about a year ago. It's now available as a pdf download on the center's website.

"Every Soldier is important to the USAHEC [U.S. Army Heritage & Education Center]. Even a clerk who never left the states has important information," Giblin said. "Someday, a researcher may want to look back to see how the duties and responsibilities of a clerk has changed over time."

Besides researchers, Hollywood filmmakers are also interested in the center's archives, he said. Filmmakers who have visited the Heritage Center included those working on "We Were Soldiers," "Saving Private Ryan," "Band of Brothers," and Ken Burns' "The Civil War" TV series.

The center plans to follow up on many of the surveys by contacting the veterans and getting oral histories from them. Volunteers in the Veteran Ambassador Program will do this follow-up work, said Giblin, adding that more veteran ambassadors are needed should anyone be interested. Volunteers can be veterans located anywhere in the world.

The Veteran Ambassador Program started just a year ago, he said.

Source: http://www.army.mil/article/154709/Army_works_to_open_Vietnam_War_exhibit/



“E Troop” Trooper Looking For Buddies And Lost Months

Dave Gardner served with E/2/503 Recon from June '70 - September '71, he believes, during his second tour of duty in Vietnam. Dave is hoping to fill-in some memory gaps from the time he was with the unit.

On his first tour Dave served with the 17th Cav, including running fire support of the 2/503d during The Battle of the Slopes. *“I was with 17th Cav. They took me and another guy and we took our 106s off our jeeps, rolled them on a Chinook, and they put us on the side of a hill where we fired in support of the 2nd that day. I remember firing beehive rounds at 100 meters all day long. I had 2 loaders and I was slinging that hot shell out of the breach all day. I had a big burn on my hand because it burned thru my glove. That was in '67.”*

“Then I was in the 2nd Bat in '70-'71 in E Company. I think I was in the Recon Platoon. Can you help me find those lost months? Thanks a lot.”

**Dave Gardner
E/2/503**

Note: Any trooper who remembers Dave and/or can help fill-in memories of his time with Echo Company, please contact him by email: sky22074@yahoo.com

Bill introduced to allow exchange, commissary privileges for veterans

National Commander Moses A. McIntosh Jr. called upon DAV members to support H.R. 1292, a bill that would authorize service-connected veterans receiving disability compensation and their dependents access to Department of Defense exchange and commissary facilities. Their access to these facilities would be on the same basis as if they were military members or dependents entitled to retired or retainer pay.

This bill is in alignment with longstanding DAV Resolution 095, which calls for legislation to extend commissary and exchange privileges to service-connected disabled veterans and their dependents.

Source: DAV Magazine, November/December 2015



T-5 Parachute from WWII



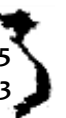
Purportedly used by a US Airborne Paratrooper from 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment in action during WWII, 1944.

[Sent in by Paul Whitman, 503rd PRCT Heritage Bn Website]



Chutes carrying their precious cargo, men of the 503rd PRCT as they make combat jump in the Markham Valley under the cover of a smoke screen on 5 September 1943.

(Photo from web:- via Eunice Doucette)



Nails in the Fence



Aidan Lewis Smith, ready to liftoff in his Huey

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all.

He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, *'You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. But it won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound will still be there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one. Remember that friends are very rare jewels, indeed. They make you smile and encourage you to succeed. They lend an ear, they share words of praise and they always want to open their hearts to us.'*

[Sent in by Ray Chapman, RAA]
(Photo added)

WETSU MF'ER!



Army APC in Vietnam. (web photo)

The first reference I've seen to "WETSU" since used by troopers of the 2/503d at Camp Zinn.

WETSU? *We Eat This Shit Up!* Ed

Skydiving's History Now Online

Pat Works, (714) 336-7860
pat@works-words.com

A website devoted to sport parachuting's colorful history offers a window into the evolution of man's interest in freefall and parachutes. The "Encyclopedia of All Things Skydiving" (<http://Skydiving-Encyclopedia.com>) is a new online presence for a planned museum exploring the history of skydiving around the world. Its WIKI format invites registered visitors to contribute their personal experiences in skydiving, with an eye toward building a comprehensive resource for future generations of freefallers.

Website content includes early accounts of people jumping from buildings, bridges, balloons and finally, aircraft using some sort of decelerator. A wide range of topics trace the history of parachuting equipment, the people who designed it, and how it has been used over time – by thrill-seeking barnstormers who were the face of early aviation for many, for commercial cargo delivery, for aerospace and military purposes in both war and peacetime, and by today's skydivers.

Sent in by:

**Dan Poynter, Chairman of the Skydiving Museum's
Collections and Curating Committee**



173rd remembers fallen on 50th anniversary

March 29, 2013

By Nathan Deen

nathan.deen@thebayonet.com



Missy Vimoto reads the name of her son, Timothy, a fallen member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The names of each Sky Soldier killed in Afghanistan or Iraq were read Saturday during the brigade's 50th anniversary celebration.

FORT BENNING, Ga. (March 27, 2013) -- On the night before he read the name of his deceased son at the 50th anniversary celebration of the 173rd Airborne Brigade at the National Infantry Museum, Martin Madden went to the brigade's memorial alone with his guitar, and played for several hours.

It was the night before the birthday of his son, Russell, who would have been 32, had he not been killed in Afghanistan on June 23, 2010.

Madden taught his son how to play.

He dwelt on memories of Russell, including the times they played guitar together and the last time he spoke to him on Father's Day, three days before he died. Russell also left behind a wife and son, Madden said.

"I sure do miss him," he said.

"Sometimes communication wasn't always as strong as it could have been (between us). But we could always play music together."

Madden drove more than 10 hours to Fort Benning from Dayton, Ky., a small town of about 5,000 people

next to the Ohio River, in his son's red Ford pick-up truck, which Madden bought him for his 12th birthday.

"My wife wasn't strong enough to make it," he said. "I wouldn't have missed it. These were his battle buddies."

Madden was one of dozens of Family members on Saturday who read the names of the 96 Sky Soldiers killed in Afghanistan or Iraq at the 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial.

"We're overcome with pride and grief in equal amounts," Madden said. "I'm proud my son served with dignity and honor and that he was a go-to guy. But you're just overcome by this void that you have. For the first year, we tried to throw stuff into that hole, thinking it would fill up, but it didn't."

The event was a part of a day-long celebration, which included a ceremonial reading of the names of each fallen Sky Soldier of the Vietnam era, held at the National Infantry Museum Stadium and attended by about 600 people, said retired Col. Kenneth Smith, president of the brigade's memorial foundation.

The name readings for the Vietnam War took over three hours, Smith said.

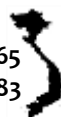
"That was a tough ceremony," he said. "When we watch the parents read the names of their children, it's particularly moving, knowing how difficult this is for them. But they're the reason we built this (memorial)."

Smith commanded two companies during Vietnam, he said, one which he took over just after it lost 76 members in June 1967.

A lot of memories filled Smith's mind throughout the day as well, he said. He remembered one day he was on his way to promote a good friend to the rank of major when he learned a sniper had just killed him. He remembered Charles Watters, his chaplain, who was killed by an air-to-ground bomb in 1967. Watters' name was one of the ones Smith read Saturday.

"This monument is also for those of us who came back because it helps us deal with what we've experienced," Smith said.

(continued....)



Aside from the reading of the names ceremonies, retired Cpl. Gavin Campbell, who served with the 173rd for two years and had one deployment to Iraq, coordinated a 10th anniversary dinner of the brigade's involvement with Operation Iraqi Freedom. During his eight-year Army career, the two he spent as a Sky Soldier defined him, Campbell said.

"The tie to the 173rd is a unique one, unlike anything in the Army," he said. "When you have guys go into Special Forces, and still wear their 173rd patch, that tells you something. When guys swap out their Ranger tab for their 173rd, that tells you something."

"We lost some really good guys. Because of the tenacity of the brigade ... the guys we did lose were felt that much more. But that made us fight so much harder so the next guy wouldn't go down."

The 173rd was activated on March 26, 1963, and deployed to South Vietnam on May 5, 1965. During the six-year span of its deployment, the brigade lost 1,646 Sky Soldiers. The 173rd was deactivated at Fort Campbell, Ky., on Jan. 14, 1972, and reactivated on June 12, 2000. Today the brigade is stationed in Vicenza, Italy, and returned from a nine-month deployment in February in which 14 Sky Soldiers were lost.

Madden said it was important for Family members, or the ones closest to the fallen Sky Soldier, to be the ones reading their names.

"If there is something going on to honor him, someone else shouldn't read (my son's) name," he said.



Monument:

The 173rd was activated on March 26, 1963, and deployed to South Vietnam on May 5, 1965. During the six-year span of its deployment, the brigade lost 1,646 Sky Soldiers. The 173rd was deactivated at Fort Benning, KY., on Jan. 14, 1972, and reactivated on June 12, 2000.

Source:

www.army.mil/article/99911/173rd_remembers_fallen_on_50th_anniversary/

In Memory of Sky Soldier

Charles Harrell Graham

April 16, 1947 - May 22, 2015

Obituary



Charles Harrell Graham, age 68 of Oviedo, FL passed away Friday, May 22, 2015. He was born April 16, 1947 in Red Bay, Alabama. He grew up in Zion, Illinois. Charles retired from the Federal Government after a combined service of 38 years with the Army and Navy. His Military career began in February 1966. He served with the 173rd Airborne, 5th Special Forces in Vietnam and was requested by name for assignment to the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, not once but twice. His Civil Service career began in December 1987 at West Point and later transferred to the Naval Air Warfare Center Training System Division. He retired as a Simulator Operation and Maintenance Analyst. He is survived by his wife Debbie; Children: Gary, Eniko, Michael, AnnMarie and Andrew; Grandchildren: Benjamin Jr., Matthew, Erick, Brooklyn and Landon; Mother: Evelyn Ermis; Siblings: Carolyn and Lynda.



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 46 of 83



~ I have seen the rain ~

"It was really special to be able to record a song with my Dad. The first song I ever learned. We hope you like it and dedicate it to all the Vets out there." Pink



Pink performing with her VN vet dad, Jim Moore, who wrote this song in Vietnam.

I have seen the rain
I have felt the pain
I don't know where I'll be tomorrow
I don't know where I'm going
I don't even know where I've been
But I know I'd like to see them again

Spend my days just searching
Spend my nights in dreams
Stop looking over my shoulder, baby,
I stopped wondering what it means.
Drop out, burn out, soldier whore
Oh they said I should've been more
Probably so if I hadn't been in that crazy damn
Vietnam war

I have seen the rain
I survived the pain
Oh I've been home 30 years or so
And I'm just stepping off of the plane

Spend my days in searching
Spend my nights in dreams
Stop looking over my shoulder, baby,
I stopped wondering what it means.
Drop out, burn out, soldier whore
Oh they said I should've been more
Probably so if I hadn't been in that crazy damn
Vietnam war

We have seen the rain together
We survived the pain forever
Oh it's good to be home again
It's good to be with my friends
Oh it's good to be home again
It's good to feel the rain

View music video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJrftgq6KKw>

[Sent in by John "Dutch" Holland, B/1/503]



Bronze Star Speaks Loudly For Quiet Boy In Vietnam

By Dale Enoch

Pfc. Danny C. Aden is "sort of a quiet little boy" according to his mother, but he was a determined and dedicated paratrooper that day last September when he tried to rescue a wounded comrade during a fierce encounter with the Viet Cong near An Khe in South Vietnam.

Mrs. Ruth L. Roberts of 895 Winchester received a letter from her son yesterday which included a citation awarding the Bronze Star Medal with the "V" for valor to Private Aden for his heroism.

The 19-year-old Army private was on patrol last Sept. 18 (1965) when his unit was cut off from the main body. Receiving instruction to move north and rejoin the main force, Private Aden was in the first elements to move out of the defensive perimeter under heavy fire from the Viet Cong.

"The non-commissioned officer leading the unit was wounded by enemy machinegun fire," the citation said. "Without regard for his personal safety, Private Aden crawled forward to assist the severely wounded man."

"He then began to drag the wounded man (who later died) to safety but in the process was wounded himself (in the thigh). At this time, Private Aden fired on the Viet Cong machinegun position, dispersed the enemy and was later rescued by helicopter."

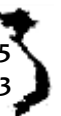
Eighteen days later, Private Aden was released from Qui Nhon military hospital and soon after rejoined Charlie Company, Second Battalion, 503rd Regiment.

Private Aden earlier had sent a Purple Heart awarded him for the encounter to his wife, Mrs. Ann Aden of 4643 Honeysuckle. They have a 1-year-old son, Danny Jr.

Private Aden, who says little about the war and even less of his heroism in letters home, is now a part of a 56-day Allied operation in the northern part of South Vietnam. His tour of duty in Vietnam is scheduled to end in July. He is scheduled for discharge in April 1967.

His brother, Pfc. Jimmy H. Aden, 21, is with the 101st in Vietnam after having transferred from the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Source: The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, March 18, 1966



Excerpt....

Vietnam vet skydives on 50-year anniversary of Army Airborne tour

By Earl Corp, *Meadville Tribune*

Harvey jumps



Robert Harvey (bottom) of Saegertown and his skydiving partner free fall before opening the parachute while skydiving at the Grove City Airport. (contributed photo)

What does a Vietnam veteran who has had brain tumors, cancer and five knee surgeries do to celebrate life? He goes skydiving.

Saegertown's Robert Harvey recently went to the Grove City Airport and did a tandem jump with Skydive Pennsylvania on the 50-year anniversary of when he became an Army paratrooper.

