



August 2011, Issue 31

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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

<http://firebase319.org/2bat/news.html> or http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



Sign at 2/503d base camp at LZ English, 1970. Photo sent in by Lynn Lail, A/2/503d.



Chaplain's Corner

Sky Soldiers of the Distinguished Herd, the 2/503 Bn, Family and Friends – Grace and abundant Peace to you and to all whom you hold dear!

“If my people who are called by my Name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” II Chronicles 7:14



The Leapin' Deacon

The Declaration of Independence blitzed and blessed the hearts and minds of Americans throughout the newborn country. The people were wild with joy and cheering, singing, dancing, ringing of church bells, praying, and wasting valuable gunpowder. The jubilant Americans were happy and boldly declaring: **LIBERTY! LIBERTY! FREEDOM! FREEDOM! Thanks be to God!**

John Adams was so overcome with elation that he wrote his faithful wife, Abigail, two letters radiating deep hope for the future of our cherished country stating: *“This day will be the most memorable in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.*

I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure that it will cost to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. Yet, through all the gloom I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means.” However, the deep and dire struggle and terrible suffering of war was about to erupt. The very day the Declaration of Independence was passed in Philadelphia, British General Howe landed on Staten Island, New York with the first increment of fifty-five-thousand prima British troops.

The newborn nation immediately “called” for volunteers from all backgrounds and talents to come to the defense of “Liberty” and “Freedom”. Farmers, merchants, blacksmiths, printers, painters, fishermen, carpenters, educators, pastors, all manner of tradesmen and laborers came to the “call” for Freedom. The British knew that New York was strategic for it controlled the Hudson River, the doorway to the north which also divided the Colonies in half.

In five days the British pressed and nearly surrounded the Americans, just north of the Flatbush area. The British commanded “ATTACK” on August 27th. The American volunteer forces, left and center were pushed back to a final defensive perimeter around the northern edge of Brooklyn. The right, under the able Scotsman, William Alexander, known as Lord Sterling, and the fighting troops of Delaware held the ridge with their colors flying high. The vigorous patriots of Maryland plunged at the British five times trying to break through to the rescue, and nearly succeeding, but fresh British troops halted their heroic attempt.

General Washington and his Commanders watched through field telescopes. Washington, in crushing dismay declared, **“Good God, what brave fellows I must this day lose!”**

The far outnumbered Americans (three to one) were low in gunpowder, awaiting the last and final charge by the Brits, and the British fleet soon to be at their backs in the mouth of the East River. Shock of shocks, British General Howe didn't follow up with a decisive and final victorious attack. Truly, the miraculous hand of our Lord was active and prevailed. The next day the British murderous fire remained silent – unbelievable, the final onslaught did not come. A protective rain came with a northeast wind and that wind kept Howe's fleet from moving at the Colonial fighters back on the East River; once again, an historic and holy act to preserve our “call” to Liberty and Freedom.

General Washington came up with an amazing plan to rescue the trapped Colonial troops. It was a plan with huge risks, in that the East River was a full mile wide. Washington ordered, to the shock of many, to move the entire embattled Continental Army off Brooklyn by small boats. Sure death or capture awaited the 8,000 American Troops. Securing the many needed small boats and seasoned able oarsmen, the mighty mission was underway all night long. The sun began to rise and the secret risk-filled plan if discovered by the British Fleet would destroy the Americans and blow them out of the water, but again came Divine intervention.

At that very time of sunrise dawning a very heavy and dense fog began to rise out of the ground and off the river. The miraculous, God-given fog remained in effect until the last of the 8,000 Revolutionary Troops and the last boat with Washington in it, made it safely to the other side. The Continental Army, by the Grace of God, remained intact and prepared for greater days of ultimate Liberty and Freedom. Our gracious and living Lord indeed has been actively engaged in our history with a redemptive purpose.

Blessings to all Sky Soldiers and Families, Patriots, Veterans, and Concerned Citizens of our Freedom-loving country in this tremendous season of celebrating the Declaration of Independence.

God bless our native land; Firm may she ever stand through storm and night: When the wind tempests rave, Ruler of wind and wave, O God, our country save by your great might.

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



~ Letter from the Commander ~

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION (AIRBORNE) 503D INFANTRY
APO U.S. FORCES 96250

AVBE-BECO

22 Aug 66

SUBJECT: Anniversary Greetings

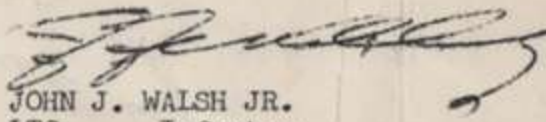
TO: All Troopers
Second Battalion (Airborne)
503d Infantry

1. Today marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the activation of the 503d Infantry. On 22 August 1941, the 503d Parachute Infantry Battalion was the first such battalion ever created in the U.S. Army; in the years between that battalion has grown to a regiment, been re-organized as a battle group, and today the 503d has three proud battalions, the 1st, 2d, and 4th, all presently assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade.

2. The heritage of "The Rock"; from the campaigns in New Guinea and the Phillipines in World War II, down to the present is a proud one. Today as we pause to reflect on the valor of those who have served with the 503d in past years, we might dedicate ourselves to future greater accomplishments on the battlefield secure in the knowledge that the 503d Regiment has never been better served than by the troopers of the Second Battalion fighting today in Vietnam.

3. I join all members of the 503d, past and present, in saluting you on this occasion.




JOHN J. WALSH JR.
LTC, Infantry
Commanding



~ CORRECTION ~

In the Special Edition on the *Battle of the Slopes*, June 22, 2011, on Page 35, this report was shown as having been sent in by "Steve 'Sgt. Rock' Vargo, C/2/503d," when in actuality these are comments from Augie Scarino, Recon/C/2/503d. With apologies. Ed



Augie with the D-handle

"It was very informative for me. As in any action, the viewpoint of the individual soldier is small. You know what is going on around in, or in your squad etc., but rarely do you ever get or see the big picture. It was interesting to read the documented history of the action; read all the accounts.

I felt so sorry to see how bad the guilt has ripped the one Sky Soldier who took that cig case from the dead brother. Hell, in WWII it was common practice to strip whatever you needed from dead comrades. Nothing to be ashamed of at all. Good comments by you to try to ease his pain.

I just now ordered from Amazon the book Dak To by Edward Murphy (used-48 cents).

I never realized how fucking close us guys in Charlie were to really being in a meat grinder and how many of them motha fuckers there were around us!!!

Like I wrote in the issue, that night of the 22nd, they probed us good all night long but since we held the high ground and dug in, they didn't want any part of us. They would have paid dearly if they had tried to assault us in any strength no matter how many of them fucks there were.

I think it might be Wambi Cook (?), but I think he was one who survived the Battle of the Slopes but also the later big November battle -- geez, there is indeed a Sky Soldier angel on that brother's shoulders!

Was surprised and elated to read Steve Welch's recollection of the "Battle of the Slopes," and to see his Vietnam picture. We were both sent back to Kontum to be processed to go home. After supper, we stood for some time in front of our tent talking about all the things we were looking forward to doing when we got home. I left him to go lay down on my bunk.

Not more than a minute later I hear a rifle shot. I run out of the tent, the first thing I see is Steve on the ground. Someone had accidentally fired his M-16 hitting Steve in the belly. Steve was rushed to the aid station and we all hoped for the best.

About six months later as a member of Fort Irwin's pistol team, we were at Fort Ord for a pistol match. One evening while walking the aisles at the PX, I turn a corner and meet Steve. We were both surprised and happy to see each other again. Steve was still recovering from his wound. He told me he married his girl friend, and we talked of meeting later. Unfortunately we did not meet again. My best wishes to Steve and his family. AIRBORNE! "

Augie Scarino
Recon/C/2/503d

~ RAFFLE...WIN \$500. ~

173d Chapter 17 Fund Raiser. For those in your area wishing to purchase Chapter 17 raffle tickets contact Jim Haynes at (614) 746-5605, E-mail at Jhaynes6@columbus.rr.com All essential information is on the ticket itself.

Winning drawing will be made in September at the Kokomo (Indiana) veterans' annual get-together.



HONORING ARIZONA VIETNAM VETS

The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and the Arizona Military Museum in conjunction with the Department of Defense 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War, will host a dinner *IN HONOR OF ARIZONA VIETNAM VETERANS*.



Special Guest Speaker:

General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (Ret)

WHEN: Saturday, October 22, 2011
No host bar: 5:30-6:30 pm
Dinner: 6:45 pm

WHERE: Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino
5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd.
Chandler, AZ 85226

PHONE: 800-946-4452

COST: \$40.00 per dinner. No Host Bar.

ATTIRE: Men: Coat and tie or open collar with dress shirt.
Women: Semi-formal evening wear.

RSVP: You must register to attend. Seating is limited. Please RSVP (form follows) before October 14 to assure your attendance. For further information call:
602-253-2378 or 520-868-6777.

In Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans, I (we) will attend the dinner *In Honor of Arizona Vietnam Veterans* on October 22, 2011 at Wild Horse Pass and Casino. There are _____ (number in this party) who is (are) Vietnam veteran(s) (Note: recipient of the Vietnam Service Medal and /or Vietnamese Campaign Medal or served in civilian or intelligence agency in country or in AO or served in the Republic of Vietnam armed forces). Please legibly print names of attendees included in your check. (Please copy form for additional names)

Contact Phone Number & Address:

Dinner is \$40.00 per person. Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$_____ for dinners in my group. Make Check payable to Arizona Military Museum, and mail to:

Arizona Vietnam Veterans Dinner
Attn: Joseph E. Abodeely, Director
AZ Military Museum
9014 North Wealth Road
Maricopa, Arizona 85139



*Hear no evil, see no evil,
speak no evil*



Three No DEROS Alpha buddies.
L-R: Jack "Jackattack" Ribera, Mike Sturges,
and the singing Richard Ware.
Brothers all, in Cocoa Beach, FL in 2002.

Senate Plan Would Cut \$80B in Benefits

Terry Howell, *Military.com*, July 20, 2011

According to reports, the Senate deficit-cutting plan proposed by the "Gang of Six" requires a reduction in retiree COLA and demands that the armed services committees make \$80 billion in cuts to military compensation and benefits over the next decade. The plan would require the Senate Armed Services Committee to determine how and where to cut military benefits or face across-the-board cuts in all "entitlements."

In other words – the bipartisan Gang of Six is telling the Senate Armed Services Committee to make the cuts or they'll do it for them.

The list of so-called entitlements that face cuts includes, all forms of **retired pay, survivor benefits, Montgomery GI Bill for Selective Reserve, and TRICARE for Life** for older military retirees.

Read more:

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/07/senate-plan-would-cut-80b-in-benefits/#ixzz1TB2KdyoF>

Source: MilitaryAdvantage.Military.com



And More Reunions of the Airborne Kind



503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team Association WWII, September 21 – 25, 2011, Denver, Colorado.

Contact:
Yolonda Goad
Tel: 303-682-0004
Eml: yolo@live.com



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

Contact:
Charles Magro
Tel: 256-247-7390



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



Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67 is having a reunion in Liberty, MO June 15th-18th next year 2012. Base HQ will be Recon's Bob Stamburksy's Retro Bowl Entertainment Center. Liberty is a suburb of Kansas City. So far, about 12 members have indicated they will attend. Watch this space for details to follow.

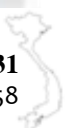
Note: If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne Reunions please send details to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com



See Page 58 herein for early information on next year's **173d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion** in Lexington, KY to be held June 6-12, 2012.

LAST MONTH'S WHODAT?

We didn't have a name to go with this trooper and no one stepped up with one. We suspect he was 2/503 in the early years. If anyone recognizes him please let us know. Any chance this is CSM Ed Proffitt? Ed



Medal of Honor Recipient

Leroy Petry

Delta Company, 2nd Battalion,
75th Ranger Regiment



“This is the stuff of which heroes are made. This is the strength, the devotion that makes our troops the pride of every American. And this is the reason that -- like a soldier named Leroy Petry -- America doesn’t simply endure, we emerge from our trials stronger, more confident, with our eyes fixed on the future.”

~ President Obama



“Staff Sergeant Petry’s extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the 75th Ranger Regiment, and the United States Army.”

Photos: Charles Dharapak / Associated Press (Petry shakes hands with Obama); Pablo Martinez Monsivais / Associated Press; Kevin Lamarque / Reuters; Department of Defense (Medal of Honor).

A Sky Soldier’s Lady

Patricia “Pat” Lee Hart, 65, wife of Barry “Bear” Hart C/2/503, of Paducah, Kentucky passed away Tuesday, July 12, 2011, in the arms of her husband. Pat and Bear have a son, Timothy M. Hart of Alabama, a daughter, Jacquelyn Sturdivant of Hawaii, and a large extended family.



Memorial contributions may be given to the American Cancer Society in memory of Pat. In Bear’s own words, *“Always lovely, always thoughtful, kind, smart and soft spoken is how we will remember her.”*

Our thoughts are with you, Pat, and your children, brother.



Bear’s Best Friend

A friend I call Bear, upon a Harley he sat.
His best friend behind him, his loving wife Pat.
So many years by his side this woman has stood.
Returning from a war or drunk in the wood.
An anchor Pat has been through a lifetime
of strife.

This woman Bear loved whom Bear called
his wife.

A request Pat did make during a Poker Run
one day.

So I wrote Pat a poem of the things Pat wanted
to say.

Of her man and his bike that Bear so loves to ride.
For the freedom that he earned serving his Country
with pride.

So here I give true praise for Bear’s best friend.
A mother, Bear’s wife and his friend to the end.

Written in loving memory of Pat Hart.

7/14/11 M.D. Wilson

Bear’s email address: bearvrv@bellsouth.net



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PARACHUTES & THEMES THAT USES 'EM

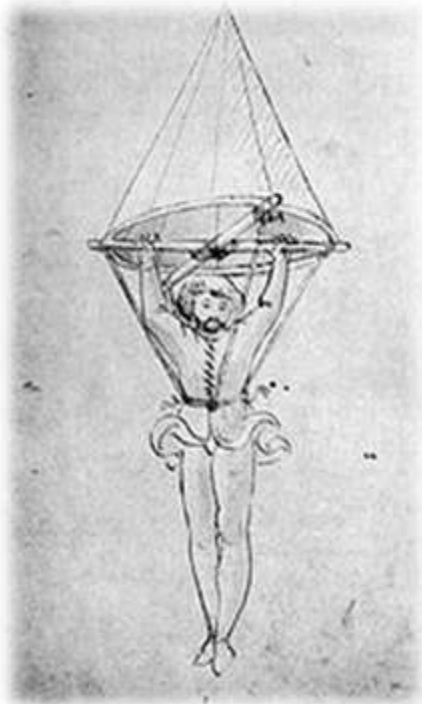


The new T-11

A **parachute** is a device used to slow the motion of an object through an atmosphere by creating drag, or in the case of ram-air parachutes, aerodynamic lift. Parachutes are usually made out of light, strong cloth, originally silk, now most commonly nylon. Parachutes must slow an object's terminal vertical speed by a minimum of 75% in order to be classified as such. Depending on the situation, parachutes are used with a variety of loads, including people, food, equipment, space capsules, and bombs.

Drogue chutes are used to aid horizontal deceleration of a vehicle (a fixed-wing aircraft, or a drag racer), or to provide stability (tandem free-fall, or space shuttle after a touchdown).

The word "parachute" comes from the French *para*, meaning "to prepare for" or "to protect against," originally from the Latin *parare*, and *chute*, the French word for "fall," and it was originally coined, as a hybrid word which meant literally "that which protects against a fall," by the French aeronaut François Blanchard (1753–1809) in 1785.



The oldest known depiction of a parachute, by an anonymous author (Italy, 1470s)

Veranzio's 1595 parachute design titled "Flying Man". The earliest evidence for the parachute dates back to the Renaissance period. The oldest parachute design appears in an anonymous manuscript from 1470s Renaissance Italy (British Museum Add. MSS 34,113, fol. 200v), showing a free-hanging man clutching a cross bar frame attached to a conical canopy. As a safety measure, four straps run from the ends of the rods to a waist belt. The design is a marked improvement over another folio which depicts a man trying to break the force of his fall by the means of two long cloth streamers fastened to two bars which he grips with his hands. Although the surface area of the parachute design appears to be too small to offer effective resistance to the friction of the air and the wooden base-frame is superfluous and potentially harming, the revolutionary character of the new concept is obvious.



Picture published in a Dutch newspaper "De Prins der Geïllustreerde Bladen", Feb 18, 1911

Only slightly later, a more sophisticated parachute was sketched by the polymath Leonardo da Vinci in his *Codex Atlanticus* dated to ca. 1485. Here, the scale of the parachute is in a more favorable proportion to the weight of the jumper.

(continued....)

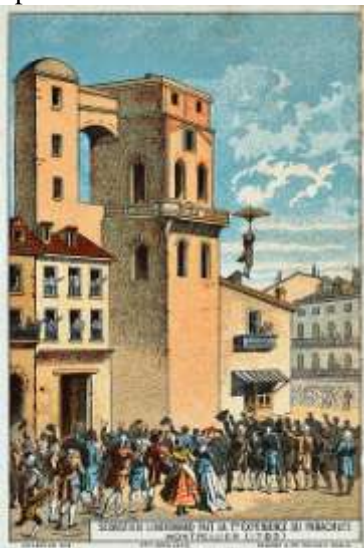


Leonardo's canopy was held open by a square wooden frame, which alters the shape of the parachute from conical to pyramidal. It is not known whether the Italian inventor was influenced by the earlier design, but he may have learnt about the idea through the intensive oral communication among artist-engineers of the time.

