



June 2011, Issue 28

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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

www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php or http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

Target Walking.....The RTO



“As big as this guy is, I would have to say it is Mike Donahue from Florida. This is definitely a recon photo, but from the back it sure looks like Mike.” Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d

(Feb. '67 photo by Pat)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / June 2011 – Issue 28

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



Chaplain Connie Walker

Sky Soldiers of the heroic HERD – the 2/503d Bn – Families & Friends:

Grace and Peace to you and all Freedom loving people.

Psalm 89: 1-2

*I will sing the story of thy love, O Lord, forever; I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations.
Thy true love is firm as the ancient earth, thy faithfulness fixed as the heavens.*

I Corinthians 13:13

In a word, there are three things that last forever; faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of them all is love.

In the movie “Brave Heart,” actor Mel Gibson played the heroic Scottish patriot, William Wallace (1305 AD), who in his torturous last hours loudly cried, “Freedom!”

Freedom is a root desire of humankind. Our National history is deep and wide and our patriotic citizens have this mighty word on their hearts, minds and bold lips to this very hour.

On March 23, 1775 the vibrant gifted orator and grace-filled leader, Patrick Henry, declared his most ardent speech, “Give me liberty or give me death!” This was an electrifying moment in American History breathing stalwart hope and tenacious will in the hearts of our Nation and people, and very particularly in the heart and spirit of the brilliant leader, Thomas Jefferson. This message of Freedom literally sparked revolutionary zeal within Jefferson’s very being and soul. The news of this inspiring, powerful and principled declaration spread like wild fire throughout Virginia and across the freedom-thirsty country.

The glorious and mighty word “Freedom” is one of the most noble and treasured words in our language. It abides with a devout spirit of thanksgiving and bids all of us to teach this captivating word to our youth and families nationwide.

True freedom is never freedom to do what we want to do, but always freedom to do what we ought to do with a deep sense of rightness – such as the freedom to speak the truth as we ought to speak, the freedom to worship our Lord God as we ought to worship Him, the freedom to assemble for the purpose of justice and mercy, and to defend these freedoms as we ought to defend them with our very lives.

Our Lord God is the giver and defender of all true freedoms by His saving work and words. May our Lord, “the giver of life and freedom” lead us in thanksgiving and a refined sense of loving care to our Herd Family, Warriors, Combat Wounded, Veterans of all ages and ranks, and all citizens as we are able.

Hoping to see as many of you as possible at the 173d Reunion, 22-26 June, San Antonio (Rivercity).

Blessings in abundance to each of you in the Name of our Lord God, our Good Shepherd Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Chaplain Conrad (Connie) Walker
“The Leapin’ Deacon”
National Chaplain Emeritus
173d Airborne Association and
Military Order of the Purple Heart



Chapel at Camp Zinn. (Photo by MG Jack Leide, CO C/2/503d)



George's Katy

Katy Dexter, beautiful wife of COL George Dexter, our battalion commander in Vietnam in 1965/66, passed away on May 11, 2011. Our thoughts are with George and his family. Here they are seen together in happier moments.



In a note to friends informing them of the passing of his beloved bride, our commander said:

Katy died on the evening of May 11 from complications of Parkinson's Disease. She was a beautiful, kind and inspiring woman who loved her family and friends and life. I was greatly blessed for the 63 years we shared as husband and wife, and I will truly miss her.

Katy's last few months were not easy, but as a nurse she knew they would not be, and she faced them with courage. Our local children and grandchildren constantly visited her over those months, and the whole family was here for the Rosary and funeral mass and the burial at the Santa Fe National Cemetery last Thursday.

She is now at peace with God.

George

The Leaving

Is it truly selfish to want you back again?
I could not calm your mind, I could not ease
your pain;
I thought my love would be enough to keep
you here with me;
But now I know that was never going to be.

I loved you, I disliked you, we argued and
we kissed;
Your face, your touch, your scent forever I
shall miss;
To hold you in my arms again, my soul no
longer lost;
I'd pay the price and gladly have no worry to
the cost.

They say that life gets better and time will
ease the pain;
They're fools who cannot see the truth, it can
never be the same;
No daytime and no nighttime just hour on
hour on hour;
And time has no more meaning now life's
not sweet it's sour.

Some think we have a life-force or a soul
some others say;
If I had one I know it died that dreadful,
dreadful day;
Sometimes I know I hurt you, I know that
was so true;
But please forgive me for those wrongs
FOR I ALWAYS WILL LOVE YOU

A poem by Colin Jarratt



Keeping A Few More on TEAM LIFE

To All Sky Soldiers / ROCK Paratroopers:

I'm in Afghanistan so do not have the connectivity associated with my home or US-based office but will do the best I can.

I established a Facebook account to remain in contact with and AVAILABLE to ROCK Paratroopers.

I was recently informed one of my "friends" on Facebook and one of my former Paratroopers in OEF VIII, took his own life – this after admirably contributing to the defeat of the many flavors of notorious insurgents in the Pech River Valley, in Kunar Province, Afghanistan.



Col. Bill
a soldier's soldier

One of our many mantras in the ROCK was/is – “ONCE ROCK, ALWAYS ROCK – ALWAYS OBLIGATED, ALWAYS RESPONSIBLE.” We are Obligated and Responsible to each other – some gave their lives, many gave blood, some emptied their emotional bottle (which we know is sometimes harder to refill than blood). It is unacceptable to lose our fellow Paratroopers at their own hands – whether overtly or masked by careless behavior.

In Kunar (and I imagine in other areas and in other wars), "No Fear" meant rucking up again and again, competently and confidently reacting to contact, and immediately moving to a buddy in need - today, No Fear still means immediately moving to a buddy in need but ALSO means anticipating which buddy is in need. Buddies know who was/is hurting and each embraced those hurting when we were in proximity to each other. Now that ROCK Paratroopers have disseminated through the force – and some returned to their homes - all still need the ROCK "bump" on occasion. All need a buddy to check on them.

I get the bump by staying in contact with ROCK Paratroopers – old and young – and by continuously hiring former ROCK Paratroopers when possible! I ask each to reach out. We say each “*lived their lives for others*”. Our recent loss is no different – let's ensure our loss of his friendship is an investment in others and that we do not lose another ROCK Paratrooper to willful or careless behavior.

I'm hopeful we hear advice from our more experienced veterans as I do not believe the loss of Paratroopers after tough combat is a new phenomenon. When fearless men invest years training and bonding, establish their place in the “family”, and then serve an adrenaline-filled year

together it's understandable there is much to be missed – much that can't be found in a bottle or a box.

That missed something can be found in the company of other Paratroopers and Soldiers.

I'm counting on continuously filling that void with like-minded men. I look forward to years of ROCK Reunions, wearing ROCK/Sky Soldier garb and hats with multiple pins, while remembering our fallen and sharing [even more] embellished stories as the years go by! RIP brothers – gone but not forgotten. If present for duty, continue to live your lives for others – “ONCE ROCK, ALWAYS ROCK – ALWAYS OBLIGATED, ALWAYS RESPONSIBLE.” ROCK!

Ostlund

[Sent in by Colonel Bill Ostlund,
Infantry Deputy Commander, 75th Ranger Regiment]

Airborne Colonel!

We can surmise there is not one of us from the Vietnam War, and more recently the wars in the Middle East, who doesn't know one, two or more of our buddies who took their own lives following their time at war; sadly, some of our guys continue to take that final, lonely path while others remain at risk. Hell, who knows how many of us have contemplated it – some, most? But, we also know that is not the path to take, though we understand it and them.

Of course, it's a path any of us who've been in combat should never consider, it might even be considered an injustice to our fallen buddies – they died so we might live. As the Colonel so rightly states, we carry a number of 'obligations' with us, and the dearest and perhaps most meaningful of all is, for us to live full lives -- it was gift given to us by our buddies who died.

We're a rare breed, we paratroopers; made of steel, able to chew barbed wire and drink sand. No hill too high for us to climb, no DZ too small on which to land, no enemy too fierce to conquer. A rare breed we are.

But then, inevitably, at some point we leave those days behind, and it becomes our time to move on, to move ahead, but always on the strength of the shoulders of our buddies who made it possible for us to live. If we owe them anything, we owe them our determination to live, and to live in spite of what this life might throw at us – that's all our buddies might ask of us – this we owe to them.

If you or any trooper you know is still fighting the battles of war, immediately call for yourself or hook your buddy up with help – *it's your obligation*. Here's one place. Ed

National Veteran's Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

24/7 free and confidential



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Over 1,000,000 Disability Claims With the VA Remain in Arrears

The information below provided by COL Thomas is a report of the result of the appeal of a Morrison and Foerster class action suit on behalf of every veteran initiated against the VA to take specific action amongst other things to resolve the 1,000,000 disability claims which are currently in arrears. Veterans lives depend on these claims and some have waited up to and over three years. Although there are many good things and many good services provided by the VA, the suit identifies that the system is broken....

<http://www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/index.html>

...even though this administration has given the VA the largest increase in Presidential history, and has further requested that the 2010 budget be increased to VA by 15% and by \$25 billion over the next five years, including a proposed \$4.9 billion increase for Fiscal Year 2010. According to the VA's admission (*60 Minutes*), over 1,000,000 disability claims remain in arrears. Reports reveal there will be NO NEW PROGRAMS for veterans and NO EXPANSION of CURRENT PROGRAMS, but the additional resources provided by the administration will be directed to refurbishing old VA facilities, building new VA facilities and providing incentives for mid-level managers.

Early in 2007, Gordy Erspamer, the senior counsel from Morrison and Foerster, contacted us for information on veterans who experienced difficulties and delays with the claims process. I explained to him that the list of veterans who didn't have a problem with their claims would be a far shorter list. Over the ensuing months I worked with Mr. Erspamer to develop an on-line form where veterans could document and express their claim concerns.

Our office alone provided over 100 veteran on-line claim concerns, which became part of the discovery for the class action suit.

While in Washington for the annual Coalition of Iraq and Afghanistan last year, I had the serendipitous pleasure to have lunch with the discovering partner of Morrison and Foerster. We discussed the VA Class Action suit at length. He informed me that the case was now with the appellate panel, one conservative judge,



Doc Scott

one liberal judge and one somewhat neutral judge. The results of that appeal appear below.

The latest update is as follows:

<https://www.baycitizen.org/veterans/story/appeals-court-cites-va-unchecked/>

The court will allow the VA a reasonable period of time to remedy the situation after which it will put VA Mental Health care in the hands of the courts. A VICTORY FOR OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES. I have a phonecon scheduled with Mr. Erspamer this week (May), while I am in Washington to discuss how we can continue to support him and support our veterans and their families.

Some Wounds Don't End with the War,

**OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
DESERVE BETTER.**

Scott Fairchild, Psy.D.
Doctor of Psychology
1370 Bedford Drive
Melbourne, Florida 32940
321.253.8887
321.253.8878 fax

In a message dated 5/21/2011 1:31:06 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time, nathanthomashope@cfl.rr.com writes:

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release

May 16, 2011, No. 11-8

Contact:
Mokie Porter
301-585-4000, Ext. 146

The Time Is Now for the VA To Fix Its Mental-Health System

(Washington, D.C.) – "Within the past week, a federal appeals court issued a scathing opinion of the VA's mental-health system, noting that it takes an average of four years for veterans to receive mental-health benefits," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). "This is a beleaguered process that demands immediate reform."

(continued...)



In the ruling of a three-judge panel, Judge Stephen Reinhardt of the 9th Circuit Appeals Court in Pasadena, California, wrote, *"Veterans should [not] be compelled to agonize or perish while the government fails to fulfill its obligations..."*

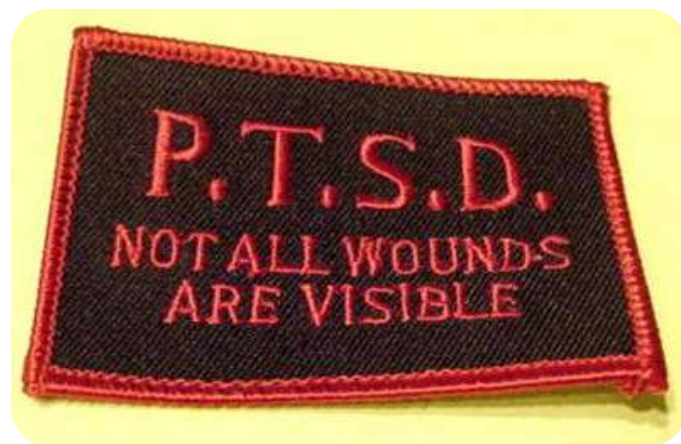
"Although the VA is obligated to provide veterans mental-health services, many veterans with severe depression or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are forced to wait weeks for mental health referrals...For those who commit suicide in the interim, care does not come soon enough."

"We could not agree more with Judge Reinhardt," Rowan said. "Despite what excuses have been proffered by the VA and DoD, we maintain that veterans in need deserve better. While the VA and the Department of Defense have delayed for years on the so-called 'seamless transition' from active duty to veteran status, far too many veterans have fallen through the cracks – or rather the gaping holes – in the system that is supposed to help them."

"Even staunch defenders of the Pentagon are displeased with the treatment afforded our veterans," Rowan added. After the hearing on the Federal Recovery Coordination Program last week, the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Health of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee decried the disservice to our wounded warriors and their families who are getting lost between two large bureaucracies.

"It's about time we work in concert to fix the system," Rowan said. "It's about time for the VA and DoD to stop guarding their fiefdoms and making excuses."

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's founding principle is ***"Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."***



Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) App Helps Thousands

WASHINGTON – The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), has already helped more than 5,000 users connect with important mental health information and resources.

"This new tool is about helping Veterans and Servicemembers when and where they need it," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *"We are encouraged so many have already downloaded this resource and hope many more will utilize this convenient tool to access VA services."*

Since its launch, the PTSD Coach app has been downloaded by thousands of individuals. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, the app has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The app lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go.

Currently, the PTSD Coach app has received perfect customer review scores on the iTunes App Store. Comments from Veterans and family members are overwhelmingly positive and one user describes the app as *"a must for every spouse who has a family member with PTSD."* Professionals have sent positive reviews, suggestions and offers to collaborate on research evaluating the PTSD Coach app.

The app has also already proven to be a useful tool for the staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. Within the first two hours of the app's official launch, the Crisis Line staff were contacted by a distressed Veteran who reported being instructed by the app to call the crisis line and was subsequently given an appointment at the local VA medical center. Crisis Line staff have begun to regularly recommend this resource to callers.

The app is one of the first in a series of jointly-designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology to help Servicemembers and Veterans manage their readjustment challenges and get anonymous assistance. Given the popularity of mobile devices, VA and DoD hope to reach tens of thousands of Veterans, Servicemembers, and their family members with the new suite of apps.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA's National Center for PTSD Website:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>



Treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder With a Jab to the Neck



By COURTNEY HUTCHISON
ABC News Medical Unit
Apr. 30, 2010

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-cured-shot/story?id=10510842&page=2>

A quick jab to the neck may be all it takes for immediate relief of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to new research from Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

Some doctors, however, caution that more research is necessary before the procedure is deemed safe enough for widespread use.

In a study published Friday in the journal *Pain Practice*, *Stellate Ganglion Block (SGB)*, a ten-minute procedure that applies local anesthetic to a bundle of nerves in the neck, proved an effective remedy for this anxiety disorder, potentially offering an alternative to the pharmaceuticals traditionally used to treat the flashbacks, anger, anxiety, and sleep disturbances caused by PTSD.

Unwilling to take medication for the rest of his life for his PTSD, John Sullivan, 28, a retired Marine Corps Sergeant from Chicago, sought out the experimental treatment from a Chicago-based anesthesiologist, Dr. Eugene Lipov. Lipov is not part of the Walter Reed study. While the block itself has been used to relieve certain kinds of pain since 1925, Lipov was the first to begin treating PTSD with this injection. He accepted Sullivan as part of a double-blind placebo study he's currently conducting on retired soldiers.



Getty Images

Sullivan was injured by a grenade explosion in 2003 while serving in Iraq. In the years that followed, he would suffer flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety, but it was not until a year ago that he was diagnosed with PTSD and was prescribed anti-anxiety medication. *"I didn't realize it at first, but I was losing my interest in going out with people, almost becoming a hermit, I wouldn't want to do work, call people... anything,"* Sullivan said.

