



December 2015, Issue 64
Contact: rto173d@cfl.r.com

See all issues at the 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website:
http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ Photo of the Month ~

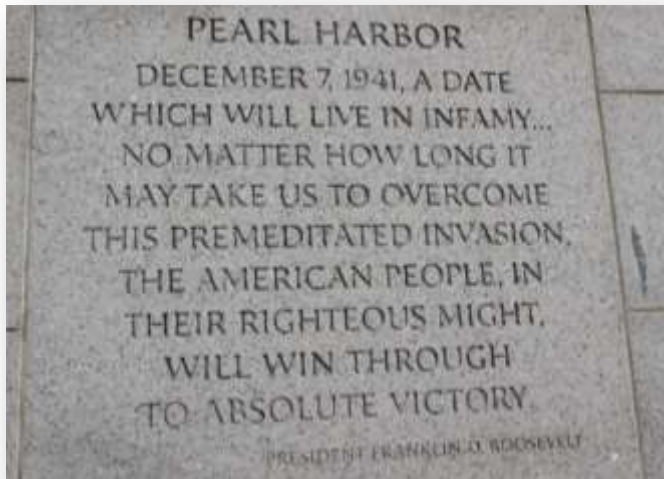
"a date which will live in infamy"



December 7, 1941, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. (web photo)



The Attack on Pearl Harbor



The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy against the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, in the United States Territory of Hawaii, on the morning of December 7, 1941. The attack led to the United States' entry into World War II.

Japan intended the attack as a preventive action to keep the U.S. Pacific Fleet from interfering with military actions the Empire of Japan planned in Southeast Asia against overseas territories of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. There were near-simultaneous Japanese attacks on the U.S.-held Philippines, Guam and Wake Island and on the British Empire in Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The attacks - from troop landings at Kota Bharu, Malaya, to the air attacks ranging geographically from Hong Kong to Pearl Harbor - took place over seven hours.

The attack commenced at 7:48 a.m. Hawaiian Time. The base was attacked by 353 Japanese fighter planes, bombers, and torpedo planes in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. All eight U.S. Navy battleships were damaged, with four sunk. All but *Arizona* were later raised, and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. The Japanese also sank or damaged three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship, and one minelayer. 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed; 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded. Important base installations such as the power station, shipyard, maintenance, and fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters building (also home of the intelligence section) were not attacked.

Japanese losses were light: 29 aircraft and five midget submarines lost, and 64 servicemen killed. One Japanese sailor, Kazuo Sakamaki, was captured.

The attack came as a profound shock to the American people and led directly to the American entry into World War II in both the Pacific and European theaters. The following day, December 8, the United States declared war on Japan.

Domestic support for non-interventionism, which had been fading since the German attack on France in 1940, disappeared. Clandestine support of the United Kingdom (e.g., the Neutrality Patrol) was replaced by active alliance. Subsequent operations by the U.S. prompted Germany and Italy to declare war on the U.S. on December 11, which was reciprocated by the U.S. the same day.

From the 1950s, several writers alleged that parties high in the U.S. and British governments knew of the attack in advance and may have let it happen (or even encouraged it) with the aim of bringing America into war. However, this advance-knowledge conspiracy theory is rejected by mainstream historians.

There were numerous historical precedents for unannounced military action by Japan. However, the lack of any formal warning, particularly while negotiations were still apparently ongoing, led President Franklin D. Roosevelt to proclaim December 7, 1941, "*a date which will live in infamy*".

Because the attack happened without a declaration of war and without explicit warning, the attack on Pearl Harbor was judged by the Tokyo Trials to be a war crime.



Rest easy Sailors



President Barack Obama's 2015 Veterans Day remarks at Arlington National Cemetery

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you so much. Please be seated. Thank you.

Thank you, Bob, for your service to our nation as an Army Airborne Ranger and your tireless work on behalf of your fellow veterans. To Vice President Joe Biden; General Dunford; Major General Becker; distinguished guests; to our outstanding veterans service organizations and their leadership; to our men and women in uniform; and most of all, to our proud veterans and your families — it is a great privilege to be with you once again. And to Captain Florent Groberg, as Bob just mentioned, tomorrow, it will be my honor to present you with the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military decoration.

To all our veterans here today, and to veterans across America, whether you served on the beaches of Europe, the jungles of Asia, the deserts of the Middle East; whether you served here at home or overseas, in wartime or in peace; whether you served proudly in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard — you are part of an unbroken chain of patriots who have served this country with honor through the life of our nation.

On these sacred grounds, where generations of heroes have come to rest, we remember all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. And today, we gather once more to salute every patriot who has ever proudly worn the uniform of the United States of America.

This year, as we mark 70 years since our victory in the Second World War, we pay special tribute to a generation that literally saved the world. We're joined by several of those heroes, including our oldest known female World War II vet, Army Lieutenant Colonel Luta C. McGrath, who this month turns 108. There she is. And I would ask all of our veterans and families of World War II, if you can stand, please stand or raise your hand so America can thank you one more time.

Today, in big cities and small towns across our country, there will be ceremonies around flagpoles and parades down Main Street to properly express our gratitude, to show our appreciation to men and women who served so that we might live free. It is right that we do so. But our tributes will ring hollow if we stop there.

If tomorrow, after the parades and the ceremonies we roll up the banners and sweep the veterans halls and go back to our daily lives, forgetting the bond between the service of our veterans and our obligations as citizens, then we will be doing a profound disservice to our



Command In-Chief places wreath at tomb of the unknown at Arlington Cemetery

veterans and to the very cause for which they served. This day is not only about gratitude for what they have done for us, it is also a reminder of all that they still have to give our nation, and our duty to them. And that's what I want to talk about briefly today.

We're in the midst of a new wave of American veterans. In recent years, more than a million of our men and women in uniform — many of them veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq — have completed their military service and returned to civilian life. Each year, at least another 200,000 do the same. Our 9/11 generation of veterans are joining the ranks of those who have come before, including many of you, our veterans of Korea and Vietnam.

Our tributes today will ring hollow if we do not ensure that our veterans receive the care that you have earned and that you deserve. The good news is, is that in recent years, we've made historic investments to boost the VA budget, expand benefits, offer more mental health care and improve care for our wounded warriors — especially those with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. We've now slashed the disability claims backlog by nearly 90 percent. We're reducing the outrage of veterans' homelessness, and have helped tens of thousands of our veterans get off the streets.

Still, the unacceptable problems that we've seen — like long wait times, and some veterans not getting the timely care that they need — is a challenge for all of us if we are to match our words with deeds. And my message to every single veteran, to veterans all across this country is that I am still not satisfied, and Bob McDonald is still not satisfied. And we are going to keep investing in the facilities and the physicians and the staff to make sure that our veterans get the care that you need when you need it. That is our obligation, and we are not going to let up.

Our tributes today will also ring hollow if we don't provide our veterans with the jobs and opportunities that you need when you come home. That's why we've helped more than 1.5 million veterans and their families pursue an education under the Post-9/11 GI bill. That's why we worked to make sure that every state now provides veterans and their families with in-state tuition. It's why we're fighting to make it easier for our veterans to get the licenses and certifications to transition the outstanding skills they gained in the armed services to civilian jobs. It's why we're helping more veterans and military spouses find jobs. And today, the veterans' unemployment rate is down to 3.9 percent — even lower than the national average.

But this can't just be a job for government. We all have a role to play. I realize that with less than 1 percent of Americans serving in uniform, the other 99 percent of....

(continued....)



....folks don't always see and appreciate the incredible skills and assets that our veterans can offer. On this Veterans Day, here's what I want every American to know: Our veterans are some of the most talented, driven, capable people on Earth.

Think about the leadership that they've learned — twenty-somethings leading platoons into life-or-death situations. The cutting-edge technologies that they've mastered. Their ability to adapt to changing and unpredictable situations. They can perform under pressure. They've helped reconstruct towns and mediate disputes. They've managed large-scale projects. They've learned how to work on teams, how to stay committed to a mission, how to solve seemingly intractable problems. They get stuff done. And they are selfless. And they are brave. And they are qualified. And America needs folks who know how to get stuff done.

If you can save a life on the battlefield, you can save a life in an ambulance. If you can oversee a convoy or millions of dollars of assets in a conflict zone, you sure can help manage a company's supply chain. If you can maintain the most advanced weapons in the world, surely you can manufacture the next generation of advanced technology right here at home.

Our veterans will tell you themselves — they may have put away their uniforms, but they're not finished serving their country. And that includes our wounded warriors who tell me that as soon as they can, they want to serve their country again. They're exactly the kind of people we need to keep America competitive in the 21st century. That's why more and more companies are hiring veterans — not out of charity, not out of patriotism or some moral obligation — although they do have those obligations — but because they know it's good for their bottom line.

Every day, our veterans help keep America strong. Every day — responding to natural disasters here at home and around the world, working to end homelessness and get more of their brothers and sisters in arms the resources they need to transition into civilian life. They're starting their own businesses, like the two veterans who started a coffee shop that's so good my own staff voted to have it served in the White House. And understand, we consume a lot of coffee in the White House. So to my sleep-deprived staff, those guys are pretty heroic.

Our veterans are moms and dads, they're teachers and doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs, social workers and community leaders. They are serving in statehouses across the country. They're serving in Congress. We've got a proud veteran, retired Navy Captain Scott Kelly, Commander of the International Space Station, who's up there right now, just became the American astronaut to serve the longest consecutive flight in space.

Our veterans are already making America great every single day. So my message today is simple: If you want to get the job done, hire a vet. If you're a business that needs team players who know how to lead and execute an

idea, hire a vet. If you're a school system that needs dedicated, passionate teachers, hire a veteran. If you're a non-profit that needs leaders who have been tested and can follow through on a vision, hire a veteran. Every sector, every industry, every community can benefit from the incredible talents of our veterans. They're ready to serve, and they'll make you proud.

I want to just give you one example, a young woman named Jennifer Madden. Jenn joined the Army at 17 years old. She wanted to be just like her grandpa, a Korean War veteran. Her very first day of basic training was September 11th, 2001. She deployed to Afghanistan, where she pulled security details during attacks. She lost one of her close friends in combat. When she came home, she tried to get back into her old life but found she simply couldn't stay focused in school or at work. She was struggling to relate to her family and her friends. Soon she was self-medicating, and became homeless. Jenn felt like she had lost her mission, her sense of purpose.

But then, thanks to an organization that connects veterans with therapists who donate their time, Jenn was able to get counseling at no charge. She started dealing with her post-traumatic stress. With a lot of hard work, she started pulling her life back together. And today, Jenn and the love of her life, Josh, are raising two beautiful children. She is a licensed nurse. She works at a rehab facility helping folks who were just like her, including veterans, get back on their feet. And through Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative, she's an advocate for her fellow veterans. Jenn is here today. And I want Jenn to stand if she can, because I want everybody to thank her for her courage, her example, for her telling her story. We are extraordinarily grateful. Thank you, Jenn.

And I tell Jenn's story because like all of our brave men and women in uniform, Jenn represents the best of who we are as a nation. She has sacrificed for us, and sometimes has the scars seen and unseen that are part of that sacrifice. And she's an example of what's possible when we express our gratitude not just in words, not just on one day, but through deeds every day, when we open our hearts and give hope to our returning heroes, and we harness your talents and your drive, and when we honor your sense of purpose and empower you to continue serving the country you love.

What has always made America great, what has always made us exceptional, are the patriots who, generation after generation, dedicate themselves to building a nation that is stronger, freer, a little more perfect. On this day and every day, we thank you.

God bless our veterans and your families. And God bless the United States of America.

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173d Airborne Association Names Brigade's ~ 2015 Sky Soldier of the Year ~ LTC JACK KELLEY



Story by Phil Coleman

LTC Kelley was born 8 July 1937 in Orlando, Florida. He was educated at the Citadel, graduating in 1959 with a degree in Political Science. He also holds a Master's Degree of Science from the American University (1974) and a Master's Degree of Arts from Central Michigan University (1976). He was commissioned a 2nd Lt. Infantry in June 1959.



Jack

In 1966 Capt. Kelley served as Company Commander of A Co 2/503 173rd ABN BDE and then as Aide de Camp for General R. Deane. In 1970 he served as S-3 3/503 173rd ABN BDE.

LTC Kelley went on to serve until 1979. He retired after serving as Battalion Commander 1/505 82nd Airborne Division (1976 and '77) and Deputy Commander 5th Special Forces Group (1978 and '79).

His decorations include: the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star w/V device and six oak leaf clusters, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, and the Air Medal with 11 clusters. Additionally the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Expert Infantry Man's Badge, Senior Parachute Wings, Pathfinder's Badge, and Crew Member Badge.

LTC Kelley was one of three founding members of the Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade in the early 1970s. He, along with Col Robert Sigholtz (a DMOR and deceased) and Col Don Soland (deceased) were responsible for and coordinated the founding and organization of the Society and were involved in a number of the first reunions/gatherings of the Society in 1973 and 1974 at Fort Myer and Fort Belvoir.

LTC Kelley served as the Masters of Ceremonies at the penultimate reunion held at Fort Bragg in early 2000s. He also served as Chaplain for the 173rd Airborne Association.

After retiring, LTC Kelley served as Associate Pastor of the Northwood Temple Pentecostal Holiness Church in Fayetteville from 1982-1987. He continued his ministry doing pastoral counseling and served in the same capacity helping veterans as Executive Committeeman Military Order of the Purple Heart.

He has been Founder and Executive Director of Men's Ministries for the International Pentecostal Holiness Church for 20 years.

LTC Kelley and Lynn, his wife of 55 years, live in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and have two sons.

Source:
Sky Soldier Magazine
Summer 2015 – Vol. 31 No. 3
(Photos added)



Family Kelley

Congratulations Cap!!!

(continued....)





Jack, center of photo, with some of his *No DEROS Alpha* troopers and a few of their ladies, at 173d Airborne Association Reunion in Lexington, KY 2012.



“Clem Green was ‘A’ Company 2/503d Company Commander Capt. Jack Kelley’s term used to describe the average, every day, mythical, hardworking and downtrodden paratrooper infantryman who bore the brunt of every battle and the mistakes of leadership, and served as an example of what to do and what not to do by all. This sign posted near the entrance to “A” Company at the 2/503d’s Camp Zinn, proudly announced to all visitors: ‘Welcome to Alpha Company – Home of Clem Green’”. Bill Vose, A/2/503



Once shared by ‘Cap’ in memory of his men:
*"Your silent tents of green
 We deck with fragrant flowers;
 Yours has the suffering been,
 The memory shall be ours."*





INCOMING!



~ Some of You Knew or Remember Wayne ~

Wayne Ledbetter
and I met in Jump School, August 1963. Although Wayne had told me we actually went through basic, leadership school and AIT before jump school. Wayne served with the 173d, HHC 2/503rd, from September 1963 to March 1965. Wayne did not go to Vietnam.



Ken

Wayne and I were complete opposites, but for some reason we always paled around and after the service stayed in touch with one another. Around 1970, Wayne's marriage failed and Wayne became homeless. Wayne had one son, Ricky, who committed suicide several years ago. Wayne was living on the streets and in an out of shelters. Wayne would always call around the holidays or periodically every couple months or so.

About a year ago I tried contacting Wayne to see how he was. Wayne was in and out of the VA hospital for many things including a quadruple bypass about two years ago. I have tried many ways to contact Wayne or see where Wayne was for the past year. I have a friend that is a Funeral Director in Maryland and he was able to find out that Wayne had died July 6, 2014. My friend was unable to determine the cause of death. I know that Wayne was in extreme bad health for many years.

The last time I spoke with Wayne he was supposed to have some type of procedure at the VA about the same time of his passing.

I know some of you know Wayne or maybe remember him. Because Wayne had no living immediate family left, I felt the need to send this email. AATW,

Ken Redding
173d Airborne Brigade
HHC 2/503rd Airborne
Okinawa 1963-1965
Viet Vet 1965-1966



~ Not 1961 ~

A good issue (Issue 63, Oct-Nov), and a good lead story (*The Marines and the 173rd Airborne Brigade*, by Dick Culver, Pages 2-3), but inaccurate. There was no 173rd Abn Bde on Okinawa or anywhere else in 1961. It was activated in August, 1963; I know because I was there.



You may be interested to know that when I was CO of Co. A, 1/503 in 1964, our barracks was next door to a Marine barracks in Sukaran. The rest of the battalion was at Camp Kubasaki on the east side of the island, so we were alone with the jarheads. It made for an interesting situation.

Phillip L. Blake, COL (Ret)
CO A/1/503

Note: We double-checked to see if the error was ours, but it was not. The original article by the good Marine stated 1961. We have to cut the author some slack though....*Marine*. Ed

~ We're all out of the 2 years... ~

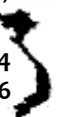
I have a Marine buddy here in Cocoa Beach, FL, Jack, who was a tanker in Vietnam. Our late buddy, Don "Rocky" Rockholt, A/2/503, and I used to call Jack a 'Tinker', just because, and years ago we pasted a 173d sticker under his pickup...it's probably still there. Jack likes to tell the true story about the time he went to enlist in the Marines. He told the Sergeant at the enlistment office he'd like to enlist for 2 years. The Sergeant paused, shuffled some papers, then said, "*We're all out of the 2 years, but we do have an opening for 4 years.*" Jack pondered this, then said, "*Okay, I'll take that.*" *Marines*, you gotta love 'em. Ed

~ Looking For Buddy ~

I had a long-time friend named **Jerry Mixon** who I lost contact with many years ago. My father was a southern Baptist minister and married Jerry to his wife Marilyn. Jerry was wounded several times when the third platoon was almost wiped out, again. I think he was from Long Beach, CA at the time. Hoping someone can hook me up with him. Thanks.

Larry Sword, A/2/503
l.sword1732@att.net

(Incoming continued....)



~ Back to Corregidor ~

I will be over in Manila in December-January, and that means I will be close and handy to Corregidor. I will be going to Corregidor, of course, though I don't know when precisely. Normally I do two or three days there, just to catch up. If any 2/503 Vietnam veterans find themselves in Manila, and their visit coincides with my Corregidor visit, I would be glad to give them the "staff tour" such as it is. I can make special arrangements for extended tours if necessary, but I charge my actual outlays. In return, I buy the beer!

There is a museum on Corregidor, and maybe you VN guys might consider creating a display of jump gear & equipment? That would be a big project. My friends and I would be prepared to assist, to ensure that the display gets entirely done. Karl Welteke, my good mate there in Subic Bay, is ex-USN, but he's done two tours in Vietnam, and his heart is definitely in the right place with the team.

Paul Whitman
Webmaster

503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion Website

Note: Any Troopers interested in visiting Corregidor and/or Paul's idea about a display, may email him at paul@whitman.com.au

~ VNV Looking for Nose Art ~

Searching for individualized "names" (e.g. *Iron Butterfly*, *Cheap Thrills*, etc.) that were painted on in-country Army copters, 1962-73. Help me document this often overlooked chapter of our aviation history. Search your in-country photo/slide collections for personalized copter nose art & names. Search your memory & memoirs or query a buddy for his. Thank you gentlemen. Respectfully yours,

John Brennan,
former SP5, 114 AHC, 1970-71,
Vinh Long AAF, Mekong Delta
johnmailman@yahoo.com



Such as this. (web photo)

~ From Down Under ~

Great to hear from a Yank brother-in-editorship. With my *Tiger Rag* is only about a 40-pager twice a year. I take my hat off to ya for the size of your bi-monthly magazine – my sincere admiration and congratulations on the quality of the publication.



Undoubtedly, like me, you find it a labour of love and particularly enjoy the feedback on topics and articles published. Above all, however, it is our proven best way to keep the boys together, no matter how far apart they live geographically.

As regards my two articles on the upcoming Cross of Gallantry award and '*Behind every good man...*', I believe you have faithfully reproduced them and acknowledged the author. As such, I have no hesitation in granting you permission, and in fact consider it an honour to have it published in the *2/503rd Vietnam Newsletter*.

As for your *2/503rd Vietnam Newsletter*, I would be delighted to receive it electronically thank you.

Brothers of the War is a classic bit of soldier prose with a lovely Yank-Aussie memory - I thank you for permission to run it. I will most certainly do so in my February 2016 issue.

Your Aussie mate...Thunder Down Under

ARTHUR BURKE OAM, Colonel (Retired)
Honorary Historian 105th Battery RAA

Note: See Arthur's report & article on Pages 37-39.

~ Welcome Home Sky Soldier ~

I read through some of your newsletter, and liked it very much. I have for so many years tried not to think of my time in Vietnam, and after my return home I talked to others very little about my experiences, and now have very little memory of that time. I am much older now and seem to want to reach out to those I served with.



Greg in Tuy Hoa
March 1968

I went to the 173d reunion in San Diego, CA with some apprehension, but after arriving there and meeting up with members of my Company I look forward to going to the next reunion at Ft. Benning.

Greg Brown
D Company, 16th Armor, '68/'69

(Incoming continued....)



~ Big Lug of the Year ~

Now that baseball's over I can finally do a few things, like reading the newsletter. It looks like the latest one is especially interesting and I was surprised to see our 'disabled' Lugnuts photo (Issue 63, Page 70). Thanks much.

Had our team party and passed out lots of real and gag awards, like the guys who tied for the most strikeouts -- one got a giant baseball beach ball (so it's easier to see when batting) and the other a giant foam rubber bat. One guy who broke some fingers got a rubber hand and box of chocolate band aids. Our team cop got a cup from a bakery called *Cops and Donuts*. I gave booze to four guys and a bottle of Courvasier to another, plus assorted other stuff.

The team voted me *Big Lug of the Year*, despite my worst statistics ever -- for keeping the team together after seven guys left.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503



The 'Lugnuts'. Larry, third Lugnut from left in back row.

Note: Only being a connoisseur of cheap rum and coke, I had to look this up. "**Courvoisier** is a brand of cognac owned by Beam Suntory, a subsidiary of Suntory Holdings of Osaka, Japan. The production is based in the town of Jarnac in the Charente region of France." Ed



Not having a good command of the language, I then had to look this up. "**Connoisseur** (French traditional pre-1835 spelling of *connaissanceur*, from Middle-French *connoistre*, then *connaître* meaning 'to be acquainted with' or 'to know somebody/something') is a person who has a great deal of knowledge about the fine arts, cuisines, or an expert judge in matters of taste." Ed



"**Fine arts.**" I think it has something to do with nudity.

~ Iron Triangle After Action Report ~

I read our recent newsletter and there was a couple of operations of the many we experienced other than Milt Olive that hit home, and memory one was the North Vietnam Officer's War College of July 7, 1965. The other that rang a bell was the seven regiments located in the "Iron Triangle", and of course, the Milt Olive operation.

I wanted to pass this de-classified operation "Iron Triangle" After Action Report on so that you can pass it on to the Herd. It explains what we were up against in that operation from the beginning to the end, and the Bulls who were involved are all lucky to have gotten out; which means it wasn't our time!

Thanks for ensuring that this young brother (Milton Olive) who gave his life for his friends is a worthy cause to keep alive.

Jim Williams
4th Platoon, B/2/503
1964 – 1966

Note: See excerpts on Pages 79-81 from the After Action Report sent in by Jim. Thanks to Jim the entire declassified report is available by email upon request to rto173d@cfl.rr.com

~ A Son Learns About His Dad ~

I appreciate being added to the newsletter list. And I appreciate your kind words about my dad. He's always been my hero.

When I was a young boy, I always thought he had a desk job in Vietnam. Can you believe that? As time went on I learned more. And I am still finding out more and more about him and what you all went through.

Again, thank you!

Shawn Kelley
(Son of LTC Jack Kelley, CO A/2/503)

Note: This statement by Jack's son is typical of many wives and children of our men who would routinely tell their loved ones, "*everything is fine, I'm not in any danger,*" in letters they wrote home even following battles where they nearly died and some of their buddies did. And the wives who did know the truth would seldom tell their children. Sound familiar?

(Incoming continued....)



~ Looking for Buddies of Alpha KIA ~

I've spent the last 8 hours of my day, NOT working like I should be, but reading all of the accounts online of the Battle of the Slopes and wanted to send you an e-mail to see if you happened to know A/2/503rd, PFC **Daniel Lee Negro**, who was one of the KIA's during the battle. He was an Infantry Indirect Fire Crewman for the Alpha Company and was my fiancé's uncle.

I know there were several people in Alpha Company so I really don't expect that you would've known him personally but I'm wondering with all of the historical research you have been a part of for the Battle of the Slopes if you may have uncovered any information regarding Dan or if any of your contacts remembered Dan. We figure a white guy with the name "Negro" could not have gone easily unnoticed, LoL.

I'm curious as to which platoon Dan would have been a part of and what his duties would have been on June 22, 1967. I assume since he was IIFC that he would've been with the Wpns Platoon but I'm not sure if he was scouting or providing artillery cover the day he died.

My fiancé's Dad served in Korea and enlisted after he was sent to Vietnam to bring Dan's body back home. He did not get many details as to how Dan died that day. Any information you have involving Dan and his involvement in the events of that day would be greatly appreciated.

Dan's virtual wall link is below:

<http://www.virtualwall.org/dn/NegroDL01a.htm>

Thank you so much for your service to our country and providing your accounts of what happened at the Battle of the Slopes.

Kevin Perttu, keperttu@msn.com

Note: Troopers who may have known Dan can contact Kevin at his email address above. Ed

Daniel Lee Negro

**Private First Class
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Wakefield, Michigan
October 04, 1946 to June 22, 1967
on the Wall at Panel 22E, Line 46**



See Issue 29 of our Newsletter for detailed report on the *Battle of the Slopes*

~ Milton L. Olive III, Honored ~

On October 22, 2015, the 50th anniversary reunion of the 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, was held in honor of Milton Lee Olive, III, the first African American to have received the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War, held in historic Olive Park, in Chicago, IL.



Milton

The event was a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Olive's death. Olive, whom the family fondly called "Skipper," paid the ultimate price on October 22, 1965 during a search and destroy mission in Vietnam.

On that fateful day Olive, who was 16-days before his 19th birthday, spotted a live grenade, placed the device on his stomach and allowed it to explode. His act of heroism saved the lives of four men, John "Hop" Foster, Lionel Hubbard, Sgt. Vince Yrineo and the only surviving soldier, retired Capt. Jimmy B. Stanford.

It was an honor for Chicago to honor Milton Lee Olive, III, and a former Englewood war hero, who attended several Chicago public schools. Because he was not challenged academically, Skipper, as his family called him, went to live with his paternal grandfather in Lexington, MS. However, when his father, Milton B. Olive, II, found out where he was, he gave him three choices: get a job, go back to school or join the military.

Skipper joined the Army in 1964 and as a paratrooper; Olive, who served in the 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade, had already been awarded a Purple Heart.

Upon his death, President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 21, 1966, presented his father, the late Milton B. Olive, II and Skipper's stepmother, Antoinette Mainor Olive, the Medal of Honor and a second Purple Heart during a White House ceremony.

In 1966, Mayor Richard J. Daley named Olive Park after young Milton erecting a plaque in his honor. Olive/Harvey College was also named in his honor.

This was the first time in 50-years that Olive's squad/platoon members held a reunion, and it was fitting they did so at Olive Park.



[Family release sent in by Bob "Ragman" Getz, 2/503]



THE HILL

"Sergeant, alpha zero eight reports!"

"Alpha zero eight, that was a satisfactory exit from the tower, but you owe me ten for being a Ranger. Report to the bench and change your harness with the next man."

"Clear, Sergeant Airborne!"

Lieutenant Jason Johnson dropped to the ground and knocked out ten push-ups. For good measure, he did one more, yelling, *"One for the big Airborne Ranger in the sky!"* He jumped up and jogged to the cement bench and gave his parachute harness to the next man waiting to jump from the thirty-four-foot tower.

Bob Miller scooted down the bench to make room and hit Jason's shoulder as he sat down. *"Damn it, Jay, they warned us the first day not for us Rangers to show our ass, and here you go yelling that 'Airborne Ranger' shit. You're gonna get us in big trouble."*

Jason smiled. *"What they gonna do? Send us to Vietnam?"*



Excerpt from *The Hill*

A novel by Leonard B. Scott

~ The Herd (173d) History Project ~

The Herd (173d) History Project is a project of 173d.com to create an oral history recording of the members of the 173d Airborne. This will ensure that their experiences are available for current and future generations.

