

FOR THE MEN, AND THEIR  
FAMILIES, OF THE 2ND BATTALION,  
173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)

**WE TRY  
HARDER!**

**2/503d**  
**VIETNAM**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *newsletter*



April 2011, Issue 26

Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

See all issues to date at either of these web sites:

[www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php](http://www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php) or [http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)

## ~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



From left, Gene Counselman A/1/503d, Wambi Cook and Les Fuller A/2/503d on the summit of Hill 875, Dak To.



# 875 REDUX

By Wambi Cook  
A/2/503d

In the fall of 2007 I asked our stateside Viet Nam travel agency to try and arrange a stop on Hill 875 during our upcoming April tour. Over 128 173d brothers lost their lives during a horrific 5-day battle in late November of 1967. Details of this conflict is readily available via a quick search of Google, Wikipedia, or any number of other internet links, as well as several superlatively produced documentaries that regularly air on the Discovery Channel affiliates.

Anyway, I thoughtlessly expected a positive retort. It would be the first time back for me and Les Fuller. We both served with Alpha Company, 2/503 from February 1967 through the Tet offensive of 1968. The agency got back to me post haste with Viet Nam's official response: *Access on or near Hill 875 DENIED*. No reason for the rebuff was proffered. All was not lost, however.

We were, however, given permission to venture to the site of the 173d's single deadliest *Battle of the Slopes*. Five months earlier, on a like hill located a few kilometers south of 875, *No DEROS Alpha* was annihilated by an elite NVA force. Outnumbered by as many as 10 to 1, Alpha suffered 76 KIAs and over 30 WIAs before noon that June 22nd. Having been fortunate to survive this affray as well, I was more than content with this alternative.



Wambi, Gene, Les & Billie in Vietnam.



And the battle rages on at Hill 875.

Unfortunately, because of my ongoing recent knee surgery limitations, we could only view the *Slopes* from the banks of the nearby PoKo River just off the Dak To airstrip. Perhaps, if we had employed due diligence and pre-planned appropriately, a trek to "Death Hill" would have been approved by the government.

So when I again requested that Hill 875 be part of our itinerary this time around, I received an unexpected and unequivocal affirmative:

*"The luggage will be loaded onto the mini-coach and we will travel to Hill 875. For the journey to Hill 875, passengers will transfer to a four-wheel-drive vehicle. The road is narrow and subject to frequent flooding and landslides. We will stop at the base, where the famous battle took place in November 1967. If guests wish to climb the hill, the round-trip trek will take approximately 4-5 hours, and can be done only if time and weather conditions permit due to the dense jungle terrain. Lunch is included."*

Well, I'll be damned...it just might happen. Reality set in. If successful, Les and I could be the first American combatants who actually fought in the battle to set foot on this hallowed ground. The enormity of this potentially historic endeavor was mind boggling.

The scheduled date (2/22/11) of our ascent fell late in our itinerary and just happened to coincide with the date of the Viet Nam war's first and only mass American combat jump -- again by the 173d's second battalion. A good omen? I asked myself.

(continued...)



First things first. For those dispassionate in reading about the remainder of our tour, skip to Hill 875.

We still had the front-end of our ten-day tour to complete. We would begin our excursion in the capitol city of Hanoi, with side trips to the Ho Chi Minh complex highlighted by a "muted" viewing of Ho's open mausoleum, then Tru Bach Lake, VN Army Museum, and lastly the 20th century French-constructed Maison Centrale, home to the infamous *Hoa Lo Prison*, nicknamed Hanoi Hilton by American POWs.



**Hanoi Hilton, 1973**

Early the next day we flew south to the ancient City of Hue located just below the former DMZ. This segment of our tour included a stimulating expedition through the Imperial Citadel compound where US marines fought 18 days in and around Hue's historic urban streets during the 1968 Tet Offensive. We visited the mausoleum of Emperor Tu Duc (The Last Emperor) and the contiguous Thien Mu Pagoda. The uncomfortable Vinh Moc tunnel system was followed by a stroll over the Hien Long Bridge River, concluding with an evening cruise down the, *not* so fittingly named Perfume River.



**Wambi in Vietnam, with the spoils of war.**

Our well-outfitted late model Mercedes mini-coach then headed south along Highway 1's bravura coastline paralleling the South China Sea (East Sea to Vietnamese). We made stops in and around charming (Yes, beachfront condos up the Ying Yang) Da Nang, Lang Co Beach (China Beach), and finally on to Hoi An City, the former MACV headquarters.

Our stay in Hoi An was highlighted by an evening of the worst karaoke performances imaginable. We departed Hoi An early the next morning. After five grueling hours of driving on the still infamous Highway 14 (Ho Chi Minh Trail), we finally reached Kontum Province and Dak To. That same day we visited several former US military installations as well as the South's largest Catholic wooden church, and its attached orphanage. Many of the staff and students remembered us from our visit in 2008. The children (ages 6 months to 18 years) genuinely appreciated our presence, and our modest donation of cash and clothing. (Special thanks to Billie Fuller).

For the sake of expedience, I've chosen not to expand further on these venues within this report. You're welcome to view photos and videos on my Facebook site. I don't think you have to be a FB member to access them. I also will make available an HD video that I'll gladly share upon request.

## Hill 875

2/22/11



**View from the summit of Hill 875.**

We loaded into the van at 0730 hrs. We'd talked incessantly about the *Hill* for months leading up to this day, and now the day was at hand. Myself, Les Fuller and his wife Billie, and Gene Counselman (A/1/503) had mentally and physically prepared for this day. So we thought.

(continued...)





**173 airborne assault on hill 875.**

We'd viewed copious topography gleaned from internet sites, and even brought along an army surplus compass, as well as a state-of-the-art GPS. Nonetheless, as we were about to transfer to the four-wheeler, there arose varied and sundry questions as to whether we were actually at the Hill 875 site? Three-hundred and sixty degrees of like hills to choose from.

Doubts unpredictably emerged. The maps, in particular, just didn't seem to co-ordinate as expected. Nguyen Vinh, our indigenous Bahnar guide, insisted that indeed the mountain some three kilometers due North of where we stood, was without question, Hill 875.

On several occasions over the past three years, he accompanied an assortment of American vets to the base, but poor weather conditions prevented them from reaching the top. He'd also guided several government-sanctioned expeditions via helicopter, but the terrain was too dangerous to land. To the best of his knowledge, we would be the first Americans to accomplish this feat.



**Sky Soldier doing his thing during battle at Hill 875.**

Our research indicated several trails within close proximity of the *Hill*. There was a nearby negligible side road, but how close it came to the apex of 875 was anybody's guess. The four-wheeler began the first leg of our journey at the base of the narrowest of clay roads imaginable. It soon became apparent that if there were any other vehicles concurrently descending this same access road, a Mexican Standoff was inevitable.

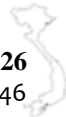
Slowly we elevated the *Hill* overlooking some of the most luscious terrain known to man. Anything can grow on this soil with minimal maintenance. Plant – cultivate - harvest. Simple but so true. As the *Hill's* zenith drew nearer, we wondered aloud how soon it would be before we had to un-ass the Kia and initiate the "hump phase." My mind inexplicably conjured up serious doubts about being physically capable of succeeding. My knees were wrought with arthritis, and the extra pounds I'd put on since my Mother's death last spring were sure to be a monumental hindrance. I dredged for more excuses - the weather in the North was cool and dank. Now inland and farther south, would the all too familiar hot and humid weather prove too daunting for me? Pretext be damned! *I will drive on!*



**875. We gotcha buddy.**

The surrounding mountain ranges of both Cambodia to the west, and Laos northwest became more discernible the higher we climbed. Then, without notice, we were there! The pinnacle. Our journey had ended. The road took us directly to the *Hill's* summit. No, not where 2nd and 4th Battalions or even the 4th Division contingent had dug-in that fateful November, but within the 'enemies' realm.

*(continued....)*





**875. Hang on brother. Help is coming.**

I immediately ran some 15 or so meters and urinated. Not to desecrate nor consecrate this hallowed ground -- I drank a full liter of water on the ride up, and my bladder just took charge.

Les and I simultaneously determined that something just didn't look right. I remembered distinctly the ravage wreaked at the time. The NVA's entire laager was zapped totally of any flora or fauna between 1/19 and 11/23, the day we took the *Hill*. Days of steady bombardments from nearby firebases, along with strategic air strikes laid waste to this non-descript piece of earth. Every tree, bush, bamboo cluster, and blade of elephant grass was destroyed. No species of plant or animal survived this obliteration. Yet before our eyes lay thousands of precisely planted pine trees rimming not only the *Hill's* outer slopes, but the adjoining hills' peak-to-peak as far as the eye could see.

Of course we didn't expect things to look so easily recognizable, but this sight took a moment or two to ponder. After gathering our thoughts, we individually proceeded to reconnoiter the expanse. I quickly came upon overgrown enemy trenches and holes that were

obviously, at one time, one-man gun positions. We chose not to meander too close to the berm for the down slopes still appeared deceptively steep, and probably just as perfidious as they were in 1967. The irony of dying due to stupidity didn't make good sense.

I walked a reduced perimeter with the video camera. I stood and attempted to mentally transport myself to this same place some 43 years past. So many "brothers" I'd lost. Even today, it's hard to accept so many lives sacrificed for so little. I became eerily unnerved, and decided my mental well being would be best served once off this mound of dirt. I'd relived the time all too often over the years and enigmatically wanted off and out of there sooner than later.

Our guide voluntarily answered some of our lingering queries about the *lay of the land*. A dozen or so years prior, this particularly rich land region was designated by the government as an ideal location to start the "Reforestation of Viet Nam."

(continued....)





### No place to land on Hill 875.

It contained some the most idyllic soil, water, and weather conditions for such a prodigious project. Their defiance over the years in forbidding outsiders access to this particular region was not because of their concern regarding the hazard of unexploded ordnance as most had speculated. They'd long since "cleared" the area of such peril. This communistic government's reason for not allowing entry was purely capitalistically economical -- a paper mill was built, and these trees would supply premium pulp for years to come -- why let the general public have easy access and possibly hinder their progress and profit.

After another 15 minutes of reflection (and several sandwich baggies full of rich souvenir red clay) we headed toward Hill 882 -- two thousand meters due north. Gene's company (A/1/503) was also engaged with a formidable VC force at the same time as 875, and our maps indicated a strong possibility of fulfilling his dream as well. We got within 150 meters of his goal, when "official types" shooed us away. Something was off-limits to our purview. No reason given. We chose prudence over valor and descended at a deliberate, but casual pace.

As soon as we began our descent, I thought perhaps I had not demonstrated fitting reverence towards this momentous point in time. I came to the realization that no amount of introspection would ever be adequate at that moment. As time passes, I'm certain a host of salient feelings of this incredible journey will continue to resonate in our hearts and minds for years to come.

For those readers who may now consider undertaking a comparable journey -- I suggest you make it sooner than later. Who knows what Viet Nam's fickle regime has in store for the *Hill's* future? Our quest to Hills 875 and 882 could possibly have been the last for outsiders, especially American veterans.

I must also thank Robert Frazier, Counselor for Management Affairs, and his staff and colleagues at the US Embassy in Hanoi, who allowed us unprecedented access to the embassy offices for a 'state of affairs' briefing. In addition, a huge hand of gratitude to Angela Dickey, Deputy Consul General, and her staff with the US Consulate who personally acted as our guide through the grounds of the Consulate in Saigon.

The emotional scars many of us continue to bear from our Viet Nam experiences will probably remain until we leave this kingdom. However, I personally have long forgiven in my heart, mind, and soul, any malevolence I held toward the innocent populace of Viet Nam. The past will never overwhelm my future.

We dedicate this voyage to those brave souls who never made it off any *Hill*.

*"Sweet is war to those who have never experienced it"*



## A Hill Too Far

In Wambi's report you read he mentions they also attempted to scale Hill 882 where the 1st of the 503d battled at Dak To, yet authorities kept them from reaching the summit. They did make it partway up that Hill. Ed



This photo is of Hill 882. If you look over my right shoulder you can see the Vietnamese flag. We made it to where the car is.

**Gene Counselman**

**A/1/503d**



# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Amidst Greatness

By Connie Walker

I am elated to write the Chaplain's message for the 2/503d Newsletter. I'm Chaplain Conrad (Connie) Walker, COL, Ret., and I served with the Herd from April '66-'67. I humped it with the 2nd Battalion for about six months until Chaplain (Father) Charlie Watters and Chaplain Robert Crick arrived and I was called up to serve with Brigade. What an honor to walk and serve amidst greatness, the phenomenal Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d Battalion!



*The Leapin' Deacon*

Psalm 33:8-9, 12 "Earth – Creatures, bow before God; world-dwellers – down on your knees!"

Here's why: He spoke and there it was, in place the moment He said so.

***"Blessed is the country with God for God; Blessed are the people He put in His will."***

An awesome moment, a crucial moment, a prayerful moment penetrated the entire Constitutional Convention of 1787! A most serious and hostile debate was taking place over representation, generally small states against larger states and interests. The situation became ugly and extremely hostile. The UNION was about to break up. It was that bad! Shockingly and surprisingly, something very unexpected happened as the UNION was about to split and some delegates had already packed up and departed, to include New York. Eighty-one year old honored servant of our beloved Nation, Ben Franklin, rose to speak, all sat at their seats' edge to focus and carefully LISTEN.