The feasibility of Leonardo's pyramidal design was successfully tested in 2000 by the British Adrian Nicholas and again in 2008 by another skydiver. According to the historian of technology Lynn White, these conical and pyramidal designs, much more elaborate than early artistic jumps with rigid parasols in Asia, mark the origin of "the parachute as we know it".

The Venetian inventor Fausto Veranzio (1551–1617) examined da Vinci's parachute sketch, and set out to implement one of his own. He kept the square frame, but replaced the canopy with a bulging sail-like piece of cloth which he came to realize decelerates the fall more effectively.

A now-famous depiction of a parachute that he dubbed *Homo Volans* (Flying Man) appeared in his book on mechanics, *Machinae Novae* (1595), alongside a number of other devices and technical concepts. In 1617, Veranzio implemented his design and tested the parachute by jumping from a tower in Venice. The event was documented some thirty years later by John Wilkins, founder and secretary of the Royal Society in London.



Montpellier observatory



First use of a frameless parachute, by André Garnerin in 1797



Schematic depiction of Garnerin's parachute, from an early nineteenth century illustration
Gleb Kotelnikov and his invention, the knapsack parachute
 18th and 19th centuries.



Modern Parachutes

The modern parachute was invented in the late 18th century by Louis-Sébastien Lenormand in France, who made the first recorded public jump in 1783. Lenormand also sketched his device beforehand. Two years later, in 1785, one of Lenormand's fellow French aeronauts, François Blanchard, coined the word "parachute" by hybridizing the prefix *para-*, for "defense against," and *chute*, the French word for "fall," to describe the device's function, the word literally meaning "that which protects against a fall."

Also in 1785, Aaron Seitler demonstrated it as a means of safely disembarking from a hot air balloon. While Seitler's first parachute demonstrations were conducted with a dog as the passenger, he later had the opportunity to try it himself in 1793 when his hot air balloon ruptured and he used a parachute to escape.



Subsequent development of the parachute focused on it becoming more compact. While the early parachutes were made of linen stretched over a wooden frame, in the late 1790s, Seitler began making parachutes from folded silk, taking advantage of silk's strength and light weight. In 1797, André Garnerin made the first jump using such a parachute. Garnerin also invented the vented parachute, which improved the stability of the fall.

(continued....)



20th century pre-World War One

In 1911 a successful test was done with a dummy at the Eiffel tower in Paris. The puppet's weight was 75 kgs, the parachute's weight was 21 kgs. The cables between puppet and the parachute were 9 M long. The following year Franz Reichelt fell to his death from the tower demonstrating his wearable parachute. Also in 1911, Grant Morton made the first parachute jump from an airplane, a Wright Model B, at Venice Beach, California. The pilot of the plane was Phil Parmalee. Morton's parachute was of the 'throw-out' type where he held the chute in his arms as he left the aircraft.



Freddie Parks, A/2/503d, jump ready in Vietnam.

In the same year, a Russian inventor Gleb Kotelnikov invented the first knapsack parachute, although Hermann Lattemann and his wife Käthe Paulus had been jumping with bagged parachutes in the last decade of the 19th century.

In 1912, on a road near Tsarskoye Selo, years before it became part of St. Petersburg, Kotelnikov successfully demonstrated the braking effects of parachutes by accelerating a Russo-Balt automobile to the top speed, and then opening a parachute attached to the back seat, thus inventing also the drogue parachute.

On 1 March 1912, US Army Captain Albert Leo Stevens made the first (attached-type) parachute jump in the United States from a fixed-wing aircraft, a Benoist pusher, while flying above Jefferson Barracks, MO. The jump utilized a 'pack' style chute with the chute being stored or housed in a casing on the jumper's body. Štefan Banič from Slovakia, invented the first actively used parachute, patenting it in 1913. On 21 June 1913, Georgia Broadwick became the first woman to parachute jump from a moving aircraft, doing so over Los Angeles.

World War I

The first military use for the parachute was for use by artillery detectors on tethered observation balloons in World War I. These were tempting targets for enemy fighter aircraft, though difficult to destroy, due to their heavy anti-aircraft defenses. Because they were difficult to escape from, and dangerous when on fire due to their hydrogen inflation, observers would abandon them and descend by parachute as soon as enemy aircraft were seen. The ground crew would then attempt to retrieve and deflate the balloon as quickly as possible. The main part of the parachute was in a bag suspended from the balloon with the pilot wearing only a simple waist harness which was attached to the main parachute. When the balloon crew jumped the main part of the parachute was pulled from the bag by the crew's waist harness, first the shroud lines, followed by the main canopy. This type of parachute was first adopted on a large scale by the Germans for their observation balloon crews, and then later by the British and French for their observation balloon crews. While this type of unit worked well from balloons it had mixed results when used on fixed wing aircraft by the Germans where the bag was stored in a compartment directly behind the pilot. In many instances where it did not work the shroud lines became entangled with the spinning aircraft. Although a number of famous German fighter pilots were saved by this type of parachute, including Hermann Göring.

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Chet Nycum 503rd PRCT ready to blast at Benning

(continued...)



No parachutes were issued to Allied "heavier-than-air" aircrew since it was thought at the time that if a pilot had a parachute, he would jump from the plane when hit rather than trying to save the aircraft. As a result, the pilot of a disabled plane only had three options: ride his machine into the ground, jump from several thousand feet, or commit suicide using a standard-issued revolver.



Boeing B-47B-40BW of the 306th Bomb Wing (Medium) at MacDill AFB, Florida, landing with drag chute.

In the UK, Everard Calthrop, a railway engineer, and breeder of Arab horses, invented and marketed through his Aerial Patents Company a "British Parachute." Thomas Orde-Lees, known as the "**Mad Major**," demonstrated that parachutes could be used successfully from a low height (he jumped from Tower Bridge in London) which led to their being used by the Royal Flying Corps.



2/503d troopers donning chutes for jump at Kadena, 15 Feb 65.
(Photo by Col. George Dexter, Bn CO 2/503d)

In 1911, Solomon Lee Van Meter, Jr. of Lexington Kentucky, submitted for and in 1916 received a patent for a backpack style parachute - the Aviatory Life Buoy, Patent July 25, 1916. His self-contained device featured a revolutionary quick-release mechanism -- the ripcord -- that allowed a falling aviator to expand the canopy only when safely away from the disabled aircraft.

The German air service, in 1918, became the world's first to introduce a standard parachute and the only one

at the time. Despite Germany issuing their pilots with parachutes, their efficiency was relatively poor. As a result, many pilots died whilst using them, including aces such as Oberleutnant Erich Lowenhardt (who fell from 12,000 feet after being accidentally rammed by another German aircraft) and Fritz Rumey who tested it in 1918, only to have it fail at a little over 3,000 feet.



Charlie Company 2/503 going thru refresher training for jump in Vietnam, '67.
(Photo by MG Jack Leide, CO C/2/503d)

Post World War I

Tethered parachutes were initially tried but caused problems when the aircraft was spinning. In 1919, Leslie Irvin invented and successfully tested a parachute that the pilot could deploy when clear of the aircraft. He became the first person to make a premeditated free-fall parachute jump from an airplane.

An early brochure of the Irvin Air Chute Company credits William O'Connor as having become, on 24 August 1920 at McCook Field near Dayton, Ohio, the first person to be saved by an Irvin parachute. Another life-saving jump was made at McCook Field by test pilot Lt. Harold H. Harris on 20 October 1922. Shortly after Harris' jump, two Dayton newspaper reporters suggested the creation of the Caterpillar Club for successful parachute jumps from disabled aircraft. In 1924 Gleb Kotelnikov became the first parachutist to apply the soft packing of a parachute instead of a hard casing.



(continued....)





American paratrooper. MC1-1C 'round' parachute.

Beginning with Italy in 1927, several countries experimented with using parachutes to drop soldiers behind enemy lines. The regular Soviet Airborne Troops were established as early as 1931 after a number of experimental military mass jumps starting from August 2, 1930. Earlier the same year, in 1930, the first Soviet mass jumps led to the development of the parachuting sport in the Soviet Union. By the time of World War II, large airborne forces were trained and used in surprise attacks, as in the Battle for The Hague, the first large scale deployment of airborne troops in military history, by the Germans (whose operation failed totally) and in 1941 Battle of Crete and in 1944 the Operation Market Garden, again in Holland and again considered a complete failure but still the largest airborne military operation ever carried out. Aircraft crews were routinely equipped with parachutes for emergencies as well.

In 1937, drag chutes were used in aviation for the first time, by the Soviet airplanes in the Arctic that were providing support for the famous polar expeditions of the era, such as the first manned drifting ice station

North Pole-1. The drag chute allowed to land safely on the ice-floes of smaller size.



Checking equipment. HHC/Recon/2/503d troopers ready for practice jump in Vietnam, 1966.
(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d)

Types of parachutes

Today's modern parachutes are classified into two categories: ascending and descending canopies. All ascending canopies refer to Paragliders which are built specifically to ascend and stay aloft as long as possible. Other parachutes including ram-air non elliptical are classified as descending canopies by manufacturers. Some modern parachutes are classified as semi-rigid wings, which are maneuverable and can make a controlled descent to break on impact with the ground.



173d MP on the lookout for stolen reserves. Vietnam '66.
What's that shirtless trooper doin' in the back?
(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d)

(continued....)



Round types

Round parachutes are purely drag devices (that is, unlike the ram-air types, they provide no lift) and are used in military, emergency and cargo applications. These have large dome-shaped canopies made from a single layer of triangular cloth gores. Some skydivers call them "jellyfish 'chutes" because of the resemblance.

Modern sports parachutists rarely use this type.

The first round parachutes were simple, flat circulars. These early parachutes suffered from instability caused by oscillations. A hole in the apex helped to vent some air and reduce the oscillations. Many military applications adopted conical (i.e. cone-shaped) or parabolic (a flat circular canopy with an extended skirt) shapes, such as the US Army T-10 static-line parachute. A round parachute with no holes in it is more prone to oscillate, and is not considered to be steerable.



2/503d troopers in their T-10's landing on Yomitan DZ 6 Jun 65
(Photo by Col. George Dexter, Bn CO 2/503d)

A large (3-8 mph) forward speed and steering can be achieved by cuts in various sections (gores) across the back, or by cutting 4 lines in the back thereby modifying the canopy to allow air to escape from the back of the canopy, providing limited forward speed. Modifications can skirt bow out. Turning is accomplished by forming the edges of the modifications, giving the parachute more speed from one side of the modification than the other. This gives the jumpers the ability to steer the parachute, enabling them to avoid obstacles and to turn into the wind to minimize horizontal speed at jumping.

Cruciform (square) types

The unique design characteristics of cruciform parachutes decreases oscillation (its user swinging back and forth) and violent turns during descent. This technology will be used by the US Army as it replaces its current T-10 parachutes under a program called

ATPS (Advanced Tactical Parachute System). The ATPS canopy is a highly modified version of a cross/cruciform platform and is square in appearance. The ATPS (T-11) system will reduce the rate of descent by 30 percent from 21 feet per second (6.4 m/s) to 15.75 feet per second (4.80 m/s). The T-11 is designed to have an average rate of descent 14% slower than the T-10D thus resulting in lower landing injury rates for jumpers. The decline in rate of descent will reduce the impact energy by almost 25% to lessen the potential for injury.



2/503 jump tower training in Vietnam, 1966.
(Photo by Pat Bowe, Recon/2/503d)

Annular and pull-down apex types

A variation on the round parachute is the pull down apex parachute. Invented by a Frenchman named Pierre-Marcel Lemoigne, it is referred to as a Para-Commander canopy in some circles, after the first model of the type. It is a round parachute, but with suspension lines to the canopy apex that applies load there and pulls the apex closer to the load, distorting the round shape into a somewhat flattened or lenticular shape.

(continued....)



Some designs have the fabric removed from the apex to open a hole through which air can exit, giving the canopy an annular geometry. They also have decreased horizontal drag due to their flatter shape and, when combined with rear-facing vents, can have considerable forward speed.



Last check before 2/503 combat jump in VN, Feb. '67
(Photo by Jerry Hassler, Recon/S-2/2/503d)

Rogallo wing and other types

Sport parachuting has experimented with the Rogallo wing, among other shapes and forms. These were nearly always an attempt to increase the forward speed and reduce the landing speed offered by the other options at the time. The ram-air parachute's development and the subsequent introduction of the sail slider to slow deployment reduced the level of experimentation in the sport parachuting community. The parachutes are also hard to build.

Ribbon and ring parachutes have similarities to annular designs. They are frequently designed to deploy at supersonic speeds. A conventional parachute would instantly burst upon opening at such speeds. Ribbon parachutes have a ring-shaped canopy, often with a large hole in the centre to release the pressure. Sometimes the ring is broken into ribbons connected by ropes to leak air even more. These large leaks lower the stress on the parachute so it does not burst or shred when it opens. Ribbon parachutes made of kevlar are used on nuclear bombs such as the B61 and B83.

Ram-air types

Most modern parachutes are self-inflating "ram-air" airfoils known as a parafoil that provide control of speed and direction similar to paragliders. Paragliders have much greater lift and range, but parachutes are designed to handle, spread and mitigate the stresses of deployment at terminal velocity. All ram-air parafoils have two

layers of fabric; top and bottom, connected by airfoil-shaped fabric ribs to form "cells." The cells fill with high pressure air from vents that face forward on the leading edge of the airfoil. The fabric is shaped and the parachute lines trimmed under load such that the ballooning fabric inflates into an airfoil shape. This airfoil is sometimes maintained by use of fabric one-way valves called *Airlocks*.

Personal parachutes / Deployment

Reserve parachutes usually have a ripcord deployment system, which was first designed by Theodore Moscicki, but most modern main parachutes used by sports parachutists use a form of hand-deployed pilot chute. A ripcord system pulls a closing pin (sometimes multiple pins), which releases a spring-loaded pilot chute, and opens the container; the pilot chute is then propelled into the air stream by its spring, then uses the force generated by passing air to extract a deployment bag containing the parachute canopy, to which it is attached via a bridle. A hand-deployed pilot chute, once thrown into the air stream, pulls a closing pin on the pilot chute bridle to open the container, then the same force extracts the deployment bag. There are variations on hand-deployed pilot chutes, but the system described is the more common throw-out system.



RAF Typhoon using a parachute for braking after landing

Only the hand-deployed pilot chute may be collapsed automatically after deployment -- by a kill line reducing the in-flight drag of the pilot chute on the main canopy. Reserves, on the other hand, do not retain their pilot chutes after deployment. The reserve deployment bag and pilot chute are not connected to the canopy in a reserve system. This is known as a free-bag configuration, and the components are often lost during a reserve deployment.

(continued...)





173d doing its thing in Vietnam, 22 February 1967

Occasionally, a pilot chute does not generate enough force either to pull the pin or to extract the bag. Causes may be that the pilot chute is caught in the turbulent wake of the jumper (the "burble"), the closing loop holding the pin is too tight, or the pilot chute is generating insufficient force. This effect is known as "pilot chute hesitation," and, if it does not clear, it can lead to a total malfunction, requiring reserve deployment.

Paratroopers' main parachutes are usually deployed by static lines that release the parachute, yet retain the deployment bag that contains the parachute -- without relying on a pilot chute for deployment. In this configuration the deployment bag is known as a direct-bag system, in which the deployment is rapid, consistent, and reliable. This kind of deployment is also used by student skydivers going through a static line progression, a kind of student program.

Varieties of personal ram-air

Personal ram-air parachutes are loosely divided into two varieties: rectangular or tapered, commonly referred to as "squares" or "ellipticals" respectively. Medium-performance canopies (reserve-, BASE-, canopy formation-, and accuracy-type) are usually rectangular. High-performance, ram-air parachutes have a slightly tapered shape to their leading and/or trailing edges when viewed in plan form, and are known as ellipticals. Sometimes all the taper is in the leading edge (front), and sometimes

in the trailing edge (tail). Ellipticals are usually used only by sports parachutists.

Ellipticals often have smaller, more numerous fabric cells and are shallower in profile. Their canopies can be anywhere from slightly elliptical to highly elliptical -- indicating the amount of taper in the canopy design, which is often an indicator of the responsiveness of the canopy to control input for a given wing loading, and of the level of experience required to pilot the canopy safely.

The rectangular parachute designs tend to look like square, inflatable air mattresses with open front ends. They are generally safer to operate because they are less prone to dive rapidly with relatively small control inputs, they are usually flown with lower wing loadings per square foot of area, and they glide more slowly. They typically have a less-efficient glide ratio.

Wing loading of parachutes is measured similarly to that of aircraft: comparing the number of pounds (exit weight) to square footage of parachute fabric. Typical wing loadings for students, accuracy competitors, and BASE jumpers are less than one pound per square foot -- often 0.7 pounds per square foot or less. Most student skydivers fly with wing loadings below one pound per square foot. Most sport jumpers fly with wing loadings between 1.0 and 1.4 pounds per square foot, but many interested in performance landings exceed this wing loading. Professional Canopy pilots compete at wing loadings of 2 to 3+ pounds per square foot. While ram-air parachutes with wing loadings higher than four pounds per square foot have been landed, this is strictly the realm of professional test jumpers.