But medication and therapy *"wasn't working 100 percent,"* Sullivan said, *"I'd take an anxiety pill and then I would be drowsy at work and I'd still be nervous and not want to go out with friends."*

The injection, which he received two months ago, *"was different,"* he said, *"not painful and the results were within five minutes -- I felt more relaxed and calmed down. It's been great."*

Because the study is placebo-controlled, Sullivan does not know if he actually received the block or a placebo procedure, but he felt that *"so far it's working."*

Neck Jab Provides Relief to Vets With PTSD

Led by Lieutenant Colonel Sean Mulvaney, Friday's report duplicated Lipov's past work with the block through a clinical trial of this treatment in two soldiers -- a 36-year-old white male on active military duty and a 46-year-old Hispanic male whose symptoms began 18 years ago after his service in the first Gulf War.

Both patients, according to the study, *"experienced immediate, significant and durable relief"* of their symptoms -- a relief that pharmacological treatment had failed to provide them.

After the first treatment, one patient reported that he felt as if *"a cloud had lifted"* from his mind and that he hadn't *"felt this good since high school,"* researchers write. This relief continued in the months following the injection and under psychiatric guidance, the patient was able to taper off his medication.

Traditional treatment with therapy and antidepressants can take months to relieve PTSD symptoms, and can cause side effects such as impotence, weight gain, and sedation, Lipov said. But the block offers another way -- it works within 30 minutes and does not have those side effects.

The effects can last between six months and a year, and long-term results have been excellent so far, he said. One patient, he reported, has been symptom-free for a year and a half following his second shot. Though these blocks have been used medically for the better part of a century, Dr. Eugene Viscusi, the director of Acute Pain Management at Thomas Jefferson University said that the procedure *"is far from risk free -- including some potentially very dangerous complications."*

The safety of the treatment would have to be tested *"but these findings are definitely interesting,"* said Viscusi, and worthy of further research.

(continued...)



How can numbing part of the neck fix a psychological problem?

When a traumatic event is experienced, it leads to an increase in nerve growth factor, Lipov said, a change that leads nerves in the brain to "sprout like flowers." In one study, he said, they studied soldiers about to take their first jump out of an airplane and found that their nerve growth factor spiked to nearly twice normal levels. This spike causes nerves to sprout, and this sprouting results in an increased production of adrenaline in the brain, making patients feel anxious. By applying local anesthetic to block a certain nerve group in the neck, Lipov said the nerve growth factor returns to normal and symptoms subside.

In one of his PTSD patients, Lipov noted that trauma centers in the brain would light up in scans when the man was shown violent pictures. After the block, those parts of the brain no longer responded to the trigger.

Testing Continues

Dr. Michael Roizen, chief wellness officer at the Cleveland Clinic, said more data is needed, especially controlled clinical trials, before this treatment could be used more widely.

With his current double-blind study, Lipov hopes to work towards just that kind of data.

"I hope this will eventually become the standard treatment for PTSD. It's quick and effective, only \$500 to \$1,000."

With so many veterans returning from combat plagued by psychological disorders like PTSD, he said, *"I think it's going to be huge in addressing the 'reverse surge' -- all these vets coming back to the country with these psychological problems."*

[Sent in by Dr. Scott Fairchild, LTC, 82nd Abn (Ret)]

Some Benefit Increases Likely in 2012

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the Consumer Price Index for April is up 0.8 percent over the March CPI. This is important for military retirees, and those drawing VA benefits, because the CPI is used to determine the annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) and rate adjustments to VA Disability and Compensation, Vets Pension programs, and other VA rates for the following year. The Military Officers Association of America reports that the April 2011 CPI is up 2.9 percent from the 2008 CPI, which means veterans and survivors may see an increase in compensation and pension benefits in 2012, the first since 2008. Source: www.military.com

[Sent in by Richard "Airborne" Martinez, B/2/503d]

Sister Looking For Buddies

Any Sky Soldiers who can identify these troopers and/or knew **Michael LeeRoy Ellis (KIA)**, please make contact with his sister. See her note below. Ed



"Mike is the one in the beret."

My name is Sheri Anderson - my brother, Michael LeeRoy Ellis, was in A Co. 2nd Bn 503rd - He was KIA 19 Nov 1967 on Hill 875. I have been trying to trace and collect any information I can about him and his life. There is really only my sister and I left who knew him. I have been trying to find anyone who may have known him in country. If you can help in any way that would be very much appreciated. Thanks for your service to me, my family and this great country - and thank you for any help you can offer. God bless.



Mike with his mother in '66

Sheri Anderson

momsgr8@roadrunner.com

Michael LeeRoy Ellis
Specialist Four
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INF, 173 ABN BDE
Army of the United States
20 August 1946 - 19 November 1967
Valinda, California
Panel 30E Line 024



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Tango, Multi-Tour Ranger Vet



Aug. 17, 1970: This Ranger has been in Vietnam for a long time. He's seen the jungles of War Zone C, the Central Highlands and the Bong Son Plains. He's been with the 173d Airborne Brigade's Ranger company since 1967. You might say he was a "Ho Chanh." He's a dog, and the men of November Rangers call him Tango.

Tango has been the mascot of the Rangers since Staff Sgt. Patrick Tadina picked him up in a Viet Cong base camp that had just been overrun in 1967 near Bien Hoa. Tadina took the pooch back with him, and the men adopted Tango as their mascot.

"Tango is one of us. He spends as much time observing in the CO's chopper as any other man in the company. If he were human, he would have the Air Medal with 10 Oak Leaf Clusters," said SSG Nat Turner after he assumed the duty after Tadina's DEROS.

"Tango moped around for a few days after Tadina left, but he soon perked up and began yapping away as usual," said Capt.

Richard Green, the old CO of the Ranger unit.



Pat Tadina, Tango's buddy.

Tango is just one of those mascots who has no DEROS. He will be around until he's old and gray – much to the delight of the Rangers. He may only be a dog, but like the man says, "he's one of us."

[Sent in by Robt. 'twin' Hendricksen, N/Co. Rangers]

RLTW

News Flash



VA to expand caregivers program

By KIMBERLY HEFLING
Associated Press

The VA says it will begin taking applications on May 9 and the monthly stipend will be ready by July. To participate, the caregiver must agree to a home visit and some other requirements.



Dr. Amdur

Deborah Amdur, the VA's chief consultant for care management and social work, said VA officials considered feedback in making decisions on how to implement the program, and she feels confident in how it will be rolled out.

"We have worked very hard to make this a success," Amdur said.

Murray said she'd been so concerned about the original plan that she'd taken up the issue with Obama. She said she's pleased that the administration changed its eligibility requirements.

"The VA correctly has responded in a positive way," Murray said.

The enhanced benefits are only for caregivers of veterans from the recent wars. But the VA has said it is improving other existing programs for caregivers of veterans from all eras.

In February, it created a national caregivers support hotline that has received about 5,000 calls. **1-877-222 VETS (8387).**

Veterans' service organizations had wanted additional support for all caregivers of veterans, but Congress was not able to come up with enough money to do so. The law instructs the VA to report to Congress within two years about the possibility of providing the enhanced benefits to all caregivers.

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_VETERANS_CAREGIVERS?SITE=FLROC&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT



There is an awful lot of beautiful poetry around. A lot of verse written during wartime as a continuing reminder of the seriousness of young lives lost. Very rarely does one come across a work which, for the sheer beauty of its imagery, the intensity of its expression, and the prayerfulness of its tone, that it becomes obvious that this poem should stand with the best of the best of poetry. It bears re-reading any number of times, one of the hallmarks of superlative poetry. It bears memorization.

~ CORREGIDOR ~

Silver moon softens shattered walls,
Only the ghosts remain,
And the winds howl down the lonely halls
The tales of blood and pain.

And chutes sigh, like long lost souls,
Stranded in lifeless trees,
Death lurks in the cave-like holes
That gape at the lonely seas.

O Lord, consecrate and bless
The loved ones who must rest,
Who bore your cross and gave their all
In this their final test.

Gertus H. Jones, Sgt.
Battery "B"

462nd Parachute Field Artillery Battery



On 3 March 2006, this poem was officially consecrated to the recognition of the 503d PRCT's Return to Corregidor. For more about the ceremony, see links from http://503prct.org/corregidor_jones.html

Paul Whitman
503rd P.R.C.T. Heritage Battalion Web Site





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 24 -- 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](http://TexasReunion2011-173dAirborneBrigade.com)

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

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

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

Register online: www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011

See note on following page.....



173d REUNION HOTEL & GOLF INFORMATION

A short broadcast before our 2011 reunion on the 22nd to 26th of June in beautiful San Antonio, Texas. Our flagship hotel, the Hilton Palacio del Rio, has NO more rooms available at our discounted rate. Our overflow hotel is the historic Menger Hotel -- they will charge their prevailing tourist rate (but ask if the earlier discount rate of \$119 plus tax is still available). Visit our website to reserve online:

www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011/hotel.html

There are a few remaining openings for our golf outing Friday, June 24th, 2011, so sign-up with Robert Gonzalez at: rogonzalez173@satx.rr.com or call 210-663-7671. Bring your clubs or you can rent them at the clubhouse. Airborne!

Scott H. Smith
President, 173d Chapter 13
www.texasskysoldier.org/reunion2011/

Sky Soldier With A Monkey On His Back



BEN and his CO- PILOT

James 'Ben' Harden was a 173d LRRP '66-'67. "Ben was a crew chief before coming over to LRRP. I believe that he deployed with the 173d from Okinawa and then was with the LRRP for 18 to 24 months," says Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP.

[Photo sent by Robt. 'twin' Hendrickson, LURPs & Rangers]

Memorial Day Message

By Scott Fairchild, 82nd Abn Div

Once again Rolling Thunder arrived Washington, DC en masse with the rumble of 101 motorcycles (the largest contingent ever, with most from Florida) to support the *17th Annual Good Grief Camp for Young Survivors*. (TAPS <http://www.taps.org/>) facilitated by Bob Cooper and Moe and riders from as far away as France. Over a half a million motorcycles are in DC for the annual Rolling Thunder ride from the Pentagon parking lot across the Potomac to The Wall.

This year there were 463 kids who have lost a loved one attending from across the United States. The healing on both sides of the bikes was as palpable as it was heart-warming.



We are just finishing the design of a joint TAPS/Rolling Thunder Patch which will read "*Ride for the Children of the Fallen*"

My son Cory has stepped up with a servant's heart this year and worked 12-hour days unloading trucks behind the scenes. His dad, well, let's say he just lost his voice and pulled his back, but that's what happens to old men.

Hats off to the many active duty and retired mentors (one per child) of all services from the DC area and around the world (as far as Germany) who come at their own expense to give of their weekend to be here for a child. They are the heart of the program which lets these young children know that the legacy of sacrifice and of their lost love does lives on.

On this special Memorial Day, please keep the families of those who have lost their loved ones defending our nation and freedoms, in your prayers.



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BATTLE OF THE SLOPES

HILL 1338

Request for Recollections



It's time to record your memories.

What did you do?

What did you witness?

What do you recall?

How has that battle changed your life?

June marks the 44th anniversary of what most Vietnam War historians consider the costliest encounter by a single American unit in the entire war. On June 22, 1967, Alpha Company 2/503 Infantry, and its 120 plus troopers headed for their Base Camp located adjacent to the Special Forces camp and the Dak To airstrip. In less than three hours, a combined NVA and VC enemy force of as many as 1000 annihilated Alpha. Seventy-Six (76) warriors lost their lives along with well over 20 wounded that fateful day.

Though Alpha suffered unimaginable casualties, there were a diverse number of

entities who were intimately involved and affected by the day's events. We're asking not only for Alpha survivors, but Bravo and Charlie companies' remembrances as well as those from sister units. What went through the minds of the 319th or the mortar contingents who pondered the accuracy of their fire missions? We'd like to hear the details from those officers who directed the fighting from the TOC, as well as the Casper platoon who played an integral part throughout the day.

There exists an uncounted number of combatants who still carry a mountain of remorse from when they stood helplessly on the banks of the Po Ko River awaiting the order to saddle up, an order which never came. Lastly, the voices of the families of those lost must be heard.

We ask that your submissions be sent in no later than June 10th for inclusion in the June 22nd Special Edition of our *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter*. Send in your recollections and any photos you have, and please pass on this request to your buddies who survived the *Battle of the Slopes*. As of this writing the Special Edition is approaching 20 pages of history.

All issues to date of our newsletter can be seen at either of these web sites: www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php and http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

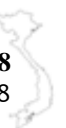
Wambi Cook

A/2/503 Survivor of the Slopes

CUTOFF FOR SUBMISSIONS IS JUNE 10TH.

SEND TO:

rto173d@cfl.rr.com



Whodat?

I have a photo of a 173d baptism in the South China Sea. I have no clue who these guys are, but I was told that two of these kids died on an operation only a day after -- cannot confirm that though. Maybe a Whodat? ATW,

Chuck Dean
HHC/1/503d



One of Our Own at White House



Here is Rick Patterson, A/2/503d, the former Executive Director of Disabled American Veterans (DAV), as he presents President Obama with a Louisville Slugger for 'going to bat for veterans'.

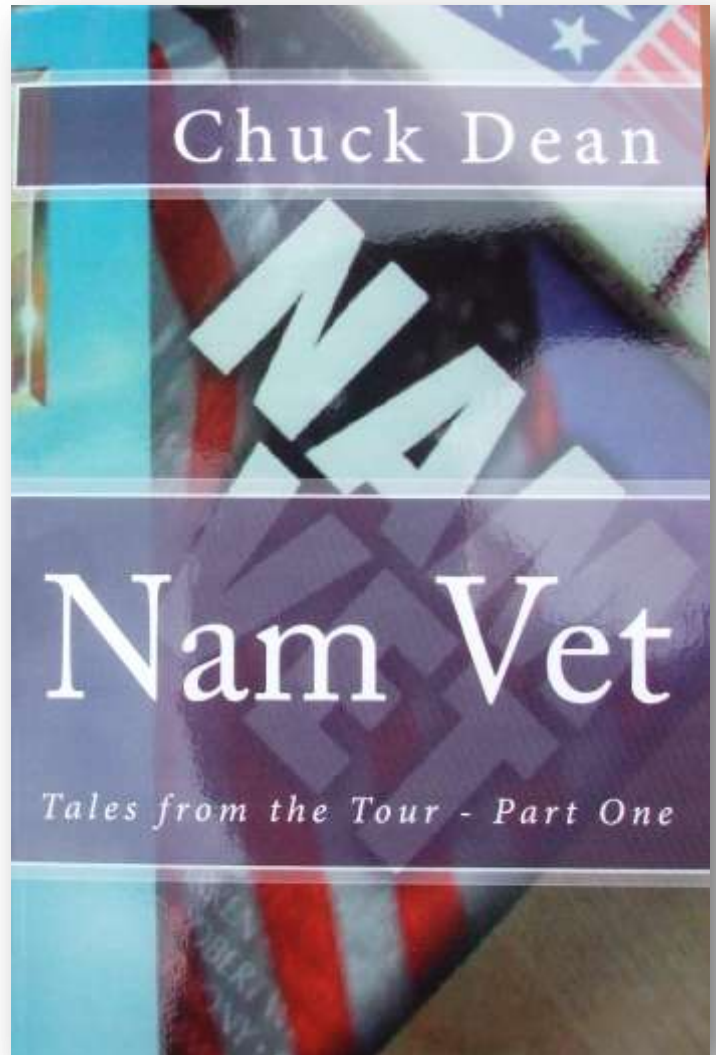
[Sent in by Bill Reynolds, A/2/503d]

"The U.S. Constitution doesn't guarantee happiness, only the pursuit of it. You have to catch up with it yourself."

~ Benjamin Franklin

"Nam Vet: Tales from the Tour"

[Submitted book review]



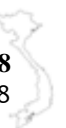
This latest book by a Sky Soldier is a collection of fictional short stories, powerful in their unity and theme and rich in their diversity of styles. Written by Chuck Dean, Vietnam veteran and author of several best-selling books including "Nam Vet: Making Peace with Your Past" and "Down Range: To Iraq and Back", these small vignettes are full of surprises, and hold unique glimpses of wartime duty. Dean served six years in the U.S. Army with two years with the 173d Airborne Brigade, 1/503d, both on Okinawa and in Vietnam. The book is available at www.amazon.com

Note: Sky Soldiers who wrote books about the Vietnam War, and 503rd troopers who authored books about WWII, are invited to send in details of their publications and the availability for purchase. These are the only exceptions to our policy of not running for-profit ads in our newsletter. Ed



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Going to the Reunion



The rig David Zsigo, Gold Star Brother, will be driving to the 173d reunion this month.



