



2/503d **Vietnam** Newsletter



For the men, and their families, of the 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) ~ *We Try Harder!*

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

See all issues: <http://www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php>

June 2010 ~ Issue 16

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

“Paratroopers of the U.S. 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade hold their automatic weapons above water as they cross a river in the rain during a search for Viet Cong positions in the jungle area of Ben Cat, South Vietnam, September 25, 1965. The paratroopers had been searching the area for 12 days.”

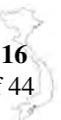


(AP Photo/Henri Huet)



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SKY SOLDIERETT'S CORNER



Again an update is taking a turn that is totally unexpected. When I sit down to do these, I try to write what I think someone needs – what I feel should be out there this month. Sure didn't see this one coming. But someone out there needs the message.

These are excerpts from a book by Penny Coleman called "Flashback" - a study on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder – a book which deals almost entirely with the men who died from the war – not in the war. The hardest part was recognizing that one of the women in the book was married to a buddy of my husband – one we searched for for years – one I heard so much about.

"Suicide is a selfish act, and (he) was not a selfish person. What finally put him over the edge twenty-six years after he came home from Vietnam, I will never know. He probably didn't even know himself.... We had an almost psychic connection. WE always seemed to know what the other one was thinking, but this time it failed me.... If I have any guilt, it is that I should have known.... He was under the care of professionals; he had a good marriage and a well-paying job. We were doing everything right. So I let my guard down. You can never let your guard down.

He had never heard of Posttraumatic Stress, he just thought he was going crazy.... When he found out there were so many others who shared his symptoms, he told me that knowledge literally saved his life.

(He) began to feel depressed, sad, and tearful for no apparent reason.,., He had to face the door; he had to have his back to the wall. He stockpiled food, survival gear and guns. He was having combat nightmares and told his doctor he felt certain he would have killed himself if I had not been for my support.

Four or five times a year, he would have what I called a spell. It was like he would turn into another person. He would get this edge to his voice and nothing we did would be right. He would retreat to his room.

He was under psychiatric care and on medication; I was in constant contact with his medical providers. I thought we were doing everything right. I thought we had everything under control.

I began to think I was married to a stranger. I believe he was finally coming to the realization that the Vietnam War was not going to leave him just because he left it.

It is nearing the anniversary of his death and I always feel it coming on. The rest of the year I can be strong, but February always feels so sad to me. He didn't die in honor with a bullet through his body shot by the enemy but was taken from his loved ones just as surely as if he were shot on the field of war. I did not lose my love for him; I did not lose my faith in him. I lost me. Why the hell didn't he take into consideration I might need him even more as the years passed?

Am I angry at him? Some days. Do I feel sorry for him? Some days. Do I wish my life had been different? Well, yeah, but if it was what kind of different person would I be? Someone told me God only gives you what you can handle. I've decided God maybe has a little bit of Alzheimer's and forgets, and he keeps giving me a little more."

For God's sake, please consider us that you are leaving behind.

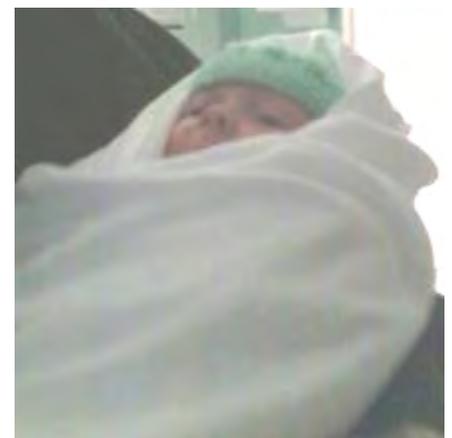
And just so you know – please check your medications and their interactions with one another. Do it yourself. Go to this site and do it yourself - http://www.drugs.com/drug_interactions.html. This site was given to me after we almost lost Wayne. Found that the medication that he was given by the VA could very well have caused the problem by the interactions caused between the different medications that weren't checked closely enough by the doctors and definitely not by the pharmacists at the VA hospital. Take some charge for yourself.

Iva Tuttle

(Wife of Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503d)

Lil' Sky Soldierette Marley

Grandpa Wayne & Grandma Cathy, Papa Wayne & Grandma Iva are so proud of our new granddaughter, **Marley Kate-Alice Tuttle** who arrived just before 8 pm on May 16, 2010, weighing 7 lb 11 oz and 20.5 inches long. She's an angel!!! Our children, David & BobbieAnn, have given us a miracle.



Wayne & Iva Tuttle



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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Does It Really Pay to Trust and Obey God?

Dr. Ronald Reese Smith
1LT, FO, B/2/503d, 3/319th
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Although most of us do not admit it, all of us at sometime or another have considered turning away from God. Even priests, pastors and worship leaders have those moments when we get confused, lose our way and almost lose our faith. This is not a new phenomena. It is as old as our race. In fact, there is a whole Psalm written by a leading worship leader of the day describing just this situation:

In Psalm 73:1-2, Asaph, a temple choral leader and composer, begins with an affirmation of faith and then delivers a touching confession:

Surely God is good to Israel to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.

In Hebrew, the word translated “foot” or “feet” includes from the knee down. The picture is this: I almost buckled; my steps nearly slipped out from under me. “My steps” in scripture always is a metaphor for ethical behavior, living our lives in conformity to Jesus Christ. In effect, Asaph is writing about a “faith crisis.” “*I was about to remove the Lord from the throne of my life, to take my life into my own hands,*” he is saying.

Frankly, this is always a natural thing to do. If you take your view of life from what you see around you—beautiful people, prosperous people, successful people—then your old nature, your sinful nature, your flesh, your natural self that wants what you want, when you want, where you want it, how you want it and with whom you want it ... well, you want to emulate that.

As your eyes run down the articulate, well chosen words of Psalm 73, you see a downward movement from taking a view of life from God to judging life from what is going on around you.

vs 3 He envies the arrogant.

vs 4 The wicked seem to prosper; they don't seem to have any struggles or health problems. (Asaph overstates the case in order to make his point).

vs 5-6 As a result they are proud.

vs 7-9 They exploit people and seem to get away with it.

vs 11 They say there is no God.

vs 13-14 Therefore, it doesn't seem to pay to serve God and be righteous.

vs 15 He doesn't feel he can say what he really thinks and feels because he is a spiritual leader and he does not want to adversely effect those less mature in the faith.



There is something wrong with a philosophy of life that is empty, even if it looks appealing for the moment. Asaph does not want to propagate the dictum that materialism should be god. Material prosperity can put food on the table but it will never give fellowship around that table. Money can put jewels on a woman, but it can never give her love. Mammon can buy a beautiful house, but it can never buy a home. No, there is something wrong with a philosophy of life that can give food without fellowship, pearls and diamonds without love, a house without warmth and contentment.

If we take our view of life from what we read in the newspaper, see on television, or our computer screen and in the movies we too, we may conclude there is no moral governor of the universe. The non-Christian world, with its pomp and prosperity, has no place for God, for servanthood, for surrender and submission to the Creator of universe in its thinking. Especially for those among us who are scrimping and trying to get by under financial duress and distress, quite honestly, it can be tempting to take that first step downward. It is easy to look at the wicked, the selfish and those who are evil and be envious and even consider chucking the whole thing and behaving unethically—going for the gusto, living for the moment, doing it your way. Envy, after all, is a sin.

In verse 16, Asaph tried to understand everything. It was hard, laborious, painful work to try and think his way through it all. The New International Version uses the word “oppressive.” This same Hebrew word translated oppressive is used for the travail of a woman in labor giving birth and of a man digging the ground. Hard labor!

Finally in verse 17, we find a breakthrough! ***Till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.***

(continued...)



There in church, in the sacred space with God, in the sanctuary—he begins to get the big picture. He gains a larger perspective. He catches an insight, an eternal perspective, a correct perspective, God’s perspective.

There sitting in a pew, he sees the eternal moral law giver. He learns that our moral God transcends all time. And, when time is finished, then moral justice will be realized on earth.

Life does not always seem fair because it is not fair. (My mother use to tell me that life is not fair. Do not expect life to be fair. The fair only comes once a year and usually for two weeks in the Fall). But God is good and in His time He will bring justice to all. It is way to easy in the rush of life to fall prey to the thinking that because God does not do my bidding, does not seem to be working my side of the street, well, I just don’t think it pays to serve God.

This view is understandable, if we live with the myth that God is supposed to be some cosmic genie to give us all our wishes. A more thoughtful approach yields this bit of wisdom, however. *“All of God’s accounts are not due and payable on a certain Friday afternoon at 4 p.m.”* That perspective was gained in the sanctuary for Asaph. Spending sometime with God may just yield similar wisdom for us.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:5).

An object of His grace,

Ron

~ 2/503d BUDDY PICS ~



Good Buddies



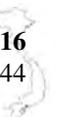
The Buddy System



Giving a Buddy a Hand...or a Foot



Bad Guy Buddies



Richard E. Eckert (Retired)

EVANS, Ga. -

Augusta Chronicle

Friday, May 14, 2010



Dr. Richard Everett Eckert, age 69, a prominent physician and a resident of Evans, Georgia, died May 12th at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida after a long illness. Visitation will be from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, Monday, May 17th at Platt's Funeral Home at 337 North Belair Road, Evans Georgia 30809. On Tuesday will be the Memorial Service at the same location at 2pm. Born May 2, 1941 in Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania, he was the only son of four children to the late Harold E. Eckert and the late Viola (Phillips) Eckert. Dick Eckert was raised in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and would graduate in 1959 from Carlisle High School as the valedictorian of his class and a three letter athlete in football, basketball, baseball, the captain of each of his teams. He was considered the finest athlete in the Harrisburg area quarterbacking his football team to three titles, playing point guard for his championship basketball team, catcher on his championship baseball team. The final tally on his efforts is impressive and extensive: All Penn Conference in football, basketball and baseball; All State in football and basketball; American Legion Baseball All Star, the Thom McCann Award given to the outstanding area football player in 1958; The Harrisburg Area Old Timers Award for football in 1958 and The Ken Millen Award presented to the male or female member of the senior class for athleticism and all around leadership.

Dr. Richard Eckert at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida after a long illness. Visitation will be from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, Monday, May 17th at Platt's Funeral Home at 337 North Belair Road, Evans Georgia 30809. On Tuesday will be the Memorial Service at the same location at 2pm. Born May 2, 1941 in Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania, he was the only son of four children to the late Harold E. Eckert and the late Viola (Phillips) Eckert. Dick Eckert was raised in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and would graduate in 1959 from Carlisle High School as the valedictorian of his class and a three letter athlete in football, basketball, baseball, the captain of each of his teams. He was considered the finest athlete in the Harrisburg area quarterbacking his football team to three titles, playing point guard for his championship basketball team, catcher on his championship baseball team. The final tally on his efforts is impressive and extensive: All Penn Conference in football, basketball and baseball; All State in football and basketball; American Legion Baseball All Star, the Thom McCann Award given to the outstanding area football player in 1958; The Harrisburg Area Old Timers Award for football in 1958 and The Ken Millen Award presented to the male or female member of the senior class for athleticism and all around leadership.

In 1980, Dick was awarded the Carlisle High School Distinguished Alumnus Award and in 1996 became a member of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame, South Central Chapter. He was also an Eagle Scout, the recipient of Scouting's God and Country Award. He graduated from United States Military Academy in 1963. While there he was an all around athlete, quarterbacking

the Army Football Team and playing baseball and basketball. Academically he was consistently in the top 25% of his class and would be appointed to lead the Corps of cadets as First Captain, the highest ranking senior cadet at the Academy. He was also the recipient of the Knox Award, presented to the graduating senior cadet with the highest rating for military efficiency. Upon graduating, he began his 22 years as an officer in the Army and serving his country proudly.

He was an airborne ranger with two tours in Vietnam in 1965-1966 and 1968-1969, serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, his first tour and the 25th Infantry Division during his second. He received two purple hearts, 3 bronze stars, and 2 silver stars. Dick switched gears in 1972 and became a physician, graduating in 1976 from Emory University School of Medicine,.



“Here is a newspaper article photo that I found of Dad. From left to right, Captain Dick Buckner, Captain Tom Blanda, and 1st Lt. Dick Eckert. The article was about former West Point football players in Vietnam. It states under the photo that they are relaxing at Bien Hoa Air Base. Dad was in command of a weapons platoon, just getting back from being wounded. Blanda and Buckner are battery artillery commanders.”

Provided by David Eckert, Dick's son.

(continued...)



He would retire from the army in 1985 at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia with a rank of Colonel. Upon his retirement from the military he specialized in pediatrics and emergency medicine. Dick started working at University Hospital in Augusta as the Director of the Emergency Room until 2007.

One of his finest accomplishments was starting the first Pediatric Emergency Department in the Augusta area and redesigning the Emergency Department at the University. Duty, Honor, Country: Dick took that motto to his heart the day he entered the United States Military Academy. He lived by it until the day he died.

But his story can best be told through the many people he touched in his life and the memories they all have of him doing his duties as a soldier, a doctor, a father, a husband, a son, a brother....as a true leader among us all. He always led by example even to the end. When the going gets tough, the tough gets going. He was a true leader in any endeavour he followed and a man with true virtues. He was sincere and generous, and he inspired the admiration of all who knew him. Surviving are his loving wife of 42 years, Jane (Rogers); 2 sons; David H. Eckert (Angela) of Melbourne, Australia; Dr. Michael B. Eckert (Helen) of Evans, Georgia; 4 daughters; Mrs. Carolyn E. Rodriguez (Juan) of Martinez, Georgia; Mrs. Amanda S. Schneider (Russell) of Evans, Georgia; Mrs. Megan M. Onate (Tony) of Evans, Georgia; Mrs. Mary-Kathryn M. Espinoza (Gabriel) of Grovetown, Georgia; 31 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his three sisters; Dr. Jayne Coover (Clark) of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania; Mrs. Mildred E. Norris (Jerry) of Cheyenne, Wyoming and Mrs. Beverly E. Bishop of Dillsburg, Pennsylvania.



Dick sharing C-Rats with kids, Vietnam.

And so it is, for after death comes only peace and happiness. And now it is for us, whom he loved so much and spoke about so often, not to mar his happiness by too much sadness, for most surely he is watching over all us for his dying has awakened eternal life for him where hopefully we may all see him again.

Dick epitomized the true essence of a gentleman, a husband, a father, a patriot and above all a man. He shall be missed by those lives he touched. And as his course on earth has ended it may truly be said of Dick: *"Well done, be thou at peace."* Should friends desire, the family suggest contributions in memory of Dr. Richard E. Eckert may be sent to the Mayo Clinic Lung Transplant Team, 4500 San Pablo Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32224.

Please sign the guestbook and send condolences at www.plattsfuneralhome.com Platts Funeral Home, 337 North Belair Road Evans Georgia 30809. 706-860-6166. Sign the guestbook at AugustaChronicle.com

[A letter from LTC Roy Lombardo to the Eckert family]

Dear Jane and family,

I am writing to extend my and Carol's condolences, as well as those of the Bravo Bull veterans to you and your family at this time of grief. May God grant you and yours peace and acceptance.

Dick was a Rifle Platoon Leader in my company on Okinawa and when we deployed to Vietnam in May 1965. He was the most erudite officer in the company and used his intellect to its best advantage. Because of his athletic background at USMA, he was selected to be the Captain of the Brigade football team, which challenged his time as Platoon Leader. He led the team to victory against the Marine opponents and saw that his platoon was ready for every challenge.

He was wounded in June of 1965 but healed quickly and returned to duty with a vengeance. Because of his exceptional record in school, he was programmed to attain a Master's. This higher education was set aside when he was accepted into the Medical Program, where he made his major mark in the military. His medical skill positively affected thousands of patients.

The Bravo Bulls have made a donation to the Brigade Education Program in his name and a donated tree will be planted in Israel, as well. He will be sorely missed but remembered with fondness as one of the original members of the Bravo Bulls. We elect not to be overwhelmed by his loss but to give thanks that such a man lived among us and was our friend and comrade.

