



December 2011, Issue 35

Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto: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](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)

## ~ 173d Photo of the Month ~



Sky Soldiers

(Photo by Horst Faas)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / December 2011 – Issue 35

Page 1 of 50

# Chaplain's Corner



The Leapin' Deacon

## GOSPEL: ST. LUKE 2: 8-14

*There were shepherds camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said,*

***“Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, A Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger.”***

*At once the angel was joined by a huge and angelic choir singing God's praises: Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please Him.*

### Dear Stalwart Sky Soldiers, Families and Friends:

A most meaningful and joyous Advent, Hanukkah, and Christmas to you and to all your cherished family members and friends.

This is a special season of the heart and the centerpiece of meaning, purpose and reason why. The great Logo therapist, Dr. Viktor Frankl, wrote a special little book, *“Search for Meaning.”* His center thought and guide for action is:

***“If I have a reason why, I can put up with **anyhow.**”***

This is a tremendous and captivating thought and guide for giving a person and a family reason to live and to care for oneself and others. Coming back to the theme that this is the Season of the Heart, our Lord God only asks for our hearts. WOW! What a splendid relief! Our Lord will settle for the heart. The only rub centers in the Lord's definition of the heart. If only He might mean a sweet sentiment, a holy and pious mood, or even a

sincere tear. However, you cannot read Holy Scripture without the deep suspicion developing and growing that He is on the path of something far more when He declares, ***“My son, my daughter, give me your heart.”***

He is clearly asking for your ALL. Indeed, He will not settle for less and the Holy Spirit calls us to surrender ALL – to give Him our ALL and best day in and day out, on good days and tough and difficult days. It is the vibrant nature of a living faith to give him ALL: yes, your great and praying heart.

The faith life means to trust Him in all things and in turn to give Him ALL, including your thankful heart. To trust means, *“to put your entire weight of your entire person upon Him,”* and to be jubilantly blessed, particularly during this wondrous season of Advent, Hanukkah, and Christmas. The Lord bless your heart now and forever in His saving and exciting presence and person.

Blessings in our Gracious God, Redeemer Jesus, and the calling Holy Spirit.



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



Connie, ministering to his soldiers in Vietnam.



# Helmet Bath

1966 opened for 2/503 with *Operation Marauder*, a brigade operation that was a real change from what we had been used to. Previously we had operated mostly in the jungle. But Marauder was in the northern Mekong Delta – flat rice paddies and sugar cane fields, barren of trees except along the dikes which separated the fields. Irrigation canals crisscrossed the area carrying water to the rice fields, and though no crops had been planted for several years, the rice fields were still muddy from rain which had ceased a few weeks earlier.

On January 2d we had fought a day long battle, ending with our seizure of a dike line where the VC had been holding us up all day. That night the VC withdrew from the area. The next day, January 3d, we were given the mission to push on to the Vam Co Dong River, a few kilometers to the Southwest. We arrived at our objective in late afternoon, after crossing muddy fields and numerous canals up to our waists in muddy water. As we closed in on our objective, the companies were deployed into a perimeter and started to dig in. We set up the Battalion CP on a dike next to an abandoned sugar cane field, and I called for the company commanders to come to the CP for a meeting later in the afternoon.



**IHC troops watch air strikes from paddy dike, 2 Jan 66**  
(Photo by George Dexter)

Since I had about an hour before the meeting, I decided that this would be a good time to take a bath. I was filthy from having lain in muddy water for several hours during the battle the day before, from struggling through the mucky fields all day and crossing the muddy canals. The cane field beside the CP had not been used for years, but there were still enough dead stalks standing that I felt I could find some privacy there. So I filled my helmet with water, got a bar of soap and a clean

set of jungle fatigues, undershorts and socks from my rucksack, and went out into the cane field. There I stripped, carefully laid my clean and dirty clothes around me, and started to lather up.



**Jan '66, near Vam Co Dong River, 2/503d troops crossing canal during Operation Marauder. SGM Mish in foreground, last man in the water is RTO Smith (editor of newsletter), others unidentified.** (Photo by George Dexter)

What I did not know, and should have, was that the battalion helipad had been laid out right beside the cane field. All of a sudden a chopper came right over my head – not ten feet up – blew down all the cane stalks, picked up my clothes – dirty and clean – and threw them all over the place. So here was the battalion commander running around all over the field buck naked trying to gather up his clothes. Not exactly a picture of dignity.

As it turned out, the chopper was full of correspondents. One of them, a reporter from a Los Angeles newspaper, wrote a story about this man running around naked in a field looking for his clothes. Luckily, he didn't use my name!

**Col. George E. Dexter, US Army (Ret)**  
**Commander**  
**2d Battalion (Airborne)**  
**503d Infantry Regiment**  
**173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)**  
**August 1964 to February 1966**

**Note:** This great story by the Commander first appeared in Issue 1 of our newsletter in 2009, when our total circulation was to about 300 Sky Soldiers. Today, our newsletter is published on two web sites, forwarded to others' email lists, and is emailed to over 1500 Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d, making the story worthy of reprinting here. Now, I heard the Emperor had no clothes, but..... Ed



# More troops lost to suicide

By **John Donnelly**  
[Congress.org](http://Congress.org)

For the second year in a row, the U.S. military has lost more troops to suicide than it has to combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.



The reasons are complicated and the accounting uncertain -- for instance, should returning soldiers who take their own lives after being mustered out be included? But the suicide rate is a further indication of the stress that military personnel live under after nearly a decade of war.

Figures released by the armed services last week showed an alarming increase in suicides in 2010, but those figures leave out some categories.