*"In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for Divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of superintending Providence in our favor.... And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?"*

*I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?"*

*We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings that except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that, without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial local interests; our projects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages.*

*And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom and leave it to chance, war or conquest.*

***I, THEREFORE, BEG LEAVE TO MOVE THAT, HENCEFORTH, PRAYERS IMPLORING THE ASSISTANCE OF HEAVEN AND ITS BLESSING ON OUR DELIBERATION BE HELD IN THIS ASSEMBLY EVERY MORNING BEFORE WE PROCEED TO BUSINESS."***

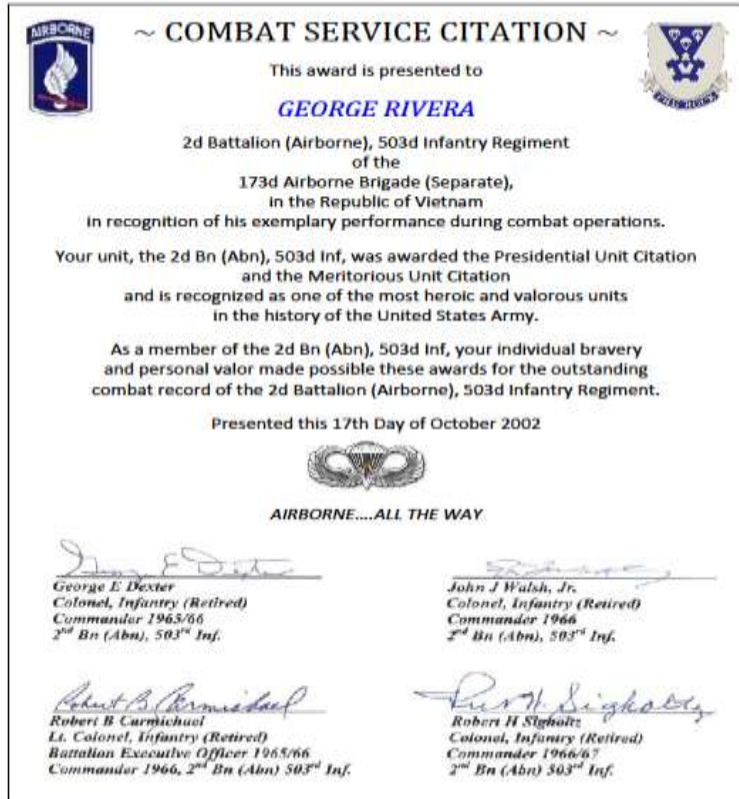
WOW! What a Proclamation! Things settled down, selfishness waned, they returned to business at hand, crafting and declaring a new Constitution and Bill of Rights under Washington's aegis. These cherished documents work beyond the Framers' fondest dreams, as do our prayers in our Almighty God, Savior Jesus, and Winsome Holy Spirit's Name. Amen



**Chaplain Connie Walker**  
*"The Leapin' Deacon"*  
National Chaplain Emeritus  
173d Airborne Association and  
Military Order of the Purple Heart



The following note from George Rivera was sent after he received his *2/503d Combat Service Citation* issued and signed by four of our former battalion commanders, Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh and Sigholtz, in recognition of and appreciation for his service in combat with the 2/503d. If you served with the 2/503d during any time in Vietnam and have not received your Combat Service Citation, please send a note to [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) Ed



~ A Heartfelt Note of Thanks ~

Yes, I have received the letter of gratitude and the certificate as well. Very many thanks to the officers who conceived this welcomed acknowledgment of our participation in a none too popular war. An additional special thanks to the officers who endorsed them. I am very grateful for this award.

I also would like to mention the unknown Air Force Fighter Bomber Pilots who flew so close to us that I could at times see their white helmets as they flew between the ridges below us and so close over us that I could make out their tail numbers. Many of us who were there are here because of their gallant attacks against an enemy determined to kill us. On two separate occasions I was under Spooky, Shadow and Scepter protection overnight. I want to acknowledge and thank them as well.



COL Dexter



LTC Carmichael

I am here because they were there over there guarding us all night.

When I say *I*, I speak collectively, not of myself -- I was not alone. There were many of us there trying to stay alive. I sometimes think of actions where young men performed acts of bravery and received no awards of recognition even though they deserved them. This certificate of recognition helps seal that wound. God bless all the survivors and have mercy on the departed. I am so proud to have served with them. I had never, except during the past two years, worn any military gear, but two Veterans Day's ago a close friend, Johnnie H. Williams, said to me, "*George, why don't you wear your colors? Are you ashamed of the your service?*" I said, no, but secretly I was.

I have a friend, Johnny Santiago, who is a vendor of military paraphernalia who gave me a 173d cap to wear. Everywhere I go people recognize the The Herd. Two years ago during Fleet Week in New York City, I was aboard a guided missile cruiser just wandering around. A young soldier came up to me and said, "*Sir, thank you for service. You have been a great inspiration to us all. The 173d is still recognized as the top frontline unit in the Army.*"

I almost cried right there, but I saved it for home. Then I cried. It was the first time that anyone had said anything like that to me -- it has been repeated very often.

People know who we were, and respect who we are. I am very proud to have served with such a fine group of officers and men under such austere conditions, and prevailed. Thank you Lord.

And, an Airborne Thanks to Colonel George Dexter, Colonel Bob Carmichael and Colonel Walsh for your leadership and support during a difficult period in all of our lives. A spiritual thanks and gratitude as well to Colonel Sigholtz and Colonel William B. (Wild Bill) Hornish and all those who have gone before us. I must mention that as I was an artillery observer, I was rotated between 2/503d Companies. I wish to acknowledge the officers and men of all the companies of the Second Battalion for having helped as many as they did get home. All the Way Sirs!

**George L. Rivera**  
2/503d Artillery Observer  
E/2/503d Recon (Wildcats)



COL Walsh



COL Sigholtz



# CHALLENGE COIN RULES

## (173d Coin Check)

**Note: A "Coin Check" consists of a Challenge and a Response.**

### 1. RULES:

A. The challenge is initiated by drawing your coin, holding it in the air by whatever means possible and state, scream, shout or otherwise verbally acknowledge that you are initiating a coin check. Another, but less vocal method is to firmly place it on the bar, table, or floor (this should produce an audible noise which can be easily heard by those being challenged, but try not to leave a permanent imprint on the bar top). If you accidentally drop your coin and it makes an audible sound upon impact, then you have just "accidentally" initiated a coin check. (This is called 'paying the price' for improper care of your coin).



B. The response consists of all those persons being challenged drawing their coin in a like manner.

C. If you are challenged and are unable to properly respond, you must buy a round of drinks for the challenger and the group being challenged.



D. If everyone being challenged responds in the correct manner, the challenger must buy a round of drinks for all those people they challenged.

E. Failure to buy a round is a despicable crime and will require that you turn-in your Coin to the issuing agency.

### 2. WHEN - WHERE:

A. Coin checks are permitted, ANYTIME, ANY PLACE.

### 3. EXCEPTIONS:

A. There are no exceptions to the rules. They apply to those clothed or unclothed. At the time of the challenge you are permitted one step and an arm's reach to locate your coin. If you still cannot reach it -- SORRY ABOUT THAT!



4. A MILITARY COIN IS A COIN.

5. A coin on a belt buckle is a

BELT BUCKLE (see #4 above) and does not count.

6. A coin on a key chain is a KEY CHAIN (see #4 above) and does not count.



7. A coin in a holder worn on a chain around the neck *IS* a COIN! (see #4 above).

The foregoing is used with permission of and thanks to CoinForce.com!

New Rule: Any sailor, Marine or airman in the presence of a Sky Soldier must always buy whether or not they have a coin. Try it, it might work!

[Sent in by Col. Tim Cloonan, 173d Bde Surgeon, LZ English, who was caught coinless one night at the Cocoa Beach VFW, and should be carefully read by Cowboy chopper pilot Tony Geishauser, another woeful coinless victim]



## ~ Correction ~

In last month's issue of our Newsletter (Page 23), we stated this Saber captured on Corregidor by 503rd trooper Chuck Breit, was on display in the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, GA...it is not. Instead, it was donated to the 503rd Assault Group in Korea in care of LTC Christopher B. Pritchett, CDR, 1/503 Inf. on 1 May 1995, for their Regimental Room.



**"The God of War hates those who hesitate."**

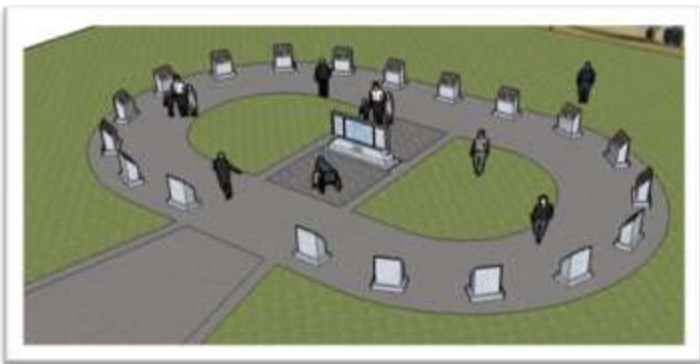
- Euripides 480-406 bc



## The Airborne Battle Memorial



Presently under construction (Jan 2011) on Eubanks Field, the Memorial is just 100 feet from the Airborne Walk at the US Army Airborne School, Fort Benning. The opening ceremony is to be on April 8, 2011 during the Airborne Awards Festival. This project has been in planning since 2003, when first suggested to Don Lassen, President of the Airborne Historical Association by LTC Aidis Zunde, 1/507 PIR (Airborne School) commander. The AHA is the official sponsor of the Airborne Walk: the graduation and ceremonial area of the US Army Airborne School. The AHA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded by Donald D. Lassen in 1980. It built the Airborne Walk in 1986 and has managed it ever since. It is funding this new memorial through donations and sale of personalized pavers.



The **Sloped Top** contains: bronze plaque with primary unit, date, location, operation name. The **Vertical Front** contains: all units of company level and higher that inserted by parachute or glider.

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

## Helping Mates Down Under



My Brothers:

I'm sure you are all aware of our situation with the devastating floods here in Australia; our country is underwater requiring much needed help and money. Over the years we, as a small 173d Chapter, have helped in every way we possible could to honour our 173d brothers and their families. There are so many poor souls with their entire world gone underwater and forever, even losing family relics which had been passed down through history.



A.B.

Whole families have lost everything!! My heart goes out to these people.

I would be honored if you can help in some way. I don't know how you could, but we need your help. This easily could have been me and my family, or yours. Our Australian brothers and families need all the help they can get and from all over the world.

I am personally organizing Harley rides to raise donations for flood victims. I have also enlisted the help of radio stations, and they are making regular announcements and appeals for financial aid. I did this same thing for the tragic fires of a couple of years ago.

We were able to rally about 30 bikes and raised money to help our people. If you can, you can, if not, you will always be my brothers. Thank you for any amount you are able to contribute to this worthy cause.

**[Internet Banking to:](#)**  
**Premier's Disaster Relief Appeal**  
**BSB: 064013 Account No. 1000-6800**  
**Swift Code: CTBAU2S**

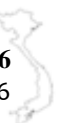
Thanks for helping! *Airborne, All The Way!!*



A.B. Garcia, HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

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## \$3.3M FOR WORLD'S FIRST VIETNAM VETERAN'S EDUCATION CENTRE IN US

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Warren Snowdon, today launched the Australian Government's commitment of \$3.3 million towards a world-first education centre in Washington DC honouring Vietnam veterans.

The Prime Minister said the Vietnam Veterans Education Centre will be a state of the art digital education and exhibit facility located on the Mall in Washington, dedicated to educating visitors about the Vietnam War.

The project was initially announced last year as part of a Labor election commitment.



**Prime Minister Gillard**

- \$1.5 million for interpretive material for permanent display and development of displays for special occasions such as Anzac Day, Long Tan Day and other commemorations.



**Minister Snowdon**

The Government is pleased to support this unique opportunity to honour the 60,000 Australian servicemen and women who served in the Vietnam War, more than 35 years ago.

In time the Centre will become a place of quiet pilgrimage for our veterans and their families, and for any Australian who wants to pay their respects.

To mark the announcement, three Vietnam veterans accompanied the Prime Minister and Minister Snowdon to Washington DC to visit the site of the Centre: Mrs. Terrie Ross, the Hon. Graham Edwards, and Mr. Arthur Francis, CSC, OAM.

We cannot thank our Vietnam veterans enough for their courage and sacrifice. This remarkable undertaking will be a source of pride to them, and their families, and represent our ongoing commitment to recognising their service to Australia.

The Vietnam Veterans Education Centre is expected to cost US \$80 million. While the project is currently in its infancy, as it is developed Ex Service Organisations and the Australian War memorial will be consulted.



Our participation in this project is a powerful opportunity to explain the Australian contribution to the Vietnam War to the American people and to further strengthen our long-standing relationship with the United States.

Australia's funding commitment currently comprises:

- \$1 million to ensure Australia's input in shaping the plans for the Centre including Australia's footprint within the facility;
- \$0.52 million for a 'Wall of Faces' – a photographic image display of 520 Australian War Dead from the Vietnam War alongside their US comrades;

Construction is planned to commence in 2012. For more information on the centre including a virtual tour visit [www.buildthecenter.org](http://www.buildthecenter.org). Artists' concepts of the Centre and images of the veterans travelling to Washington are available on the DVA Media Centre.

**Veteranweb Network**  
[raypayne@veteranweb.asn.au](mailto:raypayne@veteranweb.asn.au)

[Sent in by Ray Payne, 1RAR & Ken Smith, A/D/2/503d]



## BEERS AIN'T BEERS

During the northern summer of 2004 my family and I were traveling around the USA and Canada, and in July of that year I celebrated my 60th birthday while in New Jersey, staying at my brother-in-law's home.



It had always been a bit of a dream for me to see a real live professional baseball game in America. As part of my birthday gifts my nephew, Andrew, gave me and my youngest son, Alexander, who celebrated his seventh birthday the day after mine, tickets to see a ball game at Yankee Stadium.

On this particular day the Yankees played the Tampa Bay Devil Rays and we had the choice of sitting up in the stands behind home plate or down on the third base line, three rows back from the field, so naturally we chose the third base seats.

It only took a short while before Alexander was into the game as much as I was and we were having a ball. He thought it was great the way the blokes walking around threw hot dogs and popcorn to people in the seats and how the money was passed along, and I was enjoying not having to get up to go for a beer as it was brought around for the fans. However by the end of the 6th inning the beer was getting a little warm for me to enjoy and when the seventh inning stretch came, I went up to buy a cold one (couple actually) and that's where the fun started.

The lady at the beer booth was a smallish black lady, probably a bit younger than I, and she was a real joy with her good nature and pleasant attitude. I was looking at the beers on display but they all looked the same to me and I was trying to make up my mind and asked her which the best brew on sale was. She looked at me and said; "Oh, you would want a Foster's and I don't have that, I'm sorry." I answered her in mock tones of disdain: "Do you know that none of us drink that at home?" She said; "Why not, it's Australia's best beer?" to which I answered; "No it's not, we only sell it to you folks here in America, Britain and China." She asked me how this was so I told her: "Well, we don't want the rest of the world to know what are our best beers as, otherwise, they would all come taking it and we would find it hard to get a decent beer". When she asked me what were the best beers I told her, Carlton Draught in Victoria, XXXX (they can't spell beer up there) in Queensland, and Coopers in South Australia, which are all OK but not as good as my home state beer.