"I had a lot of people tell me I was crazy — don't go," Harvey said with a laugh. *"It was a piece of cake."*

Harvey said he thought of making the jump when he watched former President George H.W. Bush jump for his 75th birthday. Once he saw a woman on television who was older than 80 make a parachute jump, Harvey's mind was made up. *"I didn't do this for publicity,"* Harvey said. *"I did this for myself and my family."*

A tandem jump is performed with skydiving students strapped to a skydiving instructor. In Harvey's case his instructor was Craig Cushing of Skydive Pennsylvania. *"I love when veterans come out and there's something I can do to show my appreciation,"* Cushings said.

This wasn't the first time Harvey had exited a plane with a parachute. He graduated from Army Airborne School at Fort Benning, Ga., as a paratrooper in May 1965. The jump in Grove City was a lot different than what Harvey had done in the Army. Army jumps are solo, from approximately 1,200 feet and rely on a static

line to open the parachute. The tandem jump in Grove City was at 13,500 feet.

Another difference was tandem jumping students are instructed to grasp their harnesses with their hands. Meanwhile, paratroopers are taught to *"stand in the door"* and grasp both sides of the door. Harvey said he tried to stand in the door and was told to put his hands back on his harness.

The airplane door is pretty narrow and if the student's arms aren't tucked, there is an injury risk as they go out the door, Cushings said. For some it's a knee-jerk reaction to let go of the harness, but in Harvey's case it was his Army training taking over, Cushings said.

At 67 years old, Harvey has a hard time walking and uses a cane. On the day of the jump, the plane rolled into the grass near the hangar so he could climb aboard easily. There were no concerns from any of the SkyDive Pennsylvania staff about Harvey's mobility.

"As long as they're healthy, ambulatory and sign their waiver, they're good to go," said Cecil Smith, owner of Skydive Pennsylvania.

Harvey said his family was very supportive of him skydiving. His oldest son and daughter were there to see him jump.

"They told me if you want to do it Dad, do it," Harvey said. Harvey was originally inspired to go to Army Airborne School by an uncle who jumped with the 82nd Airborne on D-Day.

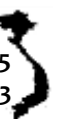
Since Harvey was only 17 years old when he wanted to join the Army, his mother had to sign his enlistment papers. She wouldn't sign for him to go to Airborne School. Harvey's recruiter told his mother he couldn't go Airborne School because he wore glasses, so she signed for him to enlist.

During basic training Harvey asked an Airborne recruiter if it was true that he couldn't join because he wore glasses. The man had him sign a paper and Harvey was on his way to parachute school. Within a week of graduating Airborne School, he was serving with the **173rd Airborne Brigade** in Vietnam.

While in Vietnam, Harvey made two parachute jumps — out of a C-47 military transport plane and — from a Ch-46 Chinook helicopter. Harvey said neither jump was classified as a combat jump; he did them just for fun. In November 1965, Harvey transferred to the first brigade of the 101st Airborne Division.

See complete story at:

http://www.meadvilletribune.com/news/local_news/vietnam-vet-skydives-on--year-anniversary-of-army-airborne/article_cf6fe4ae-8f16-11e5-941c-cff5e43038af.html





Historic opportunity to cure veterans living with hepatitis

By Tom Berger, Ph.D.

November 25, 2015



With the passing of another Veterans Day, millions of Americans paused to honor the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform to keep our country safe, secure, and free.

Yet for many veterans, the greatest sacrifice of their service is a deadly disease that continues to plague them here at home – even though cures are available.

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne viral disease that is more deadly – and ten times more infectious – than HIV/AIDS. Largely due to battlefield blood exposure, emergency transfusions, and mandatory vaccinations in the era before hepatitis C testing became common, the hepatitis C infection rate among veterans is nearly double the national average, with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimating more than 180,000 veterans to be living with the virus.

Fortunately, new treatments are now available that can cure the virus in most cases. In contrast to the painful and far-less effective interferon injections that characterized older hepatitis C treatment regimens, new medications offer cure rates of more than 95 percent in as few as 12 weeks.

While it is easy and even empowering for us to honor our former service members on Veterans Day, it is equally important to continue to deliver effective care. A critical first step in doing so is ensuring that Congress provides the VA with the resources it needs to cure this potentially deadly disease.

Connecting veterans who are suffering from hepatitis C with a cure will not only lead to better patient outcomes, it will drive down expenditures for the VA and taxpayers in the long-term. A recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that innovative treatments are cost effective in 83 percent of new patients and 81 percent of previously treated patients. Meanwhile, *Clinical Infectious Diseases* published

another study which suggests that immediately treating hepatitis C patients with new treatments is cost effective, even for those with only moderate disease progression.

Recognizing this momentous opportunity, the appropriations committees in both the House and Senate recently approved budgetary proposals allocating greater funds to connect veterans with life-saving hepatitis C treatments. Despite this laudable progress, more must be done to ensure that effective treatment is available to both infected veterans who have already been identified and the thousands more who will be diagnosed over the next year.

With the new two-year budget deal reached between Congress and the president, an additional \$25 billion is now available for increased spending on domestic agencies and programs.

The best way for Congress to express its gratitude to our former service members this Veterans Day is to direct a portion of these funds to the VA so that it can prioritize curing a disease which has plagued the veteran community for decades. My colleagues and I at *Vietnam Veterans of America* have spent years raising awareness of the disproportionate impact of this devastating virus on veterans, and we are fully committed to ensuring that Congress and the VA honor and support our fellow combat veterans by taking the necessary steps to quickly eradicate this virus.

By allocating adequate funds to the VA so that all veterans have access to the safest and most effective hepatitis C treatments, Congress will greatly improve our veterans' chances at defeating the greatest menace facing them at home.

Tom Berger, a Vietnam War combat veteran, is the executive director of the Veterans Health Council at Vietnam Veterans of America.

Source: <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/healthcare/261236-historic-opportunity-to-cure-veterans-living-with-hepatitis>

(Web photo added)

[Sent in by Dick Southern & CCVVA Chapter 982]



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 49 of 83



Sky Soldiers conduct historic Airborne operation during Exercise Iron Sword 1

November 18, 2015

By Staff Sgt. Opal Vaughn, www.Army.mil



U.S. Army paratroopers, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, along with Lithuanian Land Forces soldiers from the King Mindaugas Hussar Battalion, pose for a picture during Exercise Iron Sword at Pabrade Training Area, Nov. 14, 2015.

PABRADE TRAINING AREA, Lithuania (Nov. 14, 2015) –

U.S. Army paratroopers, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, along with Lithuanian Land Forces soldiers, from the King Mindaugas Hussar Battalion, executed airborne operations during Exercise Iron Sword here, Nov. 14.

Iron Sword kicked off Nov. 8, and continues through Nov. 20, involving more than 2,000 Soldiers, from Canada, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, United Kingdom and the United States. The exercise marks the first time U.S. paratroopers have jumped from a Lithuanian Alenia C-27J Spartan fixed wing aircraft, which is also one of three of the Lithuanian president's aircrafts.

Platoon S, 1-503rd Infantry (A), alongside the Lithuanian Recce Platoon attachments, conducted static airborne training at Siauliai Airfield, before loading the C-27J. Both elements conducted a night airborne insertion to Pabrade drop zone. Once assembled on the drop zone, they initiated a movement to their battle positions, where they demonstrated their proficiency in reconnaissance.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade, based in Vicenza, Italy, is the U.S. Army Contingency Response Force in Europe, capable of projecting forces to conduct the full range of military operations across the U.S. European, Central and Africa Commands' areas of responsibility. #####



Flame fougasse (Foo Gas)

A flame fougasse (sometimes contracted to fougasse and may be spelled foo gas) is a type of mine or improvised explosive device which uses an explosive charge to project burning liquid onto a target. The flame fougasse was developed by the Petroleum Warfare Department in Britain as an anti-tank weapon during the invasion crisis of 1940. During that period, about 50,000 flame fougasse barrels were deployed in some 7,000 batteries, mostly in southern England and a little later at 2,000 sites in Scotland. Although never used in combat in Britain, the design saw action later in Greece.

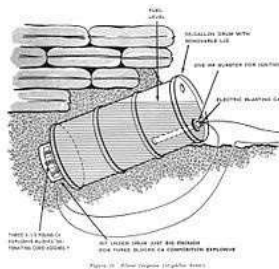
Later in World War II, Germany and Russia developed flame throwing mines that worked on a somewhat different principle. After World War II, flame fougasses similar to the original British design have been used in several conflicts including the Korean and Vietnam Wars where it was improvised from easily available parts. The flame fougasse remains in army field manuals as a battlefield expedient to the present day.



A demonstration of 'Fougasse', somewhere in Britain. A car is surrounded in flames and a huge cloud of smoke. c 1940.

Foo Gas

This is a pipe, or more commonly, a 55-gallon drum of electrically detonated napalm. Its detonation causes a brief sheet of fire (similar to a flamethrower) to shoot upward. Foo gas was developed for perimeter defense during Vietnam, and was used extensively by US Special Forces during that war. Foo gas comes in modified 55-gallon drums, which can be interlocked or chained. (Web source)



Job opportunities in California for Veterans...

Vietnam Veterans of America, CA State Council

We have been contacted by Flyers Energy Inc. in Auburn CA. Flyers needs fuel tanker drivers for their California operations. They also want to help veterans returning to the workforce by training veterans with driving experience from the military or civilian commercial driving experience. Flyers will pay for them to get their CA commercial license via an approved school. Flyers offers benefits and three of the company's four partners are veterans.



(web photo)

Could you please put the word out to the veterans community?

Any qualified veterans that are interested should contact:

Kyleene Headrick

Transportation Onboarding Specialist

Flyers Energy. 530-885-0401, ext 2237

kyleeneh@4flyers.com

(Sent in by CCVVA Chapter 982)

VA Launches Hepatitis C Advanced Liver Disease Disparities Dashboard

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is stepping up its efforts to accelerate treatment for Veterans with hepatitis C and advanced liver disease (ALD) through the creation of a Hepatitis C–ALD dashboard. The dashboard works by using a set of criteria, including age, gender, geography, service era along with and race and ethnicity, to distinguish Veteran groups at highest risk for ALD as a result of hepatitis C.

“The dashboard is a powerful data tool to help VA identify Veteran groups disproportionately affected by Advanced Liver Disease and to ensure they receive the appropriate health care,” said Dr. David Shulkin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. *“VA will provide data directly to facilities for any of the vulnerable groups identified by the dashboard and support outreach efforts to Veteran populations disparately impacted and not currently served by VA health care. This is an important step in assuring all Veterans with ALD receive timely, appropriate care.”*

For more information on the dashboard, visit:

<http://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/news/video/heap.cfm>



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 51 of 83

Singing paratroopers...

During Jump School in '65 while trotting around the Benning's ground, we'd sing a similar novelty song to that below about another lass, but this one with a yellow ribbon in her hair. I don't know but I've been told, we'd also sing about Alaskan girls – doubt they still sing such cold songs in today's army. Ed

American Paratrooper Song From WWII

On her leg she wears a silken garter,
She wears it in the springtime
In the merry month of May.
And if you ask her why the hell she wears it,
She wears it for a paratrooper, far, far away.

Chorus:

Far away, far away,
She wears it for a paratrooper,
Far, far away.

Around the park she wheels a perambulator,
She wheels it in the springtime
In the merry month of May.
And if you ask her why the hell she wheels it,
She wheels it for a paratrooper, far, far away.

Chorus

Behind the door her father keeps a shotgun,
He keeps it in the springtime
In the merry month of May.
And if you ask him why the hell he keeps it,
He keeps it for a paratrooper, far, far away.

Chorus

The paratrooper went to join his unit,
He joined it in the springtime,
In the merry month of May.
And if you ask him why the hell he joined it,
He joined it to be very, very far far away.

Chorus

In her hand she holds a bunch of daisies,
She holds it in the springtime,
In the merry month of May.
And if you ask her why the hell she holds it,
She holds it for her paratrooper, six feet down.

Chorus:

Six feet down, six feet down,
She holds it for her paratrooper,
Six feet down.



A perambulator. Ergo, the paratrooper was *far far away*.

Everything's Bigger in Australia



Wanna come and meet this big fella??? U.S. has gators, but we have CROCS. And some are bigger than this dude!!

A.B. Garcia
HHC/2/503



Oh yeah, Aussino. But we have *Swampy the Gator*!

Aussino: Nickname given A.B. in '01 on a return visit by Sky Soldiers to Vietnam, as he is an Aussie-American-Chicano. Ed

For anyone wishing to lodge a complaint....



For Dr. Fred Lough (Sky Soldier), the seeds of service to country were sown when he was very young.



Dr. Frederick Lough, right, a cardiothoracic surgeon, takes the Oath of Office during a ceremony at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD on 9/11/2013. Col. Karrie Fristoe, Commander of the Army Medical Recruiting Brigade, based in Fort Knox, officiates.

FORT KNOX, KY, Sept. 28, 2013

He grew up in a family with a history of service. His father, Brig. Gen. Frederick C. Lough, was a U.S. Military Academy graduate, who served during World War II, helping battle the Axis powers in several North African and European campaigns, who went on to complete a 40-year career with the Army.

"His experiences in war, and the caliber of people we associated with when I was growing up impressed me," he said. *"They were just the best kind of people, who served their country, and I decided to follow them."*

He applied to and was accepted at West Point. Upon graduation, he served in the Army Corps of Engineers, and attended both Airborne and Ranger training. In 1971, he entered The George Washington University School of Medicine. He did residencies in both general surgery and thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. After gaining several valuable years of experience as an Army surgeon, Lough left the service, and took employment in the civilian world.

His years of Army training and clinical experience paid great dividends. He rose through the ranks of several hospital surgical staffs, rising to the position of Director of Cardiac Surgery at his alma mater, The George Washington University Hospital.