If you are interested in doing an interview for the 173d.com web site, let me know what date and time. It will be recorded via phone, so you can do it in the comfort of your own home. The questions are on this site:

<http://173d.com/oralhistoryquestions.pdf>

Currently there are only two interviews (to give you an idea) available for listening but there are several more scheduled. Our plans are to at least get this site with all the interviews into the Library of Congress and hopefully the Smithsonian. Interviews from the 173d guys will be important to researchers years from now long after we are all gone. You can listen here:

<http://173d.com/herdhistory.html> We would really appreciate your input in an interview. Hope to hear from you soon. AATW,

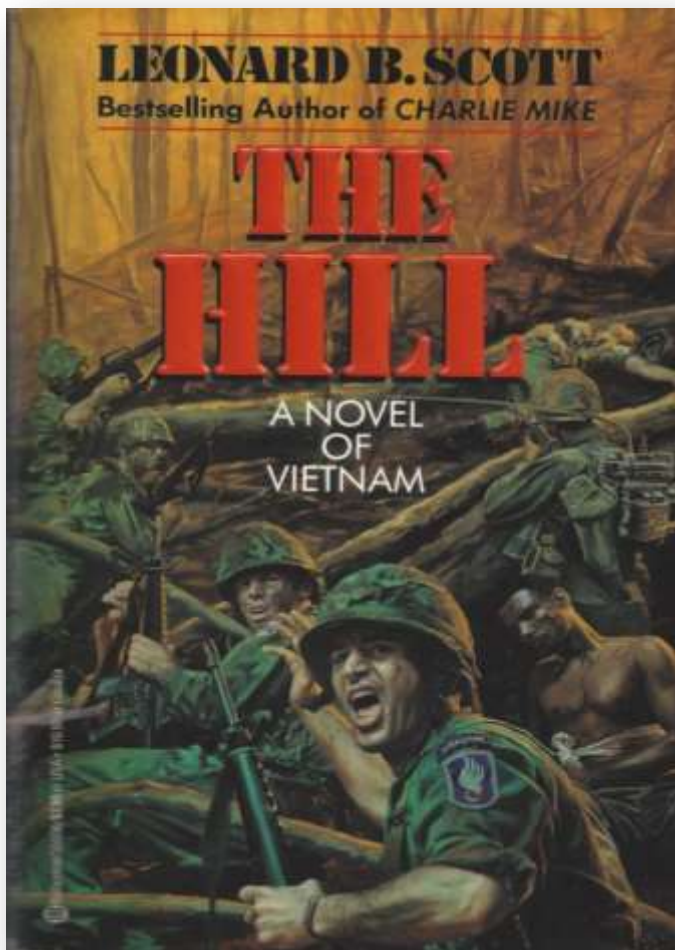
Paul Reed, A/1/503

paulreed173rd@hotmail.com

One of our Doc's Ready to Blast in June 1965, near Bien Hoa, VN



Ken (Doc) Eastman, B/2/503, about to make battalion's first jump in RVN, June 1965. *"This was to be a 'pay jump', as we all thought we were there on TDY. Tough days to come (July 7, 1965)."* Doc



**Frag Order 1- 11-65
7 June 1965 - 2 August 1965
Bien Hoa Area**

On 27 June, the brigade participated in the first joint U.S.-ARVN operation of the war. Nine battalions were involved in this mission which penetrated deep into the Western part of the Tan Uyen area of War Zone "D".

Over 400 Viet Cong casualties resulted from this combined operation. This was the first major engagement between the VC and the 173d. The brigade destroyed a hard-core VC battalion.



Troopers of the 2/503d on the move.
(Photo by Don Horger, A/2/503)



2/503 Sky Soldiers loading up. "Trooper holding his helmet is Simmie Bellamy, KIA." Jim Dresser
(Photo by Top Jim Dresser, A/HHC/2/503)

Simmie Bellamy, Jr.

Private First Class
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD ABN BDE,
USARV

Army of the United States
Conway, South Carolina
MOS: 11C10 Indirect Fire Infantryman
Ground Casualty
Hostile, died of wounds
Body recovered

August 16, 1946 to February 26, 1966
SIMMIE BELLAMY Jr is on the Wall
at Panel 5E, Line 78

"It's our job to remember."

Mark Carter, 173d LRRP, E-17th Cav

~ Viet Cong Ambushed ~

The ambush in waiting as the daylight waned
Viet Cong talking, as they walked through
the bamboo cane

Never thinking they could be seen
Laughing, hidden in the jungle green
Lying there quietly on the jungle floor
Watching them walk into the ambushes door

One turned and looked into my eyes
Knowing for sure his time had come to die
My machine gun fired with a deadly burst
Nineteen years old and I felt cursed
Bullets were flying as two more ran by

Two dead and one later died
You live with that curse for the rest of your life

Feeling sick to your stomach core
Watching a soldier emptying a clip into
the dead soldier on the jungle floor
Knowing it's your duty to kill or be killed
You will live with this day forever
as your mind shivers still

No reason is right
As you enter the night
You hear the screams of the last enemy soldier dying
during that nightfall
When this first and worse ambush comes
when the dream calls

By Stephen Welch
C/2/503



COMMENTS BY LTC BILL WHITE DURING THE DEDICATION OF THE 173d MEMORIAL AT THE NATIONAL CEMETERY IN SARASOTA, FLORIDA

October 9, 2015

The best way to describe the beginning of the “Herd” is through the eyes of a 38 year old FNG with 20 years’ service, 7 enlisted and 13 commissioned.

I joined the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) as it was being organized on Okinawa in September 1963, as a senior Leg, line infantry Major, 10 years out of jump school.

I was in the ranks at the organization parade which our Commanding General, Ellis W. Williamson, copied from an old Roman legion formation.

Upon my arrival I was put through a two-hour refresher course; PLFs, swing landings, etc., and told that I was *good to go*. When asked when I would like a chute I screwed up my Leg courage and said, “*As soon as possible.*”

The first of my 31 jumps with the “Herd” was made that night. I tailgated a C-123 over the South China Sea with far better qualified troopers than myself, and landed safely on Yomitan LZ, Okinawa. From that day forward I never thought of myself as a Leg.

Along with all the problems associated with organizing a new airborne brigade, USARPAC tasked the brigade with setting up and running a “Jungle Warfare Training School” on the island of Iriomote. As the only “dumb ass” to have attended the U.S. Army Jungle Warfare Course in Panama, I was given the assignment.

For the next 8 months we built a camp. Transported by troop ship from Okinawa, landed by Bark, trained (one week) and returned to Okinawa over 3,000 students from USARPAC – this included all 173d troopers.

My reward was assignment as XO, 2nd Bn, 503d Para Infantry on 1 May 1964, a position I held until October 1965,

During the early days we trained hard and often to perfect our infantry and Airborne skills.

The culmination of all this hard training came in November 1964, when the 173d flew from Okinawa to Taiwan (four hours flight, strapped in ready-to-jump mode), and made a mass jump and conducted maneuvers with the National Chinese Airborne.

On 1 May 1965, I had the honor of taking the 173d advanced party into Vietnam. We flew into Bien Hoa, Vietnam. Thus began the “Herd’s” seven years in-country.

At this time we were joined by the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Airborne Regiment and a New Zealand battery of 105mm Airborne Artillery, to become the first international airborne brigade to be organized and deployed by the U.S. Army.

On all battalion operations the commanding officer, LTC George Dexter, flew in the C&C chopper and the XO and a small 5 man command group went in with the lead company and came out with the last company. In the early days we were really writing the book and found this disbursement of command advantageous. All operations were conducted in this manner during my time as XO.

I left the 2nd Bn 503 Para Inf on 15 November 1965, and was assigned as the 173d Brigade liaison officer to I Corp. During this staff assignment I managed to attend the ARVN Jump School and made my last 5 jumps out of an ancient C-47.

I left the “Herd” in May 1966, as a proud “Paratrooper” who hoped his involvement contributed to its future success.

I would like to pay a special tribute to my wife of 65 years, Shirley, who also served in the “Herd” as a dependent wife with two small children from December 1963 to September 1965. She and all dependent wives deserve recognition and thanks for what they contributed and endured during the early history of the “Herd”.

Airborne!

William E. White
LT Col. Para Inf
Executive Officer, 2/503rd



Bill, with his bride, Shirley, in Florida.



2/503 Jumps Into Taiwan

We asked Col. George Dexter about the dates of what we incorrectly termed the "practice jumps" in Taiwan. Here's the Colonel's reply:

I do have dates for the Taiwan jumps in the fall of 1964. They were October 24 & 25, 1964. These were not what I would call "practice jumps." They were annual field exercises in Taiwan that had been going on for some years before '64, but I don't know how long. They were code named "Sky Soldier", but I don't think they were classified.



Bn Cmdr ready to blast

At the time of the Taiwan jump in '64 the battalion was just completing the company level of training. For the jump we marshalled in our Okinawa battalion area on the evening of October 23, packed out gear and issued the orders for the flight to Taiwan, the jump and capture of our initial objectives on Taiwan northwest of Taipei. At midnight we loaded on trucks and were taken to Kadena AFB where we donned our parachutes, attached rifles, packs and equipment bags, were inspected by the jumpmasters and loaded on C-124's, which were the largest troop carrier aircraft in the Air Force inventory at the time. I don't know if the figure is correct, but somewhere I heard they could carry and drop 100 troopers. Basically the whole brigade was being dropped -- 2 infantry battalions, the artillery battalion, the engineer company, the reconnaissance company, the support battalion and brigade headquarters. I doubt if the "tank" company was dropped. I would estimate close to 2500 troopers in all. On top of that there would be a heavy drop of the artillery howitzers, their prime movers (3/4 ton trucks) and some jeeps. Overall I estimate it would require at least 25 C-124's.

If anybody reading this was on the brigade planning staff for the exercise, please correct me if my figures are incorrect.

We took off from Kadena somewhere around 04:00 a.m. It was about a 4 hour flight. The troopers were allowed to take off their parachutes and stretch out on the metal floor of the aircraft to try to get some sleep. Around 45 minutes out from the drop zone we were awakened, reattached our parachutes and gear and were inspected again by the jumpmasters.

The drop zone was too short to allow the jumping of all troopers on the first pass, so it was decided to make two passes, dropping half the troopers on each. The planes would make a large loop, come around again and drop the remainder about 20 minutes later. I jumped in the first pass, and it was immediately apparent that there was a high wind on the drop zone. We all got dragged a considerable distance down the DZ, and many of us could not collapse our chutes until dragged into trees at the far end. There were some jump casualties, though I came out alright.

The decision was made to abort the second drop, so the C-124 armada had to turn around and fly back to Okinawa, where they had to repeat the whole drill the next night. The next day was calm and beautiful. The jump went off without a hitch except for a couple of heavy drop items which got rather bent up.

The exercise went on for about 5 more days when we captured our final objective, moved into an assembly area for a night and were flown back to Okinawa the next day.

I had only been in command of the battalion for two months at the time of this exercise, and this was the first time that we had performed as a battalion in the field since my arrival. I was really impressed. We covered a lot of unfamiliar terrain smoothly and effectively and nobody got lost. People knew their jobs and carried them out. We had four months of battalion level training ahead of us before we left for Vietnam, but Taiwan showed us that the basics were already there.

**George E. Dexter
Colonel, USA, Retired
Bn Cmdr 2/503d, '64-'66**



Bn CO, LTC George Dexter (C) displays captured enemy flag with Sgt. Brinkle (L) and Capt. Tom Faley in Vietnam.

(Photo provided by Tom Faley)



Monument to honor the 'Sky Soldiers'

By Billy Cox , *Herald-Tribune*

Thursday, October 8, 2015

SARASOTA — The local radio station near his Army Ranger base in Georgia played “Love Train” by the O’Jays as it announced the withdrawal of the last combat troops from South Vietnam in 1973. Jim Bradley shared the deejay’s enthusiasm. “I was happy the war was over,” he says. By time Saigon fell with little resistance in 1975 to North Vietnamese forces, his unit — the 173rd Airborne Brigade — had been deactivated for a good three years.



173rd Airborne Brigade veteran and Florida chapter president Jim Bradley of Tampa did some soul-searching after Vietnam and changed the course of his military career.

(Photo provided / Jim Bradley)

But in the desultory aftermath of what he’d seen and done on long-range patrol with the 173rd operating the Central Highlands in 1970-71, the now-retired chief warrant officer 3 found himself at a crossroads.

“I wasn’t impressed with the idea of killing. I didn’t think it took a lot of skill to kill people,” Bradley says from his home in New Port Richey. “I was much more impressed with the medics who ran out there in the open, under fire, saving lives. That’s what I wanted to be. I wanted to do something that made a positive impact.”

So Bradley switched gears, and became a medic. And when his 23-year military career ended in 1992, he transitioned into a physician’s assistant with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

But what happened more than 40 years ago in Southeast Asia will no doubt shadow him at Sarasota National Cemetery beginning at noon Friday. That’s when, as president of the nonprofit Florida Chapter of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association, Bradley and fellow veterans will dedicate a memorial Friday in a public ceremony to the “Sky Soldiers,” or what he calls “one of the best-kept secrets in the war.”

Troops from the 173rd earned 13 Medals of Honor, 46 Distinguished Service Crosses, 1,736 Silver Stars and more than 6,000 Purple Hearts in Vietnam. Nearly 1,800 lost their lives during the unit’s six-year run in Southeast Asia.

Formed on Okinawa in 1963, the 173rd was reactivated in 2000 as a rapid-deployment force out of Vicenza, Italy. Since then, the paratroopers have been deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Poland, the Baltics, Ukraine, and Hungary. Bradley’s own connection to the outfit has been extended through family ties. A son and two sons-in-law are with the 173rd. Like him, all are either medics or completing Army medic training.

“When you’re a medic, you’re always at war,” says Bradley. “You’re fighting off diseases and injuries; people fall off trucks, they break legs during jumps. You’re not just rehearsing for war, you’ve got a real mission in real time.”

With Russia now militarily assisting the Assad regime in Syria — violating Turkish airspace in the process and evoking howls of protest from NATO — the 173rd is training with multinational forces that may be called upon to contain the regional instability, perpetuated lately by the Syrian civil war. But after seeing how 30,000 members of the Iraqi army fled 1,500 ISIS insurgents who captured not only the city of Mosul but an arsenal of weaponry in 2014, Bradley has a sense of déjà vu about the latest tensions.

“Vietnamization — that was kind of a joke,” he says in reference to the U.S. exit strategy of shifting combat operations from American to indigenous forces.



173rd Airborne Brigade veteran and Florida chapter president Jim Bradley of Tampa did some soul-searching after Vietnam and changed the course of his military career.

(Photo provided/Jim Bradley)

(continued....)



"I didn't see the Vietnamese doing anything over there. Frankly, I believe to a certain degree that the Vietnamese didn't give a crap one way or the other. They'd side with whoever happened to be coming through at the time. I think most of them just wanted to be left alone. And you know, we weren't fighting for the flag or mom or apple pie over there, either. We were fighting for the guys next to us, our buddies."

From Bradley's seat, prospects for the Middle East look equally bleak. *"The similarities are unbelievable,"* he says. *"And now you're dealing with culture where tribalism transcends everything."*

When the 173rd Airborne marker is installed Friday morning, it will join four other memorials now lining Sarasota National Cemetery's Memorial Trail. The Society of the 3rd Infantry Division, the Suncoast Chapter of the U.S. Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officers Association, the Navy Seabee Veterans of America, and the Florida Knights of Columbus Jurisdiction have all contributed monuments.



173rd Airborne Brigade veteran and Florida chapter president Jim Bradley of Tampa did some soul-searching after Vietnam and changed the course of his military career.

(Photo provided / Jim Bradley)

Cemetery director John Rosentrater said the burial grounds were originally designed to accommodate 27 memorials, but more can be added.

Billy Cox is a feature writer for the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*.



Source:

<http://veterans.heraldtribune.com/2015/10/08/monument-to-honor-the-sky-soldiers/>

(Reprinted here courtesy of Billy Cox and the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*)

Soldiers Of The Vietnam 173rd Airborne Squad Meet Again. Their Reaction... *I Can't Help Crying!*

Something extraordinary happened to Mike Gude, a soldier, in 1969, while on a mission in Vietnam. He and 4 other men were on duty in the Vietnamese jungle. It was late when they realized that they were surrounded. Gude lost his leg in one incident.

Gude confessed that he heard a huge explosion, and then saw a huge dark cloud which made him think that he had fallen in a hole. Were it not for his two comrades, his life was going to end there.

He said that the men who saved his life vanished after rescuing him, and he never knew if they were still alive and kicking. For 45 years he kept asking himself if his rescuers managed to be survivors of one of the cruelest wars in the USA history.

By the use of an online message board, Gude was able to know that Bob Bodemann, Howard Hunt, and Grady Fox were the ones who had died, so somehow, his saviors were alive somewhere.

Surprisingly, each one of them kept asking himself if the others had survived. By watching this come together, tears will flow down your cheek.

The meeting venue of the 173rd Airborne members was at Ontario airport. You can see how they missed each other from the hugs they give each other. Gude was so overjoyed even to a point of saying that his life was complete, even if it meant that he was to die that very day.

Please **SHARE** this reunion video, if you honor the soldiers who fought for our nation in Vietnam.

Source & view video at:

<http://www.viralstories.tv/soldiers-vietnam-173rd-airborne-squad-meet-reaction-cant-help-crying#>



16 Jan 67

173d Unit Digs Out Viet Cong

By S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON – The paratroopers were within 20 yards of the enemy.

The enemy, a reinforced Viet Cong platoon, were well armed with automatic weapons and fought from trenches, bunkers – reinforced with railroad ties – and spider holes.

Lt. Daniel J. Severson, of North Vale, N.J., led his platoon against the heavily fortified positions shrouded under the canopy of the jungle in the southern portion of the Iron Triangle.

Earlier in the day, B Co., 4th Bn., 503d Inf., 173d Airborne Brigade, had been on a search and destroy mission. Severson’s platoon spotted the communists.

The Americans fought from bunker to bunker for 30 minutes before withdrawing to allow air strikes on the VC positions.

The paratroopers later searched the area and found five VC bodies. They also found tunnels which honeycombed the area, connecting bunkers and spider holes.

Some of the tunnels had as many as five levels. Seventy-eight assorted weapons, including a 60mm mortar and a large supply of ammunition was found. The tunnels also contained food, medicine and clothing.

The commander of the 173d, Brig. Gen. John R. Deane Jr., who had observed the firefight from his heli-command post, landed nearby to congratulate company commander Capt. T. John S. Yakshe of Allentown, Pa., and his men for doing a “real find job.”

Deane presented several Bronze Star with “V” Device (for valor) on the battlefield. The recipients included Yakshe and Severson.

(Article from web)



Captured weapons and supplies during Operation Cedar Falls. “A little bit of everything in that bunch.” (web photo)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)
Office of the Commanding General
APO San Francisco 96250

AVBE-CO

26 January 1967

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

TO: The Sky Soldiers



Gen. Deane
1919 - 2013

Your performance as individuals and the performance of the Brigade on Operation CEDAR FALLS was outstanding in every respect. I have received the highest praise of the Brigade from General Westmoreland, General Seaman, and General DePuy. The credit for this praise is rightfully yours. I want each of you to know that I appreciate your efforts and I am tremendously proud of being associated with such a great group of professional soldiers.

It may interest you to know that during the fifteen days that we were in the Iron Triangle area we killed more than our proportionate share of the VC, we captured more VC, and we captured material and documents of very significant value. During these fifteen days we produced greater results than the Brigade had in the entire preceding six month period. The most important of these results are listed on the riverside side of this letter.

Now the eyes of all are on us. The question is what will we do next? Will we continue this fine performance in the months ahead? The answer is that we will do plenty. Our performance will be even greater. I expect the Brigade to demonstrate, without question, that it is the greatest outfit in the Army.

In closing I commend you for a job well done.

AIRBORNE - ALL THE WAY!

JOHN R. DEANE JR.
Brig Gen, U.S. Army
Commanding



Preface: After year-long or multi year-long tours in the combat zones of Vietnam, the thought of returning home to the average G.I. was an exciting proposition. But, for many the reality didn't live up to the expectations they had envisioned during their time at war. Generally, there were no welcoming family and friends to greet them as they disembarked the plane in Oakland and elsewhere; there were no thank you's, no parades, no ticker tape; their war was not WWII, there's was that nasty little thing going on somewhere in Southeast Asia. Only days earlier they were in some rice paddy, jungle or mountain range, continuing their struggle to survive, living somewhere between life and death, hoping to keep their buddy's alive, and today, like ghosts, they walk the streets of Fisherman's Wharf with the dirt of war still coating their skin, a dirt which often takes a lifetime to cleanse, or never at all. Many found themselves lost in this place they had so loved and defended, with many only wishing to be back with their buddies in the red dirt of the war zone – many did return. Our brother A.B.'s recollections here of his return home to "The World" will sound familiar to many who were just average G.I. Joe's proudly doing what our country asked of them. A.B., welcome home bro. Ed



A.B. Garcia (the *Aussino*) in t-shirt, 4.2 Platoon, 2/503, '65/'66, in the "D" Zone jungle with buddies helping evacuate a wounded Sky Soldier in March 1966. Short weeks later he would be back in the U.S. with that jungle mud still on his skin.

Coming Home....1966

By A. B. Garcia
HHC, 4.2 Platoon, 2/503d

Coming home from Nam was like a bad dream. All of a sudden I'm on an aircraft, French Airlines, with beautiful round eyes and stunning stewardesses. We boarded at Tan Son Nhut airbase, I think in the morning of 22 May 1966. I can't remember the time it took to get to Oakland Airport.

Upon arrival with all our gear on the 22nd of May, we were mustered into a large building and were all cleared to leave. With whatever money that was owed me, I bought a ticket from San Francisco Airport to Los Angeles. I don't recall how I got there, as it seemed where I had been for 12 months was also a bad dream.

Arriving at the airport I found it so weird walking amongst other round eyes with no one in danger or getting shot at. I was used to always covering my safety for that time. It was so weird! I bought a ticket to L.A. and sat at a bar in Frisco sitting with others, not knowing anyone. I sat on my own, watching a television at the bar, drinking a beer. Looking at the t.v. I saw a segment of the Herd on operations in Nam. I could not believe that just the day before I was in Nam, and today I'm on U.S. Soil! Weird!!!

All sorts of things were going through my head, thinking about where I was, and what had happened in those twelve months of combat. It was like a bad dream again. Unbelievable that I had survived the 'tour of duty' as we called it.

Arriving the airport, nobody was there to greet me. I caught a bus to East L.A. and walked in the dark to a phone booth carrying all my gear in a large Army duffle bag. I *think* I had civilian clothes? I was hassled by some drunk wanting money for beer and I told him I didn't have any. Here I am, in the dark, phoning home, and finally my sister, Telly, picked me up and took me home.

I was very confused about what had happened and how, finally, I'm home with no one to greet me as if I hadn't been anywhere for a year. I don't know where Mom and Dad were at that time, or why no one came to welcome me home. I felt so alone and out of it. It seemed no one cared, yet in their own way, they did. I can't remember arriving home or who was there.

I settled in with no money on-hand and no I.D. as all the stuff I had, like driver's license, Social Security Card or any other sort of I.D. were long gone. I had to reapply for everything again.

In Nam, I was at least smart enough to put money into U.S. Savings Bonds which totaled about \$4,000. or so? I went to the bank, cashed them in and started a new life. I bought some nice clothes, just wanting to blend into the "Real World".

I got loaded every night and partied by myself most of the time. I used to drink a glass of beer, three parts full, and topped it off with gin for some reason – it was a depressant, I'm sure.

(continued....)



I just sat, drank on my own, trying to piece my life back together. Always thinking about what had happened in that place we call Nam. So much happened. People got hurt, killed and maimed throughout my year there. I got used to the carnage, quickly learning to bear the fear and brutality of war.

I would sit in the dark not wanting to talk or be with anyone; just trying to sort myself out without asking anybody what I should do. I've always been able to work things out within myself. All my life, I've never asked anybody's opinion of what I should do, ever.

I'd go out and come home from the darkness, late, and cook myself whatever I could, mostly eggs mixed with refried beans. Everybody would be in bed around that time. I'd make a mess but don't think I ever did a good job cleaning it up. I think my father or mother would clean up after me the next morning. Each day and night this same drill would be repeated, over and over.

I decided to fly to Colorado to visit my sweetheart who had supported me the whole time I was in Nam, and my family, Ruiz-Lopez. It was wonderful getting off the plane and seeing this beautiful lady running towards me, tears flowing freely from her eyes. "A.B! A.B!" she called out. God, I felt so good!! We hugged for a while with me just loving the moment of being missed as much as she had missed me.

Ursula wrote to me every day I was in Nam. At times out in the jungles we would get mail, and I would heard, "Garcia, Garcia, Garcia". Man, I loved getting letters!! I received some from her, my grandmother, Rosita Rodriguez, mom, dad and that's about it. I don't remember getting any letters from anyone else. I guess as long as there weren't any telegrams notifying them of my death, everything was good. Every time I got a chance, I'd write home. I loved writing letters home. Most times out on ops I got shot at, got pinned down, slept wherever, wet, but luckily survived it all.

I spent about a week in Colorado with my family of Juan, Julia, Linda, Margie and Lizzie. I think grandmother Nanny (Rosita) lived there and also my little brother Rudy. One night I had an altercation with Arnold and Erica, as they told Ursula she could not go out with me. I confronted them and sorted it out. I got a little flustered and heated as they were denying my love being with me.

When I returned home to L.A. I got a job with an old neighborhood friend, Fernando Bocanegra. Not much of a friend when he told me one day that he thought I was conceited because I was in Nam -- like I was a big nothing. I'd said nothing to anyone, as they would not have understood what had happened to me in Nam.

I got this shitty job at a meat works called Hoffman's, my dealings there weren't very pleasant. I had this foreman who was a World War II veteran who took a disliking to me. He was a suckhole, and every time he would run around the owners, I'd give him that look; we'd make eye contact and he knew by that look what I meant. *Suckhole!!!* But, I did my job and put up with it. It was a dead-end job, no future, no benefits other than giving me sustenance and my life. I hated it and resented everything that was happening. Confused, angry and feeling as if my country had abandoned me after putting me through hell.

By that time, Ursula had moved to L.A. and left her family back in Colorado. The life she had there was miserable and abusive. She found a job working at a nursing home and was like a nurse in her white uniform. She looked beautiful in it! She was a stunner!! She found an apartment in East L.A., in Montebello, a small one bedroom unit. It was rented out by a lovely Russian couple named Mike and Alice. Beautiful people and very caring towards Urs.

On one night Ursula and I were driving down Whittier Blvd. and went passed a Ford dealership. Right in the showroom was a brand new, 1966 Mustang Fastback, red with black interior, a V-8 T-bar auto. Man, I said, that's mine. The next day I went in and bought it with the money from the savings bonds. It cost me \$2,800. I took out a loan over two years. I've never liked owing money, so I wanted to pay it off as fast as I possibly could.

I used to sneak out and tell Mom and Dad I was out and wasn't coming home. I think they knew where I'd be...with my love. One day I just said, let's get married.

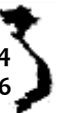
I told my dad one day as we had a beer in the back yard of 6335 Crossway Drive in Pico Rivera. I said to dad that I was going to marry Ursula. Dad loved her. He just said, "O.K. Mijo, whatever you want to do."

My best friend from Nam, Truman Ray Thomas who served with me told me he was getting married on the 7th of October and I said so was I. Of all things!! Almost 50 years later, still married!! ###



A.B. with his sweetheart,
Urs, the love of his life.

And another soldier's love story follows.....



During war there are two sides; theirs and ours. This is from the *other* side....