She then asked me what was my home state beer and I whispered to her "Tooheys," and that we have two types; a very heavy 'OLD' type which we call BLACK that we Novacastrians drink at the pubs around my home area of Newcastle and the Hunter Region, and a pale ale we call 'NEW' which is much lighter that we drink at home or at Bar-B-Qs and such.

She said; "Tooheys, I ain't never heard of that," to which I replied; "Yes, we keep it a secret so you people from the north side of the equator won't come down and drink it all on us!" Her answer was "Oh, you Aussies!" and she was still laughing as I walked away with the two beers I bought from her. But, if you offered me \$100. I couldn't tell you what they were now, I just remember that they were nice and cold and I got back to my seat to watch the game, which, incidentally, the Yankees won by about 5 runs or so.

Sky Soldiers, come on down and I will buy you one or three.

**John Arnold  
1RAR**



*Hey Mate, it's fun being an Aussie.*

Thanks John, but I think I'll stick with Bud Lite. Ed

**"Surrender? Don't be  
bloody silly.  
We're Australian."**

- Anonymous



# NEWS FROM...HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS - RANKING DEMOCRAT MEMBER FILNER

Contact: David Tucker at (202) 225-9756

<http://democrats.veterans.house.gov/>

## Congress Must Act Now to Restore Earned Benefits *to All Vietnam Veterans - Including "Blue Water" Vets!*

Washington, D.C. – House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Democratic Member Bob Filner (D-CA-51) announced the introduction of the Agent Orange Equity Act, H.R. 812, a bill that would restore equity to all Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange.

*"We owe it to our veterans to fulfill the promises made to them as a result of their service,"* said Ranking Democratic Member Filner.

**"If, as a result of service, a veteran was exposed to Agent Orange and it has resulted in failing health, this country has a moral obligation to care for each veteran the way we promised we would. And as a country at war, we must prove that we will be there for all of our veterans, no matter when they serve. The courts have turned their backs on our veterans on this issue, but I believe this Congress should not allow our veterans to be cheated of benefits they have earned and deserve."**

H.R. 812 would clarify the laws related to VA benefits provided to Vietnam War veterans suffering from the ravages of Agent Orange exposure. In order to try to gain a better military vantage point, Agent Orange, which we now know is a highly toxic cocktail of herbicide agents, was widely sprayed for defoliation and crop destruction purposes all over the Vietnam War Battlefield, as well as on borders and other areas of neighboring nations.

Currently, VA requires Vietnam veterans to prove a "foot on land" occurrence in order to qualify for the presumptions of service-connection for related illnesses afforded under current law. This issue has been the subject of much litigation and on May 8, 2008, the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals upheld VA's overly narrow interpretation and the Supreme Court later denied certiorari essentially affirming this ruling. However, Congress clearly did not intend to exclude these veterans from compensation based on arbitrary geographic line drawing by VA. Many stakeholders agree.



**Bob Filner**

H.R. 812 is intended to clarify the law so that Blue Water veterans and every service member awarded the Vietnam Service medal, or who otherwise deployed to land, sea or air, in the Republic of Vietnam is fully covered by the comprehensive Agent Orange laws Congress passed in 1991. *"Time is running out for these veterans,"* concluded Ranking Democratic Member Filner...

**"Many are dying from their Agent Orange related diseases, uncompensated for their sacrifice. There is still a chance for America to meet its obligations to these noble veterans. This is not a partisan issue and I hope the new Chairman of the Committee will join me in working work with our colleagues to provide the earned disability benefits and health care to the thousands of veterans and survivors that earned this care for their selfless service to our nation."**

[Sent in by Bob Madden, B/2/503d]



## Memories of the 4/503d

When the 4/503d arrived in RVN in June of 1966, and we went out on a major operation in Aug. 1966, PFC Paul Epley, 173d PIO Photographer and Henri Huet had been "hanging around with us" in the field. Henri Huet interviewed and took photos of former French Foreign Legionnaire and Paratrooper, SP4 Ruediger Richter of HHC 4/503d and LTC Michael D. Healy's "bodyguard".

On 14 Aug. 1966, PFC Daryl R. Coreman, A/4/503d, was killed by a mortar round. PFC Epley and Henri Huet were standing next to me when they were taking the photos of "Rudy" Richter and SGT Daniel Spencer who was later KIA with the 5th SF on 12 Nov. 68. Spencer was a CPL when KIA.

Henri Huet took an award winning photo of the body, Rudy Richter and Daniel Spencer and a Far East Press Award was given to Henri Huet. Rudy Richter was looking up at the sky through the smoke and the sunlight was coming down on Rudy, boy what a photo!

The University of Southern California had a big week long session about Viet Nam many years ago, and the famous photo by Henri Huet was on display at USC, but no story about the photographer. I told one of the students overlooking the photo display that I wanted to talk to the Journalism Professor who put together the photo collection and chew him out for not giving Henri Huet the credit that was due. A few years ago, I wrote to USC and tried to see if they had stored the famous photo by Henri Huet but they could not locate the photo. I know someone in New Jersey who has a copy of the famous photo and I will try and get a copy made for me and forward you a copy.

Paul Epley's photo was entitled "the Agony of War" and was used in books, magazines and in other events. When the 4/503d shipped out from the Oakland Army Terminal on 6 June 1966, aboard the USNS General John Pope, PFC Reed Cundiff was assigned to HHC and Bob Stowell was also assigned to the 4/503d. A few months after we were in Viet Nam, the 173d Long Range Patrol Platoon was looking for some new members. SSG Kaiama, 2LT Bob Stowell, PFC Laszlo Rabel, PFC Reed Cundiff, PFC Raul Santiago and a few others from the 4/503d volunteered for the LRRP's.

Laszlo Rabel was KIA on 13 Nov. 68, and he was already a hero from Budapest, Hungary, and he helped save some young kids by helping them leave Hungary during the revolution against the Russians. He joined

the US Army to fight the communist again and he received the Medal of Honor.

In 1987, I attended the 173d reunion in Orlando, FL, and I met Sid Smith and we talked about Laszlo Rabel and I lent him some photos of Laszlo Rabel, and I'm still waiting for those photos!

**Ray Ramirez**  
**Recon/4/503d**



*The Agony of War, Photo by Paul Epley, Bde PIO*

**Note:** See the March 2010, Issue 13, Page 5 of our newsletter for background story on Paul's photo. Ed

### *"The Year of the Pathfinder"*

**2011 Convention**

*Sponsored by the  
National Pathfinder Association*

**Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**July 19-23, 2011**

[nationalpathfinderassociation.com](http://nationalpathfinderassociation.com)



# 4th / 503d



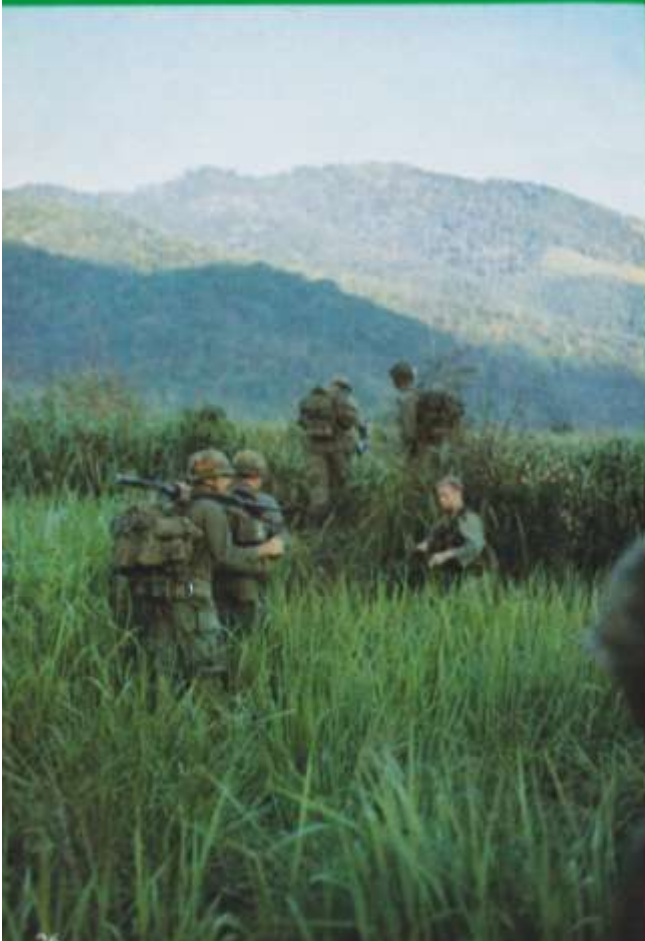
The close of 1970 brought with it an end to the concentrated pacification efforts of the 4th Battalion. On Jan. 6, 1971, the Geronimo Battalion relinquished control of LZ North English and the installation was turned over to ARVN Forces.

The battalion relocated at LZ English and the infantry companies moved into the treacherous enemy strongholds of Phu My, Hoi An, and Hoi Nhon Districts.

The troopers conducted combat and reconnaissance-in-force missions seeking to destroy the ever elusive enemy. Miles of foot trails were covered and many grueling hours under the scorching rays of a tropical sun were spent before that search paid off in large numbers.

In April 1971 the paratroopers were rewarded for their intensive searches. An element of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry engaged a large force of North Vietnamese Regulars. The Geronimo troopers were called upon to reinforce their sister battalion in a battle that was to span an eight day period.

The men of the Geronimo Battalion, aided by elements of the 2d Bn., 503d Inf. fought gallantly against a determined enemy. Massive air strikes and a multitude of artillery barrages served to rout many of the NVA soldiers from their fortified positions. During the action the combined forces accounted for more than 100 enemy soldiers killed as well as capturing a variety of weapons and munitions.



Sent in by Richard Pasillas, D/4/503d





# 173d REUNION ITINERARY

(Tentative, subject to change)



## June 22 -- Wednesday

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



## June 23 -- Thursday

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



## June 27 -- Friday

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

**Maverick Plaza**

## June 25 -- Saturday

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

### **BANQUET DINNER**

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



**The Alamo**

## June 26 -- Sunday

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

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





# 173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION ~ REUNION 2011 ~



22 June – 26 June 2011, San Antonio, TX

Hosted by Texas Chapter 13

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Unit served with in the Brigade \_\_\_\_\_ Dates served \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Guests:**

Circle Male or Female and Shirt Size for each guest

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

**Registration/ Event Fees**

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



Hilton Palacio del Rio, San Antonio, Texas

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Enclosed

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

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

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

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

Register online:

[www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011](http://www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011)



## Terrence "Terry" L. Boggs E/3/503d

Terrence "Terry" L. Boggs, 61, of Blain Highway, Waverly, Ohio died January 1, 2011 at the V.A. Medical Center, Chillicothe, Ohio. Terry was born April 29, 1949 in Ross County, Ohio, son of the late Arnold Boggs and Esther Leann (McQuay) Boggs.



Surviving are two children, Jacob T. Boggs (Teresa Quitugua) of Washington D.C. and Adrienne Boggs Glandon (Mike) of Chillicothe, Ohio; his canine companions, LG and Obama; a brother, Robert Boggs (Mona) of Chillicothe, his significant other, Phyllis Dunsieith and close friend, Bob Tennant. I feel another person bears

mentioning in my dad's obituary - my brother, Brent Payne. Although my parents divorced almost 25 years ago, dad still regarded Brent as his stepson.



In addition to his parents, two sisters, Geraldine Park and Sandra Boggs Best, a brother, Wallace Boggs, canine companion, Patches preceded Terry in death.

Terry was a retired electrician with Chilpaco in Chillicothe, Choir Director at the Paint Grill, U.S. Army Veteran of the Vietnam Era receiving the bronze star in 1970, and a member of the Chilpaco Union. He was also a life member of 82nd Airborne Division Association and the VFW Chillicothe Post 108, a member of the Society of the 173d Airborne Brigade, Eagles



Lodge in Waverly, American Legion Post 62, Chillicothe and Associate Member of the 503rd RCT, WWII



Memorial Contributions may be made to the Wounded Warrior Project.

*Rest easy Trooper.*



## Our Dog Handlers and Their Wonderful Partners

From the beaches of Vung Tau, to the jungles of the Iron Triangle, through the rubber plantations surrounding Da Lat and Tay Ninh, sweeping the Ia Drang Valley west of Pleiku, then north, taking the NVA held mountains above Dak To, protecting the highly vital highway 19 corridor, and finally, securing the An Lao valley and the Bon Song coastal plains. For five years the Scout Teams of the 39th always were out in front. *"We're moving out! Dogman, take the point!"*



### Ran Him Ragged...

We had a scout dog with us one day. Tired that poor old boy out in the high ground -- he worked very hard. The handler (a guy named Jim from the Pittsburgh area) had to carry the dog back across his shoulders.

**Jerry Sopko**  
D/4/503d

### We Came to Love and Trust Those Dogs...

I was part of a 5 man point squad who pulled this duty everyday for our company in Dak To for five straight months leading to 875. We came to love and trust those dogs. I believe we abandoned everyone of them when we left Vietnam. The only dog I ever owned was a German Shepherd many years later. She lived for 13 years and was an incredible dog.

**Roger Dick**  
C/2/503d

*(continued....)*



### Doggone Dog...

This is not a 173d dog story, but happened in March '66 on Operation Silver City. 1RAR and E/17 Cav were securing the 'other side' of the river bank while the HQ and guns were on the LZ side. 2/503d moved through us. The VC had been sneaking up and setting off their claymores towards E/17 Cav. One of our small ambushes saw a bunch of these guys tippy-toeing along and opened fire. There was a ginormous explosion as the big claymore detonated. In the follow-up I came to the spot where the explosion was – 35 paces across, no leaves left, blood and mince splattered all over and up in the trees. From somewhere an ARVN dog team arrived. The dog was a good-natured pooch and frisked around. We left the company position with the intention that the dog would pick-up the trail of the survivors and take us to them. Well, we walked to the explosion site with not a sign from the dog, out for a stroll with these new friends. He walked right through the blood-spattered scene, nary a sign but happiness. Our enthusiasm started to fade. About 100 yards past the scene, suddenly the dog perked up. Tail bristled, up went the ears; the dog halted...now it was a military dog! Then it spun around, looked back at the bomb scene and indicated 'enemy!' – pointing right at Sergeant Smudger Smith, platoon sergeant! We reverted to human tracking and put the dog at the rear.