Sincerely,

BDQ Roy



~ THE HILL OF PURPLE HEARTS ~

by **Bill Nicholls**
A/2/503d



Bill Nicholls

After Hill 1338 on June 22, 1967, "The Hill of Purple Hearts," with 82 KIA, 34 WIA, I was astounded that I survived. I was scheduled for R&R to Hawaii on June 28 to meet my high school sweetheart, Dale, and sister Lyn. In the past, when we had casualties, R&R was postponed until troop strength was increased. So I was okay with that as I did not think I could go and be "normal." I was not sure what normal was at that particular time as I was reassembling my emotions.

First Sgt. Mike Deeb said "*Sgt. Nicholls, you're going.*" It will take a couple of weeks for the replacements to come in. As I prepared, I wondered if I could pull this off. On June 28, I left Saigon for Hawaii and spent the entire time trying to get my state of mind to the level of where I could be socially acceptable. By the time I landed, I felt I had accomplished the mission.

My sweetheart and sister met me and off we went to the hotel. I hardly spoke for the first twenty minutes. Finally, I "bitch slapped" myself and snapped out of it. At the hotel I had a surprise - my parents! They had read about June 22 in the New York paper, which included my interview by an UPI reporter. Not until I returned home at the end of my tour did they tell me that they went to Hawaii because they thought it might be the last time they would ever see me alive.

I actually began to relax. After all, enough Mai Tai's will even bring a bull elephant to his knees. On my third day, having lunch poolside, I spotted **General Westmoreland** with his family. I contemplated going over and thanking him for coming up to Dak To on June

23 to speak to the survivors of A Company. I decided it was not a good idea as we were both trying to put some distance between the Nam and us. As I was leaving, I whipped a sharp salute and "*Airborne Sir*" which he acknowledged.



General Westmoreland at Dak To

Before I knew it, I was on my way back to Saigon and back at Dak To with the company at the laager site. After the first day of humping, I was gripped with total dismay. It was like humping with a herd of water buffalo. I remember my first couple of weeks as an FNG ...80 pounds of gear in 100-degree heat with matching humidity. But this was different; the whole company was green except for about 10 vets. What made matters more intense is that we were operating about 2-3 clicks from the June 22 location where we ran into a reinforced Bn. of NVA, estimated at 600-800 men. These FNG's represented the cream of the crop, they were Airborne.

Nevertheless, there was no doubt in my mind that if we had a repeat of June 22 with this group, there would be no survivors.

On day two, it was worse. Some of the guys were dumping gear so they would not have to hump it up and down the mountains. After six months of surviving, I believed you are not "dialed in" until your first "baptism of blood."



Joe Gray

Toward the end of the day, I realized we needed vets up in front leading this group to even have a chance of making it out alive. Had I lost my mind? I am thinking permanent point squad! Volunteering to jump out of planes is one thing, but this? My mind raced...could I even find four guys who would pull point every day in the NVA-rich Central Highlands? So, it was time for my sanity check.

(continued...)





Larry Golf through the barrel of his M79.

At the end of the day at our laager site, I went on my mission. There were about 10 survivors from June 22, with the company – if that. My first contact was with **Joe Gray**. He said, “*count me in.*” Next contact was **Wambi Cook** – again, “*count me in.*” Then, **Les Fuller** – same thing.



Wambi Cook

None of these guys blinked an eye at the idea, just a cool confident, “*I’m in.*” These guys all started with me in February. Although I was not in their platoon, having been on close to 75 ambushes, I was familiar with their abilities and confidence. After all, they had survived five months and were well seasoned.

Now, we needed M79 support. The only problem is we did not have any M79 vets. So I approached **Larry Golf (aka Babyson)**. Larry looked to be about 16 years old, but was confident and ready to deal with adversity. No surprise, after all, he was Airborne.

Capt. Dave Milton had been seriously wounded just before I returned from R&R. He was replaced with **Capt. Ken Smith**, whom I did not know. I approached him and this is how it went down. “*Sir, I am Sgt. Nicholls. I have a proposal for you. I have four men and myself who will pull permanent point squad.*” His reply would be indicative of the grave nature of our position. He said, “*Sgt. Nicholls, let me make one thing perfectly clear. If you get pinned down and we can’t reach you, I will call artillery in on your location.*” My reply... “*Sir, with all due respect, I have been Company Forward Observer for five months and as long as I am still breathing, before you can reach for your handset, I will have the rounds on the way as that is my MO.*” Then, as if that wasn’t enough, I turned and said... “*And one more thing. If my men are blazing the trail every day, I want them inside the perimeter every night.*” Capt. Smith agreed, and we had a deal.

(continued...)





Les Fuller

The next day we started. We would start out twenty to thirty minutes before the rest of the company. From the start we were in locked step. We all realized we increased our odds by at least 75% of having direct enemy contact. We realized we were fodder and accepted the challenge.

Thirty-nine years later, I would hook up with Joe, Wambi and Les at the Fort Bragg reunion. I had been in contact with Joe a few months before the reunion. I spotted Joe and walked up to greet him. Standing beside Joe were Wambi and Les. Joe said, "you remember Wambi and Les, they were in our unit." Thinking Joe was referring to the Company, I asked "what platoon were you in?" They all looked at me perplexed and Joe said, "they were in Recon Squad with us." Words cannot describe the mix of emotions that raced through my head. In a little over four months of being with these guys 24/7, at best I can only remember four days. So many times they have told me of events, but nothing registers. I once asked them "Did I screw up or embarrass myself or anyone else?" They all said "no." (I really like these guys).

Of the original five, we all made it out alive. We did have one KIA and one WIA.

I still have no memories of that time. Not only did I become a master of putting my emotions on lock-down; I did the same with my memories. Getting together

with these guys is special, especially at reunions. Reunions are a comfort zone for us that can't be explained.

After all these years, I am so full of gratitude and pride to be a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade. Considering that we were an all volunteer Airborne unit, it just doesn't get any better than that - AIRBORNE!

"Nothing is as strong as the heart of a volunteer."

LTC Jimmy Doolittle
WWII

"I don't mind being called tough, because in this racket, it's the tough guys who lead the survivors."

Gen. Curtis LeMay
USAF



This more recent photograph is of Bill and his wife Judy in front of his favorite WWII Fighter, the P47 Thunderbolt; of course, he still has an affinity for the "Skyraider."

A SAD OLD GIRL.
This Navy A-1 Skyraider is on display in Saigon (HCM) at the Vietnamese War Museum.



REMEMBERING JOHN WILLS A BRAVO BULL

by Larry Paladino
B/2/503d, '64-'66



When John Wills had part of his esophagus removed due to cancer a year or so ago he seemed a little down. He was weak, but still climbed into his pickup truck to drive himself to the V.A. Hospital in Reno, Nevada. Months later, doctors said the cancer wasn't completely removed and he'd

need to undergo chemotherapy treatments and his survival rate was 20 percent.

"Hey, it could be zero per cent," he said one day over the phone. "Twenty per cent. Hey, that means I could be OK."

John was a very positive guy, a very laid-back kind of guy, with the demeanor of a California surfer with a heavy dose of cynicism about lots of things. He was determined to beat cancer and the countless other afflictions that ravaged his 6-foot-4 frame, everything from diabetes to emphysema. That damned Agent Orange.

He struggled with his ailments for years, still managing to do many of the things he enjoyed, like fishing. But even such a mountain of a man, as his former company commander on Okinawa and Vietnam, Roy Lombardo, called him, couldn't fight off so many physical enemies. He died May 4 at Renown Hospital in Reno, with his daughter, Sara, at his bedside, along with her friend Jeff, John's longtime friend Bob Beetle, and me, whose friendship with him began in Jump School, continued on the ship to Okinawa, to M-60 machine gun crews in the weapons squad of the 2nd Platoon of Company B of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry of the new 173d Airborne Brigade.

We all, of course, went to Vietnam with the rest of the brigade on May 5, 1965, and later, John and I even went to Hong Kong on R&R at the same time. I was told John died a day before the 45th anniversary of his Vietnam deployment, Sara said, "He would have wanted his own day, anyway."

Wills' parents, Jack and Ann, moved from Port Huron, Michigan, to Arizona when John was 2 or 3. When John left Vietnam he spent much of his time in California and eventually moved to Truckee, California, outside Reno,

where he took care of an ailing senior, Ray Haas, until Haas' death. John moved to a Reno apartment and began working towards getting the disability compensation he deserved from the V.A. It was a struggle, as it is with many ex-GIs, but he finally got his 100 percent.

"Now I can start doing a few things I've always wanted to do," he said.

And his first big purchase was a big-screen TV. Next came the "sleep number" bed he so long desired. But his diseases didn't allow

for him to continue to finally reward himself with more things, including the souvenir 173d M-16 he saw advertised in the 173d Association newsletter. John had an off-the-wall sense of humor and liked cartoons like 'The Far Side.' He once had a softball team nicknamed, "The Vermin."

On Okinawa and in Vietnam, John, or 'Wills' and we called him, was a tall, skinny, lanky guy, probably the tallest among the Bravo Bulls of B/2/503. After the Army, though, he put on a lot of weight and grew a beard, making him look like the proverbial veteran biker guy. But he really was too much of an individualist to fit into any kind of mold. Maybe he inherited that individualism from his grandfather, C. Harold Wills (1878-1940), who founded the Wills Automobile Company and eventually sold out to Ford Motor Co. He was Henry Ford's draftsman in 1902 and is credited with designing many engineering components for the Model T. When Ford Motor Co. was organized in 1903, John's grandfather was its chief designer and metallurgist and even designed the Ford script logo which still is in use today. He was president of the company in those early days.



Sky Soldier John Wills

(continued....)





John in Vietnam, 1965.

In 1919, John's grandfather became restless (as John often was) and wanted to update the Model T. But Henry Ford refused and Wills decided, with \$1.5 million in severance pay, to leave the company and build his own cars in Marysville, Michigan. In 1921 the C.H. Wills Co. produced its first overhead-cam V-8, the Wills-Sainte Claire.

To prove the quality, C. Harold Wills made a record run from Detroit to New York City, 689 miles in 20 hours, 26 minutes. Poor national economy, however, left the company \$8 million in debt in 1922. It reorganized, but finally went out of business November 23, 1926, and Wills joined Chrysler Corp. as a metallurgical consultant.

John pined over what might have been, but never really seemed to care too much that he didn't inherit a fortune as all the family might have under the right circumstances.

John was married for 10 years to the former Susan Whitaker and they had two daughters, Sara (Polzine) and Heather. Sara is an emergency room nurse in Redding, California, and Heather is manager of a Super Cuts salon and lives in Studio City, California. John also had a daughter, Fantasia, with former girlfriend Jill Stensland. Fantasia lives in Sacramento. John's sister, Mary, owns

a kaleidoscope store in Jerome, Arizona. His brother, Dan, is a battalion fire chief in Sedona, California, and his other brother, Mark, is a refrigeration company supervisor in Phoenix. His brother Mark earned a Silver Star and Combat Medics Badge while with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam.

John Wills has two grandchildren, Courtney Mitchell and Justin Werner.

John earned a Purple Heart, Combat Infantrymen's Badge, and various other medals while serving with the elite 173d. He just threw them all in a drawer and never was one to spout off about such things. He did attend a few 173d reunions, though, including the one in Reno in 2003, one in Santa Rosa, California, and a B Company reunion in Palm Springs, California. John was a life member of the Purple Heart Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, and a member of E Clampus Vitus Monterey-Viejo chapter.

John Wills, a Sky Soldier and a good man was buried with full military honors at Memorial Cemetery in Fernley, Nevada on May 14, 2010. John, it was my honor to have known you as my friend and as my brother.



Good buddy **Dave Glick, B/2/503**, sent in this clipping from a Long Island newspaper. We asked our brothers to share their thoughts about it. Ed

Overcoming Shame

"What I long to forget, but cannot, is the vilification of those that served. What I long to forget, but cannot, was the media desire to promote this vilification. What I long to forget, but cannot, is being ashamed to say I was a Vietnam vet. What I find ironic is that it took another war for the American people to finally recognize the contribution its service people give to them. What I find ironic is the American people finally recognize what the Vietnam vet sacrificed, not in Vietnam, but here at home....Our dignity. What I found, 40 years later, was the courage to display my service medals for my duty in Vietnam. What I hope is that my fellow Vietnam vets can do the same."



"When I read that, chills came over me. I thought I was the only one who thought that. I've never read anything that so clearly describes my feelings of that period of my life. If I didn't know better, I would think I wrote it. Just reading it makes me a little emotional."

Wayne Bowers, A/2/503d

"When I processed through Camp Alpha in '66 and boarded a bus to take me to Camp Zinn with the 173d, I noted the bus had steel grating welded over the windows to prevent grenades from being tossed inside. When I came back to the World in early '67 and left Travis AFB, I left in a similar bus, except this time the grating was to prevent bottles and rocks from being tossed in by protesters. It didn't take a returning Vet long to know the best course was to remain silent on their service. Interesting, that today, well over ten million claim to have served in-country, when the real figure is 2.7 million with another 700,000 having served off shore. This is more than the 9 million that served in all branches everywhere during the war. Go figure."

Jerry Hassler, HHC/Recon/2/503d

"Hand Salute to you. There is no shame connected to Honorable Service to your country. Some are called to serve in harms way, some are not. The real shame should be placed squarely on the shoulders of those who did not "SERVE," they are the ones who should hide, and be "ASHAMED". For those who scorned our Brothers in Arms they will never know truly the value of Patriotism, Camaraderie, and what the Star Spangled Banner stands for."

Steve Goodman, B/2/503d

"I spent 45 years hiding from VN. When asked, I could say I was there, but it was only words. I agree with our the author of the clipping about the ironies of history. What I find really ironic is that, although the American people recognize us and what we've done, none of it serves to loosen up the VA and the US government to properly compensate us. To be a combat soldier all we need do is sign up. To get VA compensation for disabilities, we must prove we were in, were there, and that something happened to us, etc. Not a new process for the govt. The Indian People of this continent can give up millions of acres of their homeland and all of their culture by the signatures of three drunken illiterate "chiefs," but can only regain it by proving their lineage back seven generations. Even Pope John Paul's apology, though sincere, was of little help. Hecetu welo, Howa."

Russ Webb, HHC/2/503d

"I had shame, not at first. But it came soon enough. I remember being told at the replacement center, 'Don't wear your Dress uniform in the city' (Oakland Cal), but that's all I had to wear. My personal gear hadn't caught up to me yet. On the bus ride over the Oak/Sanfran bridge a black guy gets in my face and says 'Vietnam?' Yes. 'So, your just a pretty Blue eyed Baby killer!' I FUBAR'ed his ass & the bus driver put me off the bus in the middle of the Bridge. A month later, sitting in a living room talking with my date's dad as she finished getting ready for our date, he says, 'What do you do for a living?' Typical father question. I'm a Carpenter! 'How long have you done that?' Again, typical! 'About a month. 'What did you do before that?' I was a Paratrooper! The color drained from his face! 'Vietnam?' Yes. He stood up walked to the front door opened it and said. 'Get out of my home and don't come near my daughter again!' What a shame cause she was 'HOT.' Yeah, I learned real quick. When to let it known. Saved my ass a lot of times as would be opponents found out I was a Nam 'Crazy!'"

Butch Clark, HHC/2/503d





"I guess that must make me unique in a way. I NEVER denied or hid the fact that I was a Vietnam Vet, hell, I proudly boasted about it. Ashamed, hell NO, never was and never will be. In my youthful days after Vietnam I cheerfully and willingly announced myself as a Vietnam Vet. Everyone I knew was aware of this and some of my peers from high school even joined up after I returned from Nam and spoke of it. I made a special trip to Ann Arbor, MI during the McGovern campaign to announce my complete disgust with him as a Vietnam Vet. If it were not for the news media with Cronkite leading the way the public would have realized that we were winning the war and perhaps would have been more likely to appreciate the returning veterans.