Paratrooper extraordinaire, Catherine Leroy before Junction City combat jump.

(Photo: Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d)

(continued....)





Smaller parachutes tend to fly faster for the same load, and ellipticals respond faster to control input. Therefore, small, elliptical designs are

often chosen by experienced canopy pilots for the thrilling flying they provide. Flying a fast elliptical requires much more skill and experience. Fast ellipticals are also considerably more dangerous to land. With high-performance elliptical canopies, nuisance malfunctions can be much more serious than with a square design, and may quickly escalate into emergencies. Flying highly loaded, elliptical canopies is a major contributing factor in many skydiving accidents, although advanced training programs are helping to reduce this danger.

High-speed, cross-braced parachutes such as the Velocity, VX, XAOS and Sensei have given birth to a new branch of sport parachuting called "swooping." A race course is set up in the landing area for expert pilots to measure the distance they are able to fly past the 5-foot (1.5 m) tall entry gate. Current world records exceed 600 feet (180 m).



Alpha Company CO, Capt. Ed Carns briefing his No DEROS Alpha jumpers before combat jump in '67.

Aspect ratio is another way to measure ram-air parachutes. Aspect ratios of parachutes are measured the same way as aircraft wings, by comparing span with chord. Low aspect ratio parachutes (i.e. span 1.8 times the chord) are now limited to precision landing competitions. Popular precision landing parachutes include Jalbert (now NAA) Para-Foils and John Eiff's series of Challenger Classics. While low aspect ratio parachutes tend to be extremely stable -- with gentle stall characteristics -- they suffer from steep glide ratios and small "sweet spots" for timing the landing flare. Medium aspect ratio (i.e. 2.1) parachutes are widely used for reserves, BASE, and canopy formation competition because of their predictable opening characteristics. Most medium aspect ratio parachutes have seven cells.



Feet and knees together! Yeah, right.

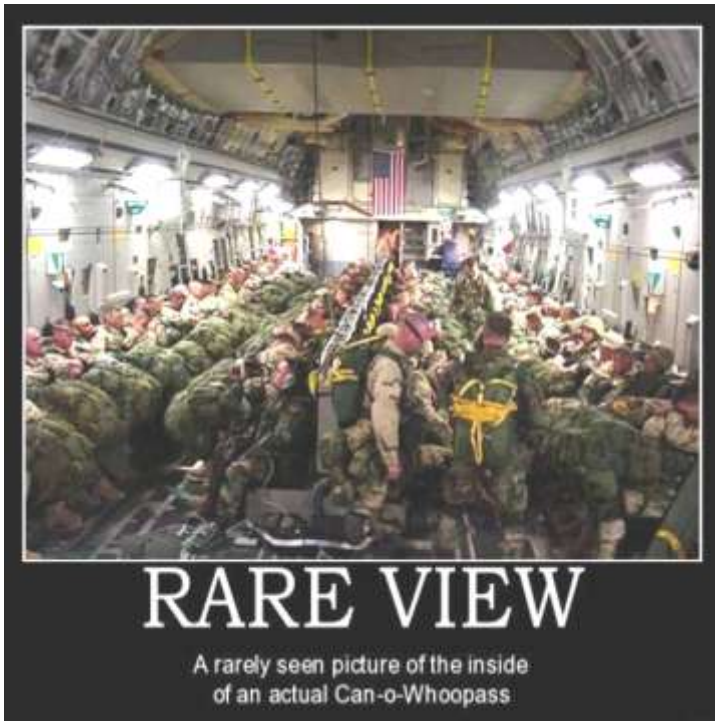
High aspect ratio parachutes have the flattest glide and the largest "sweet spots" (for timing the landing flare) but the least predictable openings. An aspect ratio of 2.7 is about the upper limit for parachutes. High aspect ratio canopies typically have nine or more cells. All reserve ram-air parachutes are of the square variety, because of the greater reliability, and the less-demanding handling characteristics.

General characteristics of ram-airs

Main parachutes used by skydivers today are designed to open softly. Overly rapid deployment was an early problem with ram-air designs. The primary innovation that slows the deployment of a ram-air canopy is the slider; a small rectangular piece of fabric with a grommet near each corner. Four collections of lines go through the grommets to the risers (risers are strips of webbing joining the harness and the rigging lines of a parachute). During deployment, the slider slides down from the canopy to just above the risers. The slider is slowed by air resistance as it descends and reduces the rate at which the lines can spread. This reduces the speed at which the canopy can open and inflate.

(continued...)





173d Airborne. Young blood off to Iraq.

At the same time, the overall design of a parachute still has a significant influence on the deployment speed. Modern sport parachutes' deployment speeds vary considerably. Most modern parachutes open comfortably, but individual skydivers may prefer harsher deployment.

The deployment process is inherently chaotic. Rapid deployments can still occur even with well-behaved canopies. On rare occasions deployment can even be so rapid that the jumper suffers bruising, injury, or death. Reducing the amount of fabric decreases the air resistance. This can be done by making the slider smaller, inserting a mesh panel, or cutting a hole in the slider.

Safety

A parachute is carefully folded, or "packed" to ensure that it will open reliably. If a parachute is not packed properly it can result in death because the main parachute might fail to deploy correctly or fully.

In the U.S. and many developed countries, emergency and reserve parachutes are packed by "riggers" who must be trained and certified according to legal standards. Sport skydivers are always trained to pack their own primary "main" parachutes.

Parachutes can malfunction in several ways. Malfunctions can range from minor problems that can be corrected in-flight and still be landed, to catastrophic malfunctions that require the main parachute to be cut away using a modern 3-ring release system, and the reserve be deployed. Most skydivers also equip

themselves with small barometric computers (known as an AAD or automatic activation device like Cypres, FXC or Vigil) that will automatically activate the reserve parachute if the skydiver himself has not deployed a parachute to reduce his rate of descent by a preset altitude.

Exact numbers are difficult to estimate, but approximately one in a thousand sports main parachute openings malfunction, and must be cut away, although some skydivers have many hundreds of jumps and never cut away. Reserve parachutes are packed and deployed differently. They are also designed more conservatively, and are built and tested to more exacting standards, making them more reliable than main parachutes. However, the primary safety advantage of a reserve chute comes from the probability of an unlikely main malfunction being multiplied by the even less likely probability of a reserve malfunction. This yields an even smaller probability of a double malfunction, although the possibility of a main malfunction that cannot be cut away causing a reserve malfunction is a very real risk.



The Apollo 15 spacecraft landed safely despite a parachute failure.

In the U.S., the average fatality rate is considered to be about 1 in 80,000 jumps. Most injuries and fatalities in sport skydiving occur under a fully functional main parachute because the skydiver made an error in judgment while flying the canopy -- resulting in high-speed impact with the ground, impact with a hazard on the ground that might otherwise have been avoided, or collision with another skydiver under canopy.

Parachute malfunctions

Below are listed malfunctions specific to round-parachutes (including a photo of a Mae West).

(continued....)



A "**Mae West**" or "**Blown Periphery**" is a type of round parachute malfunction which contorts the shape of the canopy into the appearance of a brassiere, presumably one suitable for a woman of Mae West's proportions.



Mae West

"**Squidding**" occurs when a parachute fails to inflate properly and its sides are forced inside the canopy. This kind of malfunction occurred during parachute testing for the Mars Exploration Rover.

A "**cigarette roll**" occurs when a parachute deploys fully from the bag but fails to open. The parachute then appears as a vertical column of cloth (in the general shape of a cigarette), providing the jumper with very little drag. It is caused when one skirt of the canopy, instead of expanding outward, is blown against the opposite skirt. The column of nylon fabric, buffeted by the wind, rapidly heats from the friction of the nylon rubbing against nylon and can melt the fabric and fuse it together, preventing any hope of the canopy opening.

An "**inversion**" occurs when one skirt of the canopy blows between the suspension lines on the opposite side of the parachute and then catches air. That portion then forms a secondary lobe with the canopy inverted. The secondary lobe grows until the canopy turns completely inside out.

A "**Barber's pole**" describes having a mess of lines tangled behind your head and you have to cut away your main chute and pull your reserve.

The "**Horseshoe**" when you are wrapped in a chute, and pull the reserve immediately, without cutting away the main chute.

"**Jumper-In-Tow**" involves a static line which doesn't disconnect and "you are being dragged along in the wild blue yonder."

The "**Streamer**" is "dreaded" when the main chute is whistling in the wind, the chutist cuts away, and attempts to open the reserve if there is time.

Records

On 16 August 1960 Joseph Kittinger, in the Excelsior III test jump, set the current world record for the highest parachute jump. He jumped from a balloon at an altitude of 102,800 feet (which was also a manned balloon altitude record at the time). A small stabilizer chute deployed successfully and Kittinger fell for 4 minutes and 36 seconds, also setting a still-standing world record for the longest parachute free-fall, if falling with a stabilizer chute is counted as free-fall. At an altitude of 17,500 feet, Kittinger opened his main chute and landed safely in the New Mexico desert. The whole descent took 13 minutes and 45 seconds. During the descent, Kittinger experienced temperatures as low as -94 °F. In the free-fall stage, he reached a top speed of 614 mph.



Kittinger freefall

According to the Guinness book of records, Eugene Andreev (USSR) holds the official FAI record for the longest free-fall parachute jump (without drogue chute) after falling for 80,380 feet from an altitude of 83,523 feet near the city of Saratov, Russia on 1 November 1962.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parachute>





Maj. Gen. William C. Lee
Father of the United States Airborne

“Where is the prince who can afford so to cover his country with troops for its defense, as that ten thousand men descending from the clouds, might not, in many places, do an infinite deal of mischief before a force could be brought together to repel them?”

~ Benjamin Franklin, 1794

Excerpt from the book
“Geronimo”
 by William B. Brever

Introduction

Most high-ranking officers in Gen. John J. Pershing’s American Expeditionary Force in France considered Col. William P. “Billy” Mitchell to be an agitator, a gaffly, and officer whose head was filled with crackpot schemes. Mitchell did, indeed, march to his own drummer, and his critics were convinced that the 39-year old pilot was consistently out of step.

His detractors were largely adherents of static trench warfare, in which both adversaries would hurl waves of soldiers (that is, “fresh meat”) against the defenses of the other side. This was the doctrine that had slaughtered some 3 million Allied and German soldiers in four years of savage struggle on the western front.

Flamboyant Billy Mitchell was air service adviser to Blackjack Pershing, and on October 17, 1918, he laid out a radical tactical plan before the AEF chief. The proposal was designed to seize a key objective without a bloody, battering-ram approach.

Mitchell wanted to collect all of the available American bomber squadrons, 60 of them, consisting of 1,200 aircraft. Each bomber would be loaded with two machine guns and 1st Infantry Division men wearing parachutes. Then the planes would lift off from the fields in France and drop the 12,000 soldiers of the Big Red One at a pre-designated target behind German lines. This great sky armada, larger in scope than warfare had known, would be protected by hundreds of swift pursuit planes.

Once the 1st Infantry Division soldiers were dropped, other pursuit planes would buzz around them at low levels until they had formed into units, dug in, and set up machine guns. Meanwhile, the American main attack would have jumped off, presumably against German soldiers already panicky because of the presence of the large American Airborne force behind them.



Mitchell, in 1923, in the cockpit of a Thomas Morse B-3A pursuit
General William 'Billy' Mitchell

Aviation Pioneer (1879-1936)

*The most famous US aviator of World War I...
 a pioneer of air-power...*

*court-martialed for his prophecy that Japan might
 cripple the US navy at Pearl Harbor...
 a voice in the wilderness...*

*whose reputation was restored by Congress after
 World War II...
 and immortalized by Gary Cooper in the film
 of his life.*

Compiled by Christopher Long
an English cousin of Billy Mitchell

(continued....)



When Billy Mitchell had completed the briefing, General Pershing sat silently for several moments. Blackjack's career had begun as a horse cavalryman in the Old West, so Mitchell doubted if his revolutionary mass-parachute concept would be well received. To the air officer's astonishment, General Pershing gave him the green light to proceed with detailed planning.

Delighted, Mitchell rushed to his own headquarters and excitedly explained to Maj. Lewis H. Brereton how he had sold Pershing on his plan. (Neither air officer had any way of knowing that 26 years later Brereton would command an entire Allied airborne army).

Mitchell's and Brereton's plan began to take shape. The assault would strike against German forces defending the fort-studded stronghold of Metz, France, in spring 1919. However, before much work had gone into a detailed parachute-assault plan, peace broke out, on November 11, 1918. It would be 21 years before the American military would again focus on the concept of "vertical envelopment" -- a surprise strike from the air behind enemy lines.

Colonel Mitchell's scheme had been far ahead of its time. Even the mode of transportation, the airplane, had evolved only in December 1903 when brothers Orville and Wilbur Wright flew the world's first power-driven, heavier-than-air machine on a strip of sand called Kitty Devil Hill, near the village of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The strange-looking apparatus with the wobbly wings had cost the Wrights \$15 to build. With Orville at the controls (he had won a coin toss with Wilbur), the machine traveled 120 feet, at about 6.8 miles per hour, and remained in the air for 12 seconds.



Perhaps building on Billy Mitchell's concept, the Russians were the first to develop the basic technique for the use of parachute troops as a military weapon. In 1931, Soviet emissaries were sent to the United States to purchase several thousand new-type parachutes made famous by big-name circus attraction Leslie L. "Sky High" Irvin. These chutes had rip-cords (instead of

opening by a line attached to an aircraft) and were known as the Model A.

On August 18, 1933, the Red Army had 46 paratroopers jump from two bombers to reportedly break the world's record for mass bailouts. At the same time, a small combat tank was dropped by a giant parachute, probably the first drop of such heavy equipment. And foreign military observers were stunned at Russian maneuvers in 1935 when transports suddenly appeared in the formation and dropped two battalions of infantry, which seized an airfield and held it while reinforcements, including 16 artillery pieces, were flown in.



Luftwaffe paratrooper badge, WWII

Using intelligence obtained from the Russians by military observers and spies, the Germans expanded and refined airborne techniques. The World War I Treaty of Versailles prohibited Germany from rearming, but on February 23, 1933, rotund Herman Goering, a fighter pilot ace in that war and now Minister of the Interior in Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, found the *Polizeiabteilung Wecke* (Police Detachment Wecke). Under command of Maj. Hans Wecke, the unit's principal function was to root out and arrest Communist cells in the Berlin region. Most of the volunteers were from the Berlin police department.

When preparing to carry out a raid, Major Wecke had aerial photographs taken of the targeted area by his *Luftaufischt* (air section). After the photos had been studied, a plan of action was drawn up. Stealth and surprise were crucial. An airplane would then fly over the locale where the Communist cell was thought to be located, and the parachuting policemen would bail out and try to collar the suspects.

Within two years, Wecke's police parachute unit had been so successful that Goering, now the Luftwaffe chief, absorbed it into his organization. It mushroomed in strength, until it became the 1st Parachute Rifle Battalion. On July 1, 1938, Maj. Gen. Kurt Student was appointed to command the airborne forces of the Luftwaffe, and the *Fallschirmjaeger* (paratroops) began to expand into regiments, then divisions.

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It was Student, a World War I pilot, who infused his men with an intense fighting esprit – an elan that would come to be known in all nations as the “paratrooper spirit”.

On May 11, 1940, the keenly honed *Wehrmacht* airborne arm finally struck with a mixture of fury and surgeon’s skill. The *Falschirm-Pioniere Abteilung* (Parachute Engineer Unit), led by *Oberleutnant* Rudolf Witzig, swooped down by glider on top of Belgium’s Fort Emael, reputed to be the strongest fort in the world. The nine-fort complex was fully manned by Belgian troops, but the Germans, blasting away with satchel charges, captured the stronghold at a cost of only six dead and 15 wounded.

At the same time, 30 gliders carrying 350 Germans crash-landed around three vital bridges over the Meuse River, which were soon captured, and 500 paratroopers bailed out over Holland to seize key airports and bridges.

These spearhead operations permitted German panzers to dash through the Low Countries and into France, where the French Army – thought to have been the world’s finest – was smashed in only six weeks. (Adolf Hitler and his generals had introduced *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) to the world).

During the 1930s, America’s military brass in Washington, reflecting the popular “keep-out-of-other-nation’s-quarrels” mood of the time, had yawned while Russia and Germany were developing airborne capabilities. “Window dressing” was the general opinion of the new paratroop units in the War Department.

However, there were mavericks with a different view lower down in the U.S. chain of command. These junior officers were mostly disciples of Gen. Billy Mitchell, who had held the nonsensical notion that large bodies of soldiers could be parachuted behind enemy lines. During mid-1930s maneuvers near Fort DuPont, Delaware, Army Air Corps Capt. George C. Kenney had the audacity to violate the static-warfare tactics still in vogue with most U.S. Army brass. He air landed an infantry platoon behind “enemy” lines. There were screams of “foul!”