**Lex McAulay**  
1RAR



### Good Job...

The above photo is of a scout working with 2nd Platoon, B/2/503d. I think it was in 1966. It was a good team. Those guys did a good job and relied on the dog to protect them too! I took the photo below sometime in 1966.

**Dave "Griff" Griffin**  
HHC/B/2/503d

### The Wounded Handler at LZ Zulu-Zulu...

(Notes from 9/24/2002)

His name was Arron or Orin Johnson and he was medic'd, insisted his dog must go with him on the chopper but the CO was standing there and said the dog would take up too much space....needed it for the other wounded. When we were finally extracted some days later, the dog was left behind on the LZ. Never heard anymore about it or Johnson. And we never used scouts or their dogs again while I finished my tour. I don't know if it was because of that incident or the forthcoming situations just never figured their services worthwhile. I know for a fact tho that Johnson's dog kept us from walking into an ambush a couple of days before the shit hit the fan on the 16th.

**Tom Wallace**  
A/2/503d

Damn. That's the first bit of hard evidence I've heard about the kid since that fateful day. Another little piece of the puzzle has been found....he was on the "A" Co. line. I imagine he and his dog were attached to us on Silver City (March '66), and not being a regular that may be the reason no one recalls him. If he was conscious and worried about his dog while being put on the Dustoff, it sounds like there's an excellent chance he survived.... sure hope so. Too bad about the dog, he didn't leave his master even tho' bullets were flying by his ears...dumb and loyal, kinda like PFC's and husbands! Stuff like this kinda grabs you in your gut. During the battle I crawled over to him, someone had already put a makeshift bandage on his gut wound. He was lying on his back with his head propped against a tree, his shivering dog at his feet. He couldn't speak, but just looked at me through helpless eyes. I held his hand for a moment and told him he'd be o.k. and we'd get him out of there, but I thought to myself there's no way he's going to survive. There was no way to move him during the fight and I had to leave him there. Thanks for the news on Johnson, Tom, I've thought of him off and on for over 36 years, you made my day.

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

**Note: If anyone knows Johnson the dog handler please hook me up with him, thanks. [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)**



**Kennel area at Bien Hoa, August '66. 39th IPSD website.**



## ~ If Only I Could Talk ~

By: **R. "Pete" Peters**  
39th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog)

### **My military career began in late 1965 or early 1966.**

I cannot be sure of the exact date because as a civilian I had no use for calendars. My life consisted of sleeping and waking up whenever I felt like it, getting fed, and having the run of the house. I had it made and I knew it. I would gladly have gone through my whole life there with my job title of "Pet". But that was not to be. My life was to drastically change.



One day two strangers appeared at my house. I had never seen people dressed exactly alike before, and I guess that made me a little uneasy. My natural instincts were to be wary of them so I raised the hairs on my back just enough to make them aware of just who was boss here. It didn't go unnoticed, but nothing was said. After signing a bunch of papers, my owner was given a leather, basket-like contraption that I had never seen the likes of before. When he held it out and called "*Here, Budda*". I went to him eagerly to get what I thought was a new toy.

I will never forget the shock of that thing going over my face and being buckled in place. This was the first time I had ever been muzzled. To make matters worse, a silver chain was put in place over my head and my old leather collar with the brass name and address plate on it was removed and discarded.

Immediately after that I was led out the front door of the only home I had ever known, never to return. I was led to the street and placed in an aluminum box with air holes in it. If I could only talk I would have let them know that this must be some sort of mix-up or something. The box was then placed in the back of a truck, and away I went to my new life in the military.

*(continued....)*



**A dedicated young man and his dog.**

I served from Feb. 69 till Sept. 69. The battalion rotated the scout dogs in and out on several occasions. The photo above is from one of those times. I was always glad to have them with us because they could definitely alert on things we could not hear. The young man in my photo was such a nice kid. I always felt for them as they were moved around and never really had a HOME unit. On Easter day 1969, our platoon, 3-C/Lima, was the reactionary platoon to go in for a platoon that was overrun by an element of a NVA battalion. Of the platoon I know there were 100% casualties and we recovered 12 or 13 dead and one scout dog. I'll never forget that day as some of the dead had ring fingers cut off and others were shot in the head that probably would have lived from their initial wounds. I never determined if the kid in my photo was one of the KIA's. The best I could determine in this photo the handlers' name was Boyer or Boyder. He was a dedicated young man and I was glad to have him with us. I do not know but hope he was one of the few that got out that night. AATW

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



I was taken to the K-9 Processing Center at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas where I met many others who had met the same fate as I. We were constantly poked, prodded, measured, and weighed during this period of our induction. The guys in the uniforms called it "physical and emotional profiling". I called it "BS"!!! They wrote in my records that I had an "attitude problem".

After a couple of weeks of this it was determined that I was physically fit, and had the required attributes to remain in the military and become a Scout Dog. I wish I could have told them my thoughts on the subject, especially about what the veterinarian did with that thermometer. *Ouch!!!* Next, it was back into the aluminum crate and off to basic training.

The flight to Georgia was uneventful and lasted only a couple of hours. Upon our arrival there we were assigned to the 39th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog). This unit had seen action in the Philippines in WWII and in Korea. Now, in March 1966, they were being reactivated for Vietnam and I was to be a part of it all. Sgt. Bob Brown was assigned to be my handler.

We had loads of conflicts over just who was to have control over whom. Eventually we came to the understanding that for the time being we would merely tolerate each other and hope for the best. After all, he was the one who fed and cared for me.

Basic training was the pits. We were green dogs being trained with and by, equally green handlers. What a circus! It was day after day of nothing but "circle training". We had a steady diet of "NO", "HEEL", "SIT", "STAY", and "DOWN". The only one I had a problem with was "NO". It just wasn't in keeping with my nature. If I could only talk I would tell them that this was all BS, and they could send me back home any time.

Then one day we didn't do that circle thing. Sgt. Brown strapped me into a leather harness and removed my choke chain. Then he took me for a walk down a narrow path through the woods. Not too bad so far. He kept saying things like "SEARCH", and "EASY". I had no idea what he was talking about at the time, and was unable to ask. Suddenly I sensed that we were not alone there. I had caught a whiff of someone else, and that made me nervous. My natural instincts took over, causing me to raise my head slightly and smell into the wind to detect whoever was there. My ears perked up and rotated forward to detect any sound that might help

me pinpoint this person. As I was unsure of his intent, my muscles tensed and the hairs on my back stood up. Sgt. Brown quickly moved forward, kneeling just behind me and with both arms outstretched pointed in the same direction that I was looking.

He began patting my shoulder and said "*Attaboy Budda, attaboy*". Then we advanced upwind and suddenly somebody burst from the bushes and ran away. We both gave chase, but I guess Sgt. Brown was a bit slower than me because I couldn't quite catch up with the decoy because the leash restrained me.



If I could talk I would have said "*Damn, this is FUN*". But all I could do was bark and jump around. We did this a few more times and it finally sank into my hard head that this was what we were supposed to do. Hey, this is easy. And the more we did it the easier it was. I was having fun, and suddenly Army life didn't seem too bad.

This all went on until July of 1966. Then one day as we were taken out in the morning we saw a line of those aluminum crates again. There were 27 crates in all, one for each of us. I knew we would be traveling again. I had no idea that I had a one way ticket to a combat zone.

The platoon had three 2 1/2 ton trucks, a jeep, and a utility trailer. We, in our crates, were loaded into two of the trucks. Our rations, water cans, veterinary supplies, tents, and other gear went into the trailer. The remaining deuce and a half was for all of our handlers and their duffel bags. We set out from Fort Benning bound for Warner Robins Air Force Base near Macon, Georgia. The 80 mile convoy trip was hot in those darned crates. If I could talk I sure would have told them a thing or two. I was really tired of this crate business! But we all thought we would be out of them now that we were here. **WRONG!**

Our little convoy split into two groups and they drove right onto the flight line and right up the rear ramps on the two C-141 Starlifters that were waiting there for us. As soon as everything was chained down and secure, we took off. This was a far longer trip than any of us had expected. After a 2 hour refueling stop in Alaska and another in Japan, we finally landed at Tan Son Nhut airbase in Vietnam after 27 hours. Damn, did those planes ever stink by then!

*(continued...)*



Our arrival date was July 26, 1966. We stayed there at "tent city B" for a couple of days and then our orders came down. We were being assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa. When we got there, our area was just a clearing in the woods, just inside the perimeter. The squad tents went up for our handlers, and we were staked out next to our crates. Construction of my new home was started almost immediately. We were attached to the Engineer company and they had the materials, equipment, and know-how to build my kennels and the hooches for the men. Items that we couldn't get through normal channels were gotten either by trading out some extra dog food, or by a "midnight requisition". I think that was how the emergency fire pump appeared behind the kennels one morning. It was just the thing for washing down our runs each day. A little over-kill though.

My first combat mission was during Operation Toledo in August, 1966. When we returned to the kennels after the 28 day operation where all of the handlers were awarded their Combat Infantryman Badges. Although we dogs were not eligible for military awards or decorations, many of our handlers passed them along to us in appreciation of a job well done.

There was little rest for us at the kennels. Dogs needed to be worked on a daily basis to maintain their sharpness and physical conditioning. New training was initiated to pass on what was learned during the previous missions.

There was a 30 acre area adjacent to the kennel area that was all woods and a stream. This made an excellent training area to run our practice patrols. We got some deactivated VC mines and "potato masher" grenades from the EOD team to help us. They were either buried in a pathway or rigged with tripwires attached to a rat trap for us to detect. Probably due to this continual training between missions, no scout teams from the 39th were injured by booby traps during my first year in country. Many were detected though.

My life became a whirlwind of missions. Brownie (as I now referred to Sgt. Brown) and I had become inseparable buddies. We each trusted each other completely. That bond was our means of survival. We made it through Operations Sioux City in Xom Cat, Attleboro in Minh Than, Waco around Bien Hoa, Cedar Falls in the Iron Triangle, Big Springs in war zone D, and Junction City in war zone C near Tay Ninh. I felt

honored in March of 1967 when Brownie and I were selected for a very special secret mission. Out of all the Scout Teams in country, we had been selected to go TDY with the 5th Special Forces Group and be attached to one of their A Teams. I liked to think we were chosen due to my skills and temperament, but I guess Brownie's security clearance level may have helped a little. I never told anyone where we went or what we did. Hey, I couldn't talk anyway!

After returning to our kennel at Bien Hoa I got the shock of my life. Brownie would be going home in July when his DEROS date was up. After all we had been through together the team was being broken up. My handler for the past 15 months was now under direct orders to stay away and have no further contact with me. They said it was to prepare me to accept Brownie's replacement.

Since we had all come over as a unit at one time, all of the other dogs were in the same position. How could the military screw us dogs like that?

Our tour of duty had changed into a life sentence. My old "attitude problem" returned. From here on I would do my job, but I didn't have to like it or be nice to anybody. It's probably good that I couldn't talk then. Article 15 for sure. But I knew that they had to feed and water me, and since we had no rank or pay that could be taken away, I really didn't give a damn.



**IPSD Scout Dog Platoon, November 1966. From left to right, standing: Mike Medlen, Bob Halbrook, Pete Peters, Bruce Hartman, Carl Dobbins, Bob Payne, John Kregel, Mike Voorhees, Wayne McLeister, Duane Simpson and Dennis DeWindt. Kneeling: William Powell, Jim Rade, Kenneth Crouse, Bob Brown, Gerry Mortensen, Vaughn Payne, Rich Cortez, Joe McNally and Clyde Pyatt. Not present is Melvin Cobb who was WIA two weeks earlier.**

*(continued....)*



My next handler was an OK kind of guy, as were all of those that followed. One, Rick Hovis, even gave up his platoon clerk job to become my handler! We all worked hard, but the personal chemistry just wasn't the same. Brownie would be a part of me forever.

The summer and fall of 1967 were especially rough. The 173d was moving north into II Corps to intercept the NVA that were coming in from Laos and massing in the central highlands. I worked in Pleiku Province, sweeping the Ia Drang Valley. From there we moved farther north into Kontum Province. It was here in the hills above Dak To that we were in the middle of some of the most vicious fighting of the war. Many of my friends and their handlers became casualties there. I still had my attitude problem, and the hand to hand fighting had shown me just what I was really capable of doing to whoever I felt was an enemy.

The entire Brigade was now set up at An Khe and a break in action was what we all needed. I was just getting used to kennel life when the Tet Offensive began. The remainder of 1968 and '69 was split between patrolling near Highway 19, the main artery into the western sector of the highlands, and then going east to the coastal plains at Bong Son.

Next we were back in our crates again. The Brigade was moving again. This time to a place called LZ English, located just north of Bong Son. We all hated those crates. It seemed that each time we were moved in them, our whole world sort of fell apart. Everything was always completely different when we got where we were going. Dogs prefer familiar places, faces, and routines. I was tired of all the changes, and my attitude got worse.

Long days on point left me tired that night and stiff the next morning. I was grumpy and the platoon all knew it. It was determined that it was time for me to retire. It was unofficial of course, but I was not assigned to another handler, therefore I had no more missions. Life was easy around the Kennel area. I had regular meals and spent much of the day sleeping in the shade. The platoon Sergeant, SFC Kelly, took a liking to me and would take me out for walks and some exercise. I only bit him once. After all, I still had an image to maintain. I was a seasoned veteran and a survivor. I felt I deserved the praise I got.

When handler Don Bradley went up for the 173d Airborne Brigade's coveted "*Sky Soldier of the Month*" award, he was asked which of the dogs was most famous. Without hesitation he answered "*with such a long list of accomplishments, plus many confirmed enemy kills, that could only be Budda*". But by now I

was a little overweight and turning slightly gray. It didn't worry me though. Most of the handlers would be in similar shape by the time they retire.

Then one day in July of 1971, I noticed a different mood around the kennels. Many of the other dogs were being put into their crates and loaded into a truck. I eagerly followed because I was tired of Camp English. Since most of the handlers had left we might even be going home. That would be great. We deserved a break after all we had done.

It wasn't a very long trip. We were taken to a nearby Air Base and there were many dogs there from all over the country. There were Scouts, Trackers, and Sentry dogs all together here. I guess we really are being sent back home! Maybe they will ship me to Brownie. I wonder if he thinks about me as often as I have thought of him.

Does he remember all we went through together? I am so excited that I can hardly stand still.