David's brother, Alex.

~ On The Wall ~
Alexander C. Zsigo, Jr.

Specialist Four
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173 ABN BDE
Army of the United States
19 December 1945 - 22 June 1967
Durand, Michigan
Panel 22E Line 052

Final Mission David Taitano N Company Ranger 173d Airborne Brigade 1968-69



Attending services in South Carolina included:

Pat "Tad" Tadina 1966-70

Don Giannattasio 1968-69

Drew Love 1970-71

Allen Lohmann 1970-71

Joe Marquez 1970

~ RLTW ~

Welcome to the Vietnam War Commemoration Site

The Vietnam War marked a difficult and tumultuous time in our history. Many returning service members didn't receive the honorable and appreciative "welcome home" they deserved. Now is the time to recognize and remember their service, honor, and sacrifice.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program to commemorate the *50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War*. To accomplish that, the United State of America Vietnam War Commemoration was establish to honor and pay tribute to Vietnam Veterans and their families. Please visit our web site:

<http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/>

Richard D. Williams, Dir. Of Comm. Affairs
Vietnam War Commemoration

[Sent in by Tony Esposito, C/2/503d]



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Saluting the RTOs of the 2/503d



Cover of *Sky Soldier*, December 1968 issue.



~ The RTO ~ (Radio/Telephone Operator)

(From the Net): He was usually carefully chosen. He had to be someone with experience who wouldn't get rattled under fire. He had to be able to read maps, too. If something happened to the officer, the RTO would often effectively command the unit, calling in fires, calling in medevacs, etc. It was also a dangerous job, since the radio antenna said to the enemy "*Shoot ME first!*"

But an experienced RTO became like a "private secretary" to the officer, anticipating what might be wanted and preparing it in advance. At night, he and the officer, the platoon sergeant, and platoon medic slept close together, alternating radio watch, the "PRC" within reach of all.

RTOs within a unit got to know each other too, and formed a kind of bond, since they performed most of the telecommunications. There was a "status" to being the RTO. Most RTOs administratively reported to the communications section back at battalion. The commo section also maintained your radio for you, out on the field.



L-R: David Farraro (KIA), Leo "Frenchy" Pellerin and RTO Dominick Cacciatore A/2/503d ready to go on mission.

Some of our RTOs

We had many more RTOs than those listed throughout this report, but these are all we could identify. Not everyone remembered first names and correct spelling of last names.

Mike Adams, B Co. (KIA)
Larry Albright, HHC
Don Anderson, A Co.
Mike Anderson, HHC
Simmie Bellamy, A Co. (KIA)



A gaggle of 2/503 RTOs

(Photo by RTO Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d)

Dennis Begley, A Co.
Leonard Benovitz, A Co.
John Berry, B/D Cos.
Jim Bethea, HHC
Walter Bills, C Co.

Unpleasant Red

I served May 5, 1965 to April 18, 1966. My call sign was Unpleasant Red. James Ratz, May '65 to January 2, 1966, was Unpleasant Blue.

Dennis Begley
A/2/503d

Keep Your RTO Alive

"An RTO is a radio-man in *Mud And Blood: Vietnam* who can call support on your location. You can have more than 1 RTO if you get lucky. Make sure to keep your RTOs alive, as you are completely cut off from the outside world if they perish. Without an RTO, not only will you lose the ability to send in arty, choppers, etc., but you will also be unable to call for ammo drops, which means your men will eventually run out of ammo and become defenseless."

~ From some web page

(continued....)





2/503d Bn CO LTC George Dexter and RTO Connelly at LZ Wine in the Mekong Delta during Operation Marauder, January '66.

August Brooks, A Co.
SP4 Burch, B Co.
Archie Caffee, A Co.

- Jack Bixby, A Co. (KIA)
- John Bowers, B Co.
- Wayne Bowers, C Co.
- Lee Braggs, HHC
- Larry Brisco, B Co. (KIA)

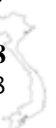


RTO Dominick Cacciatore A/2/503 at Camp Zinn at live firing range before going on OP



A/2/503 CO Capt. Ed Carns. The Cap's RTO must be out of the picture frame tied to that rubber chain.

(continued...)





RTO Pennington A/2/503d taking five.

- Richard Childress, B Co.
- Harry Cleland, B Co.
- Hal Clem, HHC
- Dave Colbert, HHC/E Cos.
- George "Scotty" Colson, HHC

- Ernesto Corrieno, B Co
- John Cotanch, B Co.
- Mo Dahl, C Co.
- RTO De Gregorio, A Co.
- Roger Dick, C Co.



Top pic is the unknown RTO, B/2/503 - Dec. '67 to early Jan. '68, Capt. "The Swamp Fox " Rogans` RTO. I know he was really close to leaving when I arrived in Dec. '67. I want to say HICKS, not sure. Bottom pic must be a lost RTO or a missing LT in 2nd Platoon.

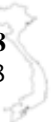
Richard "Airborne" Martinez
B/2/503d '67/'68

- Jesse Dunn, C Co.
- Troy Duran, C Co.
- Richard Dykes, B Co.
- Ron Ellet, HHC
- Dugan Ersland, A Co.
- RTO Fabish, HHC
- David Farraro, A Co. (KIA)
- Woodrow Fike, A Co.



RTO (Sgt.) Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503d, '68-'69

(continued...)





RTO Murphy A/2/503, monitoring the Net.

- Bob Fleming, C Co.
- Lamar Fredericks, A Co. (KIA)
- Pat Fruchtenicht, HHC/D Cos.
- Pat Garvin, C Co.
- Bob Gerber, A Co.
- George Goodman, HHC
- Rick Grantham, E Co.
- Dave "Griff" Griffin, B Co.

Experience and Good Troops

My RTO experience and some good troops had a lot to do with my squad coming out ahead in competition with even experienced E-6's. Having the communications skills didn't hurt either when I went through the Recondo Raider course at Bragg.

Dave "Link" Linkenhoker
B/2/503d

- Eugene Grim, A Co.
- Gary "Red" Grossman, B Co.
- Johnnie Hansel, C Co.
- Glen Harmon, C Co.
- Jerry Hassler, HHC

Weapons Platoon RTO

I was an RTO from early Nov. '67 until late Jan. or early Feb. of '68 with the Weapons Platoon of B/2/503rd. I arrived in country with Jim Miller of Tucson, Arizona, and Jim was the RTO of the Recon Squad of B/2/503d.

John Bowers
B/2/503d

~ The RO Tactical Radio ~



Weight: 18 ounces
Range: 210 miles

18 ounces?! That just ain't fair.

~ The PRC25 ~



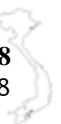
Weight: 23.5 pounds
Range: not far enough

- Robert Hill, C Co.
- Leo Hittle, B Co.
- Guy Hodgkins, C Co.
- Wayne Hoitt, HHC

I was an RTO in A Company. I carried the PRC25 for 1st Squad 2nd Platoon, call sign *2 Alpha*. I lasted the whole year without being wounded. Many times I thought it might be beneficial to get wounded so I could get rid of that piece of crap and give it to the FNG.

Bob "Luke" Lucas
A/2/503d

(continued....)



It's A Boy!!

SP4 Zackry L. Lindsey from Atlanta, GA on handset in August 1969, receiving a call from the Red Cross informing him he has just become the father of a 9 lb. 6 oz. baby boy. Zackry was the artillery RTO with B/2/503d. The 2d Battalion was on a pacification mission in the valley near the I Corps/II Corps line.



Pictured with Zackry are 1LT Throckmortan, FO 1LT Ron Smith and an unnamed trooper.

(Photo provided by Ron Smith, B/2/503d)

~ That Radio Was Good To Me ~

Sorry, no memory of other RTO names. Just can't seem to pull 'em out of my ass these days. I took our squad RTO position into my second month with 1st Platoon B/2/503 around March 1970. All OJT of course, making a lot of mistakes early on. Continued as RTO when volunteers were requested to replace KIA members of Stag Team 2 out of Ca Cong village on the coast around June 1970. Remained the teams' RTO until the team was disbanded in mid-December 1970, I received my Buck Sgt. stripes at the same time and was DEROS'd back to the states with the 82nd.



Link in 1970

My last duty out of LZ English was to escort a B Company trooper being held in Da Nang to Na Trang to his court martial for knocking out the Execs' teeth. Never got to reunite with the Stag Team or my old platoon before the DEROS. However, the experience as RTO came in handy stateside as well as there was a chronic shortage of Staff's (E-6's) with my company at Bragg (coincidentally 1st Platoon B/2/505). Even with my short time as an E-5, but with combat experience, I was often given a squad of my own during squad competitions, and general training periods.

**Dave "Link" Linkenhoker
B/2/503d**



A/2/503d troopers RTO Jim Gettel on left with good buddy Leonard Benovitz

Richard Holmes, C Co.
Don Horger, A Co.
Don Hudson, HHC
Olaf Hurd, HHC



An RTO, doing his thang.

(continued....)





A/2/503d RTO "Bob" Johnson on left with Sgt. Benovitz

Thomas Hurd, C Co.
 "Bob" Johnson, A Co.
 William Johnson, A Co.
 RTO Johnson, HHC
 Bill Knapp, B Co.
 Stu Kumasaka, HHC



HHC/2/503 Bn Command Group RTO and his buddies humping the "D" Zone. Still can't figure out what the hell they're doing on that damn foot path.

(Photo by Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d)

John Leppelman, C Co.
 Dave Linkenhoker, B Co.
 Bob Lucas, A Co.

Shoot me now!

Geez, this is really a memory challenge. But I had a special bond with my Company HQ RTO's. Besides touring Vietnam together as part of a mobile antenna farm which the bad guys liked to shoot at, we ate together, slept together, pulled radio watch together and generally "covered" each other's asses. In 1965, SGT E5 George Schleife was the C Company commo sergeant and a very accomplished C-ration chef. Jack S. Moore Jr. started as a SP4 RTO, he made SGT E5 and served as my operations sergeant. He was seriously wounded in Dec '65. He was evac'd to the States. I later visited him at Walter Reed and in Florida. Not sure about the rest of his military service? I think he lives somewhere in the SE US. I would love to regain contact with him after all these years! Other guys that I can remember packing radios and putting up with me were Johnnie Hansel, SP4; Jesse Dunn SP4; Raymond Wiles, SP4; and Richard Holmes, SP4. I think it was Holmes that had the distinction of having his handset cord shot off. I don't remember the names of the platoon RTO's, but hopefully somebody can come up with more names. It took a good man to pack a PRC-25 around with an obvious antenna that advertised "shoot me now"!

Fred Henschell

C/2/503d



A/2/503 CO Captain Carmen Cavezza with his RTO Sgt. James Underwood

PFC MacGregor, C Co.
 Terry Marcinkowski, HHC
 Art Marquez, C Co.

(continued...)



RTO Loves Them Bulls

Myself, I got handed the Radio when our RTO, whose name I did not know, got wounded and was evacuated and the LT saw me and handed it to me saying I was his new RTO -- I was Bravo/3/1 and I have a few pics of me with the "Dam Target" on my back. Actually, I enjoyed carrying it as I always knew (well as much as anyone) what was going on at the time or supposed to be going on. I really enjoyed being in the 3rd platoon with such great men as Olive, Mike Carver (Skoshie Bit), George Lewis (Pineapple), Pappy Sides, Donnie Orville Wilfong, Caldwell, Grimes, Sgt Yrieno, Williams, Larry Fogle, Robinson, James C. New III, David Kuhns, Lloyd Michaels, and so many others as well as all the Bravo Bulls that I am proud to have served with and will carry dear to my heart as long as I draw a breath. Sorry but when I get going about our crew in Nam I get so excited thinking of B Company men like Dave Glick, Jack Schimpf, BDQ Roy (Lombardo) although I do not remember Lombardo myself from Nam I know he was there and met him at the Lake George Bulls' reunion last fall. Others Doc Wolcott, Don Matlock, Gainey, Beaver. Anyone remember what Beavers real name was??? The list just goes on and on. I did not go over with you all and did not get there until September 9, '65 and left 11 months 21 days and 15 hours later. We had the finest group of men in and assigned to our Brigade that the Army ever put together and if that makes me just a little bit Proudful of our men then I am Guilty as charged. Bless you Brothers.

Bill Knapp

B/2/503d

"Preacher" Chaplain Chapter 26, 173d Abn Assoc.

PFC MacGregor, C Co.
Terry Marcinkowski, HHC
Ted Matuliwick, HHC
Ted Menke, A Co.
Jim Miller, B Co.



Commo & Recon RTO Jerry Hassler, 2/503d , '66/'67



Alpha Company RTO in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta on 2 Jan 66 during Operation Marauder.

Roy Mills, A Co.
Roy Mischew, A Co.
Jack Moore, C Co.
RTO Moore, E Co.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

On 1 June 1970 was published a *Sky Soldier* special edition by the 173d Airborne Brigade with introduction by BG H.S. Cunningham. The following is an excerpt from this army publication:

WALKING TARGET: He comes in all shapes and sizes but his load is the same. Not to mention the risk.

He's one of the most critically needed men of any operation, whether it's a fire team on a night ambush, or a battalion in the field. His is one of the least desirable of jobs.

The radio operator wears an uncomfortable load and poses a beautiful target for snipers. His long, whip antenna tells everyone who he is, and the most basic instruction of any military force is the importance of radio communications. Charlie desperately tries to get the RTO.

But, in spite of his load and the risk he runs, once a trooper becomes accustomed to his radio, he sticks faithfully to it and, in many cases, would not swap jobs with anyone. He knows how important he is.

[Sent in by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d, '66/'67]

(continued...)



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Special RTO Duty

*"Is that a PRC25 in your pocket
or are you just happy to see me?"*



**Bravo Bull 2/503 RTO Larry Paladino welcomes
Playboy Playmate of the Year Jo Collins to Camp Zinn
in 1966 on direct orders from Capt. Les Brownlee.
It's not what you know...**

John Mudrick, A Co.
Ted Olzack, C Co. (KIA)
John Oury, B Co.
Larry Paladino, B Co.
Tom Parrott, D Co.



Chargin' Charlies with their RTO nearby.

Don Quixote & Sancho Panza

or;
Never believe a Texan



**2 Jan 66, Bn XO Maj. Bob Carmichael and Smith, his
trusty RTO, await their chopper ride to LZ Wine in the
Mekong Delta during Operation Marauder.**

On my cherry mission as we were coming in to land at
LZ Wine, Bob leaned down to me and over the roar of
the chopper blades yelled out, **"Don't worry, Smitty, this
LZ is secure,"** just before the roof above our heads was
torn apart by incoming fire. I've haven't believed a
goddamn thing he's told me ever since! Smitty Out

RTO Pennington, A Co.
Jackie Puckett, HHC
Jim Ratz, A Co.



A 2/503d RTO looks on as buddy inspects a VC camp.

(continued...)



A Four Foot Thingy

Re: the radio.

Contrary to popular opinion, PFC's and Spec 4's were not the only guys lucky enough to wander around the jungle with a 4 foot thingy waving above their heads.



I usually sent Corrineo and Sutton off with one of the platoons and I stuck close to the company commander. Especially after Roy Lombardo left. Consequently, I carried my own PRC25; I had 3 of them. I usually had the antennas folded and tied down with rubber bands. I do not know when the infantry companies got the 25's but they had not reached B Company by the battle of July 7, 1965. With the 25 I could talk to everyone, especially air, both fixed and rotary wing. During the above mentioned battle, while I was jumping around on various frequencies, my antenna popped up (I was trying to keep it on the ground). It was immediately hit and flopped into the half erect position. I had the only functioning radio as the rest of the company radios crapped out or were shot off the backs of the RTOs. It still worked and I was able to yell and swear at just about everyone for the rest of the battle.

Jim Robinson, FO/B/2/503d, '65/'66



Jim's RTO, Ernesto Corrineo in village.

Jack Ribera, A Co.
Don Rice, HHC
Jules Rice, A Co.
Paul Richards, B Co.
George Rivera, A Co.

Two Recon RTOs Meet Again



RTO Jerry Hassler, right, takes a look at the plaque recognizing his friend, RTO Olaf Hurd, left, as *Outstanding Military Veteran*. Hassler surprised Hurd with his visit. It was the first time they had seen each other in 43 years.