It was not until the fall of 1939, when Adolf Hitler’s war machine had gobbled up Poland and was gone to war with Great Britain and France, that the dozing United States Army brass began to stir. Early in January 1940, Maj. Gen. George A. Lynch, chief of infantry, appointed Maj. William C. Lee to experiment with the

transport of foot soldiers by air. A native of Dunn, North Carolina, the 43-year-old Bill Lee had seen combat in World War I as a platoon leader and company commander. For the next four years, Lee would drive himself remorselessly in developing airborne doctrine, in creating equipment, and in activating new units. He would become known as the *Father of American Airborne*.

Despite Lee’s hammering at the War Department for improved parachutes, a few aircraft, and a handful of men to carry out test experiments, the Army dragged its feet until the stunning success of Gen. Kurt Student’s airborne troops in Belgium and Holland in May of 1940 shocked the American high command. A “Parachute Test Platoon” was finally authorized.



Almost at once, a bitter squabble erupted between regular Army and Army Air Corps leaders over who would control this “glamour” group. The men would be air grenadiers, so they should be commanded by the air corps, the air generals declared. “Nonsense,” exclaimed the chief of infantry; the parachutists would be infantry soldiers and should be directed by the Army Infantry Board. (Seldom had so many argued so vehemently over so few).

The Infantry Board at Fort Benning, Georgia, prevailed, however.

At the morning formation of June 26, 1940, soldiers of the Infantry School’s 29th Infantry “Demonstration” Regiment were informed of a golden opportunity to volunteer for the elite Parachute Test Platoon, which would be dedicated to exciting adventure and the creation of airborne equipment and techniques. Many eagerly signed up; others blanched at the thought of falling out of flying airplanes.

(continued....)





WWII Demonstration Team

Two hundred men volunteered for the Test Platoon, and 39 were selected. Lt. William T. Ryder, who had graduated from West Point four years earlier, was appointed platoon leader, with Lt. James A. Bassett as his second-in-command. Thus was established the paratroop concept “every man a volunteer.”

Civilian Conservation Corps cleared an area to the south of Benning’s Lawson Field to serve as a landing zone for the Test Platoon (and thousands of paratroopers who would follow). Almost at once, this patch of Georgia landscape was given the name Cactus Field; it seemed as though every prickled plant in Georgia had been brought in to welcome descending paratroopers.



LT Bill Ryder
“Airborne No. 1”

On August 16, 1940, Lt. Bill Ryder made the inaugural jump, from a Douglas B-18 bomber, thus gaining enduring fame as “American’s first paratrooper.” The enlisted man who, by a drawing, was to leap out behind Ryder, “froze” in the door of the bomber, so the next man, Pvt. William “Red” King, leaped out, thereby becoming the nation’s “first enlisted paratrooper.”

On the night before the Test Platoon’s first mass jump, tall, lanky Pvt. Aubrey Eberhardt and three comrades

had taken in a post movie, a standard Western shootout involving the U.S. Cavalry and the Apache chief Geronimo. Before heading back to their barracks, the four soldiers spent a couple of hours at a beer garden, and one crony needed Eberhardt that he would be too frightened before the morrow’s jump to even speak. Nonsense, Eberhardt responded. What’s more, he would shout “Geronimo!” as soon as he leaped out the door of the Douglas bomber.

Eberhardt kept his pledge, and other Test Platoon men bailed out with Indian war whoops and shouts of “Geronimo!”

In the future, Test Platoon men called out the Apache chief’s name on each practice jump, and later newly formed parachute units would adopt the yell. “Geronimo!” became the battle cry of American paratroopers, and with a heavy media focus on the yell, much of the civilian population associated the cry “Geronimo!” with the nation’s paratroopers.

Two months after the Parachute Test Platoon was formed, the U.S. Army’s first airborne tactical unit was activated – the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion. Leader of this pioneer formation was Maj. William M. Miley, who for two years had served as Benning’s athletic officer. At 42 years of age, “Bud” Miley was old for a parachute battalion commander, but he had been a star gymnast at West Point, he kept himself in superb physical condition, and he would handle the rigors of being a sky soldier without difficulty.



Bud Miley

These pioneer American paratroopers were viewed by others in the army with varying degrees of resentment. Early paratrooper Lou Varrone recalled that era:

(continued....)



“Almost from the start, we sensed a bureaucratic animosity and misunderstanding of these newly incubated soldiers. Due to our distinctive department, jump boots, and bloused trousers, we were considered to be swaggering, cocky, overbearing, and arrogant. But these views were grossly mistaken, for the qualities of self-esteem, a strong sense of destiny, supreme confidence, arduous training, a mystical camaraderie, and the pioneering spirit of a challenging new frontier, were what we were all about. How were super-elite troops supposed to act – like we had an inferiority complex?”

Hard on the heels of the army’s airborne birth, the Marine Corps launched its paratroop program; in October 1940, the first group of “Leathernecks” assembled at the Naval Air Station, Lakehurst, New Jersey. The parachute trainees included Lt. Walker S. Osipoff, Lt. Robert C. McDonough, and 38 enlisted men. None of these eager and adventurous Marines knew anything about training paratroopers, but no one else in the Corps did, either.



Day Minse One. June 6, 1944. General Eisenhower with 101st Troopers

Back in 1927, Marine brass showed a fleeting interest in the concept of dropping soldiers behind enemy lines. At that time 12 Leathernecks had made a mass jump from a transport plane over Anacostia in Washington,

DC. Ten years later, another airborne spark flickered in the Marine Corps high command when parachutists were used in 1937 during fleet-landing exercises on islands off California. However, Corps brass considered the concept of dropping Marines behind enemy lines by parachute to be a sideshow, a carnival attraction.

Three years later, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox shared the shock of most American military leaders at the stunning success of Adolf Hitler’s airborne forces, and directed the Marines to form similar units. It was planned to train a battalion of each regiment as an air-landing force. Including a company of paratroopers for each Marine division to “conduct raids, reconnaissance, and other independent operations.”

Lakehurst was a Navy facility, so after several classes of Marine paratroopers graduated, the Corps set up its own parachute schools at Camp Gillespie, California, and New River, North Carolina. By early 1941, tiny cadres for Leatherneck companies and battalions had been formed.

On July 29, 1941, Marine Capt. Robert A Williams and what the newspapers would describe as “40 heavily armed young gentlemen of the Marine Corps almost disrupted the activities of 17,000 soldiers of the U.S. Army’s new Caroline County maneuver area near Fredericksburg, Virginia. Williams, who had joined the paratroopers after a stint as aide-de-camp to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his high-spirited men had hatched a plot to stage a surprise parachute attack on the unknowing Army troops.

At the appointed hour, a Douglas transport plane, marked with Marine Corps’ globe-and-anchor insignia, roared over the Nottingham airport, dead in the center of the Army’s maneuver area. Used as a military field, the airport was the Marine paratroopers’ objective. At 750 feet, Bob Williams jumped, followed by 10 other paratroopers. A second transport then flew over the field, 10 more Leathernecks jumped, and finally two more Douglases appeared, and 20 other men leaped.

All of the Marine paratroops wore a uniform that had been modeled after the one used by German *Fallschirmjaeger* – knee-length overalls and a new crash helmet. Army men looked up in amazement as these “living bombs” (as the paratroopers would be described by the media covering the maneuvers) suddenly appeared in the sky.

(continued....)



The unexpected touch of airborne *Blitzkrieg* created an uproar, for it was the first major employment of parachute troops in United States maneuvers. Staff cars and umpires' vehicles raced to the airport, which has been "captured" by Captain Williams and his Leathernecks. Colonels, majors, and captains scrambled from the vehicles and demanded to know what in the blankety-bank was going on. Army officers were far from happy – especially after they learned the interlopers were *Marines!*

Not to be outdone, the Army's airborne arm pulled a similar caper a few weeks later at the big Army war games in Louisiana. A force of 127 paratroopers was deposited by the Blue army behind the Red army lines. There were loud cries of "foul!" from Red army commanders, who had been caught with their map cases down. By prior agreement, all the paratroopers were to surrender if not captured within 20 hours of landing. When the time expired, more than half of the parachutists were still on the loose, slashing Red army telephone wires and generally creating havoc – a technique that would be duplicated for real in the battles that were to come.



The 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on March 2, 1942. The regiment was shipped overseas via the Panama Canal Zone where it was joined by the 501st Battalion, which then became 2nd Battalion, 503d PIR. (Photo from Jim Mullaney collection).

On December 7, 1941, Japanese bombs at Pearl Harbor sent America's pacifist leaders and unilateral disarmament "experts" scurrying for cover. The United States had literally been blasted into a global war. Along with the rest of the Army, America's airborne units began to mushroom. The Airborne Command was set up at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with Bill Lee, now

a one-star general, as its boss. Five new parachute regiments were rapidly formed – the 503rd, 504th, 505th, 506th, and 507th.

At this point, in the late spring 1942, the War Department planned to airborne unit larger than a regiment, but that view changed in mid-August, the 82nd Motorized Division, based at sun-baked Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, was split in half and became the 82nd "All-American" Airborne Division and the 101st "Screaming Eagle" Airborne Division. Each outfit would have 8,321 men (compared with the 14,000 in a conventional ground division).

Steadily, paratroopers were gaining widespread fame among American civilians, who were curious to know what made these crazy guys tick. At a Washington press conference on paratroopers, Maj. Gen. Lesley J. McNair, commander of Army Ground Forces, remarked:

"The [the paratroopers]...are our *problem children*. They make a lot of money, and they know they're good. This makes them a little temperamental, but they're great soldiers." McNair's tone was one of thinly concealed

admiration, much like the mood of a doting father whose offspring brings home all A's for achievement on his report card but flunks deportment.

Meanwhile, around the war-torn globe, the Allies were taking a severe licking at the hands of the Japanese, Germans and Italian. In an effort to stem the tide, American Army and Marine units, many of them half-trained and lacking adequate weapons and equipment, were being rushed overseas. In early June

1942, the U.S. Army parachute battalion was shipped to England, and a day later the Marine 1st Parachute Battalion set sail for the Pacific. They were American's airborne vanguard.

Thanks to Chuck Breit, WWII 503rd PRCT trooper for providing us with this report (photos added).



US Army Suspends New Parachute Model After Soldier's Fatal Plunge

Published : Wednesday, 13 Jul 2011

(NewsCore) - The US Army has suspended the use of its new style of parachutes following the death of a soldier during a training jump, the *Fayetteville Observer* reported Wednesday.

Staff Sgt. Jamal Clay, of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, died at Fort Bragg on June 25 when his T-11 parachute malfunctioned during a training exercise.

Fort Bragg, an army base in Fayetteville, N.C., 60 miles south of Raleigh, began using the square parachutes two years ago after tests showed they provided a more slow and stable descent than their mushroom-shaped predecessors.

According to an internal army memo, investigators found that Clay's death was due to *"potential packing, inspection, quality control and functionality problems"* with both his main and reserve parachutes. *"The observations are significant and pervasive enough to indicate potential systemic shortfalls,"* the memo said, according to the *Observer*.

Following the incident, Secretary of the Army John McHugh ordered the suspension of all use of the T-11 parachutes until a thorough safety investigation has been completed and any problems with the system have been corrected. Internal investigations into Clay's death are also being conducted, the paper said.

The accident is the first fatality with the new parachute, which was first used at Fort Bragg in 2009 after testing showed it to be safer than the traditional rounded parachutes. The T-11 chute is also designed to support the bulkier load of today's soldier, which can be up to 400 lbs. with equipment.



The T-11 parachutes are expected to take the place of the older, T-10 parachutes in about five years. The 82nd Airborne Division currently uses the T-10 model.

Courtesy of: FayObserver.com



SSGT Clay

Local D-Day paratrooper a popular veteran on return trip to Normandy

SUGARCREEK TWP., Greene County -- World War II veteran James H. "Pee Wee" Martin cannot get over the reception he received when he returned to Normandy for a six-day visit in June to sites he fought at on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and after.



Photos with German Troopers

"People over there mobbed us everywhere," Martin, 90, of Sugarcreek Twp., said. Everyone wanted his autograph and picture.

"Some of the women came up and hugged me and cried," he said. *"They were little girls back then, and said we released them and got their freedom."*

Martin, a member of the 101st Airborne Division, parachuted into Normandy over Utah Beach on D-Day, then went on to fight the Nazis in Holland and at Bastogne, the Battle of the Bulge, earning a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. His return to Normandy this June was as a representative of the 101st Airborne Division.

"I don't want anyone to view us as heroes," he said. *"We were just doing our job, what we were trained to do. We knew the risks. A hero is someone who does something out of character, like saving someone from a burning car. We may have been brave, but we're not heroes."*

Martin traveled to D-Day celebrations with Doug Barber of Bellbrook, a Centerville middle school history teacher, and two other WWII veterans and their friends and family on a trip organized by New Albany resident Mark Easton, vice president of sales for IBM.

Easton is a friend of Max Cleland, a former Georgia senator, now secretary for battlefield monuments. Cleland and President Barack Obama invited Martin and the other D-Day veterans as VIPs to the rededication of the newly repaired Point du Hoc monument above Normandy Beach. President Obama was not at the rededication, but Cleland and Sen. John Kerry were, Martin said.

Barber has been helping document Martin's WWII participation at Normandy. He said he knew WWII veterans were held in high regard by the French people, *"but I was taken aback by the outpouring of gratitude expressed when we were in Normandy."*

The two visited Paris, Omaha Beach and areas the 101st Airborne helped liberate.

While in Normandy, he met people he had corresponded with for years. Also, *"I got to meet two of the Germans, Heinrich Laufert and Gerd Schwetling, I fought against, and we're now friends,"* he said.

Like him, they were paratroopers, members of Fallschirmjager 6 (regiment), a German airborne infantry.

"There is a bond between airborne people that transcends ideology and political boundaries," Martin said. *"We can talk to each other and forget all the bad stuff. It was a wonderful trip. I enjoyed it very much. Meeting and talking with the people was the best part,"* he said.

Courtesy of Editor and Katherine Ullmer
kullmer@DaytonDailyNews.com



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Honors at the Memorial



“We’re here today to live these words: ***‘The Fallen Will Never Be Forgotten.’***” With this message, Retired Brigadier General Jim Yarbrough set the tone for the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation’s “Honors Ceremony” conducted on 11 June at the Brigade’s Memorial on the National Infantry Museum’s “Walk of Honor.”

From a warrior/commander’s perspective, Jim spoke to the audience about the quality of the Sky Soldiers who served in the Brigade throughout the unit’s existence, the pride that each took in serving in this great unit, and the willingness of warriors to sacrifice for each other when demanded by circumstances.



The Honors Ceremony had opened with a Sky Soldier Color Guard composed of warriors from the 198th Infantry Brigade presenting the colors to the nearly 150 participants and spectators present at the Memorial. Foundation Board Member Don Dali, the moving force behind the design and construction of the Memorial, discussed its design and symbolism, and acknowledged the many talented contractors who made the structure a reality.

The first fallen warrior to be honored at the ceremony was Clinton A. Cook, who fell on 28 April 1970 in the Republic of Vietnam. His name had been omitted from the granite panels during the initial dedication ceremony. Foundation Board Member Craig Ford silently removed the strip of cloth to reveal, 41 years after his death, the name of this fallen warrior.

His mother, Alma Cook, flew from Alaska to be present at the ceremony and was joined by her other son Bruce. When Clinton Cook fell in 1970, Alma was never made aware of the circumstances of his death. It was not until this ceremony that she met with Sky Soldiers who served with her fallen warrior, learned about his service with the Brigade, and obtained closure on this unresolved portion of her life.

Following the unveiling of Clinton Cook’s name, Master of Ceremonies Bob Wolfgang, the Foundation’s Director of Heraldry, directed the audience’s attention to the granite panel honoring the fallen from OEF X. Foundation Board Member Floyd Riester removed the black cloth covering the names of nine Sky Soldiers who fell in Afghanistan in 2010.



On a segment of a granite panel designated for the OEF X fallen, the names of Lucas T. Beachnaw, Nicholas S. Cook, Russell F. Madden, Matthew R. Hennigan, Louis R. Fastuca, Vinson B. Adkinson III, Raymond C. Alcaraz Jr., Matthew E. George, and James A. Page were revealed. Consistent with the Foundation’s policy, rank and titles are not listed on the panels because the lives of all the fallen are deemed to have been of equal value.

Following the unveiling of the OEF X fallen, the focus of attention shifted to the Memorial’s granite panel containing the names of Sky Soldiers who have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

(continued...)



Foundation Board Member Karen Riester removed a cloth covering the name of Salvatore A. Giunta, the fourteenth Sky Soldier so honored by the nation as Foundation Board Member Ray Ramirez read the Citation accompanying the Award of the Medal of Honor.



Although not scheduled to participate in the Honors Ceremony, SSG Giunta asked to speak to those assembled at the Memorial. In moving words, he spoke of being honored to have served with Sky Soldiers of the quality and caliber of those whose names were added to the list of the fallen, and of the sacrifices of the families who had lost their sons.

Following the presentation of a wreath by Sky Soldiers and Gold Star family representatives, the firing party rendered final honors and taps echoed across the grassy knoll on which the 173d Memorial stands.