In the Veterinary Clinic I can't understand why everyone is crying. Just give me my DEROS shots and get me on that plane and I'll finally be getting out of here. I can hardly wait! In all of my excitement I barely felt the needle. I was used to them anyway. It feels just like the tranquilizer shot that we got before we left on the plane ride over here back in July of '66. I feel a little sleepy all of a sudden. I think I'll lie

down and rest right here. It seems to be getting darker. Will Brownie remember me? I feel numb! I think I'll rest for awhile and think of what it will be like to be home.

I'm tired. I - ZZZ ZZZ Z Z Z.....

**NOTE - Robert Brown went on to retire from the Army and is presently residing in New Jersey with his civilian canines. He has become an accomplished artist.**

**Budda (4A82) bravely served his country for the "human equivalent" of over 40 years. During his time in Vietnam he had eight handlers, all of whom survived to return home. He was wounded five times. He had five confirmed enemy kills in close combat. He protected and saved the lives of uncountable numbers of American servicemen. For all of this, the military leadership awarded him the death penalty.**



# Recognition – At Last!!

39th IPSD Dog on  
“Special Operations”



For their services with a combined US Special Forces unit in March of 1967, The Special Operations Association in October 2002 honored Budda, 4A82, and his first handler Bob Brown, of the 39th IPSD. The association remembered Budda's

actions “In Memoriam”, and Bob was made a life member during a formal presentation at their annual meeting in Las Vegas. According to the association, Budda is the only Military Working Dog ever to have served in this capacity.

The Special Operations Association (SOA) is a 1700+ member fraternal organization of American and foreign participants who have documented proof of having served in special military operations in combat theaters, primarily during the Southeast Asian conflict. The group also includes World War II and Korean Veterans as well as those from the more recent conflicts; membership is limited to members of Free World forces who aided or took part in missions deep inside hostile territory in a combat capacity. The association is mainly composed of US Army Special Forces personnel but also includes Air Commandos; Navy SEALs, Force Recon Marines and veterans of other elite military and civilian organizations, who were a part of Special Operations.

During the Vietnam War, U.S. political and military leaders confronted strategically important but elusive ground targets. Political and other considerations prevented the deployment of conventional ground units, and air power alone proved unable to eliminate the targets. In both cases, policymakers turned to special operations forces (SOF) to conduct reconnaissance operations to locate the hidden targets. During the Vietnam conflict, SOF teams crossed the border into Laos to search for critical targets along the Ho Chi Minh Trail that were obscured from above by triple-canopy jungle and camouflage. This network of footpaths, trails, and roads ultimately came to serve not only as a supply line for North Vietnamese forces but also as a basing area from which attacks could be staged on South Vietnam. U.S. forces confronted formidable obstacles in their efforts to stem the flow of traffic along the trail.



**Missing War Dog tribute.**

In early 1967, Budda and Bob of the 39th IPSD were selected for TDY assignment to the highly classified all-volunteer unit. Budda engaged in unconventional warfare and clandestine operations, roving deep into areas crawling with NVA soldiers, and lead six top-secret expeditions "over the fence" into Laos. Budda and Bob shared the knowledge of acts of remarkable valor that will never make the pages of history books. But nevertheless, the mission of a Scout Dog and his handler is to save and protect friendly forces. This they did, and did it well. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

####

## NEWS FROM CHAPTER 25

This is a copy of the stickers for our fundraiser. These would be given out instead of buddy poppies. This is similar to what the Vietnam Veterans of America use. We took our Chapter number off of them so they could be used by all Chapters. I would like to see if any other Chapter would like them and if anyone had changes? We also have vinyl signs that can be purchased inexpensively. Please let me know.  
[bob5992@cox.net](mailto:bob5992@cox.net)



**Bob Madden**  
B/2/503d



## Alpha Company 2/503d, Fall In!!!

If you served in Company A, 2d Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) from 1963 to 1972 please join your fellow "No Deros Alpha" buddies in Columbus, Georgia for an A/2/503 ONLY mini-reunion.

### Reunion Dates:

May 4-8, 2011

### Reunion Central:

Hilton Garden Inn  
1500 Bradley Lake Blvd.  
Columbus, GA 31904

### Hotel Reservations:

Phn: 1-706-660-1000

Fax: 1-706-660-1919

Web: <http://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com/en/gi/groups/personalized/CSGGHGI-A2503-20110504/index.jhtml;jsessionid=LGUS5XWRRQ3K2CSGBJBNEWQ>

*Airborne!*

Terry "Woody" Davis

A/2/503d

[davis\\_terrence@bellsouth.net](mailto:davis_terrence@bellsouth.net)



***"From now until the end of the world, we, and it shall be remembered, we few, we Band of Brothers. For he who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother."***

- William Shakespeare ("King Henry V")

## Honors Ceremony Set for 11 June at the Memorial

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation is pleased to announce that a formal "Honors Ceremony" will be held at the Memorial on Saturday, 11 June, at 1000 hours.

This Ceremony will honor the nine warriors who fell during Operation Enduring Freedom X in Afghanistan, and to unveil their names on the panels commemorating our fallen. The Memorial Foundation will add the name of a fallen Vietnam warrior to the list of our brothers who died so long ago.

The name of SSG Salvatore Giunta will be added to the roster of those who have been awarded the Medal of Honor while serving in the 173d Airborne Brigade. This brings to fourteen the names of those so honored.

Data related to the Brigade's deployment for OEF X, if available, will also be unveiled as part of the ceremony.

All Sky Soldiers, families, and friends are invited to attend this brief but meaningful ceremony. When plans for the event are finalized, information will be placed on our website ([www.173dairbornememorial.org](http://www.173dairbornememorial.org)).

**Kenneth V. Smith**

*Colonel, USA (Ret)*

*President*

*173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation*

## WW2 and Japan Surrender

Check out this great video on the web, which includes:

- **503rd Combat Jump on to the "Rock"**
- **MacArthur's return to Corregidor**
- **End of War footage**

[http://corregidor.org/now%20showing/cine/cine\\_02\\_jump\\_on\\_corregidor.html](http://corregidor.org/now%20showing/cine/cine_02_jump_on_corregidor.html)



Chet at Benning

At exactly 1:40 mins. into the video we understand the paratrooper crashing into the side of the bomb crater is our very own 503rd trooper Chet Nycum who attended the 173d reunion in N. Myrtle Beach in June 2010. *Airborne Chet!*



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**Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard Presents:**

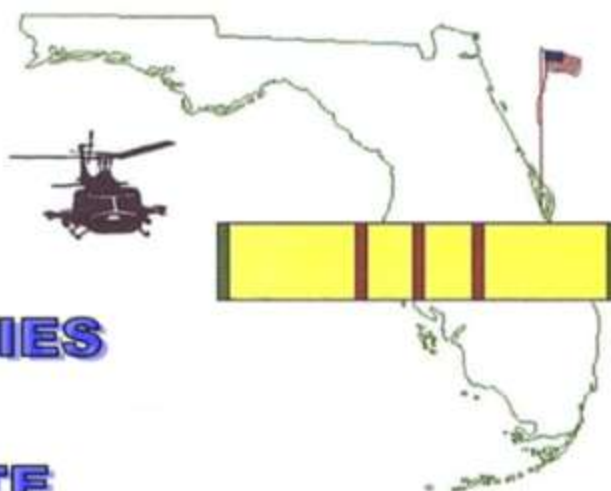
# **Florida's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion**

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

## **May 5, 6, 7, 8, 2011**

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

**LIVE MUSIC**  
**FOOD & DRINKS**  
**MILITARY VENDORS**  
**MILITARY DISPLAYS**  
**POW / MIA CEREMONIES**  
**THE LAST PATROL**  
**THE MOVING TRIBUTE**



**Also visit the Reunion Web Page at:**  
[floridaveteransreunion.com](http://floridaveteransreunion.com)

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

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

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

**Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall**  
<http://travelingwall.us>

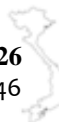
**Vietnam and All Veterans of  
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Cocoa, FL 32923-7225



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**dmwassmer@yahoo.com**



## Semper Fuckin' Fi!



Photo by Jeff Bundy, *Omaha World-Herald*

Leading the fight is U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Michael Burghardt, known as 'Iron Mike' or just 'Gunny'. He is on his third tour in Iraq. He had become a legend in the bomb disposal world after earning the Bronze Star for disabling 64 IED's and destroying 1,548 pieces of ordnance during his second tour.

Then, on September 19, he got blown up.

He had arrived at a chaotic scene after a bomb had killed four U.S. Marines. He chose not to wear the bulky bomb protection suit. *"You can't react to any sniper fire and you get tunnel vision,"* he explains. So, protected by just a helmet and standard-issue flak jacket, he began what bomb disposal officers term 'the longest walk', stepping gingerly into a 5 foot deep and 8 foot wide crater.

The earth shifted slightly and he saw a Senao base station with a wire leading from it. He cut the wire and used his 7 inch knife to probe the ground. *"I found a piece of red detonating cord between my legs,"* he says. *"That's when I knew I was screwed."*

Realizing he had been sucked into a trap, Sgt. Burghardt, 35, yelled at everyone to stay back. At that moment, an insurgent probably watching through binoculars, pressed a button on his mobile phone to detonate the secondary device below the sergeant's feet. *"A chill went up the back of my neck, and then the bomb exploded,"* he recalls.

*"As I was in the air I remember thinking, 'I don't believe they got me...' I was just ticked off they were able to do it. Then I was lying on the road, not able to feel anything from the waist down."*

His fellow Marines cut off his trousers to see how badly he was hurt. None could believe his legs were still there. *"My dad's a Vietnam vet who's paralyzed from the waist down,"* says Sgt. Burghardt. *"I was lying there thinking I didn't want to be in a wheelchair next to my dad and for him to see me like that. They started to cut away my pants and I felt a real sharp pain and blood trickling down. Then I wiggled my toes and thought, 'Good, I'm in business.'"*

As a stretcher was brought over, adrenaline and anger kicked in. *"I decided to walk to the helicopter. I wasn't going to let my teammates see me being carried away on a stretcher."* He stood and gave the insurgents who had blown him up a one-fingered salute. *"I flipped them one. It was like, OK, I lost that round but I'll be back next week."*

Sgt. Burghardt's injuries, burns and wounds to his legs and buttocks kept him off duty for nearly a month and could have earned him a ticket home. But, like his father, who was awarded a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts for being wounded in action in Vietnam, he stayed in Ramadi to engage the battle against insurgents who are forever coming up with more ingenious ways of killing Americans.

[Sent in by Frank Dukes, A/2/503d]

Happy birthday Bommel. LYL



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# Part I: Preparing for War

By Roy Lombardo



**Ranger Roy**

My story starts in the early days as the Brigade was forming up as an airborne infantry unit. We had some WWII veterans and many from the 187 ARCT, but I want to talk about a few of the young officers and how we prepared for our ultimate deployment, which we were fairly certain of doing.

There was no formal military education program but we knew that what was going on in SE Asia would affect the US military at some point. So several of us decided to BE PREPARED. In fact, the Ranger Handbook had not yet been written and graduates only had access to whatever notes they took while a student.

I and 1LT Carmen Cavezza came from the 82d Airborne Division and brought some Ranger school and Airborne experience with us. 2LT Wayne Downing came straight from Ranger School. 1LT Ronn Hoffman and 2 others (whose names elude me) came to the Brigade after a 6 month deployment with the 1st Special Forces Group, bringing some practical combat experience from around RVN.

We hung out together and read avidly every book we could locate on Counterinsurgency. This was 1963 and there was NOT the wealth of information which is now available. We'd trade books and discuss what we read. If we'd bump into an officer from the 1st SFG, we'd pump them for their experiences in RVN. How did language training work? What weapons were used to arm the friendly forces? What was the terrain like and how did they move and communicate?

Slowly we begin to gather an accurate picture of some of the problems that might take place if we deployed and discussed how we might overcome them.

Some of the books:

- *The ATOM Pamphlet* - Antiterrorist Operations in Malaya
- *The Centurions and the Praetorians* both by Jean Latergny
- *Street Without Joy* - Bernard Fall

And others that don't quickly come to mind.

We studied language to the extent possible, realizing that some knowledge of French would be helpful. I still have my notes from my early classes on Vietnamese using phonetic spellings to represent the sounds that I was trying to master. Many years later when I attended formal language training at the State Department, I was surprised how accurately my phonetics were to the real pronunciations.

We trained with our respective units on Okinawa, learning how best to pack and live in the jungle. Okinawa's jungle was a secondary jungle because the vegetation was barely recovered from the denuding fires of WWII in 1945, less than 20 years earlier. There were no special uniforms, weapons, or equipment. Cleated boots were only available to those who had the local shoemaker modify Jump or QM boots. A good KaBar or similar knife was essential to jungle movement and living, so we added that to our gear. Waterproof map cases, small taped flashlights were all part of our gear that we acquired. Heat tabs were available through the supply system but you had to get the supply sergeant to order them from stockpiles.



**Iriomote 1964**

*(continued....)*





**173d jungle warfare training on Iriomote.**

The Brigade would deploy annually to Taiwan for training with the Nationalist Chinese Airborne Regiment. In 1963, we deployed to Thailand in the summer and to Taiwan in the fall. In January 1964, the Brigade conducted Jungle Training on the island of Iriomote, the second largest island in the Ryukyuan Chain, next to Okinawa. Iriomote was almost uninhabited, while Okinawa had millions of residents. Jungle training probably deserves a separate article to do it justice.

In November the Brigade deployed to Taiwan for 2 weeks, which was the best possible warm-up for our deployment to RVN on 5 May 1965.

The officers I listed earlier became an unofficial cadre for training in general, and for instructors in the Bde Jungle School specifically. We weren't "know it all's" but those in our platoons and companies listened when we spoke because of what we'd done and where we'd done it.

OVERALL we learned and professed that the jungle was NEUTRAL. You can learn to live in it, operate effectively, and do your tactical job. The jungle was not your enemy, the VC/PAVN were. When you could move and communicate as well as the bad guys, you could beat them at their own game and walk away from

the encounter Alive. More to follow. For the next chapter, collect your salt tablets, which is how we flavored our water to replace the excreted salt from our sweating bodies.

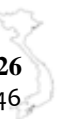
Fondest Airborne regards,

BDQ Roy

**Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret)**  
**CO B/2/503d, '64/'65**



**2/503d blast on Taiwan.**  
 Photo by Tom Goodwin



# We call it...ZZ



On March 11, 1966, paratroopers of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade prepare to load choppers at Bien Hoa Airbase (the "Snakepit") for assault into War Zone "D" during Operation Silver City.