TAO

Tao enjoyed the benefits of a middle-class upbringing in South Vietnam's capital city. But the pretty schoolgirl who grew up speaking the language of colonialism at school was also learning about social justice at home.

A family of revolutionaries:



"My mother was wonderful. Not only did she give us the opportunity to attend a French school, she also taught us to resist against the dictatorship, against repression and injustice. When the dictator [South Vietnamese president] Diem repressed the Buddhists [in 1964], we took part in demonstrations."



Buddhist monks protest against Diem regime.

Tao was horrified by the brutal measures taken by Diem, the corrupt Catholic president installed by the Americans, to silence the Buddhist monks who spoke out against the war. Her family attended massive street rallies in support of the monks. At one rally, Tao and her sister Tan were spotted by a Viet Cong recruiter. He later visited their home. The girls joined the guerilla movement in support of Communist North Vietnam, and went to work.

On working with the Viet Cong:

"When I was 18, I was part of a plan to bomb the Saigon central police station. I am the leader of the commando unit, and I carry the explosives inside the police headquarters...To succeed in the plan, I had to convert one of the police staff to our cause. But I was arrested because this person betrayed me."



Tao

Tao and her sister were thrown into jail. Even in jail, they would not stop protesting against their arrest and the South Vietnamese regime, and as a result were moved to the infamous Tiger Cages in the island prison on Con Son. It was the beginning of seven years of torture, beatings and starvation.

On her imprisonment and torture:

"In prison, sometimes they made my sister or me witness the torture of the other. When I saw them beat my sister, it was very painful...They put us in the Tiger Cages, and when I came to my senses I thought I fell into Hell because the cage was the shape of a coffin. The jailors walked above us, and we were inside the cages below. There was so much suffering—they mistreated us, poured down quick lime [a caustic chemical which burns the skin on contact] when they wanted to repress us."

On life in the Tiger Cages:



In 1970, U.S. Senator, then a legislative aide, Tom Harkin captured the horror of the tiger cages in a series of photos that appeared in *LIFE* magazine.

"One day we heard strange voices. My cellmates said, 'You can speak English, ask them who they are.' I asked 'Where are you from?' They answered, 'We are US congressmen and we come to investigate the military regime.' I denounced the conditions, the bedbugs, the torture. One person on this team, he came back to Vietnam 25 years later. He is now a senator from Iowa, Tom Harkin."

(continued...)



But despite the beatings and torture, the girls continued their resistance. Tao and her sister painstakingly wrote the names of all of the political prisoners held in the island prison in microscopic script on the inside of a prison uniform and gave it to their mother to smuggle out of the country. The list of political prisoners would make its way to the Paris Peace Talks, where it was entered into evidence, documenting that South Vietnam was holding political prisoners, a fact they had vehemently denied. These talks would curtail U.S. involvement in the war.

Tao's release; the end of the War:

"When I was released...I couldn't believe it...the happiness makes tears pour down. I couldn't walk. I was paralysed [from years of torture]. I was cured in those months, but at the time of the liberation, my legs are still very weak. But I participate in the liberation. I planted the revolutionary flag."



When Tao was released she could barely walk.

The war was over, but Tao's revolutionary ardor was undimmed. After several jobs in the post-war government, she went back to school and studied marine biology because she believed the field could help feed the new nation. In 1988, twenty years after they first met, she married Sau Cong - the V.C. recruiter who had spotted her in the crowd of demonstrators and changed her life.

Tao marries her Viet Cong recruiter:

"When we got married, I asked him, 'When did you fall in love with me?' He said, 'Since the beginning, since our first meeting.' I asked him, 'Why, if you loved me, didn't you prevent me from taking those risks and placing the explosives at the police headquarters?' He said, 'Because it was your duty. Only when we have freedom, we can have love. If our people, our country, is dominated, we can't have happiness.'"

Tao and Sau Cong now operate a shrimp co-operative in the Mekong Delta, and are helping nearly two dozen small farmers climb out of poverty. For Tao, as long as Vietnam's poorest still lag behind, the war is not over.



Tao married the Viet Cong who recruited her.

"My husband said to me that during the war time, we dared to sacrifice our lives for the liberation of our people. So now that the peace is restored, when we see our people so poor and starving, we must do something to help them...In the war time, solidarity is easy—maybe because during the war, the people were needed for the resistance. Now no one needs the poor people. So the revolution is not over, and it's a struggle all around the world. Anyone who believes must join together to carry out this new war—the war against poverty, injustice and repression."



"Tao's struggle is not over."

Source:

www.pbs.org/vietnampassage/Stories/stories.tao.02.html



Chaplain makes historic jump to honor 173rd ABCT, heroic chaplain

July 25, 2013

By Chaplain (Lieut. Col.) David Deppmeier

On a remote airfield at dawn in Frederick, Oklahoma, twenty-two veteran paratroopers took to the skies for a 60-second thrill ride – all as a way to honor those who have served and sacrificed among them. Though they wore uniforms from different eras, they shared one common bond: each served, or is currently serving, in the famed 173rd Airborne Brigade.



The paratroopers, both past and present, attended two days of training to make the July 19th jump, which honoured the 173rd's 50 years of service. All were combat veterans from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The oldest 173rd veteran who jumped was 82 year-old Dayton Herrington, a retired Army Sergeant Major.

Soldiers wore the field uniform of their dates of service in the brigade. Some wore Vietnam era rip-stop jungle fatigues with M2 steel helmets while others wore the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) and the Army Combat Helmet (ACH). In honor of WWII paratroopers, they made the jump from an actual C-47 that made airborne drops during the Normandy invasion.

Active duty Soldiers of the 173rd from Ft. Sill and Ft. Leavenworth joined the veterans in the jump. Chaplain (Major) Sean Wead, an instructor at the Command and General Staff College and former Brigade Chaplain (above) of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in Vicenza, Italy, jumped with a picture of Chaplain (Maj.) Charles J. Watters, who was killed in action on November 19, 1967 at the Battle of Dak To. Chaplain Watters was awarded the Medal of Honor for his bravery that day, and his efforts to rescue the wounded.

As a former chaplain of the 173rd ABCT, Wead has a deep-seated respect for Watters' legendary ministry, and his selfless service to his Soldiers to the very end.

"His example was an icon for the Chaplains of the Brigade. He shared the risk of his Soldiers to reflect God's presence with them. Chaplain Watters is the only officer of the 173rd to receive the Medal of Honor."

One of the veteran paratroopers who made the jump had served with Chaplain Watters in Vietnam. Charlie Lewie was a Radio Telephone Operator in the 173rd, and related a combat story involving the decorated chaplain.

"Charlie told me that a week before Chaplain Watters was killed, they had shared a foxhole together," Wead

said. *"Watters arrived at their position just as they started receiving some indirect motor fire. Lewie's fighting position had excellent overhead cover and Chaplain Watters quickly asked admittance. The men spent the next two days and nights together shoulder to shoulder as they waited out the periodic attacks."*

Wead admitted that prior to the event he wasn't quite sure what to expect.

"I was apprehensive at first because I knew the Vietnam veterans would be much older and was not sure we would have much in common," he said. *"That worry was quickly put aside. What I discovered was these old soldiers were no different than the Soldiers I have served with today. They were older and had a better sense of self, but the experiences we shared were the same. We were instantly brothers."*

And, just as it is today, Soldiers from all time periods appreciate the comfort that a chaplain's presence brings.

"They were very appreciative to have a chaplain along, especially at their age," observed Wead. *"They wanted to hear all about my deployment and the latest 'goings on' in the Brigade. They have a real interest in the unit and its health even though it has been over 40 years since some of them served. There were a lot of stories about the Brigade from the time of service of each Soldier."*

Because of the common bond and experiences shared by all Soldiers, Wead observed a connecting truth about the chaplain's role.

"This gathering was a chance to continue the ministry of Chaplain Watters and other chaplains of the Brigade," said Wead. *"There are so many Soldiers who still bear wounds from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As a chaplain our duty is to these Soldiers no matter how long or when they served."*

And just as it was during times past, paratroopers today still appreciate a chaplain's prayer prior to going out the door of an aircraft. Before the jump, Wead offered the following prayer for safety:

"May we remember that we will not jump alone, we will jump with those paratroopers of the 173rd who gave all that they were and would ever be for their country and will be forever young in our minds. One more time, Lord, guide us on our descent through the air keeping us safe. Abide with us from now until we are reunited with 173rd in the sky. Sky Soldiers! Amen!"

Source:

www.army.mil/article/108065/Chaplain_makes_historic_jump_to_honor_173rd_ABCT_heroic_chaplain/



Thomas J. Mica CW4 U.S. Army



Tom Mica, cherished husband of Patricia Ann, and dear son and brother to four siblings. He rested at Thompson & Kuenster Funeral Home in Oak Lawn, Illinois, with entombment at Bethania Cemetery.

Tom was a 40 year Veteran of the U.S. Army Reserve, and a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade, known as Sky Soldiers, where he served in Vietnam. He also served during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Iraqi Freedom for four and a half years after 9/11.

Tom was a highly decorated Intelligence Officer serving at the Defense Intelligence Agency and Cheyenne Mountain Complex. He also attended the annual conferences in Seoul Korea.

Tom was a 28 year veteran of the Oak Lawn Police Department and was one of the original D.A.R.E. Officers teaching until 2000.

During his career he earned 24 awards.

Rest Easy Airborne

**“He was just a common Veteran and his ranks are growing thin, but his presence should remind us, we may need his likes again. For when countries are in conflict, then we find the Military’s part, is to clean up all the troubles, that the politicians start. If we cannot do him honor, while he’s here to hear the praise, then at least let’s give him homage, at the ending of his days. Perhaps just a simple headline, in the paper that might say:
*OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING,
FOR A VETERAN DIED TODAY.*”**

Author unknown

During 508th Night Jump...

A remarkable record of 618 night parachute jumps in five hours without a serious injury, a sterling example of mental alertness and the priceless value of the reserve parachute all were written into the record-books of the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team last week.

On Jan. 11, the Third Battalion of the 508th ARCT jumped 618 enlisted men and officers on Drop-zone Lee Field between the hours of 7:15 o’clock and three minutes past midnight.

When it was all over and Lt. Gen. John P. Piron, Belgian Army Chief of Staff had motored away, it was found that the 508th medics had treated only the following:

Pfc. Guy Tenney of Company M bruised back. He was sent to the Station Hospital for precautionary check-up and released after 24 hours. Sfc. Joseph Wolfe, riser burn on the neck, and Pfc. Tracy Furlong slightly sprained ankle both of Headquarters Company, Third.

Only other excitement was when Cpl. Glenn B. Rehmel of Company K plummeted more than 700 feet with less than-one-third of his main canopy open before he pulled his reserve parachute.

Cpl. Rehmel, jumping from the 13th load as the fourth man in the left stick of a C-46 aircraft, galvanized into action when he failed to get that *“hurt that feels good,”* the terrific shock of the 28-foot canopy popping open.

Rehmel looked up. He saw his main canopy wasn’t supporting him. He held his head back and yanked on the handle of his reserve chute, strapped to his chest. The 28-foot check chute cracked open, about 250 feet above the ground.

Rehmel landed with a thud at the feet of the medical officer, First Lt. R.G. Vanables, barely missing a small shack and alighting no more than three feet from a medical jeep. Rehmel’s first words were,

“Boy, that was close!”

Then he quickly leaped up and slowly walked away. It was the 11th jump for the 26-year-old ex Ranger. He still held the metal reserve handle in his right hand when he landed.



CPL. GLENN B. REHMELE



Source:

Old, unnamed, newspaper article from web.



Regimental History: 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment 1951-1957

On April 16, 1951, the 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment (AIR) was reactivated at Fort Bragg, NC. On May 5, 1951, the 508th AIR Reactivation Day Parade was held. The airborne recruits who had just completed their basic training were assembled on the regimental parade ground of the 504th AIR. On the reviewing stand were MG Thomas Hickey, CG of the 82d Abn Div, BG Roy E. Lindquist, WW II CO of the 508th PIR, 1st SG Leonard A. Funk, Jr., Medal of Honor recipient from WW II, and the new Commanding Officer of the 508th AIR, COL Joseph P. Cleland.



The airborne volunteers, who had just completed basic training, were moved to Fort Benning, GA in three successive weeks to receive airborne training and begin the task of bringing the newly reactivated regiment up to its authorized strength at its new location in the Sand Hill area of Fort Benning, GA.



In August 1951, the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team (ARCT) was formed and comprised of the following units:



The 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment (AIR) consisting of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Service Company, Medical Company, Support Company and three Infantry Battalions. Each infantry battalion consisted of a Headquarters Company, three Rifle Companies and a Heavy Weapons Company. Each battalion had their own unit designation which was worn on the left side of their jet black highly lacquered helmet liner. The Regimental shoulder insignia was worn on the right side of the helmet liner.



The 320th Airborne Field Artillery Battalion joined the Regiment in August 1951 to form the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat (ARCT).

The 598th Airborne Engineer Company joined the ARCT in September 1951.



In August, 1952 the 19th Airborne Quartermaster Detachment was organized at Fort Benning, GA as the first such unit in the Army. On September 23, 1952, the detachment was redesignated the 519th Airborne Quartermaster Company and became a component of the 508th Airborne Regimental Combat Team.

The 427th Airborne Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battery was activated and joined the ARCT on January 1, 1955. In early 1955, a Regimental Tank Company was activated, but was then deactivated prior to the ARCT's participation in Operation Gyroscope in July, 1955.

The regimental crest for the 508th Infantry Regiment was approved for wear by The Institute of Heraldry, US Army on September 4, 1951 and was first worn by the proud members of the 508th AIR. LTC Clyde M. Dillender, Jr., Regimental Executive Officer originated the motto "*Fury From The Sky*" which was incorporated into the regimental crest. See Regimental Coat of Arms/Lineage/Decorations section for the official crest description.



On October 15, 1951, the 508th Airborne Regiment Combat Team shoulder sleeve insignia was officially approved. This was the first shoulder sleeve insignia designed specifically for the 508th Infantry.

The insignia was an adaptation of that worn by the 82d Airborne Division which furnished the cadre for the regiment when it was re-activated at Fort Bragg, NC. In lieu of "AA" in the 82d insignia, a blue wyvern was designed for the 508th ARCT. Throughout the Summer and Fall of 1951, ground training and airborne operations intensified as the Red Devils prepared for their next test.



(continued...)



In December, 1951 the Red Devils moved to Camp Rucker, Alabama where they were the aggressor force pitted against the 47th Infantry Division (Vikings). During the exercise, the Red Devils proved their mettle against the 47th in their aggressiveness and quick movement. Aggressors usually lose these mock wars but the Red Devils were so skillful at infiltration tactics and surprise raids that the Vikings were unofficially conceded to have lost the exercise.



Exercise Long Horn Casualties - April 1952

Throughout its assignment at Fort Benning, the 508th continued to train as a Combat Team, support the Infantry School, provide cadre for ROTC Summer Camp training, and provided instructors in support of the Ranger School at both its northern Georgia and Florida camps. In addition, the 2nd Battalion, under the leadership of LTC Herbert V. Mansfield (above), pioneered the light poncho roll concept which allowed the Infantryman to move faster and eliminated the backpack entirely. The Regiment also tested new airborne equipment both at Fort Benning and special desert warfare equipment in the Yuma, Arizona area.



Exercise Long Horn was the next big exercise for the 3,800 highly trained Red Devils. Pitted against the 82d Airborne Division, the Red Devils were slated to conduct a massive airborne drop on April 8, 1952 despite the forecast of high winds. Right on time, the Red Devils hit the silk despite encountering 20 mile per hour winds. Col. Joe F. Lawrie, CO of the ARCT and BG Lacey Murrow, CO of the 18th Troop Carrier, made the decision to drop not knowing that LTG William Hoge had ordered the big drop canceled when winds exceeded 15 MPH. One trooper was killed and 221 were injured, 196 serious enough to be admitted to the hospital. GEN. J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, was visiting at Fort Hood to observe the jump. But like newsmen, believed it had been called off and missed it. He was quoted as saying, he was satisfied with the jump...



Troopers of the 1st Bn, Exercise Long Horn

"It is dangerous. That is why the paratroopers are made up of volunteers. That is why they get extra pay."

(continued...)



Late 1952 and early 1953 saw the strength of the Regiment depleted as the officers and men of the Regiment were ordered to Korea as individual replacements. Many who had volunteered to join the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team were diverted to Infantry Divisions in Korea who were in need of replacements due to combat losses. The Regiment received orders to move to Fort Campbell, Ky effective February 15, 1954 with attachment to the 11th Airborne Division. On April 8, 1954 the Regimental Combat Team was reorganized at Fort Campbell as a General Reserve, Class 1 unit. The regiment received additional troops and once again began intensive unit training. During this period the regiment got its first look at the C-124 Globemaster aircraft and became one of the first units to jump from what was then the largest transport aircraft in the Air Force inventory. Little did the Red Devils realize that less than a year later they would once again become reacquainted with the Globemaster for more than a short ride and jump.



1st Battalion troopers receiving orientation on C-124's

After 17 months at Fort Campbell, the Regimental Combat Team was once again ordered to effect a permanent change of station. This time the Red Devils took part in Operation Gyroscope - an exchange with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team stationed in Camps Chickamauga and Wood in Beppu and Kumamoto, Japan respectively. The 187th ARCT was to return to Fort Bragg, NC. Once again, the Red Devils met up with the C-124 Globemaster. At that time, this was the largest air movement of troops ever undertaken by the Army and Air Force.

The objective of Operation Gyroscope was to airlift 3,800 Red Devils of the 508th ARCT to Japan and to ferry to Fort Bragg, NC 3,200 men of the 187th ARCT. A steady stream of C-124's, each carrying approximately 90 troopers and seven tons of equipment, leap-frogged across the Pacific both ways to complete the transfer in 10 days. The operation started at the airfield at Fort Campbell, KY. From then on a plane took off every 2 hours and landed in Japan approximately 50 hours later. Stops were made in California, Hawaii and Wake Island

for refueling, food and crew rotation. The actual flying time from Fort Campbell to Japan was 43 hours.



Composite of C-124 with 508 troopers at left – 187th troopers at right.

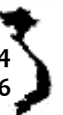
July 8 saw another unique side to Operation Gyroscope. This was the movement of dependents via sea transport. Two ships, the USS General A. E. Anderson and the USS General J. C. Breckinridge, carried 704 Red Devil dependents to Japan. After a 10 day voyage to Moji, Japan, the Red Devil dependents were met at the port by their husbands who had accompanied their family to California and then boarded aircraft at their stop at Travis AFB, CA for the rest of their journey to Japan.



After their arrival at their respective stations the Red Devils began to unpack, check all equipment left by the 187th and prepare to commence training at the various training areas. The 1st Battalion moved by vehicle to their major training area in early August and celebrated their arrival in Japan by making a 25 mile hike with full field equipment back to Camp Wood after several weeks of intensive training.

Deployment to Japan saw the Red Devils faced with many situations not normally encountered by a Regimental Combat Team.

(continued....)



While both Camps Chickamauga and Wood had a small support compliment, the Regiment had to appoint many troops to assume additional duties such as Finance, Post Exchange, Clubs, Postal and other "housekeeping activities. For example, the Military Police Detachment at Camp Wood was comprised of troopers from the 1st Battalion and the 320th Abn FA Bn. In addition, Medical, Service and Engineering troops were split between the two camps.

Perhaps the most significant exercise undertaken by the Red Devils in 1955 was their participation in Operation Firm Link, a joint SEATO exercise conducted near Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives of all SEATO members were involved. Troops of the 2nd Battalion and Battery B, 320th Abn FA Bn formed a Battalion Combat Team commanded by LTC Edwin H. Patterson. Stops were made at Okinawa and Clark AFB, P. I. on the way to Bangkok.



Another cold training day.

Operation Gyroscope was supposed to be a stabilized three year tour, however, that was not to be. The Regimental Combat Team was ordered back to Fort Campbell, KY and all elements returned in July '56 - almost a year to the date of their departure from the same station. The Regimental Combat Team, along with the 187th ARCT, which was also ordered to Fort Campbell, Ky from Fort Bragg, NC. The mission of the two proud Airborne Regimental Combat Teams was to cadre the formation of the 101st Airborne Division which was reactivated at Fort Campbell, KY in late July, 1956.

A much reduced 508th Infantry became a part of the 101st Airborne Division and was designated "The Schools Command" for the Division. Its mission was to provide Infantry Advanced Individual Training (AIT) for those recruits who had volunteered for the 101st Airborne Division after they had completed their basic training. The recruits were assigned to various units of

the Division sent to the Division Jump School. Upon satisfactory completion of Jump School, the new troopers received their Advanced Individual Training conducted by the training cadre of 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment.

In March, 1957 the mission of the 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment was completed. The 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment was deactivated on March 27, 1957 at Fort Campbell, Ky after a period of almost six years of outstanding active service. The remaining personnel of the 508th were reassigned to various units of the 101st Airborne Division.

~ 508th CHAPTER HISTORY ~

In 1990, Bob Murray, former member of B Company 508th ARCT recognized there was a need for an organization of former Red Devils who had served with the 508th or any of its' attached units since it's organization in October 1942. As a result the 508th Airborne Chapter was formed and chartered as a Chapter of the 82nd Airborne Division Association. Bob was the founding Chairman of the Chapter and served in that capacity from August 1990 until December 2001. During those years he additionally served as Secretary, Treasurer and Quartermaster at various times. Jack Damron, HQ 1st BN, assumed the Chairmanship 1 January 2002. He accepted a second term for 2004-2005, serving in all officer capacities except Vice Chairman, as well as writer, editor and publisher of the bimonthly Devils Digest. His second term was interrupted in August 2004 by the disastrous effects of Hurricane Charley forcing him to later resign the remainder of his term. Bob Murray in September of 2004 assumed the position of Interim Chairman and served in that capacity until December 2005. Joe Montoya, HQ Btry 320th, accepted appointment to serve as Chapter Chairman for the vacant term 2006-2007. The present slate of Officers was re-elected to their positions for the same term.



Source:

http://www.red-devils.org/_regthist/abn_1951.shtml



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?

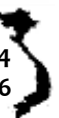
Men of the 2/503 who were there and who participated in this operation are planning to produce a video documentary to record that history for all time. If you were in the 2/503, especially Company A, we'd very much like to receive your comments, photos, and stories on what transpired that day. We will 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)



Rocky's Team Sky Soldiers Compete in VVA Chapter 522 Golf Tourney in Belleair, Florida

Named in memory of the late Don "Rocky" Rockholt, A/2/503, Rocky's Team Sky Soldiers competed in the 9th Annual Dwight Harrah Memorial Golf Tournament in Belleair, Florida this past October at the Belleview Biltmore Golf Club where it was hosted by VVA Chapter 522. The organizers, who included Sky Soldiers, put on a great event, but while Rocky's team had won many more tourney's than it's lost, we finished this competition somewhere in the middle of the pack – it had something to do with the ball not going into the hole when so directed in spite of constant begging.



Rocky, our late friend and golfer extraordinaire



Rocky's Team Sky Soldiers seen here with great hopes for another marvelous victory for the Herd before the tournament began are, L-R: Lew Smith (HHC/2/503), Kelly Livingston (USN VN Vet), Mike Britt and Tom Sebastian (Cocoa Beach VFW 10148 Men's Auxiliary). *It takes a lot of balls to golf the way we do!*

(Photo by Ranger Dick Ammon, 4/503)

This quartet did post a somewhat respectable 3 under par after taking bogies on the final two holes. We could have won too had it not been for those young guns from the Middle East wars....and had Rocky been there instead of the 2/503 RTO seen below. Ed



The Military Industrial Complex

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist."



President Eisenhower farewell address, 1961

Dwight D. Eisenhower

"The military-industrial complex, or military-industrial-congressional complex, comprises the policy and monetary relationships which exist between legislators, national armed forces, and the arms industry that supports them. These relationships include political contributions, political approval for military spending, lobbying to support bureaucracies, and oversight of the industry. It is a type of iron triangle. The term is most often used in reference to the system behind the military of the United States, where it gained popularity after its use in the farewell address of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on January 17, 1961, though the term is applicable to any country with a similarly developed infrastructure. In 2011, the United States spent more on its military than the next 13 nations combined."

"Huge profits were possible through the Vietnam war. Is there any truth in the theory that the military-industrial complex was merely a self-perpetuating war-mongering monster?"

"America's dependence on technology to fight the war in Vietnam clearly suited those firms which manufactured the appropriate weapons. Huge profits were to be made from war-related contracts -- by 1972, for example, over \$10 billion had been made available just to replace aircraft losses in Vietnam -- and, in the right circumstances, enormous funds could be extracted from the government to pursue research into new or more effective technological devices. As many of the companies involved had close ties with the administration and the Pentagon, they were ideally placed to influence decisions and ensure the adoption of new ideas, however, bizarre. Small wonder, therefore, that this military-industrial complex was blamed for creating false hopes which only served to fuel unworkable strategies. To many commentators, the influence of weapons-producing companies was evil, perpetuating a hopeless war and tempting the military to adopt ever more destructive responses to enemy attack."

Excerpt: NAM The Vietnam Experience 1965-1975



Col. Bob Carroll received 'Silver Star' fighting with 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam War

by Don Moore



President Lyndon Johnson pins a "Silver Star" medal on Col. Bob Carroll of Manasota Key for a firefight his unit survived in Vietnam when he was commander of an outfit dropped behind enemy lines.

Col. Bob Carroll never mentioned he was awarded a "Silver Star" in Vietnam "For Gallantry in Action." The Manasota Key, Fla. resident also has an 8 X 10, black and white, framed photograph of President Lyndon Johnson pinning the medal on him at Fort Benning, Ga. The commendation accompanying the medal says it all. It reads:

"Capt. Carroll distinguished himself by gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam on 5 Feb. 1967 while serving as Commanding Officer, Company A, 1st Battalion (Airborne) 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

On this date, Capt. Carroll was directing his company on a search and destroy mission in War Zone D, near a suspected Viet Cong prisoner of war camp when his lead platoon encountered a well-fortified and determined enemy force employing command-detonated mines and armed with automatic and small arms weapons. He immediately moved to the scene of the battle. Constantly exposing himself to the intense hostile fire, Capt. Carroll courageously directed the action of his men and helped pull the wounded from exposed positions to safety without regard to his own danger. Ordering a withdrawal of one hundred meters, he called in an artillery concentration and air strikes against the enemy lines. Aggressively leading a determined counterattack, he was forced to withdraw again because of approaching darkness and undiminished hostile fire. Learning of several unsuccessful attempts to rescue two severely wounded soldiers from exposed positions, Capt. Carroll personally led a final attempt through the intense and accurate hostile fire and returned with the two soldiers without further casualties. Capt. Carroll's extraordinary courage, aggressive leadership and determination were in keeping with the highest tradition of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army."

The colonel is a 1962 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, as was his father before him. His dad graduated from "The Point" in 1933. He fought his way across France, Belgium and into Germany with Gen. George Patton's 3rd Army during World War II. "He had the distinction of working for three of the nine, five-star generals during the Second World War and afterwards – George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower and Omar Bradley," the younger Carroll recalled recently.



Bob Carroll of Manasota Key is a West Point graduate Class of '62. He is a member of "The Long Gray Line" and so was his father.

"As a kid I knew Ike. He used to like to watch cowboy movies. On one occasion (during the war) in France at this magnificent hotel in Versailles five of us kids and Ike were all in our P.J.s watching a western," he said....

(continued....)



....“George Marshall was looking for a combat veteran who knew the Pentagon. He selected my father and pulled him out of combat in 1944 to go to work there for him,” Carroll said. “He also worked for Gen. Bradley.”

“After the war, my father went to work for Eisenhower. He was the Secretary for the General Staff working in the White House,” he explained. “Eisenhower had very few military men working for him in the White House.”

His father died of a heart attack at 44. He was a brigadier general.

One of Carroll’s favorite pictures is of Gen. Eisenhower pinning a “Silver Star” on his dad. He received two “Silver Stars” for bravery during the Second World War.