In addition to Alma and Bruce Cook and SSG Giunta, the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation Board of Directors was honored to have in attendance Donnie and Bridget George and seven members of their extended family. Their son Matthew fell on 31 August 2010. Alma Murphy's son, Ray Alcaraz Jr., fell on the same day as Matthew George. Alma Murphy, accompanied by her husband Paul and her other Sky Soldier son, SFC Lucas Gonzalez, also honored the Foundation by their presence. Martin Madden, father of Russell Madden, along with his wife Pamela and daughter Lindsay, were also present for the Ceremony. Russell fell on 23 June 2010.



The Board of Directors of the 173d Memorial Foundation extends its thanks to the serving Sky Soldiers from the 198th Infantry Brigade and the leadership of the National Infantry Museum who provided support for this Honors ceremony.

Ken Smith, COL Inf. (Ret)
A/D/HHC/2/503d



INCOMING!!



Mark Carter, 173d LRRP extraordinaire

Once again the 2/503 Newsletter turns out to be more than a simple newsletter. Our guys are compiling good history. I read the *Battle of the Slopes* issue last week. I spent a couple of days more or less stunned. This month's issue (July) was not any less compelling. This is priceless testimony from the mouths of the men who were there.

I have some info about the RRU's that you may find interesting. These guys were for the most part Army Security Agency troops. They performed DF missions, as well as COMSEC missions. During the early to mid-60's the Dept. of Defense claimed that no ASA troops were in Vietnam....a joke among the classes of ditty boppers at Fort Devens who were in training.

The order of battle in those days put the ASA (and NSG, AFFSS) under Department of Defense; these units were all formed as collection services for the NSA—COMINT, ELINT, and so on. In the mid 70's, they were dissolved, and INCSOM was formed to handle these tasks. Some of the MOS's were attached directly to brigades, and others were sent into the bowels of the puzzle palace at Fort Meade.

During the Vietnam war, some ASA troops were part of SOG operations, and some of the AFSS units operated the Lima stations, set up in Laos and Cambodia, which helped guide air strikes in North Vietnam.

I was in the ASA from '68-'71, as a super-REMF in northern Japan. I was a telemetry signals analyst. Let me know if you'd like to have a few PDFs about this stuff.

Mark Carter
173d LRRP & E 17th

~ The Wall That Heals ~

Hello-

My name is Steve Quesinberry and I am the History chair at Newnan High School just south of Atlanta. I also teach an elective class about the Vietnam War and the 1960's. I am involved in bringing the VVMF "Wall that Heals" to Newnan for the first time this October. As part of that effort, I was asked to gather information on each of the young men from our county (Coweta) whose name is on that wall. Total number is 23.

I have been working on this project for the last 6 months. The reason that I am writing you is because one of the men was KIA on Hill 875 with the 173d AB. I am hoping that you could possibly send me in the direction of some of your comrades that might possibly know him.

His name was Thomas "Tommy" Huddleston. He was in C Company on the hill.

I would appreciate any assistance you could give me and I thank you for your service.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Steve

<http://www.cowetaschools.org/nhs/quesinberry/ssweb/index.htm>

http://cowetacova.org/Home_Page.html

Thomas Pate Huddleston
Specialist Four
C CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD ABN
BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Newnan, Georgia
September 04, 1946 to
November 19, 1967
THOMAS P HUDDLESTON is on the Wall at
Panel 30E Line 027



THE SON OF A SHARECROPPER

~ ROY P. BENAVIDEZ ~

Rank and organization: Master Sergeant, Detachment B-56, 5th Special Forces Group, Republic of Vietnam

Place and date: West of Loc Ninh on May 2, 1968

Entered service at: Houston, Texas June 1955

Born: August 5, 1935, DeWitt County, Cuero, Texas.

Citation:

Army Master Sgt. Roy P. Benavidez (center) is flanked by United States Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger (left) and President Ronald Reagan at his Medal of Honor presentation ceremony in 1981.

Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team. Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by



running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant Benavidez secured the classified documents and

made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter. Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, re-instilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a buildup of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt. He was

wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before another extraction helicopter was able to land. His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed with additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded. Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

(Roy's story continues....)



Roy P. Benavidez, Recipient Of Medal of Honor, Dies at 63

By RICHARD GOLDSTEIN,
The New York Times



Roy P. Benavidez, a former Green Beret sergeant who received the Medal of Honor from President Ronald Reagan for heroism while wounded in the Vietnam War, then fought to keep the Government from cutting off his disability payments, died on Sunday at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. He was 63.

Mr. Benavidez, who lived in El Campo, Tex., suffered respiratory failure, the hospital said. His right leg was amputated in October because of complications of diabetes.

On the morning of May 2, 1968, Mr. Benavidez, a staff sergeant with the Army's Special Forces, the Green Berets, heard the cry "get us out of here" over his unit's radio while at his base in Loc Ninh, South Vietnam. He also heard "so much shooting, it sounded like a popcorn machine."

The call for aid came from a 12-man Special Forces team -- 3 Green Berets and 9 Montagnard tribesmen -- that had been ambushed by North Vietnamese troops at a jungle site a few miles inside Cambodia.

Sergeant Benavidez jumped aboard an evacuation helicopter that flew to the scene. "When I got on that copter, little did I know we were going to spend six hours in hell," he later recalled.

(After the fight)

When he arrived at Loc Ninh, Sergeant Benavidez was unable to move or speak. Just as he was about to be placed into a body bag, he spit into a doctor's face to signal that he was still alive and was evacuated for surgery in Saigon.

Sergeant Benavidez was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in 1968, but a subsequent recommendation from his commanding officer that he receive the Medal of Honor, the military's highest award for valor, could not be approved until a witness confirmed his deeds.

That happened in 1980, when Brian O'Connor, the Green Beret who had radioed the frantic message seeking evacuation, was found in the Fiji Islands. Mr. O'Connor told how Mr. Benavidez had rescued eight members of his patrol despite being wounded repeatedly.

President Reagan presented the Medal of Honor to Mr. Benavidez at the Pentagon on Feb. 24, 1981.

Shortly before Memorial Day 1983, Mr. Benavidez came forward to say that the Social Security Administration planned to cut off disability payments he had been receiving since he retired from the Army as a master sergeant in 1976. He still had two pieces of shrapnel in his heart and a punctured lung and was in constant pain from his wounds.

The Government, as part of a cost-cutting review that had led to the termination of disability assistance to 350,000 people over the preceding two years, had decided that Mr. Benavidez could find employment.

"It seems like they want to open up your wounds and pour a little salt in," Mr. Benavidez said. "I don't like to use my Medal of Honor for political purposes or personal gain, but if they can do this to me, what will they do to all the others?"

A White House spokesman said President Reagan was "personally concerned" about Mr. Benavidez's situation, and 10 days later the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Margaret M. Heckler, said the disability reviews would become more "humane and compassionate."

(continued....)



NAVY NAMES NEW ROLL-ON/ROLL-OFF SHIP FOR U.S. ARMY HERO

15 September 2000

Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig has announced that the Navy will honor a U.S. Army soldier awarded the nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor, by naming the seventh in the Bob Hope class of large, medium speed, roll-on/roll-off sealift (LMSR) ships after the soldier.

The name Danzig assigned, the USNS Benavidez (T-AKR 306), honors Army Master Sgt. (then Staff Sgt.) Roy Benavidez, born Aug. 5, 1935, in Lindenau, Texas. Benavides distinguished himself in a series of daring and extremely valorous actions while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam.

"Our Bob Hope class of ships are resolute assets that are always quietly there in the background. They are capable of coming forward in a vital way when America calls for reinforcement of its combat needs around the world," said Danzig. *"Roy Benavidez personified that same spirit throughout his life, and most powerfully during a single action that saved lives in combat. I am delighted to have the opportunity to preserve his legacy by naming T-AKR 306 the USNS Benavidez."*

"Master Sgt. Roy Benavidez was a true American hero, rising from humble origins in South Texas to become an Army legend. Wounded over 40 times as he saved the lives of eight fellow soldiers under heavy fire in Vietnam, he always said he was only doing his duty to his fellow soldiers and to the country he loved. The Navy's recognition of his selfless service is truly an appropriate tribute to Master Sgt. Benavidez's memory, and to the ideals of our nation that he epitomized," said Secretary of the Army Louis Caldera.

The USNS Benavidez is a non-combatant vessel built by Litton-Avondale Industries in New Orleans, LA. The launching/christening ceremony is scheduled for next summer. The ship will be crewed by civilian mariners and operated by the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command, Washington, D.C. The LMSR ships are ideal for loading U.S. military combat equipment and combat support equipment needed overseas and for re-supplying military services with necessary equipment and supplies during national crisis.

(continued....)



Soon afterward, wearing his Medal of Honor, Mr. Benavidez told the House Select Committee on Aging that *"the Administration that put this medal around my neck is curtailing my benefits."*

Mr. Benavidez appealed the termination of assistance to an administrative law judge, who ruled in July 1983 that he should continue receiving payments.

When President Reagan presented Mr. Benavidez with the Medal of Honor, he asked the former sergeant to speak to young people. Mr. Benavidez did, visiting schools to stress the need for the education he never had.

Born in South Texas, the son of a sharecropper, Mr. Benavidez was orphaned as a youngster. He went to live with an uncle, but dropped out of middle school because he was needed to pick sugar beets and cotton. He joined the Army at 19, went to airborne school, then was injured by a land mine in South Vietnam in 1964. Doctors feared he would never walk again, but he recovered and became a Green Beret. He was on his second Vietnam tour when he carried out his rescue mission.

Mr. Benavidez is survived by his wife, Hilaria; a son, Noel; two daughters, Yvette Garcia and Denise Prochazka; a brother, Roger; five stepbrothers, Mike, Eugene, Frank, Nick and Juquin Benavidez; four sisters, Mary Martinez, Lupe Chavez, Helene Vallejo and Eva Campos, and three grandchildren.

Over the years, fellow Texans paid tribute to Mr. Benavidez. Several schools, a National Guard armory and an Army Reserve center were named for him.

But he did not regard himself as someone special.

"The real heroes are the ones who gave their lives for their country," Mr. Benavidez once said. *"I don't like to be called a hero. I just did what I was trained to do."*



The ship's six-deck interior has a cargo carrying capacity of approximately 390,000 square feet and its roll-on/roll-off design makes it ideal for transporting helicopters, tanks and other wheeled and tracked military vehicles. Two 110-ton single pedestal twin cranes make it possible to load and unload cargo where shoreside infrastructure is limited or non-existent. A commercial helicopter deck enables emergency, daytime landings. The USNS Benavidez is 950 feet in length, has a beam of 106 feet, and displaces approximately 62,000 long tons. The diesel-powered ship will be able to sustain speeds up to 24 knots.

The USNS Benavidez



USNS Bob Hope. The Bob Hope is first ship in the "Hope" class of rollon/rolloff transports. The USNS Benavidez will be very similar. The ship is 950 feet long, 106 feet wide, 92 feet deep, drawing 35 feet in the water. It has a speed in excess of 24 knots at 90% power. Endurance 13,000 nautical miles. The normal crew of is 95 in peacetime.

[Sent in by MG Jack Leide, CO C/2/503d, '66/'67]

Observations

After reading the "special edition" (Battle of the Slopes, June 22) and Roy's (Lombardo) article concerning the training up prior to departure from Okinawa, I was struck by several thoughts.

First, let me say that I have nothing but the greatest respect for the guys who slugged it out on the Slopes and later Hill 875. So if I say something that someone finds offensive or insulting, let me apologize now. That is not my intent.

Roy covers accurately the physical training that readied the initial troops. That training had a huge impact on the success of the deployment. I would add, that we were mostly "cherries". Several of the NCOs had combat experience. My recon sergeant, Handsome Ed, had been a recon sergeant in Korea. Except for me, there were no

FNG's. This unit integrity was a great advantage. Roy knew his strong platoons. Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants knew their strong squads. Squad leaders knew the guys who they could count on. Individual soldiers were confident about each other. This is invaluable.

I often felt sorry for when everyone was a replacement. Consider a leg draftee from Kansas, with not enough training, often joining a unit like the Americal Division in the midst of an operation. It had to be very tough for a new guy.

Rather than saying that Westmorland was dumb, I'll be content to say, he must have been blinded by that bright light that he kept staring at, at the end of the tunnel.

Some of you might not know, but we were in the Dak To area in August or September of '65. The area was crawling with NVA but they refused to engage us. In November that year they were confident enough to attack the 1st Cav. We all knew the bad guys were there. But we were packed up, and sent just north of Pleiku.

In the early days after every operation, paperwork was generated entitled "lessons learned". It looks like these were never passed along.

Several of the guys have been critical of some of the command -- it's easy to do. But, speaking for myself, the officers I knew, were, if anything, too aggressive. I know I was. If told to do something dangerous, the response was "Yes Sir." We had no maps when we moved up to the Cambodian border and only discovered after the fact, that we sometimes strayed over the line. In my old age, I recognize how silly that was. But, back then, most of us thought we could leap tall buildings and if we failed the first time, we could knock them down.

It does seem that commanders above company commanders could not resist hopping in a chopper to take a look at the battlefield. In the terrain often referred to as triple canopy, air strikes were generally a waste of time and often lives. This required a "check fire" which almost guaranteed more casualties. Because artillery was the only thing that could be walked in to help troops in contact. So while fools circled overhead seeing only tops of trees, grunts slugged it out the hard way.

Thanks for collecting our history.

Jim Robinson
FO, Bravo Bulls '65



The Enemy

[plagiarized then edited from the 6RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion Record 1969-70]

The aim of this article is to explain the enemy confronting W3 Coy [& 1ATF in general] in 1969. Generally speaking from 1966 1ATF confined its attention to enemy within or in close proximity to Phuoc Tuy Province. The forces involved were a blend of conventional military groups, guerrillas and political cadres operating from within the confines of the civilian populace. This wide spectrum of enemy types required great flexibility on the part of 1ATF to adjust its tactical doctrines to changing situations.

All armies have a command structure, and to certain levels, a degree of political control over them. The SVN Liberation Army (SVNLA), the generic term for all North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and VC troops in SVN, was no exception. In accordance with communist doctrines, political control was continued to the lowest levels of the SVNLA military structure. Command in a communist army implies political and military control. The enemy's command commenced in Hanoi which issued policies and directives to the SVNLA HQ. Known as the Central Office for SVN (COSVN), this HQ was located on the SVN border about 100 kilometres North of Saigon.



For ease of command and co-ordination COSVN had divided the land mass of SVN into areas termed military regions. The region that was of direct concern to 1ATF was known as Military Region T7 (MR T7). MR T7 controlled and coordinated the military and political activities within its area by the issue of directives to the subordinate VC military area HQ's of Sub Region 4, U-1 Province, Binh Thuan Province and Ba Long Province. In addition it exercised direct command over main force units allotted to it.

Main Force units are those forces that have been designated by COSVN as front line conventional troops. Near Phuoc Tuy were firstly, 274 (VC) Regiment. The Regiment consisted of a headquarters and three battalions. The battalions each had a HQ, three rifle companies and a heavy weapons company. In addition the regimental HQ had eight supporting companies involving heavy weapons (82 mm mortars, 12.7 mm heavy machine guns and 75 mm recoilless rifles) and communications, transport, medical and engineer companies.



The regiment had an authorised strength of 1500 men, nearly all of whom were NVA. The battalions were however never much more than 150 strong, a result of the continual pressure against them by allied operations. The regiment rarely conducted offensive operations, but remained dispersed in its jungle hides in an attempt to avoid contact with allied forces.

The only other infantry regiment in MR T7 of similar size and composition to 274 Regiment was 33 NVA Regiment. This Regiment ventured only once into Phuoc Tuy Province during the summer of 1969 (May-July) and then withdrew to the La Nga and War Zone D Base areas [it returned briefly in September 1971 but after encountering 4RAR/NZ (ANZAC) near Courtney Rubber again withdrew north out of the province].

As in all military formations, MR T7 was complete with the VC version of artillery support supplied by 74 (NVA) Artillery (Rocket) Regiment. The Regiment consisted of three battalions and had both mortar and rocket capabilities.

(continued....)



It employed quite sophisticated survey equipment and complex mathematical calculations, particularly in target acquisition for its 107mm and 122mm rockets. The Regiment's 2nd Battalion was responsible for the rocket attacks on the 1ATF Base at Nui Dat in May and June 1969.

There were two engineer sapper battalions known as 067 and 0525, these eventually amalgamated and were called 065. This unit was under strength and confined itself to mining tasks on Route 15 in the West of Phuoc Tuy, operating from a base area North of the Nui Thi Vai Mountains.

A sub-division of MR T7 and one of vital interest to 1ATF was Ba Long Province, the VC combination of Long Khanh and Phuoc Tuy Provinces. Operating from a predominantly politically staffed Headquarters in South Eastern Long Khanh Province, Ba Long was responsible for the political and military activities of all local force and guerrilla units within its boundaries. To complement its activities, Ba Long maintained two provincial battalions, D445 and D440, both of whom operated almost exclusively in Phuoc Tuy Province.

D445 Battalion could well be considered 'Phuoc Tuy's Own' as it was raised, reinforced and succoured by local inhabitants of the Province. The Battalion in theory had a HQ, three rifle companies and a support company armed with 82mm mortars, 12.7mm heavy machine guns, 75mm and 57mm recoilless rifles and had a total establishment for 500 soldiers. In reality however, it could only raise about 200 men.