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

March 16, it seems to come our way every year about now. For some odd reason I neglected to make mention of that fateful date for many of us in our March newsletter. Old man time is catching up with us I suppose.

There are so many battles, small and large, memorable to us, from Marauder in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta, to the savage battles at Dak To, and those before, between and after, countless of them. Yes, for hundreds of us, March 16 will forever remain our most significant recollection from our time during that war -- the battle at LZ Zulu-Zulu.

Just hooked up recently with Pat Feely, a B Med medic attached to Charlie Company at ZZ, and a retired LTC who made the army his career. Pat had asked for background information on the battle, and his inquiry pretty much prompted this note to you. Pat was one of the medics who tended to the Charlie Company troopers wounded by artillery on the night of the 15th.

As many of you, perhaps most of you, I too find myself pondering that event on occasion, and thinking of the 'what if's' about it. As in what if Tony Geishauer and Joe McHenry's Huey had not been shot down within our perimeter prematurely opening the battle? As in what if they had safely delivered those yummy hot eggs and simply departed without a shot being fired, or the B Company patrol had not been ambushed? And what if Alpha and Charlie Companies had gone on their separate search and destroy missions leaving Bravo and a small HHC contingent to man that LZ with a regiment of bad guys waiting at the ready? What if?

According to Tom Faley, Charlie Company CO at ZZ, his answer to the 'What If' question is:

*"The situation had the makings of a massacre. It was so immense. Once they opened up and hit the helicopter, all hell broke loose all around our perimeter. Quite frankly, I was stunned. I thought 'What the devil is going on?' In the end it was a massacre, but not of the Americans. Luckily, the Vietnamese attack was premature. Had it started an hour later, we would have been out of the shelter of our foxholes, strung out on patrols and quickly overwhelmed."*

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

One hell of a What If.

Nearly two-hundred of us were wounded that day, some severely maimed for life, while a small number of our boys died so we might live, and where hundreds of the enemy died. How do we thank these men of ours..... we can't, words don't work when thanking someone for one's life. So what do we do...we remember them.

To mark Operation Silver City and the fight at Zulu-Zulu is the following brief report which appeared some time ago in *Sky Soldier* magazine; additional photos have been included. It was an honor of a lifetime to have been there with you guys, *All the Way*.

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



# THE BATTLE AT BAU SAN

**IT WAS 40 YEARS AGO ON  
16 MARCH 1966,  
PARATROOPES OF THE  
FAMED 173D AIRBORNE  
FOUGHT IN WHAT WAS  
REPORTED TO BE ONE OF  
THE MOST SUCCESSFUL  
OPERATIONS EVER  
CONDUCTED BY THE  
BRIGADE IN VIETNAM.**

By: Lew "Smitty" Smith



**2/503d enroute to War Zone "D", 11 March 1966.**

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

In the vast and dense jungles of War Zone "D", on the late afternoon of 15 March 1966, the 2d Battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), arrived position Zulu-Zulu during Operation Silver City. The battalion was part of a major offensive to "locate and destroy or capture all personnel, equipment and intelligence material" of the Viet Cong's Military Region Seven (MR7) headquarters. Only a few of these Sky Soldiers knew they would be up against "an enemy capable of defending this complex with a maximum force of three Main Force Regiments, two Main Force Battalions, one Local Force Battalion and Local Security elements." Nor did these paratroopers expect to be fighting North Vietnamese soldiers in the thick jungles of South Vietnam.

But, on the morning of 16 March 1966, while awaiting a delivery chopper to arrive with a breakfast of hot eggs, the men of the 2d Battalion were in for something much hotter and even more dangerous than the army's powdered eggs. In this small jungle clearing the Viet Cong referred to as Bau San (the cabasa swamp), Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d would find themselves surrounded by an enemy force three times their size. Comprised of Viet Cong of the 271st Main Force Regiment and reinforced with what may have been a majority of North Vietnamese soldiers, the enemy was fanatically committed to overrunning LZ Zulu-Zulu and destroying all paratroopers there. It was on 8 November 1965, when the VC's 271st suffered over 600 casualties at the hands of the 173d Airborne's 1st Battalion, and the bad guys were looking for some payback.

The enemy in the jungle had already made its presence known to the 2d Battalion on 13 March, when six "B" Company and two HHC troopers were wounded in a fire fight. Also wounded that day was the "B" Company Commander, (then) Capt. Les Brownlee, who years later would become acting Secretary of the Army.



**Evacuation of future Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee, on 13 Mar 66.**

Les Brownlee provided

The next day, 14 March, the battalion was attacked again, this time "C" Company receiving six wounded, HHC one wounded, with three "C" Company and one HHC troopers KIA. Up to that point the 2d Battalion found itself chasing an elusive enemy, a hit-and-run enemy, an enemy unwilling to stand and fight it out – but, that would soon change.

Following a trail of B-52 bomb craters on the late afternoon of 15 March, the four companies of the 2/503d, along with attachments, humped into Zulu-Zulu, a small 100-by-160 meter clearing in the triple-canopy jungle.

*(continued....)*





L-R: "C" Company CO Capt. Tom Faley, Bn XO Maj. Willard Christensen and Bn CO LTC John Walsh during Operation Silver City. Tom Faley provided

After quickly knocking down anti-chopper poles from the LZ, then establishing the battalion perimeter and sending-out two and three man listening posts, the Sky Soldiers settled in for the night.



15 Mar 66, 2/503d arrive LZ Zulu-Zulu. The bad guys are watching. Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

*"The night (March 15/16) was sleepless; even aside from the few 75mm shells we were taking sporadically, something just felt wrong..."*

Wayne Hoitt/HHC/2/503d

During the evening of 15 March two "C" Company mortar men were wounded by incoming artillery bursts,

one losing the lower half of his legs. Unbeknownst to the Sky Soldiers manning the perimeter at LZ Zulu-Zulu that night, they were being "softened-up" by elements of the Z-37 and Z-43 Artillery Battalions of the VC's U-80th Artillery in preparation for a planned early a.m. attack. Amazingly, a reinforced enemy Regiment had moved in during the night undetected, and surrounded the troopers at LZ Zulu-Zulu.

*"On a bright, sunny morning of the 16th of March, I awoke and was greeting the beautiful morning in the jungle while watching a helicopter hovering above the LZ and attempting to land. As this was occurring, gunfire from one side of the landing zone was directed at the chopper. The chopper was hit and began swaying in mid air from side-to-side. Suddenly, the blades were ripping into the trees, raining branches all over the area. The chopper crashed and the gunfire intensified with our brothers returning fire. We had no idea of the size of the unit we were engaging, but it was big."*

A.B. Garcia/HHC/2/503d

Once the resupply chopper crashed into the tree line, incoming fire erupted from all sides of the LZ, supported by enemy mortar and artillery attacks. Gun fire intensified from all around Zulu-Zulu with waves of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers attacking each of the Company lines -- but, the gallant and resolute men of the 2d Battalion held their ground and for hour-after-hour repelled the attacks. During this five-hour battle these brave paratroopers of the 2/503d did not surrender a single foot of their perimeter to the enemy forces attacking them.

*"There was a lot of shooting on my left flank, and a heavy machine gun was firing from our right flank... One of our machine gunners was*

*courageously standing on top of a termite mound cutting down the attacking enemy 10 feet from our perimeter."*

Gus Vendetti/A/2/503d

(continued...)





**The Cowboy's breakfast bird's final resting place at ZZ.**  
 Photo by Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d

Early in the battle ammunition throughout the battalion was quickly becoming depleted. Huey's with desperately needed ammo sling-loaded beneath them were repeatedly driven off by intense and accurate enemy fire. Many choppers took hits that morning in their courageous attempts to resupply the troopers under attack.



**A/2/503d Jack Ribera under attack at Zulu-Zulu.**  
*"I had one 20 round mag left for my M16 and a grenade or two, as did most of the rest of us."*  
 Don Rice/HHC/2/503d

The 1/503d received orders from the Silver City CG to immediately move to Zulu-Zulu to reinforce the troopers of the 2/503d under severe enemy attack. It was for his actions on this date that First Battalion's Al Rascon was later awarded the Medal of Honor.



Heroic actions were a common occurrence throughout the battalion that day. Numerous wounded troopers held their ground while fighting off the attacking forces rather than crawling back to the LZ for aid. Many of the unit's casualties were incurred by troopers running ammo to the Company lines engaged in the battle.

*"I'll never forget when a major came over to the tree where all the wounded were being assembled and told me to get all the walking wounded to fix bayonets and to be prepared to react to any breach in the lines with a bayonet counter attack."*

Chuck Guy/HHC/2/503d

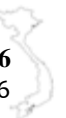


**Strategic reserve: Wounded troopers at Zulu-Zulu.**  
 Photo by: Wayne Hoitt

Throughout the battle countless TAC Air strikes and artillery missions were conducted all around the perimeter of Zulu-Zulu. Following the battle numerous groups of badly mangled VC bodies were found, attesting to the effectiveness of supporting fires.

*"Firing was so intense it was beyond description. The VC was coming from all directions."*  
 Willard Christensen/HHC/2/503d

(continued....)





**Pop smoke for dustoff! Wounded troopers waiting on edge of LZ for medivac, 16 Mar 66.** Photo by: Wayne Hoitt.

This breakfast meeting in the dense jungle of the “D” Zone would go down in history as one of the 173d Airborne’s finest entries into a journal of countless battles won during the war, with over 400 enemy soldiers and numerous facilities and equipment destroyed and weapons and documents captured. *Time* magazine reported in their March 23, 1966, edition:

***“The Airborne won with fewer casualties and more enemy dead than any major engagement of the war to date.”***

It was on 4 August 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for bravery during combat actions at LZ Zulu-Zulu, to the men of the 2/503d and attached units.

***“The combination of Viet Cong killed, equipment destroyed and intelligence information captured, makes SILVER CITY one of the most successful operations ever conducted in Vietnam. Brigade forces continued to effectively exercise the three most important capabilities of Civic Action/Psychological Operations, Intelligence Gathering, and Tactical Operations concurrently.”***

CG/173d Bde

In July 2005, three paratroopers of the 2d Battalion who survived the battle of 16 March 1966, returned to Vietnam. Enduring a five-hour hump into and out of War Zone “D’s” jungle, Sky Soldiers Gus Vendetti, Bill Vose and Lew Smith returned to LZ Zulu-Zulu for the first time in 39 years. When asked why they were taking this tortuous trip into the jungle, Bill Vose replied...

***“Because we can.”***



**Mementos from the boys at Zulu-Zulu recovered in '05.**

[This report originally appeared in the Winter 2005-06, Vol. XX, No. 4 edition of *Sky Soldier* magazine. Additional photos have been added to the report]



## Sky Soldier Musings About Zulu-Zulu

Can you believe it was 45 years ago? Seems like yesterday!

**Jack Schimpf**  
B/2/503d

And it carried over to the next day, which was St. Patrick's Day, and so that day is for the wearin' of the jungle green, I guess.

**Larry Paladino**  
B/2/503d

Hi Guys: As Larry said, tomorrow is St. Patrick's Day, as it was 45 years ago. But today is St. Heribert's Day (Heribert is my real first name), just as it was 45 years ago when I celebrated at LZ Zulu Zulu with lots of firecrackers popping left and right and above and the ground shaking underneath. St. Heribert proved to be an efficient patron saint and guardian angel, otherwise I wouldn't write these words today. In about half an hour's time (remember that over here in Switzerland I'm way ahead of you all), I'll open a bottle of champagne and toast to all those that were there, and especially to those whose souls are still there and also to all those who helped St. Heribert in this most difficult task (the helicopter crews, the artillery guys, the bomber pilots). Lift your glasses guys. Here's to us.

**Herbert Murhammer**  
B/2/503d



2/503d trooper on his way to Zulu-Zulu. Op Silver City.

I'll have a toast tonight, and remember those I served with. God Bless you all.

**Joe Logan**  
B/2/503d

So many years ago but it seems like yesterday. Man were we young. I will have a toast tonight to all that made it home alive and to those brave soldiers that never made it through that day.

**Craig Ford**  
C/1/503d

Took my wife, kids and their kids to dinner tonight (March 16), by chance to a Japanese restaurant, so there was a sense of the orient in the air. Made a quiet toast with my rum drink to the menboys we lost that day...not sure the family would have understand a vocalized toast.

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

Hooah!

**John Searcy**  
HHC/2/503d

Well I wasn't going to reply, but I was so impressed with the other replies I can only say it has been a great 45 years (I thought it was closer to 9 or 10. hahahahaha!). I too will drink some fine California champagne, not the wimpy French stuff, and celebrate our all making it through another year. You know, before we lose any more we really should plan a ZULU ZULU reunion dinner sometime in the future!

**Bill Vose**  
2 LT, A/2/503d, Weapons Platoon Leader OJT  
3/16/1966

TO ALL: I celebrated my toast on the 13th when our small party walked into that VC base camp as a prelude to what was to follow when Bravo Company came in to pull us out. What did I get us into? My best to all.

**Art Martinez**  
HHC/2/503d

Amazing that it has been over 45 years!!! I will sit in my Tee Pee with the ribbons you guys took to Zulu-Zulu a couple of years past covering them with dirt from that LZ. Remember them? I know Vose couldn't lay them down due to the company of guides. They hang proudly in my hooch. Some of us were so lucky, and the other brothers not so. But, we carry them in our hearts and will forever. *"Lest We Forget"*

**A.B. "Aussino" Garcia**  
HHC/2/503d

March 16 1966....Ah such sweet memories.....NOT. But I am glad to be alive to have them. Just hate the nightmares...love the memories of fighting with some of the best soldiers in the world. Happy Rebirthday,

**Chuck Guy**  
HHC/2/503d Class of '64-'66

I second that, classmate.

**John Searcy**  
HHC 2/503

(continued....)



One hell of a class it was. Curriculum was a bitch. While at the reunion in Myrtle Beach last year had the opportunity to see Willie Monroe, paralyzed from wounds received when he, Freddie Parks and Bill Vose (all A/2/503) went outside the perimeter to take out that machine gun nest wreaking havoc along that line. May have been another trooper with them but don't recall his name. They all were wounded by that gunner, but Willie the worst off. Spent some time with him at one of our 2/503 reunions here in Cocoa Beach years ago, but happy to report at this most recent meeting, altho still confined to a wheelchair, Willie appeared to be moving and speaking better -- in fact, don't recall him speaking much at all at the earlier reunion. Vose: If you put on a Zulu-Zulu dinner, get a big table.