Dan Robinson, HHC
Peter Rooney, A Co. (KIA)
Jesse Sanchez, 2/503



2nd Platoon B/2/503d PSG SFC Mac Adams with his RTO Dave "Griff" Griffin.

(continued....)



FOXTROT UNIFORM, OUT

I was an RTO with A/2/503rd, 173d Abn Bde (Sep) for Squad Leader Sgt. Joseph Pomroy, 1st Plt. 1st Sq. from about April '66 until Nov. or Dec. of '66, when I was Med Evac'd out with malaria and dysentery (I lost so much weight that I did not recognize myself).

On my first field operation (scared to death) the RTO got hit -- I was so new with the platoon that I didn't even know what his name was. We were being air lifted out the next day so I was given the radio and that was it. I was now the squad RTO.

I really don't have a favorite RTO story, being in the jungle was never a fun place to be humping a radio w/extra battery (I got to keep the plastic bag), roll of land-line wire and everything else, also going thru the jungle fighting with the "WAIT-A-MINUTE-VINES". At that time not all RTOs were school-trained, they came off the line just like me; we had our own radio check, it went something like this :

ONE, this is ALPHA ONE, radio check, KILO MIKE ALPHA over...

ONE ALPHA, this is ONE, FOXTROT UNIFORM ...OUT

We did it this way until the new CO, Capt. ED CARNS "suggested" that we do radio checks by the book.

The plus side of being an RTO was that you knew what was going on all the time, the down side was that as an RTO you knew that the VC and NVA were looking for the person with an antenna coming up from his back. Just one more thing not to think about.

Finally, it took me a long time before I realized just how much power an RTO has. He has the power to save a life by calling in a dust off or taking a life by calling in an air strike or artillery. I am just proud to say that I served with the HERD and that I was an RTO.

Dominick Cacciatore, OUT



~ We're Proud to be RTOs ~

There are very few poems about radiomen, I've searched and searched the day long, to find any odes which might best depict when they were so young and so strong.

Our RTOs, of one I was which,
and now sadly share this with all,
took a damaging toll in our war long ago,
as told by the names on *The Wall*.

'Walking Targets they were,
the RTOs' task,
as they humped that PRC far and near.
Up to mountain plateaus to green valley's below,
seldom spending much time in the rear.

"Sir, this call's for you,"
was their usual refrain,
passing to and fro commo's galore,
in waist deep water of paddy dykes
or while hugging the jungle floor.

Good job my boys, and a job well done,
and this I want you to know.

It was an honor, indeed, to be one of you,
to be a 173 RTO.

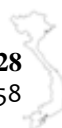
~ A 2/503 RTO



Good buddy RTO Lee Braggs, HHC/2/503d

SP/4 Santelli, C Co.
Gary Saso, 2/503d
George Schleife, C Co.

(continued....)



Gerald Sebastian, HHC
 Lew Smith, HHC
 Chris Segler, HHC
 Steve Senseney, C Co.
 RTO Sorrell, A Co.

The Pensive RTO



B/2/503 RTO and buddies looking for bad guys.

RTO Souve, A Co.
 Stanley Snead, C Co.
 Patrick Steele, E Co. (KIA)
 Joe Svetlick, HHC
 Swoop (nickname), C Co.
 RTO Symon, A Co.



Wayne Bowers, C/2/503d

I carried a radio for the squad leader (Sgt Kuntz, KIA Hill 875) and later for the platoon leader (Lt Philbin) while in Charlie Co., 1967. I may have spelled both names wrong. While in D Co. on Hill 875 our Platoon RTO was KIA. As we were pulling back I came upon him and the platoon leader. He was yelling, ***"I'm gonna shoot the next son of a bitch that doesn't help me!"*** I grabbed the kid by the pack frame and we dragged him about 40 meters. He later died. I had known him for a while. I can see his face as clear today as then, however, his name has left me. He was from New England, I think Conn.

Wayne Bowers
 C/2/503d

My best friend, **RTO Ted Richard Olzack**, was killed on Hill 875 on November 1967. At that time I was in the Mekong Delta with the Mobile Riverine Assault Force. Anyone remember a young LT named Tracy Murrey from Miles City, Montana? I believe he received a DSC for his actions during that battle.

Wayne Tuttle
 C/2/503d

(continued....)



RTO Hal Clem, HHC/2/503d, working his P-38.



His Dad Was The Best

My name is Jim Miller. I was with B/2/503d, Nov. '67 to Oct. '68, but records may show Nov. '67 to May '68, then HHC/2/503d from June '68 to Oct. '68. I was in the Arizona National Guard for a year, but in January 1967, I left the Guard and went on active duty and signed-up for Airborne Infantry with my buddy. After basic training at Ft. Ord, CA they told us that instead of Infantry Advanced Training, we were both going to 05C MOS training, first at Ft. Ord. then on to Ft. Gordon, Georgia. After Radio/Teletype training, we went to Ft. Benning, Georgia for Jump School. Following Jump School, my buddy went to Special Forces Training and I went to Vietnam, assigned to the 173d.

I arrived in Vietnam at Bien Hoa the first part of Nov. '67, then on to An Khe. Very shortly after arriving at An Khe, they put a bunch of us new arrivals to the 173d on a flight to Dak To. I remember arriving at night and they "Herd"ed us into a tent. There were 4 of us that were 05C MOS and we were all told that we were going to be assigned to a Infantry Company at daylight. (Hill 875 was in progress).

B/2/503d had been very badly hit before Hill 875, and that is where they sent us, to replenish their depleted ranks. After Hill 875 was secure, they told us that we could return to our MOS and back to HHC, and I requested to stay with Bravo Company, and they granted my request.

After the first of the year (1968) B/2/503d was back to strength. They reformed the Company Recon Squad and I volunteered to be the RTO. We left Dak To at the start of the Tet Offensive and went to other areas in the Central Highlands. After that, we were back at An Khe for a short period, then were trucked to Bong Son.

At Bong Son, we were short-handed in our Recon Squad and a fine young man named Larry Briscoe volunteered to come into our group. Last man in, unfortunately, has to carry the radio. Larry did not hesitate. Larry was a very strong, brave and courageous man, but he was much more than that. He was very caring about his fellow troopers and he always made sure that others were taken care of before himself.

Larry had a tremendous sense of humor and a smile that could make you melt. In the middle of the worst conditions you can imagine, Larry's smile and laughter could make the worst of times better. Larry had the smile of Paul Newman and the courage of a lion.

On May 6, 1968, we were sent out on a S&D thru the hedge rows around Bong Son. Shortly after our chopper landing, I led us into an ambush (I was the pointman in our Recon Squad). The first man the VC went for was

Larry, because he had our radio. Larry was KIA. A Lt. tried to get to Larry, but he too was shot and killed.

I owe my life to Larry and every day I ask God, why him and not me? I know that Larry had a son that was living in Colorado as I saw it on a posting with the Association. I should have contacted him, but couldn't. Can't let things go. Still struggling with the past. Tell him, his dad was the best.

Tell him to be very proud of his dad. His dad was everything that this county stood for. But more than that, his dad was everything that God stood for. There is a verse in the Bible that I refer to, in honor of Larry, for it says it all. In John 15:13, "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*"

Larry, I love you and miss you. God Bless you and your family.

Jim Miller
B/2/503d

Bill Totten, C Co.
James Underwood, A Co.
Terrel Vickery, B Co.
Norman Walsh, C Co.

Our RTO (Company Commander's RTO) for Company C, 2/503 Inf Abn was SP/4 Santelli, the spelling might not be right and don't know his first name. Don't know how long he was in Vietnam, but he was in the fire-fight 3 Mar 67 with me, after we made the Combat Jump.

Gary Baura, CSM
C/2/503d

I was assigned to C/2/503d from April 1970-71. Our platoon policy was that each Cherry Boy had to carry the radio until a new Cherry Boy was assigned to your squad. The Old Timers thought process was that it was better for a Cherry Boy to be killed than an Old Timer because he had not been in country too long.

Robert Hill
C/2/503d

Myself and John Berry were the first Company HQ RTO team for the new D Company when they changed the TO&E to include a D Company. John currently lives quietly in Renton WA.

Bob Fleming
D/2/503d

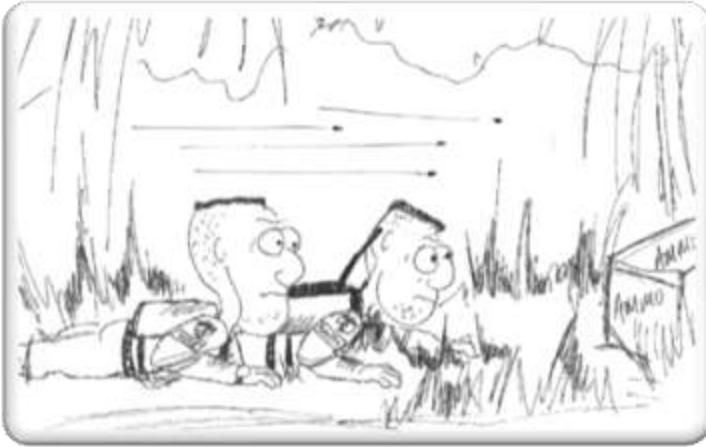
Sounds crazy, but I don't really remember my company RTO's, but I was a close friend with Mike Adams, RTO for B/2/503, KIA on 875.

Ed Perkins
HHC/A/2/503d

(continued....)



The LT & his RTO on the Hunt for Ammo



LT Vose A/2/503 and RTO Smith HHC/2/503 hunting for ammo at Zulu-Zulu 16 Mar 66.



"Psst! Hey! What are you guys doing out there??"



Out there?

(By Dan 'The Wild' Smith)

My RTO was Ernesto Corrieno. A great kid who I have never been able to find. I think he was wounded in the October ambush but cannot confirm that.

Jim Robinson
FO/B/2/503d

I did not know the first name of my company RTO (Paragon Charlie), but he was a slender (weren't we all) black kid named Smith. Really good troop. He was there Dec. '69 - May '70. I really am ashamed that I cannot remember more names now than I can.

BTW got a story about him. We got resupplied in the low grounds just west of LZ English. The next morning we moved a few Km to the base of the hills/mountains and took a break. I told him to put up the long antenna so I could talk to battalion. He said he must have forgotten it at our RON position, so I had the platoon we were with set up security and he and I walked back to the previous nights RON position and as might be expected, there it was. We picked up the antenna and rejoined the platoon and continued our mission. He never forgot anything again. LOL

Darrell "Moe" Elmore, LTC
C/D/HHC/2/503d

I, Terrel (HOG) Vickery, was RTO from July '68 to September '68 in Company B/2/503, until I transferred to LRRPS/Company N/75 Rangers.

Terrel Vickery
B/2/503d

My name is Troy Duran, I was a Red Leg RTO with "C" Co. 2/503 from approximately April '67 to Dec. '68.

Troy Duran
C/2/503d

I was an RTO with E/2/503 (Wildcat Recon, Team #1) for about three months in early 1970. We were based out of LZ English.

Rick "Granny" Grantham
E/2/503d

Best I can remember, 3rd Platoon, Company B, 2nd Bn, Oct '65- April '66, RTOs name was Bush. I had a hard time keeping some distance between us when the shit hit the fan. He drew a lot of fire. Love his dedication tho. Was a damn good RTO too. First name Specialist. That's the best I can do after 45 years. Second thought...his name could have been Burch. If you find out let me know.

Jim Stanford
B/2/503d

(continued...)



MORE ABOUT RTOs (Radio Telephone Operators)

The basis of this section is to give you an idea of what an RTO looks like and what he might be wearing. 'The Look' is exactly like a rifleman except you have this great big radio strapped to your back. So you want to be a RTO? Here we can discuss what you should have in your collection to display a basic RTO in the US Army in Vietnam. Mind you this is what I think, so you don't have to go along with it. At the end of the day it's up to you what you carry and how much weight you assign yourself. Along with all of your basic Rifleman load, you will be packing a radio, this could be a PRC77 or PRC25 or PRC10, with either the radio carrier or pack frame with shelf. RTO's were targets! They often tried to hide the radio a bit. You often see claymore mine bags tied to the radio, used to carry spare batteries, flares, etc.. A radio accessories bag would also be attached to the straps holding the radio in place, this would contain antenna components, maybe a spare handset. A buttpack is attached below it.

This RTO keeps his radio well masked and in doing so keeps his profile down. Remember, RTO's are easy targets to VC with their antenna acting like a flag. Take out the radio and you take out a valuable platoon resource.



This next RTO is carrying a flare, two smoke grenades, an ID panel, map, radio accessories bag, machete and a pink flashlight. The radio is a PRC-10. I am not sure what the pouch is on the right. I wonder about the stuff being stored under the hold down straps. If they are pulled out to use, the radio would be loose on the carrier.

The RTO in this picture has an ID panel under his straps and on the left side there is an M-16 cleaning pouch (I think) and on the right is a case for a long wire antenna reel.



You see a towel under the shoulder straps on his pack straps. Being a Rifleman also, he is carrying an ammunition bandoleer.



[Check the stash. Obviously a Leg RTO, not that there's anything wrong with that]

Source:
david.brubakers.us/Vietnam/Vietnam_Equipment_page_3.htm

(continued....)



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LTC Bob Sigholtz on the Net as RTO Johnson holds map.

The Captain RTO

Sometimes, thinking back, it seems the two most “forgotten” guys in the company were the medics and the RTO’s. Doc Beaton and his medics were exceptional, professional and, if I had thought of it when I should have, I’d have told them... “*You’re the best!*” As for RTOs, my RTO, PFC Johnson, and I learned a very hard lesson together.



“Dramamine Six”

The company had encountered some light small arms fire as we hit a small small enemy camp. I was trying To get a handle on what was happening when Johnson told me that Col. Sigholtz (the Battalion

Commander) wanted to speak to me. I determined that the firefight was more important and told Johnson to tell the Colonel that I would be right back to him, *that we were in contact.*

Immediately, Johnson grabbed my arm and said that the Colonel wanted to speak to me *now* on the radio...still it seemed the firefight was the higher priority and again I asked Johnson to tell the Colonel I’d call him in just a minute...one more time Johnson grabbed me.

I stopped and turned to face him, somewhat ticked off -- and Johnson said, “*Sir, Colonel Sigholtz has relieved me as your RTO, and, Sir, he wants you to carry the radio, and, Sir, he wants you to call him the minute you get the radio on your back.*”

Johnson and I learned a great lesson that day.... “*When the voice from above says ‘now’ it’s time to obey*”

Jack Kelley, Capt.
CO A/2/503d

(continued....)



The Hill People

Capt. Gary Prisk, CO C/2/503, called his men *The Hill People*. Pictured here are some of his RTOs and their buddies.



RTO Spec Four Bill Totten



“RTO Glen Harmon tucked in brush behind NVA chippy...west of Kontum.”



L-R: RTO Sp4 Steve Senseney with Sgt. Bledsoe near Fishook in An Lao Valley.



L-R: RTO Sp4 Bobby Watts, Capt. Gary Prisk & RTO Sp4 Steve Senseney near the Fishook.

Raymond Wiles, C Co.
Bill Wiseman, HHC
Reggie Yates, B Co.
Louie Zucco, 2/503



“RTOs Sp4's Bobby Watts & Thomas Hurd liberating Bong Son.”

(continued....)



THE RTO IS NEVER WRONG

There has always and only been one RTO for me, SGT Gary Wright, a native American from Oklahoma. He was the Commo Chief of B/2/503 on Okinawa, when I was the Company XO and he was the Commo Chief when I was the Company Commander.



Sgt. Sam Arnold had given a K bar knife to one of the local Yard leaders who we had befriended. Here he is sharpening it as Gary Wright looks on. At the time we were humped up on Route 19 close to the Special forces camp there. Somewhere I have a photo of either or both of them ogling a topless lady from the tribe. (See Page 39)

(Jim Robinson, B/2/503d)

Initially, until June of 1965, the battalion only had PRC-10's. Those that go back to those days remember the calibration system but also know that one radio calibrated to 98.2 might not be able to speak to another radio on the same calibration. At that point, the RTO's would conspire and request a "long count" to attune their radio to the Battalion base radio. The problem was that a long count in Area 1 might work, but as the units moved the calibration might waver and slide away. Gary's position was to do what worked. My position was that if the radios were properly maintained any one could set the right frequency and communicate.