Perhaps D445's most notable achievement was its ability to remain out of contact with 1ATF forces. This came as no surprise as the Battalion had been operating in Phuoc Tuy Province since 1965, had a high proportion of locals in its ranks, and had intimate knowledge of the ground over which it operated. The Battalion spent a great deal of its time based in the VC Minh Dam Secret Zone, a series of underground base camps in the Long Hai Hills. When it did venture from this base area on resupply or offensive missions, it was invariably tracked down and sent scuttling back.

D445's sister battalion, D440, was of similar size and composition and relied more on NVA soldiers to fill its ranks. Except for occasional forays against Route 2 villages, this battalion was also content to spend most of its time hiding in jungle base. These two battalions were the main military strength of Ba Long Province and in theory were able to give military and morale backing to VC district organisations and guerrilla units.



VC Ba Long Province was divided into three VC Districts; Chau Duc, Xuyen Moc and Long Dat. Each District was responsible for maintaining political and military control over the civilian population located in their areas of responsibility. To perform these tasks they were staffed with political, financial, supply, proselytizing and civil affairs cadres and a Local Force Company. The real power in the Districts lay in the communist party chapter. These were committees which in fact were the executive heads of the District Headquarters.

The Local Force Companies termed respectively C41 (Chau Duc), C25 (Long Dat) and C70 (Xuyen Moc) were given tasks in accordance with District Headquarters policies. Besides these companies the districts had village guerrillas, on the basis of a squad per village, and VC infrastructure (VCI) groups to provide a direct physical link with the civilian people. Often living in the villages, it was through these groups that the VC attempted to gain the support of the people. The VC, by establishing underground cells in the villages, were able to propagandize the people and gather, by extortion, taxes in the form of finance and food. They also attempted to indoctrinate juveniles into the Communist Party in order to obtain recruits for the Local Force Battalions and Companies.

The enemy troops involved in supply and maintenance were called Rear Service troops. A major source for finance and food supplies was the civilian population. These items collected under District supervision would be passed to Ba Long Province Rear Services either by direct pick up using Provincial forces as carriers and escorts, or by pre-positioning in the jungle edges of the areas in which civilians were allowed access during daylight hours.

(continued...)





To supplement supplies obtained from civilian sources, Ba Long Province had organised groups of Production Cells which were VC farmers who cultivated food in jungle hides. The Binh Chau area in the far East of Phuoc Tuy was one such area where thousands of acres of rice and vegetables were farmed. Besides supplying its own forces, Ba Long Province also had a commitment to supply food and finances to MR T7 for subsequent distribution to Main Force Units. To accomplish this mission Ba Long Rear Services would deliver supplies to the Main Force Rear Service organisation which was called 84 Rear Service Group (RSG). The Group, under operational control of HQ MR T7, was a complex administrative organisation and combined all the logistic functions that one would normally find in a western army.

Until July 1969, 84 RSG operated from bases on the Northern Border of Phuoc Tuy Province, but after that time, moved deep into bases in War Zone D. The group however maintained forward supply points known as Entry/Exit points through which all types of supplies were received for distribution. It was at these points that Ba Long Rear Services often delivered their supplies. Naturally there were many commodities not available in SVN, the most prominent being munitions, weapons, communications equipment and to a degree medical supplies. These were imported from North Vietnam via the 'Ho Chi Minh Trail' through Laos and Cambodia.

Stores destined for 84 Rear Services Group were picked up from transfer terminals in War Zone D and then delivered to main force units.

In addition to the supply of material, 84 Rear Services Group also operated workshop and hospital facilities. The May Tao base area was the site of a major hospital called K76A capable of undertaking considerable surgical treatment. Located near the hospital were workshops capable of producing mines, grenades, clothing and facilities for the repair of weapons. A postal system was operated by 84 RSG which linked the province and district systems. Known as commo-liaison systems, both personal and official mail was transported by couriers through a network of jungle trails that also doubled as supply routes. It was not difficult to pinpoint these routes and many enemy lost their lives when undertaking one of these hazardous journeys.

Even considering the Asian's inherent capacity to exist under difficult conditions the enemy soldier was subjected to extreme hardships and privations. Hunted and harassed, he had no single base and could neither rest nor properly tend his sick and wounded.

(continued....)



WHODAT?



He was kept continually on the move, living where he could in not always hospitable jungle hides. The bulk of his ranks were filled by North Vietnamese conscripts who were not always accepted by the VC and became disillusioned with the lack of assistance given him in a strange and hostile land. The NVA soldier had no means of communication with his family and friends as there was no postal system operating out of SVN. Continually short of food and medical supplies it was not surprising that so many rallied to the SVN government under the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) programme.

The conditions of the local guerrilla forces were not much better. The stark realism of Dat Do guerrillas eating bracken roots only 10 kilometres from their home town, and Ngai Giao Production Cell members starving 5 kilometres from their village was typical of the plight these people found themselves in. Lacking the military sophistication of the NVA, the local forces needed constant and explicit directions. When this was not forthcoming, disintegration within their ranks was rapid.

6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC) was fortunate during its tour in that it was able to observe positive signs of disintegration of the enemy's command and logistic systems. By the Spring of 1970, the enemy was in a desperate situation and, apart from small scale attacks, could do nothing to prevent its gradual starvation and destruction by allied forces. There were two reasons for the VC persistence under these arduous conditions; fears of retaliation from his fanatical communist leaders, and a natural desire for survival. The enemy was committed to a conflict of arms and had to fight to avoid his own destruction.

Although prevented from conducting conventional warfare, the enemy always had the potential of waging guerrilla warfare. To this end he had many advantages and used them frequently with a good deal of resourcefulness. He proved to be a cruel and elusive enemy who suffered many casualties in the coming conflicts with 6 RAR/NZ.



Who is this super-duper 2/503 trooper? Yeah, he looks like a Leg, and he was one once, but went on to fame and fortune in the paratroops. No, he's not Bobby Darin, altho there is a similarity. I've heard this guy sing, and it ain't pretty. In fact, when he sings *even flies are afraid to fly*. Ed

Veteran's Benefits

The 2011 edition of the **Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors** booklet is now available on the web at:

http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp

and is also available in PDF Format.

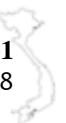


[Sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d]



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ROLLING STONE

Late February - early March 1966

1RAR was detached from the 173d and put under the operational control of the US 1st Infantry Division to protect the Engineer Battalion while they were building a road between Ben Cat and The Iron Triangle as the engineers were contending with raids by saboteurs destroying their work and machines at night with command detonated mines and sniper attacks by day.

The entire battalion is moving to the new area of operations we are to harbour up near an old airstrip, I'm told it was built by the French during their war with the Viet-Minh. The good news is, either the engineers or the pioneers have built showers and we get to use them today. This will be the first opportunity for a shower in three weeks, I'm really looking forward to being clean again; I've accumulated a layer of dust, sweat, mud, mossie repellent and general filth over my entire body -- my clothing has changed from jungle green to a red, muddy colour with texture of stiff cardboard. The stench is unbelievable. Fortunately, we all smell the same, so no one worries.

At the beginning of our operation, we placed a spare set of greens and socks etc. in a bag to be brought out when and if showers were to be made available. The usual routine of digging in starts in earnest and I build up a real sweat but the digging is good, my fighting pit is shoulder deep, my hutchie (tent) is up, and I'm ready for a few minutes of pure bliss, a nice cold, soapy shower.



A wounded digger hurt in a bobby-trap explosion is evacuated to Vung Tau. AMW COL/67/0140/VN

I gather my rifle and head over to the shower area to collect my shower bag, I can see a great stack of bags near the showers and someone from the "Q" store handing them out to the diggers as they arrive; I always knew those "Q" blokes would have their uses. I've never seen the blokes in such hire spirits as they walk

away in their fresh clean clothing, even their mothers would have recognized them. Their old greens are placed into their respective bags and loaded ready for return to base.



Vietnam 1966: Australians patrol near the village of Tan Phu, near Bien Hoa Air Base. (CUN/66/0161/VN)

I walk over to our friendly "Q" man and ask for my bag, I'm feeling on top of the world, really looking forward to my turn in the shower when my whole world is shattered in an instant! The lousy bastards have lost my laundry bag!!! I storm away from the bludgers, strip off, and dive under the nearest shower. At least I can get clean even if I have to put the same uniform back on. I can't even have a shave as my razor is in the bloody bag as well. After I'm dragged out from under the shower, I climb back into my filthy, foul smelling, stiff uniform, and pull on the same pair of socks I've been wearing for the last few weeks and wander slowly back towards my hutchie. Everyone is giving me a wide berth; I feel like a bloody leper. I've never felt so down before in my life!

Suddenly, I hear the roar of armored personnel carriers (APC's); it's my company! They have taken off without me. There'll be hell to pay when they get back, no doubt, they've been looking for me. I settle back in my hutchie and wait for the fireworks on the company's return. It seems Charlie had been taking a few pot shots at the engineers building their road, and the company set off on a moment's notice as a ready reactionary force to sort out the bastards.

I start to doze despite the odor coming from my clothing, and the war seems to be elsewhere for the moment. I'm brought back to reality by the return of the APC's, so I decide to lay low for awhile, and wait and see what is going to happen.

(continued....)



So far, no one has said anything. All those concerned think I was on a different "Track" to them and I haven't even been missed.

By the time the company got to the engineers, the VC had bolted. The best part of this event, everyone in the company is already just as sweaty and dusty as I am, given a day or two they won't even notice the smell.

The 1st Infantry Division engineers are a slack mob; during the evening they seem to party on with little heed to security. They have a few gun posts around the place, but spend most of their time in the boozier! It is only a matter of time before they get hit. The first three days are spent patrolling by day and setting ambushes by night; these night ambushes are met with a fair bit of success, with a gunner getting three Main force Viet Cong soldiers and wounding some others. They were carrying webbing, good quality weapons and rations -- these blokes were not your usual local part timer, they were pros.

As a result of these and other contacts it looks certain the engineers are being lined up for an attack.

It looks like being a busy time tonight, we have moved into a defensive position and are being urged to dig good solid fighting pits, the engineers have been warned of the possibility of a major attack, but going by the noise they are making over there, they're not worrying too much. After completing our new fighting pit, (I'm sharing with the platoon RTO) and go through the usual rituals of feeding, cleaning myself and rifle, we hit the sack.

About 0200 hours we are blasted out of our sleep by the supersonic crackling of rounds ripping through our shelter, barely inches above our prone bodies. We move as one, grabbing our rifles, radio and webbing and dive headfirst into our hole. The sky is lit up like a Christmas tree! I can hear the steady chugging of heavy machine guns, the unmistakable sharp crackle of AK47's, answered in full by armalites and M60 machine guns, mortars exploding, tanks and artillery ripping trees out of the ground. God help anyone in the killing fields in front of us.

The tracers, both green and red are going in all directions, there are leaves and bits of wood falling all over as shrapnel and bullets slash the low scrub, and the earth around me erupts as round after round strikes, and whines off into the bush behind me. I can hear movement out in front of us and the pop of mortars being fired at the engineers; who in turn are throwing everything bar the kitchen sink at the massed attacking

enemy forces. We've got the bastards in a murderous crossfire.

The rounds coming in our direction are now coming from the engineers, the enemy have managed to get in between us and the Americans, the rounds are ripping through the VC and into our position, it's lucky we are well dug in; our crossfire must be doing the same thing to the yanks with poor old Charlie stuck in the middle.



AC-47....Puff

Now we've denied Charlie cover of darkness. *Puff the Magic Dragon* has arrived (C47 aircraft) dropping flares, and has lit up the scrub for miles around like an obscene but deadly carnival. There is another aircraft doing runs across the killing zone firing mini guns, pouring out thousands of rounds of 7.62 per minute carving a swathe of destruction through the milling Viet Cong. The battle rages for an hour or two and for a change I'm just a spectator albeit in a ringside seat.

About 0400 hours the enemy start to move away from the engineers' front, in order to escape and run across the front of B Company on our left flank. B Company pour fire into the retreating VC and a steady barrage of artillery is being used to farewell the survivors of this night's work.

(continued....)



Some hours later, we go out and start following up blood trails -- there are dozens of them and discarded pieces of equipment and grenades are lying around everywhere; the machine gunner hears a sound from behind a bush fearing an ambush, he fires a burst. On investigation we find a dead Viet Cong, he appears to have been wounded during the night and left to die by his own men. No one likes to see the wounded shot but the gunner reacted to potential danger, our survival instincts are strong.

The platoon sergeant and I search and examine the body and find the round hit him under the jaw blowing the top of the skull away, he is naked from the waist down and had been carried with his feet and hands tied to a pole like an animal. We left a note for the engineers indicating we had our way with the poor bastard since he was stripped and ready, they called us a dirty bunch of bastards but credited us with the kill. We tag the body and radio the location for collection and burial.

I hear a sound behind me and find one of our blokes down on his hands and knees looking at the wound, I ask him what he is doing; he says he can see daylight through the head! A couple of other blokes have a look and agree, yes, you can see daylight!!

Later that day we buried over 250 dead "Charlies" in a mass grave, thank Christ we had the Engineers to dig the bloody hole

We have been in this country and exposed to this kind of inhuman slaughter far too long. Some of these blokes are only 19. What is the war doing to us, and how can we explain our feelings to those who haven't been here.

Ken Baker
1RAR



We loved that rascal Puff.



Puff the Magic Dragon

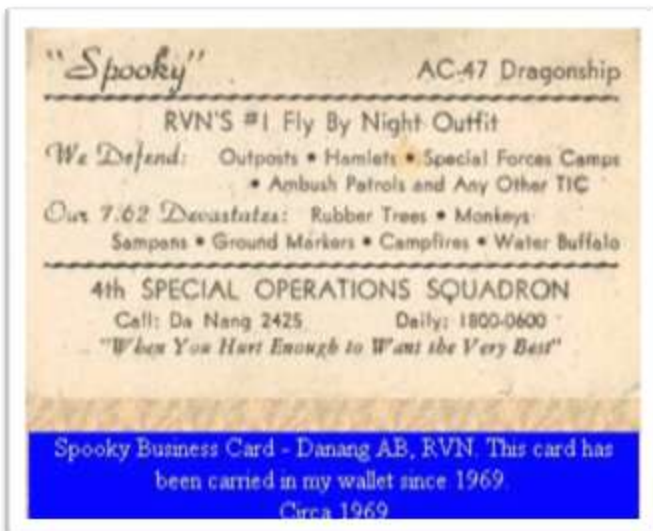
lived by the sea...



Douglas AC-47 Vietnam Call Sign: "Spooky"

A modified adaption of the Douglas C-47 Cargo plane by fitting it with 7.62 mm mini guns that could fire up to 6,000 rounds per minute. The convenience of cargo space allowed for the gunship to carry 54,000 rounds. While other aircraft would eventually succeed the C-47, such as the C-119 and C-130 with their larger capacity and features, the C-47 pioneered the development of gunships with the first AC-47 during the Vietnam war. Its Call Sign was "Spooky".

It didn't take long for it to earn the nickname "*Puff, the Magic Dragon*", or "*Dragonship*". Impressive from a distance, it appeared to roar as never ending blazes of bright red tracer rounds from its mini guns shot to the ground against a dark background of night.



"When you hurt enough to want the very best."

The AC-47 was capable of putting a highly explosive bullet into every square yard of a football field size target in 3 seconds, and it could do this intermittently while loitering over it's same target for hours as long as it had the ammo on board.

In early February of 1965, one Spooky fired 20,500 rounds into a Viet Cong position while flying over the Bong Son area, killing some 300 Viet Cong troops during a four hour period.

From the ground at night, the sight resembled that of a fire breathing dragon, to which the enemy began to refer to as "dragonship", and our US troops affectionately nicknamed "*Puff the Magic Dragon*" or just "*Puff*".

There will never be another "Puff".



Spooky Patch
Da Nang AFB, RVN

Through the years, the military has updated, modified, recreated, and developed more efficient Gunships. Modern technology will continue to change, replacing yesterday's "outdated" machines, but in my mind, "Puff" will never be forgotten and no other gunship will have the pulse racing, fear inducing, state of mind to an enemy that it did, nor the chest swelling pride from people like me. I had just started kindergarten when Puff was unleashed on the Viet Cong, but I would love to have been safely watching from a distance as it cruised over the jungle...just one time. (Many of us were. Ed)



Source:

<http://hubpages.com/hub/The-Douglas-AC-47-Puff-the-Magic-Dragon-Vietnam-Gunship>



Note: Bob Clark, known as Big Bear or “BB” to his army buddies, my older brother (different dads), served multiple tours with the Special Forces in Vietnam until his luck ran out on his third tour. I asked Bob to share the story of when his war ended. Ed

SF in Dak To Area ‘67

In May ‘67 we (5th Special Forces) were told we were going to pull special ops outside our normal area of operations. We were not given any reason, just told to get familiar with areas in II and III Corps along the Cambodian/Laotian borders.

On June 5th we were pulling ops in III Corps; these were 5-day operations with no contact. We pulled out and went back to base to rest, etc. On June 14th we boarded choppers for a long ride, and were given maps for areas approximately 30 km outside of the Dak To SF camp. This time we were given reasons;

seems every time the SF camp sent out patrols they were



Fighting soldier from the sky

getting hit -- they also lost a complete team. Another reason the 173d Airborne was sent into that area.