Terry "Woody" Davis, A/2/503d

"I know I'm preaching to choir when I say my post Vietnam experience was very similar to what is described in this article. Here is my story: I broke my foot on a parachute jump on active duty and x-rays did not reveal the hairline fracture. I was therefore treated as if it was a sprain. Since it did not heal properly the fracture has always given me trouble when standing for long periods, long walks, or running. About one year after my discharge my then father-in-law (an MP in the 101st during WW II) convinced me I should file a claim with the VA. What a joke that was, they denied my claim and sent me away. I felt that if valid claims are treated this way, the VA would be non-responsive and I therefore failed to appeal even if I had known I could. My VA claim along with the way many in our country treated returning Vietnam veterans allowed me to perceive our country and government as not very appreciative of my RA enlistment. I felt my duty was to shut up and appreciate I was still alive. I kept quiet about my service – not telling or talking about it. A few

years ago I was returning from a Vet Center with a friend who was in the Big Red One. We stopped at Sizzlers on the way home to have dinner. I was wearing a ball cap with a 173d patch on the front of it. While eating, a small boy about 9 or 10 years approached me from behind and said 'thank you for your service.' It caught me off guard and took me a moment to grasp what he had said. No one had ever said that to me before. I choked, held back tears and said thank you. It seems since that date my perception and treatment has changed. I had refiled my claim with the VA adding exposure to Agent Orange and other service connected disabilities. I was not told to appeal because I didn't have to as my claim was adjudicated favorably after a period of time. This along with mostly respectful treatment from the public has renewed my faith in our country's citizens and the VA. Over 35 years had passed, but was nonetheless, welcomed and appreciated by this former PFC."

James Jackson, B/2/503d

"Emotions ran really high in those years and I suspect that every Vietnam Vet had and still has a set of emotions that have influenced and continue to influence their lives. I never felt shame over my participation in the war. What I did feel and perhaps continue to feel was a lot of anger. Anger at the press, politicians, flag burners, those who chose to go to Canada, and those few among our ranks who failed to stand strong. When I was a commander at Fort Campbell well before the war ended, a young captain had the audacity to tell me that he felt really lucky that he had escaped the stigma of the war by not having to go. It was his opinion that the future leaders in the Army would be those who did not serve in Vietnam. I knew that attitude existed but did not give it much thought until it hit me in the face. No, I never felt shame, just a lot of anger."

Ralph Southard, A/2/503d

"I am now and always was a proud Vietnam Vet. I let everyone know that I served with one of the best units in the whole Army and was proud to do it. My son grew up honoring all the Vets and I even took him to Washington DC to show him the Wall so he would understand the sacrifices that were made so we could continue to live our lives free here at home. I feel very sorry for this man."

Frank Dukes, A/2/503d

(continued....)



"I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die-Rag"

Country Joe McDonald and the Fish, 1965

Well, Come On All Of You, Big Strong Men,
Uncle Sam Needs Your Help Again.
He's Got Himself In A Terrible Jam
Way Down Yonder In Vietnam
So Put Down Your Books And Pick Up A Gun,
We're Gonna Have A Whole Lotta Fun.

And It's One, Two, Three,
What Are We Fighting For?
Don't Ask Me, I Don't Give A Damn,
Next Stop Is Vietnam;
And It's Five, Six, Seven,
Open Up The Pearly Gates,
Well There Ain't No Time To Wonder Why,
Whoopee! We're All Gonna Die.

Come On Wall Street, Don't Be Slow,
Why Man, This Is War Au-Go-Go
There's Plenty Good Money To Be Made
By Supplying The Army With The Tools Of Its Trade,
But Just Hope And Pray That If They Drop The Bomb,
They Drop It On The Viet Cong.

And It's One, Two, Three,
What Are We Fighting For ?
Don't Ask Me, I Don't Give A Damn,
Next Stop Is Vietnam.
And It's Five, Six, Seven,
Open Up The Pearly Gates,
Well There Ain't No Time To Wonder Why
Whoopee! We're All Gonna Die.

Well, Come On Generals, Let's Move Fast;
Your Big Chance Has Come At Last.
Now You Can Go Out And Get Those Reds
'Cause The Only Good Commie Is The One That's Dead
And You Know That Peace Can Only Be Won
When We've Blown 'Em All To Kingdom Come.

And It's One, Two, Three,
What Are We Fighting For?
Don't Ask Me, I Don't Give A Damn,
Next Stop Is Vietnam;
And It's Five, Six, Seven,
Open Up The Pearly Gates,
Well There Ain't No Time To Wonder Why
Whoopie! We're All Gonna Die.

Come On Mothers Throughout The Land,
Pack Your Boys Off To Vietnam.
Come On Fathers, And Don't Hesitate
To Send Your Sons Off Before It's Too Late.
And You Can Be The First Ones On Your Block
To Have Your Boy Come Home In A Box.

And It's One, Two, Three
What Are We Fighting For?
Don't Ask Me, I Don't Give A Damn,
Next Stop Is Vietnam.
And It's Five, Six, Seven,
Open Up The Pearly Gates,
Well There Ain't No Time To Wonder Why,
Whoopie! We're All Gonna Die.

"I have to say honestly that I have never been ashamed of being a Veteran....and was a veteran only because of Vietnam; otherwise there would have been no need for me to have gone in. Unlike many others, I never hid that fact, but thousands of other VN Vets as well hid or was 'ashamed' of it. As many (almost all?) other VN Veterans, I too, never talked about what I did, saw, or heard about in the War, especially to my children who still have no idea what I did, other than just that they know I was there. For others, if they knew I was there, my only comment was...and still is today... 'ANY WAR IS HELL....BUT COMBAT IS A REAL MF' (fully spelled out and said aloud) to my non Veteran contemporaries that have asked me. I am (and not just lately, but from day one) very proud that my father served in WWII and that I also served during my 'time'... and that I did not use a deferment which I could have(I was 'the only son, of an only son' and therefore was not required to serve in the military, or at the very least, not in a combat zone) while many of my college and farmer (mid-west native of a small farming town) friends and classmates did. But never did I try to hide the fact that I not only served, but that I served in a war because I was sent. Did/Do I like war? HELL NO. But I also know that sometimes, wars are necessary and needed. Today (as then) there are those that feel if we never went to war, there would be no war....LOL....that all we have to do is to show everyone kindness, love, give them money and other help to improve their lives, and teach them how to live better and for us to become their friend, are sooooo very wrong. Before 9-11 we did nothing to the ones that attacked us...indeed man, if not every one of them, had lived in America, was schooled in America, and knew of all the benefits of being 'free' with all the advantages being an American can bring, i.e. good jobs, money, schools, plenty of food, etc. And yet they killed over 3000 other CIVILIAN people, many that were not even Americans, that had never done anything to them....what is it that the 'never go to war' people do not get about being nice does not work with everyone??? Sometimes the more educated the less common/street sense and 'real life' knowledge a person has, it seems like. I am sorry if I have gotten off subject somewhat, but the very word "ashamed" rubs me the wrong way, although I knew there are many that were and some that still feel that way. I am not, nor was I ever, ashamed of fighting for my own life or the lives of those great men beside me. The war was NOT my idea...hell like about everybody else, I was not old enough to vote or even drink a beer.... and so I never felt that I had anything to be ashamed about, I only felt that I had served with pride in myself and in the unit I was in... the 173d.

(continued...)



"I think that a guy really has to view this question on a personal basis. If you did something that you're ashamed of then your own conscience will condemn you. If you did what you had to for survival and the survival of your Brothers in battle, then you did what was expected of you. If you took life when you didn't have to then it may be argued that you have something to be ashamed of. I'm not ashamed of anything I did in Vietnam...well, there was that time I accidentally discharged a weapon. I believed I was crusading for the little brown people. I felt ashamed when I heard about and then read about My Lai. I felt ashamed when I read the diary of Dang Thuy Tram (Last Night I Dreamed Of Peace). If one has the courage to dash into a phone booth, take off the Super Patriot suit for a moment and read the accounts written by the Viet Cong and NVA Veterans, one may have a clearer perspective of the results of our collective good intentions. As a good friend of mine once said,"We were all victims in that war." Victims of what? I say victims of misuse. Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, McNamara and Westmorland; they have something to be ashamed of and to answer for, but they never will. I am frustrated and angry that our leaders are free from having to atone for their mistakes. Always, when one is spending someone else's money or life one is less careful in the accounting. What we got out of it is knowing that we showed up when we were called and did our job. Like the grunts at Normandy and Pelelue and all the other bloody places, we have nothing to be ashamed of. We are the "ancient sacrifice" and we stand tall in history."

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d

"Happy Tuesday and Thanks. A few days ago, there was picture essay and article about the 35th anniversary of the ending of the Vietnam War on the CNN web page. I had thought that things had changed, but it was the same negative pictures and read outs. All things considered, we are fortunate...not to be crazy. Welcome home. Peace."

Peter Ludlow, N/75 Rangers

"I was never ashamed. Held my head high, challenged those that spoke against our service, and never ever forgot who we were and what we did. Being a army brat didn't hurt either. My favorite expression for the media and those who protested VietNam was (Those Bastards Don't Have a Clue)! The real Life Lesson is our parents always knew our fight was justified because of what they learned from WWII and Korea. For that I can thank my parents. They were the ones who thanked me and never let me forget how proud they were of my brother and I. The article was great, but I never felt the shame that some may have felt."

Dave Griffin, HHC/2/503d

"What I do know is that for many years I have had this feeling in my gut to keep these thoughts to one's self. I have connected with many vets who shared the same feeling. We have had mutual love and respect for each other over the years. After returning from VN, I had one friend who gave me shelter and another who protected me from legal harm, both were in a reserve unit that I attended meetings at (even though I was not part of the unit). It gave me a sense of having a safe haven. I have encountered people who pretended to be VNV's, ya'll know that you can spot a fake a mile away. You can only imagine that I was sick to my stomach knowing that these SOB's existed. How many of my friends, whom I cannot even remember their names, lost life and limb in the bush. I had never revealed what some of these feelings were and still are. Whoever wrote the article has said a lot with a few words, but the truth of being out there will probably follow a number of us to the grave. I would like to display what medals I have but I still feel incomplete. I am proud that I served with these men of distinction, but only feel safe while in their midst."

Harry Cleland, B/2/503d



(continued...)



"I know how he feels. We were the only ones who never received a proper welcome home. Instead we were spit at, cursed at, and called baby killers. We were forgotten so quickly when we came home. I am very proud to be a Vietnam veteran. If not for this country then for the guys I served with. The shame of it all now is that we can't even get a proper burial when one of us dies. We get Taps played from a boom box, or a bugler holding a trumpet with a recorder inside. There is no firing party anymore, and the soldiers folding the flag don't know if they are to start folding from the stars or the stripes. I proudly display my Vietnam medals and hope everyone else will. My 173rd pin stays on my lapel. I hope everyone feels like we are proud of what we did."

Dennis Paul, A/2/503d

"I feel sorry for the person who wrote this piece. Never once have I been ashamed of my service in Vietnam or anything I did while I served there. I volunteered to serve in Vietnam as did my brother (Bob Gore, B/2/503rd) and my father (USAF). I have always been proud to have served with some very special people. I am proud of the unit I served with (E/2/503rd) and the Army as a whole. During the time I was there I fought for the guy next to me and he did the same for me. We were given a job to do and we did the best we could. I do not ever remember anyone giving up on the task at hand. We may not have always agreed with what was asked but we performed to the best of our ability. If asked would I do it all over again knowing what I know now, the answer would be "yes". I have no regrets for my time in the Army or for my time in Vietnam."

Jim "Doc" Gore, E/2/503d

"I never was ashamed to tell people I was in Vietnam or was a paratrooper. I never talked much about it unless it was with another grunt and usually drinking, which I did too much of the first year back. My kids knew who I was with because my daughter got me a book about the 173d at Dak To for Christmas about 10 years ago. I shared that feeling you (Smitty) expressed about news items when they talked about someone killing or robbing and I always hoped it wasn't a VN vet or if it was the news didn't mention it. Always wondered why didn't they say it was a WWII or Korean vet if that was the case, just us."

Terry Boggs, E/HHC/3/503d

"Spot on. I am glad the kids today are welcomed back with open arms. The Air Force, Marine and Naval aviation personnel POWs received a well deserved recognition on their return. U.S. Army guys came back a plane load at a time to diffident country and families. That was damaging."

Tim Cloonan, Co. B (Med) and 2/503d

"He has so elegantly expressed the thoughts of so many of us that I am sure will be demonstrated on June 1, 2010 and the week following. There is hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't express their appreciation to me for having served my country, right or wrong, my country in the Vietnam war. When we were delivering to Saigon the body bags with our buddies and friends, filling them in unbelievable numbers, it was extremely difficult to not shed a tear and say a prayer for not only the fallen, but their kin at home."

Don Bliss, 173d Bde. Aviation

"This (the newspaper clipping) is so true, and should be put on a billboard. Thanks."

Ron "Woody" Woodley, A/2/503d



Vietnam veterans enter a hangar at Fort Campbell, Ky., during a ceremony welcoming them home Sunday, Aug. 16, 2009. Hundreds of veterans finally got the homecoming they never had when they returned from the Vietnam War decades ago. (AP Photo/Mark Humphrey)

"I have never felt shame; neglect yes, and for 35 years. It took six months in Dak To, and losing most of my friends to awaken this 19 year old to the realization that we were being used by corrupt politicians to fight a war they themselves would shed no blood in. The impact of digging into the side of a mountain for the second time in Dak To in almost the exact same spot, but with all new people around me was profound. The complete and total circle of life as a combat soldier became clear and frightening. The survival mode took over and the victory parade but a mere illusion. The 19 year old kid became a very old man in a nanosecond. My mission from that instant on was to protect the few people we had left and to get out in one piece."

Roger Dick, C/2/503d

(continued...)



"I was always proud to be a Vietnam Veteran. If someone tried to shame me I would shove my pride down his throat."

Jesse Salcedo, Recon/D/1/503d

"Shame? Hell no! Anger, disappointment? You bet. When the army kicked me out in 69 I was so mad I could not spit. However, I recognized that I had responsibilities and went to work. I kept track of Vietnam, but rarely said anything, except when someone would say 'He was a good kid but got screwed up in Vietnam.' This was usually someone making excuses for a drunk, junkie, criminal. My response was, 'if he came home from Vietnam screwed up, he went there screwed up. I know too many guys that saw way too much combat and they are good citizens.' Occasionally, people did not appreciate my candor. Remember, this is coming from a guy that kept ending up at Letterman Hospital in San Francisco of all places. I always wore my Class A uniform and no one ever, even puckered up at me. Must have been the spit shined boots.

Craig Ford, 1/503d

I have always been proud of my military service. Coming from a small southern town as a 19 year old I thought it was what a man should do for his country. I still feel that way today but also realize we are a dying breed. God bless those that are serving today because most of the citizens they protect are clueless of the price of freedom, or life without the freedoms we have in this country.

Dave Colbert, HHC/2/503d

*I can only provide the remark attributed to GEN Norman Schwarzkoff after the three day war with Iraq when he came home and said something like, "It's a great time to be a Soldier". Well, I'm an old Infantry Paratrooper and for the 20 years that I served on active duty and in the reserves, I was always proud and always noted that I was a retired Airborne Infantryman. I worked for 33 years at the University of Illinois at Chicago and William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, IL, with faculty who were not always congenial with current or former military. They knew who I was and I knew who they were. They didn't put me down nor did I put them down. We did our jobs and kept our distances. The United States has never been kind to its Soldiers. Our citizens do not realize the importance of having a strong and willing military. The worst mistake we have made is to have eliminated the draft and gone to the Volunteer Army. Today, no one cares. With a draft, there is care. We need to go back, re-establish the draft and see where our country stands today. Without the draft, we'll never know. **AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!!***

"RAGMAN" Robert A. Getz, 2/503d

"I do not think there is a one of us who were not in those shoes."

Jim Robinson, B/2/503d

"I think we all felt this way. After being called 'baby killers, murderers, drug addicts' and being told even a few years ago by our Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, that 'we didn't send our best and brightest to Vietnam,' how are we supposed to feel? Like returning heroes?"