"I accumulated a lot of experience in those intervening years," he said. *"I participated in no less than 15,000 open heart procedures during that time."* But after 9/11/01, and with America becoming involved in two wars, the call to service began to tug at him. So, over the process of a few years, he began working with Army medical recruiters, and, in 2007, signed up to serve in the Army Reserve.

He didn't have to wait long for a chance to go into harms' way.

Lough deployed as deputy commander of a NATO hospital at Camp Arena in western Afghanistan in 2010 in support of the 4th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division. He was exposed to a truly international cavalcade upon arrival: the base was overseen by the Italian Army, the medical facility was under the command of the Spanish, and the surgical team was Bulgarian.

"Our assignment was to establish U.S. Army medical style care in a facility run by our coalition partners," he said. *"It was a challenge at times overcoming the various language and cultural barriers, but we came together as a unit and succeeded in our mission to provide quality care in a demanding environment. The practice of medicine is universal, and we were able to treat numerous Spanish, German, and American servicemen and women, as well as Afghan nationals. If you came into our facility alive, no matter the injury, you left alive,"* he said.

His deployment to eastern Afghanistan in the summer of 2012 was in stark contrast to his deployment in 2010.

"It was a very violent experience," Lough said. *"The base was attacked. We had casualties and some deaths. The Forward Surgical Team (FST) facility was destroyed, but we were able to quickly rebuild it, and continue our support of combat operations,"* he said. *"Later, our entire unit was awarded the Combat Action Badge,"* which is unusual for medical support units. *"I was very proud of the work done by the 628th Forward Surgical Team, and our surgeons and staff,"* Lough said.

Upon his return to the United States and The George Washington University Medical Center, Lough was in a meeting with Col. Leon Moores, a senior staff member of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda, Md.

"He asked me what my plans were, and I told him my dream job would be to go back on active duty and teach at USUHS, and he said, 'Well, let's make that happen,'" Lough said.

(continued....)



"So, I began to work with the Army medical recruiters, and here I am today, coming back full time to serve in the Army I love," he said.

In his new position on the Department of Surgery faculty at USUHS, Lough hopes to convey to military medical students some of the practical wisdom and experience he has accumulated.

"We want to preserve the medical lessons learned in both Iraq and Afghanistan, convey those lessons to the students at USUHS, and prepare them for service in both peacetime and wartime," he said. "I'd also like to share principles of leadership that I have learned as both an Army officer and physician and surgeon," Lough said.

"Dr. Lough is a great addition to the Army and to the military medicine team," said Col. Karrie Fristoe, commander of the Army's Medical Recruiting Brigade, based in Fort Knox. "He has many years of training and experience in both civilian and military settings which make him a great asset and resource for students, faculty and other military medical professionals he comes in contact with," she said. Col. Fristoe served as the officiating officer during Lough's swearing in ceremony on the USUHS campus on 9/11/2013.

"Being a military physician is a great way to serve, not only our wonderful Soldiers, but our fellow man, including civilians during humanitarian missions such as in Haiti. You can experience high adventure, and positively affect the outcome of many lives at the same time," Lough said. "Where else can you have those kind of experiences?" he asked.

"A civilian physician colleague once asked me if I had any regrets about serving in the Army, traveling around, etc. I thought about it for a moment, and then responded that I did have one regret," Lough said. "He leaned forward and asked, 'And what was that?' I said 'I can only do it once!'"

For more information on Army medical careers, visit www.healthcare.goarmy.com/v490 or call 1-888-710-ARMY.

Source:

**This release was written by Randy Lescault,
Advertising and Public Affairs, U.S. Army Medical
Recruiting Brigade**

Note:



In 2012 Dr. Lough served as the Senior Trauma Surgeon, 628th and 624th Forward Surgical Teams Forward Operating Base Shank, in Afghanistan with the 173d Airborne Brigade.

Thanks:

Thanks to Col. John Erskine, 1/5/6/SF, for bringing Dr. Lough's service with the 173d to our attention.

In Memory of Sky Soldier

Santos Silva Moreno

December 10, 1949 - October 25, 2015

Obituary



Santos S. Moreno passed away in his home in Visalia, CA at the age of 65. Santos was born on December 10, 1949 in Edinburg, Texas to Florencio and Gelacia (Silva) Moreno. Santos was raised in both the United States and Mexico, as his family moved frequently for work. He completed his GED in 1970, when he was honorably discharged from the United States Army. Santos served his country from 1969 – 1971 in Bravo Company, 3rd of the 503rd, 173rd Airborne Brigade, he was an E5 sergeant. He received several awards for his service in the military including numerous commendation medals and a purple heart for wounds received in action.

~ Rest Easy Amigo ~



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / January 2016 – Issue 65

Page 54 of 83



CHIEU HOI BROTHERS

By Sp/4 Mike Higgins

Information Office, 173d Abn Bde (Sep)



BIEN HOA, RVN (173d Abn IO) – *“My friends! This is Nguyn Van Chanh,”* the voice blared from the speakers on the jeep. *“You must give up and join the government cause. You will be treated well like my brother, Dang, and I.”*

The jeep was moving down one of the dusty roads that wind through the Iron Triangle. The two brothers were sitting in the back of the jeep talking through loudspeakers to their VC friends hiding from the Americans, just like the two men had been a few days before.

Chanh and Dang turned themselves in to different units of the 173d Airborne Brigade at almost the same time, but 2,500 meters apart. They did not know of each other becoming a Chieu Hoi until they met at the Brigade base area hours later.

Impressed by the treatment they received from the Americans, the brothers voluntarily gave the 172nd Military Intelligence Detachment all the information they had on Viet Cong strength, supplies and positions. To further show their gratitude they pose for a picture to be used on a psychological operations pamphlet and Chanh wrote a message for the back of the pamphlet to four of his friends to give themselves up.

First Lieutenant David Boyle (Malden, (Massachusetts), the assistant Brigade S-5, said, *“Chanh and Dang have helped us a lot. They made a tape message to their friends still hiding from the loud-speaker helicopter, and then spent almost one full day riding up and down the roads in the Triangle broadcasting the same message live.”*

Whether the Nguyen brothers said the right thing or not may never be known, but 31 VC turned themselves in that day, including the four men named on the pamphlet.

Before sending the brothers to the District Chieu Hoi camp to finish their processing, Dang and Chanh were taken to visit their mother and Dang’s wife and children. *“We wanted to show our gratitude to the two of them,”* Lt. Boyle said, *“so we took them home for a few hours.”*

The visit home turned out to be another day of broadcasting for Chanh. When the two men arrived at their home, all the neighbors crowded around curiously and began asking questions. One of the women seemed very persistent with her questions about the brothers treatment at the hands of the Americans.

The S-5 interpreter, Staff Sergeant Phan Thai, explained why the woman was so interested in the brothers; her husband and brother were in the jungle and she wanted them home before they were killed.

After hearing and seeing how well treated the Nguyen brothers were, she wanted to take the loudspeaker jeep, go into the jungles of the Iron Triangle, and try to talk her loved ones out of hiding.

Chanh volunteered to go with the jeep and lead it to an area where he thought some more of his friends were still hiding, including the woman’s husband and brother. Lt. Boyle recognized these developments as a real break.

“The optimum condition for a loudspeaker broadcast is if the person speaking is someone the VC know and trust,” the lieutenant said. *“In this case, having the wife and sister of two of the VC was fantastic luck. Not only would she affect the two she was calling for, but also remind the others that their families wanted them back safe and sound.”*

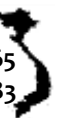
For three hours the loudspeaker jeep, accompanied by a three-quarter ton truck and two Military Police gun jeeps, crept down the dusty road after another. The young woman, with her year-old son in her arms, and often with tears in her eyes, pleaded desperately with the dense jungle lining the roads that hid the people she wanted.

Chanh also made appeals to the rest of his friends hiding in the heavy vegetation, calling to two of them by name. When they reached the end of the secure section of the road, the small convoy stopped for 15 minutes of rest. Then began the long return trip to the village where it began, arriving empty-handed.

The Nguyen brothers had to leave almost immediately, but with the knowledge that they would soon be with their families for good.

Everyone had a happy ending however. Ten minutes after the four vehicles had turned around and started the trip back, two Military Police gun jeeps from the 173d picked up four Chieu Hoi’s, two of which were the men named by Chanh and the other two were the young woman’s husband and brother.

Note: This 173d release of the time named no date, but is likely during the period ‘65/’66. Web photo added. Ed



A life of service: Retired colonel starts group to help veterans

St. Michael is the patron saint of paratroopers, thus the name of the chapter designed to assist paratroopers and other veterans returning to the area who are disabled, homeless, looking for jobs, medical support, or in need of other types of help.



Troy E. "Gil" Gilleland is founder of a new St. Michael's all-airborne chapter for former paratroopers. Here, Gilleland adjusts his 82ND Airborne flag on the back of his motorcycle. ... ROBERT C. REED/RECORD

BY JOHN DAYBERRY jdayberry@hickoryrecord.com

Posted: Sunday, November 29, 2015

HICKORY — To be Airborne is to belong to a brotherhood within a brotherhood, Troy E. "Gil" Gilleland said. "It's one of the proudest brotherhoods in the world, and I'm proud to be a part of it," the 63-year-old Gilleland said, who has returned home to Catawba County after being away 44 years, having served his country for 39 of those years.

As a way of continuing to serve, Gilleland has founded a nonprofit veterans' organization to help paratroopers and other veterans in need in western North Carolina. The St. Michael's All Airborne Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division — a unit in which Gilleland served for the first six years of his military career — had an organizational meeting recently in Newton. About 20 former paratroopers showed up for the meeting, and many more have expressed interest in participating.

"We're off to a good start," Gilleland said. "Everyone is excited."

"All of our chapter members served as paratroopers in their service to our country," Gilleland said. "Paratroopers are members of elite units, such as the 82nd and 101st Airborne Division, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and other units on jump status. There is no greater camaraderie than to be in one of these units. And we take care of our own, whether it be our soldiers and veterans who return from war with physical or psychological disabilities, those down on their luck or needing employment, are homeless, or in need of other assistance."

Our chapter will identify those paratrooper vets, or any other deserving vet, in our western North Carolina area and provide them with assistance. That assistance may run the gamut: monetary help, networking for jobs, help with the VA, teaching disabled veterans how to fly fish, or whatever we can do to help."

While membership in the chapter is only open to paratroopers, anyone interested can become involved. When Gilleland was chapter president in Atlanta, the group had volunteers helping at the USO, greeting returning soldiers at the airport, mailing care packages to deployed soldiers, and performing other support activities.

"Many of our honorary members were spouses of paratroopers, or just people interested in what we were doing," Gilleland said. "There is no greater calling than to serve in our Armed Forces, and there is no better way to serve than being a paratrooper. Having served in combat during my career, I have seen and experienced first-hand what our troops go through, and we need to take care of veterans returning to this area. Our organization wants to give back to these troopers in need. There are hundreds of us in western North Carolina, and this is a way we can all continue to serve."

(continued....)



Gilleland grew up in Hickory, graduating from Hickory High School in 1970. He attended Catawba Valley Community College for a year before being drafted. He immediately volunteered for Airborne training. Gilleland spent more than 33 years on active duty, working his way through the ranks and retiring as a full colonel. He then spent more than five years in the Department of Defense Senior Executive Service in positions equivalent to a one-star and two-star general. During his career, Gilleland served in a wide variety of jobs and commands throughout the world as a commissioned officer, including deployments into combat in the Middle East, attaining the rank of colonel before retiring in 2004 as the U.S. Army Forces Command Budget Officer, managing a budget of more than \$24 billion to include resources for all combat units in the United States as well as the money for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a result of his career accomplishments, Gilleland was inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2004. Shortly after his retirement from active duty, Gilleland was selected as a Department of Defense Senior Executive Service member, the civilian equivalent of an Army general. As a member of the Senior Executive Service, he oversaw the manning for all Army combat units in the United States ensuring they were properly manned prior to deployment into Iraq and Afghanistan. Prior to his retirement in April 2010, he was selected as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (force management, manpower, and resources) in the Pentagon, but turned down the appointment in order to spend more time with his family.

Gilleland holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Florida International University, a Masters of Business Administration from Georgia State University, and a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. He also completed post-graduate studies at George Washington University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society for high scholastic achievement in the graduate school of business.

His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (two awards), the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (five awards), the Army Commendation Medal (two awards), and the Army Achievement Medal. He has also been awarded two Kuwaiti Liberation Medals, the Southwest Asia Service Medal with three Campaign Stars, the National Defense Service Medal (two awards), the Army Good Conduct Medal (two awards), the Global War on Terrorism Medal, the NCO Professional Development Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, and the Army Meritorious Civilian Service Medal. He also earned the

U.S. and Canadian parachutists badges, as well as the Army Staff Identification Badge.

Gilleland and his wife, Tracie, moved from Atlanta to the Lake Norman area of Catawba County about 18 months ago. She also has local family ties and grew up in the area.

"We never thought we'd return to the Hickory area, but we're glad we did," Gilleland said.

A lifetime member of the VFW and the War College Alumni Association, Gilleland enjoys golfing, motor-cycling, boating and fishing.

"And spending time with the grandkids. Family is important to me," he said.

Gilleland said he cannot imagine what his life would have been like had it not been for the military.

"The Army core values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage," Gilleland said.

"I've tried to live my life by those values. They have become my guiding philosophy."

People interested in joining or helping the St. Michael's All Airborne Chapter may contact Gilleland at StMichaelsDZ@gmail.com or 770-289-0229. The chapter also has a Facebook page.

[Reprinted here courtesy of John Dayberry]

Source:

http://www.hickoryrecord.com/news/a-life-of-service-retired-colonel-starts-group-to-help/article_20877f30-970c-11e5-bf7d-fbb8d9c63251.html

####

LOVE THEM ALL AMERICANS!