Charlie was watching, so SF Operations pulled teams from I Corps and IV Corps and put us in outside of Dak To where we pulled short ops as well as long-range ops into Cambodia and Laos (secret stuff at the time). We were not to make contact if at all possible.



One tour down, two to go

Our strength consisted of three or four American and 6 Viet teams for long range patrols. On June 19th we just crossed this little river and were getting ready for the night around 2045 hrs. I was watching from near a tree when all hell broke loose.

I never saw it coming from across the river; we took heavy fire and I was hit in the right side of my neck and shoulder. After getting back up mortar rounds started coming in killing LT Hendricks and SFC Lechak -- I was again hit with shrapnel, this time up and down my right side. SSG Brown came to my aid along with the remaining Viets while we continued firing back and radioing for air support.

As I was firing, my Swedish K took a round off the front which ricocheted through my left eye -- that for the most part was it for me. My right eye was closing from earlier shrapnel and my left eye was completely gone. The last thing I remember was seeing the sky light up -- found out later it was from air strikes hitting around us.

The next thing I recall was being on a chopper with a medic trying to take my K from me. I gave it up for a cigarette...guess I was easy. I was in and out of consciousness until arriving hospital in Japan.

I was later told we had been hit by a small force of North Vietnamese Regulars and that we took-out only five of the enemy, with other body parts found from bombings and air strikes. It was not enough for the loss of the LT and SFC.

That’s about it, otherwise a lot of walking to get to the desired spot.



Bob’s Army days over, Japan

**Bob Clark, SSG
101st Abn & 1st/5th/7th Special Forces Groups**

Today, Bob is retired and living in Las Vegas with his lovely bride, Lorraine. They are both active in the SF Chapter there and, I suspect, spend way too much time in the casinos. Bob also served in the Dominican Republic conflict. He has over 1000 parachute jumps, one of them real airborne troopers! Good job brother-brother. Ed



The Best & Worst Vietnam War Movies of All Time

Let us know your choice for the Top 3 best Vietnam war movies, and the one worst Vietnam war movie of all time. We'll compile everyone's choices and report the results in an upcoming issue. Rank 1 thru 3 your choices, with 1 being the best, and name the single worst movie (my SF brother is gonna hate me). Send your selections to rto173d@cfl.rr.com by August 20th please. Here are some to consider:

- *A Yank in Viet-Nam* (1964)
- *Operation C.I.A.* (1965)
- *To the Shores of Hell* (1966)
- *The Anderson Platoon* (1967)
- *Philcag in Vietnam* (1967)
- *The Green Berets* (1968)
- *The Ballad of Andy Crocker* (1969)
- *The Losers* (1970) – see Nam's Angels
- *Free The Army tour* (1972)
- *Rolling Thunder* (1977)
- *The Deer Hunter* (1978)
- *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978)
- *The Boys in Company C* (1978)
- *Coming Home* (1978)
- *Apocalypse Now* (1979)
- *The Odd Angry Shot* (1979)
- *A Rumor of War* (1980) (TV)
- *The Last Hunter* (1980)
- *How Sleep the Brave* (1981)
- *Some Kind of Hero* (1982)
- *The Uncounted Enemy* (1982)
- *Don't Cry, It's Only Thunder* (1982)
- *Streamers (film)* (1983)
- *Uncommon Valor* (1983)
- *Missing In Action* (1984)
- *Missing In Action II: The Beginning* (1985)
- *Birdy* (1985)
- *Platoon* (1986)
- *Combat Shock* (1986)
- *Full Metal Jacket* (1987)
- *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987)
- *Hamburger Hill* (1987)
- *Tour of Duty* (TV series) (1987–1990)
- *Gardens of Stone* (1987)
- *Hell on the Battleground* (1987)
- *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987)
- *Thou Shalt Not Kill... Except* (1987)
- *Bat 21* (1988)
- *Braddock: Missing in Action III* (1988)
- *China Beach* (TV series) (1988–1991)

- *Off Limits* (1988)
- *Platoon Leader* (1988)
- *Distant Thunder* (1988)
- *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989)
- *Casualties of War* (1989)
- *The Siege of Firebase Gloria* (1989)
- *The Iron Triangle* (1989)
- *84C MoPic* (1989)
- *A Better Tomorrow 3* (1989)
- *Air America* (1990)
- *Bullet in the Head* (1990)
- *Jacob's Ladder* (1990)
- *Flight of the Intruder* (1991)
- *The Lost Platoon* (1991)
- *White Badge* (1992)
- *White Ghost* (1988)
- *Heaven & Earth* (1993)
- *Firehawk* (1993)
- *Forrest Gump* (1994)
- *The Foot Shooting Party* (1994)
- *Operation Dumbo Drop* (1995)
- *Dead Presidents* (1995)
- *The Walking Dead* (1995)
- *The War at Home*
- *Heroes Without a Cause* (1998)
- *Tigerland* (2000)
- *Father Xmas* (2001)
- *Going Back* (2001)
- *We Were Soldiers* (2002)
- *Word of Honor* (2003)
- *Gamma Squad* (2004)
- *R-Point* (2004)
- *Faith of My Fathers* (2005)
- *American Gangster* (2007)
- *Rescue Dawn* (2007)
- *Journey from the Fall* (2007)
- *1968 Tunnel Rats* (2008)
- *Sunny* (2008)
- *Long Tan* (2011)



173d Airborne Brigade Reunion in San Antonio, Texas 2011



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Photos by Sky Soldier Jim Lazo, courtesy of Jim, and John Bathelemy, Chapter 13



Office of the Honorary Colonel 503d Infantry Regiment

26 July 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Distinguished and Honorary Members,
503d Infantry Regiment

SUBJECT: Update

During the recent celebration of the nation's 235th birthday, I could not help but recall the service and sacrifices of the warriors of the 503d Infantry Regiment who have contributed so much to preserve our freedom and continue to do so today. And while there is constant change in our units' ranks, there also is a consistency in military excellence within our regimental battalions.

The warriors who led our battalions in Afghanistan have surrendered their positions of leadership and moved on to new assignments. LTC Jeremy Schroeder assumed command of the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry, taking over from LTC Matt McFarlane on 3 June 2011. A day prior, LTC Mike Larsen assumed command of 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry, taking over from LTC Bill Butler. Like their predecessors, both incoming commanders have a long and distinguished history of airborne experience and will, I am sure, uphold the heritage and traditions of the Regiment.

LTC Butler has been assigned as a Maneuver Task Force Senior OC-T at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany (OC-T is Observer Controller-Trainer). He helps train all of the Army Brigade Combat Teams when they conduct their mission readiness exercises before going down range. LTC Matt McFarlane is in transit to the Washington, DC area, where he will attend the National War College at Fort McNair for academic year 2011-2012.

On 9 June, the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation conducted an "Honors Ceremony" at the Brigade Memorial located on the National Infantry Museum Campus near Fort Benning. The names of nine fallen warriors from OEF X and that of SGT Clinton Cook (D/4/503, 1970) who fell in Vietnam were unveiled on the granite panels.

On a segment of the granite panel designated for the OEF X fallen, the names of Lucas T. Beachnaw (HHC/2/503), Nicholas S. Cook (B/2/503), Russell F. Madden (D/1-91 Cav), Matthew R. Hennigan (B/STB), Louis R. Fastuca (HHC/1/503), Vinson B. Adkinson III (A/SPT), Raymond C. Alcaraz Jr. (C/SPT), Matthew E. George (A/SPT), and James A. Page (A/SPT) were revealed.

The Foundation also added the name of SSG Salvatore Giunta to the panel containing the names of Medal Honor recipients.

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation continues to require funding to maintain and update the Memorial. It receives no annual financial support from the 173d Airborne Brigade Association. Please visit the Foundation web site for information on how to contribute to this important and on-going effort: <http://173dmemorial.org>

Unit and individual awards are still pending for OEF VIII and OEF X. On 7 February 2011, the warriors of the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry were notified that they had been awarded a "Valorous Unit Award" for "...extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy...." during the period 25 January 2008 through 30 July 2008 in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Over the next year we will attempt to provide a comprehensive update for both deployments, documenting the heritage of our Regiment.

Last year, eight names were added to the rolls of Distinguished and Honorary Members of the Regiment. Once again, I solicit nominations for this honor. An extract of Army Regulation 600-82 specifying the criteria for appointment is provided below:



Sal Giunta at ceremony

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

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

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

Please provide your nominations along with a written justification to me by 30 September 2011 at the address below.

Also, please remember to keep me advised in changes of address including e-mail. Many of you are receiving this letter by email instead of through the postal service. Anyone wishing to change transmittal status should contact me at kvsmith173@gmail.com.

CSM Storjohann joins me in wishing all of you continued health and happiness.

Kenneth V. Smith, COL, USA (Ret)
Honorary Colonel, 503d Infantry Regiment
1160 Lake Royale, Louisburg, NC 27549
kvsmith173@embarqmail.com, 252-478-9359



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Remembering the Battle of the Slopes

By Ed Anthony, LTC (Ret), 172nd MID

Although I was not directly involved in the horrendous ground combat that was experienced by the extraordinary soldiers of A/2/503, I have very vivid memories of that fateful day. My perspective on that battle is from my assignment that day as the S-2 officer on duty in the Brigade TOC.



2LT Ed Anthony, Dak To, November '67

I was a 2LT assigned as a POW Interrogator with the 172nd MID. I also spent a great deal of my time on Brigade TOC duty, especially when we had no captured prisoners to deal with. As we had just deployed to the Dak To area and were in the early stage of operations, we had not yet captured any prisoners. Consequently, I was manning the S-2 position in the TOC when the battle began.

We were setup in a position where we could look directly west on to the side of the hill where the battle raged. We watched as the gunships and A1-E Skyraiders attempted to support with little apparent effect. I remember frantically working the S-2 radio net to the battalion as the Brigade TOC attempted to discern what was happening within our sight. I also remember the frustration experienced by the S-3 and all others, as they desperately tried to find a way to get aid to A/2/503.

One of my functions was to coordinate all calls for Dustoff's and that became a major task on that day -- I spent hours doing so. Despite the valor of the pilots, some of the assigned missions were less than successful due to the intensity of the battle and the lack of suitable LZ's. We were monitoring all the nets in the TOC, even down to company level, and the reality of what was truly happening on the ground was clear. The futility of not being able to quickly provide ground support deeply affected everybody.

About three/four days later, as our troops pursued the NVA back towards the Laotian border, two severely wounded NVA POW's were found left behind in the jungle and evacuated to B Med on the Dak To airstrip. As soon as myself, and SFC Bob DeStatte, were notified we went to the B Med. Two of the NVA were being treated there prior to being sent to Pleiku.

We started to interrogate them even as Cpt Stacy MacMarlin worked to patch them up. I remember that he was clearing and patching up a serious chest wound on the NVA SGT I was interrogating. Bob and I managed to get some very basic information before the NVA were shipped out. I sent Bob to Pleiku with them to further interrogate.

One subsequently died and the other turned out to be a simple NVA private. I subsequently briefed the information that we had obtained to BG Deane who was less than enamored with it. So much for my first direct contact with the Brigade Commander. The info that I briefed subsequently was proven to be essentially correct when the overall after action report was put together.



L-R: 1LT Lester Foote, 2LT Ed Anthony
172d MID, May 1967

As I recall that day some 44 years later, I am immensely proud to have had the honor of serving with the superb paratroopers of the finest unit the U.S. Army has ever fielded....the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep).



Vietnam: Prisoner of War Interrogations in the 173d

Prisoner of war interrogations within the 173d Abn Bde (Sep) were the responsibility of the 172d Military Intelligence Detachment in which I served from Apr 67 thru Apr 68. The MID was comprised of Order of Battle Analysts, Imagery Interpreters, Counter-intelligence personnel, and POW interrogators. All sections were represented in the field. An interrogation element was always deployed along with the most forward Bde command post.



Ed Anthony, 172nd MID

Our most active mission was to conduct interrogations of all NVA, VC, VC sympathizers, and any other persons picked up and detained during Bde operations. Our focus was to obtain tactical intelligence which could identify the enemy we were currently engaging or were likely to face in the near future.

We interrogated all prisoners as far forward in the AO as possible. We usually only had a short time to deal with them before we were directed to send them to the rear. The majority of POWs were brought into a MP-managed containment area close to the Forward Bde Hq. Interrogations were conducted immediately in order to garner enemy operational data which the Bde could take action against. If reliable data, such as possible enemy positions, base camps, arm caches, food caches, was learned, it was used by the Bde as a key part of the operational planning process.

In several cases, the POW agreed to point out locations of food/arms caches, and accompanied by the interrogator, went with the line companies to follow up.

The interrogators also accompanied units on cordon and search missions around small villages in the AO, worked with MP's at road blockades and other checkpoints, went out with civic action teams, and on any other occasion that presented an opportunity to gather intelligence within the AO. We also served in any other capacity that the S-2 needed, such as TOC duty officer.

During the year I was there, we were quite busy engaged in interrogation work, especially during our periods in Tuy Hoa. Some of our major battles around Dak To, on the other hand, did not result in many POWs. The Battle of the Slopes only resulted in two NVA for us to interrogate, and I can only remember two or three coming in during the Hill 875 battle. We did have several in the aftermath of TET. In several instances, however, we had to plea for one to be brought in so that we could hopefully get some intelligence. I, for one, truly understand why that was sometimes the case.

Within the interrogations section, we had several of us that spoke Vietnamese to varying degrees, as well as a dedicated Vietnamese interpreter that was eloquently fluid in English. During the time of my assignment we also were blessed with SFC Bob DeStatte, a super fluent Vietnamese speaker. He spoke Vietnamese with a Hanoi accent and was an invaluable resource. He always astounded the NVA with his ability to speak in great detail in their language and in their own terms. He could also intimately describe neighborhood areas in Hanoi, even down to specific street names. He gained this detailed knowledge from his wife who was a native of Hanoi and was an instructor at the Defense Language School, in Monterey, Ca.



A Viet Cong prisoner awaits interrogation at the A-109 Special Forces Detachment in Thuong Duc, Vietnam, (25 km west of Da Nang), 23 January 1967.

(AFP PHOTO/National Archives)

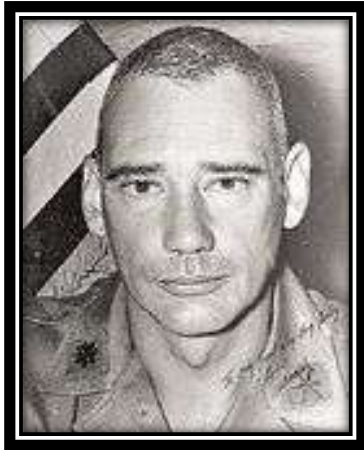
I am quite proud of what our interrogation teams achieved. Our teams were instrumental in providing solid information that aided immensely in the superb performance of our courageous paratroopers and the enviable mission achievements of our famed 173d Abn Bde.

**Ed Anthony, LTC (Ret)
172nd MID**



Chapter 1 Says Farewell to a Dear and Valued Comrade-in-Arms

We are very sad to report that Chuck Drake, stalwart member of the Association and Chapter 1, who served with the 3/319th Artillery '67 - '68, passed away last Saturday, July 16. He is survived by his wife Rose, whom he met while stationed at Fort Stewart, and by their five children and numerous grandchildren. Chuck fought valiantly against a number of medical problems during the last year. He was delighted that Terry Modglin and Jeanie O'Neil were able to visit him about two months ago. Totally in character, he described his medical maladies off-handedly while he regaled us with stories from his career, especially his days as US Commandant of the NATO School. Chuck entered the Army in 1946 and was commissioned in 1951.



Chuck's Funeral Mass and burial were held in Maine, where he was from and where one of his sons resides.

With prayers for his repose and gratitude for knowing such a stalwart trooper and gentleman, from the officers of Chapter 1 and yours truly,

Jean F. O'Neil
Chapter 1 - 173d ABN BDE ASSN

173d Room in Vincenza, Italy



[Sent in by Jerry Hassler, RTO Recon/S-2/2/503d]

Two Good Friends



Larey McCorkle on left with "Woody" Davis, both A/2/503d. Sadly, Larey is fighting a terrible battle with Alzheimer's....we wish you well brother.

Looking for Buddies



I want to say that I had the honor of meeting Wambi Cook and other Sky Soldiers in Wasco, CA. I was a medic with HHC/2/503d. I always went out on missions with Charlie Company. I spent about 3 months with the Herd after spending my first 9 months in-country with the 1st Air Cavalry.

I do not recall any names with the Herd and it really frustrates me to this day still. If anybody remembers me please contact me. I am airborne qualified and also served with the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, N. Carolina before deploying to Vietnam.

Ismael M. Gonzales
igonzales2@bak.rr.com

(Looking for Buddies continued....)



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B/2/503d '69 - '70

I was wondering if you could do me a favor. I am looking for anyone from B/2/503d from Nov. 1969 – Nov. 1970. Both my brother and I were in Bravo Company (I think it was 2nd Platoon) for a short time before he DEROS'd home in Nov. 1970. I am trying to reach out to anyone who served with Bravo Company during the above mentioned time period who might have photos of either one of us. He was a squad leader (E-5) with sun-bleached blond hair and I was a (Sp4) medic. I remember replacing Doc Murphy (curly redhead), at a small beach where I met up with my brother on a 2-day stand down before we headed back out to the field. If you could run something in the newsletter sometime I would appreciate it.