Ed Privette, HHC/2/503d



WHO YA GONNA CALL?

RTO's. Like lawyers, not loved 'til you need one. Like walking around with a target on your back, carrying a 25 lb. prick and a 5 lb. extra battery? When you need artillery, who you gonna call? Not Ghostbusters, but your friendly, neighborhood RTO. Able to leap deep latrines in a single bound, faster than a speeding lambretta and disguised as a mild-mannered soldier due to no rank worth anything. Who else calls in Sit Reps and Puff the Magic Dragon and coordinates air strikes with proper smoke? Of course, there was that one time I didn't like the officer and told the Phantom 'red smoke' and the officer 'yellow smoke.' At least he got smoked! Can't always be perfect!

Proud to be an American RTO!

**Jerry Hassler
S-2/Recon/2/503d, '66-'67**

RTO's are great people....I stayed as far away from them as I could get!

Rev. Mike "Mac" McMillan, Sniper, 4/503d



The Super Jew

VINTAGE "SKY SOLDIER"

[Originally appeared in the Fall 1995, Vol. X No. 4 issue of *Sky Soldier* magazine and worth reprinting here].

~ In the Company of Heroes ~

At a recent Society gathering, I heard a Sky Soldier lament that we had so few heroes left. He mentioned **Charlie Morrison**, awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions with the Herd, as one recognized hero. He also mentioned **Dave Dolby**, also a CMH recipient, and then he stopped. I was dumbfounded.

I would submit that we daily walked with heroes in Vietnam. I am not talking just about **Father Watters** or **Carlos Lozada**, both of whom I had the distinct honor of knowing. Nor am I referring to heroes with multiple awards of the purple heart, DSC, Silver Star or Bronze Stars/ACM's with V devices. I am instead talking about every man in my company, and the other companies of the brigade, who daily faced the enemy. Our heroes went on ambush, walked point, manned mortars and artillery in exposed positions under enemy fire, carried supplies, flew helicopters, cleared mines, scouted and did LRRP work. Truly, we walked with heroes.

Every man who did his duty, in the face of the enemy, who daily woke up and accepted new challenges in a difficult situation, is a hero, whether formally recognized or not. In your heart of hearts, each of you know the fears and the doubts with which you were challenged, and the victories you won performing your daily assigned duties. Unlike some who declined or avoided service, you performed the duties you were assigned. Whether you admit it or not, you walked with heroes and are a hero.

Some will say that those who suffer after-effects of the war, whether immediate or delayed, are weak and not worthy of accolades accorded heroes. I believe that these people are wrong and that the City of Rochester's actions to award everyone a medal at the recent convention was appropriate. The fact that an individual succumbs to "survivor's guilt" or repressed memories of trauma and horror is not a character flaw. Those who turn to alcohol or drugs for relief need help, not condemnation. Those who are fortunate to have recovered both physically and mentally from the conflict need to help those who did not.

There are a few heroes left in our nation, and we are among them. By our service with the Herd, we have incurred an obligation to help our fellow Sky Soldiers, our heroes, particularly those in vulnerable conditions. How you fulfill this obligation is up to you. I hope that each of you will do your part -- become part of the solution -- in caring for our comrades in arms who are in need of your support.

Ken Smith, Col. (Ret)
CO, A/2/503d



Al Ginsburg and Jim Robinson

The above photo is of Al Ginsburg and myself. I'm the guy with the pipe. The photo was taken very early in '65 at Camp Zinn. I had not yet had a chance to round up a shoulder holster. However, I had my own 45 and still have it! I know it looks strange to have it attached to my belt rather than a "pistol belt" but it worked well.

I made the decision to never be without at least one firearm and my jerry-rigged outfit worked great until I got the shoulder holster.

Al was a classmate at of mine at OCS and somehow I got to Vietnam a few weeks before he did. He referred to himself as Al "The Super Jew" Ginsburg. Six Jewish soldiers started our OCS class and Al was the only one to make it through. That was the normal attrition rate in '64, unlike the later rates. I believe he became the Forward Observer for A company.

Jim Robinson
FO, B/2/503d

Q: *If you're going to make a parachute jump, at least how high should you be?*



A: Charley Weaver: *Three days of steady drinking should do it.*



Coalition of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans (CIAV) Update

by Dr. Scott Fairchild
Welcome Home Vets

I was honored to represent Welcome Home Vets, Inc. and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice (as a BRAIVE Fund recipient) at the annual CIAV Conference in Washington, DC.

<http://coalitionforveterans.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/The-FINAL-Program.pdf>

I followed up today with Bob Woodruff's staff (reporter, TBI, Iraq) after meeting with Lee Woodruff yesterday at the book-signing. When I return, we will work on a proposal to submit to the Woodruff Foundation to help fund our future Welcome Home Vet Florida Provider's (Lossen My Grip) and Military Family retreats. These retreats will restore and empower providers to become force multipliers as well as empower military families to better survive reintegration. Our first retreat for 65 participants will be held at the Canterbury Conference Center in Orlando in November.

What a full day starting off with Brigadier General Loree Sutton briefing us on all of the ongoing activities at the Dept. of Defense Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD, followed by some great solution focused work groups. Loree should soon pick up her second star and based on her accomplishments and her dedication, I firmly believe that she is destined to become the first psychiatrist and first female Surgeon General of the Army. We talked about the WHVets QEEG and brain retraining work we are doing and she reports that the national research data to date is very promising. She was very encouraging and pointed me in the direction of some additional grant resources.



BG Sutton

Then, last evening things only got better.....waaaay better.

Sebastian Junger, the New York Times Best Selling Author (*The Perfect Storm*) came out to do a reading and signing of his new book, *WAR*, just released yesterday. He started off the day on *Morning Joe* and

recorded with *NPR*. The book chronicles the lives of a platoon of men serving in the most intense combat area of the world in Afghanistan, where they experienced over 500 fire fights in a year.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126676276> (a 7 min listen).

For five separate intermittent months, Sebastian and his camera man were embedded with **Battle (B) Company of the 173d Airborne Brigade**, in the Korengal Valley, also known as Death Valley. 70% of the munitions expended in Afghanistan to date have been used in the Korengal Valley.

Before the unit 173d Airborne deployed to Afghanistan, I spoke with their very sensitive Commander. The same unit had just finished a tour in Iraq and were training up for their Afghanistan mission. Welcome Home Vets has sent them books in support of their mission.

In addition, we were amazingly blessed with the opportunity to see a sneak preview of *Restrepo* (named after their medic who was one of many who died there), a movie which had just won the 2010 Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Festival. The film is produced by National Geographic and will be released in select theaters beginning June 26th. The entire movie is real life combat footage narrated by the soldiers themselves. The pain, the loss, the intensity. He also interviewed them after they returned to Italy where the unit is based.

Sebastian and I spoke and shared some 173d Airborne stories. I will share his book and information with hundreds of 173d Airborne veterans who will be attending the reunion in Myrtle Beach, where I will be speaking on June 4th on PTSD and its impact on soldiers and their families.

I spoke with Sebastian about coming to Melbourne, sharing his combat reporter experiences, offering a book signing and supporting a FUND RAISER for Welcome Home Vets, Inc. where all the money raised can go back to Central Florida veterans. He was very excited about it and will speak with his publisher, after which we will set a date! Airborne!!



Sebastian and Doc Scott

(continued....)



Likely it will be after *Restrepo's* premier (Jun 26) and we may even get permission to show the movie. If we are allowed to show the movie, we will need to find the largest venue available. Give me some ideas.

Hold on, that's not all.....

I also was blessed with the opportunity to meet and speak with Paul Rieckhoff, President of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the largest organization supporting OEF/OIF Veterans.
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/10/29/paul.rieckhoff/index.html>.



Paul Rieckhoff and Doc Scott

He has the personal ear of the President on all matters pertaining to OEF/OIF veterans and drove the train for all of the recent advancements in veteran legislation. What a super trooper! Even got to give him a Welcome Home Vets Combat duck. He gave me an IAVA coin in return.

We discussed some strategies for more effectively utilizing not-for-profit's in the treatment of injured and traumatized veterans. The 90,000 troops returning from Iraq this summer will no doubt break an already stretched system. I'm told our Viera, Florida facility alone is registering over 200 new vets a day and waits for vet initial appointments and follow-ups are long. We are begging them to contract out some of the work. An amazing thing happened two weeks ago. We, at Welcome Home Vets, actually had three referrals from the VA for services. When we tracked down the source, we found that they were quietly told by the receptionists that Welcome Home Vets could help. Bless their hearts.

Also met with a bevy of other folks to include several Congressmen, the liaison to the Speaker of the House and an Attorney from Morrison and Foerster, who initiated the veteran's class action suit against the VA for

delay of claims; now a shameful 1,000,000 claims backlogged. The decision remains in appeal.

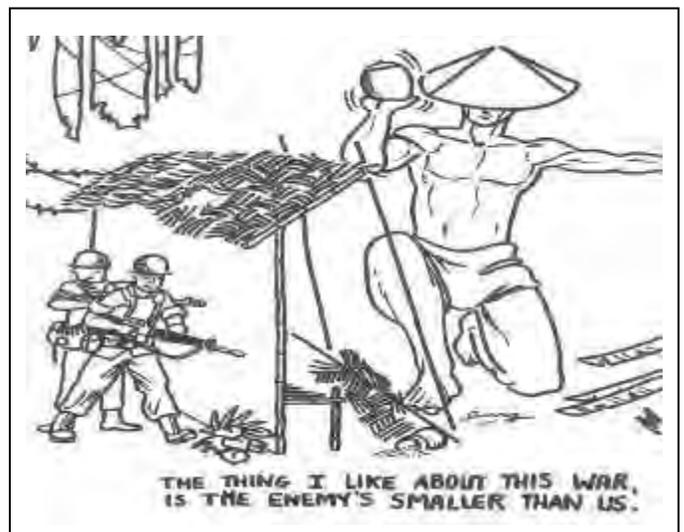
Perhaps most importantly, I met with a young sergeant (on medical hold pending his medical board), after he broke down as a panel member while attempting to share his combat experiences. He will be coming down from Fort Campbell, KY to see us and we will assist him with his medical board for the Army so he is fairly evaluated. A representative of the organization, Air Compassion for Veterans, who was sitting at our dinner table volunteered to fly him down for free. Taking care of soldiers, one at a time. Welcome Home.

***We are Welcome Home Vets,
We make a difference,
Veterans supporting veterans.
Our work has just begun.***

Thanks to each of you for your support.

Scott Fairchild
Doctor of Psychology
Welcome Home Vets, Inc.
1370 Bedford Drive
Melbourne, Florida 32940
321-253-8887

Note: Doc Scott is a retired LTC having served with the 82nd Airborne. If you will be attending the 173d reunion in North Myrtle Beach, SC on June 2 thru 6, you and your spouse/partner will not want to miss his series of PTSD and VA awareness sessions.



by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d



HOW HE BECAME A BRAVO BULL, WHAT A GREAT SOLDIER HE WAS, ZULU-ZULU, AND WHY HE WAS A CORPORAL FOR SO LONG

By Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d, '64-'66



Ruben in 2007, affectionately known as "Kenny Rogers"

In May, 1964, I was assigned to B Company 2/503 on Okinawa as the Weapons Platoon Sergeant. Bravo Company was located at Sukiran, apart from the rest of the Battalion, which was at Camp Kui. Shortly after my arrival I had to go to Battalion HQ for a briefing or something. As I walked past C Company's Quonset huts, there was a Buck Sgt. supervising a PFC who was fussing around getting his load-carrying gear together. Just then, a SFC came out of another Hut at the end of the street. He turned toward the Buck Sgt and shouted, *"God damn it Dimas! Can't you get that fucker to move any faster? He's already late!"* To which Sgt Dimas replied, *"What the fuck you want me to do, punch him in the mouth?"* Not exactly PC leadership, even in those days. But I liked the attitude shown.

A few months later Captain Lombardo called me into the orderly room and said that a Buck Sgt in C Company with a Weapons Platoon MOS had been busted to Corporal and transferred to Bravo Company. He asked me if I wanted him in the Weapons Platoon. I said *"What is his name?"* *"Dimas,"* said Lombardo. *"Hell yes! I'll take him."* I said. And that's how Ruben became a BULL!

Ruben soon proved to be very skillful with both the mortar section and recoilless rifle section responsibilities. He never was anything but a positive influence in the platoon. I believe his past problems in C Company were personality related more than anything.

When we deployed to Nam on 5 May 65, we had very little use for the 106MM recoilless rifles. So, the men of that section became like a "Do it all" squad. Dimas just wanted to know, *"What are we doing this time?"* They provided extra security for the Company CP group, carried extra ammo for the mortars, acted as a demolition squad when a clearing had to be made or we just wanted to blow-up something. They carried the rifle platoon's 90MM recoilless rifles when the situation called for that weapon on ops. They functioned as a regular rifle squad as necessary and ran ambush patrols in a regular rotation with the rifle platoon squads. Yes! Ruben could do it all. Probably their most trying responsibility was caring for and carrying that old back breaking 50 caliber machine gun and the ammo for it.

Fortunately, someone was able to convince Captain Lombardo that this was a better weapon for base camp defense than humping it through the jungle.

When the scrambled eggs rained down on ZULU ZULU on 16 Mar 66, and the fight started, Ruben and I were at the edge of the tree line, behind the Company CP, with our mortars. You who were there know how heavy the incoming was that morning. Ruben and I decided to go to the tree line behind us so we could have eye contact with the men on the mortars and still control the fire. Ruben had his entrenching tool with him and was actually scratching the hard dirt out from beneath his prone body to get as low as possible with all that lead going past us. I asked him to lend me the tool so that I could do the same. He looked at me as if to say *"Get your own fuckin' tool!"* But he did finally give it to me after he got about an inch lower.

Then a man from the CP group came running over to where we were and said *"Sgt. Schimpf, the CO wants you to go up to the 3rd Platoon CP and take over. They have several casualties, including the LT and some NCOs."* I thought, *"Oh shit! I don't want to go up there!"* I looked at Ruben and said, *"Come on. Let's go."* He said, *"He didn't say anything about me going up there, goddamn it! He said for you to go."* But he said it with a smile. And off we went, passing the wounded LT on our way to the 3rd Platoon CP.

When we got there, there were 4 or 5 men in the CP area with only one functioning M16 rifle between them and an M79 grenade launcher. Fortunately, I had a cleaning rod for the M16s and gave it to a Sp/4 (I think his name was Shorter) with instructions to try to get the rest of the rifles back in working order.

I had no idea where the rest of the platoon was except that Sp/4 Mitchell was on the left flank with his M60 machine gun. On our right flank was a 1st Platoon machine gun and that squad leader, SSGT Willie Boyd.

(continued....)



The location of the 3rd Platoon CP was in the center/rear of the platoon area, behind tall grass which extended about 40 yards to the tree line on that side of the LZ. There was a VC machine gun which opened fire whenever any of us at the CP had to move around. Luckily, the gunner kept firing high, but he was a pain in the ass! I tried to take him out with the M79, but had no luck.

Sp/4 George Bingham, one of the best athletes in the Company got pissed off, grabbed a hand grenade and said, "I'll get that son of a bitch!" He stood up, exposing himself to the fire and threw the grenade to the bottom of the tree where we thought the MG was. We did not receive anymore fire from that area.

Dimas had positioned himself at the far left of the CP area. There was a ravine or small gully to his left front. He came over to me and said that he heard VC voices in the gully and that he needed grenades to deal with them. We scrounged around and got 2 or 3 for him. Ruben disappeared back to my left and I heard the grenades explode over there. In a few minutes, Ruben came back with a big grin on his face and said, "They ain't talkin' no mo!"

When we got back to Camp Zinn I was getting ready to return to the States. Ruben had a few more months to go in Nam. One of the last things I told him was that he could expect to get his SGT stripes back soon. He said that he planned to re-up soon and that he hoped to get the promotion, also. I left before Ruben reenlisted.