“I had a little trouble getting into West Point. I passed the exam, but I had no appointment,” he said. “I got a Presidential Appointment as the son of a deceased veteran. My first year at ‘The Point’ was tough, but I did pretty well academically. I’m one of those people who really loved it after my first year,” he said. “When I graduated in ‘62 I went into the Infantry like my dad. If you’re going to be a soldier you might as well be an infantryman.”

“Once I got out I went through a series of schools at Fort Benning – Airborne, Ranger School and then I was posted to Hawaii for two years. In November 1965 I volunteered for Vietnam.”

“I was put in Ranger Command over there and sent to a place in Two Corps called Duc My. It was a Vietnamese Army training center. I became the advisor to the Vietnamese Ranger group,” Carroll said. “I just made captain when I arrived there. I was told if you’re going to be an advisor to the Vietnamese Ranger School you’ve got to go through the school. I did.”



A young Capt. Carroll relaxes shirtless with a couple of buddies in Vietnam.

He spent his first six months in Vietnam at the ranger school. Then he joined the American 173rd Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam. Carroll became the commander of a six-man “LRRPS Unit” dropped behind enemy lines to spy on the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army troops. That’s when he got in a firefight with enemy forces and received a “Silver Star” for his efforts.

His last six months in country during his first tour he commanded Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry. His unit was stationed in “The Iron Triangle.” Carroll returned to the States in June 1967.

After graduating from Northwestern’s graduate school he taught a course in leadership at West Point for two years.

By June of 1972 he was back in Saigon on his second tour of Vietnam. By then he was a 32-year-old Army major.

“I was the executive officer of a brigade in charge of all ground operations,” he said. “I was one of 50 people who stayed on at the American Embassy in Saigon after the last American G.I. left Vietnam.”

Upon returning from Southeast Asia, Carroll was stationed in Fort Carson, Colo. as commander of 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry, Mechanized – part of the 4th Infantry Division. He took the division to Germany and spent three years with the unit over there. His final four years in the military was spent working in the Pentagon. He retired as a full colonel in 1983 after 21 years of service to his country.

“When I got out of the service I went into banking for about 10 years. Then I got back into the leadership training business. I worked for a California consulting firm that provides leadership workshops for Fortune 500 companies. I also teach leadership at ‘The Point’ periodically.”

Carroll and his wife, Betty Sue, moved to the Englewood area and Manasota Key 20 years ago. They have two grown sons: K.C. and Cody.

Carroll’s File

Name: Robert Cooper Carroll
D.O.B: 12 March 1940
Hometown: Fort Benning, Ga.
Currently: Englewood, Fla.
Entered Service: 6 June 1962
Discharged: 31 July 1983
Rank: Colonel
Unit: 173rd Airborne Brigade, 1st Battalion (Airborne) 503rd Infantry



Col Carroll

This story was first published in the *Charlotte Sun* newspaper, Port Charlotte, FL on Monday, June 22, 2015, and appears on the web.



Master Blaster

The **Parachutist Badge**, also commonly referred to as "Jump Wings" is a military badge of the United States Armed Forces awarded to members of the United States Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy. The United States Coast Guard is the only branch that does not issue its own Parachutist Badge, but its members are authorized to receive the Parachutist Badges of other services in accordance with their prescribed requirements. The DoD military services are all awarded the same Basic Parachutist Badge. The Army and Air Force issue the same Senior and Master Parachutist Badges while the Navy and Marine Corps issue the Navy and Marine Corps Parachutist Badge to advanced parachutists. The majority of the services earn their Basic Parachutist Badge through the U.S. Army Airborne School.



The Army's **Basic Parachutist Badge** is awarded to all military personnel who complete the US Army Basic Airborne Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. It signifies that the soldier is a trained military parachutist, and is qualified to participate in airborne operations. The badge and its sew-on equivalent may be worn on the Army Combat Uniform (ACU).

The original Army Parachutist Badge was designed in 1941 by Captain (later Lieutenant General) William P. Yarborough and approved by the Department of the Army in March of that year. The Parachutist Badge replaced the "Parachutist Patch" which was previously worn as a large patch on the side of a paratrooper's garrison cap. LTG Yarborough also designed the Senior and Master Parachutist Badges and the addition of stars to portray the number of combat jumps. The flash that is worn behind the badge is also a contribution of William P. Yarborough.



To be eligible for the **Master Parachutist Badge**, an individual must have been rated excellent in character and efficiency and have met the following requirements:

- Participated in a minimum of 65 jumps including twenty-five jumps with combat equipment to consist of normal TOE equipment, including individual weapon carried by the individual in combat whether the jump was in actual or simulated combat. In cases of simulated combat the equipment will include water rations (actual or dummy), ammunition (actual or

- dummy), and other essential items necessary to sustain an individual in combat. Four night jumps must also be made during the hours of darkness, one as jumpmaster of a stick. Five mass tactical jumps must be made which culminate in an airborne assault problem with a unit equivalent to a battalion or larger; a separate company/battery; or an organic staff of regimental size or larger. The individual must fill a position commensurate with their rank or grade during the problem.

- Either graduated from the Jumpmaster Course of the Airborne Department of the Infantry School or the Jumpmaster School of a separate airborne battalion or larger airborne unit, or infantry divisions and separate infantry brigades containing organic airborne elements, including the U.S. Army Alaska Jumpmaster Course, or served as jumpmaster on one or more combat jumps or as jumpmaster on 33 noncombat jumps.
- Have served on jump status with an airborne unit or other organization authorized parachutists for a total of 36 months (may be non-consecutive).
- The 25 combat equipment jumps necessary to qualify for the Master Parachutist Badge must be from a static line.
- The master parachutist badge is 38mm in width at the widest part of the wings and 31mm from the top of the wreath to the bottom of the parachute where the risers meet in a point.

Source:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parachutist_Badge_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parachutist_Badge_(United_States))

Note: Of course, we know actual jump wings do not reflect specific unit insignias as shown here. But, it is purrty.



One of our own Master Blasters,
Command Sergeant Major, Richard Clark





Chuck Dean

The Love of Veterans

In 1982, Joseph Ambrose, an 86 year-old World War I veteran, showed up at the dedication parade for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D. C. It was a special Veterans Day indeed.

Joseph came with a broad smile and a peaceful heart, and in his arms he cradled a triangular American flag that had once draped over his own son's casket; a young soldier who had given his life in the Korean War.

So much was said without words that day. Joseph lovingly embraced that flag as if he was holding his son once again.

To this day, none of us know exactly what Joseph was feeling or thinking that day; we can only imagine. My thinking is that he arrived that Veterans Day not only because of his personal loss. I believe he had come to honor the duty and sacrifice of all veterans, and especially a fellow veteran (his son) who paid the ultimate price to keep America free. It was a veteran-to-veteran love that compelled him to walk out on the grass in front of the 58,000+ names engraved on that V-shaped black granite wall.

He demonstrated his love for them all because they had served beyond the call of duty. It was a love far distant from how love is normally defined, and amongst warriors, that kind of devotion is simply impossible to explain...perhaps that's why they speak so rarely of it; but it's there all the same. You can see it in their eyes when they meet.

So, what do I think of veterans on this Veterans Day? I can summarize this by telling you of a time that I spent with some WWII French Resistance fighters in Paris. I traveled with them to a large country chateau near Leone. During dinner, they served the most excellent local wine produced in Bordeaux. When I commented on how good it was they stood and raised their glasses, and said it was because of "*La vigne doit souffrir*"... which means "*the suffering of the vine.*"

Our friends explained that the best wine always comes from grapes grown on vines that have had to suffer, so Bordeaux vintners plant them on dry rocky hillsides where it seems like nothing can grow. The vine must struggle to reach the water needed for survival. As a result of this stress and hardship, the best grapes are produced to make award-winning wine.

It is easy for me to draw a parallel between those fine grapes and the veterans that have served our country. Through the physical and emotional hardships of military life, they are like the vines planted in that arid ground. By struggle and stress, their roots have gone far to survive, and the deeper those roots have had to go...the deeper their love becomes for one another and for all of life.

I look at our warriors, young and old, as award-winning fruit because of the hardships they have endured. They are the finest fruit our country has ever produced. That's what I think of veterans, and I salute you all.



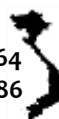
Chuck Dean served as an Army paratrooper in Vietnam, and through that experience was led to address the many transitional issues veterans struggle with after war. In 2008, he was honored to receive the prestigious Hirsch Foundation Leadership Award for his writing and work in support of veterans. Visit his web page at: <http://chuckdean>

Sky Soldier Chuck's report appeared in the November 2015 issue of the....



Source:

www.thevegasvoice.net/uploads/2/8/1/0/28107857/vv_11-15_web.pdf



~ Correction ~

On Page 73 of Issue 63, we included this photo of John Searcy, HHC/2/503, 4.2 Platoon, *taking 5* while resting against a mule, sometime, somewhere in Vietnam. The caption incorrectly stated John was a retired SFC. Top, of course, is a retired 1SG, which he gently reminded me of. *Oops!* Fortunately for me, Top lives out west and me in the southeast, so he'll never really know if I gave him those 20 pushups or not. My apologies Top!



Anyone could tell this young Sergeant would go on to retire as a 1SG. Anyone that is, except the editor of this newsletter.



Maybe I better give him 30 pushups just to be safe! Ed

Of interest to California Vets....

Governor Signs Allen Legislation to Protect Veterans from Pension Scams

September 2, 2015

Sacramento, CA – Today Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a measure authored by Senator Ben Allen (D – Santa Monica) to protect veterans from pension scams. The bill, Senate Bill (SB) 386, was proposed in response to the increasing number of veterans who are falling prey to investment schemes in which they are promised a lump-sum cash payment in exchange for their monthly retirement income.

“It is completely unacceptable that veterans are being taken advantage of through these financial scams. California’s 2 million veterans deserve better. This legislation is a modest, but important, reform that will help prevent our retired servicemen and women from being duped into similar schemes in the future,” Senator Allen said.

Nearly half of the 38 companies engaged in these phony investment deals are located in California. Once a veteran signs away his or her benefits, the company sells interests in the revenue stream generated by those future benefits to investors. This practice is illegal under federal and state law, but several companies continue to advertise the transactions in publications targeting veterans. SB 386 makes the act of advertising these pension poaching scams illegal, and allows prosecutors to file suit against the companies responsible for the advertisement.

Veterans are often led to believe they are agreeing only to a short-term loan to get them through a rough patch. In many cases, they have no other source of income than their pension when they return from active duty.

Senator Allen is a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. His 26th senate district is home to the Los Angeles Air Force Base and thousands of active and retired military members.

Source:

colleen.beamish@sen.ca.gov

[Sent in by CCVVA Chapter 982]



AC-130 Gunship

Saw this in our paper today and thought you might enjoy this one! Us SF guys would sure like to know one of these was around to help out if needed!

John Erskine, Col.

1/5/6 SF



Nick Tomecek | Northwest Florida Daily News

First of Its Kind

An AC-130J gunship taxis under a stream of water Wednesday at Hurlburt Field. This is the first model aircraft of its kind. More AC-130Js are expected at Hurlburt Field for testing. Hurlburt Field is the home of the Air Force Special Operations Command.



AC-130 Spectre / Spooky / Ghost rider / Stinger II



Sounds like a good place for wings and 33 Beer*.

[Sent in by Jerry Sopko, D/4/503]

*After the war a German firm invested in the company which brewed the 33 beer we knew and changed its name to 333 beer (really). It's said to taste one-third better.

How to Erect a Flagpole

The 2/503 Major tells the new 2nd LT, "I'm going to Brigade. I want a flagpole put up over there by the time I'm back tomorrow."

So the 2nd LT goes to the brigade's engineering office and gets blueprints for a flagpole. And he goes to Supply and gets materials. The next day he goes down to Bravo Company and gets twenty privates for a work detail.

That afternoon the Major gets back early and sees the 2nd LT all sweaty, telling one group of troopers how to cut the pole; telling another group of men how to paint the pole; telling another group how to dig the hole the pole will be going into.

The Major screams out, "HOLD IT, LIEUTENANT!! That's not how you put up a flagpole!"

The 2nd LT is baffled and takes the blueprints over to the Major and says, "Yes it is sir, it says right here...."

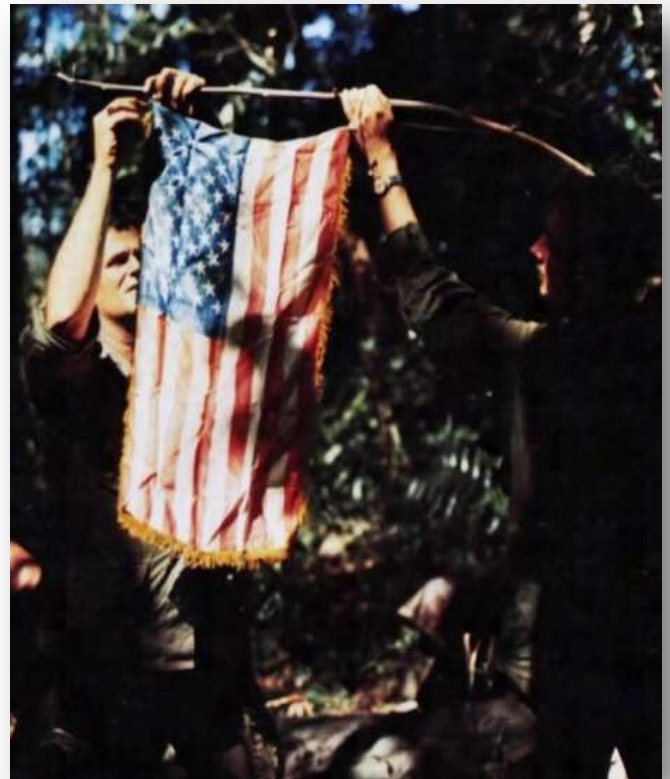
The Major cuts him short and says, "No Lieutenant, this is how you put up a flagpole. Watch."

"Sergeant! Put a flagpole up over there!"

Craig Thompson

B/2/503

Note: Sent in by Craig. Slightly modified to fit the unit.



Butter Bar erecting a flag pole in Vietnam? Cool.



BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Ft. Benning, Georgia | June 2016



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

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



From Down Under



Dear Fellow Gunners

As most of you are aware from the editorial in the last *Tiger Rag*, the 105th Battery has been awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation (RVCGWPU) for its 1965-66 South Vietnam service with the 173rd United States Airborne Brigade. A formal presentation parade (was held) within 1st Regiment RAA's Barce Lines at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera on Tuesday 6 October 2015.

On this parade, the battery commander of the 105th (was) presented with a symbol of the citation and any 1965-66 veterans and widows of the 1965-66 veterans of the 105th able to attend (were) 'badged' with the personal award symbol of the Citation. The parade (was) followed by the official opening of the new 105th Battery Museum by Doctor Robin Bade, the widow of 105's 1965-66 forward observer Captain Ken Bade, the first Australian officer to be killed in the Vietnam War.

This day also celebrated the 60th anniversary of the re-raising of the 105th, the 60th anniversary of the 105th being the first Australian Artillery unit to serve (in Malaya) on operational service since the Second World War, and the 50th anniversary of the 105th being the first Australian Artillery unit to serve in the Vietnam War.

105th Battery's 1965-66 veterans, widows of 105's 1965-66 veterans other veterans, families, Association members and friends of the 105th (were) invited to be part of this significant occasion....

ARTHUR BURKE OAM

Colonel (Retired)

Honorary Historian 105th Battery RAA



"The 105 Field Battery fire one of the first shots of their war in Vietnam." (Web photo)



Behind every good man ...

'Behind every good man is an even better woman.'

To paraphrase and add a little literary licence to a 2003 American discussion paper (Flannery O'Connor et al) on this subject. *'When we used to think about a woman, we envision a pale wisp of a lady who swoons if it gets too hot. She is delicate and beautiful and must be taken care of by a man.'*

A century ago, this was the image that males adopted when it came to the way in which one perceived members of the fairer sex. However, within the last century in Australia, factors such as two world wars, the Great Depression, flower power, the liberation of women and the changing role of women in the workforce have generated tough and capable women who are willing to take on any role a man can do. Within them there is none stronger than the woman who stands behind her soldier.

This may seem a rather strange introduction for the editorial of *'Tiger Rag'*, but the calendar flipped over to 2008 and as I entered the downhill slope of my 65th year, I began contemplating the strength of the women who had stood behind us when, heads down and blinkers on, we charged through our military careers. They are a very particular breed of women and today I will pay them a long overdue tribute.



At 105 reunion, Diggers and their special ladies.

(continued....)



When we first entered the Army, very few of us were married. The work-hard-play-hard syndrome was a way of life. With a fortnight's pay burning a hole in the pocket and feeling invincible, one could blow the whole wad in a single night of boozing and/or trying to impress the local lasses, be carried home by one's mates, and then face 13 days of free food and a roof over one's head till the next pay day.

But sooner or later, there was a particular woman who became more than good company on nights out and someone who you really wanted to be with. She could even curb your drinking, guide your dress sense, and prove to you that there was more to life than work, pay and spending. With her, you even began to save and a whole new world of hitherto unobtainable assets became possible.

Suddenly, you realised that, despite the mateship and camaraderie of your fellow soldiers, there was a need for another side to life, a side which included this particular woman. Of course, not all of your mates thought you were right in the head about this because you began talking about living out of barracks, getting married and buying a house—even having children! Eventually, however, and despite your mates' earnest counselling, you became engaged and then married.



And without the loves of their lives, it would just be a table of old soldiers.

I can recall a wise old warrant officer telling us during training as officer cadets that soldiers should marry nurses, teachers or air hostesses because they were used to a nomadic lifestyle and could tolerate the turbulence of military life. The upheavals caused by the Army's posting cycles did not seem terribly important or relevant when one is young, but some of this advice must have stuck—I married a nurse.

In the 1950s and the '60s, one of the things that often happened after marriage (or in some cases led to marriage) was an overseas posting. Now, whilst Korea was no cup of tea because memories of the Second

World War were still very fresh in everyone's minds, Malaya and then Malaysia were a little bit of the British Raj—an accompanied posting with house help, overseas allowances and a relatively cheaper cost of living.

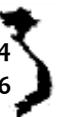
The downside of this Raj was, of course, that the menfolk spent most of their time away from home with only four days of leave each month and a Christmas break. This strongly impinged upon family life and, though lonely for a wife with no children, frequently brought strong challenges to the others. Though there were house help and wives' groups overseen by rear detail personnel, the woman of the house was obliged to assume all the absent husband's roles including finance manager, disciplinarian, bill disputer and home maintainer.

Back in Australia in the 1960s, the trials of new organisations, equipments and operational concepts led to long (several months at a time) training exercises. These led to family circumstances which were not unlike the days of the Raj, but minus the advantages of house help, baby sitters and sometimes the wives groups. Under these circumstances, the woman of the house suffered a much more tedious existence and the bonds of marriage were really tested.

Then the Vietnam War began. Not only were the wives of Regular Army servicemen subjected to 12 months of spouse deprivation, but the younger married partners of the 20-year-old National Servicemen suddenly found that the drop of a lottery ball had hurled them into this melee of sudden separation. Worse still, this was the first time in which the television media brought the frightening detail of war into the lounge room of every home. The casualties in Vietnam were also many times those suffered in Malaya, Malaysia and Borneo operations so a new dimension of fear was added to the burden of the women at home.

The last quarter of the 20th century was comparatively peaceful as far as the Australian Army was concerned with only the occasional Rwanda, New Guinea, Somalia, Gulf or Cambodia experiences providing challenges to the soldier's wife left at home. In some way, however, these sudden absences had a more devastating effect than, say, during the Vietnam War because there were few family welfare systems established. Those that existed were sorely untested, so again the soldiers' women were where the family buck stopped.

(continued....)



Since 1999, the troubles in East Timor, the Solomons, Iraq and Afghanistan have led to a plethora of six-month overseas operational postings. Whilst this may not seem as trying for the womenfolk, new factors are causing fresh problems: rotations back overseas are becoming more frequent; more women are in the workforce, some in quite demanding jobs; and the media frenzy is bringing operations into homes almost as they are occurring—and in graphic detail.

Throughout all these times, women have not only stood behind their men's decisions to serve operationally, but have in fact stood in their men's places on the home front. It is they who have brought up the children and they who have been the lonely face at sports' finals, at parent-teacher evenings, and at school concerts. These women have been the ones who had to put on the extra jolly faces on Christmas days when fathers were serving overseas.

Eventually there comes a time when the soldier stops soldiering—for money that is. Nevertheless, he still maintains contact with his old service mates, he still relives the old nightmare demons of the past and he often becomes a cranky old bugger. Without dependent children, these have been the final straws that have broken the back of numerous marriages. Within others, there has been a new pulling together to defeat new enemies—old ghosts, old injuries and old age.

When we originally took those alter oaths to 'love, honour and obey', 'in sickness and in health', no soldier's woman ever expected she would be tested to the very limit of these words. The pair were supposed to be a team, helping each other and heading for the same goals. The military took the 'we' out of the team and the woman was left to steer the ship of the home, family and marriage all by herself. This is surely a task above and beyond that original oath.

Behind every good man is an even better woman. This is more than a popular quote and the soldier should accept it as a truth. In the case of a soldier's woman who has survived these tests of time and is still with her man, no accolade can be sufficient to recognise her worth, no man can ever fully understand what she has sacrificed to keep their union working, and no amount of thanks or gifts will ever recompense her.

I doubt there is a greater sacrifice that a woman makes than to stay married to her soldier 'till death us do part'. Nevertheless, there are many women who continue to make this sacrifice. To these ladies and on behalf of all soldiers, I offer two inadequate, but heartfelt words—thank you.

Ubique

Arthur Burke, Editor, 'Tiger Rag'

Source:

<http://www.105bty.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BehindEveryGoodMan.pdf>

Courtesy of

ARTHUR BURKE OAM

Colonel (Retired)

Honorary Historian 105th Battery RAA

“Surrender?!
Are you bloody crazy?!
We're Australians!!”

Veteran's Day in The Land of Oz



Our very own A.B. Garcia (The Aussino), HHC/4.2 Platoon 2/503, '65/'66, proudly displaying his colors during Vietnam Veteran's Day at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Australia. *Him mighty big Chief!*



From Down Under....

The National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island in Victoria has just won the Trip Advisor 2015 Travellers Choice Award



We are delighted with the award which gives the museum the status it deserves and justifies the huge amount of work that volunteers do for the museum. I encourage all of your wide readership to make the journey to Phillip Island, you will not be disappointed. I would also like to mention a way that you can support the museum, through joining Friends of the museum. For just 80 cents a week as a Friends member you help to support the museum, spread the word as an ambassador and of course as a Friend you are a valued member of the museum and entitled to a wide range of discounted activities and purchases and attendance at Friends prices to the special displays etc at the museum. Best of all, you help preserve YOUR STORY, free of spin, for future generations. Visit the NVVM website for information on Friends and how to join. Warm regards,

Bob Elworthy

Secretary NVVM Board of Directors

P.S. We are getting an APC! At long last one of the big holes in our big boys toys display is to be filled with the arrival of an M113A shortly. Also the Huey is about to start its transformation back into its Vietnam War livery and configuration.



“Australian APC – call sign 20A – after being hit by a mine in the Long Hai Hills, 25 February 1970. Several soldiers were wounded in the explosion, including New Zealander Alan ‘Buck’ Peters from 161 Battery RNZA.”

(Photo from the web, credit to Kiwi brother, Alan “Buck” Peters)

About One of Our Troopers...

“Here is a uniform for an airborne trooper that fought in combat with the 187th RCT in Korea and later the 173rd Airborne in Vietnam until we was mortally wounded.



Sgt. Robert Allen Gray served 11 months in Korea with the 187th RCT Rakkasan’s. He served in Company C, 2nd Battalion, 503rd PIR, 173rd Airborne in Vietnam.

**Robert Gray was from Avilla, IN
Sept. 23, 1930 ~ Dec. 18, 1965**

On 18 December 1965, Gray’s company was on a search and destroy mission at Courtenay, Republic of Vietnam when his company encountered a large force of well-entrenched Viet Cong. The forward elements of the company were ordered to mark the Viet Cong positions with smoke grenades. One of the grenades thrown hit thick underbrush and bounced back onto a soldier and became entangled in his webbing.

SGT Gray saw that the soldier was being burned by the grenade and rushed to his aid, exposing himself to intense enemy fire. He grabbed the grenade and threw it back at the Viet Cong but was killed by small arms fire in the process. His grenade landed on target and marked the enemy position for air strike.

For this act of heroism, SGT Gray received a posthumous Silver Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal.”

Source:

<http://rallypointmilitaria.com/vietnam-war-militaria/vietnam-173rd-airborne-uniform>

They Were Young & Brave & Paratroopers



If you are the recipient of the Bronze Star w/V, the Silver Star, the DSC or other valor award for combat actions in Vietnam with the 2/503rd, send a copy of your original written citation and a photo to rto173d@cfl.rr.com We will continue to include the text of awards to our men -- something your grandkids can one day read, about when their granddad was young and brave and a paratrooper.



~ He Was Young & Brave & A Paratrooper ~

STEVEN I. HABER...CHARGIN' CHARLIE EXTRAORDINAIRE

HABER, STEVEN I.

Private First Class, United States Army

Co C, 2d Bn (Abn)

503d Inf, 173d Abn Bde (Sep)

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device

Date of Action: 14 March 1966

(Operation Silver City)



Reason:

For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force:

Private First Class Haber distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 14 March 1966 during a search and destroy mission near Phuoc Vinh, Republic of Vietnam. As his unit approached a designated objective, two claymore mines were detonated and Private First Class Haber was knocked unconscious by the same explosion that killed his squad leader and two other squad members.



Steven



2/503 troopers evacuating wounded following firefight during Operation Silver City in the "D" Zone jungle, March 1966.

When Private First Class Haber regained consciousness, he used his compass to determine the exact locations of several Viet Cong bunkers and fortified positions. Upon withdrawing to the rear, he helped evacuate the wounded. He then presented a detailed report of his observations to this company commander and volunteered to act as point man to lead a platoon size force to the insurgent positions. As a result of his accurate and detailed information, the operation was successfully completed. Private First Class Haber's personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962.

Note: Two days later, on 16 March 1966, Steven would be wounded in combat during the battle at LZ Zulu Zulu when his company and battalion were surrounded by a regiment of enemy forces, and would earn the Purple Heart.



The 2/503rd in the An Lao Valley 1968 ~ 1970

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

In the wake of the Communist Tet Offensive in January of 1968, all three brigades of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) were redeployed from II Corps to I Corps. At the same time, the 173d Airborne Brigade was ordered to replace one of those brigades in northern Binh Dinh Province. Brigade Headquarters and the 2nd Battalion were co-located at Landing Zone (LZ) English, near Bong Son/Hoai Nhon. The 4th Battalion worked out of LZ North English, the 1st and 3rd Battalions were eventually co-located at LZ Uplift, and the Support Battalion went to Phu Tai.

With the move came a change in tactics. In previous years, the norm was battalion-sized operations: with one company held in reserve, three companies would deploy together, disperse during the day, and then co-locate at night. After the move to Binh Dinh, the norm became company-sized operations: 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. Within a given platoon, it would deploy as a group, disperse during the night to ambush positions, and then re-group the next day. At least in the 2nd Battalion, this tactical innovation was known as the "Hawk Team Concept."

"Hawk Teams" were utilized throughout the 2nd Battalion's tactical area of responsibility, to include the An Lao River Valley. During the Second Indochina War, the "An Lao" was the scene of much bitter fighting between the NVA/VC and American forces ~ including the 1st Cavalry Division, 1/50th Infantry (Mechanized), and the 2/503rd Infantry (1968-1970). The four photos with dates are from my own collection; the other eight were "borrowed" from the internet.



AN LAO Shown on this map is a portion of northern Binh Dinh Province in South Viet Nam.

To the east of the preceding map is the South China Sea. In the center is LZ English. The An Lao River Valley is located to the west of LZ English and Bong Son.



AN LAO Pictured here are the eastern or seaward slopes of the An Lao Mountains.