**Lew "Smitty" Smith**

**HHC/2/503d, Class of '65-'66, graduated cum scared shitless**

I took Hidalgo and Parks with me on that little jaunt!

**Bill Vose  
A/2/503d**

Does not seem possible that it was 45 years ago but what the heck I got to be 64 somehow and it looked like 19 was doubtful more than once that day. I may be a non drinker but will hoist a diet coke to all of you Brothers for your hard work on that day and to those who went to be with the Lord of their choice. I have always been so proud to have been with all of you then and now. Never has there been assembled a finer group of American fighting men in the history of the U.S.A. AATW. As a Preacher I pray that the God of your choice will bless each and everyone of you and yours with long healthy, love filled years to come.

**Trooper Bill Knapp  
Bravo 3/1, '65-'66**

I don't know if William Gossett (KIA Zulu-Zulu) was on my helicopter or not. I don't think he was. We were fully loaded w/canisters of food and drink and we were sling loading 400 pounds of ice. Other than my crew the only other two passengers we had on board were two cooks who were supposed to distribute the food. Forty-five years was a long time ago, but I recall pretty clearly that one of the cooks fell out of the helicopter with our cargo doors open as we were starting to fall from the sky after being



**Capt. Tom Goodwin, commo boss, wounded at ZZ.**

hit. The other cook, I was told, was killed during the fire fight. Was never able to confirm that. I started to get pretty apprehensive in ZZ after the firelight went on for hours rather than the normal minutes most went on. I should have been scared, but when I started seeing Tac Air coming in, helicopter gunships, and pallets of ammo being dropped off for our guys, I thought we were going to be OK.

**Tony Geishauser  
Cowboys, '65/'66**



**Tony G. (L) & Joe McHenry, the unlucky chopper pilots at Zulu-Zulu.**

Congratulation to all that made it out that day. The chopper shot down was to be my ride out of combat and the start of my way home. It seem as tho every replacement I would get wounded before I could leave the area.

**Jimmy Stanford, Captain  
B/2/503d, Special Forces Retired**

Jimmy. Sorry I screwed up your ride home. I was one of the pilots flying the bird that spilled the eggs and was not flyable to take you home. Believe me, I know the feeling of not getting out on the chopper that was supposed to take you out.

**Tony Geishauser  
Cowboy 173**



**John was KIA during the early morning B Company squad's clearing patrol on 16 Mar 66.**



# ~ 75th Ranger Regiment Association Reunion ~

July 25 - 31, 2011  
Fort Benning, GA



## Lurps & Rangers of the 173d Airborne Brigade



Part of the lineage of the 75th Ranger Regiment:

173d Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol  
74th Long Range Patrol  
75th Inf. N/Company Rangers  
74th Long Range Surveillance

### Reunion Headquarters:

#### Holiday Inn

2800 Manchester Expressway  
Columbus, GA 31904

**Reservations: 706-324-0231**

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



(All 173d and sister units welcome to attend)

### Reunion Registration Rates:

Members: \$40.  
Sat. Banquet: \$40.

### Reunion Contact:

Robt. 'twin' Henriksen  
Unit Director  
360-393-7790

Our reunion will be held in conjunction with the current 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment *Rendezvous and Change of Command*

### Tentative Activities:

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

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



# A Letter From Robert Donovan WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> PRCT To A Sky Soldier

leave the theater until September 1945, returning home to Salem.



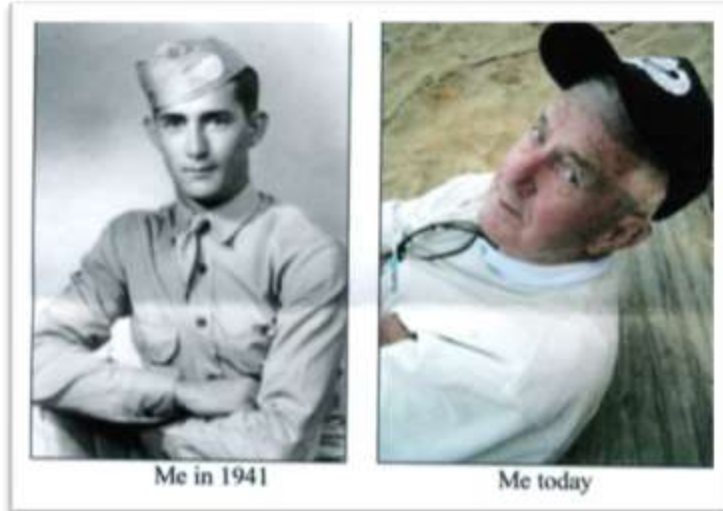
The most significant operation in which I participated – of which you obviously have some knowledge – was the retaking of fortress Corregidor, an island in Manila Bay, The Philippines. The operation was considered one of the most successful airborne undertakings in military history, but it occurred near simultaneously with the U.S. Marine assault on Iwo Jima, so it got much less attention than perhaps it deserved. I was present when Gen. Douglas MacArthur returned to the Island, as he promised when evacuated from Corregidor in 1942. I am proud to have been a part of the island's liberation.

Upon returning from the Pacific, I married the best friend of my young sister Ruth. Janice Donovan (nee Kingston) and I have been married 64 years. We have three children – all of them now living near me in the Washington, DC suburbs, to where I moved our young family in 1959 in pursuit of a job with the United States Government. My sons followed me into the federal civil service. My eldest, Kenneth, retired after 39 years from the U.S. Park Police, riding a horse most of that time along the National Mall in Washington; he now works under contract as a security consultant to the U.S. Department of Justice. My middle son Donald is now the third highest-ranking official in the U.S. Marshals Service. My son Paul is a senior instructor of analysis at CIA, following an analytic career that led him to brief the President, Vice President, and other senior U.S. and foreign officials. I now have six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren – ironically almost none of them have entered federal service.

Thanks again for taking the time to write. Your remembrance means very much to me.

Airborne all the way!

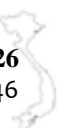
Robert E. Donovan



Dear Friend:

Thank you so much for your kind letter. It pleases me that those younger than me appreciate the sacrifices that soldiers, sailors, and marines of my era made on behalf of this great nation. It brings me comfort that the ultimate price paid by so many of my dear friends and comrades has not been forgotten. You and others like you – many of whom also serve overseas today under very difficult conditions – give me absolute confidence that such sacrifices were not in vain. I apologize for the delay in responding. Now 90 years of age, I need to get my son's help in printing my letter.

I too was once a young man. Growing up in Salem, Massachusetts, I initially served first in the United States Coast Guard. On the eve of the war, I enlisted in the United States Army and eventually was assigned to the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team and subsequently deployed to the Pacific Theater. For most of the war, I served as a machine gunner in Company Headquarters 3rd, but frequently I was attached to I or G Companies during actual combat operations. I participated in all of the 503rd's combat missions except the jump at Nadzab, in New Guinea, in what was then the Dutch East Indies; that operation occurred as I was arriving from Australia. I received the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in battle at Noemfoor Island, also in New Guinea. I received the Bronze Star for meritorious service during my tour of duty in the Pacific. I didn't



## Senate Declares March 30th as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day”

### Resolution Introduced by Senator Richard Burr

Washington D.C – The U.S. Senate yesterday declared March 30th as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day,” agreeing unanimously to a resolution introduced by Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

On March 30, 1973, all U.S. troops withdrew from Vietnam under the terms of the Treaty of Paris. This March 30th, the Senate has encouraged Americans across the country to recognize Vietnam veterans for their sacrifice and demonstrate a warm welcome to these soldiers who returned from war to a politically divided country.

*“I’m pleased that the Senate has agreed to set aside a day to give our Vietnam veterans a warm, long-overdue welcome home. I strongly encourage communities throughout North Carolina and across the country to observe this day with activities and events that honor these veterans for their service. It’s time they receive the recognition they have earned and deserve. This day also provides our nation with an important teaching moment. Never again should our men and women serving in the armed forces receive the same treatment as those returning from Vietnam,”* said Senator Richard Burr.

Senator Burr introduced the resolution for the second consecutive year on February 16, 2011.

The United States became involved in Vietnam because policy-makers believed that if South Vietnam fell to a communist government, communism would spread throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The US Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961, and in 1965, ground combat troops were sent into Vietnam. On March 30, 1973, after many years of combat, all US troops withdrew. More than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam.

Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Thad Cochran (R-MS), James Inhofe (R-OK), Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and Mike Johanns (R-NE) co-sponsored the legislation. The resolution now moves to the House of Representatives for consideration.



**Senator Burr**

## HOW WERE YOU ‘WELCOMED HOME?’

Send in your welcome home story to [rto173d@cfl.r.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.r.com) and we’ll include it in the May issue of our newsletter.

Not all Vietnam Vets received an unfavorable welcome back from the combat zone, many did of course, my older brother, Bob, for one. Bob served three tours with the 5th SF until blinded in one eye during combat. He was and remains a patriot through-and-through.



Bob and I come from a small steel mill town in Southern California. On leave home between one of his tours the Sneaky Pete decided to stop by one of the many beer gardens in that rough territory, the original home of the Hell’s Angels.

Sitting at the bar there decked out in his pressed and bloused khakis, spit-shined Corcoran’s, silver wings on his chest and green beret, the fighting soldier from the sky was pretty much minding his own business when five steel workers approached him who weren’t big fans of our war. It’s reported he got in some good licks, which would make any paratrooper proud, before those steel benders left him there on the floor with the holy hell beat out of him. Welcome home soldier, thanks for your service to your country.

**Lew “Smitty” Smith  
HHC/2/503d, ’65-’66**



**Bob, visiting me at Camp Zinn in December ‘65**



~ Last Month's Whodat? ~

In last month's newsletter we asked you to identify this young trooper with the jump school haircut holding his M-79.



I think the guy holding the M-79 is Willie Matthews. He was in 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon B Company, 2/503d. Sure looks like him in '66/'67. Love the newsletters. Capt. Kaplan was my CO.

**Ray Tanner**  
HHC/B/2/503d

~ A Few Years Later ~

Former B/2/503d CO LTC Ken Kaplan (L), with his trusty RTO, Dave Griffin.



*"Thanks Griff for carrying that PRC for me."  
"Anytime, Cap."*

Airborne Bravery

One day, a general of the Army, an Admiral, and an Air Force General are having an argument about whose branch of the military is the bravest.

So the Admiral yells to a passing Navy Seal, *"Sailor, catch that falling anchor!"* The Sailor snaps to attention, shouts, *"Yes, Sir!"*, runs under the anchor, and is crushed to death trying to catch it. The Admiral turns to the others and says, *"Gentlemen, that was bravery."*



So the Air Force General takes his turn and calls an Airman over. *"Airman, catch that landing plane."* The Airman snaps to attention and shouts, *"Yes, Sir!"* and is sucked into the propellers and is sliced to death. The Air Force General turns back to the others and says, *"Gentleman, that took guts."*

Finally, the Airborne General yells for his Paratrooper. *"Trooper, get into that airplane, go to 1,200 feet and jump out."* *"All the Way, Sir!!"* shouts the Paratrooper. *"But,"* the General says, *"do it without a parachute."* The Paratrooper snaps to attention and without hesitation shouts, *"Fuck you, Sir!"* The Airborne General turns to the others and says, *"Gentlemen, now that took guts."*



The 3 Weeks of Jump School

Week 1

The men are separated from the boys.

Week 2

The men are separated from the fools.

Week 3

The fools jump!



## Gen. Petraeus Admits Son Served Term in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON -- Challenged by a congressman to "be honest" about how long American troops might have to fight in Afghanistan, Army Gen. David Petraeus revealed that he has a personal stake in ensuring that the U.S. war objectives are met -- his son, Stephen, whose recent combat tour was kept "very quiet."



Gen. Petraeus & son Stephen

In an emotional exchange with Rep. Walter B. Jones, a Republican, Petraeus said "if I ever felt that we couldn't achieve our objectives," he would be "very forthright" not only with his superiors in the military chain of command but also with President Barack Obama and members of the Congress.

Noting that Obama has said the U.S. will have combat troops out by the end of 2014, with the Afghan government in position to provide its own security, a skeptical Jones said he could imagine a senior military leader coming before Congress in 2015 and pleading for more time and more sacrifice.

**"You know, 15, 16, 17 years, for God sakes, how much more can we take, how much more can we give treasure and blood?"**

Jones asked

Petraeus replied: "I may not be at this table, probably won't be, in 2015, but I'll tell you that my son is in uniform, and Lieutenant Petraeus just completed a tour in Afghanistan, which thankfully we were able to keep very quiet, and left in November after serving as an infantry platoon leader. We're very proud of what he did. He thinks he was doing something very important."

His son, 2nd Lt. Stephen Petraeus, served in Afghanistan as a member of the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team. AP

### Reid S. Jaffe

Grants Coordinator  
Bureau of Preparedness and Response

[Sent in by George "Scotty" Colson, HHC/B/2/503d]

# VA Watchdog dot Org

Keeping an eye on the VA because somebody has to!

## Scams and Fraud Committed by Patriots

By Tom Stoddert

Scams against veterans are so integrated in our society that we don't see them anymore. However, it's almost like having a target painted on your back. That bulls eye says, "I am available to: donate, buy, contribute to, to be given bullshit, to be lied to, to shed tears for you, give you my vote, and permission to screw up my claims to the VA." Very thick manuals could be written with a chapter on each type and the way they work.

A definition for SCAM could be anything that provides more "bang to the buck" to the person/group than promised to the veteran.

Today I opened an email that I had received from several other people warning about a very nice sounding veterans' group called Veteran Affairs Services. It seems this group collects your personal information and then steals your identity. How do they get your attention so that you give them your personal info? They tell you they are there to help you get benefits from the VA. Hell Yeah! Give me benefits and you have a patriotic name, so I don't need to think any further.

First of all, if you have a problem and think the VA may help, then get off your butt and check it out, at least on line. Jim Strickland has a great website ([VAWatchDog.org](http://VAWatchDog.org)) and guess what... you can trust him. This paper has great resources. The site [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) is the source. Please note, if it does not have [dot.gov](http://dot.gov), it's not the VA no matter what the name is. OR... just contact your state's department of veterans' affairs; they are in phone book and it's free.