Upon reenlisting, Ruben was given a 3 day pass to Saigon. He was still a Corporal, the promotion had not come through yet. One day while on that pass in Saigon, in a slightly inebriated state, Ruben was walking on Tu Do Street and felt the need to relieve his bladder. There were large potted plants along the curb line and Ruben decided to use one of them, discreetly, I'm sure, as a urinal. Sure enough, along comes a MP jeep with a Leg Lieutenant and his driver. The LT stopped the jeep when he saw Ruben and shouted at him, "Corporal, what are you doing over there?" Ruben's response?

What else? "Takin' a piss, sir. What the fuck does it look like I'm doin'?"

The DR (Disciplinary Report) from the MP LT was on the Company Commander's desk before Ruben returned to Camp Zinn. Ruben had to report to him as soon as he got back. The conversation went something like this:

CO: (Holding up a piece of paper) "Corporal, do you know what this is?"

Dimas: "Yes, sir. It's a DR, sir."

CO: (Holding up another piece of paper) "Corporal, do you know what this is?"

Dimas: "No, sir."



Front row L-R: Ed Kearney, Ruben Dimas, Jim Jackson, Mike Farrell, Phil Moulaison. Back row L-R: Jim Robinson, Jack Schimpf, Bryan Bowley, Joe Logan, Joel Trenkle (partially hidden), Dave Glick, "Ranger Roy" Lombardo, Mike Broderick, Harry Fruge.

CO: "This, Corporal, is a set of orders promoting you to Sgt., which I would gladly present to you with appropriate congratulations if I had not received that first piece of paper!" The CO then proceeded to tear up the promotion orders and dismissed Dimas.

That's why he was a Corporal for so long. And, there NEVER was a better one!

Ruben Dimas passed away on April 29, 2010.
A Sky Soldier died that day.

A Farewell Tribute to Ruben Dimas, Sr. **"Sky Soldier Elite"**

*"Hey" Ruben, Sky Soldier Elite,
 You've made your final jump, and landed on your feet.
 And now you'll walk those "streets of gold" with silver
 wings on your chest,
 a diamond in the rough, among the very best.*

*And as you walk those "streets of gold"
 with death no more to fear,
 you'll see old friends and "Bravo Bulls"
 as softly they draw near,
 With outstretched arms saluting you,
 and a smile on every face,
 guiding you gently to that final resting place.*

*It's adios for now, and rest well dear friend,
 until the great "reunion," never more to part again.*

From Ruben's old bunker buddies: Ken "Doc" Eastman,
 Roger "Tulip" Flowers, Jack Schimpf and
 James "Big Jim" Quick
 (and all Bravo Bulls, past and present)



**OUR MISSION -- FACILITATE THE
TRANSPORTATION OF SKY
SOLDIERS TO THE MEMORIAL
DEDICATION & SUPPORT THE
MOST MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE
POSSIBLE FOR OUR
SKY SOLDIERS!!**

By Terry Modglin, 4/503d

The **Country Inn and Suites**, 1720 Fountain Court, Columbus, GA 31904, will be the Rally Point for those members of the **2/503d** who wish to stay at the same hotel with their battalion buddies for the Dedication of the **173d National Memorial** at 10 a.m. June 1, 2010. The room rates are \$88. for single or double, and \$90. for a suite (of which there are just 5), plus tax. These rates are good for just the 31st of May and 1st of June. There is a big soccer tournament just before our contingent arrives and a smaller one just after so it is highly unlikely rooms will be available on these shoulder nights.

This is definitely a nice hotel, recently renovated. The 3d and 4th Battalions will be staying at hotels within the same zip code. There is no obligation for attendees to book rooms at any particular hotel. The Country Inn will provide free transportation to and back from the Memorial Dedication for guests booking 30 days in advance.



The hotel's phone number is **706-660-1880**. Their email is cx_clbs@countryinns.com If you call in the reservation, just indicate you are part of the **173d Airborne Group**. If you register through the Internet, go to <http://www.countryinns.com/hotels/gacolumb> and after you select your dates to stay, in finding

your rate you will see a link for "More Rates." Go there and put in the Promotional ID **173AIR**.

If this hotel is filled (as I expect it will be), we have other hotels in that area for more 2d Bat Sky Soldiers.

There will likely be a tour of Fort Benning on June 1, after the Dedication. Details will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.

In the interest of transparency, as I have indicated throughout, I am receiving no money whatsoever from



this initiative, but my travel planner colleague, Mark Zeller, is receiving 10% commission on the hotel room nights taken. We have already spent a lot of time on this and Mark will likely spend really significant time on this over the months ahead because it has so many moving parts. Believe me, the money will be hard-earned and will help offset some of his out-of-pocket expenses.

We are not part of the Memorial Foundation or the Association, but we have received the goodwill and cooperation of both. Mistakes made, if any, are ours alone....the *Transportation Memorial Dedication Group*.

If you have any questions, or guys with other battalions needing hotel information, please email me at Terry.Modglin@Gmail.com or call me at **202-270-3083**.

Airborne!

Terry Modglin, 4/503d

This notice appears in our newsletter as a courtesy to those working in support of the 173d National Memorial. Ed.





The 173d Memorial at Ft. Benning, GA.

The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial

The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial will be dedicated on June 1, near the new National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, Georgia. A Transportation Memorial Dedication Group, not affiliated with the Association or the Memorial Foundation, has established for May 31 and June 1 room blocks at 18 Columbus, Georgia area hotels, and designated seven of those hotels as unit Rally Points so that Sky Soldiers on this singular occasion can see their buddies with whom they served. Additionally, there is a bus the day after the Dedication from Columbus to the Annual Reunion (\$99) in North Myrtle Beach, and a tour of Fort Benning (\$25 -- limited to 100) an hour or so after the Dedication. All this is being done to facilitate attendance at the Dedication and enhance the experience. A microwebsite of the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau is up and running and will make it easier for Sky Soldiers to make hotel reservations - www.meetincolumbusga.com/173d/ Refer to the Accommodations link in order to find all the hotels with room blocks.

Please share this information with your Members, remembering that April 30 is a cutoff date for a number of the offers involved.

Please ask all Sky Soldiers and friends, when they register at the hotels, to indicate that they are in the "173d Airborne Brigade Transportation Group" so that they receive the correct room rate and we know who will be there from specific units.

Please address any questions to Terry Modglin, Volunteer Liaison to Sky Soldiers for the Transportation Memorial Dedication Group, at terry.modglin@gmail.com, or call 202-270-3083. Thank you.

Terry Modglin,
4/503d

SPECIAL COVERAGE OF THE DEDICATION

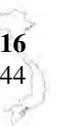
In the July issue of our newsletter will be special coverage, including photographs of the dedication of the memorial at Fort Benning. We'll also feature Mr. Mike Elliot, the artist behind the memorial.



It's not too late to make plans to attend the 173d Memorial Dedication
at Fort Benning, Georgia, June 1, 2010



Photos sent in by Craig Ford, 1/503d





OUR WWII 503rd PRCT GUESTS

A final note of thanks to our Sky Soldier brothers and friends of the 173d and 503rd for their contributions which made possible our inviting WWII veterans of the 503rd PRCT to this year's reunion in North Myrtle Beach. An accounting of the disbursement of funds follows this list of good people.

THE "AIRBORNE SPIRIT" IS ALIVE AND WELL!

Kevin Austin (173d)
Tim Austin (3/503)
Jim Bailey (2/503)
Gordon Baker (173d)
Jesse Beachman (4/503)
Dave Beal (2/503)
Bob Beemer (2/503)
Bill Berry (173d Eng.)
Gayle Bethea (2/503 spouse)
Jim Bethea (2/503)
Jerry Bethke (2/503)
Walter Bills (2/503)
Tom Blankenship (2/503)
Don Bliss (Caspers)
Pat Bowe (2/503)
Wayne Bowers (2/503)
Mike Broderick (2/503)
Bob Bruce (1/503)
Dave Canady (2/503)
Abel Candia (2/503)
Bob Carmichael (2/503)
Ed Carns (2/503)
Mike Carver (2/503)
Jimmy Castillo (2/503)
Chapter XXVII
John Chester (E/58 LRP)
Jim Chieco (2/503)
John Civitts (2/503)
Bob Clark (5th SF)
Butch Clark (2/503)
Harry Cleland (2/503)
Tim Cloonan (173d Med)
Bob Cockerill (173d)
Dave Colbert (2/503)
George Colson (2/503)
Wambi Cook (2/503)
Virgil Cooley (2/503)
Gene Counselman (1/503)
Buzz Cox (2/503)
Ken Cox (173d)

Larry Cox (2/503)
Gary Cucinitti (1/503)
Reed Cundiff (173d LRRP)
Gary Davidson (2/503)
Woody Davis (2/503)
George Dexter (2/503)
Matt DeZee (N75 Rangers)
Roger Dick (2/503)
Tom Dooley (2/503)
Jim Dresser (2/503)
Frank Dukes (2/503)
Mark Dunlap (2/503)
Ken Eastman (2/503)
Paul Epley (Bde PIO)
Tony Esposito (2/503)
Scott Fairchild (82nd Abn)
Paul Fisher (3/503)
FL Chapter (173d)
Bob Fleming (2/503)
Craig Ford (1/503)
Rick Fred (2/503)
Les Fuller (2/503)
A.B. Garcia (2/503)
Tony Geishauser (Cowboys)
Jim Gettel (2/503)
Dave Glick (2/503)
Steve Goodman (2/503)
Jim Gore (2/503)
Johnny Graham (2/503)
Gary Granade (E-Troop)
Joe Gray (2/503)
Jim Green (2/503)
B.F. Griffard (2/503)
Dave Griffin (2/503)
Mike Guthrie (2/503)
Steve Haber (2/503)
Eddie Hair (1/503)
Larry Hampton (1/503)
Tom Hanson (3/503)
Mike Hargadon (2/503)
Mike Harris (2/503)
Barry "Bear" Hart (2/503)
Jerry Hassler (2/503)
Jim Healy (2/503)
Robt. 'twin' Henriksen (N/CORangers)
Dennis Hill (1/503 & 3/503)
Wayne Hoitt (2/503)
Jeff Horne (173d)
Ken Kaplan (2/503)
Ed Kearney (2/503)

(continued...)



Bill Knapp (2/503)
Skip Kniley (3/319)
Gary Kozdron (1/503)
Joe Lamb (2/503)
Virgil Lamb (2/503)
John Leppelman (173d)
Dave Linkenhoker (2/503)
Joe Logan (2/503)
Roy Lombardo (2/503)
Bob "Luke" Lucas (2/503)
Art Martinez (2/503)
Frank Martinez (173d)
Mike McMillan (4/503)
Bill Metheny (4/503)
Dave Milton (2/503)
James Montague (2/503)
James Mullaney (503rd)
Rick Navarrete (2/503)
Butch Nery (173d)
Bill Nicholls (2/503)
Jerry Nissley (2/503)
Hal Nobles (3/503)
Dave Norman (2/503)
Ben Oakley (2/503)
Dale Olson (2/503)
Larry Paladino (2/503)
Ed Perkins (173d)
Marcus Powell (2/503)
Anonymous (2/503)
Ed Privette (2/503)
Court Prisk (3/319)
Gary Prisk (2/503)
Jim & Julie Quick (2/503)
Ken Redding (2/503)
Dan Reed (2/503)
Paul Reed (173d)
R.C. Reed (173d)
Bill Reynolds (2/503)
Jack Ribera (2/503)
Don Rice (2/503)
Floyd Riester (Bde HQ)
Jim Robinson (2/503)
Lee Robinson (2/503)
Don Rockholt (2/503)
Walter Rosso (173d)
Andy Russell (2/503)
Nick Sabree (5th SF)
San Diego 173d Abn. Assoc.
Jack Schimpf (2/503)
Roy Scott (3/319)
John Searcy (2/503)
Tom Siopes (2/503)
Mike Sirmeyer (Cav)
Pat Sirmeyer (E-Troop)
Arvil Sirvula (2/503)
Steve Skolochenko (173 Spt)

Ken Smith (2/503)
Lew Smith (2/503)
Ron Smith (2/503)
Ralph Southard (2/503)
Larry Speed (1/503)
Dennis Stanerson (3/503)
Jimmy Stanford (2/503)
George Stapleton (173d)
Jim Stephens (3/319)
Sam Stewart (2/503)
Mike Sturges (2/503)
Ed Swauger (2/503)
Pat "Tad" Tadina (173d)
Gus Thomas (1/503)
Ted Thompson (2/503)
Wes Thompson (173d Eng.)
Thunderbird Chapter (173d)
Joel Trenkle (2/503)
Alton Turner (2/503)
Steve Vargo (2/503)
Terrel Vickery (2/503, 75th)
Bill Vose (2/503)
Dave Walker (Rngr/LRRP)
William Wallace (173d)
Bob Warfield (2/503)
Russ Webb (2/503)
Gene Weeks (173d)
Bill White (2/503)
Jerry Wiles (2/503)
R.R. Will (173d)
Ron Woodley (173d)
Pat Wright (2/503 & 4/503)
Ray "Zac" Zaconne (2/503)
Dwight Zimmerman (173d)
173d LRRP





THE 503rd HERITAGE BATTALION WEB SITE



http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/nycum/chx_alt

For its successful capture of Corregidor, the 503rd was awarded a **Presidential Unit Citation (US)** and received its nickname, **“THE ROCK REGIMENT”**

AIRBORNE.....ALL THE WAY!

Accounting of Contributions for 5 Guest Couples

Total committed: \$8826.25

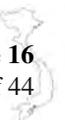
Total received: \$8151.25

Expenditures to date:

Lodging:	\$3677.80
Registration:	1500.00
Jackets & Hats:	1050.00
Reunion Pins:	98.00
Plaques:	400.00
Gift Baskets:	175.00
Week's Meal Money:	1275.00
Corregidor Maps:	240.00
Scholarship Donation:	100.00*
Subtotal:	7465.80
Cash On-Hand:	686.05

* Thanks to Ed Carns A/2/503d, who made a double donation. With his concurrence Chapter 30 sent \$100. in Ed's name to the 173d Scholarship Fund. Should any funds remain after all expenses are paid, Chapter 30 will make a donation to the 173d Scholarship Fund in the names of all donors.

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER TO
ATTEND THE REUNION
IN NORTH MYRTLE BEACH.
SEE YOU THERE!!!**



~ REMEMBERING NUMB3RS ~



**Numbers are driving me nuts!
Yes. It says "Jesus Hates Legs"**

Lately, numbers have been driving me nuts; these days they all seem to be swirling around in my head, smashing into one another as if atoms on drugs. And, there's 62+ years of them accumulated up there, leaving little space for new numbers to take a foothold, which is probably all well and good.

Simply remembering the mish mash of digits stored in there is enough to drive a sink to drink. But, like all of the senses, the congering-up of numbers can easily throw us back to times and places, oft times places we might not enjoy being thrown back to....sometimes.

For instance, 20 often reminds me of the big, mean, nasty sergeant or the too young, pale-faced 2LT rightly proud of his new device, who too often would ask me in rather pointed terms to drop and give that number to them. I could never understand their fixation with that quantity when 3 is an equally good number.

Yet, we can't live without numbers nor can we get thru the day without relying on those atom wanabe's demanding our attention. Plus, without them how would I know morning coffee requires 4 large spoon fulls of sugar lest it taste like shoe wax? Even my elderly German father in-law was not exempt from the influence of numbers when, after seeing a bottle of 7-Up for the first time, wryly noted in English, "*I wish I could get one up!*" Ahh, those funny Germans, *Ja Ja*.

Numbers, I suppose, are necessary after all; they're the way we measure important stuff. Like the way the shoeless, smudged-faced, cute little imp in the ville, after giving him a few cans of C-Rats, rightly pointed out, "*You Numba One G.I.*" Numbers can be fickle, however, as it wasn't much later when after refusing the favors of a not-so-cute lass in that same ville, she declared I was instead a "*Numba 10 G.I.*," then went about speaking discouragingly about my familial lineage

in broken English. Oddly, no one ever mentions hearing of a "Number 5 G.I." I'm sure there were some.