***"The only thing we have to fear,
is fear itself."***

President Franklin D. Roosevelt

~ More About Fear ~

Several sages were walking along the road and met Cholera heading toward a village. They asked Cholera only to take those he needed and to spare the rest. Cholera agreed.

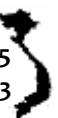
Sometime later the sages again met Cholera on the road. They asked why so many in the village had died. "You promised to spare as many as you could." Cholera replied, "I did. Only a few died of disease. The rest died from fear."

[Sent in by a C/2/503 sage of the VN war kind]



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 57 of 83



Found on the web, posted on 8/21/07...



Michael Curry, Our Brother

Smitty, great introduction to the funeral. I, for one, would like to hear more detail and personal insight regarding the funeral if you feel like sharing. The little you wrote about the funeral had me totally glued.....

If you have the energy could you pick up from where you left off and describe the remainder of the service? If not, we understand. Man, this really reached out and grabbed me for some reason. I was right there with you. Maybe it's just me.....Thanks Lew, love you brother. Rev. Mike McMillan, A/4/503

You know, Mac, I awoke this morning around 3 a.m. thinking about what you said and thinking about Michael Curry, the young Sky Soldier killed in Afghanistan. I thought, yes, Mac's right, someone should write something about the young man, but not me, I didn't know him personally nor had I ever met him. I'm sure his buddies and members of his family have spoken and written all that could be recorded about him. So, why should I, what right do I have to even attempt to honor another one of ours who died at war? But, I understand it's not a question of right or wrong; it's that inner breath-taking hurt we all feel when we learn of the death of one of ours which moves us to try and express that hurt, or hide it. Oddly, that hurt is not as great when the lost soul is from some other unit, yet the reality is no different, the pain and anguish felt by their family and friends are no different.

While there at the memorial service someone showed me a photo of the man. He was standing with his beautiful wife, a girl he met and married in Italy, holding her close; a friendly, smiling face of a young soldier so proud of his wife. Michael Curry looked like someone I would like to have known. Sometimes you can sense the goodness of a person by simply looking at their faces in a photo. I think Mike was a good man.

Since the first notice was circulated describing the circumstances of his death, and given the fact 1st Sergeant Michael Curry hailed from Dania Beach, FL, a few hours from where Bill Vose and I live, Bill hounded me almost daily to join him at the memorial service there. Bill knows I don't like attending funerals or such services, yet he continued to urge me to go with him. Now, I'm glad I did.

Enroute to the address in Dania Beach I became lost. I shouldn't have, I had lived over 25 years in Miami not far from there, but I was lost. My eldest son, Don the Wise, gave me directions by phone and I arrived the church about ½ hour before the service was scheduled

to begin. I recall thinking I'm old enough to be Mike's father, he was the same age as my youngest son, Dan the Wild. I had anticipated a small group of family and friends and maybe a few soldier buddies of the fallen trooper would be there in attendance. It was a hot day, humid, the temperature hovering around 100 degrees.

Turning the corner to the church I immediately saw U.S. flags, maybe twenty or thirty flags lining one side of the street held by twenty or thirty Vietnam veterans, mostly biker dudes and their dudettes, wearing their leather jackets, riding boots and war patches, their Harley's silently parked nearby. After parking I slowly walked up to these men and women, exchanging hellos with a few of them. One drill sergeant type was standing in the middle of the street barking orders to this squad to keep their spaces even, hold the flag upright, and other army type orders. I moved across the street where I could better take in this sight.

My first thought about the bikers was cynical. I thought what the hell are you people doing here? You didn't serve with Mike, you're not Sky Soldiers, is this just something to do to posture, show off your patches and bikes, I thought. You're not even paratroopers. I then learned of another memorial service held in another city at another time to honor another vet killed in the Middle East where war protesters took that opportunity to display their anger about the war. It must have been extremely disturbing to the family members of that fallen soldier. And I learned these biker dudes in their biker regalia were on-guard, pulling duty as they had before in another lifetime, another war. No protesters this day would be allowed anywhere near this service, and pity those who tried. My first reaction to them now bothered me, I was so wrong to pre-judge these patriots, these brothers.

Standing across the street, shirt now soaked wet from the heat and humidity, I noticed one man about my age was wearing a 173d Airborne hat. I walked up to him with hand extended and asked him with which unit he had served. He told me he hadn't but his son was now serving with the 173d's first battalion in Afghanistan, Mike's battalion. The man's son had been a friend of Mike. We briefly chatted and I wished him and his son well, thinking he must be thinking, will *he* be one of the family members at some similar event in the future?

The start time of eleven a.m. came and went as I and the flag holders across the street stood quietly, quietly sweating.

(continued....)



I thought of George Bush and his cronies and wondered if they were aware of today's planned services. Had they even read Mike's name on some daily report? I suspect they had not. Mike was a soldier, not a General, not a politician, simply doing his duty at the time his life was taken from him. I wondered if jets with the missing man would fly overhead...of course, there were no jets, Mike was a soldier.

I had spoken with Bill by cell phone and he told me he'd be there soon, but the start time was near and there was no sign of my friend. It was then the drill sergeant yelled to everyone to take their flags and run around the corner to again line-up; we were standing in front of the wrong church. This maneuver was accomplished before the arrival of the black limousines carrying Mike's family to this service. Police cars had by now blocked-off access to the street fronting the church where the memorial service would be held.

Vietnam vet buddy Jim Nantkes of the 3/503d walked-up to me wearing a suit and tie, clearly on the verge of heat exhaustion, like most of us. We shared some war stories and agreed it was indeed a sad day here. We spoke with an old, small, thin man wearing a VFW hat and shirt, a WWII vet, a sailor. It was good to talk with him and we thanked him for being part of our country's *Greatest Generation* and for helping save the world. This friendly, meek old sailor just smiled. Fortunately for all of us one of the VN vets was there with a pickup truck loaded with ice water; his lady walking by giving water bottles to anyone in such need, which was all of us.

We were told Michael was or would be interred in Italy. We had heard this before and couldn't quite figure out why Italy and not the U.S., until we learned his immediate family lived there. We spoke of the pain his wife and children must be experiencing at this very moment, like so many other family members who would soon be across this street, and those across this land.

There was still no sign of Bill and his son Jeff as a Staff Sergeant wearing a 173d combat patch marched the honor guard of paratroopers carrying M16's into the street and in front of the church. There, facing the entrance to the church they came to attention -- a bugler off to the side in anticipation of the arrival of Mike's family. They stood there for the longest time until the sergeant put them at parade rest, sweat dripping off them as they made not a movement. It was then about six or seven VN vets from the local VFW wearing white hats and shirts took their position in front of Jim and me. The wait continued, the biker dudes and their dudettes lined-up down the street, on-guard; there was quiet all around.

Off to our right we then see black limos turn onto the street where the flags, honor guard and vets were waiting. Slowly, very slowly the cars moved towards us, the honor guard and all of us coming to attention. As the car doors opened an order was given to "*present arms!*" which we all did. We stood there at rigid attention, sweat running down our bodies, many of us trying hard to keep our salutes steady as Mike's grieving family were escorted into the church. "*Order arms!*" finally came as the last of his family entered the building.

The Staff Sergeant in command marched his squad to a shaded area nearby as services in the church began. Later, one of the troopers walked past us and I stopped him to ask which parachute unit they were in, I didn't recognize the patch. He said they were the 509th Airborne, my former unit in Germany; and I didn't remember the patch.

The church was a small white building in this small community in Dania Beach, no doubt built to accommodate no more than 100 people, yet well over 100 people entered its' doors. I saw Bill arrive and quickly move to the church where he joined those in attendance, Jim and I preferring to remain outside. The service, scheduled for one hour lasted nearly two hours.

Nearing the end of the service the front doors of the church were opened. We then heard the singing. Voices of every belief, age and gender joined one another as they sang together "*God Bless America*". It was a moving rendition and spoke to something bigger, more meaningful than any one of us alone. It spoke of unity and hope and sorrow.

Then we heard his voice from inside the church. A seemingly hard-as-nails First Sergeant with the 173d Airborne called out loudly, "*Michael Curry?!!*" (silence) "*Michael Curry?!!*" (silence) "*1st Sgt. Michael S. Curry?!!*" There was no reply as the honor guard fired their salutes and *Taps* began to play.

As the family departed we again saluted them and thought of Mike. I would like to have known him, for you see, he was and will forever remain our brother.

Airborne Mike! All the Way!

Lew "Smitty" Smith
2/503d, 173d Airborne, '65/'66

**1SG Michael S. Curry, Jr.
D/1/503, KIA 23 Jul 07
A Sky Soldier & Brother**



“A Promise Made, A Promise Kept”



WHY A POW-MIA MUSEUM?

“While we can debate the rights and wrongs of war, what is not open to debate is what these men and women did for their country. This country called, and they answered that call, and many did not return. People ask why this is important, it’s important because this country sent men and women into harm’s way and made them a promise. The promise was that they would be returned and it is a promise made not just by our government and our military, it was a promise made by each individual American. Each one of these men and women were somebody’s father or mother, they were somebody’s brother or sister, they were somebody’s husband or wife. All of us are those mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, brothers and sisters. That makes the promise we made to them one husband or wife to another, one mother or father to another, one brother or sister to another, and this is a promise that we’re determined to keep.” – Joint POW-MIA

Accounting Command.

The Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum will be a part of this promise, a part of that commitment with which we have been entrusted. A commitment through which our fellow Americans will be able to see and understand – a promise made, and a promise kept.

HISTORY

Motivated by the interest generated by the Missouri AMVET POW-MIA Traveling Museum, AMVET District Commander, Joe Grohs Jr., contacted U.S. Congressman Russ Carnahan about the possibility of a permanent POW-MIA Museum in Missouri. Congressman Carnahan began looking into it and in April of 2011 sent letters to Missouri’s Veterans Groups inviting them to join together in an effort to establish a permanent POW-MIA Museum in the Old 1898 Officers’ Quarters

Building located at 16-18 Hancock Road, in the Jefferson Barracks Historic District. The structure, up until August 2008, had housed Missouri’s Civilian Conservation Corps Museum.



16-18 Hancock Road, Jefferson Barracks Historic District

Answering the call to date, the Missouri AMVETS, the Missouri American Legion, the Missouri Veterans Commission, the Missouri Department of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, the Missouri AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary, the Missouri Air Force Association, and the Missouri Veterans of Foreign Wars, have joined together to form the Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum, Inc.

The Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum, Inc. is a 501C(3) non-profit, non-partisan, all volunteer organization with a Board of Directors, an Executive Committee, and an active Fundraising Committee in place. It is currently busy with raising funds for Museum design, repairs and renovations, as well as with meeting the necessary requirements and making the necessary preparations to enter into a long-term Lease Agreement with St. Louis County, owners of the Old 1898 Officers’ Quarters Building.

It is the hope that a Jefferson Barracks POW-MIA Museum will not only honor the service and tremendous sacrifices of our POW’s and MIA’s, but will also become a source of deep pride for Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis County, the State of Missouri, and indeed all Americans by staying true to the words of its motto: **“No One Left Behind, No One Forgotten.”**

If you have any questions or needs, please contact me at 314/395-2788 (Home/Ofc) or Cell 314/363-8707. I am a Board Member for the Museum. Bill Kiefer, VP VVA Chap. 794 Florissant, MO KieferVVA794@yahoo.com

Source: <http://jbpow-mia.org/>

[Sent in by CCVVA Chapter 92]



~ THE FINAL INSPECTION ~



(web image)

The Soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining,
Just as brightly as his brass.

*'Step forward now, Soldier,
How shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?'*

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,
*'No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns,
Can't always be a saint.
I've had to work most Sundays,
And at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.*

*But, I never took a penny,
That wasn't mine to keep.
Though I worked a lot of overtime,
When the bills just got too steep.*

*And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.*

*I know I don't deserve a place,
Among the people here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.
If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand.'*

There was a silence all around the throne,
Where the saints had often trod.
As the Soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God.
*'Step forward now, you Soldier,
You've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
You've done your time in Hell.'*

~ Author Unknown

[Sent in by Bob Clark, 1st & 5th/SF]

THEN AND NOW

*"This is one of the coolest pictures I have ever seen.
The men on the right are about to parachute into
France on D-Day. The men on the left are the same
men today. More remarkable? It's the same plane.
God bless our heroes."*



[Sent in by Paul Littig, D/2/503]



Supply Drop, Operation Junction City, 1967



(Photo by U.S. Army)

“Photo is of an air drop of supplies in Operation Junction City during the Vietnam War. Operation Junction City was the largest U.S. airborne operation since WWII’s Operation Market Garden and was the only major airborne operation of the Vietnam War. It began on February 22, 1967 and lasted almost three months with the goal of destroying Viet Cong bases and the Viet Cong military headquarters for South Vietnam. While American forces captured large quantities of stores, equipment and weapons, it failed to be a turning point in the war.”

Sneaky Pete Brother Hooks Up With 2/503 Sky Soldier in Vegas



1st & 5th SF trooper Bob Clark (on left) and HHC/2/503 Sky Soldier Richard Rocha, met by chance while out to dinner in Las Vegas. Bob is the older brother of Lew “Smitty” Smith, editor of our *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter*. Both Richard and Smitty served as RTOs in the Bn command group; Richard, most notably as RTO for Col. Bob Sigholtz, Bn CO, & Smitty for LTC Bob Carmichael. Bn XO/CO, and Maj. Willard Christensen, Bn XO.



A sharp shooting bad guy in VN would take one of Bob’s eyes as a souvenir, ending his army career.