The An Lao Mountains above as seen from LZ English during November of 1970. Beyond the concertina wire is a tiny village of rice farmers.



AN LAO Visible here are the An Lao River, Valley, and Mountains.

In the above photograph, the River runs from the north/top to the south/bottom. Before US combat operations began in 1965, a great deal of rice was produced on both sides of the River. Much of the open land in this photo was once under cultivation; the square-cornered places were once paddy dikes. The people who lived here were removed forcibly by US troops; in the process, their homes and rice stocks were burned, their crops and animals were destroyed, and self-sufficient farmers ~ who had lived here seemingly forever ~ became displaced refugees overnight.

(continued...)





AN LAO Another view of the An Lao River and Valley.

Fire Base Tape is visible in the middle-distance of the photo above. Before US combat operations began in 1965, around 10,000 people inhabited the Valley. In order to wrest control of the Valley and its people from Communist control, almost everyone was removed forcibly in 1966. Anyone who remained was considered a Communist and, as such, could be killed on sight; it was a "free-fire zone." War-time survivors claimed that South Korean troops had committed massacres in two villages at the Valley's head.



AN LAO This photo is of the large hill in the center of the An Lao Valley.

At one time, this large hill was the site of the 173d Airborne Brigade's Fire Base Tape. (View: looking north.) The top of this hill would be a wonderful place to build a temple for meditation . . . on windless moonlit nights, when the fog flows down the Valley on both sides of the hill, this is one of the most beautiful places on Earth.



AN LAO Another view of the An Lao Valley, looking toward the south.

The CH-47 helicopter in the distance, above, has just taken-off from Fire Base Tape (left foreground) and is returning to LZ English.



AN LAO UH-1H Helicopter during a combat assault in the An Lao Valley.

In the photo above, the object in the right foreground is a helicopter nose antenna, so this photo was taken by the pilot. Let's hope the co-pilot had the controls!

(continued....)





AN LAO An OH-6 helicopter provides aerial reconnaissance during a combat assault in the An Lao Valley.



AN LAO A UH-1H helicopter off-loads "Sky Soldiers" next to the River during a combat assault into the An Lao Valley.



AN LAO After off-loading and organizing for movement, a platoon of fully-armed "Sky Soldiers" crosses the upper reaches of the An Lao River in a good Ranger file.



AN LAO Sergeant Charles Matthews on combat patrol with the 3rd Platoon, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry in the An Lao Mountains during August of 1970.



AN LAO Left to Right: Private First Class William Jones and Sergeant Benjamin Brockway on combat patrol with the 3rd Platoon, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry in the An Lao Mountains during August of 1970.



AN LAO Left to Right: Sergeant Benjamin Brockway and First Lieutenant Thomas Ayers on combat patrol with the 3rd Platoon, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry in the An Lao Mountains during August of 1970.

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A MEDIC'S DIARY

173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE

by Larry (Doc) Speed
HHC/C/1/503



26 May 67

Left *West Des Moines*, Iowa this morning and arrived here in *San Francisco* this afternoon. While on layover in *Omaha*, I called Mike Nieman's mother and inquired about Mike....still in *San Diego* for boot camp. Out of *Omaha* I caught a jet non-stop for S.F. I checked into a hotel and later that evening met Edmond Wright, who is from *Birmingham, Ala.*

27 May 67

Today, Ed and I toured *San Francisco*. We visited the zoo, the beach, rode cable cars, trolley cars, and took a cruise around the bay. This afternoon, I met Craig Lowery in *San Francisco*. He was with me at *Ft. Bragg*, and had just gotten back from *Viet Nam*. He was wounded over there, so he must return to *Letterman Hospital* for re-evaluation of his wounds. The three of us went out for dinner this evening and later went out for a few beers together.

We met a guy named Pops, who claimed to be a blues singer with the *Louis Armstrong* band. The man could really sing....no doubt about that. I guess Craig will stay with us tonight, so we had better get to sleep since all of us have to get up early tomorrow morning.

28 May 67

Called home this morning and then caught a bus for *Oakland Army Base*. Began my processing and stayed here for four nights.



San Francisco, 1967 (web photo)

1 June 67

Left *Oakland* this morning and traveled by bus to *Travis AFB*. This evening at 1900 hours we boarded a *Continental* jet for our long trip to *Viet Nam*. Before our arrival at *Bien Hoa*, we stopped at *Honolulu* and *Clark AFB* in the *Philippines*.

3 June 67

Arrived at *Bien Hoa AFB* this morning at 0530. This completed our 22 hour flight. After filling out a few forms, we were transferred to the *90th Replacement Battalion* located near *Long Bien*. Our bus was escorted by an armed jeep. It sure is hard to believe that I am over here, but there isn't any doubt from what I see around here.....a few rice paddies, a trashy little town, the civilians dressed in their native clothing, and explosions in the background. A few months ago I was watching this typical scene on television. Now, I am a part of it.

It looks funny to see the people squatting instead of sitting down. The only source of transportation I have seen are bicycles, motorcycles, lambrettas, and military vehicles. Their exchange is called piasters. Today we had to exchange our greenbacks and coins for military payment certificates, commonly called MPC's.

The *90th replacement center* is built up quite well. The barracks are made of wood with each individual slab of wood attached at a 45 degree angle. The upper section on each side of the barrack is screened. *War Zone D* is to our East. This afternoon, Wright and I noticed some WP and heard small arms fire.

(continued....)



4 June 67

This morning we were sent to the 173d reception center. More papers to fill out before going to our unit. A lot of artillery fire can be heard from the perimeter..... harassment rounds. I have been assigned to HHC 1/503. This afternoon I was issued my clothing and TA50 equipment.

5-10 June 67

Attended jungle school this week. Our night operation consisted of a hump to the edge of a rubber plantation, where we set up a perimeter.

13 June 67

For the last few days, I have been working around the aid station. Sgt Watson put me in for SP/5. This afternoon I flew up North to Pleiku aboard a C-130 which was also carrying two OH13 helicopters.

The view from the aircraft window was very picturesque. It looked as if most of the land below was of jungle region. The "mud hole" East of Pleiku is the 173d temporary base camp while up North. I met the Dr., Lt. Inuza, and also saw Joe and Robert again. They left Bragg last February.

14 June 67

Joe and I went across the road this morning to pick up Lt. Inuza's laundry. The buildings were just shacks made out of beer cans, lumber, tin, and a little of everything else. Down the road was a *Montagnard* hamlet. I guess it is accepted for all the little kids to smoke, because they all were today.

A couple of older women were preparing dinner....rice in a dirty pot. With a *purple smile*, they offered me a bite----No Thanks!



Montagnard villagers in Vietnam. (web photo)

15 June 67

This afternoon caught a slick out to Charlie Company. I will be the medic for weapon's platoon. I was welcomed as a "FNG".

17 June 67

The last few days around the "golf course" have been very pleasant....if one can say that about Viet Nam. I got to know my group a little better and now feel more easy going around them. I stayed in a hooch occupied by Steve, Ski, and Mac. Ambushes have been going out most every night, but return with a negative sit rep.

There are two Montagnard hamlets on either side of us and a rice paddy at the bottom of the hill.

Jim Gage and I have been hitting it off together. Jim is from St Louis. He has one problem though.....and that would be his girlfriend back home. I guess because I'm the medic, he seeks advice from me. Not sure if I can really be of any help to him.

Until this morning, we have been at this same location. We are now going farther North to some place called *Dak To*. We trucked out by 2 1/2 ton trucks to the AFB in Pleiku. Here we rejoined the rest of the brigade.

As soon as we left the "golf course", Montagnard children swarmed in like bees and began digging up sumps and other filled-in bunkers and holes.

We flew to Dak To in C-130s, unloaded, and set up camp across the road. After setting up a hooch with Pauk, we began digging our bunker. A stream at the bottom of the hill would provide us our bathing water.

The hills in the distance are of unfamiliar beauty. This beauty is the *Central Highlands* of Viet Nam.



Dak To airstrip. (web photo)

18 June 67

Today, Lieutenant Cecil became our platoon leader. At the creek today, I got a Montagnard bracelet from a woman in trade for a couple bars of soap.

(continued....)



19 June 67

Today, I made my first heliborne assault by chinook to *dead man's hill*. An ARVN camp with Special Forces advisors was overrun by NVA forces. We are to assault, set up a perimeter and defend the line companies as they advance up the hill to police up the bodies for removal.

An hour before our departure, artillery pounded the area until the advance party arrived. Weapon platoon boarded the chinook which took us to the LZ. With LBE, weapons, and rucksacks, we unloaded the chinook and secured one side of the LZ near the wood line. Many of the trees along the wood line bore shattered scars where artillery had struck.

As the smoke from the woods revealed itself, an air strike was being conducted from above. Over and over again, the planes came diving in and dropped their deadly load. The motivation of myself and other troops was for real. The gun squad set up the mortar while the rest of us began digging in. All the time, more equipment was being brought in by hooks. This included everything from chain saws and jeeps to 4.2mm mortars and ammo. Once we got our bunkers dug and overhead cover, we began setting up our hooches.

With the line companies, who passed by, were CIDG.....Civilian Irregular Defense Group. Over the PRC 25 came reports of the finding of Americans and ARVN soldiers. This evening the mortar squads fired supporting fire for the line company. In the darkness of the night we could see the *Willie Peter* explode.



M-16 & helmet destroyed by fire at Battle of the Slopes
(web photo)

20 June 67

The bodies were removed by choppers this morning. Today has been quiet and slow.

21 June 67

We were extracted this morning by chinook, and returned to Dak To. After our arrival, I took a bath and set up my hooch. In the afternoon, we were informed of a new operation. One member of a LRRP team had gotten lost in the jungle and the enemy was known to be close by. Our operation would be a night heliborne assault on a deserted Montagnard village. We are to find this man and/or make contact with the enemy.

Once we packed our gear, we headed for the helipads. It was quite dark when I boarded the slick. Four of us were aboard...Sgt. Weston, Ski, Logger, and myself. After takeoff, the ship headed East and we could see a few lights below us of villages. Before we reached the LZ, our chopper encountered small arms fire from the jungle.

The door gunner in the Huey behind us opened up with his M-60. A steady stream of tracers headed into the jungle below. Our door gunner made an unsuccessful attempt to fire. His gun jammed after a few rounds. Flares lit up the LZ below.

After touchdown, we unloaded and the mortar men began digging a pit for the 81mm. Near the pit was a cave-like bunker with some pottery inside. The insects were bad that night, so I sprayed the grass on the side of the bunker before Pauk. ###

You can read Larry's entire diary at:
<http://www.173rdairborne.com/medicdiary.htm>

(Photos added)

"An army medic tends to seriously wounded soldier north of Saigon in 1967."

(web photo)

Those Doc's were the best. Ed



For a detailed report on *The Battle of the Slopes*, see Issue 29, June 2011, of our newsletter.



Newly Published -- **The Hump**

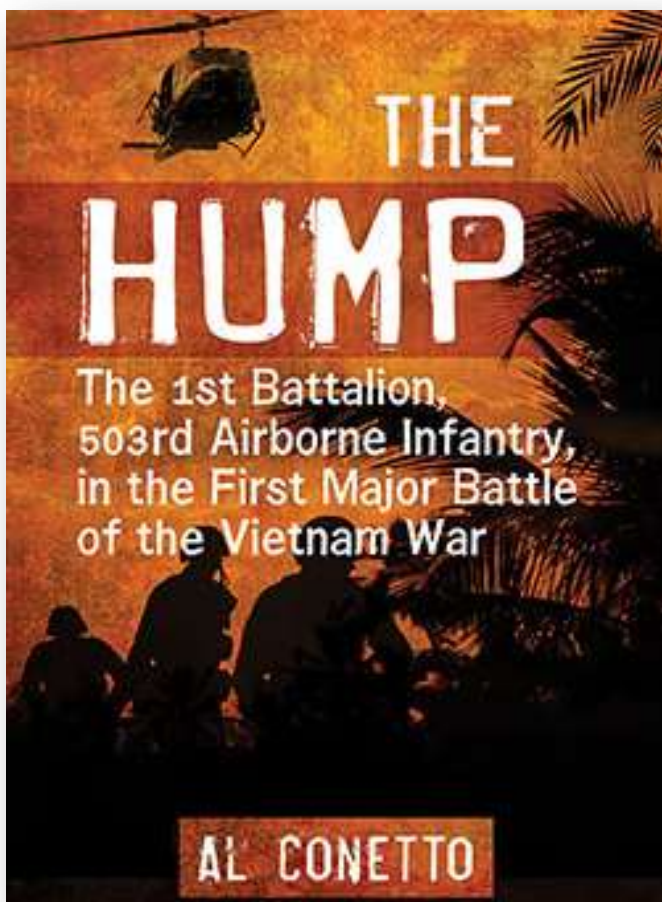
The Hump: The 1st Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, in the First Major Battle of the Vietnam War

By **Al Conetto**

Operation Hump, the first major battle between the U.S. Army and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, took place November 5-9, 1965, in South Vietnam's War Zone D. Known as "The Hump," it would change the nature of war, escalating it from a hit-and-run guerilla conflict to a bloody contest between Communist main force units and American commands of battalion size or larger.

This memoir of an Operation Hump survivor begins with the sequence of events leading up to the battle, from the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Drawing on official Army documents and the recollection of fellow combatants, the author not only describes the battle in detail but explains the war's basis in fabrications at the highest levels of the U.S. government. His experiences with PTSD after the war and his eventual return to Vietnam in the 1990s are included.



Available at: www.mcfarlandpub.com

US Constitution and Citizenship Day Celebration



Sky Soldiers Terry Gannon and Bob Getz of LZ Uplift, LZ English and Bong Son fame are currently members of the Illinois Secretary of State's Veterans Advisory Council. In that roll, as one of their duties, they are invited to participate in the Secretary's *Annual US Constitution and Citizenship Day Celebration*.

Secretary of State Jesse White has a special appreciation for our Sky Soldiers as he frequently refers to himself as SP4 White, a Paratrooper from the 101st Airborne Brigade.

On this September 16, 2015, celebration, there were approximately 75 individuals who had petitioned to be citizens seated in the center of Daley Plaza in downtown Chicago. Terry and Bob were on the platform with the Secretary facing them for the ceremonies which consisted of a Naval Honor Guard presenting the Colors, a Triple Nickel NCO singing the National Anthem, students from the Community College providing music during a marching of the Colors of the various nations represented by those changing their allegiance with these new citizens renouncing previous claims of allegiance to other nations and declaring their allegiance to the United States of America.



The photo shows Secretary of State Jesse White (L) and the Honorable Judge Joan Gottschall presenting Certificates of Citizenship to those sworn in after the ceremonies.

[Sent in by Bob "Ragman" Getz, Task Force CO, 2/503]



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The Crunchies in Nui Dat

(actual title of report is unknown)

By Barney Seibert

NUI DAT, Vietnam (UPI) – It’s a different kind of war at the Australian task force base at Nui Dat. The 5000-man Australian task force, including a battalion size element of New Zealanders, is the only Allied unit in the Indochina War with tactics markedly different from those used by American, South Vietnamese, South Koreans and Thais.



“Deep in the lines at Nui Dat.” (Web photo)

The South Vietnamese, Koreans and Thais all were trained and advised by Americans. So were the Laotians. Even the Cambodians are learning the American counter-insurgency tactics from the South Vietnamese.

But the Australians have needed no advice from Americans in scouring the jungles for Viet Cong in Phuoc Tuy Province, a lightly populated area of jungled forests and mountains along the South China Sea 50 miles southeast of Saigon.

Japanese infantrymen, who were experts in the craft of jungle warfare, told American captors at the end of World War II that the Australians were the real jungle experts on the Allied side. “Americans are not jungle fighters,” one prisoner of war remarked. “They simply remove the jungle.”

The Australian expertise in jungle war was forged in expeditions to maintain order in New Guinea, polished in the Australian Army’s jungle warfare school, and honed in 12 years of campaigning against the Communists in Malaysia.

The Aussies are the only U.S. allies in Vietnam who brought along most of their own equipment and who pay their own way.

In addition to the 5000-man task force there are another 3000 Australian fighting men in Vietnam – airmen, sailors and military advisors working with South Vietnamese units. About 50 percent of the Australians are conscripts.

Because of their jungle warfare expertise, the Australians are less oriented toward air mobility in the

Indochina conflict. One of the first things Americans notice at Nui Dat is the absence of helicopters – the Aussies have only about half as many as a conventional U.S. infantry unit of equivalent size and about one-fourth of the total assigned to an American air mobile division.

Another major concept is the absence of Vietnamese civilian workers at the base. “We do not have a security problem,” one officer said.

Other Differences:

The Australians live in tents rather than “hooches,” call their infantrymen “crunchies” rather than “grunts,” maintain their vehicles and equipment almost as well as the Koreans – the most spit and polish soldiers in Vietnam – leave the trees standing to provide shade when they build a base camp rather than removing the vegetation to minimize the infiltration danger.

The Australians buy their artillery pieces and ammunition from the United States -- “in the quantities in which you make it we can buy it cheaper than we could make it ourselves.” They also buy machine guns, grenade launchers, armored personnel carriers and some web equipment.

Their tanks are British Centurions. Their rifles are the Belgian NATO weapon, which uses the same cartridge as the M.S. M16; the Aussies say it has better range and is less susceptible to jamming than the M16. Their jeeps and weapons carriers are various modifications of Australian-built Land Rovers and their trucks are built by the Australian subsidiary of International Harvester Corp. The trucks do not have the familiar dual rear wheels of U.S. Army vehicles.

The elite Australian unit in Vietnam is the Special Air Service Squadron, highly trained volunteers who are paratrooper qualified.



“Soldier with five members of No. 1 Squadron, Special Air Service.” (web photo)

(continued...)



In four years of operations in South Vietnam's Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australians have killed 2,840 Viet Cong and driven the only two main force Viet Cong battalions, D445 and D446, from the province.

Intelligence estimates show about 800 Viet Cong guerrillas remain in the province and the Communist infrastructure has been reduced 50 per cent to 1,500 persons. During the 1968 Tet offensive there were an estimated 5,000 Viet Cong soldiers in the province, supported by an infrastructure of 3,000 persons.

And the Australians in Vietnam know more than just how to fight.

"Take a look at the Aussies' pacification program," a civilian official of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam said. *"It's one of the most effective in the country."*



"Australian PM John Gorton in Nui Dat, South Vietnam."

(web photo)

Lt. Col. Keith P. Outridge, 43, of Canberra, commander of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, said: *"We only try to do things as the Vietnamese see it and wish it down, and try to do something to stimulate their development as we see it and hope they see it the same as we do."*

The "Australian Province" – Phuoc Tuy – is a 400-square-mile area of mountains, jungle, forests and coastal swamps. It's 105,000 residents are poor and the province has never been self-sufficient in food. Before war disrupted its economy, its people made their livelihood by working on the large rubber plantations, lumber mills, salt drying ponds and in the resort hotels along the beaches.

The Australian pacification program is similar to but somewhat smaller in scope than American efforts in other provinces and there is some U.S. pacification activity by the American Civil Operations Rural Development Support (CORDS) program in the province. But most of the effort is Australian.

Col. Outridge sees both advantages and disadvantages in a militarily administered pacification program.



"Australian soldiers in bunkers at Nui Dat." (web photo)

On the plus side, he said, is the fact that *"most authority in a country at war is military and there is an empathy between military men; we have closer access to military resources to carry out the programs."*

Disadvantages, he finds, are *"a lack of expertise in specific fields and lack of continuity in projects"* due to the one-year military rotation.

However, he feels that a military pacification program may get to the areas where it is needed most sooner than a civilian program because the soldier is less likely to be kept at a distance by absence of physical security.

"We try to work with the soft moccasin instead of the hob nail boot," Outridge said. *"We try to get the Vietnamese into the program as soon as we can. We insist on their input. They must initiate the project, it must benefit the government, and they must help carry it out."*

About 22 percent of Phuoc Tuy Province's population are fishermen, 23 per cent farmers. To stimulate agriculture the Australians have introduced breeding stock and model farm methods for chickens and hog raising operations.

"We go up and down the highway and persuade a farmer here and there to try it out. After that it spreads from neighbor to neighbor," Outridge said.

[Sent in by Ray Chapman, RAA]

(Photos added)



CHEMICAL WAREFARE AGENTS

Update: The Army is reaching out to unit members regarding potential exposure. Soldiers who served in Iraq with the Army's 702nd, 756th or 710th Explosive Ordnance Disposal companies, or with "Bushmaster Company," 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, will likely hear from the Army in its search for soldiers who may have been exposed to chemical warfare agents. Others who feel they were exposed or were not contacted can call the hotline at **1-800-497-6261**. Months after revelations that U.S. soldiers were not adequately treated for exposure to chemical weapons in Iraq, the Army's under secretary has apologized to those service members.



A cache of mustard rounds found buried in a peninsula near Taji, Iraq. Soldiers detonated the rounds, resulting in this explosion.

Along with that apology by Under Secretary Brad Carson comes a commitment to get treatment and health care support for veterans who were affected, as well as recognition for those who were denied awards, according to a report in *The New York Times*.

Carson acknowledged to *The Times* that the Army did not follow policy in caring for troops exposed to chemical weapons, old and abandoned munitions that units found in myriad places around Iraq. The under secretary also said the Army had reversed an earlier decision denying a Purple Heart to a soldier who was burned by a sulphur mustard agent, and that additional medals would be reviewed and issued to veterans. This change specifically affects service members injured by insurgents' use of old chemical shells in roadside bombs. All four services say wounds caused by such incidents would qualify for a Purple Heart.

Carson told *The Times*:

"To me, the scandal is that we had protocols in place and the medical community knew what they were, and yet we failed in some cases to implement this across the theater," he said. *"That was a mistake, and I apologize*

for that. I apologize for past actions and am going to fix it going forward."

Since November 2014, the Department of Defense has attempted to contact service members and veterans who may have been exposed to chemicals — warfare agents such as mustard agents or sarin — during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The DoD even set up a hotline number — 1-800-497-6261 — for veterans who had been exposed but not contacted by the department to report their conditions.

This effort was in response to an Oct. 14 article in *The New York Times*, "*The Secret Casualties of Iraq's Abandoned Chemical Weapons*," which detailed its investigation and the Pentagon's acknowledgement that as many as 600 U.S. troops had reported chemical exposure.

Carson said that new instructions have been distributed to the military services to ensure that those veterans identified or who had called the hotline number be screened and properly treated. This instruction would also cover troops who were exposed to chlorine (used as a weapon by the enemy) during active duty service.



Carson

What the military has released about those exposed:

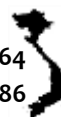
- Military expects to screen at least 1,500 active duty service members or veterans
- 830 noted on post-deployment health forms they believed they had been exposed to chemical weapons
- 540 who called the exposure hotline set up by the DoD
- An additional 275 identified by *The Times*' reporting or those who served alongside deployed units.

Chlorine exposure is new to this effort, as Carson said to *The Times*:

"We are committed to finding every chlorine incident," he said. He added, however, that until the services had done more research and interviewed potential victims, the working group would not have a firm tally of the number of wounded troops. As an estimate, he said, it could be in the dozens.

This estimate was echoed by the Marine Corps, which said through a spokesman that the corps had identified 20 potential chlorine victims to interview, along with more than 120 other veterans or active-duty Marines who might have been exposed to other chemical agents.

If you were exposed and have not been contacted, call this hotline at 1-800-497-6261



~ Some of What Occurred This Month in Vietnam History ~

1946

December 19 - In Hanoi, 30,000 Viet Minh launch their first large-scale attack against the French. Thus begins an eight year struggle known as the First Indochina War. *"The resistance will be long and arduous, but our cause is just and we will surely triumph,"* declares Viet Minh military commander Vo Nguyen Giap. *"If these [people] want a fight, they'll get it,"* French military commander Gen. Etienne Valluy states.



1951

December 9 - Giap begins a careful counter-offensive by attacking the French outpost at Tu Vu on the Black River. Giap now avoids conventional warfare and instead wages hit and run attacks followed by a retreat into the dense jungles. His goal is to cut French supply lines. By year's end, French casualties in Vietnam surpass 90,000.

1953

December 8 - The French launch Operation Pollux to clear the Tai Highlands and Lai Chi by evacuating everyone to Dien Bien Phu.



The battle at Dien Bien Phu. (web photo)

1955

December - In North Vietnam, radical land reforms by Communists result in land owners being hauled before "people's tribunals." Thousands are executed or sent to forced labor camps during this period of ideological cleansing by Ho Chi Minh. In South Vietnam, President Diem rewards his Catholic supporters by giving them land seized from Buddhist peasants, arousing their anger and eroding his support among them. Diem also allows big land owners to retain their holdings, disappointing peasants hoping for land reform.

1960

December 12 - Hanoi forms National Liberation Front for South Vietnam

Observing the increasing unpopularity of the Diem regime, on 12 December 1960, Hanoi authorized the creation of the National Liberation Front as a common front controlled by the communist party in the South.

December 20 - The National Liberation Front is established by Hanoi as its Communist political organization for Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam.

1964

December - 10,000 NVA soldiers arrive in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh trail, carrying sophisticated weapons provided by China and the Soviet Union. They shore up Viet Cong battalions with the weapons and also provide experienced soldiers as leaders.

December 1 - At the White House, President Johnson's top aides, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, and Defense Secretary McNamara, recommend a policy of gradual escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.



President Johnson meets with Secretary of Defense McNamara in oval office.

(continued....)



December 14 to Mar 29 1973 - Operation Barrel Roll Begins

On 12 December 1964, Barrel Roll was approved by Souvanna Phouma. The program originally consisted of only two U.S bombing sorties per week that were to be conducted by no more than four aircraft in each strike. Due to the nature of the American agreement with the Thai government (most U.S. strike aircraft flew from bases in Thailand), the aircraft had to first fly to South Vietnam, land, and then take off again for Laos. By 24 December, six armed reconnaissance missions were being conducted per day, but the hoped for reaction from Hanoi did not materialize.

December 20 - Another military coup occurs in Saigon by the South Vietnamese army. This time Gen. Khanh and young officers, led by Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu, oust older generals including Gen. Minh from the government and seize control.

December 21 - An angry Ambassador Taylor summons the young officers to the U.S. embassy then scolds them like schoolboys over the continuing instability and endless intrigues plaguing South Vietnam's government. Americans, he had already warned them, are "*tired of coups.*"



General Maxwell D. Taylor
1901 - 1987

Taylor's behavior greatly offends the young officers. Gen. Khanh retaliates by lashing out in the press against Taylor and the U.S., stating that America is reverting to "colonialism" in its treatment of South Vietnam.

December 24 - Viet Cong terrorists set off a car bomb explosion at the Brinks Hotel, an American officers' residence in downtown Saigon. The bomb is timed to detonate at 5:45 p.m., during 'happy hour' in the bar. Two Americans are killed and 58 wounded. President Johnson dismisses all recommendations for a retaliatory air strike against North Vietnam.

By year's end, the number of American military advisors in South Vietnam is 23,000. There are now an estimated 170,000 Viet Cong/NVA fighters in the 'People's Revolutionary Army' which has begun waging coordinated battalion-sized attacks against South Vietnamese troops in villages around Saigon.

1965

21 November - 17 December - Operation New Life, La Nga River Valley.

The 173d moved three infantry battalions, four artillery batteries, the Calvary troop and the command section by air to Vo Dat. The brigade's mission was to prevent the rice harvest in the area from falling into the hands of the VC. For the first time, the brigade used the Long Range Patrols (LRPs). These small patrols would usually be infiltrated by helicopter deep into the enemy rear where they would operate independently for weeks at a time.



2/503d troopers crossing the La Nga River during Operation New Life. (Photo by George Dexter)

December 4 - In Saigon, Viet Cong terrorists bomb a hotel used by U.S. military personnel, killing eight and wounding 137.

December 5 - U.S. Military Launches Covert Aerial Interdiction Campaign, Operation Tiger Hound

Operation Tiger Hound was a covert U.S. 2nd Air Division, later Seventh Air Force and U.S. Navy Task Force 77 aerial interdiction campaign conducted in southeastern Laos from 5 December 1965 till 11 November 1968, during the Vietnam War.