365 and a wake-up...a very large number indeed. M-16, M-79, .50 cal, today just more useless numbers milling around up there, taking-up space and getting in the way of remembering what time she said dinner would be ready. C-130, C-47, B-747. I prefer the B-747, business class please.

So, why do we place so much import on numbers? And why are they so damn difficult to remember? RA19841371, funny, we never forget those numbers.

As a young lad in school I once learned what a peck and a bushel were and how many thingies one might expect to find in each; but alas, I've never owned either and would be hard-pressed to correctly cite such quantities today. I do know morning coffee tastes sooooo sweet with three spoon fulls of sugar...or is it four? Damn atoms!

503 is another number worth remembering.

**Smitty Out
HHC/2/503d, '65-'66**

BUTTERFLIES & PARATROOPERS An Airborne Reunion Like No Other

It's 4 a.m. here in Merritt Island, FL according to the wall clock she bought years ago; the one with the colorful butterflies imprinted next to the 2 and 8 hour markers on its face; and where the 6 should be, but isn't, the temperature reads almost 80 degrees with no humidity in sight. It's a gaudy looking silent clock. If allowed, one could become giddy thinking of the winters Sky Soldier buddies Wayne Hoitt in NH and Mike McMillan in WY are continuing to enjoy this early April morn. Another clock is on the patio here somewhere, its ticking and the rustle of the breeze through the palm leaves are the only sounds to be heard.



It's a good, quiet time to address the note received yesterday from one of the driving forces behind this year's 173d reunion, good buddy Wayne Bowers:

"Smitty: I plan on putting together a reunion Program to be given to all who attend. I would like to have a section explaining the connection between the old 503d and the 173d..... Just briefly explain the link and how or why you came up with this idea (of inviting 503rd WWII paratroopers to the reunion). Wayne."

(continued...)





THE 503rd HERITAGE BATTALION WEB SITE



http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/nycum/chx_alt

For its successful capture of Corregidor, the 503rd was awarded a **Presidential Unit Citation (US)** and received its nickname, **“THE ROCK REGIMENT”**

AIRBORNE.....ALL THE WAY!

Accounting of Contributions for 5 Guest Couples

Total committed: \$8826.25

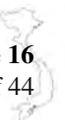
Total received: \$8151.25

Expenditures to date:

Lodging:	\$3677.80
Registration:	1500.00
Jackets & Hats:	1050.00
Reunion Pins:	98.00
Plaques:	400.00
Gift Baskets:	175.00
Week's Meal Money:	1275.00
Corregidor Maps:	240.00
Scholarship Donation:	100.00*
Subtotal:	7465.80
Cash On-Hand:	686.05

* Thanks to Ed Carns A/2/503d, who made a double donation. With his concurrence Chapter 30 sent \$100. in Ed's name to the 173d Scholarship Fund. Should any funds remain after all expenses are paid, Chapter 30 will make a donation to the 173d Scholarship Fund in the names of all donors.

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER TO
ATTEND THE REUNION
IN NORTH MYRTLE BEACH.
SEE YOU THERE!!!**



~ REMEMBERING NUMB3RS ~



**Numbers are driving me nuts!
Yes. It says "Jesus Hates Legs"**

Lately, numbers have been driving me nuts; these days they all seem to be swirling around in my head, smashing into one another as if atoms on drugs. And, there's 62+ years of them accumulated up there, leaving little space for new numbers to take a foothold, which is probably all well and good.

Simply remembering the mish mash of digits stored in there is enough to drive a sink to drink. But, like all of the senses, the congering-up of numbers can easily throw us back to times and places, oft times places we might not enjoy being thrown back to....sometimes.

For instance, 20 often reminds me of the big, mean, nasty sergeant or the too young, pale-faced 2LT rightly proud of his new device, who too often would ask me in rather pointed terms to drop and give that number to them. I could never understand their fixation with that quantity when 3 is an equally good number.

Yet, we can't live without numbers nor can we get thru the day without relying on those atom wanabe's demanding our attention. Plus, without them how would I know morning coffee requires 4 large spoon fulls of sugar lest it taste like shoe wax? Even my elderly German father in-law was not exempt from the influence of numbers when, after seeing a bottle of 7-Up for the first time, wryly noted in English, "*I wish I could get one up!*" Ahh, those funny Germans, *Ja Ja*.

Numbers, I suppose, are necessary after all; they're the way we measure important stuff. Like the way the shoeless, smudged-faced, cute little imp in the ville, after giving him a few cans of C-Rats, rightly pointed out, "*You Numba One G.I.*" Numbers can be fickle, however, as it wasn't much later when after refusing the favors of a not-so-cute lass in that same ville, she declared I was instead a "*Numba 10 G.I.*," then went about speaking discouragingly about my familial lineage

in broken English. Oddly, no one ever mentions hearing of a "Number 5 G.I." I'm sure there were some.

365 and a wake-up...a very large number indeed. M-16, M-79, .50 cal, today just more useless numbers milling around up there, taking-up space and getting in the way of remembering what time she said dinner would be ready. C-130, C-47, B-747. I prefer the B-747, business class please.

So, why do we place so much import on numbers? And why are they so damn difficult to remember? RA19841371, funny, we never forget those numbers.

As a young lad in school I once learned what a peck and a bushel were and how many thingies one might expect to find in each; but alas, I've never owned either and would be hard-pressed to correctly cite such quantities today. I do know morning coffee tastes soooo sweet with three spoon fulls of sugar...or is it four? Damn atoms!

503 is another number worth remembering.

**Smitty Out
HHC/2/503d, '65-'66**

BUTTERFLIES & PARATROOPERS An Airborne Reunion Like No Other

It's 4 a.m. here in Merritt Island, FL according to the wall clock she bought years ago; the one with the colorful butterflies imprinted next to the 2 and 8 hour markers on its face; and where the 6 should be, but isn't, the temperature reads almost 80 degrees with no humidity in sight. It's a gaudy looking silent clock. If allowed, one could become giddy thinking of the winters Sky Soldier buddies Wayne Hoitt in NH and Mike McMillan in WY are continuing to enjoy this early April morn. Another clock is on the patio here somewhere, its ticking and the rustle of the breeze through the palm leaves are the only sounds to be heard.



It's a good, quiet time to address the note received yesterday from one of the driving forces behind this year's 173d reunion, good buddy Wayne Bowers:

"Smitty: I plan on putting together a reunion Program to be given to all who attend. I would like to have a section explaining the connection between the old 503d and the 173d.... Just briefly explain the link and how or why you came up with this idea (of inviting 503rd WWII paratroopers to the reunion). Wayne."

(continued...)



Wayne requested two pages, but that's a lot of words, so I asked Paul Whitman, manager of the 503rd Heritage Battalion web site, to share his thoughts as well.

The writing assignment by Wayne, while understood, was not a welcome one. Instantly upon reading his request, I knew it would not be an easy task to fulfill, at least if it was to be fulfilled honestly. How did we come up with this idea, he asked. The answer, while simple, carried with it certain complications. The easy part was contacting the web manager, Paul, of the 503rd web site.

Paul is an Aussie living in Manila who, some years ago, fell in love with the WWII 503rd guys and has since done a superb job building and maintaining their historical web site. Writing him and requesting permission to run a story or two from that site in our 2/503d Vietnam Newsletter, he responded offering us unlimited use of stories, photos and other material from that site. Up to that moment I knew little of the 503rd, other than we shared the same unit designator and they had jumped in to Corregidor during WWII, ergo "The Rock."

With our reunion coming up in North Myrtle Beach, it just seemed logical and timely to broach the subject of inviting a few of those troopers to the event, and I asked Paul what he thought about the idea -- he agreed, it would be great if it could be done. Within days the reunion committee members voted unanimously in favor of it, and within one week guys of the 173d and friends of the 173d committed sufficient funds to help accomplish this, well over 150 people in all (ultimately over 180 in all).

Originally we planned to invite three WWII 503rd troopers and their spouses, but due to overwhelming support, we were able to invite 5 couples. Four troopers and their companions are confirmed as of this hour, and there's a shared excitement in the air by men of both the 173d and 503rd who are looking forward to this gathering.

But why? Why are we doing this now? This part of Wayne's question I rued answering as it would necessitate addressing these past 45 years or so, over four decades when men of the 503rd and 173d could have and should have yet didn't come together. Perhaps the timing wasn't right until now?

Many believe we, Vietnam vets, were shunned by our brothers from WWII, and there may be truth to that; hell, we were shunned by everyone else. Perhaps it was and remains the position of many 503rd guys theirs would be "a last man standing organization" -- that when they died the unit died, still subscribed to by some men, but not all.

Then, some time in the interim, something happened to us all....we matured, we all became old men. Not all,

really, for the history of the 503rd which began in the foxholes on islands in the Pacific in the early 40's and was passed on to us, is being carried forward by the young paratroopers in the Middle East, and new chapters of the 503rd history are still being written.

Planned, wanted or not, the legacy of the 503rd will outlive us all. Those daring young troopers now back in Afghanistan serving with the 503rd Infantry Regiment are that colorful butterfly at the 2 position on the clock hanging in this patio here in Florida. Our 503rd brothers from WWII are marking time alongside the butterfly at the 8 o'clock position, with us quickly marching in cadence step behind, holding the place of the temperature gauge on that time piece where the 6 should be but isn't, all of us looking at the 12 o'clock hour.

And silently, yet never abating nor pausing, that clock continues to tick into the future, ever forward. Maybe, just maybe, by bringing together the three generations of 503rd Paratroopers we can slow that ticking, if only for a moment.

Smitty Out

THE 503rd P.R.C.T. HERITAGE BATTALION

~ AN UNBROKEN LINE ~

Lineage is Loyalty

It's a bit difficult for me to explain "the connection between the old 503d and the 173d" in the sense that this isn't my specialty.

John Reynolds, of the WWII 503d, wrote the *Three Winds of Death* column in *The Static Line*, and he dealt with the technicalities of the Lineage connections. His combined article is at http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/lineage/lineage_503_commentary.htm and as it's on the website, you are free to use it.

It's one thing to write of the formation of the 503d of WWII, but quite another to deal with the decisions the Army made when, in August 1945, it had to face a period of military retrenchment in which valued units had to be broken up, reorganized, consolidated or disbanded.

(continued....)





On 16 February 1945, the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment jumps in to Corregidor.

When they went into Negros, the 503d had been the sharpest axe in the SWPA shed, but they were only a Regimental Combat Team and their highest representative in the “corridors of power” was only a Colonel. Whilst the 503d had been fighting in Negros, the 11th Airborne had been in a reserve area in the Philippines and had been preparing to have a role in the next theater, Operation Olympic, in which large-scale airborne envelopment was planned beyond anything seen in the SWPA before.

To say that the Negros operation had not been kind to the 503d would be an understatement. Their misuse in Negros had been perhaps the stupidest use of a paratroop unit in WWII, and thus it was an easy decision within those “corridors of power” to disband them and to roll its members into a Division, and send them off to Japan for occupation duty. By Christmas Eve 1945, the 503d had been “inactivated.”

So essentially, to my eye, there’s no direct line drawn from the 503d of WWII to the 173d. However, I am not a US Army bureaucrat who can define the indefinable and thus reactivate the “inactivated” and create an unbroken line which can then link units from four wars into a Lineage. But I accept it, I praise it, even though in

my own view, it is drawn from the younger men up to elders, and not vice versa.

Where the US Army redeemed its sin of deactivating the WWII 503d, was by recognizing that, notwithstanding their post-war industrial and management techniques, there is a singular advantage to honoring the ancient system of Regimental Lineage, to engender an esprit de corps in its members which builds throughout the years, even peaceful ones. Perhaps they had seen the way that the British and Canadian regiments had operated, using their unit history, traditions, the continuance of battle honors, ceremonial uniforms, cap badges, peculiarities of insignia, marches and songs as means of administering a soldier’s military career, and creating the desire to volunteer to that specific Regiment that no mere jingo poster can.

So it is in that sense that I hold such faith in the concept of Heritage and Lineage, that I see that the history of the 503d of WWII should not be allowed to fade with the passing of its troopers, but should be inherited by the Lineage, in this case, the 173d Airborne Brigade. Lineage is Loyalty.

**Paul Whitman
503rd Heritage Battalion**





HOW I REMEMBER IT

MY PRIVATE WAR - CHET NYCUM

Negros

by Chet Nycum

“G” Company, 503rd PRCT

“...WE WERE TAUGHT JAPANESE, LEARNING TO SAY ‘I AM AN AMERICAN,’ ‘I NEED WATER,’ ‘I SURRENDER’ AND ‘HELLO’ (KO-NI-CHI-WA). HELLO IN JAPANESE WAS THE ONLY WORD I MASTERED, AND I CONSIDERED IT TO BE USELESS, FOR IF I MET A JAP AND HAD TIME TO SAY ANYTHING, ‘GOOD-BYE’ WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.”



It took me a little time to get my gear together, about three days, but that was about all the time it's taken to find myself in the midst of another preparation for a combat operation. Having just enough time to get my gear together and my barracks bag put away, and the tents dropped, we're moved to the air strip where we don chutes and make ready for the jump on Negros.

There are some new faces around me, and they make me feel like an old pro.

I make the time about 7 AM. There's the usual undercurrent of tension as we load on to the planes and taxi, which the take-off doesn't do anything to relieve. All is normal, and I am praying once again that my personal angel is at my side protecting me, as before. But there is something occurring on the aircraft though which is not usual. After about a half hour in flight the jumpmaster announces that the jump is off. The tension recedes but not for long, for his next words are,

"Remove your chutes! Leave them on the plane, we are landing at Iloilo on the island of Panay and we will move to Negros by boat."



Iloilo docks, en route to Negros, P.I.

Arriving on Negros we board trucks and head out I know not where. The ride to our destination is quite lengthy and we move through grassy hills and across beautiful rivers until we reach the town of Bacolod, where we proceed through the town and headed up toward the high ground we can see in the distance. The rocking of the truck settles me down, as does the constant noise, and as soon as the noise runs out, I wake. The road we were on is dirt but shows no heavy signs of traffic. There is some milling around at the unloading point, and much shouting of orders. Once again I hear the order I have learned to dread, the scouting team's introduction, *"NYCUM, TAKE THE POINT!"*

I breathe one more prayer and move out at a careful pace, heading toward the high ground.

So began Negros.

(continued....)





. "Negros was a tough campaign, every bit worse than Corregidor, in almost every respect. Worst thing of all, it became a forgotten tragedy, dismissed by the insult of calling it a 'mopping-up' action."

**Paul Whitman
503rd Heritage Battalion.**

My senses bristle, but I move about a quarter mile up the road before I pause to look back to see how far my second scout is behind me. Andy Pacella is following me at about 100 ft. All is well, God is in his heaven, my angel is with me and I continue on.

A short time later I can see a wall with an arched opening, and within the opening I can see people peeking out at me. As I approached, they appear to be Filipino kids, and as I get closer they disappear somewhere behind the wall, as I reach a point in front of the opening.

I am alive today because of a disproportionate amount of good fortune, a good fighting team with me always, and a talent for noticing whatever is unusual in a natural setting. The latter, which the Aussies called "tracking, mate" meant looking for the unnatural, a skill taught me by Umberto Poppi, my good Aussie friend. Anything which had been disturbed in nature tends to leave

something unnatural, an unusual angle about it, something different, and skill in tracking was noticing whatever looked unnatural.

As I reach a point in front of the opening I notice a small mound of sand, off center of the road. It does not look natural to me, and I signal to Andy to come up, and point it out to him. He will, in turn, direct the others away from it. In my mind it has to be a land mine, and I treat it that way. Moving on about a hundred feet there is another small sand pile on the opposite side of the road. The mines are planted to take our tanks or trucks.