Then comes our deployment to RVN with a major problem on company and battalion communications. Around mid- May ('65) we are on a search and destroy in War Zone "D" with communications coming in and out. Gary is doing his "long count" every few minutes to stay in contact. BINGO!! After finding an abandoned VC training camp, we find a library of documents, letters, who-knows-what in a hut before we

torch it. When I try to report to Battalion, I can't get them although they can be heard. Now we have two waterproof bags of documents...and two heat casualties: John Sahn and Sp5 Reed.

We are in "D" Zone and we get through briefly to HQ and are instructed by Sam Gillette to find a med-evac LZ and send the papers at the same time. It was almost dusk

and we were in primary jungle.

Looking at the map, I note that there is an eraser-size white spot on the map about 1.5 KM away on a magnetic azimuth of about due north. I get a small merry band together of stretcher carriers and security, ground our rucksacks, and hope we can get the med-evac done before dark. The XO beds down the company in the night defense.

We find a grass-overgrown but otherwise clear route that seems to head where we want to go and not showing any signs of human activity. With security out, we hustle as fast as two stretchers can be carried and arrive at what appears to be a suitable LZ.

(Note: no one in the company has ever done a med-evac before). Somehow,

Gary gets through to battalion in garbled fashion and gives our location.

The two heat casualties appear to be in dire straits. After waiting on the edge of this LZ, security out, I see a distant flashing light of an approaching helicopter about 2 miles out after 3 long hours of waiting.

*"Sergeant Wright, see if they are on our frequency."
"Dust off, this is Tiger Spanker, over."* Nothing.

*"Call battalion to see if Dust Off has our frequency."
"Paragon 3, this is Tiger Spanker, over."* Nothing
Miraculously, I hear, *"Tiger Spanker, this is Dust Off 16, over."*

We answer but Dust Off apparently can't hear us. Gary is calling Battalion for a long count, but he doesn't know if they can hear us, either. I don't know how but without help from battalion, Gary unlocked and spun the calibration dial and had Dust Off loud and clear.

"Sir, I have Dust Off!!"

"Dust Off 16, this is Tiger Spanker. Have you in sight, proceed about one mile on current azimuth and watch for my mark."

(continued...)



Gary says, “Sir, they won’t see smoke. Use this illuminating grenade,” which comes out of his jacket pocket. I pop the grenade and it lights-up the LZ like an NFL stadium at night.

Dust Off comes on and does about a dozen pedal turns to dodge saplings that we couldn’t see before the illum grenade, puts his light on, and brings it down like at Fort Rucker. In go the casualties and they get immediate saline drip. In go the documents, which net an undercover VC in Bien Hoa the next day. Dust Off heads off to Bien Hoa.

Tiger Spanker and his merry band beat feet about 200 meters and go into a tight perimeter, fearing that the VC may be out looking for us. The night proved uneventful but no one slept. In a whisper, I asked, “Sergeant Wright, how did you get Dust Off so clearly??” “Sir, I waited for them to transmit and honed in on their volume,” said Gary. “Your radio technique and illuminating grenade saved two lives tonight,” I said. Well done!!”

From that moment, a bond of trust was solidified that didn’t end until his death in Seattle a few years ago. He was a far better soldier than Gunga Din.

**Roy Lombardo, CO
B/2/503d**



‘No DEROS Alpha’ trooper, RTO Don Anderson, catching some zzz’s in August 1966. So, you wanna be a paratrooper, huh?



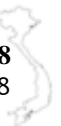
RTO Don Horger, A/2/503d

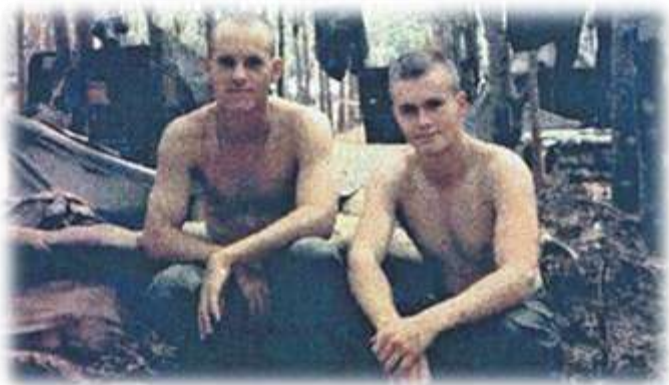


A/2/503 RTO Don Horger on left with his 6, LT Bill Vose



B/2/503 CO Capt. Ken Kaplan and his faithful RTO Harry Cleland





**Two RTO buddies in the rubber tree plantation 1965,
Jim Bethea & Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d**

Bobby Watts, C Co.
Roger Wells, A Co. (KIA)
Rich Whipple, HHC

I was with Headquarters Company in '68/'69. I was an RTO at the Fire Support Bases as well as ARVN compounds, relaying (PRC25) between the infantry and base camp. I was also on a combat assault, being the only commo guy (with a 15' whip antenna). We sometimes were in the middle of some hot battles, and we'd damn better relay accurately for the lives of the infantry.

Also Terry Marcinkowski (Kalamazoo, Michigan) did the same duty as I did with HHC/2/503d.

**Rich Whipple
HHC/2/503d**



RTO Symon and 3rd Platoon buddies, A/2/503d

Do not remember the first name but my RTO in E Co. 2/503 '69 was Moore. Maybe someone else will see his name and send it on

**Preston Parrott
E/2/503d**

You asked about Burch or Busch as the 3rd platoon RTO 65-66? You asked if anyone knew his first name but I do not remember him and was in the 3rd platoon from September '65 - September '66 and got handed the Radio sometime in late October. I believe because our guy got wounded or KIA, I do not know for sure which, all I knew is the Lt handed it to me and it became my job. I was not trained for it just OJT as happened many times in those situations. I took to it like a duck to water and enjoyed it most of the time cause I am nosy by nature and liked knowing what all the cluster fudges were about. When no one knew anything at least us RTO's knew who didn't know what -- you know what I am talking about. I know that I carried it for long time. Pretty sure it was until August '66 when Grimes and I went to Tokyo for R&R and that is another story in itself. Anyway, sorry 'bout being so long winded but I get started seems like I can't stop. Could not talk for about 35 years about any of it but now when I communicate with another Bull it seems like I cannot shut up. Probably cause I tried some of the VA groups to "Help" me cope but sitting in a group listening to some meatball who was traumatized cause the power went out and his refrigerator thawed out somewhere in Vung Tau when it was Bravo Company who cleared the mountains around Vung Tau which had some suckie moments -- I got violent and almost thumped the guy and got thrown out of the Rap Group.

**Bill Knapp
B/2/503d**

Unfortunately, I don't recall the CO's RTO. I was Recon soon after 6/22/67, and was enjoying not having to dig a nightly hole that it was all about my "good fortune." Surprisingly, I can still vividly recall the faces and voices of several outstanding RTOs but names escape me.

**Wambi Cook
A/2/503d**

You are right about us having a lot of RTOs. But, as I mentioned before was during our tour we all took on other jobs as guys were wounded, killed or rotated back to the world. Also, I would remind you that there was a RTO for each platoon, three line and weapons platoon. Weapons platoon furnished these men plus a forward observer to adjust the 81mm mortars that we humped, plus a Company RTO who was in touch with battalion and also a forward observer from 319 arty that adjusted 105,4.2,155,175 and also air support. This is what line company's had. I am not sure what HQ Company had.

**Dennis Begley
A/2/503d**

~ Sitrep negative. Out. ~



Incoming!

~ More About ANZAC Day ~

Thanks for the 2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / May 2011 – Issue 27. Noted that on page 36 of 40 there is an article about ANSAC day. It is actually about ANZAC day. ANZACs were members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps of WW1. Ever since a disastrous landing of ANZACs at Gallipoli, Turkey in WW1, our veterans days have been called ANZAC day. And when we actually get over our rivalry for a bit, both Aussies and Kiwis are still proud to be called ANZACs. The article was great, but I just thought you should know. Cheers,

Harold Guy, Ojai CA
Flt Lt, 1st NZ Services Medical Team
Bong Son, Vietnam, '68-'69

~ The Cammo'd One ~

Here is a well worn Cammo "We Try Harder" button. I forgot who was looking for it.

Ed Privette
HHC/2/503d



Thanks Ed. It was Jay Forbes, a Canadian non-Vet friend of the 173d who was looking for it. Damn, you guys got all the good stuff. In '65 and into '66, they gave us white 173d patches and white jump wings to wear. Hmmm.....were they trying to tell us something? Ed

Which Company?

The 173d Association web site lists Romiro C. Rodriguez, Sp4 as KIA on December 1, 1965, while serving with Delta Company 2/503d. My understanding is Delta didn't arrive in-country until the latter part of '66. Does anyone know with which company Romiro served?

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d

~ On the Button ~

About three months into the wearing of the white buttons with red lettering, some staff weenie saw a picture of the 2nd Battalion Sky Soldiers wearing them and his boss put out the word that they were "too visible" and could not be worn.

LTC Bob Sigholtz took the matter to Avis and within a few weeks the battalion had camouflage background buttons with black lettering.

Coincidentally, when as President of the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation I was working with Avis officials, I mentioned to the director of publicity in a meeting with the AVIS CEO that I had a camouflage button. Their Publicity Director mentioned that they knew about the camouflage buttons but did not have a sample. Subsequently, I presented one to the Avis Corporation and it currently is encased in a "shadow-box" picture frame hanging on the wall outside the CEO's office.

Avis is extremely proud of the Vietnam era connection with the 2/503 but has never tried to parlay that connection into an advantage by using it in their advertising. Regards

Ken Smith
A/D/2/503d

~ Assigned to HHC/2/503 Late '68 ~

I found this picture of Kranchick's rig assigned to HHC/2/503d. This was my brother Jack's rig. We went over to Nam at the same time. The photo was probably taken late '68. Check out the bumper with "H 4/503". As I mentioned, shortly after I DEROS'd our rigs were outright attached to each battalion. Bit of useless information but thought you might like to know. Corky....Out

Corky Corcoran
HHC/2/503 & 173d Signal



Hell, Corky, that's part of our history, certainly not useless. Thanks for sharing the pic brother. Ed

(Incoming continued....)



~ About the Chopper ~



A little side note for you. In the May newsletter (on Page 7, photo above, cover of Chuck Dean's *Nam Vet* book) it shows a slick on a small hill top disembarking some troopers. Well, that image is part of a USPS Commemorative Stamp set of the '60s, and guess what else, the middle guy on the right skid is my brother, Sgt. Claud A. Baskin, B Troop, 1st Sqdr., 9th Air Cav, 1st Cav Div. That actual chopper is now on display at the Ft. Rucker, AL Museum. My brother earned the Silver Star, Bronze Star and a Purple Heart that day. He was also put in for the MOH but LBJ downgraded it to a DSC and when things settled the 1st Cav said nope, going to be a SS!

Jim Baskin
B/4/503d

~ Elite Bastards ~



Steve....Sgt. Rock

In the last week I got hooked back up with my old unit, Co. F, 51st Inf. (Abn) LRP. I accidentally came across their website ([elitebastards](http://elitebastards.com)). They hold reunions every two years.

As I mentioned earlier, almost all original NCO's who formed the unit came from the HERD. I have already heard from guys in the 51st who were with me in Charlie at the Battle of the Slopes. Many others told me they regularly go to 173d reunions and some are going this year.

I just spoke on the phone to my old team leader SSG. I was assistant team leader as an E-5. He lives up in the hills of Mississippi. I will go visit him in the future. he was fucking funny -- I don't normally talk to 'Yankees'!

Co. F 51st Inf (Abn) LRP: Constituted June 16, 1917. Fought at Meuse-Argonne; Alazce in 1918 in WWI. Redesigned again 8-11-67; deactivated January, 1969 but later reactivated in 1983 as C F LRP unit assigned to 519th Military Intelligence Bn Abn at Fort Bragg.

Upon being deactivated 1/69, Co. F and other LURP companies were reactivated by the Dept. of the Army and became RANGER COMPANIES WITH THE 75TH INF. REGIMENT.

When we came from the Herd, we completed the MACV Recondo School in Nha Trang. Recondo is a combo of reconnaissance; commando; doughboy.

When I get the June Herd newsletter, I am going to send it out to the guys; you should get a whole shit load of new sign-ups for it. Airborne!

Steve Vargo
C/2/503d

(continued....)



1st Cav chopper at Ft. Rucker Museum



In an exchange of notes with trooper Bill Calhoun, president of the WWII 503rd PRCT Association, he shared this interesting bit of paratrooper history which, I suspect, most of us were never aware of. Thanks Bill.

The Big San Antone

I will end with a *Big San Antone* (not San Antonio). San Antone was used early before the brass in Washington instigated Airborne. This came about after the 82nd ABD followed by the 101st ABD were made special troops. As I remember from old 501st Parachute Battalion, (the horses' mouth so to speak), there was an airborne battalion in Panama with them caught wearing civilian attire. I guess they were not parachutists.



(Then) LT Calhoun on LST returning from Corregidor to Mindoro.

(Bill Bailey photo)

They were transported in C-39 transports which landed. I say 'so to speak' because I was in F Company which was the old C Co., 501st Parachute Battalion. We hated the name Airborne. As Lt Col Raft said in speaking to his men (509 PI) just before they loaded to go jump in Africa,

"Come on men! Give me one more Big San Antone!"

You know originally the 503rd had two battalions. One was in the 503d in the Pacific and the other sent to Europe. Back in the early days the exiting cry was "*San Antone!*" The reason was those who refused to jump were sent to Ft. Sam Houston.

William T. Calhoun
President
503rd PRCT Association



The Brave Paratrooper

A cowboy, a former army paratrooper, appeared before St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.



"Have you ever done anything of particular merit?" St. Peter asked.

"Well, I can think of one thing," the cowboy offered.

"On a trip to the Black Hills out in South Dakota, I came upon a gang of bikers who were threatening a young woman. I directed them to leave her alone, but they wouldn't listen. So, I approached the largest, meanest looking and most tattooed biker of the bunch and smacked him in the face, kicked his bike over, ripped out his nose ring, and threw it on the ground. I yelled, 'Now, back off or I'll kick the shit out of all of you!'"

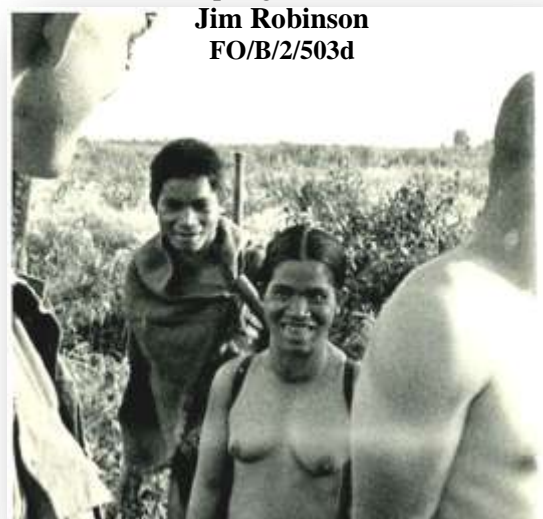
St. Peter was impressed, "When did this happen?"

"Just a couple of minutes ago."

[Sent in by Capt. Gary Prisk, C/2/503d, and reproduced here with minor modification]

Miss July Playmate 1965

Everyone knows Jo Collins came to Vietnam to visit Bravo Company when our very own RTO Larry Paladino stole a kiss from the lass. Not many are aware of the other Playmates who came. Here's *Miss July 1965* making goo goo eyes at Gary Wright (on the left) while Sam Arnold (on the right) is rushing off to great her twin sister. Love springs eternal.



Jim Robinson
FO/B/2/503d

There is absolutely no truth to the rumor Jim has an 8x10 glossy copy of this photo on the ceiling over his bed. It's simply not true.



~ 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

For more information go to:
<http://rangerrendezvous.soc.mil/>

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

Tentative Activities:

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

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



And More Reunions Of The Airborne Kind



3/506th Parachute Infantry, 101st Airborne Division

June 28 – July 2, 2011, Tunica, Mississippi.

Contact:

Jerry Berry

Tel: 408-293-7678

Eml: jerryberry@currahee.org



503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team

Association WWII, September 21 – 25, 2011, Denver, Colorado.