December 7 - Defense Secretary McNamara tells President Johnson that the North Vietnamese apparently "*believe that the war will be a long one, that time is their ally, and that their staying power is superior to ours.*"

December 9 - The *New York Times* reveals the U.S. is unable to stop the flow of North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies into the South despite extensive bombing.

(continued....)



December 18 - Operation Game Warden

Operation Game Warden, Task force 116, was an operation to deny Viet Cong access to the resources in the Mekong Delta which was conceived of in December 1965.

December 18-20 - President Johnson and top aides meet to decide the future course of action.

December 17-23 - Operation Smash, Phuoc Tuy

Operating approximately 50 kilometers southeast of Bien Hoa on the Courtenay Rubber Plantation, the 1st and 2nd of the 503rd along with the 1st/RAR began saturation patrolling. On the morning of December 18th the recon platoon of the 2/503rd encountered a defended VC trench system supported by numerous machine guns. B Company smashed into the enemy from a different direction and overran the enemy position resulting in 62 VC killed.



Web photo shown in connection with Operation Smash.

December 25 - American comedian Bob Hope performs for United Service Organization (USO) at the Bien Hoa Air Base in Vietnam.

Bob Hope — wielding his trademark golf club and members of his troupe wave to passing helicopters during a show at the Bien Hoa air base in December 1965.



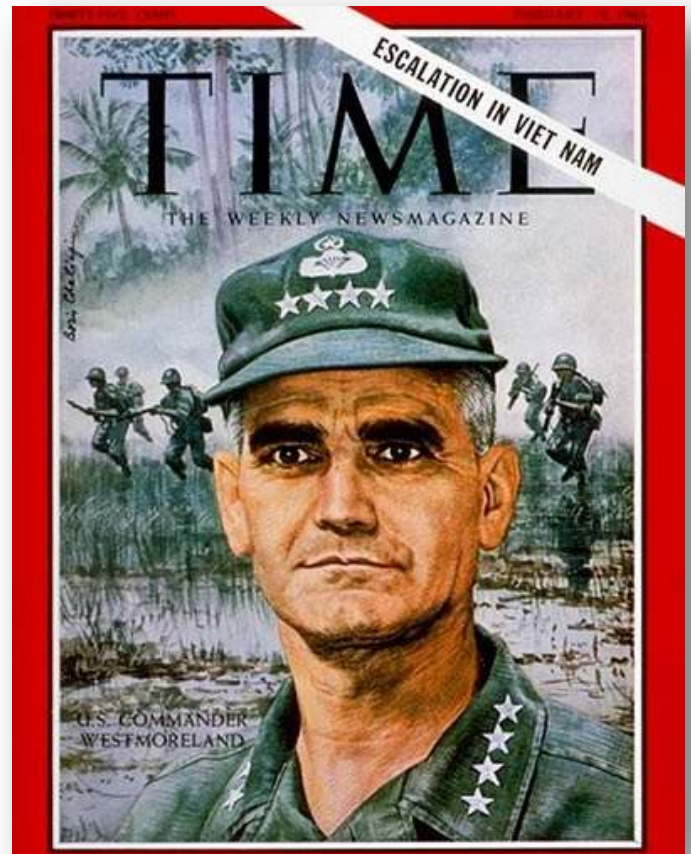
“And did you read where President Johnson just requested another \$50 billion to cover the rising cost of the war? Wouldn't it be awful if we ran out of money and they repossessed the war?”

Bob Hope

December 25 - The second pause in the bombing of North Vietnam occurs. This will last for 37 days while the U.S. attempts to pressure North Vietnam into a negotiated peace. However, the North Vietnamese denounce the bombing halt as a "trick" and continue Viet Cong terrorist activities in the South.

By year's end U.S. troop levels in Vietnam reached 184,300. An estimated 90,000 South Vietnamese soldiers deserted in 1965, while an estimated 35,000 soldiers from North Vietnam infiltrated the South via the Ho Chi Minh trail. Up to 50 percent of the countryside in South Vietnam is now under some degree of Viet Cong control.

Time Magazine chooses General William Westmoreland as 1965's 'Man of the Year.'



1966

October 8 – December 4 - Operation Winchester

The 4/503d Infantry's mission was to relieve the 2d Battalion of the 26th Marine Division and to occupy and maintain control of an assigned sector of the Da Nang TAOR.

Throughout the 58 day period the paratroopers conducted numerous day and night patrols in addition to providing security for the daily convoys of troops and supplies moving through I Corps.

(continued....)



November 25 - December 2 - Operation Waco, Bien Hoa Area

The brigade reassumes responsibility for the Tactical Area of Responsibility for the area surrounding Bien Hoa.

December 7 - 5 January 1967 – Operation Canary/Duck, Phu My to Bear Cat

The 173d conducted a two phase highway security operation along Highway 15 from Phu My to Long Binh and from Phu My to Bear Cat for elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 9th Infantry Division.

December 8-9 - North Vietnam rejects a proposal by President Johnson for discussions concerning treatment of POWs and a possible exchange.

December 13-14 - The village of Caudat near Hanoi is leveled by U.S. bombers resulting in harsh criticism from the international community.

December 26 - Facing increased scrutiny from journalists over mounting civilian casualties in North Vietnam, the U.S. Defense Department now admits civilians may have been bombed accidentally.

December 27 - The U.S. mounts a large-scale air assault against suspected Viet Cong positions in the Mekong Delta using Napalm and hundreds of tons of bombs.

By year's end, U.S. troop levels reach 389,000 with 5008 combat deaths and 30,093 wounded. Over half of the American casualties are caused by snipers and small-arms fire during Viet Cong ambushes, along with handmade booby traps and mines planted everywhere in the countryside by Viet Cong.

American Allies fighting in Vietnam include 45,000 soldiers from South Korea and 7000 Australians.

An estimated 89,000 soldiers from North Vietnam infiltrated the South via the Ho Chi Minh trail in 1966.

1967

December 4 - Four days of anti-war protests begin in New York. Among the 585 protesters arrested is renowned 'baby doctor' Dr. Benjamin Spock.

December 6 - The U.S. reports Viet Cong murdered 252 civilians in the hamlet of Dak Son.

December 23 - Upon arrival at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, President Johnson declares "*...all the challenges have been met. The enemy is not beaten, but he knows that he has met his master in the field.*" This

is the President's second and final trip to Vietnam during his presidency.

By year's end, U.S. troop levels reach 463,000 with 16,000 combat deaths to date. By this time, over a million American soldiers have rotated through Vietnam, with length of service for draftees being one year, and most Americans serving in support units.

An estimated 90,000 soldiers from North Vietnam infiltrated into the South via the Ho Chi Minh trail in 1967. Overall Viet Cong/NVA troop strength throughout South Vietnam is now estimated up to 300,000 men.

1969

April 15, 1969 – January 1, 1971 - Operation Washington Green, Binh Dinh Province

December 1 - The first draft lottery since World War II is held in New York City. Each day of the year is randomly assigned a number from 1-365. Those with birthdays on days that wind up with a low number will likely be drafted.

December 15 - President Nixon orders an additional 50,000 soldiers out of Vietnam.



President Nixon and Henry Kissenger in Vietnam, 1969

(continued...)



December 20 - A frustrated Henry Cabot Lodge quits his post as chief U.S. negotiator at the Paris peace talks.

By year's end, America's fighting strength in Vietnam has been reduced by 115,000 men. 40,024 Americans have now been killed in Vietnam. Over the next few years, the South Vietnamese Army will be boosted to over 500,000 men in accordance with 'Vietnamization' of the war in which they will take over the fighting from Americans.

1970

December 10 - President Nixon warns Hanoi that more bombing raids may occur if North Vietnamese attacks continue against the South.

December 22 - The Cooper-Church amendment to the U.S. defense appropriations bill forbids the use of any U.S. ground forces in Laos or Cambodia.

American troop levels drop to 280,000 by year's end. During the year, an estimated 60,000 soldiers experimented with drugs, according to the U.S. command. There were also over 200 incidents of "fragging" in which unpopular officers were attacked with fragmentation grenades by men under their command. In addition, many units are now plagued by racial unrest, reflecting the disharmony back home.

1972

December 13 - In Paris, peace negotiations between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho collapse after Kissinger presents a list of 69 changes demanded by President Thieu.

President Nixon now issues an ultimatum to North Vietnam that serious negotiations must resume within 72 hours. Hanoi does not respond. As a result, Nixon orders Operation Linebacker II, eleven days and nights of maximum force bombing against military targets in Hanoi by B-52 bombers.



The Paris Peace Talks

December 18 - Operation Linebacker II begins. The so called 'Christmas bombings' are widely denounced by American politicians, the media, and various world leaders including the Pope. North Vietnamese filmed footage of civilian casualties further fuels the outrage. In addition, a few downed B-52 pilots make public statements in North Vietnam against the bombing.

December 26 - North Vietnam agrees to resume peace negotiations within five days of the end of bombing.

December 29 - Operation Linebacker II ends what had been the most intensive bombing campaign of the entire war with over 100,000 bombs dropped on Hanoi and Haiphong. Fifteen of the 121 B-52s participating were shot down by the North Vietnamese who fired 1200 SAMs. There were 1318 civilian deaths from the bombing, according to Hanoi.



1973

December 3 - Viet Cong destroy 18 million gallons of fuel stored near Saigon.

December 10 - Along with North Vietnamese Politburo Member Le Duc Tho, Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 1973, for their work in negotiating the ceasefires contained in the Paris Peace Accords on "Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam," signed the January previous. Tho rejected the award, telling Kissinger that peace had not been really restored in South Vietnam.

(continued....)



1974

December 13, 1974 - North Vietnam violates the Paris peace treaty and tests President Ford's resolve by attacking Phuoc Long Province in South Vietnam. President Ford responds with diplomatic protests but no military force in compliance with the Congressional ban on all U.S. military activity in Southeast Asia.

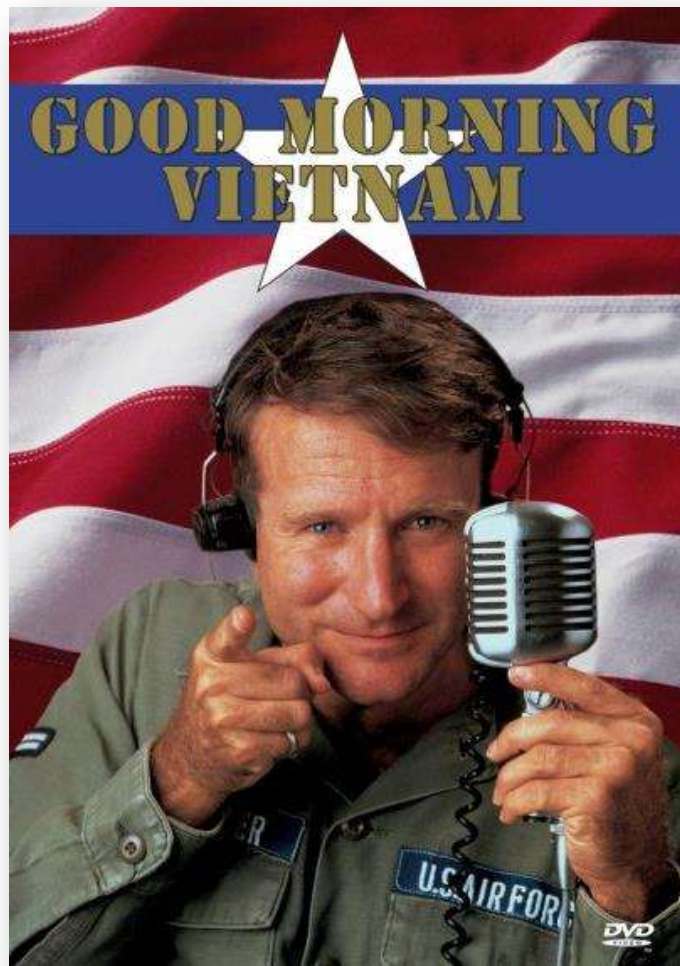
December 18 - North Vietnam's leaders meet in Hanoi to form a plan for final victory.

1987

December 23 - Good Morning, Vietnam released.

Good Morning, Vietnam is a 1987 comedy-drama film set in Saigon during the Vietnam War, based on the career of Adrian Cronauer (Robin Williams), a disc jockey on Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS), who proves hugely popular with the troops serving in South Vietnam, but infuriates his superiors with what they call his "irreverent tendency." The film was written by Mitch Markowitz and directed by Barry Levinson. Most of Williams' humorous radio broadcasts were improvised.

Williams was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role. This film is number 36 on Bravo's "100 Funniest Movies."



A Sky Soldier's Holiday Card
1968

From Bill Wyatt, HHC/2/503



82nd All-American ready for Christmas in Vietnam
(web photo)



~ Memories of Christmas & December in Vietnam with the 2/503d ~

~ And Recon Panther Piss Was Born ~

Christmas of 1966 and we were out on operation Canary-Duck. I'm not sure if Christmas Day fell in the Canary or the Duck part of the operation. It really didn't matter, we were still out in the sticks.

Recon was running 72 hour ambush patrols. Three days out on ambush got us one night of sleep on inner perimeter. The perimeter for the battalion was in a small stand of young rubber trees adjacent to highway 15. We were told we were providing security for the 199th Brigade and the 9th Infantry Div. landing at Vung Tau. We were also told we might be going to see the Bob Hope show. When we didn't get any clean uniforms we knew that wasn't happening.

Xmas packages came out from Bien Hoa on a deuce and a half. Around dark some of the guys got together at the Recon platoon CP. Some medical alcohol appeared and some water and a container. A bunch of guys donated funny face drink powder, (rootin' tootin' raspberry, Ollie Ollie orange, goofy grape, etc.), and *voila!* Recon panther piss was born. I think there was even some ice from somewhere.

Somewhere during our silent reverie the voice of Colonel Sigholtz rang out through the black night, "*I want all company commanders at my CP...now*". Hmmm, something must be going on.

The story that got back to us was, some of the medics (perhaps in a misguided effort to improve morale) had smuggled some ladies of the evening into the medical tent. A line formed (of men needing morale improvement?); the Chaplain thought the line was for shots and got in line. At some point the Chaplain and the Colonel put an end to things and the evening reverted to silence except for the almost imperceptible noise of Panther Piss being sipped from canteen cups. Silent night.

Gary "Kraut" Kuitert
HHC/Recon, 2/503



L-R: Col. Bob Sigholtz with Recon troopers Jim "Skid" Skidmore, Dave Kies and Marcus Powell at 2000 Sky Soldier reunion in Rochester, MN. Sadly, Bob & Skid have left us.

~ He Can't Remember Shit! ~

I "CRS". All I can remember is, getting ready to go on Operation Marauder. That was the thing that pissed me off, as I was wanting to go see Santa Claus, but had to be there for Captain Cavezza's operation order. Love ya guys,

Jim "Top" Dresser
A/HHC/2/503, '65/'66



Top

~ A New Kid in Town ~



Daniel Fritzman, A/2/503, December 27, 1970, at Replacement Depot in Cam Ranh Bay. "*New clothes, new boots, just waiting to go to An Khe.*"

Dan Fritzman
A/2/503

~ No Memory of Christmas in Nam ~

I was hit and evacuated on the January 1966 operation (Marauder in the Mekong Delta). From that operation to Third Field Hospital in Saigon, from Saigon to Clark Hospital in the Philippines, from the Philippines to Camp Zama Hospital in Japan for five months, then back to the 101st Airborne, Fort Campbell, KY! I don't remember Christmas in Nam December '65.

Jim Williams
B/2/503



~ Initially VN Wasn't So Bad For This FNG ~

It was around December 16, 1965, when I arrived the repo depot in Tan Son Nhut, coming over from the 101st at Campbell. Thinking I would be joining the Screaming Eagles there, I was shocked when they called out names of a few of us, telling us we're going to Bien Hoa and the 173d. I was pissed! Having never heard of the 173d, I thought they were sending me to a Leg unit!

Arriving Camp Zinn and the HHC commo hootch, I immediately made friends with Nguyen Phuc, one of our battalion Scout/interpreters, and good buddy Lee Braggs, one of the other RTOs. Sadly, Phuc would die in '67 during The Battle of the Slopes.

I seem to recall part of the battalion was out on an operation that mid-December, and there wasn't much going on at Zinn.

Some sergeant noticed this FNG RTO had nothing to do, so he volunteered me to ride shotgun on a deuce leaving camp to fetch water. As the driver stopped the truck at the guard gate, I noticed a Sneaky Pete walking toward it on that dirt road....it was my older brother Bob! He had heard I was in-country and came down from Da Nang to welcome his kid brother to the war.

Telling the duty sergeant my brother was there, one of the Special Forces kind, the good sergeant took me off the water detail and I exchanged my M-16 for a pass to Saigon! Bob and I had a great time together on Tu Do Street, doing our best to contribute to the local economy and the corruption of innocent young lasses.

Then Bob Hope came to town, and for reasons which escape me to this day, my name found its way onto the list of troopers going to that Christmas Day show.

Hadn't been on a mission, not once fired at with ill intent, and there I was, a marauding tourist in Saigon and a clapping fool at a USO show. Initially, Vietnam wasn't so bad for this FNG. Then, January 2, 1966, and Operation Marauder happened, and I longed for another visit from that Sneaky Pete.

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



**Sgt. Phuc (KIA)
One tough cookie**



Good buddy Lee



**Brother Bob, at our
hootch at Camp Zinn**

~ A Similar Experience ~

I had a similar (reassignment) experience. Was assigned to 101st but reassigned to 173d two days after arrival in country. The 2nd Bat, A Company had lost 1/2 of the 3rd Platoon; this was February 1966.

Silver City was my first experience with real combat; lost a good friend, Ken Knudson, that first day of the firefight.

I was assigned to the 82nd when returning to the states in 2/1967. I was going to re-up in 01/1968 for helicopter training in Alabama but when I got to Bragg that morning they locked us down. No phone calls, no nothing.

I had just gotten married on 12/26/1967 and took the wife from California to North Carolina, rented a place and settled in to a somewhat normal routine. They informed us our unit was going to Vietnam. I only had 6 months left in my enlistment at that time. I told them of my plans to re-up but only if they got me out of this 2nd trip over. They said no, and I said shove it.

The only good thing about my second trip was my brother was getting out of basic and they wouldn't send 2 brothers at the same time to Vietnam. We went to Hue on the second trip but I lucked out and was assigned to the commo bunker at the base camp. Still got harassing fire and rockets at night but no real field action.

**Larry Sword
A/2/503**

About Larry's good buddy, Ken Knudson, KIA:



"Second Platoon had one KIA on Silver City. A tall blond young man named Knudson, a farm boy from the heartland, as I recall.

Several days earlier he had found an ancient wooden plow and asked if he could have it – he wanted to display it at the Country Fair when he got home. I told him it was fine with me, but I didn't know how he would get it to an LZ and then back to Camp Zinn. He said he would carry it until we got to our next LZ, and that he did.

Through 8 clicks of jungle he carried that 80 pound wooden plow, in addition to all his other gear, and then convinced a chopper pilot to drop it off at Camp Zinn. Ken Knudson never got to send the plow home."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503

(continued....)



~ Hump Day All The Way Thru ~

My Nam tour of duty started May 6, 1965, when the Herd left Okinawa and landed in Bien Hoa. Hump Day all the way thru to August when I was flown back to Okinawa to begin getting ready to return stateside (already had 36 months with the Herd, but alas, not to be).

The Herd was made a PCS status in Nam and I had to go back to complete my one year tour. Was to fly out of Okinawa to head to the states three days later!

In December, I got a 12 day leave from Nam to go back to Okinawa for Christmas and missed out on a couple of ops.

January 1966, was the start of something else tho!!

"IN GOD WE TRUST"

KEEP-ON KEEP'N-ON!

Tom Wallace

A/2/503



Tom

~ Zero Memory Can Be A Blessing ~

Sorry Bro. I would normally cooperate always but I have zero memory of this. After November '67 (Dak To and Hill 875) I was numb and just trying to stay alive until my ETS in March.

Zero memory, which at times is a blessing.



Roger Dick

C/2/503

~ Vietnam Wasn't So Good For This FNG ~

Like you, Lew, I too had come from the 101st and thought I was going to the 101st in Vietnam. But I arrived in June during the Battle of the Slopes. So the Army came to the repo-depot at Long Binh and emptied it of all the 11B's with P's in their MOS. I was assigned to Alpha Company and given an M-60 machine gun. Later I was made an RTO.



When D Company was formed on 1 September I was reassigned to Delta and made the Battalion net RTO, Captain Ken Smith's RTO.

On 1 November '67, CPT Smith left to go to Brigade and was replaced by 1LT Bart O'L'earry. On Sunday, the 19th of November I was wounded twice on Hill 875. Early, in front of the first bunker that opened fire on us, I was hit in the left buttock by a large piece of shrapnel. I bled badly at first, but then the piece, being so hot, cauterized the wound and it stopped bleeding. That was around 1115.

Later, when the F-4 dropped the bomb(s) on the CP I was wounded the second time. I did not hear or see the plane or bomb coming, so the blast was a complete surprise. The flame hit my face about the same time as the noise. I then went unconscious. I came too burned, deaf, bleeding; felt like my ribs had been kicked in. Everyone around me was in worse shape or dead, including Father Watters who was just a few feet away.

I spent the next few days sleeping with the bodies and the parts. I finally got on a dust off on Wednesday evening, and was flown to Dak To airstrip. After being tagged I was put on a C-130 waiting at the end of the airstrip. That full C-130 flew a full load of wounded to Pleiku where it was unloaded. Then it was told to reload and was flown to the coast to another Army hospital. The following morning, Thanksgiving Day, I was operated on and had my left buttock removed to gangrene that was there since day 2, Monday.



Some of our fallen at Hill 875. War demands a hefty price be paid to it. (web photo)

(continued....)



Two days later I was sent to Japan, via the Philippines.

At the 106th General Hospital (Yokohama) my open wound was closed since it appeared to be clear of gangrene. I was in a general surgical ward.

The Ward Master was an old E-7 who was from Pittsburgh. His assistant was an E-6 who was a 187th Airborne (Korea). So being the two Airborne guys in the ward we were treated well.

There definitely was a difference between the Airborne guys and the non-Airborne. The Airborne guys helped the medics and nurses, making beds, changing bandages, and other duties -- just so that things could get done and we could get on the good side of the medical staff. As a result the Airborne got passes, the non-Airborne did not.

On Christmas Day I, and a couple others were invited over to the Ward Master's home. He and his wife and children were celebrating with a tree and presents under the tree. I was speaking to the Sergeant about his home in Pittsburgh and what had changed since he had left there. It was nice being in a family situation and not military.

Later we were invited to go bar hopping with the hospital Marine (E-4) liaison. When we first encountered him we kind of harassed him. Then he came and asked us to *Please* not do it in front of his Marines, saying that it would mess up his authority over them. He said he'd take us out drinking if we did. We said since he asked nice, we would. Well, he took us to some serious drinking establishments in Yokohama. He turned out to be a decent Marine.

A couple of weeks later I was sent to Camp Zama for rehabilitation. Then after a couple of weeks after that I was sent back to Vietnam, arriving just in time (late January '68, and my 21st birthday) for the Tet Offensive. The night the Tet Offensive started I was in Pleiku. Oh, how I hate to miss a party.

Bob Fleming
A/D/2/503, '67/ '68

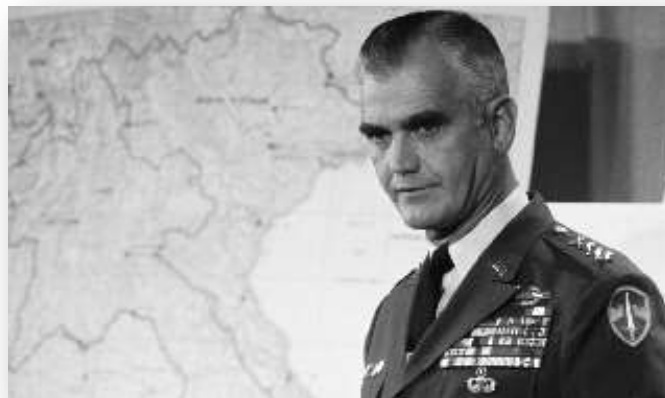


Exhausted, Sky Soldiers have taken Hill 875. (web photo)

November 21, 1967

Vietnam War: American General William Westmoreland tells news reporters:

"I am absolutely certain that whereas in 1965 the enemy was winning, today he is certainly losing."



Westmoreland briefing reporters in the Pentagon on 22 November 1967. (web photo)

~ A Christmas That Didn't Exist ~

There are three things I remember about December of '65: My birthday on the 22d, the Bob Hope Show and a Christmas that didn't exist.

Except for the Bob Hope Show (which I liked very much) Christmas was a non-event, just another day shorter - the same for my birthday.

I wasn't surprised, those events were just out of place in Vietnam. The good times were found in sneaking off to a cathouse or a good meal and a bottle of wine at an open air restaurant on the Dong Nai River in Bien Hoa. Cheers,
Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503, '65/'66

(continued...)



Mr. Bethea, with buddies in background



Cam Ranh Bay, December 23, 1967



~ From SF to the Herd ~

In December of '66 I was still in SF in 3 Corp's at Dong Xoai and then we built an A team camp at Bunard.

I think this photo is from December '66 going to the Chi Lin A team camp. We walked into VC/NVA Regimental Base Camp. They ran us out of there but we got some with the M-79, and the 175 artillery pounded them hard.

While on a combat operation in December we had heavy contact at Bunard and the CIDG soldier carrying the only M-60 we had was killed, sadly, along with nine other of our Cambodians.

The M-60 was also shot up. I remember taking it to Bien Hoa to the 173d Airborne and a young maintenance guy was kind enough to DX it for us.

I thought then seeing all the sharp troopers that I would like to serve with this unit.

I actually went from SF to the Herd when they asked for volunteers to fight in the highlands in '67. Was I crazy or what? Fought with great soldiers, it was worth it. Best,

**Nick Hun, Col.
SF & B/2/503**



Nick in the Nam

~ Brothers Together During War ~



This is my Brother on the right with my hat on, I'm to the left with his hat on. That's SSgt Chuck Searcy US Air Force in Da Nang, November 1965.

Later we spent December watching the Bob Hope show at Bein Hoa Air Base on December 25, 1965.

That's how I spent my December 50 years ago.

**John (Top) Searcy
HHC/2/503, 4.2. Platoon**



(continued ...)

A G.I. celebrates Christmas in Vietnam



~ My December ~



Bob Beemer, in front of our Memorial at Benning

December came early in my tour as I arrived a couple of days before Thanksgiving 1967, in Bien Hoa. That Friday or Saturday I was sent to An Khe for jungle school. I was there for a week before catching a flight to Dak To, FSB 12, and my assignment with B Co. 2/503.

My first impression was a camp of heavily reinforced bunkers surrounded by high ground, an air strip with the burned-out remains of a C-130, and self-propelled Guns (not sure if they were 155 or 8"). At the perimeter wire they had drums of foo gas setup with det cords and claymores in front and set for ignition with white phosphorus. (What the hell did I get into?)

As a result of previous contact the company was made up of a lot of FNGs like me. Luckily, the company had good leadership in Capt. James Rogan and 1Sgt. Kitchen. It didn't take long and we were climbing up and down the hills getting into shape real fast and learning the skills of hunting which served us well for the rest of our tour.

Coming back to base just before Christmas we setup for perimeter guard. Christmas Day choppers came in and Chris Noel got off and they setup a show. She climbed up on a bunker then tried to pull her Mini-skirt a little lower without much success. The show was short but I remember it to this day.

On December 26th the Battalion started moving to Kontum to start new operations.

**Bob Beemer
B/2/503**



Chris Noel in Vietnam with the Herd

Chris Noel

Born: 2 July 1941

"She was just one of a myriad of beautiful, statuesque, bikini-clad blondes who pranced and romped about the sand and surf of the California shores in all those nostalgic beach party movies of the 'swinging '60s'. In the great perky tradition of fellow blondes Sandra Dee, Linda Evans, Yvette Mimieux, and the late Sharon Tate, stunning Chris Noel did what she did best: distract male viewers from some of the silliness around her.