Richard immediately behind LTC Bob Sigholtz; that’s CSM Ed Proffitt on the right – somewhere, sometime in Vietnam.



BROTHERS, ALL



I appreciate very much you passing on information to 173rd vets as well as any other vets about my Vietnam book----*Brothers, All*. The book came out last month and I have been happily busy speaking to veterans groups and at the Vet Day Ceremonies here in Columbia, TN. It has been an honor for me.

Another thing I am proud of is that all the author profits from the sale of the book go to Maury Co. Veterans, a local group that helps all local veterans in need. It is a great organization and all of the money goes to the vets and their needs. There is no overhead thanks to great volunteer help.

Brothers, All is called historical fiction because I have one main character who is a composite of the men I served with. It was a better way to show a more complete picture of the average grunt in Nam. Below is a summary of the book.

"Vietnam, 1966-67. *Brothers, All* depicts the men of the fourth Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne. James Fowlkes, called "Prof," and his brothers-in-arms mash through jungles doused with Agent Orange, trudge through monsoon downpours with heavy rucksacks, and oftentimes act like boys in their foolish hijinks. They fight the enemy, and sometimes they fight each other over canned peaches or the wrong kind of music. They learn to depend on each other, pull their buddies out of harm's way, and treat gently their fallen brothers. Their coming of age happens in the first firefight that splatters them with a brother's blood. They become men, changed and hardened. Those who make it back to the world bring with them their wounds, PTSD, exposure to chemicals, and the blood-stained images of war they hold silent for decades with the beast of Vietnam ever stalking them."

The book costs \$15 and is available on [Amazon.com](#) and [Banes and Noble.com](#). Shipping costs are listed on the web sites and there are some reviews of the book as well.

I would be honored to speak to a vet group that is somewhat in the area, if practical. I can be reached by my email, neiloranjones@gmail.com or cell phone 615 767 0698.

All the best to you, and thanks again for your help.

Neil Jones
B/4/503

Meet one of our young guns....

Tyler Jackson

Sergeant/E-5 INFANTRY

Team Leader

B Co., 2-503rd ABN, 173rd ABCT

Smithville, Missouri



July 2015 – Present (6 months)
Vicenza Area, Italy

Team leader in a Light Infantry Company; responsible for the welfare, fitness, morale and discipline of a four man Team; responsible for the individual training and maintenance of their equipment; primary instructor and advisor in the matters of tactics, personnel management and junior leader development; directs his Team's tactical employment during offensive and defensive operations; responsible for the accountability and maintenance of all assigned MTO&E equipment worth in excess of \$30,000.



Fighting leader who leads by example. Has authority over his subordinates and overall responsibility for their actions. Under the fluid conditions of close combat, the team leader must accomplish assigned missions using initiative without needing constant guidance from above. Position on the battlefield requires immediacy and accuracy in all his actions.

Responsible for all his team does or fails to do, the care of his men, weapons, and equipment. Is the subject matter expert on all the team's weapons and battle drills.

Leads team in fire and maneuver and assists the squad leader as required. Prepared to assume the duties of the squad leader at any time.

Source:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/tyler-jackson-108a7094>



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 63 of 83

Once a Sky Soldier.... Always a Sky Soldier



We came across this great photo on the web of our buddy Dave Kies, Recon 2/503, '66/'67. Dave's combat tour with our battalion ended abruptly when he stepped on a mine losing both legs. His physical disability, however, never stopped him from raising a family and attaining professional success during his civilian career. Dave is *Airborne*, and *All The Way!!*

VA Makes Changes to Veterans Choice Program

Changes Remove Barriers and Expand Access to Care

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a number of changes to make participation in the Veterans Choice Program easier and more convenient for Veterans who need to use it. The move, which streamlines eligibility requirements, follows feedback from Veterans along with organizations working on their behalf.

"As we implement the Veterans Choice Program, we are learning from our stakeholders what works and what needs to be refined," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. *"It is our goal to do all that we can to remove barriers that separate Veterans from the care they deserve."* To date, more than 400,000 medical appointments have been scheduled since the Veterans Choice Program went into effect on November 5, 2014.

Under the old policy, a Veteran was eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she met the following criteria:

- Enrolled in VA health care by 8/1/14 or able to enroll as a combat Veteran to be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program;
- Experienced unusual or excessive burden eligibility determined by geographical challenges, environmental factors or a medical condition impacting the Veteran's ability to travel;
- Determined eligible based on the Veteran's current residence being more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.

Under the updated eligibility requirements, a Veteran is eligible for the Veterans Choice Program if he or she is enrolled in the VA health care system and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Told by his or her local VA medical facility that they will not be able to schedule an appointment for care within 30 days of the date the Veteran's physician determines he/she needs to be seen or within 30 days of the date the Veteran wishes to be seen if there is no specific date from his or her physician;
- Lives more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility with a full-time primary care physician;
- Needs to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home;
- Faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, a medical condition, the nature or simplicity or frequency of the care needed and whether an attendant is needed. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him or her to determine if the Veteran is eligible for any of these reasons; or
- Lives in a State or Territory without a full-service VA medical facility which includes: Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire (Note: this excludes New Hampshire Veterans who live within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC) and the United States Territories (excluding Puerto Rico, which has a full service VA medical facility).

Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program or wanting to know more about it, can call [1-866-606-8198](tel:1-866-606-8198) to confirm their eligibility and to schedule an appointment. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress visit:

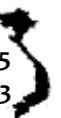
www.va.gov/opa/choiceact

[Sent in by Hugh "Hubie" Imhoff, N/75 Rangers]



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 64 of 83



Taken Prisoners by the Viet Cong

Published March 30, 2010

At 28, Marjorie Nelson was a doctor on the staff of AFSC's Quang Ngai Rehabilitation Center in Vietnam. After months of working for long hours with little free time and constant reminders of the human tragedy of the war, Marge was pleased to take a vacation to the city of Hué during the Tet holidays.

On January 29, 1968, she set off for a week's visit with Sandra Johnson, a friend at a volunteer agency in Hué. However, both women disappeared shortly after Marge arrived.



Jill Richards, Marjorie Nelson and Nguyen thi Xuan Lan, Quang Ngai, Vietnam, circa 1967-1968

Photo Credit: Marjorie Nelson

On February 9, a secretary from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) reported seeing a cadre of Viet Cong escorting the two young women out of the city of Hué. The women were wearing pajamas, walking hand in hand. For the next two months, AFSC staff, the women's families, and U.S. officials tried to learn their whereabouts, with no success. The women's names became part of the U.S. State Department's list of 18 U.S. civilians *"known to have been taken prisoner by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces during the Tet Offensive."*



During the battle for the City of Hué. (Web photo)

In an interview shortly after her release, Marge recollected her arrest and detention by the National Liberation Front (NLF). The bombing of Hué began in late January, right after Marge's arrival, and continued into early February. Marge and Sandra took refuge in Sandra's bomb shelter, surviving for several days on Tet candies before they were discovered by NLF soldiers, who took them to another location. They remained there for several more days, while all around them the city exploded under military force.



The Imperial City of Hué after bombing. (Web photo)

On approximately February 9, Marge and Sandra were tied at the wrists and walked out of the city of Hué. Crossing through the mountains with nothing but wooden "house" shoes, Marge's feet quickly became sore with blisters. They traveled for hours through the dark, sometimes in bare feet, other times in borrowed shoes, finally arriving at a mountain village in the wee hours of the morning....

(continued....)



They came to a gate with an arch over it, a typical entryway to a Vietnamese village, but this one stirred dismal feelings. *"It looked very forlorn,"* Marge recalls. *"I thought, 'Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.'"*

They were put outside in a fenced area. *"It was very cold with a fine rain falling. We slept on the ground with no cover...That was a bad night, but we survived it."* This was the only time during their captivity that she felt the NLF soldiers could have done more for their comfort.

The next day the women were forced to begin a week-long trek through the jungle and across mountains with little food or water. They were reminded by their captors that they were being moved away from Hué to safety, for their protection, which Marge believed was at least partly the truth. She recalls that the NLF soldiers took great care to make sure she and Sandra were not harmed. When they arrived at a camp, they were well fed and cared for under the direction of the soldiers' commander, Nam. Marge welcomed the chance to rest and to learn about the Vietnamese culture and people. She and Sandra were given NLF fatigues to wear, with apologies from Nam that there were no women's clothes available. They remained in this location for several weeks, developing new friendships with soldiers and other prisoners.

Near mid-March, they began another journey to another camp, again on foot but with boots the soldiers had found for them. Three days into their journey, two of the other prisoners escaped. *"The lists were gotten out, and roll was called. . . . It wasn't just that two guys had gone; there was other tension. We had been told that there might be bombing that morning."*

The two women, up until this point, had always eaten with the men prisoners and slept in a separate area. This night, however, the men were called for their meal, and Sandra and Marge were not. Nam appeared with another soldier and fed the women dinner. After dinner he sadly announced he would not be continuing on with them. Sandra and Marge were worried. They felt safe with Nam and the rest of the group and were anxious that the move might put them into the hands of people less interested in their welfare. Nonetheless, the next morning they were separated from the rest of the prisoners and moved by foot to another camp.

The first words from the camp commander were, *"Do not escape!"* Despite this warning, it soon became apparent to Marge that the move was a preparation for their release. *"It sort of occurred to them, I guess, that maybe we . . . shouldn't really be prisoners. We were really more like guests, and they sort of began to be a little embarrassed at this prisoner business.... Within*

several days we were instructed to not refer to ourselves as prisoners."

Near March 20, the two women were instructed to write release statements. Marge wrote, in part, *"Almost everyone I met has been both kind and friendly to me. I have been impressed with the courage, dedication, enthusiasm, and cheerfulness of the NLF Forces. There is no doubt in my mind that they represent a significant segment of the Vietnamese people and must be accepted as such."* Likewise, the statement by the NLF distinguished between U.S. military aggression and U.S. citizens, many of whom the NLF soldiers understood were not part of the war machine. The statement said, in part, *"Both above-mentioned American women showed more or less sympathy with the Vietnamese people's struggle for national independence and peace."*

On March 31, 1968 - nearly two months after the Tet Offensive - Marjorie Nelson and Sandra Johnson were released north of Hué. They were directed to a path leading to railroad tracks and then to a road. Still dressed in NLF fatigues, they caught a bus filled with soldiers from the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (often referred to as ARVN), and so they found their way back into the city.

During the weeks of Marge's detention, the AFSC staff members with whom she had worked had pulled out of Quang Ngai, due to unrest after the offensive. The AFSC team did not resume its work at the rehab center until May. Marge flew home to the United States, but, just six-and-a-half months after her release, she returned to Vietnam on September 10 to finish out her term on the AFSC staff.

Source:

<http://afsc.org/story/taken-prisoners-viet-cong>

(Web photos added)



Purported to be of NLF soldiers near Hué.



I'll Always Remember Winnie

1LT Winnie Smith was my ward nurse for a month in November 1966, at 3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan Son Nhut near downtown Saigon. I recall asking her what she hoped to do once her time at war was over -- she replied, *"Move to the Carolina's and have twelve kids."*

Nurse Smith never did that (although she did celebrate one son), because as with many of us, too many of us, our war took its special toll on her. Ed

Excerpt from *"American Daughter Gone to War, on the Front Lines With an Army Nurse in Vietnam"....*

February 1967: Intensive Care and Recovery Room

Operation Junction City, the war's biggest offensive so far, starts the last week of this month. Once again it's against a Vietcong stronghold near the Cambodian border. Once again it's to ease pressure on Saigon. Once again it brings us many wounded. When no beds are left on either side of the ward, gurneys with incoming wounded are rolled between beds in the recovery room.



Just after induction
Fort Dix, NJ

Blood has been accumulating on one soldier's head dressing as he awaits surgery on a gurney. The dressing covers his eyes, so it's impossible to check his pupils -- standard procedure with head injuries. He's alert and moving all extremities, neurologically fine, but I need to try to stop the bleeding.

Cutting through the layers of Kerlix, I lift it from his face. With it comes his eyeball, dangling by a thin strand of tissue. I gasp, backing away from the mangled eyeball. My retreat is blocked by the bed behind me.

Gathering my composure, I pick up the eyeball with the blood-soaked dressing and place it on top of his socket. No matter that it's a useless motion. I haven't the nerve to cut it free, much less touch it with my bare hands.

The soldier's other eye is stuck shut with dried blood. He reaches up to feel his face.

"Don't touch it!" I cry in alarm.

His head turns toward my voice, and the eye falls out of the socket into my hand. I'm trembling as I replace it.

"Will I ever see again?" The voice of this nineteen-year-old soldier is calm, in marked contrast with my own, which has betrayed my terror.

I breathe deeply to control my tremor. *"You've lost one eye. The other's covered with blood, so I can't tell about it."* In nursing school we were taught never to divulge such information, that it's the doctor's decision

to determine when and how much a patient should know. But what we learned then has nothing to do with what we do here. Doctors are scarce, and wounded soldiers won't be put off, insist everything be laid on the line.

"Don't turn your head. I'll get something to wash it."

I fear that I don't have time to do this, that another casualty will go into shock while I diddle around washing off dried blood. But when the eye proves uninjured, and he smiles brightly for still having one good eye, it's worth the worry.

A putrid smell follows another casualty through the swinging doors. I swallow against the nausea creeping up my throat, grab a wrist to check his pulse; weak and very fast. And touching his arm is enough to tell me that he's burning up with fever. The IV is running wide open. Good. I tear down the dressing on his abdomen and find his blood and guts swimming in a mire of green, foul-smelling, maggot-infested pus. This soldier lay too long in a rice paddy before he was rescued.

Dear Lord, when will all this end so we all can go home?