Contact:

Yolonda Goad

Tel: 303-682-0004

Eml: yolo@live.com



“The Year of the Pathfinder”

July 19-23, 2001

2011 Convention

*Sponsored by the
National Pathfinder Association*

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

Contact:

nationalpathfinderassociation.com



11th Airborne Division Association, 68th Reunion,
September 25 - 29, 2011 Tucson, Arizona.

Contact:

Charles Magro

Tel: 256-247-7390



Special Forces Association National Convention,

June 23 - 26, 2011, Orlando, Florida.

Contact:

Tel: 561-252-6080

Eml: sfachapter85.com



506th Association Rendezvous, (Fort Campbell),

November 8 – 11, 2011, Oak Grove, Kentucky.

Contact:

COL Sean M. Jenkins

Tel: 270-439-1499



82nd Airborne Division 65th Annual Convention,

August 10 – 14, 2011, Dayton, Ohio.

Contact:

Tel: 937-898-5977

Eml: srgabn@aol.com



101st Airborne Division Association 66th Annual

Reunion, August 17 – 21, 2011, Lexington, Kentucky.

Contact:

Tel: 931-431-0199

AIRBORNE....AND THEN SOME!!

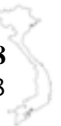
Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne Reunions please send details to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

See Pages 11 & 12 for 173d Airborne Reunion details.
See Page 40 for Lurps & Rangers Reunion details.



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / June 2011 – Issue 28

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~ I want to go back, I'm not done ~

By **George Rivera, SGT**
A/2/503d

It is sad that I have no pictures of me from that time. For some reason, there is very little footage of me and the Herd on operations. During two tours, I only once saw a combat photographer and he did not shoot a foot of film during the few days he had spent with us. I had a few of those Kodak disposable cameras in my foot locker in my recon tent, but I was evacuated one day to be rotated back to the U.S. and I cannot believe that my good friends never sent its contents to me. Well, I know it was because they did not know my status.

It happened like this. I received a radio call from my First Sergeant, *"There is a chopper on the way out to pick you up. Get on it."* This is how I moved between companies, so I did not think it odd. Then he called and told me that there was a C-123 waiting for me at the airstrip at LZ English. A C-123 waiting for me? But this too had happened before. It was exactly how I had been sent to An Khe along with NO DEROS ALPHA to cover for some fuel transportation units that had been ambushed through the Mang Yang Pass, and how I got to IFOR for the Artillery Officer's Course. I didn't question the order, I just went. I thought I'd be back. I hate the Army.

When I got to An Khe, someone met me to tell me to go to Cam Ranh Bay. That sounded weird. I said to the guy, *"There must be some mistake. I am assigned to the 173d. I was ordered to An Khe. I am not supposed to be going beyond An Khe."* Then he said something like *"Today is your lucky day. You are going home."* I said, *"Home, home where? There must be some mistake. I have to go back to LZ English."* He said, *"Let me see your ID. Yes, that's correct. It's you. It's RA12784186. You're on orders to DEROS."*

I was short, but I had intended to extend to stay with my friends. I did not want to go back to Fort Bragg. I said, *"I'm going home."* To me home was LZ English with my friends and my unit. He said, *"That's correct."* Then I told him, *"Okay, then, where can I go to find out when there's a ship going back to English?"* He said pointedly, *"What is it with you infantry guys? If you attempt to return to English you will be violating your orders and you will be subject to court martial."*

At this point I was unhappy, but as diplomatically as I could I said, *"What the fuck are you talking about? I'm not even supposed to be here. I don't care what it says*

on those orders, I have to get back to my unit. They're expecting me to come back. There must be some mistake. I want to talk to someone else." *"There is nothing more to talk about,"* he said, *"here are your orders. Start clearing over there,"* and he mentioned a building number.

I felt as if I had been smacked on the head with a mallet. From then on everything was a cloud or a fog. I thought about my friends, my stuff, the letters I had received, my foot locker with my personal things in it. I had pictures, mostly copies of pictures other guys had taken with me in them, and it was all in there. I figured, once I get to where I'm going, they'll see it has all been a mistake and send me back. I want to go back. I'm not done. My friends are depending on me. I literally dragged myself to the first clearing point on my instruction sheet to surrender my weapons and ordinance.



I was an idiot. It had not been my lucky day at all. When I got back to Bragg, I immediately filed for return and was denied.. It would be 9 months before I could apply for transfer back to my Herd. By the time I got back home, some of my friends had been wounded and evacuated out of country while the others DEROSD.

I went straight to the "New" Recon, which meant no real missions, no more night ambushes, no more combat patrols, just short patrols, artillery ambushes, and H&I plotting -- dead beat work. My friends were no more. The thrill was gone. I did some interesting and some exciting things, but gone were the days where we went out to the range limit of our radios hunting. It was early June of 1971 when I became short again.

(continued....)





LZ English, home to the Casper's Platoon from 1968 to 1971. Casper's "Ghost Town" was located on the east side of English and right next to "Sniper Village".

LZ English photo from Casper Platoon web site.

I took to standing on the high ground, where the outdoor theater had been, looking all around at LZ English in bewildered disbelief. I turned 360s dizzily looking, scanning the base, remembering all the places where I had last stood with many of the men who had died. Most had been strangers, men I had seen moving back and forth going or returning from patrols, night ambushes, or digging endless holes to fill sandbags we seldom used and which were left behind prefilled for enemy use. I helped them dig holes for and construct fighting positions we would never use. We had seen each other every day. They had known who I was and I who they were, but we really had not known each other except on sight.

Even though I had never known them, all of them had been my brothers. Now, standing in the darkness with the sound of generators running all around me powering the air conditioners, and stereos of the privileged, I could feel that I was standing in their presence. They stood near me seeing what I was seeing, asking the questions I was asking, feeling what I was feeling. I teared and snorted like a pig as I fought against the need to cry aloud. I was tearing uncontrollably until my tears ran out. I could tell that I was changing, but I had no idea how.

I was sad to have left them behind. That had been our land. We had fought for it, suffered for it, bled for it, and died for it. I did not want to leave it. But I was

made to go. I went home alone as I had arrived. Soon after, the Herd was rotated back to the "States" and it was all over. As long as it had lasted, I could not wait to forget about it.

I wanted to go somewhere to forget, but I would finally accept there was no such place.

I tried to enlist in the Israeli Army, but I was told that I would have lost my American citizenship, that I would be considered a mercenary and not have Geneva Convention Protections or a country to call my own. A man needs a country.

In all of my life since then, for all the places I have lived, for all the friends I have had, I have never left it behind. I have tried, but Vietnam has followed me everywhere. It haunted me at my places of work, in my thoughts and in my endless dreams of dread. Like an old scratched record, everything, the places, the faces, the incidents have kept playing over and over. So many years later and sometimes, I still stare at an unknown fixed point in space and end up back there. I am tired. I want to go home.

All The Way!



DIGGER IN THE MEKONG

Operation Marauder

South Vietnam

1-8 January 1966

By Ken Baker, 1RAR

It is a bad operation; right from the word go. From the time I get out in the bush until the day I get back. I am no newcomer to these operations now, and I'm accustomed to the prickly heat, sweat, mossies and leeches, but going to the Mekong Delta, I'm going to be wet all day from wading chest deep in canals.



I served with 1RAR as an infantry medic (stretcher-bearer). We were the first battalion in South Vietnam back in 1965. Most of my tour of duty was with 3rd Platoon A Company, although for this operation I was with 1st Platoon. My previous experience as a medic prior to Vietnam was absolutely zero. Incredible as it may seem, my experience in the bush with an infantry battalion before I came to Vietnam was limited to two days and nights. The situation was no fault of 1RAR, more the haste in sending troops to maintain the battalion's numbers.

The preparations for the operation had begun in earnest; we had been issued all of our "C" rations and ammunition requirements. I had completed my check on the platoon medical kit and in particular made sure that my shell dressings and morphine supplies were in good condition. The routine of test firing and cleaning weapons helped to control the building tension we felt.

It is time to go; the various companies climb aboard the "cattle trucks" and head towards the waiting helicopters. It is as hot as hell and the bull dust clings to our already sweaty bodies and our greens turn to a murky muddy colour within minutes of our departure. As we move away from the battalion lines we yell abuse at those bastards fortunate enough to be staying behind; they are left choking in the black smoke of our exhaust fumes.

We follow what has developed into a tradition (our fathers probably did the same) and give the American military police a hard time as we pass their compound. Our officers pretend not to notice, they know this small act of defiance is good for morale. No doubt the military police will get their own back sometime after the operation when we are on local leave.

After a bumpy and very noisy ride we arrive at the airstrip. The searing heat rising in waves from the concrete tarmac hits us. The humidity combining with the fumes of the trucks and the aviation fuel leave me choking and gasping for breath. The assault on our ears is incredible as the roar of jet fighters taking off, with afterburners fully open hit us. The sergeants and corporals are forming their troops into flights yelling to be heard over the banshee created by the many jet engines around us. We can feel the thumping of the Hueys (UH10 helicopters) rotor blades slicing the thick air as we climb aboard and begin our own "Ride of the Valkyries".



Ken in the boonies.

As always the flight is spent in silence other than a few instructions from the section commanders and the flight crew, my pulse is racing in the face of a supercharged adrenaline rush as the gunners opened fire, spraying the perimeter of the landing zone in a hail of tracers as we leap from the chopper only to find ourselves waist deep in a bloody big swamp.

(continued...)



Any wonder this place is known as Plain of Reeds; my surprise quickly turns to sudden shock as the gunships fly a few metres overhead blasting the edge of the jungle with both rapid fire machine guns and rockets screaming just over our heads. Thank Christ they are on our side.

There are no Vietcong to greet us on arrival, which is hardly surprising, for who in their right minds would lie in ambush in a waist deep swamp. I for one am not disappointed, it seems the “powers that be” made an error and landed us in the wrong place.

The company moves away from the rest of the battalion as soon as we clear the swamp and head towards a distant village that has been targeted for a visit. It seems this village harbours a number of Vietcong. The company’s task is to take the high ground surrounding the village; our platoon will enter and search the village, looking for weapons and the suspected VC. Our movement through the jungle is slow and seemingly never ending as we wade through endless leech infested creeks and canals. We could cut the humidity with a knife.



Ken on patrol with escorts.

We reach the forming up point late in the afternoon. The rest of the company is in position and we move into the village, and just for once young men are found in the village, caught by surprise, there are weapons found in the huts, and we are instructed to take these men as suspect VC. We blindfold them, and tie their hands, then lead them from the village towards company headquarters, situated on a large feature nearby.

As we start climbing the slope towards our objective, a message is passed by the radio “*You are being followed by an armed cell of VC*”. The platoon commander questions “*Can you fire over our heads?*” showing concern about our position on the slope and the relative position of the enemy. The answer is swift. Machine guns of the company fire inches over our heads! Jesus wept! This is the second time today “so called” friendly fire has passed just over us.

We scramble to the top of the hill in bloody quick order, ready to brain the first machine gunner to look sideways. The initial burst of firing halts, artillery support is and, thank Christ it’s there, courtesy of the US 7th Fleet. Talk about overkill, I swear they are shooting 44 gallon drums in our direction, the barrage is incredible. I lie on the ground, hands over my ears, I can’t believe how painful sound can be. God help those poor bloody VC down at the bottom of the hill.

Adding insult to injury, the company commander decides, since our platoon invited the VC to the party we had to finish it off by completing a sweep of the fire zone. We go down the hill, this time searching for bodies! By the time we get into the area of the last enemy sighting, the smoke is lifting, the stench of cordite is foul, and we can hear quiet moaning coming from under a bush. Investigating, we find a VC horribly wounded, hit by machine gun fire and then was brutalised by artillery, I can do nothing for him. Mercifully he dies as we watch. We find just one body and an AK47 assault rifle, there is no further trace of Vietcong.

Completing the sweep the platoon heads up the slope and rejoins the company, which is digging in for the night. They had chosen a section of a rubber plantation for an overnight defensive position. Our section of the perimeter is on the edge of the plantation looking back towards the place of carnage we had just left. As I started to dig my fighting pit, I remember thinking that maybe things are not so bad as the local soil was rich red and good easy digging; besides I had just been offered a good job for the night. The platoon sergeant had asked me to do a radio watch during the night instead of my usual 2 hours sitting on the machine gun up front. I thought, “*You bloody beaut!*” It means someone will bring the radio to me in my shelter at midnight and I then would take care of the radio checks for 2 hours and take the radio to the platoon signaller (RTO), who does the next shift. I would only be out of my bed for about 5 minutes at the most.

(continued....)



I happily finish my fighting pit and consider the path I would have to clear in order to find the signaler in the dark at 0200 hrs. I clear a small track by getting down on my hands and knees and brush the leaves aside exposing the red earth creating a path about 6 inches wide and some 30 yards long direct to the signaler's tent. I knew it would be as "black as the ace of spades" as there is no moon and it is raining off and on. I have no choice but to crawl along the ground to find my path.

As a platoon we go through our usual ritual of weapon cleaning, take our anti-malarial tablets, feed ourselves and complete our "stand to" at last light. At last I'll get a decent night's sleep and quickly drop off. I am roughly shaken awake at midnight and given the radio, my shift has begun. I carry out my duty in the relative comfort of my shelter, dozing between radio checks with the command post, thinking that I never had it so good, and the time flies. Soon it's time to hand the radio on to the next bloke.

It's still raining outside and as I expect, totally black. Not even able to see my hand a foot from my face, I am a bit concerned that I won't find the path I've made. I clear the last remnants of sleep from my mind, gather the radio and my rifle and move into the night.

Thinking this won't take very long and I will be back to sleep, I start crawling along in what is rapidly turning into mud with my face a few inches from the ground searching for my narrow path. I have to be totally silent not wanting to draw any attention from our own blokes quietly sitting beside the machine gun.

After what seems an eternity, I find the shelter at the end of the path. I shake the signaler in much the same way, as I had been a couple of hours ago, thinking this'll teach him to sleep so soundly. "Jesus wept!?" I've managed to wake up the bloody company sergeant major. Thinking I'm about to be beaten to a pulp, he tells me to "*Get the fuck out of here!*" He then threatens to have me chained up. I retreat back into the rain, thanking my lucky stars it was so dark, he could not have recognised me as the interloper shattering his sleep.

Someone else had by chance constructed a path crossing mine confusing me and forcing a retracing of my steps back to my shelter to start all over again. It seems simple enough, so off I go, nose a couple of inches from my not so trusty track and tail up in the air awkwardly carrying radio and rifle, crawling for what seemed forever and then the cold realisation hits me – I am lost! I had somehow picked up yet another track in the darkness and I haven't the slightest idea where I am! My gut knots in fear. Should I try to find my way back again? A second wave of fear, no, terror hits me. Where is our machine gun? After yesterday's events (was it

only yesterday?) the gunners will be mighty nervous and probably trigger-happy as we couldn't account for all of the enemy force we fired on. It seemed reasonable they could be lurking around in our vicinity or worse in my vicinity, wherever that is!

In the face of these insurmountable problems I decide to stay where I am until daylight. The worst part of my predicament is in the fact I have a radio but don't dare speak for fear of either alerting the enemy to my position or, worse still, my own mates shooting me to pieces like the VC was yesterday.

So I sit and wait, shivering with cold and fear in the rain, not daring to make the slightest sound. The radio operator at the command post must know something is wrong as each time he calls for my allotted radio check, I squeeze the pressel switch on the hand set, but I can't do more than that. He should know I'm there somewhere.

When the sun starts to rise I realise my worst fears, I am sitting out in front of our platoon gun pits and the gunner has not yet seen me! I call quietly to him, praying I don't startle him into firing, he answers immediately, saying he thought he could see someone out front but held his fire as he was not convinced. I have rarely known such relief, although it is mixed with embarrassment and the sure knowledge I was extremely lucky to be alive.

The next few days prove to be uneventful, just ceaseless patrolling, hot and sweaty and forever picking off leeches or wading through endless canals, gathering fresh leeches from the bushes as we push through the jungle. I am feeling a little "off colour" but we are always thirsty, as we don't stop long enough to fill water bottles; the water was probably full of disease anyway.

Thankfully, I hear nothing about my night of misadventure either from the mates or, more importantly, from the CSM. The whole series of events rapidly fades from my mind as I start thinking the worst of this operation is behind me. Surely with just a few days to go, not much else can go wrong, besides what could be as bad as what I have already endured?

It is the sixth morning of the operation and when I get up for "stand to" I feel as sick as a dog with a fever, and I knew it, I feel as if I have no strength. One minute I am sweating the next chilled to the bone, but, on the bright side my mind is as clear as a crystal.