I have moved us about three miles before I am directed to move off the road to the right, crossing into a shallow valley and then up on a hogback ridge running to the top of a domed shaped hill. This valley is covered with heavy tropical growth, typical bush, trees, brush and jungle vines. We move into position around the hill, and settle in for nightfall. My position is about three foxholes to the right of a machine gun which is located to fire directly down the trail we have just traversed. I am actually in the rear, and looking down on the trail we had just came up. We dig in for the night, with our foxhole just deep enough to allow the three of us in the hole to lay prone and fire, with only our heads above ground. When I had first learned the soldier's craft, there were two to a foxhole, so that one could always remain awake. Experience eventually taught us that individual fatigue was less with three to a hole. Actually we felt pretty safe for the night, knowing we were not on the front line, and settled in. It was a very quiet night, field discipline was tight, and there were no sporadic firings, just silence, for some hours.

Suddenly the force of an explosion shatters the quiet, making the skin on my entire body seem to shrink, for it has occurred directly in front of us, but a few merciful yards short. Without a wristwatch, I can only estimate it is about three o'clock in the morning, as I tense and begin the wait. Never has a group of men been more alert nor more on edge. I lay on my left hip with my Tommy gun at the ready, shaking not from any cold but from stark fear and anxiety. We wait, and I shiver for almost two hours.

The noise and concussion in the air instantly herald the arrival at our perimeter of grenades and mortars, and within seconds Japs wearing camouflage rise up in front of us like shadows, fighting with whatever they had. They are so close upon us that there's very little time to fire, and our machine gun never opens up. I glance and see our BAR man Joe Syracuse standing, shoving a Jap away from him with the barrel of the gun.

(continued....)



Apparently he has been caught with the safety still engaged on the gun. McLemore, in the hole next to me, cuts the Jap down with a shot from his rifle.

I fire bursts of three, trying to concentrate my fire toward the trail and at a point about three feet off the ground. (Bursts of three is the minimum I could fire, due to the speed of the bolt. Longer bursts brought a risk of missing the target, as the gun had a tendency to climb to the right. Some fellows claimed a skill of being able to fire single rounds with accuracy, though I have difficulty believing that). I exhaust my first clip, and replace it with another. It too becomes empty, and yet I do not realize how long this contact has lasted. Yet it seems that it is over almost as soon as it started, and dawn comes eventually. With the light, we can now move. I stand and realize that I have developed a sore on my left hip, from shaking so hard and for so long in the wet mud of the foxhole. The others are out of their foxholes, trying to piece together what has happened and who needs help.



The Tokaldo Road begins, Negros P.I.

Over there are several Jap bodies laying where they fell, but here is one of our own men who is beyond help. Having given in to panic, he broke our cardinal *'no movement at night'* rule and attempted to fall back to an adjacent foxhole. He has been killed by a trooper, who thought his position was being stormed by an attacking son of Nippon. His body lays desperately sprawled, with his head and shoulders face down in the foxhole he was trying to get into. As we are viewing the bodies, and thanking our personal gods that our buddies are not looking down at us, one of our men happens upon the scene and remarks callously, to no one in particular, *"Look at this Bastard,"* pointing to our man.

Three troopers grab him, and only a penitent apology saves him an early morning meal of his own words being shoved down his throat. The trooper expressed his sorrow for his mistake in identifying the victim, and the incident soon passes.

A tally is made, and 'the score' is passed around in hushes and whispers - seven troopers and seven dead Japs.

As we continue surveying the situation, attempting to rationalize our personal survivals, our medic walks over to the Jap bodies and spots a well kept fellow with well trimmed sideburns, moustache and goatee, laying flat on his back. With his trench knife in hand, he reaches down and flicks the knife through the Jap's goatee. At this, he notices a pulse beating on the Japs neck. *"Look at this SOB."* He dropped down, putting his knee on the Jap's chest and presses his trench knife against the Japs throat. The Jap starts calling, and waving his arms about, and the medic, plunges the knife through the fellow's Adam's apple and into his spine, giving it a twist. *"Now the score is even,"* he pronounces finally.

To this day I do not know who set the booby trap that exploded at the start of this incident. I was told some time later that some enterprising troopers had dug up the mines that I had spotted earlier on the road and somehow moved one to the spot just below our position. What I thought was a mine had turned out to be a 500 lb. bomb with 40 lb. detonator. A grenade was tied to the detonator and a trip wire was stretched across the trail. Whoever was responsible for turning that bomb into a booby trap, saved my life and many others on that perimeter. After the attack and the anger subsided I went down the trail to look at the area where the bomb exploded. There I could see many blood trails where the wounded crawled or were carried away. Only seven had survived to attack our line.

It is at this point that I shall describe the terrain we are crossing as we press the attack.

We are continuously moving up hill on a grassy plain and our path is made more difficult by hills that continue to extend across our front like giant fingers gripping the earth. They disappear into the ground to our left and grow higher to our right. It is the perfect place for snipers to pick off our men as we press the attack across the top of a finger. From our rear there are steep and deep gullies extending towards these hills, made deeper by years of tropical rains.

(continued....)



Even digging in for the night or arising in the morning we must remember to stay below the military crest of our hill, for the peril of sniper fire is always with us. Even if one can't admire the skill of the snipers, you had to respect their patience.

I soon fall into a timeless state of mind, where time ceases to exist in any continuous line, and instead runs through my memories as a series of short episodes, perhaps strung together with a common thread of emotion. I cannot describe the action on an individual day, for time is now become lost, and only singular events make it possible for me to continue.

We are moved to our right across a wide gully and up on to a hogback ridge, along a well worn trail. I am the lead man as we start to move up toward the higher ground. Moving about 300 yds. up the trail, the ground erupts no more than three feet to my rear, with a sound from the gully like no other gun I know of. I hit the ground and roll off the trail and lay there waiting but no other shots were fired. Orders come to me to hold my position while a squad goes down into the gully to silence the gun. A short time later, word comes that the gun they have destroyed was an aircraft machine gun positioned to cover the trail, fired remotely by a wire. No Japs were found.



Chet and buddy in jungle.

After this incident and having spent sufficient time on the point, I am rotated and moved to the rear of the column, the second scout always taking the last man position. It is a comforting feeling to me to know Andy Pacella is watching my back. He was my second scout throughout all the missions.

After we advance for some distance, I am called on to take two men and carry a wounded Lieutenant back to base camp on the other side of the gully. The Lieutenant has a gunshot wound across the back of his neck. During the trip down the ridge one of the carriers stumbles and I warn him to be more careful. The Lieutenant tells me it's OK, not to worry, "because I

can't feel a thing." We continue carrying him to base camp, and when the medics come over to look at him they pronounce him dead, I feel hit by a thunderbolt. Apparently the bullet had hit his spine. I didn't even hear him leave.

Returning to the front I find that we are starting an advance across a wide basin. Trees rim the basin to our front and to our right. We spread out across the basin and start the assault. As we are about half way to the tree line in front of us, machine guns started firing. All of us to a man hit the grass and lay prone, trying to flatten our bodies as low to the ground as possible. Laying there I can see tracers passing just a few feet over us. It then dawns on me that the Japs have dug their guns into a position where they can't lower them sufficiently to rake the bottom of the basin. Our rifle grenadier, in the stress of the moment, attempts to fire a grenade and forgets to put a blank cartridge in his rifle prior to firing. The rifle explodes and shrapnel wounds pepper his back.

I felt we can roll out of the basin and started to do this. I am rolling out but as I do, I see the man next to me laying on his back with his legs sticking straight up in the air. "Get your damn legs down!" I call at him. "F... You! Mind your own f...ing business!" He is looking for a "homer" and taking a bullet in the leg is as good as any. He is not the only one that day, and I question myself whether this is the spirit of the unit I came back from Hollandia to go into battle with. Perhaps amongst these few old timers, on their fifth campaign, the odds of living seem that much shorter with each new day of combat. Was I the crazy one or were they? The question is with me still, unanswered.

In a short while two tanks show up, positioning themselves between us and the Nips. They then slowly walked us out of the predicament we had gotten into.

As I move away from the tank and into safe cover I come upon Malone, our grenadier, laying on a stretcher grinning like a fox eating grapes. "Hey Nyk! I got a homer this time!" Accidentally chambering a live round instead of a blank in a .03 is a hell of a way to fire a grenade, or get a homer.

After reassembling, Lt. Marshall comes to me and instructs me to take the squad and wade a stream that flows from the rear of the Jap gun emplacements and on down past our right flank. I move to the stream and wade in. The water is about knee deep initially but gets deeper in places as I progress toward the turn to the left. The turn will put me directly behind the guns.

(continued....)



Water is now at upper chest level, and there is a large boulder just ahead of me at the point where the stream turns left. I move cautiously to the boulder, with only another few feet to a point where I will be able to see around the bend. The guns are quiet but my heart is beating just as loudly.

Lt. Marshall calls **"OK NYCUM! THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!"**

Well that did it for me and the Japs. I could hear the guns falling down the cliff ahead of me so I push through the water hoping to get the guns, but as I make the turn there is no one, and the guns may be in the water. The job is done and the guns are no longer a threat, and there was no need for my pushing those few feet out of safety to find out. I am totally disgusted. Why I had to take that risk, I will never understand. When the tanks showed up to rescue us, they could just as easily have knocked out the machine guns. But Hell! Then we would have no casualties, and no medal on the commander's chest for our accomplishment!

Again I am on the point, this time I am approaching a hill that runs across my front. We are receiving artillery fire from a forest covered area further out to my front, and lucky for me the shells are bursting to my rear. As I reach the military crest of the hill I am surprised by a loud roar directly overhead. I dive to the ground and roll on to my back to see what it is. To my surprise a B-25 Mitchell has passed over me, not more than 100 ft off the ground, with all guns firing. Looking at his direction of travel I realize he's used me to line up on the target! I don't know what scared me most -- the racket of twin radials and multiple .50 cal's, or my short career as a target marker.

Recovering my composure, and then my concentration, I move forward where we come under mortar fire. As scout, I figure somebody has to be in front, and am used to the company being spread out in the valley behind me. A trooper named Getchell is passing grenades up to me and I am tossing them over the crest at whatever may be there. I am having no luck reducing the intensity of the mortar barrage, and am calling back for more grenades.

A trooper slides up beside me. He looks over at me, rises into a crouch, gestures ahead of us and calls *"Come on! Lets get em!"* Oh God in heaven, it's Maxie! I start to rise with him, but instantly there is a sound much like a bass drum, and Maxie falls to the ground as if swatted by a giant hand.

"There must be mucho Japs over there..." he says as he looks at me.



Chet (R) and his good buddy, Maxie, KIA on Negroes.

We get the command to pull back, and I turn to Maxie and say *"Go!"* thinking he heard the command, but Maxie does not move. I roll myself over to his side and pull him onto his back. I can see blood on his right side and that his eyes have rolled back until only the whites are showing. I called to Getchel to help me carry Maxie back, and though everyone else had moved back, Getchel shows great courage in staying close to me. Getchel takes Maxie's legs and I take his shoulders, and we carried him back through the mortar fire. Getting him to the safety of our line, he is pronounced dead, and I am shattered. My closest friend is gone and I am feeling enough rage to take on the whole damn Jap army, but opportunity and good sense hold me back. Maxie was hit just below the right shoulder and the bullet exited out his left side in the area of the lower rib.

(continued....)



Later we find a Jap trench that terminates in a tunnel that allows the defenders to locate a machine gun or individually fire from cover.

As I move among the men trying to learn if any others are hit I see a man standing at attention in front of a Lieutenant. I figured he's getting raked over the coals for something, as I near them the Lieutenant slaps the trooper across the face, a resounding broad handed rebuke with the palm of the hand. I have had more than enough at this point, and such conduct I will not stand for, even by a Lieutenant. I charge up to the pair shouting "*Don't hit him again!*" The Lieutenant steps back, shocked, I expect, to hear such words from a private. He turns immediately towards me, steps back a mite to regain some space between us, and cautions me "*Hold it!*"

"*This is the way a man shows fear!*" he says to me, gesturing at the same time to the trooper, who is rock solid and has not moved.

"*If he were a woman he would be screaming!*" I look at the trooper, who is not steadfast, but absolutely helpless and totally incapable of moving or speaking. The Lieutenant says it is sometimes possible to shock a man out of that state by slapping him.

It did not work for this man.

We spend the rest of the day trying to spot snipers, and keeping our heads down.

Late that same afternoon we see a flight of four Marine Corsairs coming in, as beautiful as their name suggests. The first plane makes a pass at the Jap positions, and as he pulls up the Jap ack ack hits him and he goes down behind enemy lines. The second plane makes his run and he too is hit.

Fortunately, after dropping his bombs, he turns towards our lines and bails out, hitting the ground about halfway between us and the Jap positions. Everyone opens up with everything we have to cover him, and he makes a run towards our line. No football game or Olympic race was ever so exciting, and he falls into the closest foxhole he can find. No 503d guest was more welcome, nor arrived with a more exciting introduction, nor had a more dangerous night.

The last two Corsairs come in together, drop their bombs and turn toward us. Neither looks to have been hit, but the second plane had a bomb hanging from the shackles under its starboard wing. We see the pilot working desperately to free it as he heads back toward our lines, when the bomb shakes loose and falls in the direction of the C.P. and a convoy of trucks bringing in replacements.

I am told that 12 or 13 men are killed. The mood amongst those who know of the episode is sombre, generally summarized by one comment that I heard passed, "*The poor guys, they didn't even get a chance to get into the fight.*"

As night conceals us, there is no moon and no starlight, just pitch black. Fear, tension and anxiety come to me again, for where we are tonight we can expect them to come to us. We're too much of a challenge, too much of a target to be left alone.

The attack opens with the mortars falling, and the waves of Japs soon follow, charging at our line, yelling and firing, the sounds so close I can hear rifle bolts slamming rounds into their chambers. How long it lasts, how much ammo I expend, how I stay alive, I have no recollection. My universe has contracted to the point where I am aware only of my own actions, and those of the men immediately around me. How we fight, whether we fought well or badly, we shall have time to think of that later. The line holds, and we are then the unwilling audience to the sounds and the cries of the dying. One man out in front of my position keeps crying "*Melikan die!*" and for some reason I do not consider him worth a grenade, so I put up with the irritation.

Morning comes and all is quiet. Still as it might be, none of us will challenge the patience of the snipers by raising our heads over the crest of the hill, for we've learned that the Japs leave snipers behind to get in the last word. Well after sunrise, when I do feel it sufficiently safe to steal a look towards no man's land, there are no dead or wounded to be seen. Silently and skillfully, the Japs have quietly collected their dead and wounded comrades.

**Our Marine pilot, rising from
the foxhole, can be heard
swearing to one and all that he
will gladly ride the next plane to
hell before he will spend another
night on the front line.**

Our activity changes and we are now sending out patrols to try and locate any enemy that may be a hazard to our advance.

(continued....)



The Japanese in their clever way, take the opportunity to move after dark to the sloping face of a grass covered hill, dig in and wait for daylight. Dawn comes and, though you think there might be some way to avoid it, the first man that ventured beyond the crest of the hill is killed. We immediately take firing positions and begin to try to spot the hidden Japs. It's relatively easy to spot them if one wants to become a target in target practice, but there's no future in it. Over to my left a machine gun opens up, sending out a stream of "to whom it may concern" greetings to no fixed address. Firing on dug in troops is often a wasted effort, but today someone is smiling on us. Tracer shells firing into the grass hiding the Japs caused the grass to burn, and it is not long before we have a raging fire covering the hill ahead of us. Japs are jumping up, trying to put out the fire, or to evade it and we were having a turkey shoot. A hell of a way to have fun, but we surely enjoyed the morning's good fortune.

Having cleared the Japs from the hill we begin patrolling the wide expanse of grassland in front of us. Progress is good for a time and there appears to be no opposition until I lead our patrol over to our extreme left, and a machine gun opened up upon us. We hit the ground and slide away from the gun on our bellies. Estimating the distance to the gun from our position, I judge it to be well over 300 yards. We are about a 1000 yards from our perimeter and in no position to take that gun, so we returned to our lines, to report the location of the gun. I try hard to show it to the Lieutenant, but he just can't make it out, and tells me he will call for a sniper.