####

"Winnie Smith faced family members who could not understand her pain, antiwar demonstrators who belittled her efforts, and a dismaying, disorienting sense of loss. Like the other soldiers, she faced a country that had no place for her, a world where she no longer belongs. Many years after the war was over, she struggled with flashbacks, nightmares, uncontrollable bouts of crying. Only the support of other veterans, and the astonishing courage and endurance she found in Vietnam, helped Winnie begin her long road back to peace."

American Daughter Gone to War...is an extraordinary story of a woman who came face-to-face with the drama and tragedy of a war zone, and found her own peace in the end. It is a heartbreaking mirror for America's own loss of faith over the course of one of the most shattering conflicts of the century, and an inspiring account of personal healing and renewal."

"Winnie Smith grew up in North Carolina and New Jersey. She attended nursing school in New York City and worked as a nurse for many years after returning from the war. Today she lives with her son in California." (circa 1992)



Note: Capt. Winnie Smith's 5-star book is available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and highly recommended to nurses everywhere, and to the hundreds of men for whom she cared. Ed



WWII Pacific Theatre



"GROWING UP OVERNIGHT – THE NEGROS CAMPAIGN"

By Charles R. Stribling*

"D" Co., 2d Bn, 503 PRCT

The Negros campaign was one of the last major operations in the recapture of the Philippine Islands. It had no real military or tactical value -- other than it was an island where thousands of Japanese troops had been staged, airfields built, and troops dispatched to the other islands from the excellent harbors that the Island boasted. The Island was one of the last places where the Japanese held out, and it was probably more a matter of principal that the Island be recaptured -- rather than bypassed in favor of more important targets. At any rate, we were alerted of a possible jump into the center of the Island. We geared up and boarded planes on April 7, 1945.

Enroute to the drop zone, the jump was called off and we landed instead on a neighboring island and boarded boats (Navy Landing Craft, Infantry, LCI's), for the landing on Negros. As it happened, the landing was unopposed for the Japanese had pulled back to defensive positions in the mountains. The actual landing stays in my mind quite clearly, mainly because we had pulled up to the beach expecting to be met with Japanese fire and instead, we were met with a Filipino band playing welcoming music for us. I particularly recall them playing a spirited rendition of "Amapola" over and over, and I thought, *"Now this is the way to hit a beach!"*

I do recall one incident quite clearly though. An elderly Filipino gentleman dressed in full military dress uniform - pinks and greens, was standing at rigid attention as we landed. He was a Captain as I recall, and I wondered at the time why one of our officers didn't go up to him and greet him. In retrospect though, I suppose his day was made and his career complete when the first trooper splashed ashore to regain his home Island. We bedded down that night in the town square, and the townspeople held a dance in honor of the occasion.

We moved by motor convoy from the beach several miles and into the hills. We pulled patrols for the first few days without making physical contact with any enemy. We did receive several rounds of enemy artillery fire that wounded one or more men slightly. We moved up and replaced another company on the front line.

11 April 1945

2300 hours

First real action of the Negros Campaign. Two (or more) enemy soldiers could be heard talking in front of the company outpost and moving directly toward our perimeter. They were met by a burst of fire. Daylight revealed one enemy KIA approximately 30 ft in front of our position. My first impression was that they were acting more like a group of GI's returning from an evening out on the town than a combat patrol. This impression was never felt again during the campaign.



Fishman, 3rd Squad, 1st Platoon, "D" Co. cradles his BAR while on patrol. Negros, 1945.

14th or 15th of April

It was about the 14th or 15th of April when we moved into new forward positions and someone discovered an abandoned 55 gallon drum in the perimeter. It was filled with alcohol distilled from sugar. Sugar cane was one of the principal crops of the island, and the Japanese had apparently been using it as motor fuel. Some brave soul sampled the contents and declared it potable and potent. Mixed with lemon powder and water, it quickly became a popular drink. I recall the incident primarily because I was selected to carry the BAR on a patrol when the assigned BAR man became a bit indisposed after sampling the alcohol concoction. To speed things, I simply took his webbing and gear, including the BAR belt filled with ammo, a pistol, two canteens, etc. and headed down toward the river.

As usual, it rained, and the patrol headed back with no contact. By the time I staggered back up the now muddy hill, I could barely walk with the ill-fitting belt, pistol hitting me about the knees, and hips raw from the ammo pouches. I believe it was this evening that our machine gunners, in high spirits, provided the entertainment by firing their machine guns to the tune of "Shave and a Haircut - Six Bits." They were answered by Jap machine gun some distance away across the valley, and a little duel ensued. I distinctly remember our guns' red tracers going out - and the Jap white tracers coming back at them.

(continued....)



17 April

An overnight patrol in company with Filipino guerrillas. Set up a perimeter the night of 17 April and moved out in the morning of 18 April. I remember the night well, primarily because we had set up our perimeter on a hilltop with the guerrillas.



**"D" Company on patrol.
Negros 1945**

It was hot, humid, and the mosquitoes were thick and hungry. We had repellent that we used, but our guerrilla comrades had none, and spent the night loudly slapping the hungry insects. They also had no water, and I recall sharing one of my two canteens of water with them. Filipino civilians in the area were questioned and indicated that Japanese activity in the area was common.

About noon the guerrillas made contact and two were wounded in the ensuing firefight. I recall the firefight well primarily because of their actions. When the shooting began, they continued advancing in a skirmish line across a fairly open field, while we hit the ground. They responded to whistle commands by their leaders to advance, commence firing, cease firing, etc. I was impressed. We had moved forward and across a relatively open hillside facing dense forest. We thought the affair had been settled to our satisfaction and that the enemy had pulled back until Pvt. Rickard sighted an individual in the trees ahead of us. He and I had a little discussion concerning the individual's identity. We decided he was a Japanese, so Rickard shot him. At the same time PFC Bates, who was in charge of our mortar section, lobbed a round of mortar fire into the area. The response was immediate and effective. A barrage of knee mortar and rifle fire erupted from the forest to our front and hastened our immediate departure to the rear.

A morning air strike on enemy positions directly ahead of us was observed and cheered by all hands as the Air Force A-20's pounded enemy positions ahead of us. The sound of Japanese



**Air Force A-20 drops its load, during
WWII. (web photo)**

machine gun fire could be heard with each aircraft pass and its effect observed when one of the planes was hit in an engine and turned in a glide back over our positions with one engine flaming.

As he crossed over our perimeter, an explosion sent a burning object from the plane and into our position. It was a tire that the flames had caused to explode and fall from the plane. We dove for cover as the tire hit near our positions. Our shouts for the crew to "jump" were answered as one chute could be seen as one of the crewmembers bailed out and we could see his chute open as the plane glided out of our sight. We later heard that the pilot and gunner rode the plane to the ground and jumped from the burning plane as it skidded through the brush and just before it exploded on the ground. We heard that the jumper we had observed bail out was an Associated Press correspondent who had went along for the ride.

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19 April

A morning air strike on enemy positions directly ahead of us was observed and cheered by all hands as the Air Force A-20's pounded enemy positions ahead of us. The sound of Japanese machine gun fire could be heard with each aircraft pass and its effect observed when one of the planes was hit in an engine and turned in a glide back over our positions with one engine flaming.

(continued....)



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20 April

My platoons assault on the ridge to the left front of our position resulted in no casualties to our platoon, but an education in the sound of Japanese knee mortars being fired at you and the actual sight of incoming mortar rounds. The company lost several men in this assault and I found out just how powerful the explosion of a mortar round could be. I dove into a shell hole at the sound of a round being fired and the sight of it coming in my direction. I was untouched as the round exploded beside my hole, but deafened by the explosion for a time.



Maurice St. Germain of Vermont - the entire 2d Bn was loaded on a train from Fabrica to Malapasoc - and was bombed by a wayward B-24.



Japanese knee mortar. (web photo)

20/21 April

The night of April 20th and morning of the 21st were ones I shall never forget. We had dug in on top of the ridge and it was the longest night I have ever endured. Japanese shouting in perfect English

"Americans, you will all be dead by morning," and **"We will kill you all!"** It made you wonder if perhaps they knew something we didn't.

We threw grenades at the sound of Japanese creeping into our positions, exchanged fire with them, and it was here I remember asking the Lord to help me through the night. It was on this ridge at about 4:00 AM that several enemy came charging into our positions with a machine gun and sprayed fire into one of our positions, killing two of our people. The position they hit had originally been one of their gun positions, so they knew exactly where it was located. Fortunately, I was in a foxhole that I had dug myself.

28 April

Shortly after noon the company moved through "F" Company to take a ridge some 500 yards to our front. The third (my) platoon was following the first and second in the advance. After mortars and small arms fire hit the first, we moved through them to take over the advance. I noticed several of them alongside the trail, wounded and bleeding and being cared for by medics. I noted one was a friend I had come overseas with (Raines) -- fortunately, he was only slightly wounded.

We continued to the ridge position, the enemy retreating under heavy fire. As the ridge was being secured, my friend and fellow BAR team member (Hearne**) was killed at my side by a sniper. A few moments later, as PFC Sierra and I checked out a road to our front concerning a wrecked field gun that had been left immediately in front of our position. As we peeked over the hill at the gun, a sniper put a round directly between us, spraying us with gravel.

By now I was certain that I was no longer invincible, but a very mortal and very scared individual, who had matured from a teenager in a very short time. When replacements arrived that afternoon to fill our depleted ranks and replace those soldiers we had lost, I felt as I had been there forever.

**** HEARNE, Elwood H., Pfc; SN 32762155, "D" Co., 503d PRCT. Enlisted NJ.**

(continued....)



2 May 1945

Heavy rain as usual. Everything soaked.

At about mid-morning a report that one of our patrols had been hit and two men killed. One body was not recovered. My platoon was called out to assist in the recovery. As we moved up the trail, a "short" round of our own mortar fire burst in the trees just ahead of us. The rain had soaked the powder charges and made mortars useless.



"Mail Call, Negros, July 1945 - Robert C. Roberts, of 3rd Squad, 1st Platoon, 'D' Co. Note the height of the grass."

As we continued on up the trail we met up with a machine gun section on the trail. It was one of their men that we had been sent out to recover. It was decided that under covering fire from the machine gun section and our squad that Dablock and I would race out to recover the body of Sgt. Wister. As the machine gun section and 1st squad poured covering fire into the area, we raced out to recover the body.

Encumbered with my Thompson sub-machine gun, I was having trouble picking up and carrying the body by its feet – which had been stripped of its boots by the enemy. I took Dablock's sub-machine gun and he threw the body over his shoulder and ran back to cover while I sprayed fire from both guns into the area to our front to cover our retreat with the body. As I turned to race back to cover, my helmet was knocked from my head – perhaps by a tree limb; or perhaps somewhere on Negros Island, along a trail called Tokaido road, there is a rusting helmet, possibly with a bullet hole in it. Needless to say, I did not go back to retrieve it and find out.

Tokaido road was, to say the least, a long, grinding ordeal for the 503rd. Almost daily patrols to the front or sides of the road – and usually some enemy contact made and people killed or wounded in the fire-fights. We would dig into our positions each night, and anything that moved was shot at or grenaded - the assumption being that it was the enemy and not our troops.

Our biggest assist at night came from our own mortar platoon. If ammo was available, and it was not raining too hard, we could depend on our 60mm mortar crew to fire a flare to our front on demand and give us an opportunity to look over the terrain and possibly catch Japs in the act of creeping up on us. The mortars had a distinct sound, and we could usually tell when it was a flare on the way and not high explosive - which gave us an opportunity to get set to observe the area to our immediate front without being seen by the Japs, and at the same time, catch them in the open.

As I recall, we had little or no artillery support at this time, but on occasion we would get an air strike on positions just to our front before we assaulted them. It was quite a thrill when Corsairs - which were actually fighter planes belonging to the Marines - would come tearing up from behind our lines, release their bombs far behind us and we would dive for cover as the bombs just cleared our hill and landed in the Jap positions ahead of us. Some astute trooper finally made the comment that *"You can't see the tail fins on the bomb coming in, dive for cover. If you can see the fins, the bomb won't land in your lap, so relax."* He may have been right, but I still never relaxed, and would take cover at the sight of every bomb released just over our position.



The Corsair WWII: "AND A FEW MARINES: Marines in the liberation of the Philippines." (Web photo)

(continued....)





3d squad, 1st Platoon, "D" Co. on Negros, Philippine Islands in May 1945. From left: Roberts, Fishman, St. Germain, Hall and unknown.

22 May

During an assault on a heavily defended hill, one of our men was hit and suffered a bad head wound (Rouse). He was one of the replacements who had arrived only a few days earlier. As a scout, I was on the far left flank of our squad – almost alone in the jungle, or so it seemed. We were ordered to fall back, recover our wounded and pull back to our previous position. As I retreated - the last person in the platoon to pull back, I could distinctly hear the sound of female laughter from the hill top - derisive and taunting laughter. I can only presume that it came from Filipino women who had joined the Japanese during their occupation of the Island, and probably married some of them. Upon the later surrender of the enemy forces at wars end, no Filipino women were found with them. (I did hear later that quite a few women were taken into custody at wars end).

24 May

Moved out as first scout on patrol with 1st squad, 3rd platoon, under Lt. Watkins. About 150 yards out, I began to notice many fresh tracks in the muddy trail... including some "split-toe" tracks that could only have been made by a sort of tennis shoe that the Japanese snipers wore. I also noted our communications wire had been neatly cut in numerous places. I also noted that the Jungle was strangely silent.