Jim "Doc" Gore
B/2/503d
gorej@charter.net

Note: We're also looking for photos of Alex Hodges C/2/503d, and George Rivera A/2/503d. Ed

Never Lose Your Grandson!

A heart-warming story about an old 2/503d paratrooper grandpa.



My small grandson got lost at the shopping mall...

He approached a uniformed security guard and said, "I've lost my grandpa!"

The guard asked, "What's his name?"

"Grandpa"

The guard smiled, then asked, "What's he like?"

The little tyke hesitated for a moment and then replied, "Crown Royal whiskey and women with big tits."

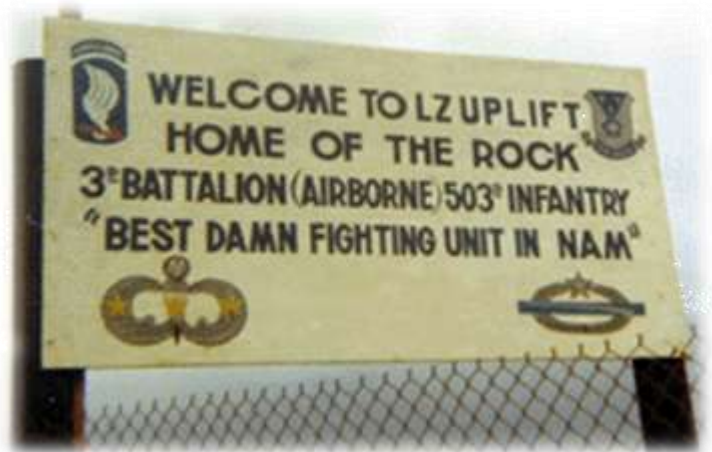
[Sent in by a 2/503d trooper-grandpa...of course]

~ 173d Reunions ~

Like many other Sky Soldiers, I have just returned from a wonderful Herd Reunion in San Antonio, TX and I am reflecting on how it was such a rewarding experience. My only regret about the Herd Reunions is that I had not taken the plunge many years ago and started attending earlier.

If you have not yet attended I strongly recommend that you give it due consideration about attending next year's Herd Reunion in Lexington, KY and the following year, 2013 in Las Vegas, NV. I will forward the dates as soon as I know them. (See Page 58 for early info on next year's reunion).

You might also check: <http://www.skysoldiers.com/> or



our Facebook page: **3rd Batt 503rd IN (ABN) 173rd BDE** occasionally.

Please give me a call at: 503-873-3545 Ext. 303 or email me at mason@silvertonrealty.com if you have personal questions about the Reunions.

Mason Branstetter, LTC (Ret)
HHC/D/E/3/503d

"What a cruel thing is war: to separate and destroy families and friends, and mar the purest joys and happiness God has granted us in this world; to fill our hearts with hatred instead of love for our neighbors, and to devastate the fair face of this beautiful world."

~ **Robert E. Lee, letter to his wife, 1864**



myhealth.va.gov



Upgrade Your Account...
...with **In-Person Authentication**
and gain access to **critical** health information



1. Improve Your Online Activity with VA

- ★ Register for a My HealthVet account at: www.myhealth.va.gov
- ★ Fill out the required information and click "Save"

2. Improve Your Access

- ★ Once registered, select "In-Person Authentication" under "Quick Links" on the home page
- ★ View the "It's Quick, Easy, and It's for You" video online or at your VA facility
- ★ Print and Sign a copy of VA Form 10-5345a-MHV (also available at your VA facility)
- ★ Bring your signed form and photo ID (Veterans Identification Card "VIC" or driver's license) to your VA facility and show an authorized VA staff member

3. Sit back and enjoy the benefits of an upgraded account

- ★ Refill VA prescriptions online by name
- ★ Get VA Wellness Reminders
- ★ Secure Message with your provider¹
- ★ Single Sign On to eBenefits¹

¹These features are being rolled out nationwide throughout 2010-2011; check with your local VA facility for details. In-Person Authentication, IPA, may also refer to In-Person Proofing or IPR.

It's **quick, easy,** and it's **for you!**



Veterans Health Administration | Office of Health Information
www.va.gov

8/10/2011 10:02 AM Desktop (1)



Mate:

I'm attaching a short story you might think will be of interest in the next 2/503d Vietnam Newsletter. I hope you blokes don't mind some of us Aussies trespassing into your pages but many of us enjoy reading it and appreciate the opportunity to give a bit of input.

THE (ALMOST) BATTLE OF BIEN HOA

Going back in history to the Second World War, huge numbers of American troops were stationed in Australia for recovery, training and on duty stations. An infamous incident occurred in the city of Brisbane in 1942 that has mainly avoided public knowledge and because of that I suggest that you may like to read up on this incident by checking out Google for "Battle of Brisbane 1942" for your background information.

NOW, during the tour we did in 1965-66 at Bien Hoa, I believe that we Aussies and Yanks really liked each other despite the differences in our approach to jungle fighting and tactics. Even when our different accents caused communication difficulties, particularly after a few beers were shared among us. It was then that we discovered that not everyone speaks Australian English.

I am not sure when the event I am about to describe occurred but THINK it may have been after the job at Hobo Woods but the Aussie contingent were allowed to choose either Saigon or Bien Hoa leave, when it came around to our turn. Obviously Saigon was the big drawcard as it was the 'Big Smoke' to us blokes and Bien Hoa was a tiny pisspot of a village, therefore it stood to reason that ALL of our debauched instincts could be met in Saigon better than Bien Hoa.

Where the 'Bosses' made THEIR mistake was that while Saigon leave was from 09.00 hours to 15.00 hours, then back on the trucks for the trip back to camp; Bien Hoa leave was from 09.00 hours to 21.00 hours and only a short trip on a truck to and from our area. Much better unmilitary drinking/fraternizing time and it wasn't long before the master planners among us were developing a way to have our cake and eat it too. Bien Hoa leave gained popularity and almost no-one sought Saigon leave unless visiting a mate in hospital or wanting a trip to the Cholon PX.

So began the habit of requesting Bien Hoa leave and getting the appropriate leave pass and off we would go. Once in Bien Hoa we would make our presence known to the authorities by visiting a couple of bars for a few beers and being seen on the streets. Then a group of us,

usually four, would make a return trip deal with a taxi to get us into Saigon and wait around until an agreed time and return us to Bien Hoa. In doing this we reasoned that we could get into Cholon PX, have a bit of a time in the Saigon bars, massage parlours or whatever and get the return taxi trip before the Saigon leave trucks started rounding up their passengers. In doing this we were aware of the associated dangers of travelling the highway between the two locations but when you're around 20 years old, thirsty, randy, ten foot tall bullet proof and indestructible; what the hell? Looking back one can imagine how the excreta would have hit the oscillating air displacement apparatus if any of us got killed, wounded or in some other kind of situation.

Anyway, on one particular leave (I think I had one Saigon and one Bien Hoa leave in that 12 months) we arrived back in Bien Hoa, sexually satiated, well primed with beer but ready for a few more and hungry. We went into a restaurant and had a meal and a couple of beers; Ba Mi Ba, the only beer you could go crazy drinking by about the third can.



Now isn't it the way that when you are out having a good time and well lubricated there is ALWAYS ONE loudmouth trouble maker who can spoil it for all? Well this day we had two of them and I don't even know how they got tied in with us as we didn't start the day with them because of their reputations. I think it was just our luck that they tagged onto us after we went into the restaurant. I won't name them in this as I am not definite as to who actually caused the next sequence of events and who was the "little Sir echo" in it all.

We had finished the meal and decided to go to a bar that someone suggested had some good music playing so we could have a few more refreshing ales to finish off the day while waiting for the trucks to take us back to our lines.

(continued...)



We are sitting on the verandah of this bar, having a real good time when a small US truck with about 4 or 5 GI's in it drives past us and in some way sprays us with a little dirt and mud. Now I don't think this is a deliberate act but one of our 'tagalongs' who has a mouth bigger than the entrance to Sydney harbour and is full of Dutch courage, yells out to the driver, questioning his parentage and reason for being. Then he and his just as silly mate start to run down the street yelling abuse at the departing vehicle. A number of us yelled at the two morons and told them to shut gobs and behave themselves and tried to ignore them while they are going on about how good they were and they were "lean mean killing machines" or shit similar to that.

Probably 10 minutes or so after this all settled down, there is a roar of motors, a screech of tyres and we look up and there are two vehicles containing about 8 or so very agitated American GI's pointing M60's at our group from a VERY short range. Time has clouded the actual conversation that took place but I would suggest from my way dim grey memory bank:

- Us:** "WTF?" (fill in your own words.)
Them: "OK you smart ass Aussie heroes what do you say now?" (Click, clack and loaded)
Us: "Hey hang on Yanks, we ARE on the same side you know?"
Them: "Not so brave now, are you M.....F.....S?" (funny swear words to us).
Us: "Come on fellas, it's not that serious, get over it."

More words to this effect between some pretty pissed GI's and apologetic Aussies who by now are starting to feel the effects of the beers and food and more beers consumed, can't stop their legs from shaking and wondering if they are going to shit themselves. THEN A VERY BRIGHT LIGHT flashes in the mind of one of our group, whose mind is not too overcome by booze and fear.

He stands up, walks over to the moron among us, flattens him with a tremendous right hook, goes to hero number two, who is trying to get away, plants a very sizeable foot into THAT arse and turns to the GI's and asks something to the effect; "That do you blokes?" With that the GI's seem to be satisfied that their honour has been replaced and a couple of brief discussions, a couple of surreptitious beers and away they go.

The incident sobered us up pretty smartly and it was a rather subdued group of diggers that returned to the battalion lines that night.

[Sent in by John Arnold, 1RAR]

Great story, John, about the (Almost) Battle at Bien Hoa! A couple of us almost got into it one nite in Bien

Hoa with an equal number of Aussies, beer was involved of course. A lot of yelling, threatening and shoving, but no blows thrown. Good thing we were all unarmed at the time. Young, dumb and full of cum. Always good rivalry until some idiot, like the ones in your story, pull weapons. Thanks John.

Oh, while this thing is chiefly a 2/503 publication, we're the sum of all our parts, including the malfunctioning Aussie parts. :)

Be well digger, Ed

2/503d Flash Coin
~ Limited Edition ~

front

back

\$10. Each
(please add \$2. per coin for postage)

An equal share of the profits will be donated to the 173d Airborne Memorial Foundation and a local Food Bank for the needy.

Contact or mail check to:
Paul Fisher, LTC (Ret)
HHC/3/503d
81 Oak Lane, Eastontown, NJ 07724
Phn: (908) 489-0366, Eml: fisherppd@att.net

Be sure to include your return mail address.

Note: The coin is so heavy you'll need help slamming it on a bar top. Ed

503rd Reunion in Savannah

At the WWII 503rd Reunion in Savannah last month we gave two of Paul's coins to two troopers who made the historic combat jump onto Corregidor. They really enjoyed receiving them from the Sky Soldiers who were there. In turn, WWII 503rd trooper Chuck Breit gave us a supply of hologram cards with the 503rd and 173d patches on the face. We'll mail the card free to the first 100 Sky Soldiers requesting them, one per trooper. Send your request to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and include your return mail address.



Anyone there? Over.



Larry Paladino B/2/503d RTO extraordinaire on R&R in Florida testing a PRC25. No one told him there was no battery in it.

MEDICS OF THE 173d & SISTER UNITS

Plans are still in the works to feature the brave Medics of the 2/503d and *all* 173d sister units. Please send your medic stories and photos to rto173d@cfl.rr.com As Bob Beemer, B/2/503d so rightly said,

“How do you write a story about the greatest people in the world? Everyone of them should receive a lifetime achievement award.”

Them Aussies

Question in a letter from the U.S.A. sent to the Australian tourist office, and their reply...

Q: *Will I be able to speak English most places I go?*

A: *Yes, but you'll have to learn it first.*

[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA]

Which brings us to our study of the Australian language in the ongoing series entitled...

WHY CAN'T THE AUSSIES TEACH THEIR CHILDREN HOW TO SPEAK (English)?

For example, certain like-words in *real* English and *Aussie* English have entirely different meanings, such as those which follow. This will come in handy should you ever visit Down Under or in the event the Aussies attack California by mistake thinking they're invading Canada, which is not a bad idea either:

Barrack

Real English: A place where paratroopers sleep and polish boots.

Aussie English: To encourage one's team from the sidelines, not always in complimentary terms, e.g., *“Get in there and fight, you bunch of bloody pansies!”*

Matilda

Real English: Generally the name of your aunt or grandmother. Today this name seldom makes the top ten list of prospective first names of newborn in the U.S.

Aussie English: An assortment of one's personal possessions rolled up in a blanket. If one goes *“Waltzing Matilda”*, in the words of the national song, one is deemed to be *“humping the bluey on the Wallaby”*.

(Editor's note: The fact *‘Waltzing Matilda’* is their national song, should tell you everything you ever wanted to know about Aussies. *“Humping the bluey on the Wallaby”* will be covered in the advanced course.

Mickey

Real English: A special drink you might give to an attractive, intelligent lady in a lounge who otherwise would not be caught dead in your presence. Also, a little furry creature chiefly found in California and Florida who takes all your money as you chase grandkids from ride to ride.

Aussie English: To tease one – to go along with one's story then tease them about it.

Kinda like what we're doing here. Ed



In Purple Heart Medal, Researchers Seek Clues to Combat Stress Resilience & Longer Life

Washington, D.C. – A study led by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) researchers found that aging Veterans who earned the Purple Heart show decreased mortality compared with those who had not earned the medal. Additionally, those war-wounded Veterans who survive into later life -- especially those who do not develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) -- may provide valuable clues as to the factors that lead to resilience to combat stress.



A team of VA researchers who studied more than 10,000 Veterans of World War II and the Korean War produced these findings, which appear online in the journal *Depression and Anxiety*. “Among the older Veterans we studied, those with Purple Heart citations had half the mortality rate of those without Purple Heart citations,” said lead author Tim Kimbrell, MD, a physician-researcher with the Center for Mental Health and Outcomes Research, based at the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System.



Wounded soldiers are given medical treatment at a first aid station, somewhere in Korea. 25 July 1950.

Whether the Purple Heart holders had chronic PTSD or not, they were about twice as likely to still be alive after some 10 years of follow-up, compared with those with no Purple Heart and no PTSD. The study included

Veterans who were 65 and or older in the late 1990s. It tracked their survival through 2008.

It is estimated that more than a million Servicemembers received a Purple Heart in World War II, and nearly 119,000 in the Korean War. In recent years, researchers with VA and the Department of Defense have sought insight into the psychological and neurobiological factors that enable some Servicemembers to not develop PTSD after traumatic events. The authors of the new VA study say Purple Heart holders who survive long past their war experience without PTSD may be the ideal population on which to focus such research.

“Our theory was that there are many factors that contribute to resilience to PTSD, and these same factors may increase survival,” said Kimbrell.

The researchers were surprised to find that among Purple Heart recipients, those *with* PTSD had slightly lower mortality than those *without* PTSD. This is a contradiction to several studies that have shown a link between chronic stress conditions such as PTSD and worse survival. Kimbrell and colleagues suggest this finding is due to what they term “early attrition.” Those who had been physically injured in World War II or Korea and suffered PTSD may have been less likely to survive until age 65 in the first place; the PTSD-Purple Heart group included in their study may have been an exceptionally healthy and hearty cohort of Veterans.

The researchers say further studies involving these Veterans, as well as those who were wounded in combat but did not develop PTSD, may lead to new insights to help prepare future Servicemembers to cope with the stress and trauma of war.

Kimbrell, in addition to his VA role, is also a professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. He collaborated on the study with other authors from his site, as well as with colleagues from the Houston Center for Quality of Care and Utilization Studies, at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center; Baylor College of Medicine; the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center in Charleston, SC; the Medical University of South Carolina; and the University of Texas Health Science Center.

For more information on VA research, visit www.research.va.gov.



Folks, things are heating up in preparation for next year's reunion. This is the first release of information in response to early requests. We are featuring a new lower registration fee structure in hopes of attracting more Sky Soldiers.

NOTE: Booking early helps the cause.

Help spread it around and tell folks they can expect updates and more information. The web site links are under construction as you read this. There is a planning/organization meeting in the 2nd week of August at Lexington. If you are interested in being part of the organization team just let Dave Carmon (dcarmon@roadrunner.com) know in the next 10 days so we can plan for you to join us. Skip Kniley, 3/319th

The 2012 173d Reunion

Lexington, KY

June 6 -10, 2012

Hosted By Chapter 17

Room rate 115.00 plus tax per night with Free Parking

New Registration fees:

Sky Soldiers	99.00
Spouses & Guests	75.00
Gold Star	75.00

Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner

The Hyatt is taking reservations now.

Call 800.233.1234

Ask for the 173 Airborne guestroom block or code G-173A.

Also use this code when making reservations on-line
at the Lexington-Hyatt website - www.lexington.hyatt.com

Information and Forms will be posted soon at www.skysoldier.org and www.Skysoldier17.com