"A sniper!" I laugh to myself as I walked back to my squad, where a few words to them shares the amusement, and soon we are all smiling broadly. We have nothing much of anything happening for a while, and there is much mocking as to just who is going to be our saviour sniper.

It was not too long before we see a bulldozer making its way towards us, dragging a long barrelled cannon. Someone yells "Hey Nyk! Here comes your sniper!" and there is now more amusement, but at my expense. I'm not a big guy, but I've got broad shoulders, and can take it.

I soon learn what a 90mm is like. The dozer uses his blade as a shield, and pulls the gun up towards our line, and then sets to work leveling a spot to place it. With

the gun in place they call me over to identify the machine gun emplacement. I stand back of the gun and tell the gunner how to move the gun until we have it pointing in the right direction. The Lieutenant who arrived with the gun is chipper and businesslike, and asks me to see if I can spot the bunker if I looked through the barrel of the 90mm. He opens the breach and I look down that long shiny rifled barrel. The opening looks small but there is ample space for me to line up and tell them how to lower the gun until the target comes into view. The Lieutenant has been following the moves of the gun using a small scope mounted on its left side and as the target comes into view for me he calls "*I've got it!*" I step back from the gun, for my role is about over. He makes a few corrections aiming it, then asked me to look through the small scope and confirm the target. After I confirmed the target he called for a shell. It looked to be at least 4 ft. long and has a yellow tip, which the Lieutenant tells me means high explosive (H.E.). The gun is fired, I see the hit, and surprisingly the Jap gun opened up in reply. Some of these bushido types just don't know to quit when they're ahead.

The Lieutenant looks at me, sides of his mouth turning down, shoulders shrugging. "*We'll get him,*" he comments, sounding a bit like a mad professor. He orders up another shell, this one not as tall, and with a short short nose. "*What's that one?*" I ask.

"*Armor piercing.*"

They load. I press both hands to the side of my ears as they fire.

There is no response this time, not even when my hearing comes back to me.

Later, as we patrol out to the gun position, we confirmed that neither the machine guns nor the three Japs inside will be giving us any further trouble.

As I rack my mind to put these events in order I feel it was from this position that we are roused in the middle of the night and each man holding to the webbing or a piece of equipment attached to the man in front of him, we move to a new area and told to hold our position and wait for daylight.

As I lay there thinking about the move I determine it had to be to our left. Probably the Japs are flanking us, and daylight might be trouble. Daylight comes without incident, patrols are sent out and we started our advance again.

(continued...)



We are now approaching the mountains, on our left there is a cliff dropping down towards a river. During one of the patrols we locate a well worn trail that comes from our right and extends across our front and uphill away from us. We decided that this will be a good place to ambush Jap patrols.

On our second day out, while hiding in ambush, we spot a patrol of American troops coming from our left. Seeing that they are our troops we break cover, shout and waved to them. They respond by opening up on us. We yelled at them and they take off running. We did not give chase.

Though Sgt. Guthrie (footnote S/Sgt. John M Guthrie - KIA 22 May 1945, received no medal other than a purple heart, to my knowledge) is not hit, but he has a hand grenade shot loose from his webbing, and everyone hears the detonator fire, and hits the ground as far away from it as we can. Sgt Guthrie in the bravest and most selfless act I had ever seen, threw himself on top of the grenade. No one else in his vicinity is wounded, not even a scratch. Even 56 years on, as so many times over the intervening years when I am reminded of it, this event brings me to tears.

Upon reporting this action to our command we are told that what we thought was Americans were really Japs in American clothes. Though it did not occur to me at the time, I wonder where they got their M-1 rifles. I guess this is all part of war.

The next incident occurs late in an afternoon. I am called to the C.P. and *asked* if I would go up and see if I can retrieve one of our men who had been killed.

Assignments such as these are never easy. If a patrol has left a trooper's body somewhere, you can almost guarantee that there is a damn good reason for it. The Japs know we don't leave our buddies behind, and all it takes is one good sniper or a M.G. crew to ruin a guy's whole day.

I should try to describe the terrain I am moving through. It is uphill, on a hogback ridge with typical jungle-like vegetation, a rain forest off to my right and a cliff dropping to the river on my left. I start climbing, my heart pounding. I am extra careful now, finding myself looking for any excuse to turn back, but there is none. I move up to the large tree, as described to me as *the place*. I ease my head around the tree and I can see him curled up on the ground between two large root fins of

the tree, his left arm is stretched out in front of him. I can see that his ring finger has been cut off. I ease myself around the tree and get hold of his fatigues at the shoulders, and as I start to lift him, his head falls against my chest. The odor is almost more than I can stand. I keep pulling but I do not have enough strength to get him over the root of the tree, I cannot and will not expose myself any further. In total frustration I relax and ease him back, not slumped forward but in a sitting position with his back against the tree, and return to our C.P. and report my failure.

We did not dig in this night but spent the night where we were. The following morning I am ordered to lead the way up the hill and try to take the position. It is early morning, I would guess 5 or 6 AM. With a swallow of coffee someone gives me, I start up the trail, proceeding to the tree where our man was killed, and find his body is gone. I reach a point where, with head lowered, I can see over the hill, directly where the Japs are dug in. Cautiously I straighten up to my full height, and I am looking at four Japs. One is an officer wearing a sword, with his back to me, facing three soldiers with their rifles slung on their shoulders.



Chet, 3rd from left in front row, and buddies on Negros.

Without hesitation I fire bursts of three first into the officer and then into each of the three standing soldiers. They each fall as my .45s find their targets. I step higher and strafe their bodies on the ground, to be sure they are not playing dead as I had seen one do before. Worrying about my remaining ammo, I release the 100 drum and replace it with a 20 clip, jack a round into the chamber and started to turn toward the machine gun.

(continued...)



As I start this move I catch movement in the corner of my eye. Spinning to my right, I am looking down the barrel of a Jap rifle.

I know immediately that this is the time of my death, so I do not take time to aim. I just let go a few rounds from where I am, hitting him chest high, and he collapses towards the ground like a bunch of old clothes. Why that soldier hesitated, I will never know.

They say that many a true word is said in jest. Years after the war, when our company was doing business with the Japanese, I overheard a colleague say

"the Japanese are the most polite people I ever met."

**When I agreed with him,
he asked me why, seeing as I'd
been in a war against them.**

I'd formed that opinion.

"They always let me shoot first."

Having made it nearly to the brink of the hill, I now have to concentrate on that damn machine gun, now only about 50 ft. to my right. I ponder how to approach it safely and call for our BAR man, Joe Syracuse, to come up. When he arrives, I tell him to give me cover as I move across toward the gun.

Joe asks, *"Do I have to stick my head up there?"*

"You can't shoot from down there!"

I take a W.P grenade from my webbing, pull the pin with my right hand then hold the handle down as I transfer it to my right hand. I start moving towards the gun emplacement, making it to the top without any problem. At this point I can see the top of the bunker, but I know that I am fully exposed to anyone that is not in the bunker. Suddenly I hear Andy Pacella calling me, and I look towards him, seeing that he's motioning for me to come back. Looking at the troops behind A, I can see that they are moving to the rear. Without knowing what was happening I back down to A. It is at this point I realize that I still have the grenade pin between my teeth and a live one in my hand. He tells me we have been called back. He then removes the pin from my teeth and reinserts it in the grenade.

Together we returned to the C.P.

I reported to Lt. Hewitt, told him of the encounter and he tells me he will recommend me for the Silver Star. That either never happened or Col. Jones did not think I earned it. I didn't realize how the great strain of the encounter was upon me until I sit with Lt. Hewitt and he hands me a canteen cup of coffee. As I reach for the cup I find myself shaking so bad that I cannot hold it to my lips. He takes it and holds it steady while I drink, and lights a cigarette for me. Boy! Did I love *that cigarette!*

Once again we spend the night in the same place. Morning comes and again I am called upon to take the lead. This time our second platoon is assigned the task of moving off to our right and then circling back to the left, staying out of sight of the Japs on the hill for the night, and at daylight to attack them from the rear. I would now for the third time attack from the front.

I lead the way up the same trail we had been on until I was just about to cross the top. Suddenly the Jap machine gun opens up, and I spring forward to get into the fight. As I cross the top, one of the second platoon men waved a caution at me and points to my left, where I see one of our men laying crumpled on the ground. The Japs had moved the gun from the bunker and had it placed ready to fire on the lower left side of the hill. When Karsten Hall, the platoon scout, crossed the top they gunned him down. Neither we or the 2nd platoon men got any of the remaining Japs or the guns.



I wasn't to know it, but this was my last encounter with any Japs. We were moved to Demaguete and made camp in a large corrugated steel building. My duties were to lead patrols around the area and to relieve the men manning a machine gun at the crossroads on the road coming down from the mountains.

(continued...)





The Japanese Surrender, Negros, P.I.



Next stop, POW Camp. Negros, P.I.

Each day was like the one before, except for the entertainment we had fighting roosters. Mike Levack had a rooster and when I found a good one while on patrol, I just could not wait to get back to camp and

challenge Mike. The fight was set for the next day. I had a patrol in the morning, so the fight had to wait until afternoon.

During that patrol, we pass in front of a Spanish-style home, where I am beckoned inside by a charming Spanish gentleman. He has a very cute Filipino girl mix me a drink, which tastes like it's made from Sugar alcohol and bitters, but it is very tasty and does a fine job of making me feel friendly. I am introduced to his Spanish wife, who weighs at least three hundred pounds. This is because, he explains, she has a severe craving for chocolate. Their home is lavishly decorated with Chinese statues, and she proceeds to offer me my choice of anything in the room if I would get her some chocolate. I had no doubt in my mind that these people had to be Japanese collaborators, for there is surely no way any items of value could remain out of Japanese hands during their occupation.

As luck would have it, when I get back to base we have just received a supply of tropical chocolate, so I grab one box and take it to my bunk, hiding it in my blanket to keep it safe until I get back to that family.

Outside Mike is waiting with his rooster. In the Filipino way, we immediately form a circle, there are bets made and insults of roosters passed. A steel blade is strapped to the cock's leg. We then let the birds get acquainted, tossing them in, letting their nature take its course, and witnessing the melee. It is a great fight, all noise, feathers and the glint of sharpened steel, and I think I have it won when Mike's rooster lands on its back. My rooster leaps high with steel spur pointed downward, but before it can strike, Mike's rooster kicks upward driving his blade into the breast of my rooster. Mike's bird wins. Ah, such is the way of the cockfight.

Next day I have another patrol in the same area, which will give me an opportunity to take the chocolate to the Spanish lady. As I approach the home I see the man of the house coming out to greet me. With a big smile he hands me a butterfly knife, a beautiful thing with a caribou carved into the wood. The stiletto-like blade folds into the handle, as the wing-like handles swing around to clip together. We go into the house and I present the chocolate to the lady. She is so excited she cannot speak, and pulls the box apart and removes a chocolate bar, takes a bite and lays back in her chair and allows the candy to melt, smiling and moving her head up and down demonstrating her satisfaction. She motioned for me to take anything in the room I wanted. I hesitated for a bit and then thought, what the hell why not!

(continued....)



I move to a fat bronze Buddha to inspect it more closely, and see it has eyes of Jade. Yes, that is what I want, but when I pick it up I cannot lift it.

I looked around for another object, and spy a carving of a Chinese holy man standing at a dais. He looked like Foo Man Choo, with the long draping moustache, and I walk over and picked it up, not even looking for markings. I just tuck it under my arm, take my leave of them, and go. The woman is too happy enjoying her chocolate almost to notice. Back at my bunk I wrapped the statue in a blanket and stowed it under my blanket.

The following day I have duty on the machine gun. I board the truck and ride to the gun emplacement. It is quiet, in a certain Philippine way, and I am there about an hour before the truck returns with another of our guys. He tells me he has been sent to relieve me, and I ask why.

"You have to get your stuff packed, you're going home."

Boy! He did not need to say any more. I crawled out from behind the gun, grabbed my kit, and climbed the truck.

Getting back to base I start to pack, and J, from one of the squads, says we ought to get some pictures. Good idea, seeing as if I'm leaving and won't see many of them again. Mike Levack now has a camera, I go over to where he's quartered and ask if I could borrow it, and he readily lends it to me. We proceeded to set up for a photo, and just as things are about ready, somebody asks "Nyk, where are your flags?" Now I know why they want pictures, not that they care about me, they just want to pose with the flags. What's it matter, better leave 'em happy, so I race to get them. We hang the garrison flag which Maxie had picked up on Corregidor, and the personal flags I had collected.

Mike takes the first picture, which is of the members in our squad, and as the others get into the act, I take the rest of the series.

The next morning, for me the war is over. I hand my Tommy Gun and the .38 cal. pistol I have carried throughout the war to my replacement (replacement name?). I board a truck with several other men, a Jap prisoner, and a few Taiwanese laborers, for the ride to Bacolod and the ship that will take me home.



Chet, his buddies and bad guy finally heading home.

I do not realize it then, but for me the war did not end that day, or any other. The pieces of shrapnel continued to find their way to the surface of my back clear through into the mid-1950's, and the memories of the deaths of my friends, my colleagues and even those of my enemies all continued to invade my dreams, even until today.

Since the war, many people have asked me what was combat really like, as if a few words from me could put it all into some sort of grand perspective that made sense of it all. What was it really like? All I can tell them is

***Would you really risk understanding
what combat was truly like, if you
knew there was a risk that nightmares
would wake you up for the
rest of your life? 🇺🇸***

[Photos in this story were provided by Chet Nycum and the 503rd Heritage Battalion, including the Bailey/Calhoun Collections].

Note

Our thanks to 503rd trooper Chet Nycum for sharing with us some of his stories about his time in combat during WWII, and to Paul Whitman, manager of the "503rd Heritage Battalion" web site. As long as the current editor produces our newsletter, we will continue telling the story of the remarkable men of the 503rd PRCT in the Pacific during WWII. Ed.



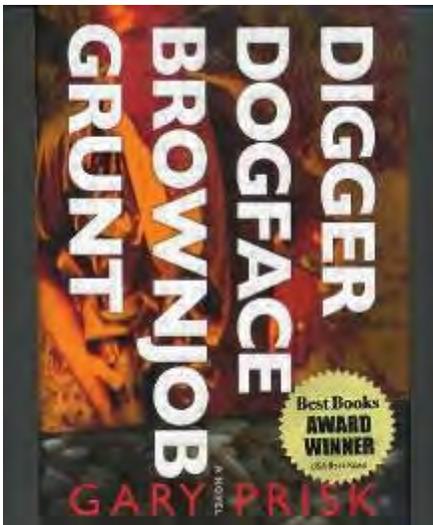


2/503d Dustoff, Operation Marauder, Jan. '66

The 2010 International Book Awards Results

~ GRAND PRIZE ~

Digger, Dogface, Brownjob, Grunt
by Gary Prisk
Cougar Creek Press
978-0-615-25343-5



Gary served as a platoon leader and later a company commander with the 2/503d in '67/'68. His book, about the 2/503d, is available on Amazon.com

~ DUSTOFF ~

Over the years, I have collected many tidbits, some of which may be useful to fill gaps in the newsletter. This is one.

The Army's radio call sign for medical evacuation choppers was "Dustoff." In 1962, the Navy Support Activity in Saigon controlled all radio call signs in South Vietnam. That year, the first Army helicopter evacuation unit to arrive in Vietnam was the 57th Medical Attachment. The 57th's call sign was "Dustoff." From then on all medical evacuation choppers used the call sign followed by a numerical designation. The only exception was the 1st Cavalry Division who used the call sign, "Medevac."

Jerry Hassler
S-2/Recon/2/503d, '66-'67

Thanks Jer. Hell yeah! If there was ever a newsletter which needed gaps filled, this is the one!

NOTE

Please send your 2/503d stories, photos and other information to be shared in our newsletter to rto173d@cfl.rr.com If you served with another 173d unit and have a story involving the 2/503d, it will be very much welcome.