I halted the patrol and notified the officer in charge of my findings and suspicions. Lt. Watkins immediately decided to recall the patrol and return to camp for reinforcements before venturing out again. Just as we reached our company perimeter, we met four men from Regimental Headquarters, who were heading up the same trail we had just returned from. I knew one of the men as I had come overseas with him (Donovan). I told him that the area he was heading into was crawling with Japs, and that we had just returned from it for reinforcements and would be heading out again in a short while, and that he was in danger of being

ambushed going out with only four men. He said that he had been ordered to go out to check on the effect of artillery fire in the area and had to go ahead – even though I told him we would be returning with a larger patrol in a short time.

At exactly the same spot on the trail where we had turned back, his group was ambushed, and one man was killed. My platoon returned to rescue the two men who were pinned down by enemy fire and retrieve the body of the man killed. I have often thought of this incident, and wondered what prompted me to halt the patrol and turn back at the same spot where these men were ambushed only a few minutes later. I also am forever grateful to Lt. Watkins for calling off the patrol at my report and returning to our perimeter for reinforcements.

A short while following this incident we were pulled back from our positions in the mountains and were replaced by Filipino soldiers. We set up camp at the base of the mountain and cleaned ourselves, our equipment and discussed all the things that had happened to us. At about this time some of us were offered a short leave to go into the capitol city of the island. Several of us went and, among other things, visited the U.S. Army hospital there and the military cemetery where several of our buddies were buried.



Sign: "This hallowed ground is dedicated to the memory of these gallant men who died that freedom may live." (Web photo)

(continued....)



I recall the hospital visit quite clearly, primarily because one of the men we saw there was the new man who had suffered the bad head wound I mentioned. We were surprised that he was still there, but found that he was in no shape to transport at the time, but would be shipped back to the United States for treatment if he survived. We were also shocked to see that his wound was crawling with maggots, but were assured that this was a new treatment for cleansing wounds, and was deliberate. We found later that this was true, and that procedure was being used for the first time at the hospital on our Island.



"1 September 1945 saw 2d Battalion guarding 800 plus prisoners in the compound of the Lumber Mill at Fabrica, Negros Island. The veterans amongst us hadn't slept under a proper roof in over two years. All the houses behind Trooper John Reynolds, age 22, were built of solid mahogany."

I should add that it wasn't all combat – there were long periods of endless patrols, with no contacts, long periods of sitting in our positions, waiting for orders to move out, and moments of sheer terror when contact with the enemy was made and fighting erupted. I recall one instance when we were high in the mountains of Negros, the weather was continually damp, foggy and rain nearly every day. Endless patrols; setting up ambushes along watering points or mountain springs, and armed patrols to obtain water, guarding pack trains of Filipino porters who carried supplies and ammunition on their backs from the roads at the foot of the mountains to our positions in the hills.

I awakened one morning after spending the night in my foxhole, alternating between guard duty in case of a night attack and fitful sleeping; when I climbed out of my foxhole, I felt something in my eye. At about the same time, one of my companions said, *"My God, Stribling, there is something hanging out of your eye"*. Inspection revealed that a huge leech had attached himself to me during the night. My friend and squad leader Joe Dablock lighted a cigarette and touched the burning end to the leech to make it release its grip and removed it. There was no damage, but I later often wondered how I could sleep while he attached himself to me. It was probably about four inches long, but seemed huge. Dablock referred to himself as my eye doctor thereafter.

It was about this time and place when an incident occurred that has stuck in my mind and emerged in my thoughts on occasion. My squad was called on to patrol to the front of our company area to see if the enemy had pulled back. As first scout, I led the patrol forward toward our company outpost, which was guarding the trail leading to our company area. Just as I approached the outpost, I heard a shout and a burst of gunfire. We hit the ground, and then moved on to go through the outpost and on up the trail. At the outpost, we discovered that a Japanese soldier, apparently a non-commissioned officer of some rank, had just charged the outpost, shouting and brandishing a saber. He apparently had either went berserk, or had thought his troops were charging with him. As it happened, he was all-alone, and was cut down by our outpost fire.

My patrol was pulled back, since we had found out that the enemy was still positioned just ahead of us. It occurred to me that if I had been five minutes earlier, I would have led our patrol through our outpost, and probably would have ran head-on into the charging Japanese.

The next morning, after a mortar barrage on the hill ahead of us, we moved out to take the hill. As I recall, we were spread out in a skirmish line, and had gotten only a short way from our own lines when the shooting began. We took cover and would move up a few feet, hit the ground, and then move up again; I was trying to go from tree to tree for cover. I noticed a small depression with some logs piled in front of it just about 20 feet from my position, so I made a run for it and dove in. Just as I reared up to look on up the hill, the log beside me literally exploded as a round hit it inches from my head. A Japanese obviously had the position in his sights, so I piled out and dove behind a tree downhill from the position. It then became apparent that I had dived into a recently vacated Japanese position and that the gunner who had just taken a shot at me probably had just vacated the position himself. At any rate, we pulled back and it was decided to leave the hilltop to the enemy for another try later. I recall not being too unhappy with the decision.

Two close calls in such a short time were enough for me.

It was here too, that we would have to send armed patrols out to fill our canteens for drinking water, and springs and small water holes were great spots for an ambush....

(continued....)



....I recall one such patrol, although not in search of water, I led our patrol as first scout, down a slippery, muddy trail. At about the same time I smelled smoke, came upon a small clearing alongside the trail and observed a fire with a pot of something cooking on it. The Japs had apparently been aware of our approach and decided to pull out rather than fight us at the time - for which I am thankful. At about this time, we lost radio contact with the Company, so the platoon leader decided to call the patrol back. I can only assume someone wrecked the fire and dumped the Japs dinner on the ground - I was only interested in getting out of there at the time myself.

The troopers in my unit also had a habit, which I also shared, of searching for souvenirs in abandoned Japanese positions we had taken. In retrospect, I realize it was not too smart to do so, but on several occasions I crawled into an abandoned revetment or cave, armed with only a forty-five pistol, to search for anything of interest left behind by the enemy.

The war actually ended for me, for all practical purposes, sometime in August of 1945, when I became ill with hepatitis and was sent to a U. S. Army General hospital on the Island of Leyte for treatment. I came down with a case of malaria at the same time and spent the next month or more recovering. I was in the hospital when word of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the report of surrender came to us. By this time, I had been transferred to a convalescent hospital, and was rather enjoying life.

USO entertainers came to the base quite often and I recall the visit of Kay Kyser and his band to put on a show for us. When rumors of impending surrender and wars end became rampant though, I decided that I was going to go back to my unit and go home with them, so I skipped out of the hospital and grabbed a plane going to Negros and returned to my unit. Needless to say, however, I was a little premature.



Kay Kyser (R), WWII USO Show (Web photo)

Our Japanese had not surrendered as yet, and we were still in the hills trying to convince them to give up. After dropping leaflets, and finally radios to the Japanese in the hills opposing us, they were finally convinced that the time to surrender had come, and they gave up. We took several thousand Japanese prisoners. Actually, they outnumbered our troops, and we were very surprised because we thought we were only fighting a few hundred so-called stragglers.

After guarding the Japanese prisoners for a period of several weeks, they were loaded on boats for return to Japan, and we were moved to another city on the other side of the Island, and set up camp in tents in a large coconut grove. I was by now a squad leader, and we were housed in large squad tents complete with cots, mosquito bars, and all the comforts of home, including regular meals at the company mess tent.

I recall that the town was the home of a College, which was again in operation, and our company was invited to it for a dance one evening. We dressed in our best clean khaki uniforms, and proceeded in trucks to the College. The dance was chaperoned by the College, the girls were all college students, and the edge of the dance hall was lined with chairs, and occupied by apparently the mothers of all the girls who were there to keep an eye on things. There was an excellent band, which played songs just like in the United States.



Surrender



The Japanese who surrendered vastly outnumbered us. Our Intelligence estimates of the numbers of Japanese effectives was vastly inaccurate.



There were approximately 800 prisoners at Fabrica alone, and generally they were in good physical condition.

(continued....)



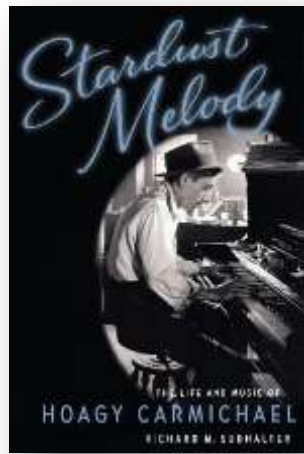
I was dancing with a well-dressed and pretty College girl to Hoagy Carmichaels "Stardust" when it hit me that this was all real, not a dream, and that the war was really over and that I had made it through in one piece and alive.

I should add another incident that has remained with me - even though it was in no way related to combat.

Sometime in May, we were pulled back from the front lines and assigned to guard a large ammunition supply dump near the capitol city of Bacolod. It was more or less a short period of rest and relaxation for us since there was no enemy in the area – to our knowledge. We were there for approximately two weeks, enjoyed swimming in a river adjacent to our campsite, visiting with the local Filipino people who lived nearby, and going into town – which had been relatively untouched by the war. It was while we were here that some officer contacted me from our regimental headquarters. He asked if I would be interested in making a career of the Army if they would send me back to the United States to attend West Point. I was floored by the offer, but at the time, was assigned duty as a first scout - a position that had the highest casualty rate in our outfit. I knew that it would only be a matter of time until my luck would run out and I would get hurt - or worse. With that in mind, I assured the man that I was definitely interested. The truth is, I would have taken off swimming to get back to the states and out of combat at the time.

I did hear that there were only two men in the regiment to whom the offer was made. As it happened, I heard no more of it and can only assume that due to the winding down of the war in Europe, there was no great need for more West Point officers four years down the road – which was what it would take to attend and graduate from West Point.

I can also assume that the offer may have had something to do with the fact that I had been a participant in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), and had attended college at the University of Kansas before it was disbanded. I also had an exceedingly high score on my AGCT (Army General Classification Test) when I entered active duty. This primarily due to the fact that I had just completed six months of what amounted to "cramming" at Kansas U. My score, as I recall, was 139. The average score was probably in the 70 to 80 ranges. I do know that it



(Web image)

required a score of 110 to be admitted to OCS (Officer Candidate School). Oh well, such was not to be, but I have often wondered – what if?

I should mention that the ASTP was the pet of Secretary of War Henry Stimson.

The idea was to take 150,000 of the brightest draftees and offer to put them through College if they opted for the Army. Those given the offer were young men whose test scores indicated that they would probably get cushy rear-echelon jobs with rapid promotion or be selected for OCS (Officer Candidate School). Those of us who accepted had to forgo those opportunities, but were to be sent to College as privates, at \$50.00 per month, but would be provided with room, board, tuition, and would take regular classes, majoring in areas where the Army anticipated needing specialists later on in the war, in such areas as mathematics, engineering, or foreign languages.



Secretary Stimson, 1945

Most ASTPers got started in the fall semester of 1943. By summer of 1944, most were gone. In anticipation of manpower needs after the battle for Europe began, the program was cut from 150,000 to 30,000; also some 71,000 aviation cadets were released to the ground forces. So suddenly the Army had 190,000 of the best and brightest – enough for ten divisions, ready to go into rifle companies as replacements. There was some bitterness and much bitching, then off to a brief basic training course. So much for the ASTP; the Army promised them a free education then changed its mind and put them in the front lines.

Shortly after we had set up camp at Dumaguete, the word came down that the unit was to be disbanded; high point men, (who had been overseas the longest and/or in the army the longest), would be sent home with the unit colors; low point men (such as I) would be transferred to the **11th Airborne Division** and be sent to Japan for occupation duty.

A short time later, I found myself on a voyage to Japan on a Navy LST (Landing Ship, Tank). We were crowded into the hold of the ship that normally held tanks, and folding cots covered the entire floor space....

(continued....)



....Our timing was perfect for the trip and as we sailed across the China Sea enroute to Japan, when one of the worst typhoons in years hit us. The ship rode it out, but we had some tense moments as the ship would leave the water cresting one wave, and the propeller would be beating in the air as we dove into the next wave. Our ship was a flat-bottomed craft, and one of the bow doors, which were made to be dropped down to unload tanks on a beach, was sprung by the storm, and navy crewmen hurriedly welded it shut and sealed the leaking sea water out by stuffing thin cotton mattresses into the cracks.

We made it to Japan, and I was assigned to Company D, 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division. I was shipped immediately to a seaport town in northern Honshu Island - the largest island of the Japanese homeland. We were the first American troops the locals had ever seen, and our reception was different, to say the least. The streets would suddenly be deserted as one of our patrols entered. This soon changed when they realized we were not bloodthirsty savages, out to kill, rape and plunder.

Occupation duty was really not bad duty at all, and when those of us who had so recently been shot at by these people, realized that they were human after all, it was really good duty.

Shortly after our arrival, our cooks accidentally set the hotel we were staying in afire with the charcoal stove they were cooking on, and we were pulled from the town and returned to the regiment and regular army life began for us. Drill, guard duty, and the regular routine were boring to say the least. My feeling at that time - and to this day, was that the bombing ended the war without the necessity of invading the home islands of Japan - which would have resulted in untold casualties to our troops. Rumor had it that in the event of an invasion, my regiment was scheduled to be dropped on Formosa as a prelude to the actual invasion, and we would have undoubtedly suffered heavy casualties.

While my company was stationed at the Japanese city of Morioka, in northern Honshu province, we had Japanese interpreters working for us to assist in our contact with the Japanese. One of ours was a Japanese-American woman who had come to Japan just prior to the war with her Japanese husband, and was stuck there when the war began. Her husband died during the war, and she was left with two children in a land that was totally strange to her. It was strange to us because her English was perfect - actually better than her Japanese. One of the other interpreters was a former merchant mariner (Japanese merchant marine),



who had visited the United States in his travels and who spoke fair English.