(continued....)



For a few hours I soldier on, but, in my own mind I'm in an awkward situation. I know I am not going to be much good to anyone for very much longer as I am getting worse by the hour and I feel I'm reaching the point of collapse. I know I can't organise a "medevac" for myself fearing facing my mates after it was over.

A couple more hours go by and the platoon sergeant realises there's a problem and suggests I see the next platoon's medic. On arrival, the medic puts a thermometer in my mouth and hits the panic button! My temperature has reached 104 degrees Fahrenheit. He promptly organises a helicopter to take me to an American field hospital. I'm thinking nothing else can go wrong now, I'm being sent to a hospital and from there I will most likely be sent back to base about the same time as the Brigade would arrive back.

The helicopter arrives creating its own swirling dust storm at the same time and whisks me away. We fly towards Saigon for all of 7 minutes and land in another self-created dust storm, much to the annoyance of the hospital staff. I am immediately disarmed; after all you can't have a dirty, smelly, unshaven soldier who looked half mad, running around their hospital armed to the teeth with all forms of destruction hanging from his body.

The hospital is in reality a very large tent out in the middle of nowhere, containing about thirty beds all full with patients, mainly Black American. I am put under a shower and cleaned up so not to dirty up the bed too much, and promptly put into the said bed. About this time it is decided it is time to take everyone's temperature, and all the male nursing staff quickly fill all mouths with thermometers and just as quickly leave the room. The whole procedure seems strange to me, and the next thing I hear is the clicking of 29 Zippo lighters as all the other residents in the hospital fire up their thermometers to what they felt was the required temperature to stay on in the hospital's care, I guess they were all trying to survive any way they could.

The next morning it is decided to send me back to the 93rd Evacuation Hospital at Bien Hoa as my condition had worsened without the aid of a Zippo. Although my condition has worsened I am still thinking quite clearly and continue to do so for the duration of my illness. I am told to get dressed and there is an ambulance waiting outside to take me to an airfield where I will be picked up and be taken by fixed wing aircraft to the Bien Hoa airbase. I dress quickly and sure enough, there was an ambulance waiting for me.

I'm transported along a very dusty track for some 10 to 15 minutes of hectic driving, and at this point I started to get a very bad feeling about the whole scenario. The driver is looking a bit nervous, as the jungle seemed to

be closing in around us. Then I realise the hospital had not rearmed me; I suddenly feel naked and completely reliant on the ambulance crew. We come to a halt in another cloud of dust! We have apparently reached our destination; an old disused rice paddy. There is no one to be seen in any direction, I look at the driver and ask, "What happens now?" His firm answer is to indicate I am to wait here until the aircraft picks me up. He says it won't be very long, and with that I was left in the middle of nowhere, unarmed! I just knew all along, this was going to be a bad operation!



Aussies of the 1RAR with Vietnamese locals. Lady on the left must be thinking.... "họ chắc chán đội mũ" (Translation: They sure wear funny hats).

I think to myself, here I am, sitting out on the edge of a jungle, no rifle, in a land where a fair few of the locals would like to see me looking down the wrong end of a rifle. I'm as sick as a dog, what else could possibly go wrong! I close my mind to the myriad of answers to this question, and sit back under a tree and wait. After about two and a half-hours which felt like two and a half months, I hear the sound of a Caribou aircraft on an approach to land. When the aircraft taxied to a halt I could have hugged the flight crew except they looked as dirty as I must have looked only yesterday. I climb aboard, once again safe for the moment, I dare not think what else could possibly go wrong, I am learning fast.

After what was an uneventful flight, we land at the Bien Hoa airbase. I ask for my transport to the 93rd Evac. Hospital, I might have known! No transport had been organised! I have to hitch a ride to 1RAR base, only to find the battalion is still out in the bush. For a change my luck is good, I find one of those fortunate bastards I abused as I was leaving the base at the beginning of the operation. He ignores my past abuse and agrees to drop me off.

The events that take place at the hospital are another story but, for now, the operation was over, and nothing else can go wrong, I was out of it!



More about “The Letter”



WWII 503rd trooper Jim Mullaney

In last month's issue (*The Letter*, May 2011, Issue 27, Page 5), Jim Mullaney of the 503rd PRCT told the touching and sad story of the time he came upon the remains of a U.S. soldier on the Island of Corregidor whom had given his life in a final face-to-face battle with enemy soldiers. This is a follow-up to Jim's letter which ultimately caused the Pentagon to become involved.

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



MEMORANDUM FOR Executive Officer, 41st Infantry Brigade

SUBJECT: Private First Class (PFC) John Skelton Commemoration

"An investigation of records at the Army Archives in St. Louis revealed that PFC John Skelton had been awarded the Bronze Star² and Purple Heart for his actions on Corregidor, but the medals had never been posthumously awarded to his family. It also was learned that he had not been awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, which he also had earned. Plans are underway for a formal presentation ceremony in Eugene this spring. The medals, accompanied by a certificate of appreciation signed by the Secretary of Defense will be presented to the family of John Hundley Skelton."

FAMILY FINALLY LEARNS JOHNNY'S LAST CHAPTER

by Eric Mortensen

It is strange to read Johnny Skelton's letters. They are so full of life – just ordinary life with all its promise – that it's tough to think he never came home. "Well, I'm in the ___ Army."

He wrote that on Aug 24, 1941, aboard what he described as a "G-D-mn" train bound for infantry training at Camp Wolters, Texas. The attack on Pearl Harbour was less than four months away. Johnny Skelton's fate was about to become a 53-year mystery. "Well, I am in Texas now. It is hotter than the devil." Johnny Skelton wrote that on Aug 30, 1941. He'd been drafted into the Army and didn't mind going. He'd worked in a mill after dropping out of Santa Clara High School north of Eugene, but America was still coming out of the Depression and jobs were shaky.



The Rock

I think I have a steady job with the government now. I have just about decided to join the regular Army and go to the islands." He wrote that on Sept. 6, 1941, after discovering career soldiers were a breed apart from the stumbling draftees he was stuck with. "They have what they call the 'awkward squad' for guys who are so dumb they can't tell their right foot from their left", he wrote to his sister, Lucille Bowman, and her husband, Clifton.

"They make them carry about a 10 pound rock in their left hand so they can tell them apart", he wrote. "That's the honest to God truth."

Johnny Skelton figured he could join the regular Army, go to the Philippines and maybe make sergeant in six to eight months. He enjoyed the regimentation, the officers were "sure enough swell guys," and he expected to qualify as an expert rifleman.

(continued...)





Japanese celebrating their short-lived victory on the island.

He'd always been one to plan ahead and take care of things. He was the oldest of the Skelton children and looked after Lucille, Tom, Helen and Aura. Lucille recalls picking cherries with him when she was young. When she got tired and cranky he'd tell her, "Lucille, it's OK if you want to take a little nap over there."

"When I woke up, I'd see my bucket had more cherries in it than when I went to sleep," she says. "He'd always worry about the rest of us kids first," she says. "He took being the oldest very seriously."

"Well, kids, how are you making it? I hear you have been doing pretty well. They say you have named him John. . . is that right?" Johnny Skelton wrote that on Oct. 1, 1941. Lucille Bowman had given birth to a son and named him after her brother, who was in Fresno, Calif., waiting to ship out to the Philippines

The war in Europe had been raging for two years and Japan was on the march in Asia. The United States was not yet at war, but it was in the wind. U.S. troops stationed in the Pacific were ill-equipped. They still wore World War I-style helmets and carried bolt-action Springfield rifles. They wore leather leggings and wool uniforms.

Johnny Skelton wrote that it would take at least 28 days to reach the Philippines by boat. "It is going to be a good adventure," he wrote. "When I get to the Philippines I will write you kids more and send you pictures and souvenirs. Pass this letter around to the other kids and tell everybody to drop a line sometime. I have went about 6,000 miles since I saw you kids last. I have several thousand more to go. Well, I wish you luck. Your brother, Johnny
(P.S) Be sure and take good care of the young one.

That was the last Lucille Bowman heard from her brother.

The Japanese fell upon Pearl Harbor and, in rapid fashion, knocked out U.S. and Filipino forces in the Philippines. Corregidor, a two square-mile rock island at the entrance to Manila Bay, was the last outpost to fall. U.S. and Filipino soldiers there surrendered in May 1942.

PFC John Skelton was listed as missing. After about three years, the Army declared him dead.

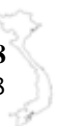
"All these years, we wondered what really happened," Lucille Bowman says. "If he'd survived Corregidor, he would have been on the Bataan Death March. I always felt sure that if he was a prisoner, he wouldn't have been one for long. He wouldn't think it was right, and he wouldn't put up with it, and they would have killed him."



Bataan Death March

U.S. troops didn't return to Corregidor until February 1945, when they retook it in the "island hopping" campaign that led to the Japanese homeland. The first Americans to return were Army paratroopers who landed on what was called the "top side" of the island. They spent several days battling their way to an airfield, blowing up caves filled with Japanese defenders. Among the paratroopers was 1st Lt. James Mullaney.

(continued...)





Liberators from the sky. 503rd jump on to Corregidor
 (503rd PRCT Heritage Bn web site photo)

During a break in the fighting, Mullaney spotted the skeletal remains of 15 to 20 Japanese who had fallen in a rough semi-circle. About 20 feet away, facing them, was the skeleton of a lone American.

"The uniform he wore had weathered the tropics much better than his body," Mullaney was moved to write five decades later. *"The shoes and leggings were still in place around bones. The pants were frayed and brittle but still covered tile backside and lower spine. The wool shirt was torn."*

The man's helmet, a World War I type, was cocked over his skull and cheek bones. His Springfield .03 rifle lay under his right arm, and the bone of his forefinger was inside the trigger guard. There was no ammunition left in the rifle.

"It scared me somewhat," Mullaney says by telephone from his home in Louisville, Ky. *"I was afraid it might be my brother. It was one chance in 10,000, but he was in the Philippines. We knew he'd been on Bataan."*

Mullaney gently moved the man's helmet strap and looked at his dog tags. The last name was "Skelton." The first name looked like "John." His hometown, included on dog tags at the time, was listed as "Eugene, Oregon."

The scene haunted Mullaney for years. He marveled at how the man had apparently battled courageously to the end. And his brother - whom he later learned had been captured and died a prisoner in Japan - was named John, too.

Fifty years flew by.

Royal and Darlyne Jaynes of Eugene took a 103-day trip to countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. It included a stop on Corregidor, and Darlyne Jaynes wrote an article about the island for *International Travel News*, a monthly magazine. As fate would have it, James Mullaney subscribes. He saw the article, learned the author was from Eugene and contacted Jaynes. He followed up on July 12 with the letter he'd been meaning to send, somewhere, to someone, for years.

"As I write to you people I am hoping that John Shelton can in some way be remembered in your thoughts and prayers. If any of his family or friends can be located, let them know what a soldier he was. Show them this correspondence and tell them that here in Louisville, Kentucky, is one person who never met John Shelton but will never forget him."



"I shall return". (1942)



A Letter From a 503rd Trooper

I am a little late in answering your very welcome letter. It sure was great to hear from a 503rd Airborne friend.

I was born May 1, 1924. When I left school, I joined the Civilian Conservation Corps which brought me to Lancaster, Pennsylvania where I entered into Hamilton Watch School. Seven months later, the war broke out and I was drafted into the army.

After Basic Training in the Army, I volunteered for the Airborne and was assigned to the 503rd Airborne Regiment. The only serious thing that happened to me was a bad case of malaria. After the war was over, I went back to work at Hamilton Watch where I stayed for 42 years and then retired in 1984.

This February 14th, my wife and I will be married for 63 years with one son and 2 grandsons. I guess that is the story of my life.

Thank you for the great letter and may you always have a soft landing.

Your Brother in Arms,

Robert L. Lenhart
Lancaster, PA

Airborne, All the Way Robert!



A note from a Sky Soldier:

The Greatest Generation! All he did was save the free world, raise a family after getting married on Valentine's Day (the romantic devil), preparing to celebrate his 63rd anniversary, and stayed gainfully employed at the same company for 42 years.

"I guess that is the story of my life," he says.

I wish we all could have such a life!

AATW!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d

Special Invitation to Sky Soldiers

This is strictly in regard to the DEEP SOUTH 503RD CORREGIDOR REUNION. It will be in Savannah, Georgia July 7-10 and we would be honored for as many of the 173d Sky Soldiers as can be had to join us.

Following is reunion information and a Registration Form. We would appreciate it if you will include the information in the next 2/503d Vietnam Newsletter in June.

AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!

Chuck & Dee Breit, Charley & Edith Hylton
503rd PRCT WWII



503rd Trooper Chuck (Clark Gable) Breit ready to blast.

Note: Chuck, Charley and their wives attended our reunion last year in N. Myrtle Beach, SC. This will be a great opportunity for us to rub elbows with some of our country's original paratroopers. Ed

[Reunion registration form on following page]





503rd PARACHUTE RGT ASSOCIATION, WORLD WAR II, INC.
503rd Parachute Regiment 462nd Parachute Artillery Battalion
161st Parachute Engineer Company



503rd DEEP SOUTH CHAPTER CORREGIDOR REUNION
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA
JULY 7-8-9-10, 2011

The Deep South Chapter invites you to the *Corregidor Reunion* July 7-10, 2011, hosted by Chuck and Dee Breit and Charley and Edith Hylton. It will be held at the

Quality Inn (Mid-Town)
7100 Abercorn Street
Savannah, GA 31406

Tel Reservations:

912-352-7100

Room Rates:

\$66.67 per night, includes taxes

(rate is good for early arrival and stay over)

Cutoff date for reservations is July 1st

Reunion Registration Fee:*

\$90.00 per person

***Includes a hot breakfast each morning, hospitality room, trolley tour, riverboat harbor cruise and dinners on Friday and Saturday nights.**



TAKE THE TRAIN!

The train is an inexpensive way to get to Savannah and we will pick you up at the train station if you let us know when you are arriving.

TROOPERS, we are without a doubt aging. Do all you can do NOW as time is not passing us by, it is **RUNNING US OVER!** Ask your children and/or grandchildren to bring you if you can't make it on your own. School will be out so invite Grandchildren to join us. **ALL GUESTS ARE WELCOME.**

ALL MEMBERS OF THE 173d AIRBORNE, you are our heritage and we welcome you to join us for our reunion.

Please assist the Reunion Planning Committee by completing and returning the following Registration Form as soon as possible which will help us make this a great reunion for everyone.

Also, don't delay in making your hotel reservations with the Quality Inn.

~ Registration Form ~
 (Please print & copy form for additional names)

Your name: _____ # _____

Your Unit: _____ # _____

Guest 1: _____ # _____

Guest 2: _____ # _____

Guest 3: _____ # _____

Mail address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

In the “#” space above, please indicate “1” for roast beef, “2” for grilled chicken, or “3” for salmon for the Saturday night dinner.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____, at the rate of \$90. per person named above.

Please make check payable to Charles E. Breit and mail to:

Chuck Breit
34 Garden Mall Court
Inglis, FL 34449

Tel: 1-352-447-3983



AIRBORNE....ALL THE WAY!



Sigholtz Capital Chapter Hosts Arlington Ceremony



On Saturday, 9 May 2011, the Sigholtz Capital Chapter hosted on behalf of the Association the dedication of the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial marker in Arlington National Cemetery. For many, it brought back memories of a similar ceremony held in 1998 when the original Brigade marker was dedicated. LTC (R) Ed Anthony was the Project Officer and Master of Ceremonies for both dedications, and our Australian and New Zealand Brothers-in-Arms enriched the ceremony by their attendance and remarks.

In 1998, the Society/Association leadership had given up hope that the Sky Soldier Brigade would ever be reactivated. Consequently, the 1998 Memorial Marker, with language oriented on the Brigade's Vietnam service, contained both an activation date and an inactivation date. With the reactivation of the 173d Airborne Brigade in 2000, the Brigade's Memorial Marker needed to be revised.



LTC Andrew Shaw from new Zealand

Australian Military Attache' Brigadier Barry McManus spoke of the long standing relationship existing between our two Armies and the pride that the Australian military took in being associated with the 173d Airborne Brigade. New Zealand Lt. Col. Andrew Shaw, who previously served in New Zealand's 161 Battery, reminded us of the collective service and sacrifices of our units.