A tour of a VA hospital in 1965 altered her destiny, forever. Based on her minor pin-up celebrity, Chris impulsively auditioned for the Armed Forces Network (AFN) and started hosting her own radio show for the GI's in Vietnam, frequently flying to that war-torn country and visiting remote areas considered too risky for Bob Hope's USO shows. She became the GI's' favorite sexy radio and show personality while putting her own life on the line. As it turned out, Vietnam veterans would become her prime mission and life's work long after the war.

In the 1970s, Chris began to suffer from postwar trauma. Any attempt to resurrect her Hollywood career in the 1970s and 1980s would be short-lived due to her stress, ill health and depression. Moreover, her first husband, a Green Beret captain (they married in Vietnam) suffering from the same postwar syndrome as Chris, killed himself during the Christmas holiday season of 1969. Chris' two subsequent marriages also ended in divorce.

Persevering, she ventured into the operation of shelters for veterans in Florida during the 1990s, becoming a durable symbol for those who fought the unpopular fight.

Chris Noel--a remarkable, courageous lady who could have just rested on her laurels as another beautiful Hollywood face, but didn't. She deserves to be remembered better than she is." ###



Chris

(continued....)



Dec. 1965: Christmas Cheer Can't Mask Tragedy

Christmas was coming up and so packages were arriving like crazy and everyone was sending cards and letters wishing Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I got eight packages in one day alone and it seemed as if everyone was baking and sending cookies. With the wishes came lots of thanks to all of us for our sacrifices. People back home sounded guilty for having things so good. Several more "Mail Call Vietnam" cards arrived from people we didn't know. It was a month in which we had our share of setbacks, including my friend, Romiro Rodriguez, being killed by a bullet through the head.



Romiro

I wrote my Aunt Anne that one of our staff sergeants, James Brown, was wounded or killed or captured, but later we found him and he was just wounded. Our company commander also was wounded and suddenly we had our fifth C.O. in eight months. Operation New Life near Vo Dat was the activity that consumed much of our time and I told everyone about the booming artillery pieces from our 319th Artillery unit that shook the ground near us as they fired into enemy territory. My father said he got a call from Ralph Padilla from B Company, who was home in Arizona on compassionate leave and called my folks to tell them I was fine.



"This is one of my favorite pictures: posed with Vietnamese kids, one of whom clutched a c-ration can as if it meant the world to her, which it probably did."

I don't remember what it was I got for my father with "Long Life" written on it in Vietnamese. (I just found the tag that must have been attached to some of the goodies in the gift package. It reads: *"Happy Holiday to Lawrence & fellows of the 173d. From: The Lockharts, Florence, Otis & Johnie."*) Flo Lockhart was one of my mother's friends from the Ford plant in Rawsonville. To this day I have ringing in my ears, perhaps from the artillery or maybe from being an M-60 machine gunner for nine months.



After Larry traded in his M-60 for a PRC25.

I'll never forget that Bob Hope show, especially Joey Heatherton dancing. And Ann Margaret. Fellow Sky Soldiers recalled that show in a batch of e-mails that bounced around in 2007. "It is a memory I will vividly have forever," said ex-Bravo Bull Jerry Nissley. He also remembered singing "Silent Night" and "I don't think there was a dry eye in the place." Chopper pilot, Tony Geishauer recalled that there were several guys in hospital gowns in the front rows. I'm sure all of us who were there felt privileged to share Bob Hope Christmas show memories with all those veterans from other wars who he and his entertainers visited over some six decades.

Larry Paladino
B/2/503

Excerpts from Larry's book,
"Thank You For Fighting The Bad People"



(continued....)



CHRISTMAS 1967.....

I CORP RVN

It was 24 May of 1967 in Bien Hoa. The Cowboys (335th) were informed of relocating north to Camp Enari at Pleiku. This movement was to support the "Sky Soldiers" of the 173d. This is what we wanted to do and what we do best. This move was in conjunction with Operation Winchester (moving to Pleiku area). We would be under direct control of the 173d, Operation Francis Marion would commence soon.

After setting up at Camp Enari (31 May), the Cowboys began their daily support of the Sky Soldiers. The first Sunday at our new home I attended a church service. Fr. Roy Peters was the 173d Catholic Chaplain. Being Eastern Orthodox, I thought the Catholic service was close enough.

Soon after landing at Camp Enari, the Cowboys were sent everywhere north. Anywhere the 173d was located we were there to lend a hand. AND, there also, at these different camps was Fr. Peters. The priest was always bumming a ride on our choppers. He needed to get to the troops. The Cowboys and the 173d were at numerous sites: Dak To, Dak Pek, An Khe, Kontum, etc. You could bet Fr. Peters would be at all these places especially on Sunday.



Fr Peters administering services in the boonies.

In the medic's tent I would set up a litter on its stands with a lantern on each end. Fr. Peters would always have "His Altar" to help him with the service. I remember him coming into the tent and with a smile saying "*What a great church*".

About a week before Christmas he indicated to me...."*I really want to take Christmas Mass to my men in the field*". I guess that was my cue, or maybe a signal. I knew we would be taking a hot Christmas dinner out to the troops. I immediately went to our Operations Officer. Maj. Jon Dickerson NEVER turned down a chance to do what was right. He indicated he would set this up.

WOW, on Christmas Day we had 2 additional chaplains. I believe their names were Mucre and Torp. Besides the three clergy, we had: a PSYCH-OPS chopper with the loud speakers, the hot meals, clean fatigues and Santa was even there. And to make sure this special day was not interrupted, the 335th Falcons with a couple of gun ships were nearby.



Even Santa went to war with the 173d thanks to the Cowboys

At one firebase I walked out onto the perimeter and was chatting with a Sky Soldier on guard duty. He was leaning on the M-60 scanning the area for bad guys. As we talked his trained eyes never left their scanning. The only time he looked up for a quick second is when I said I was from Ohio. He also was a Buckeye. He told me about an hour ago he was pretty bummed out being there and thinking of back home. The trooper said he thought he was really losing his mind....he kept hearing *Silent Night*. He was attempting to get his wits back when all of a sudden *Silent Night* got louder. It was the PSYCH-OPS chopper blasting out Christmas Carols. He indicated "*what a rush*".

This was, no, probably is, my most memorable day in my life. I believe the chaplains performed about 6 services that day. A very long day, a "day to remember". It was so rewarding in bringing some Joy to the 173d. I appreciated their situation. I had a tent, a cot and some safety to go back to each day. They did not. I had cooks that prepared hot food any time of the day or night..... these soldiers did not.

I salute you all, job well done. And always a prayer for the fallen troops. I and all the Cowboys are honored to have been able to assist the 173d Airborne.

John Trogotgott

**Medic, 25th Medical Detachment
33th Assault Helicopter Company.
Roseburg, Oregon**

(See more of Doc's photos on following Page)





1967 Pics From A Cowboy Buddy



I believe your guys were involved in Operation Boiling or MacArthur at the time of these photos. I hope some of your guys recognize themselves. **John Trogotgott, 25th Med Det, 335th Aslt Hel Co, Cowboys**



Thanks Cowboy!

Cowboys: Versatile...Aggressive...Efficient...Reliable



December 1967

Wambi Cook, A 2/503, 2/67-2/68



I made one promise once I received my orders for Viet Nam in late January 1967: I would not be in country for my 21st birthday (22 December) which would fall during the last two months of my overseas duty. Now, all I needed to accomplish this undertaking was to survive the first 10 months, and I'd then "coast" the final two. The best laid plans sometimes go awry.

I'd just survived two of the Herd's costliest battles that 22nd June (Slopes), and four months later on Hill 875. I'd taken my R&R, and reunited with my wife, Anita, in Hawaii in early July. Of course I knew full well that only one out-of-country respite was allowed within a twelve month deployment, but I'd heard rumors that a special "5-day leave" was a remote possibility.

Where do I start? The brigade ranks had been decimated over the past months' innumerable battles of Dak To culminating on Hills 882 and 875 in late November. So it became necessary that we reload. Apparently brigade was unable to muster sufficient airborne numbers stateside so a large quota of our replacements was non-airborne qualified GIs. We assumed this would be a transitory tactic yet the acceptance of this stratagem did not sit well amongst most seasoned troopers, especially those of the second battalion. It should be noted that those Legs assigned to 2nd battalion (in particular those of Alpha) acquitted themselves admirably throughout their TDY).

My master plan was to first get the out-of-country 5-day leave, and then somehow manipulate myself into a rear echelon "ghost duty." Hell, I'd burn shit 24-7 if it meant avoiding the boonies until time to DEROS in mid-February.

Someone suggested I begin at the battalion administrative field HQ. I'll never forget the enormous guffaw from the PFC clerk after introducing myself and unit then inquiring about the possibility of a *Special Circumstance Leave*. "It doesn't exist, soldier", he dismissively assured me. I'd mentally prepared for this rejection, and with a hasty about face, headed for the hex tent's exit. I'd taken one step out when one and

the same clerk emphatically exclaimed. "Yo! Wait, please! You're with No DEROS Alpha?" I was assured him, and with still two months was a 'short timer extraordinaire.' Before I could ask why the probe, he'd begun typing an official document of which I had no idea of its purpose at that moment. Once the doc was seemingly completed, he explained that there was one chance in a million that my request would be granted provided the right officers sign-off on it in a timely manner. He couldn't promise me I'd escape Nam but Vung Tao was a distinct possibility.

I pondered this revelation for a Nano second then exclaimed, "No! It's out of Viet Nam or nothing." Shit, I thought, I've come this far, I might as well go all the way. "It's on you, brother", he responded sardonically. He then instructed me the sequence of entities within HQ that I must take the request and have them sign-off. "Thanks, GI," I joked.

Just as I breached the flap for what I hoped was the last, he beckoned me back. I knew it too good to be true, I thought. To my amazement it was better news than I could have imagined. He seized the paper from my hand and promised he would act as personal de facto signatory where necessary, however, I must agree, if caught, I would not reveal who aided me with this dastardly scheme. "No sweat," I avowed. He proceeded to endorse every link where some higher would/should have, and sent me on my merry way directly to transport to arrange my departure.

Still in shock, I hurriedly advanced as directed. I'd wanted Bangkok (for obvious reasons) but only Hawaii, Australia and Hong Kong were assured seats. I opted for Hong Kong, China ostensibly because it was a shorter flight and I wanted as much copious fun time as possible. The only hitch was the available inclusive dates were 12/15 returning 12/21. My birthday is 22 December. What the hell, I'd figure things out as they happen.

Hong Kong was everything and a big bag of chips. I'll save that adventure for another issue. After my return from China I spent Xmas in Anh Khe's Sin City avoiding having to attend a Bob Hope's 1967 Christmas Extravaganza in Saigon. They finally caught up with me and several other temporary AWOLs and I was back in the field by New Year's Eve. I was returned to the Central Highlands for a few more weeks. Tet was just a couple weeks away and the VC never struck during this time of year. That would allow me ample time to work on another genius scheme to get off the line. Maybe Permanent KP? Hah!

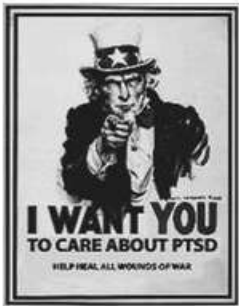
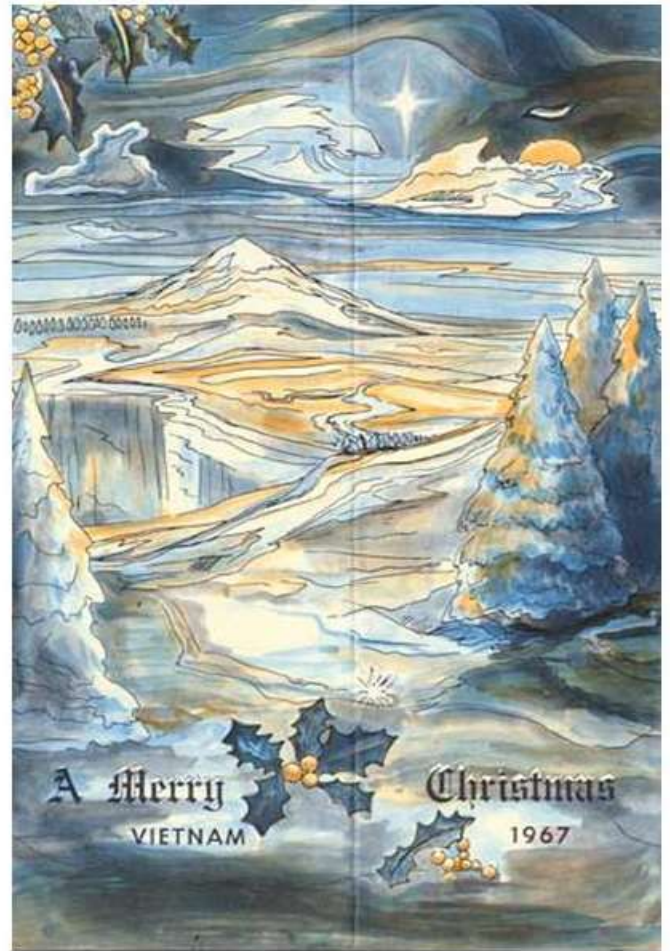


Little to Celebrate for the 2/503d & 173d in December 1967, But Thanks Anyway General

Commander's Message

Throughout the Christian world, the Christmas season is a time of joy and spiritual inspiration. Despite separation from our families and the hardships imposed by war, those of us in Vietnam will still share the traditional Christmas spirit this year. We can enjoy the spiritual satisfaction that comes from giving. As fighting representatives of the Free World, our gift is the help we give the Vietnamese people to secure their independence, their individual safety, and their future freedom. Each of you gives a part of this gift and deserves the satisfaction of having increased the happiness of others—the true Christmas spirit.

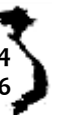
My best wishes to each of you and your families for the Christmas season. May you enjoy good fortune during the coming year.



W. C. Westmoreland
W. C. WESTMORELAND
General, U.S. Army
Commanding



22 Nov 1967, near Dak To, South Vietnam – men of the 173d Airborne honor their fallen. There were not enough boots.



Christmas and New Year's in Vietnam 1970

I was nearing the end of my extended time in Vietnam and was recently reassigned from E Company Recon where I had been the senior sniper for over a year. The battalion had just recently moved from LZ English to An Khe where our battalion was to replace the entire fourth infantry division. My time in Vietnam had been spent running sniper missions with the Rangers and E Company Recon Wildcats.



Rick Reynolds, E/2/503 Recon Wildcats, before mission with Rangers in 1970

With my extended time in Vietnam coming to a close and the problem I was having getting the higher ups to run legitimate sniper missions, I had "un-volunteered" as a sniper. And in retrospect I think it was one of the most difficult decisions I ever made. I loved being a sniper and I loved the weapon that allowed me to reach out and touch someone at ranges well over 1000 meters. But the problem was that the brass was not using snipers as they should. So I became the daytime NCOIC for security on top of Hong Kong Mountain.

My foster brother was a jet engine mechanic for the F-4's that flew direct air support for our recon teams. He had been halfway through his first tour in Vietnam when I made my arrival. As a sniper we did not clean anything but the chamber and bore of our sniper rifles and did not take them apart in the field or actually at all. Every month the snipers from around Vietnam would return to the fourth infantry division sniper school in An Khe where the gunsmith would completely break down our weapons and clean them. After that we would re-zero our weapons and be good for another month. I mention this only because having a brother in Vietnam allowed me to go see him once a month. So the way we did it was every month when I went to the sniper school to have my weapon cleaned and re-

zeroed I was allowed to stop off for a day and see my brother. This was quite a luxury for me having been living in rather primitive conditions, and seeing him allowed me to have a hot shower and sleep on a bunk that actually had sheets, clean sheets. We slept in an air-conditioned barracks and ate good Air Force chow.

My brother had requested his second tour in Vietnam just so he would be there and I would have a place to go on my way to the sniper school. Now the two bases that my brother served on during his two tours in Vietnam reminded me of the airbases we had back in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It just looked like they had picked up a stateside base and put it in the middle of Vietnam. They had a PX and swimming pools and NCO clubs and all manner of wonderful stateside things. And in two tours the worst thing that had occurred was that once a mortar round had blown up third base on their baseball diamond and on his second tour a rocket came in and blew a hole in the PX. The latter rocket attack occurred while I was there and as the sirens sounded I could hear the *whoosh* of the rocket coming into the base I rolled off my bunk with the mattress on top of me and started yelling at my brother,

"Where are the bunkers, how do we get to the bunkers?!"

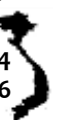
Little did I know the barracks were not equipped with bunkers in case of attack. So, those were the two combat experiences my brother had in two tours in Vietnam.

Being a good brother that I was, I thought it only right that my brother should come and see how the other half lived. So we made arrangements for him to fly in and stay with me for Christmas and New Year's eve. I had spent Christmas with him the year before complete with Christmas dinner with all the trim-trimmings just like stateside. We couldn't find a pine tree so a busted off branch from a tree had been stuffed in the pole of a bunk and decorated as a Christmas tree.



Me and two other Wildcats, "Bink" Morgan (L), and Craig Murphy (R), and our adopted kid, "Squeaky," with our home-sent tree. I'm showing how short I am.

(continued...)



Now for those that may not know it or may not have ever seen it or been to the huge base, Hong Kong Mountain was inside the perimeter. I don't remember how tall it was but it was a fairly good-sized mountain, and it still had cave complexes throughout it that had some Vietcong. We had a radio relay station on top so it was important we be there. So in reality I was on top of a mountain inside a base that still had bad guys in it. But I digress.

As I recall my brother arrived the day before Christmas and this would be his closest look at the war - the real war that was recently being turned over to the South Vietnamese. And as luck would have it he was on top of a mountain inside a very large perimeter on Christmas and New Year's Eve.

Now if we got on top of the roof of one of the buildings where I had built a machine-gun nest you could see the 360° of the perimeter. And anticipating the visit from my brother I had been collecting all sorts of items in the Army Arsenal that might put on a good show for New Year's. What I didn't think about was that all along the 28 mile perimeter GIs had the same idea.

So Christmas came and they brought us a Christmas dinner made by the army. It came up in those lovely containers to keep it warm and the guy driving the Mule that delivered it didn't care they had all fallen over on the trip up the mountain. But we got drunk instead and ended up eating Cs later that night. And someone's mom had sent us a fake tree complete with decorations.

New Year's found us still feeling no pain and just before midnight my brother and I, well lubricated, were sitting in the machine-gun nest waiting for the magic midnight hour -- and it was a time worth waiting for!

At the stroke of midnight all hell broke loose! It was nothing like I had ever seen before in my time in the Army. I'd never seen a demonstration of any kind that rivaled it. We were awestruck as the sky lit up with star burst flares and solid streams of red tracers arcing into the night sky from every bunker on the line. We were so dazed we didn't fire one of our flares or fire a single shot.

Thinking back later I thought this must be what it looked like when large units engaged each other in World War II. The show seemed to go on forever and just as suddenly as it started it was over.



Rick and his brother safe at home.

I don't remember much about the rest of my brother's stay, how long he was there, when he left, but I'll never forget Christmas and New Year's in Vietnam 1970.

**Rick Reynolds
E/2/503, Recon Wildcats**

Bob Hope brings Christmas cheer to troops in Vietnam

By Mike Mealey

Stars and Stripes

Published: December 26, 1964



Bob Hope catches up on some paperwork during the flight to the next stop on his 1964 Christmas tour of Vietnam.

(MIKE MEALEY/STARS AND STRIPES)

BIEN HOA, South Vietnam — Bob Hope, who said he wasn't scared to come to Vietnam, but added they had to blindfold the airplane, brought some laughter to a place of war Christmas Eve.

The comedian and his troupe arrived from Thailand Thursday and an hour later Hope, a golf club in one hand and a beautiful girl at the other, made it feel like Christmas here.

He had told his official welcomers, *"We've been looking forward to coming here. We've been warming up — if you can call it warming up — in Korea, then the Philippines and Thailand."*

"It's kind of a kick to be here on Christmas Eve." Then Hope, aided by Jerry Colonna, Jill St. John, Janis Paige, Anita Bryant, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Julia Bubbles, Miss World Ann Sidney, Peter Leeds and Les Brown and his band put on a two-hour show as fighter bombers and helicopters whizzed overhead.

(continued....)



Hope quipped: *"It's a thrill to be here in Sniper Valley. Hope I do as well as Henry Cabot Lodge — he got out. What a welcome I got — they thought I was a replacement. We got a 40 gun salute. Three of them were ours."*

He went on and on. And the veteran Miss Paige and the other beauties in the cast had the men whistling and clapping every time they flashed a smile.

Maj. Gen. Richard Stilwell, who welcomed the troupe to Vietnam, thanked Hope on behalf of the more than 23,000 Americans in Vietnam, adding that it was the biggest occasion of the year for any serviceman.

A cloak of secrecy surrounded the tour here for security reasons. Newsmen, given only a two-hour advance of the arrival, weren't even told where they were going until they were airborne out of Saigon. Military police were everywhere, and Hope, commenting on the security backstage, seemed amazed and appreciative. Even under a blistering sun that sent the temperature to 92 degrees, it seemed like Christmas when the cast ended the show with *Silent Night*.

The approximately 1,000 airmen in the audience sang along, heads lowered, then rushed to the stage to shake hands with the stars. One man put it simply,

"It's a great thing for them to come here. It makes it feel a little like home."

UPI said Hope dined Thursday night with blood on the cuffs of his shirt after personally shaking hands with 42 of the American victims of a Viet Cong bombing which coincidentally welcomed him to Saigon. Hope noted the bloodstains when a UPI correspondent pointed them out.

"I didn't realize I had the bloodstains," he said, surprised.

Hope said he and his group were driving into Saigon from the airport when the blast occurred. Security agents sent their baggage truck racing back to the airport but permitted Hope and his party to proceed to the fashionable Caravelle Hotel, less than 100 yards from the still burning officers barracks where the explosion went off.

"We could smell the explosion," said Miss Sidney. *"I saw them sweeping the glass off the pavement when we arrived."*

Hope left a dinner with American Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor and the commander of the U.S.

forces in Saigon, General William C. Westmoreland, and visited the U.S. Navy Hospital, talking to wounded Americans.

[Source: *Stars and Stripes*]

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Christmas has a special meaning for American soldiers in Vietnam. Amid the tragedy and ugliness of war, the Holy Season reminds us of the joy and beauty of peace. In a land whose people struggle for a better life, the Christmas message brings cheer and hope for the future.

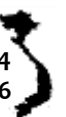
You who serve in this distant land may be justly proud. The spirit of Christmas is expressed each day in your actions toward our gallant allies and in your sacrifices for our country's cause.

My warmest personal wishes to each of you and to your families on this Christmas Day.

W.C. WESTMORELAND
General, United States Army
Commanding



Bob Hope with General Westmoreland during a U.S.O. Christmas tour in Vietnam. (web photo)





“Bob Hope”

By Arlis Kline



Bob Hope on Noemfoor, WWII

Panorama by Charles Morford



For what it is worth, I remember Bob Hope's visit to Noemfoor very well.

The 462nd was with the 503 RCT was on the opposite end of the island from where his show was to be held. Fighting was over and we were only bothered by *Piss Call Charlie* during the night. The Island was pretty secure by this time. Most of the CT went up to see the show. This was a march of about 7 - 9 miles on this little muddy road running thru the jungle.

The Show was held on a stage in front of a cleared hill. About 6 to 7000 soldiers. Some Navy personnel. Hope had Jerry Colona, Frances Langford, and a girl named Patsy (Thompson?) dancer wearing a black one piece costume with pink trim at the bottom and around the top. Wow, what a sight for a bunch of filthy soldiers.

It was a great show and I believe every man who saw it carried away wonderful thanks for Bob Hope's efforts on our part. Sure was worth the walk.

Arlis Kline, Major
CO of 462nd P.F.A.B..

The USO show was set up near the runway. "G" Co. was bivouacked just to the rear. All of us appreciated Frances Langford more than we did Bob Hope or Gerry Colona. We hadn't seen fair women for several months.

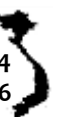
There were a lot of loaded guns, and nothing to shoot at. Hope got us laughing easily, but he had to tell us jokes first to do it. All the gals had to do for a round of cheers, Langford especially, was just *be there.*"

Chet Nycum, "G" Company

I had a very good seat about 50 rows or so from stage. I could clearly see the faces and Jerry's mustache. I'm amazed that we had so many troops there. Far more than I remember. As I recall there were reported snipers still around. Fills a gap in my memory. Thanks..... great shot.

Paul Turley, "F" Company

[Courtesy of: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website]



With December & Christmas over, it's back to the routine.



“Rick Holmes of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, sits down on January 3, 1966, in Vietnam,” during Operation Marauder in the Mekong Delta near Bao Trai. (web photo)



“Women and children crouch in a muddy canal as they take cover from intense Viet Cong fire at Bao Trai, about 20 miles west of Saigon, on January 1, 1966. Paratroopers, background, of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade escorted the South Vietnamese civilians through a series of firefights during the U.S. assault on a Viet Cong stronghold,” during Operation Marauder. (If date is correct, it's most likely troopers of the 1/503d on that date as the 2/503d didn't assault LZ Wine until 2 Jan 66). (web photo)



Into The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death...

Frank Ralph Anuci

Anuci, Frank Ralph 73, of Springfield, IL, passed, Tuesday, September 22, 2015 at Memorial Medical Center. He was preceded in death by his brother, James and sister, Brenda. After serving in the US Army from 1961-1964 as a proud member of the 173rd Airborne, Frank worked 35 years as a Union Ironworker for Local 290 in Dayton, OH. He retired as Union President in 1998 and in 2014, received his 50 year pin.



Frank married Lanita Kay Wright Ward on October 11, 2002. He will be greatly missed by his wife, Lanita; sons, Michael (Kathleen) Anuci of Cincinnati, OH and Matthew (Jennifer) Anuci of Boca Raton, FL; and numerous siblings and grandchildren.

Cremation rites were accorded by Cremation Services. Burial of his urn, with honors, was held on September 28 at Camp Butler National Cemetery.

Robert Bruce



(no details available)

Thomas Robert Buck

Thomas Robert Buck, age 67, of Richmond Texas, passed away suddenly in an accident on August 19, 2015. He was born on December 2, 1947 in Grinnell, Iowa, to Harold and Alta Buck. Tom began his education in a one room country school and graduated from Grinnell-Newberg High School in 1966. He attended Luther College on a wrestling scholarship, making the varsity squad as a freshman. Tom served in the United States Army, 173rd Airborne Brigade. He was honorably discharged in 1969 after a tour of duty in Vietnam. Tom was a Purple Heart recipient. He is survived by his wife, Marcia (Dicke) Buck; daughters; Nikole Buck, Tina (Buck)



Wright, Leandra Buck, and son Eli Buck; grandchildren; Falken Wright, Adrienne Wright, Bronwyn Wright, Nikolas Paulson, Jessika Arvidson-Buck, and BrookLynn Buck. He is survived by brothers, Al Buck, Ed (Debbie) Buck, Jim (Linda) Buck, Fred (Julie) Buck, and sister Kathryn (Mike) Stark.

Edward Whitaker Grannis

Edward Whitaker Grannis, Jr., age 72, surrounded by his family, went to be with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, after a brief illness on Thursday, October 8, 2015. He was born August 6, 1943. He was a life-long resident of Fayetteville. Ed was married to Winifred (Winnie) McBryde Grannis for 37 years. In addition to his wife, Winnie, Ed is survived by their two sons, Edward Whitaker Grannis III and Charles Little McBryde Grannis of Fayetteville. In 1961, Ed graduated from Oak Ridge Military Institute. Ed received his undergraduate degree from Wake Forest College in 1965 and his law degree from Wake Forest Law School in 1968. Ed received a commission as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry through the Wake Forest College ROTC program. Upon completion of infantry officer basic course, parachute school, and Ranger training, Ed was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Infantry Brigade in the Republic of South Vietnam for a year-long tour of duty. Upon return to the United States, Ed was assigned as a basic training company commander in the Basic Training Brigade at Fort Bragg, NC until the completion of his service obligation and subsequent release from active duty. Ed received numerous awards and decorations for his service as an American Soldier.