Second, if you ever have had contact with the VA, even a home loan, they have all your info. You don't need to go beyond providing your last name and last four digits of your social security number, nothing more, to anyone. If it is the first time, you will need to fill out a VA form 21-526. Complete it out in your time and mail it in yourself. VA form 21-526, when filled out, will provide enough info for any crook to steal all your blood relatives' IDs.

(continued...)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / April 2011 – Issue 26

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If you are afraid of feeling guilty for not donating; then promise yourself to make out a check to the local USO when you get home. Many a GI and family have benefited from them at an airport.

I did check out a group that was brought to my attention. Most of their executive board members, besides lacking educational and professional credentials, appear not to have an IQ exceeding room temperature. I tried to contact a teacher from my home town who was listed on their web site who had some sort of business relationship with them. He never replied to me about them. They also send out thank you letters for previous donations you did not make. What's more, I noted that they were raising money for benefits duplicated by the VA.

Raising money for duplicated benefits? I have seen this too many times, even on TV, raising money for benefits already provided by the VA and/or the state. They will never specify exactly what they do with the money from your donated car, boat, or RV.

Contact any suspicious group and ask what the percentage of money received goes toward operating expenses. In other words, what percentage of your donation goes to reasonable working costs and not toward the CEO's Mercedes' payment?

The financial dangers that specialized patriotic financial planners put veterans and widows into is the subject of many media articles. A particular organization called the American Association for Wartime Veterans (AAWV), that I have discussed previously, has repeatedly assured me there is a paragraph in the VA's regulations that allows the AAWV to reposition a veteran's assets (ethically and safely) so to make veterans eligible for VA pension benefits. I can't find it and I am still waiting for them to send me that information. In the meantime I did find documentation that the VA is required to periodically check a beneficiary's financial standing if they are getting a pension benefit based on financial need.

To me the most frustrating fraud against veterans and the VA are coming from veterans. Remember that dud that always stood at the back of the formation and immediately left for sick-call every day, then you didn't see him or her till the evening meal? Guess-what? They are still out there and probably ahead of you in line at the VA Rating Board. They were untrustworthy then and



now the VA has them. They are significantly using up the VA's resources that could be used for you by filing bogus B/S claims for benefits. I brought this up because it is a major problem and it us who will have to police up this garbage.

Another example of bad veterans are what happened to two large chain stores in this area, who have been great supporters of veteran issues, but have now left the arena. They pumped some serious resources into the veteran community over the years. However. one was fooled by phonies collecting donations for homeless vets in Seattle. The other was conned, by a so-called Navy vet in a wheelchair, for donated sporting goods.

These scam artists steal our hard earned reputation and the resources for the benefits that were sacrificed for. They make us look bad and we are the only ones that can clean up their acts. Call them out to their face.

To close and sum it up, if you don't know them, don't work with them, no matter what they claim.

**Source:**

[http://www.vawatchdogtoday.org/Scams\\_Fraud\\_Deceit.html](http://www.vawatchdogtoday.org/Scams_Fraud_Deceit.html)

**Thom is a writer at VAWatchdogToday dot Org. "The VAWatchdogToday dot Org site is keeping a close watch on all veterans charities and provides updated information about the ones you should avoid and the ones who make good use of your money."**

[Reprinted with courtesy of <http://vawatchdogtoday.org>]



# WHODAT?

Who is this 2/503d trooper who went on to become Chief of Police?



Hint: He was a "Chargin' Charlie".

No. He won't fix your speeding ticket when you drive too fast through Mount Weather, VA.

## ~ A MOTTO ~

I had the good fortune of serving as one of the RTO's in the Battalion Command Group under Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh & Sigholtz in '65/'66. In fact, Sigholtz was responsible for my 'best day' at war. But, Bob, if you can hear me, come on, Colonel, even National Car Rental's slogan was "Maybe we are better?" Ed 🙄



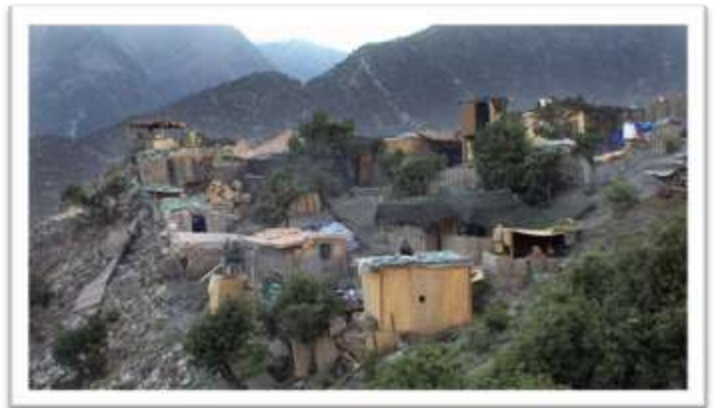
## Restrepo Soldiers Motivate Trainees

March 17, 2011  
Army News Service  
by Vince Little

FORT BENNING, Ga. -- Two Soldiers from the platoon depicted in Restrepo delivered some motivation to a basic training unit in its fourth week on Sand Hill.

Staff Sgts. Elliott Alcantara and Teodoro Buno, who appeared in the Oscar-nominated documentary, spoke to A Company, 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment, during its Warrior Ethos class March 8. The basic trainees watched the 90-minute film and then took part in a question-and-answer session about the importance of camaraderie and what they can expect to see in war zones. The two men also discussed the hardships and impact a separation can have on relationships back home.

Restrepo chronicles the deployment of Vicenza, Italy-based 2nd Platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), in northeast Afghanistan's rugged Korengal Valley between May 2007 and August 2008. The movie focuses on a remote 15-man outpost called Restrepo, named after a platoon medic who was killed in action. It was considered among the most dangerous postings in the U.S. military.



Outpost Restrepo

*"My strength has now been reduced to the equivalent of 36 squadrons...we should be able to carry on the war single-handed for some time if not indefinitely."*

Sir Hugh Dowding - RAF Fighter Command - May 1940

Really.



The following, entitled "Give Hero His Freedom", was sent to the editor of *ArmyTimes* (photo added):



## GIVE HERO HIS FREEDOM

Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta has given more than enough for his country, so why can't we let him begin a new life for himself? During the All-American Army Bowl, I got to hang out with my old battle buddy for just a handful of minutes because he was constantly being whisked away to shake hands with higher-ups, wave to crowds, and speak at events.

His day is planned for him hour by hour with a full escort and protection detail, and when he gets "free time," you can bet his detail is in the next room standing by.

Staff Sgt. Giunta just wants time with his family, something he has not been truly free to do since he received the Medal of Honor. So why can't we respect his decision and let him do so? Why do we have to make a stink about it in the papers and still ask for more of him?

When he and I were catching up and talking away from gazing eyes and cameras, he looked exhausted, yet he still puts on a smile, stands up straight and soldiers on when the eyes are back on him.

We can at least let him begin his life anew without bellyache and grief of national attention, but as a thankful nation.

**Staff Sgt. Jeremiah L. Minor**  
Cincinnati

**SSG Minor:** I can't speak for all of us with the 2/503d or 173d, but after talking with a number of our buddies, I can speak for some. We agree with you completely. Ed

## VFW Against TRICARE Increase Plans

**The Department of Defense announced plans to offset Tricare medical program expenses.**

WASHINGTON (February 16, 2011) — In the rollout of their fiscal year 2012 budget submission, the Department of Defense on Monday announced plans to offset huge Tricare medical program expenses by increasing the annual enrollment fees paid by working-age military retirees — first by 13 percent, then by linking future increases to double-digit medical inflation. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is against both plans.

VFW National Commander Richard L. Eubank, a retired Marine and Vietnam combat veteran from Eugene, Ore., believes tying future increases to medical inflation is an escalator clause that will raise Tricare premiums so high that retirees will disenroll and look elsewhere for coverage.

*"Asking someone to voluntarily give up 20 or more years of their youth on the simple promise of a pension and lifelong medical care for themselves and their spouses is a cost this nation and our government should be more than willing to bear," he said. "Any changes to how military retirees are treated will send an ominous signal to hundreds of thousands of servicemen and women who may be contemplating military careers." ###*



## GEAR PROBLEM

AS THE BOMBER SKIDDED DOWN THE RUNWAY, THE  
CONTROL TOWER ASKED IF THEY NEEDED ANY ASSISTANCE  
FROM THE PLANE CAME A LACONIC SOUTHERN VOICE:  
DUNNO - WE AIN'T DONE CRASHIN' YET





## The Tank Pilot

By Jim Wilcox  
"A" Battery, 462nd

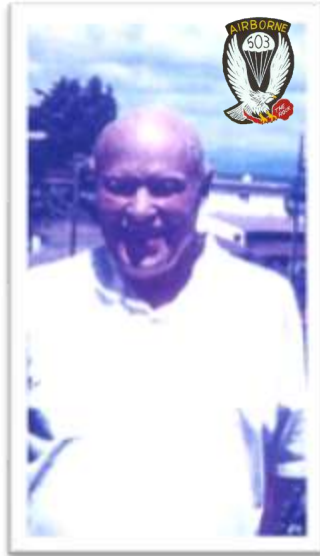
"A" Battery of the 462 Parachute F.A. Battery was assigned with its four guns to aid the infantry companies of the 503<sup>rd</sup> parachute Infantry Regiment in taking or neutralizing the Monkey Point ammo dump on Corregidor which had remained a nuisance with a very large coterie of Japanese troops inside.

A Sherman tank had been requested from the army soldiers at Bottom Side and was in place when the pack howitzers had been positioned. The tanks' objective was to blow the doors off the entrance to the dump.

The infantrymen ringed the door, standing on the earthen structure which surrounded the doorway of the dump. There were at least 100 infantry ready to take care of whatever number of enemy soldiers might try to exit the dump when the door was blown.

Since the artillery was on standby, there was no immediate need to man the artillery pieces. In the meantime, about 200 yards from the door of the dump, there was a cliff about 50' above the beach where a good view could be had of the beach in the direction of Hooker Point. The beach itself was narrow and in the cliff face the Nips had dug out rooms to accommodate their boats loaded with explosives for Kamikaze attacks on shipping.

I hoped that perhaps I could luck out and see any unfriendlies, and I wanted to see as far as possible. It was a personal battle to stick my head as far out as I could without falling off the cliff. My Tommy gun was slung around my neck by its strap, hanging under my chest while both hands were keeping me from going



Trooper Jim

over – at that very instant the ammo dump at Monkey Point exploded. What I thought was that the island had suffered an earthquake and, having already been in one, I knew to back-up fast because the cliff was falling. I rapidly back-peddled on hands and knees until encountering shelter from the falling rocks from the explosion.

This was an absolute miracle from my personal experience. The shelter was a reinforced concrete locale with four concrete legs supporting a 8'x8' or 10'x10' table top, and the legs were 8" to 12" square, and stood 4' to 5' off the ground.

The air was so thick with dust and debris when I got out from under that place, both my weapons were inoperable, and while these pieces of debris were hitting the top of it, you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

When all the rocks stopped falling, we got out to look around and it was dreadful. All those G.I.s who had been standing circling the dump were either blown to pieces or were in dire need of medical attention. I went to my gun and found that Lawrence Brayton and Duane Larson had been killed by falling boulders.



The explosion.

That scene will remain with me forever – so many dreadfully wounded – the medics doing their best – people dying – people dead, total mayhem.

(continued...)



**Monkey Point explosion: “The main explosion was followed immediately by four smaller ones. The 1st Battalion was completely knocked out as a fighting unit.”**  
Bill Calhoun/503rd [503rd PRCT Heritage Bn Archive Index]



#### The aftermath.

My Battery Commander, Capt. Fred Pope, pointed to a jeep nearby and instructed me to take it down to Bottom Side and bring back a trailer load of blood plasma. The jeep had a trailer which had been full of TNT, and the rocks ripped it all to pieces but it didn't go, which was a blessing. So, unhitching the trailer I made it down and got the plasma.

A noteworthy observation; at a turn near the beach the road went through a turn in a small gully and, evidently, the tank climbing up there to the top went through a 3' tick pile of dead Japanese.

The road was lined with mines which had not yet been detonated or removed – they were made of plywood. The only time in my US Army service that I drove a motor vehicle.

Junk from the explosion hit a Naval vessel ½ mile away. The Sherman tank was blown backwards. Whether the tank blew-up the dump, or if the Japanese soldiers inside were the cause, may never be known.

A few days later we were treated to another explosion. Since the Monkey Point affair was about the end of Corregidor operations, the 503rd had begun collecting into a spot near the 'Longest Barracks in the World.' All munitions on the island, including the howitzers, had been gathered up and placed together there. The first gun was from the dump, the other eleven guns stretched in a loose curve 100 yards away and up a slope.

Early in the p.m., a phosphorous grenade in the pile exploded for no apparent reason, but fraught with possibilities.

Sometime later some small arms ammo started sporadically banging away – next comes a bazooka

missile skittering across the parade grounds. The dump was about the size of a railroad car, and some of us started thinking perhaps this would be an appropriate time to at least retire to where the terrain started to tilt back about 50 to 75 feet.

We could still keep our eyes on what was moving about and duck down behind the brow of the descending slope if the dump cared to 'big bang' it. We hadn't retired to our 'safety first' position for 15 minutes before it went. It meant little to us because we'd seen all this before.

In the convoy on the way to Leyte, I saw a Kamikaze hit the upper forward set of guns on a heavy cruiser and later read it killed about 40 sailors on that ship. It looked like an egg splashing against the Great Wall of China.

When we left Leyte and landed on Mindoro, the Japs were sincerely pissed. The airplanes bombed and naval vessels shelled the island that first night. We were dug in on the beach prepared to repel a threatened landing but instead of a landing we received a 500 pound bomb within 100 feet of our howitzer. Never before or afterwards were we so heavily jarred by an explosion. The ground came up and *Ker Wham!* The hole was about 4 feet in diameter and 15 feet deep.



**“Ensign Kiyoshi Ogawa dove his aircraft into the *USS Bunker Hill* (above) during a *Kamikaze* attack on May 11, 1945. 389 sailors were killed or missing from a crew of 2600.”**

A week or ten days later a Kamikaze dove into a munitions ship fully loaded with bombs slated to be dropped by bombers. This went up as 1 firecracker, no small beginning, just *boom!* It was so big it produced a mushroom cloud and a mammoth sound.

There were sailors waiting there who were fished out of the water after the explosion and who then swore that they would leave that place by airplane only or live there forever. ###