The new marker

Following remarks by Sigholtz Capital Chapter President Terry Modglin, the names of the Australian and New Zealand warriors who fell while attached to the Brigade in Vietnam, as well as the Brigade's warriors who fell in Iraq and three Afghanistan deployments, were read. The three distinguished speakers presented a wreath, final honors were rendered, and Taps and the Last Post were sounded.

White Elephant Auction

On 7 May 2011, the Sigholtz Chapter dedicated a new 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial marker in Arlington National Cemetery reflecting the Brigade's service since its activation in 1963. It replaces a marker dedicated in 1998 reflecting the Brigade's service during the Vietnam era. The challenge that the Chapter now faces is -- what does one do with a 350 pound (white elephant) inscribed granite marker?

In order to close a budget shortfall between what was raised and the cost of the marker, installation and the ceremony, the Chapter Officers have decided to conduct a "Silent Auction" for the 1998 marker.

The minimum bid for the marker is \$150.00. Bids must be received by 1 December 2011. The Chapter reserves the right to disqualify any bidder who cannot demonstrate that the marker will be treated with the dignity that should be accorded such a monument. Bids may be mailed to the Sigholtz Capital Chapter mailing address (P.O. Box 15133, Arlington, VA 22215-0133), or emailed to kvsmith173@gmail.com The Chapter will work with the winning bidder to transport the marker to its final destination.

[
[Submitted by Col. Ken Smith, A/D/2/503d]



Another Bad Day In Vietnam

May 27, 1968

By George Rivera

A/2/503d

Pat Steele was killed the day after a guy named Pough, or a name pronounced 'Puff' was KIA with Delta 2/503d. Puff had a buddy out in the open being shot every time he moved for a total at the time of three hits. Pat told me that Puff, a grenadier, jumped up from behind a boulder to return fire when the sniper shot him in the chest. He died instantly. It was a big rescue op from the beginning for us and a story about stupidity, the heroism that followed, and ending in more stupidity.

Pat and the remainder of the platoon from Delta were evacuated, while we, 2/No Deros, stayed on the mountain. The only reason I know what happened was because Pat told me, "*Puff was my best friend.*" Then he said, "*Do not let them take him,*" referring to the fact that the wounded were Dusted Off, but not the KIA. So I spent the night hardly sleeping because I was lying next to Puff's body to protect it from any gooks coming along trying to grab it.

Pat and I coincidentally met at the E/203d Company orderly room at approximately 1700 the next day. I went to pick up my mail, and asked Pat and my other friend, William F. Brice, if they wanted me to pick up their mail too, and I did. William F. Brice, nicknamed FEBE, was short at the time and he was the company driver. As you know, we had a fire support base, LZ English North, and FEBE used to ferry supplies and mail back and forth. LZ English North was exactly 5400 meters north of the center point of LZ English, the maximum range of a 4.2" mortar. This happened to be the reason there was a 4.2" mortar platoon at LZ English North -- to strike as far away as the center of LZ English in case the base was overrun. This I am not sure of, but it is the only thing that makes sense; that if the southern perimeter of LZ English were attacked, the perimeter would reform north of the center of the base at which point, the remainder would be under the fire umbrella of the 4.2s of LZ English North. I could be totally wrong, but these facts concerning the distances between the bases I knew to be true, and accurate. I was an observer remember. Okay, maybe you didn't know.

A Captain wanted to spend the night at LZ English North. I was fully field armed as always. I say this because I had just returned from the field and I never secured my gear or weapon. I carried it everywhere. No one on that Jeep was armed with anything. It was as if they were going on a ride through Central Park. A guy named Darby was set to go too, and I was supposed to go along for the ride with my two friends, but the 1/4 ton

truck was only rated for four people, and I would have been the fifth. I was already on the right rear fender when the Captain said, "*The MPs are going to stop us at the gate, and one of us is going to have to get off.*" Then he turned to me and said, "*Rivera, why don't you get off and wait here. They'll be back in twenty minutes.*" Liar.

They left and about twenty minutes later I heard a distant explosion, followed by AK auto fire. Looking north towards the direction of the blast, I saw a plume of black smoke, like a petroleum fire. Then I heard over the battalion radio in the company orderly room,

"Echo, you have two KIAs. I say again, you have two KIAs."

At the same time two cobras lifted off, and then settled back down. There was nothing to be done. No enemy to assault. It was over in seconds. A few minutes later the names Steele and Brice were broadcast in the clear over the battalion administrative frequency.

At first light, I drove with some Wildcats to LZ English North. FEBE's Jeep had had a command detonated mine set off between it and the utility trailer it towed, then some gooks had opened auto fire with AKs -- even that I had heard from where I had stood originally. It had been mad fire, but it had been brief. LZ English had M-2s and M-60s all over it and two M-42 40MM Dusters. Nobody had fired a round in retaliation or in defense. I would have driven a Duster out to the fight and cleaned out the gooks if I had been there, and if I had known how to drive it and shoot it, but no one there had done anything. I would have lit up the village with a .50 cal. I would have done something. No one there had. All night I had wondered why.

I did not sleep. I was still dead from not having slept the night before guarding Puff. But I was up all night staring at the sky, talking to Pat and FEBE, telling them how sorry I was that I had gotten off the Jeep, that I had let Darby go instead. I should have been the one to go. I would have made the difference. They might have died, and me as well, but not the way they had, and not alone. I used to say that if I had to die, I was showing up at Hell's Gate with company.

When I questioned the people there, they told me that the gooks had first set off a mine, then run out onto the road shooting. The mine had blown up the tires on the trailer and it was dragging.

(continued...)



Then when they opened fire, FEBE had been shot in the hip and had tried to make a left U-turn, but the Jeep rolled over onto its right side trapping Pat's right leg under it. A gook had then run up to the Jeep, shot up the gas tank so the gas poured out onto Pat, then set it on fire.

He had deliberately, manually set it on fire. Pat had not been shot. He had burned to death in a roaring gasoline fire. That had been the black smoke I had seen. FEBE tried to crawl away from them, but one of them ran up to him as FEBE held his hand up maybe asking, pleading, but the gook emptied his magazine into his face, then turned and ran into the village.

I know there is a lot of detail concerning the ambush, and that is what made me so angry. I was yelling at them. I called them cowards. I hated them. They had seen all that detail and not given a fraction of an instant to returning fire, or responding aggressively in any way. I know it was wrong, but I wanted to shoot them and if I had been alone, I might have, but my Wildcat buddies made me go. It had not been their fault. It was the Captain's fault. He knew it was after curfew. He should not have let them leave the base, or been stupid enough to want to go spend the night at LZ English North. It was his fault.

Anyway, this wasn't about me, it was about my friends and how they died. I'm still angry, and sorry.

173d Ranger on T.V.

To all: LRRP/Rangers:

Tome Roubideaux participated in an interview with Paul LaRoche of the "Hidden Heritage" program to be televised on Tuesday night, May 31st, at 7:30 p.m. (Mountain Time).

The station is called "Rural Farm Deliver," RFD-TV, www.rfdtv.com Check with your t.v. server for the channel in your area or call RFD-TV at 402-289-2085 for details. Some may wish to record the program for others of us who do not receive that channel.

Call or email your teammates letting them know of the upcoming broadcast.

Thanks to Tome for doing this interview where he explains our operations while serving our country.

Robt 'twin' Henriksen
Unit Director
173d LURPS/Rangers



Of Memorial Day



I have never been able to think of the day as one of mourning; I have never quite been able to feel that half-masted flags were appropriate on Decoration Day. I have rather felt that the flag should be at the peak, because those whose dying we commemorate rejoiced in seeing it where their valor placed it. We honor them in a joyous, thankful, triumphant commemoration of what they did.

— Benjamin Harrison

~ On the Wall ~

Patrick Matthew Steele
Corporal
E CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY
173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Roseville, Michigan
May 19, 1949 to May 27, 1968
PATRICK M STEELE is on the Wall at
Panel 64W Line 002

Help!

Sky Soldier brother George Rivera mentioned he does not have a single photo of himself taken in Vietnam. If anyone has a Nam pic of George please send it to me and I'll see he gets it, or I can put him in touch with you, thanks. rtol173d@cfl.rr.com Ed



This is Part II in a series of reports by Ranger Roy covering the early days of the 2/503d/173d. See Part I, *Preparing for War*, in our April 2011 newsletter, Issue 26, Pages 28-29.

PART II

THE JUNGLE IS NEUTRAL

By LTC Roy Lombardo
CO B/2/503d

In my efforts to stay in the good graces of our editor and to provide some info of the 173d Airborne Brigade in the early days, I segue into Brigade Jungle Training.

Okinawa had been denuded by air and naval gunfire in 1945. What we encountered and trained in on Okinawa, was less than 20 years of sparse, secondary growth and not particularly difficult to move through, except in some deep ravines of which there were many.

The Lieutenants of note about which I have written previously had all read a book about the OSS in Burma and Malaya in WW II, seen as the title above -- the point being that the jungle was not your friend or enemy but simply the terrain through which you would move and fight. With skill that movement could be mastered.

The Brigade trained annually on an island called Iriomote, the southernmost island in the Ryukyuan Chain, which was a few hundred miles from Okinawa and near Taiwan. The Brigade trainers in their "planning wisdom" scheduled jungle training to take place beginning in January 1964. Rain was fairly constant and the temps were in the 60's and 70's, which meant if you were wet, you were also cold.

The instructors would be those Lieutenants, Ranger-qualified and trained additionally in a "jungle" school. Some of us had been to the US Army Jungle School in Panama and a very few to the British Jungle School in Malaya (now Malaysia). The British school was more highly regarded because of the skills taught and the opportunity to train with Gurkha soldiers, who were also students.

The transport to Iriomote was by Navy vessel. There were two: the first was a passenger transport, with a mess and sleeping quarters and the second was an LST which transported two 2 1/2 ton trucks on the deck and a rolling vehicle in the hold, called a LARC (Large Amphibious Rolling Craft), which could drive into the water, be propelled by the movement of the tires, then roll up onto a beach. The instructors had been asked the day before travel, "*Do you have a preference between one or two??*" The operation officer would then state, "*Well you're going on the 613.*" This turned out to be

an LST (Landing Ship Tank) only unusual because the Opns officer and the School Commander (MAJ William White) traveled on the troop ship.

The instructors and the troops from E/17th Cavalry all traveled on the LST. There was a mess hall but it was a crew mess only AND the crew was Japanese, contracted to the US Navy. The first conversation I had with the Captain was for him to tell me that he fought the French in WWII off the coast of Indochina. Other than that he allegedly "spoke" no English.



Iriomote Jungle Training at Ryukyu Islands, E/17th Cav, HQ 1/503d

Roughing it was no new deal to the instructors and troops and we even understood we'd eat C-rations for the journey (about 12 hours). The lieutenants got the troops on board and assigned to quarters, gear stowed, etc., which didn't take rocketry skills. We boarded only to learn that the quarters, for the Officer Instructors, were adjacent to the crew latrine and above the engine room. When the hatches were open, heated air from below and perfumed air from the latrine passed through our "cabin."

As soon as we sailed we began to suspect that the South China Sea was not a friendly place. Many of us carried Dramamine tablets, taped to the chains of our canteens, so we could easily get to them on a bumpy parachute flight. The winds increased, the seas rose, and our flat-bottomed LST proved that it was not intended for the typhoon. in which we found ourselves.

We arrived off Iriomote as scheduled but then had to wait five days for the seas to subside, allowing the cargo doors to be opened for the LARC to exit. By this time, all aboard were almost ready to try to swim to shore using poncho rafts for flotation. I can only tell the readers that it was astounding for a city-boy like me to stand on a pitching deck to see the sea rise 20 feet above my head and then to be lifted on the next wave and be able to see to San Francisco.

(continued....)





173d Jungle warfare training on Iriomote,

We landed without incident and set-up in GP Large tents.

The training provided individual skills; squad skills; a few platoon exercises, and a three day battalion FTX which crossed the island. Training is training and we were training in the rain, wet all of the time, seldom with an opportunity to dry off -- not unlike operations in the Vietnam Highlands. No reader would be interested in the specifics of the subjects, so I'll gloss over them with a few exceptions. Bridging (one rope, two rope, and three rope bridges); Australian bush raft; climbing and rappelling, jungle living; E&E were all significant because they taught and developed self confidence.

The three-day FTX was an opportunity to apply all the training skills into one exercise. A graduation exercise of sorts!

Now the island and our training area on the ocean was dominated by a single peak, called Komi-dake, 469 meters high. The contour lines were 20 meters apart and on the map (which I still have) the contour lines almost touch, from which you could conclude that that one was one *steeeep* motor scooter. I did a personal recon of every route, assigned to the battalions (nine days of jungle reconnaissance). The zone of action was about 6-7 kilometers long to cross the island but I knew because I had already done it, that it would take 3 days. Each company zone was about 1 KM wide. Five hundred meters/hour would be fast for small units.

There was no way for me to know (just a 1st LT) that this maneuver scheme that I proposed would be similar to many search and destroy missions in later years. When briefed to the incoming battalion commander, he retorted "*Why do we have to search for the aggressors?? Let them sit and they'll starve.*" Not the school solution but he finally agreed to accept the requirement.

Note: Ranger Roy will continue these reports on our unit up to the date of his DEROS. We will then invite another 2/503 company commander to continue reporting on the history of our battalion from his perspective. Ed

Honoring our Medics

In the July issue of our newsletter we will feature and honor those brave souls of the 173d Airborne (all units) who were so important to us all, *our Medics*. Please send your brief stories and photos of your Medic buddies to rto173d@cfl.rr.com by no later than June 15. Thanks.



REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

MEMORIAL DAY, GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

May 30, 1963

On this hallowed ground, heroic deeds were performed and eloquent words were spoken a century ago.

We, the living, have not forgotten--and the world will never forget--the deeds or the words of Gettysburg. We honor them now as we join on this Memorial Day of 1963 in a prayer for permanent peace of the world and fulfillment of our hopes for universal freedom and justice.

We are called to honor our own words of reverent prayer with resolution in the deeds we must perform to preserve peace and the hope of freedom.

We keep a vigil of peace around the world.

Until the world knows no aggressors, until the arms of tyranny have been laid down, until freedom has risen up in every land, we shall maintain our vigil to make sure our sons who died on foreign fields shall not have died in vain.

As we maintain the vigil of peace, we must remember that justice is a vigil too--a vigil we must keep in our own streets and schools and among the lives of all our people--so that those who died here on their native soil shall not have died in vain.

One hundred years ago, the slave was freed.

One hundred years later, the Negro remains in bondage to the color of his skin.

The Negro today asks justice.

We do not answer him--we do not answer those who lie beneath this soil--when we reply to the Negro by asking, "Patience."

It is empty to plead that the solution to the dilemmas of the present rests on the hands of the clock. The solution is in our hands. Unless we are willing to yield up our destiny of greatness among the civilizations of history, Americans--white and Negro together--must be about the business of resolving the challenge which confronts us now.

Our nation found its soul in honor on these fields of Gettysburg one hundred years ago. We must not lose that soul in dishonor now on the fields of hate.

To ask for patience from the Negro is to ask him to give more of what he has already given enough. But to fail to ask of



him--and of all Americans--perseverance within the processes of a free and responsible society would be to fail to ask what the national interest requires of all its citizens.

The law cannot save those who deny it but neither can the law serve any who do not use it. The history of injustice and inequality is a history of disuse of the law.

Law has not failed--and is not failing. We as a nation have failed ourselves by not trusting the law and by not using the law to gain sooner the ends of justice which law alone serves.

If the white over-estimates what he has done for the Negro without the law, the Negro may under-estimate what he is doing and can do for himself with the law.

If it is empty to ask Negro or white for patience, it is not empty--it is merely honest--to ask perseverance. Men may build barricades--and others may hurl themselves against those barricades--but what would happen at the barricades would yield no answers. The answers will only be wrought by our perseverance together. It is deceit to promise more as it would be cowardice to demand less.

In this hour, it is not our respective races which are at stake--it is our nation. Let those who care for their country come forward, North and South, white and Negro, to lead the way through this moment of challenge and decision.

The Negro says, "Now." Others say, "Never." The voice of responsible Americans--the voice of those who died here and the great man who spoke here--their voices say, "Together." There is no other way.

Until justice is blind to color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with the color of men's skins, emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact. To the extent that the proclamation of emancipation is not fulfilled in fact, to that extent we shall have fallen short of assuring freedom to the free.