(sadly continued....)



They will fear no evil...

Jimmie Howard

Finger, TN: Jimmie Howard age 68 passed away Monday August 3, 2015 at McNairy Regional Hospital. He was born May 5, 1947 in Handshoe, Kentucky, the son of the late Wiley and Emily Nester Howard. He attended school in Kentucky and entered the U.S. Army on Sept. 18, 1968, serving with the 173rd Airborne, during the Vietnam War. After service he moved to Tennessee living in Finger the past 13 years. Mr. Howard was a truck driver and a member of the Pinson Church of God. He is survived by his wife Susan McKinney Howard of Finger; five daughters, Emilia Jean Cornish (Donavan) of Lawrenceburg, KY, April Howard of KY, Jamie Goodridge (Jason) of Fruitland Park, FL, Kristie Floyd (Josh) of Savannah, Jessica Cruz (Carlos) of Bethel Springs and three sons, Jimmy Howard, Jr. (Mandy) of Fruitland Park, FL, Jimmy Patrick Howard (Brittany) of Savannah and Johnathan Cotner (Cara) of Vermillion, OH; twenty six grandchildren; two great grandchildren.



Scott Risi

(no details available)

Vernon Dale Short

Vernon Dale Short, age 71, of Hurt died Thursday, January 29, 2015 at his residence. Born September 1, 1943 in Pittsylvania County he was a son of the late Samuel Edward Short and Elsie Meade Short. He was a graduate of Gretna High School where he lettered in football, baseball, basketball and track. He was a carpenter, a member of the Local #132 Carpenter Union in Washington, D.C. and a member of the Loyal Order of Moose in Altavista. He was a U.S. Army veteran and served with the original 173rd Airborne Brigade 503rd PIR. Active as a youth coach he coached youth football for the Lee Franconia Football League, coached youth baseball for the Pioneer Baseball League and was voted the Gatorade Youth Coach Award for 1984. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Garnette "Sandy" Jones Short; one son, Samuel Dale Short and wife, Beth; two daughters, Angela Nicole Short Shupe and Teri Grissom Mason; three sisters, Sammie Short Bennett, Theresa Short DePew and husband, Norm and Dorothea Short Tracy Edminister; four grandchildren, Lori Anne Shupe, Edward Allen Shupe, Samuel Allen Short and Hailee Elizabeth Short.



Peter Clarence Murphy

May 28, 1947 - June 24, 2015

Beloved husband, father and grandfather. Peter was born in Almont, Michigan to Florence who was a school teacher and then a public school principal and Peter Sr. who was a practical engineer. His parents instilled a love of learning and taught him many practical skills. He served in the Army from 1966 to 1972 in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He served two tours in Viet Nam and was twice wounded. Military service had a large impact on the way Pete lived his life. He learned sound decision making and leadership skills that served him well. Upon returning from military service, he worked full time in the automotive industry in Detroit while going to college full time. Later upon moving to sunny Florida, he worked as a Risk Manager for various companies. Survivors are his wife, Linda; his son, Scott, daughter, Elise and grandchildren, Tyler and Caden.



Shelby Stewart

Shelby "PawPaw" Nelson Stewart, 74, of Pensacola passed away on June 19, 2015. Shelby was born to Shelby Stewart and Lucille McLeod in San Diego, CA, on August 15, 1940. Shelby served in U.S. Army from 1959 to 1979 and retired as a Sergeant First Class, having served two tours of duty in Vietnam. He was a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, receiving two purple hearts. After retiring from the Military, Shelby worked as a civil servant at Naval Air Station Pensacola, FL. He also worked at Mayes Printing Company.



(sadly continued....)



*And they will dwell in the house
of the Lord, forever.*

Frank Oscar Vavrin

Vavrin, Frank Oscar Age 94, passed away August 4, 2015. He is preceded in death by parents, son Frank Neal (1970) and daughter Kristine Elizabeth (1976). Frank served as a U.S. Army chaplain in Korea, Berlin Germany, France and Vietnam. He was a proud member of the 82nd Airborne and 173 Airborne (Sep) units. Frank received the Bronze Star for activities in Vietnam, unusual for a Chaplain. He was a wonderful and steady husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend. Frank is survived by Jean his beloved wife of 70 years; son Paul and Anne Vavrin; granddaughter Kate and Paul Young; grandsons John and Victoria Vavrin and James Vavrin; and great grand-daughters Mary Beth Kruyer, Abby Young and Gwendolyn Vavrin. A private family prayer and memorial service was held at Trinity First Lutheran Church in Minneapolis on Friday, August 7.



Jon-Eric Willette

Jon-Eric Willette died of complications related to brain cancer at St. Vincent Hospital on Oct. 9, 2015. Jon was a retired police officer and veteran of the Vietnam War where he served as a paratrooper in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He owned several businesses including a security and firearms training company and a bookstore. He was an avid reader and collector of books of all genres and a graduate of the University of Southern Colorado. Jon was a fiercely devoted husband, father and friend who always found ways to help any of those around him that needed help. He was a true intellectual conservative with a vast knowledge of various subjects to include religious philosophy resulting in a great admiration for the current Pope Francis. He is survived by loving wife Brenda; son Matthew (Shauna); son Jon-Thomas, granddaughter Marion; grandsons Laddie, Landon, Mason, and Jack; and numerous family and friends.



*Rest Easy Sky Soldiers...and
All The Way*

RESPECT FOR OUR MILITARY

Are you aware of this tradition?

Hi. This is very interesting, I did not know this. While "Cleaning of the Stones" at the National Cemetery in Holly I noticed a quarter placed on one of the stones. Later I also noticed a nickel placed on another stone. I was so touched with this that I took pictures (sorry the nickel did not turn out). I Googled about the coins, and found this out.

A coin left on a headstone lets the deceased soldier's family know that somebody stopped by to pay their respect.

Leaving a penny means you visited. A nickel means that you and the deceased soldier trained at boot camp together. If you served with the soldier, you leave a dime. A quarter is very significant because it means that you were there when that soldier died.

The tradition can be traced to as far back as the Roman Empire. It was a way to give a buddy some spending money for the hereafter.

~ Author unknown



[Circulated by Jim Gettel, A/2/503, and sent in by
LTC Jack Kelley, CO A/2/503]



“It is our job to remember.”

Mark Carter, 173d LRRP, E-17th Cav



George J. MIKEL

Pvt., "F" Co, 2d Bn, 503d PRCT
K.I.A., Grubbs Ravine, Corregidor
22 February 1945

The company was combing snipers out of Sheeney Ravine on Corregidor Island, Philippine Islands, on the morning of February twenty second when the enemy suddenly opened fire from the front from positions in three mutually supporting and well concealed caves. On the opening burst George fell seriously wounded. The platoon medical aid man rushed up to where George lay and he too was seriously wounded before he could attend to George. George then started to crawl back, but his first movement drew a hail of fire from the enemy and was killed instantly.



William T. Bailey
1st Lt 503d Prcht Infantry
Commanding



George Mikel was a 501st Parachute Battalion member who refused rotation or 30 day's leave to the U.S. On Mindoro, he asked to be reduced from SSgt (mortar platoon sergeant). After his request was refused, he went AWOL for several days after asking me if I would make him a private if he screwed-up. I reluctantly agreed because he was a good NCO. I assigned him as an extra runner.

As we neared the corrugated metal building built on the left bank of Grubbs Ravine, I could see it well. It was on ground level, which was about three feet above the dry stream bed, and was approximately 12' x 12'. There were no windows that I could see. Maciborski was the next man on my left. Mikel the next on my right. Maciborski passed the building on the far side from me. I could see the top of a large cement culvert (RC-6). Maciborski passed on by the building door which was located on the west side. He did not look in. I hopped up on the bank to take a look. Mikel hopped in the bed behind where I had just left. Maciborski looked toward us and all hell broke loose.

The noise of gunfire was coming from seemingly everywhere. Maciborski fell. I looked down into the stream bed where George Mikel was laying on his back, not moving, with at least a thigh wound. He was wearing dark sunglasses and I could not see his eyes to see if he might still be conscious, although he was just mere feet away. I did not believe him dead at that point. We were close to the culvert. Machine gun fire was coming from our flanks, the very spot where our supporting platoons were supposed to be. Heavy rifle fire was coming from our front, particularly from the South Shore Road as it curved and descended toward RC-6. At this point, neither could we see two openings towards my left, between us and the Grubbs Trail.

I could see that the area was open around the road. Large trees still stood at the culvert but bombs had cleaned out the smaller trees and brush so that visibility was very good. The same was true looking up the slopes on both the right and left. I could see debris and dirt flying from machine gun bursts along our line where my men lay. I reported the situation to Bailey and used the best language I could command to express my feelings to the platoon sergeants who did not have their platoons in position.

After I had left him, George Mikel had moved. Todd had called to him to be still, but George had sat up and was immediately hit in the chest by multiple rifle fire from the eight Japs in the culvert. He had originally been hit in the thigh which was about as high as the Japs could direct their fire.

Bill Calhoun
My Day With The Rattlesnakes

Pvt. George Mikel, former mortar platoon sergeant, had purposely gone absent without leave for four days, to become Calhoun's runner. After heroic action on Battery Hearn magazine three nights before, for which he was posthumously awarded a Silver Star Medal, he followed Calhoun closely as they swept Grubbs Ravine knowing there were Japanese Marines there. He purposely chose a position where he felt he would see more action as a platoon sergeant, and accepted the lower pay grade for the transfer.



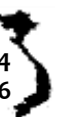
Bill Calhoun

[Courtesy of: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website]



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Stockport Sergeant Is Awarded Bronze Star For Viet Nam Heroics



A Morgan County army sergeant has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroic actions in Vietnam.

The Bronze Star Medal with "V" device was awarded Sgt. Thomas R. Wallace, Stockport, by direction of the President of the United States.

Sgt. Wallace, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Wallace, was presented the medal during ceremonies at Fort Gordon, Ga., in September, it was announced today.



The Citation Reads As Follows:

"For heroics in connection with military operations against a hostile force, Sergeant Wallace distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 2 January 1966 while serving as a squad leader in Cu Chi, Republic of Vietnam. On that day, Sergeant Wallace's platoon was engaged on a mission to search out and destroy Viet Cong insurgents suspected of being entrenched in bunkers and open fire paddies. Having made contact with a large force of hard core Viet Cong, the platoon came under intensive hostile machine gun fire and sustained a number of casualties from the initial bursts of hostile fire. The assault was held-up 25 meters from the Viet Cong positions. After calling in artillery and supporting air strikes on the hostile positions, Sergeant Wallace re-organized his men and assaulted the insurgents' positions, destroying three bunkers and killing a number of Viet Cong. Through his heroic efforts the Viet Cong were defeated in that area. His aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."

In the summer of 2005 a cartoon of Wallace, drawn by Associated Press artist Howard Brodie, was published in newspapers throughout the country. Wallace was credited for saving Brodie's life when he, Sgt. Wallace, killed a deadly Krait snake which was about to bite Brodie.

Sgt. Wallace is now stationed at Fort Gordon where he was joined by his wife, the former Masako Shinoburko, a Japanese native whom he met and married in Okinawa.

1960s Newspaper Report

Two Sky Soldier Buddies Suiting Up For Their Next Blast



(web photo)

~ Airborne Moon ~



[Sent in by Ray Chapman, RAA]



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Following in an excerpt from the declassified After Action Report covering the Brigade operation in the Iron Triangle between 8-14 October 1965, mostly as it pertains to activities of the 2/503d. See note which follows report. (Photos added) Ed

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
APO San Francisco 96250**

25 October 1965

SITUATION:

A. Tactical Situation

1. Mission. The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) penetrated, swept, and dominated a Viet Cong (V.C.) controlled area known as the IRON TRIANGLE, located Southwest of Ben Cat and West of Highway 13; and forty kilometers Northwest of Saigon. This operation, which began on 8 October 1965 and ended on 14 October, was the second phase of the plan to clear the Ben Can environs and open highway 13 for the introduction of 1st Infantry Division elements into this area.

2. Task Organization: (included)
c. TF 2/503d (Lt Col Dexter, CO)
2/503d Infantry
RRU Team
Engr Squad
2 Vietnamese Police



LTC George E. Dexter (Col. Ret)
Commander, 2/503d, '64-'66



"Bombing in the Iron Triangle in October 1965." (web photo)

3. Summary of Operations.

- a. Implementation of OPORD 25-65, a Brigade search and destroy operations commenced at 080600 hrs (D-Day) with the motor movement of E/17th Cavalry and two Bn task forces to position (RED). When the area was secured airmobile units were repositioned at this location to expedite introduction of heliborne assault on LZ WHITE. The assault began with a lift of 2/503d Inf from Bien Hoa landing at 081100 hours to secure LZ WHITE.
- b. On D+2 2/503d Inf made contact with an estimated V.C. Company. After initial contact, the battalion moved south to make contact with 1/503d Infantry moving to the eastern limits of their assigned zone. This movement positioned 1/RAR on the north, 2/503d in the center and 1/503d on the South, along the eastern end of the iron triangle area. The open was struck with 19 TAC air sorties, and 280 rounds of 105mm artillery. E/17th Cavalry continued to conduct mounted reconnaissance of areas east, south and west of position Red, to flush out V.C. snipers firing against friendly aircraft.

(continued....)



- c. The 2/503d moved on D+3 by a combination of foot march and motor convoy through the 1/RAR to secure the Lai Khe area for the 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry. E/17th Cavalry cleared Highway 13 north in preparation for the 2/503d movement. 1/503d Inf positioned itself astride the eastern road of the IRON TRIANGLE and continued to clear out sporadic resistance in that area. The 1/RAR battalion was shifted to a position immediately south of position Red with the mission of clearing that area of V.C.



“After bombing in Iron Triangle, Oct. 1965.” (web photo)

- d. On October 12, D+4, 1/503d Inf continued to search and destroy operations in the eastern portion of the IRON TRIANGLE while 2/503d Inf continued to conduct search and destroy operations in the Lai Khe area and provided security for the arriving 1st Infantry Division elements. The cavalry troop provided convoy security for the 3d Brigade forces from their staging area to Lai Khe. After the

1st Infantry Division elements were securely in position at Lai Khe, 2/503d Inf then displaced to a position immediately north of position Red with the mission of clearing that area. 1/RAR continued to search their assigned area south and west of position Red.

- e. By morning of D+5, 1/RAR and 2/503d reached the western edge of their assigned zone, placing them in a position to support the extrication of 1/503d by airlift. The 1/503d was lifted from the Triangle area to a secure area, position Red. They were subsequently shuttled to Bien Hoa. Road movement of 2/503 to Bien Hoa began in the early afternoon. The 1/RAR battalion and D/16th Armor were moved to position Red with the mission of securing the brigade installations in that area.
- f. On 14 October, D+6, 1/RAR, 3/319th Arty, D/16th Armor and the Bde headquarters and staff returned to Bien Hoa by a combination of helicopter lift and motor convoy.



“A member of the 173d Airborne in the Iron Triangle in 1965.” (web photo)

- B. Intelligence Summary
1. Prior intelligence on the IRON TRIANGLE consisted of locations of medical facilities, training camps, small unit headquarters, field fortifications and anti aircraft positions. VC Company 061 was the only element believed located in the TRIANGLE....

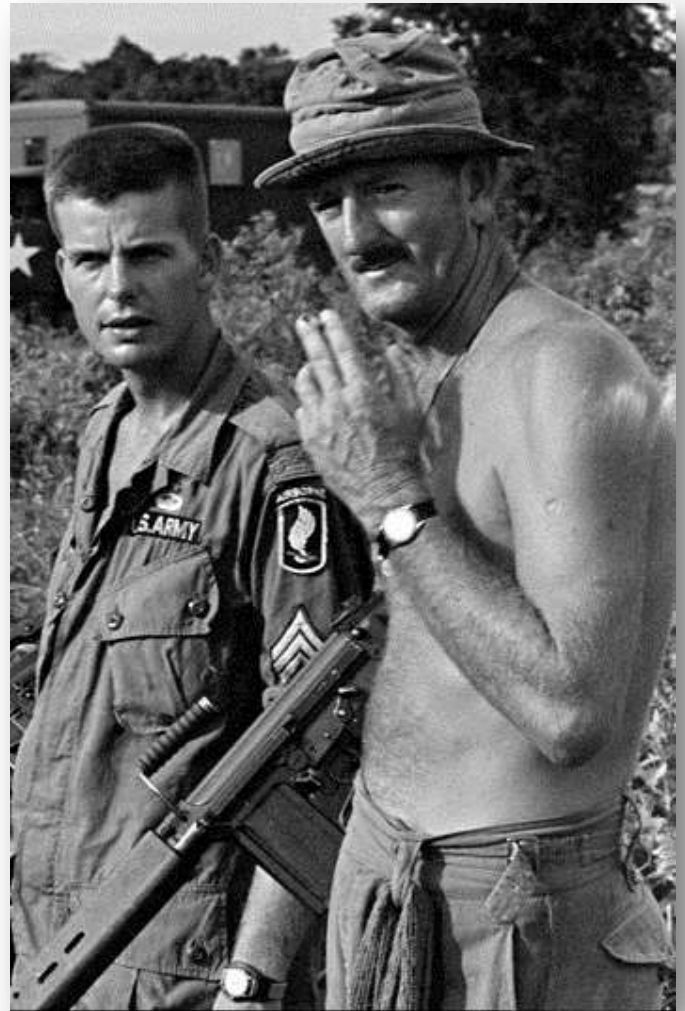
(continued....)





A Buddy, Helping a Buddy

The majority of enemy contact was on the eastern fringe of the operational area and it was estimated that because of the low matted entanglement of growth in the area, it would be impractical for VC to construct permanent or semi-permanent camps in a major portion of the area. Elaborate tunneling systems believed to be in existence were not found. The majority of the tunnels, trenches and foxholes discovered in the TRIANGLE were estimated to be two to three months old. Evidence revealed that these field fortifications had not been occupied recently. Entrenchments were found however on the Eastern fringe that showed evidence of having been occupied recently. As anticipated, the area was heavily mined and booby-trapped. These devices varied from 750 lb bombs to hand grenades. No apparent pattern appeared to exist in their placement. Enemy document and VC captives verified the presence of VC company C-60. Based on prior intelligence and information received during the operation, it is believed that these elements were engaged by B/2/503d on the 10th of October. Small arms and automatic weapons fire was received by helicopters and fixed winged aircraft through the operational period. Artillery or tactical Air strikes were directed on 95% of these firings. ###



Sky Soldiers. This photo is purported to have been taken in the Iron Triangle on October 13, 1965. (web photo)

Note:

Thanks to Jim Williams, B/2/503, the entire After Action Report, 20+ pages, is available by email. Please send your request to rto173d@cfl.rr.com with the subject line **"Iron Triangle Operation"**, and it will be sent to you.



An image found on the net.





"Lt. Norman Turpin"

By Bill Calhoun

He was the last man of "F" Co. killed during WWII.



Lt. Turpin at the entrance gate to the school in Victoria, Negros. We were preparing to move to Fabrica.

"Lt. Calhoun with first and second platoon & one section of machine guns, plus one section of mortars, left by train to recon Buagang Lumber Camp. Second platoon went to Malapasoc area to patrol that area and first platoon took the track to east of the lumber camp. Second platoon received message that four Japs were in a civilian home. Approaching the house, Lt. Turpin was killed by a sniper. Patrol returned to camp at 1400 hr. First Lt. Mathis was told to report to regimental CP at 1430."

"F" Company History, 14 July 1945



Norman Turpin had been sent to Europe as the war ended there and was then sent to the Pacific. He was proficient in French, and had been attached to the OSS and was in school learning the peculiarities of the French spoken in the Marseilles area. He was interesting to talk to. He replaced Dan Lee as platoon leader of the 2nd platoon. Lee had been the only one wounded on the raid on the Jap headquarters at Hacienda Paz about 20 June (the third time he was hit in the thigh).

There is a mendacious tale of Turpin's death related by one writer who tells of observing it from high ground. "B" Company was far away, northeast of Fabrica.

I had two reinforced platoons of "F" Company miles below Fabrica. Buagang Lumber Camp was at the junction of the main line running north-south and a spur running to the east. The camp was adjacent the rail

lines. Insular Lumber Company constructed these camps for their employees, consisting of small houses with roofs, sides and floors which could be taken apart and hauled on flat cars to other sites. I do not remember any buildings there. At the site where the camp once stood, I sent the 1st Platoon under Lt. Mathis to patrol south along the main line toward Malapasoc, and the 2nd Platoon, under Turpin, east to follow a feeder rail line. The platoons are reversed in the "history".

The train with the 81mm mortar and the light machine guns waited at the rail junction. Before the 2nd platoon had moved more than a few hundred yards a Filipino civilian approached them and told Lt. Turpin that four Japs were in a nipa hut off to the left of the tracks a few hundred yards further ahead.

Following him they turned off the tracks on to a path which lead through the thick underbrush. After going a short distance, the path emerged into a clearing, facing a nipa hut standing in the middle of the clearing. The hut was of the type usual to the area, standing on stilts about four or five feet off the ground. The windows were covered with hinged thatch covers.

The lead element halted and stayed low behind a large log. Tony Lopez, the platoon sergeant, wanted to blast the hut with fire, but Turpin disagreed. He told Lopez he'd check the hut himself, "*while you have your men cover me.*" He broke cover and walked out of the clearing towards the hut.

Half way towards it, "*Blam!*" and Turpin is dead. Now the hut is riddled, but it is too late for Turpin. A Jap jumped out of the hut's far side and dashed into the nearby brush. They fired at him but did not know if they hit him. After riddling the hut, they rush in and find the hut's only occupant - a woman who escaped injury by taking refuge in a big, heavily built oven. Lt. Turpin's body was carried back to Fabrica on the train.

At this stage the war still seemed destined to last a long time - there was still the Japanese homeland to be invaded. None of us felt our chances of survival were good. Little did we know that Turpin's death would be the last in "F" Company from enemy action. It just causes those of us who knew him to reflect, sadly, "*what if?*"

BLESS 'EM ALL

Reprinted courtesy of Paul Whitman,
of the 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website.



Happy or Good?

Some of us believe wishing a vet a "Happy" Veteran's Day is an oxymoron, while others propose wishing a vet a "Good" Veteran's Day is more appropriate. Perhaps we learned the answer from this Sky Soldier? In any event, we hope you all enjoyed a good and happy Vet's Day. Ed

Veteran's Day in TEXAS 2015

Today Joyce took me to the pain clinic to get a shot in my back. Then she took me to Applebee's to get a free lunch for Veteran's Day. Just as we got there, a lady was ahead of us and she took a seat waiting to be seated for lunch. The waiter came to us for seating and just before we moved, the lady stood up and asked if she could be seated with us; she didn't want to eat alone. We accepted her invitation.

She had on an Army WAC, Women's Army Corps, uniform from the 60s. As we all sat down, she stood up and came to my side of the table and gave me a great big warm hug and stated that she didn't serve in Viet Nam but she honored all who had served there.

Her name is SP4 Charley Michael. We really enjoyed the conversations and some were emotionally charged too. I found she and Joyce dabbing at their eyes on some of the stories she was telling about how this one soldier came up to her and how grateful he was to see her in uniform years ago; how he wanted to just hug and thank her for her service. Yes, we had a great time. Her husband died in 1991, and we found out that we only live about 5-6 miles from each other.



Joyce & Ed Kearney in Texas with their new friend, Charley

We went to another restaurant for an evening dinner (Remember bar hopping? Well, we were restaurant hopping). This too was pleasant with many "Thank you for your service" from many folks.

When the waiter brought the bill, mine was free; I gave him \$20 to cover other costs. He brought the change and I discovered he had also brought the \$20 as well. I told him according to my calculations he was giving me a free dinner, giving me my change and my \$20 back to me. He was delighted that I didn't walk out on him and was so thankful that I corrected the mistake and not cause him to lose money.

So folks, I did indeed have a *Happy* Veterans Day! To all of you men and women out there, I hope your day was as pleasant as mine; and to the spouses of military veterans, thank you too for your support as your jobs may have been just as demanding if not more so than ours.

Oh, forgot to add that we have a next door neighbor who has twin boys that will be one year old next week. They also have a 3 1/2 year old son and whenever he sees me out, he says, "Hello neighbor" and comes over to shake my hand. Today he rang my doorbell with his dad just before we went out to dinner - "Hi neighbor, I have something for you" and proceeded to hand me a \$40 gift certificate. I was absolutely speechless. His dad said his son wanted to do something for me on Vet Day, and he was teaching him how to care and look out for people. I am sure the kid doesn't understand what's all involved here but I sure can salute his dad for instilling positive values in his kids. Now all I have to do is figure out how to get them all to McDonald's for some treats.

What a Vets Day I had this year. Cheers,

Ed Kearney

B/2/503

The Day After Veteran's Day

YESTERDAY, on Veterans Day, we paused to honor and thank those among us, our friends and neighbors, who have served in the Armed Forces of our Nation, and to thank them for their service.

But in the background, among the shadows, there is another group of veterans. Those who served and fell on the fields of battle and those who returned to our beloved country but have gone to their eternal rest.

These were our friends, our comrades, our brothers -- warriors from past generations.

We should not...We cannot...We must not...forget their service and their sacrifices that purchased the freedom and liberty we enjoy today.

Ken Smith

**Honorary Colonel
503d Infantry Regiment**




~ 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

 **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 36 for more details)

 **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/>

 **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



Bayonet Thrust: Sky Soldiers return home from Baltics

"U.S. Army paratrooper 2nd Lt. Jon Broderson assigned to the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment of the 173rd Airborne Brigade greets Polish military police escorts June 3, 2015, during a convoy crossing through the Slovakian border."....."VICENZA, Italy - Paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, currently deployed to various areas in Europe in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, are scheduled to return home to Italy via three military ground convoys and one airborne operation Oct. 22 through Nov. 3."

(Source: http://www.army.mil/article/157427/Bayonet_Thrust_Sky_Soldiers_to_return_home_from_Baltics/)



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

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)	

Make checks payable to:
173d Airborne Brigade Assn

**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



A Paris man's powerful open letter of defiance to the terrorists who recently killed his wife during one of the attacks on the Bataclan concert hall. Antoine Leiris posted the letter, titled "*You Will Not Have My Hatred*", less than three days after his 35-year-old wife of 12

years, Helen Muyal-Leiris, was killed.

It was reported Muyal-Leiris was one of 129 individuals killed during the recent series of attacks in Paris. Leiris asserts he and his 17-month-old son will continue to live unafraid and without hatred.

~ You Will Not Have My Hatred ~

Friday night, you took an exceptional life -- the love of my life, the mother of my son -- but you will not have my hatred. I don't know who you are and I don't want to know, you are dead souls.

If this God, for whom you kill blindly, made us in his image, every bullet in the body of my wife would have been one more wound in His heart. So, no, I will not grant you the gift of my hatred. You're asking for it, but responding to hatred with anger is falling victim to the same ignorance that has made you what you are.

You want me to be scared, to view my countrymen with mistrust, to sacrifice my liberty for my security. You lost.

I saw her this morning. Finally, after nights and days of waiting. She was just as beautiful as when she left on Friday night, just as beautiful as when I fell hopelessly in love over 12 years ago.

Of course I am devastated by this pain, I give you this little victory, but the pain will be short-lived. I know that she will be with us every day and that we will find ourselves again in this paradise of free love to which you have no access.

We are just two, my son and me, but we are stronger than all the armies in the world. I don't have any more time to devote to you, I have to join Melvil who is waking up from his nap. He is barely 17-months-old. He will eat his meals as usual, and then we are going to play as usual, and for his whole life this little boy will threaten you by being happy and free. Because no, you will not have his hatred either.



"We are all Parisians."