Among my souvenirs, I had a Japanese battle flag that I had picked up in the Philippines. I decided to take it to him and have him read the Japanese writing on it. You may not be aware of it, but Flags were quite popular with the Japanese soldiers, and they would be inscribed with all sorts of Japanese writing - autographs, addresses, good luck wishes, etc., none of which I had the faintest idea of the meaning. At any rate I took the flag to our company office, and requested one of our interpreters, Tanaka by name, to tell me what was written on it. As soon as I gave it to him, he and the other interpreter broke into a barrage of excited Japanese conversation - completely ignoring me, or so it seemed. Finally, Tanaka's companion asked *"Is the soldier from whom you seized this battle flag dead?"* At this time our first sergeant (Louie Calhoun) - with whom I had served in the 503rd, stated most emphatically, *"If Stribling has his battle flag, you can bet your A-- he is dead."* After a long hesitation, and more Japanese between the two, Tanaka said to me, in a very low voice, *"This Japanese soldier's name was also Tanaka, the same as mine."* I recall being a bit flustered, and telling him that I really didn't know if the soldier was dead or not; and that I may have found the flag in an abandoned backpack.

At any rate, I wound up giving the flag to Tanaka, who appeared to be extremely grateful, and assured me he would see that the flag was returned to the soldier's family if at all possible. I don't recall that I ever found out what all was inscribed on the flag, or if it was actually a relative of our interpreter. I think, however, that Tanaka is a very common name in Japan - much like Jones in the United States.

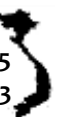
The short time I spent with the 11th Airborne in Japan was, for the most part, very enjoyable duty, and I made several friends there. However, the people I remember best - even after over half a century has elapsed - are the young troopers I joined on Mindoro. These are the ones with whom I shared the foxholes and the firefights; with whom I *"Charged the blazing hill"*; saw my friends get wounded and killed, and, fighting beside them.

I grew up overnight.

Charles R. Stribling

**The author retired as a Major and as of the date of this report, resided in Fresno, CA.*

[Source: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion web site]
(Web photos added)



From Down Under....

Lance Corporal Kyle Watson of the Royal Army Medical Corps , who stands 5'1" in her Army boots is 1 of 4 woman in history to receive the Military Cross for bravery as a Medic in time of war.

Courageous: An Army medic who put herself in 'mortal danger' when she ignored heavy Taliban fire to treat a wounded Afghan soldier has been awarded the Military Cross.

Lance Corporal Kylie Watson gave the medical care in exposed open ground for 20 minutes before helping to evacuate the stricken man. L/Cpl Watson, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, is believed to be only the fourth woman to be awarded the MC.



L/Cpl Watson

On another occasion, she made a 100-metre dash in full view of the enemy under sustained fire to deliver life-saving first aid to an Afghan soldier who had been shot twice in the pelvis. L/Cpl stemmed his bleeding despite being hampered by other Afghan troops and got the injured man to a helicopter landing site 200 metres away.

Her citation for the MC said: *"Watson's immense courage, willingness to put her own life at risk and absolute bravery saved the life of one warrior and acted as an inspiration to her platoon and their Afghan National Army partners."*

Speaking to the Independent last year, the lance corporal said she had seen a fellow soldier shot through the face while serving in Helmand province as part of Operation Black Prince.

The bravery for which she has been awarded the MC came during the same tour of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, a Royal Marine has been awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross after he picked up and threw back an enemy grenade before lying on a comrade to shield him from the blast.

Marine Mark Jackson was on look-out duty at a remote patrol base in Afghanistan's Helmand Province on August 24 last year when he heard a metallic thud and saw a cylindrical object rolling towards the feet of a fellow sentry. Immediately realising it was a home-made grenade, he grabbed it and threw it back before leaping on his comrade to protect him.

[Sent in by Ray Chapman, RAA]

Sky Soldier Docs Coming to the Aid of a Buddy in What Appears to be a Bomb Crater



We came across this photo on the web. If you know the who, what, where and when behind the picture, please let us know so we can share the info. Thanks. Ed

Cmdr Looking After His Men



"U.S. Army Lt. Col. Michael Wagner, commander of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, inspects Pvt. Christian Rodriguez equipment before an airborne operation at Aviano Air Base, Italy, Dec. 1, 2015.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade is the U.S. Army Contingency Response Force in Europe, capable of projecting ready forces anywhere in the U.S., European, Africa or Central Commands' areas of responsibility within 18 hours."

(U.S. Army Photo by Specialist Davide Dalla Massara/Released)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2016 – Issue 65

Page 77 of 83

173d Documentary Planned

Operation Yorktown 1966



Evacuating wounded of Alpha Company during Operation Yorktown in Xuan Loc, RVN, June 29, 1966.

(Photo by Jack Ribera, A/2/503)

It was June 29, 1966, approximately 37 miles east of Bien Hoa in Xuan Loc Province, when three platoons of A/2/503d Infantry engaged an enemy force between 75-100 strong employing 50 caliber machine guns and grenade launchers.

“An immense volume of small arms fire, including 50s erupted about one to two thousand meters to the north of my position, and the radio became alive with transmissions from the third platoon sergeant that they were pinned down under fire from a superior enemy force and needed assistance. The radio was completely jammed with transmissions between the third platoon and the company commander who was at a 3rd location.... We ran all out for about 1000 yards, dropped packs and encountered massive fire from the enemy that we suppressed by going on line and then my point men called to me and I saw a scene that I will never forget as long as I live.... the gray mud was no longer just gray, but now had streaks of red everywhere in it.... the forest was almost completely covered with gun smoke that hung there like a curtain, and there were bodies everywhere... one I saw was alive and looked like he was a man dying of thirst in the middle of the desert and we had brought him water..... I then turned my attention back to the pile of what I thought was the dead. I was sad to see Sgt. Morris dead and walked over to him and for no particular reason kicked him on the foot to make sure. I almost dropped my rifle when his eyes opened up, focused on me and very slowly his right hand made its way to his forehead in an almost perfect salute, and he said, ‘All the way, Sir’.... I was stunned, my god, he was alive! I yelled for a medic. I saw that his thumbs were full of hand grenade pins and that he had ‘not one but two sucking chest wounds’. Barely alive, he called to me and said in a strong but typically polite voice,

‘Just tell me where you want me to move, Sir, and I’ll crawl there’. Bill Vose, A/2/503

For his heroic actions during this ferocious combat action, SSgt. Charlie Morris of A/2/503 would be awarded the Medal of Honor.



The late Charlie Morris.

(Photo courtesy of Jim Healy A/2/503)

Remember Operation Yorktown, Vietnam in 1966, when Company A, 2d Bn, 503d Airborne Infantry engaged the 308th Main Force Viet Cong Battalion?

Men of the 2/503 who were there and who participated in this operation are planning to produce a video documentary to record that history for all time. If you were in the 2/503, especially Company A, we'd very much like to receive your comments, photos, and stories on what transpired that day. We will be doing some video-taping during the 173d Airborne Brigade Reunion at Ft. Benning during June 2016, as we begin putting together the documentary.

Please contact LTC Jack Kelley, CO A/2/503 during Operation Yorktown, at jacktkelley@aol.com or call him at (910) 488-0165 to become part of this important historical endeavor.

Hope to see you at the Reunion! *Airborne!!*



What's left of Alpha Company's 3rd Platoon following the battle on 29 June. (Photo by Doc Bob Beaton)



BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Ft. Benning, Georgia | June 2016



From the rice paddies and central highlands of Vietnam;

from the sands of Iraq; from the mountains
of Afghanistan; from Italy, Australia and
New Zealand; from the fifty states and all
points between – back to the beginning
we go.

South Carolina Chapter 30
invites you to join us in Columbus,
Georgia, home of Ft. Benning, for
five days of R&R – back to where
the Airborne experience began for
the majority of Sky Soldiers – this
time with less running, yelling, and
push-ups.

We have planned trips to local
historic sites and a day at Ft.
Benning to revisit our airborne roots.
We will visit the 250 and 34 foot
towers and eat a meal in an Army
dining facility. If the Army's schedule
matches ours, we will view a training
jump and pin wings on a graduating
class. *And of course a trip to our
173d monument is a must.*

All reunion activities will be
conducted at the Columbus
Convention & Trade Center located
directly across the street from the
Marriott hotel.

As the calendar counts down
to 7 June 2016, our reunion
committee will be busy planning
and organizing a reunion we hope
you will not soon forget. We
have arranged for the hotels in
our 'stay' list to provide a hot
breakfast daily. We contracted
buses to transport us to and from
daily activities. For the golfers
among us, we have planned a day

of golf at the Ft. Benning golf course.

Please check our website periodically for
updates and our continuing events planning.

<http://www.173dreunion2016.com/>

SC Chapter 30
(2016 Reunion Committee)

Contact:

Phone: 803-237-3169

Email: bowway@aol.com



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind 2016/2017 ~



Mid-Winter Weekend Getaway, February 25-28,

2016 is at Hilton Head Island, SC and is hosted by the Ben Vandervoort Chapter. Host hotel is the Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa.

Contact:

Bill Eberle

Phn: 843-682-4171

Eml: airborneben@hargray.com



LZ Zulu Zulu & Operation Silver City (March 1966), Gathering of Sky Soldiers, March 15-16, 2016,

Cocoa Beach VFW Post 10148, Cocoa Beach, FL. See Page 10 for details. All Sky Soldiers & family welcome.

Contact:

Eml: rto173d@cfl.rr.com



2016 Annual Airborne Awards Festival, April 13-16,

2016, College Park, GA, hosted by Donald D. Lassen Atlanta All Airborne Chapter. Host hotel is the Atlanta Airport Marriott.

Contact:

Web: <http://www.82nd-atlanta.com/2016-annual-airborne-awards/>



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual

Reunion, "Back to the Beginning", hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30, June 7-10, 2016, Ft. Benning, GA.

Contact:

Phn: 803-237-3169

Eml: bowway@aol.com

Web: 173dreunion2016.com

(See Page 79 for more details)



3rd Brigade LRRP, 101st Airborne Division

Reunion, March 15-18, 2017, Fort Benning, GA.

Contact:

Dr. Rick Shoup

Phn: 978-505-3253 or 978-371-7108

Eml: rfs.concord@gmail.com

NOTE:

If you are aware of any upcoming 'Airborne' or attached unit reunions, please send complete details to rto173d@cfl.rr.com for inclusion in our newsletter.



January, 1973, Operation Homecoming. 591 POW's come home.





~ FINAL SALUTE AND FAREWELL ~

TO SOME OF OUR SKY SOLDIERS & 503RD TROOPERS
WHO LEFT US ON THEIR FINAL JUMP THIS PAST YEAR



~ ALL THE WAY, BROTHERS ~



Don Kamadulas
HHC/2/503



Art Martinez
HHC/B/2/503



Court Prisk
3/319th



Brett Aycock
HHC/1/503



Billy Duncan
CSM, 173d



Justin Crivello
173d ABCT



Frederick Fitzmeyer
173d Abn



"Ray" Flores
173d Abn



"Judd" Fuller
173d Abn



Danny Gilbert
173d Abn



"Jack" Harjo
173d Abn



Larry Hickman
173d Abn



"Jack" Johnson
173d Abn



"Donnie" Kincaid
173d Abn



Clay Koop
3/503



Gerhard Schultz
173d Abn



LeVon Thomas
173d Abn



Michael Tiutchenko
173d Abn



John Mason
173d Abn



Samuel Perrott
173d Abn





"Wild Bill" Ramdell
173d Abn



Sammy Robinson
173d Abn



James Roseman
173d Abn



James Vaughn
173d Abn



John Wayne
173d ABCT



Edward Weitmann
173d Abn



Ronald Wooley
173d Abn



Donnie Luck
173d Abn



Jimmy Sink
503rd PIR



Willie Mitchell
173d Abn



Thomas Mica
173d Abn



Frank Anuci
173d Abn



Robert Bruce
173d Abn



Thomas Buck
173d Abn



Edward Grannis
173d Abn



Jimmy Howard
173d Abn



Peter Murphy
173d Abn



Vernon Short
173d Abn



Shelby Stewart
173d Abn



Santos Moreno
B/3/503



Charles Graham
173d Abn



Thom Cook
C/4/503



Peter Arnold
A/1/503



Frank Vavrin
173d Abn



Jon-Eric Willette
173d Abn



173d Airborne Association Membership Application Form

PLEASE PRINT AND FILL-OUT THIS APPLICATION

Mail Application and Payments to;

Please **circle** the appropriate boxes below

Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill
97 Earle Street
Norwood, MA 02062-1504

Make checks payable to:
173d Airborne Brigade Assn

New	Renewal	Change of Address, <i>Change of Chapter</i>	
Annual Membership			
Ends on 31 December of each year - \$ 24.00			
Regular *		Associate	
Sky Soldier	Veteran	Gold Star	Spouse of deceased Sky Soldier
Life Membership \$ 173.00			
Regular *		Gold Star (Parent or Spouse)	

**Regular Membership open to those assigned or attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade*

Please print current or updated information below:

Service Number (B446349): _____
(Use first Letter of last name and last 6 of service number)

First Name: _____ Initial: _____ Last Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State or AE: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

173d Service Dates (02/2003-02/2005): _____

Unit while with the 173d: (A-1-503rd or Co A/Support BN): _____

Chapter Affiliated to: (4, 18, At Large): _____ Send Magazine: [] U.S Mail or [] Via Email

Gold Star Relationship (Wife, Mother)(PFC Mike Smith 11-08-67): _____

My Email address: _____

After we receive your payment (\$ 24.00 or \$ 173.00), please allow two weeks for processing.



Please make check payable to:
173d Airborne Brigade Assn.

Mail Application & Check to:
Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill
97 Earle Street
Norwood, MA 02062-1504