Overall, the services reported 434 suicides by personnel on active duty, significantly more than the 381 suicides by active-duty personnel reported in 2009. The 2010 total is below the 462 deaths in combat, excluding accidents and illness. In 2009, active-duty suicides exceeded deaths in battle.

Last week's figures, though, understate the problem of military suicides because the services do not report the statistics uniformly. Several do so only reluctantly. Figures reported by each of the services last week, for instance, include suicides by members of the Guard and Reserve who were on active duty at the time. The Army and the Navy also add up statistics for certain reservists who kill themselves when they are not on active duty. But the Air Force and Marine Corps do not include any non-mobilized reservists in their posted numbers. What's more, none of the services count suicides that occur among a class of reservists known as the Individual Ready Reserve, the more than 123,000 people who are not assigned to particular units.

Suicides by veterans who have left the service entirely after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan also are not counted by the Defense Department. The Department of Veterans Affairs keeps track of such suicides only if the person was enrolled in the VA health care system — which three-quarters of veterans are not. But even if such veterans and members of the Individual Ready Reserve are excluded from the suicide statistics, just taking into account the deaths of reservists who were not

included in last week's figures pushes the number of suicides last year to at least 468.

That total includes some Air Force and Marine Corps reservists who took their own lives while not on active duty, and it exceeds the 462 military personnel killed in battle.

The problem of reservists' suicides, in particular, has been a major concern to some lawmakers. A Pentagon study this year confirmed that reservists lack the support structure that active-duty troops have.

Some types of reservists are more cut off than others. Rep. Rush D. Holt, a New Jersey Democrat, says that members of the Individual Ready Reserve and other categories of citizen-soldiers do not receive a thorough screening for mental health issues when they return from deployments. One of those soldiers, a constituent of Holt's named Coleman S. Bean, was an Army sergeant and Iraq War veteran who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder but could not find treatment. He took his own life in 2008.

Moved by Bean's story, Holt wrote a bill requiring phone contacts with these reservists every 90 days after they come home from war. The House adopted Holt's provision as part of its defense authorization bills for both fiscal 2010 and fiscal 2011. But conferees writing the final version of the bills took it out both years. Holt said in December that Arizona Republican Sen. John McCain was responsible for that decision in the most recent bill. A spokeswoman for McCain, Brooke Buchanan, would not state his position on the provision. Instead, she said House members had removed it. A House Armed Services Committee spokeswoman, Jennifer Kohl, said the House reluctantly pulled the provision from the bill because of the opposition of senators, whom she did not name.

Holt said a fuller reckoning of the number of suicides among military personnel and veterans is needed not so much to tell lawmakers and the public that there is a problem — that, he says, they know. Rather, it is needed to more accurately gauge the extent to which programs to help troubled troops are having an effect.

*"In order to know whether the steps we've taken work," Holt said, "we're going to have to have more detailed knowledge of who's out there."*

**This report appeared on the web site of [Congress.org](http://Congress.org), a nonpartisan news and information web site devoted to encouraging civic participation.**



## 2/503d Vietnam Vet Sky Soldier of the Year 2011

All nominations for 2/503d Vietnam Vet Sky Soldier of the Year 2011 have been received and are being considered by the selection committee. The committee comprises three officers and three enlisted men of our Battalion who served in different years in-country and with different companies.

Having read each nomination it is clear they are faced with a most difficult decision as all men nominated are, in my opinion, deserving of this special recognition.

2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2010 was Colonel Ken Smith in recognition of his never-ending, ongoing support of paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep).

The 2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2011 will be announced in the January 2012 issue of our newsletter.

*All The Way!*

## Willie Pitts Jr. Parkway



Jack Owens, A/B/2/503d, standing on the Willie Pitts Jr. Parkway in Albany, GA, Willie's hometown. Jack says, "Willie Pitts was my platoon sergeant in Sept. 1966. He was Paragon Alpha 35. He retired a Major, died in 2005. Best NCO and best soldier I ever knew."

## ~ VIETNAM TRIVIA ~



Presented to honoree

### Re: Robert Stack's visit to Dak To

Might be a little trivia question for your next issue. Stack was accompanied by a lesser known female television star when I met him, and her, at Dak To. Who was she?

A little hint: The comedy TV show about a fictitious cavalry unit she co-starred in was cancelled in 1967 and the main stars were Forrest Tucker, Larry Storch and Ken Berry.

Just wondered if anybody would remember. She was hot.

**Jim Wilson**  
C/2/503d

*"To be a good soldier, you must love the army. To be a good commander, you must be willing to order the death of the thing you love."*

- Robert E. Lee



## SFC Robert Howard (Col.) A Green Beret



Bob Howard, America's most decorated soldier, died last December and I am honored to pass along some of his story taken from the book *SOG The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam*, by John L Plaster.

Bob Howard was nominated for the Medal of Honor on three separate occasions within a 13-month period yet very few people in America have ever heard of him. At the time of his award of the Medal of Honor by President Nixon, no newspaper or TV station carried the news. American citizens, to their everlasting shame, were not interested. Bob first served in Vietnam as a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division. While recuperating from a wound, he was recruited by Special Forces soldiers who were also recovering from their own wounds. Bob joined the Special Forces and volunteered to serve with SOG, the Special Forces unit that conducted secret missions into Laos and Cambodia.

One night, he ran alongside an enemy truck full of NVA soldiers, tossed a claymore mine inside and detonated it. Another time, he saw two VC riding a motor scooter toss a grenade at a GI chow line. He grabbed an M-16 rifle from a security guard, killed the driver and chased the passenger for a half-mile and killed him too. No award for these actions.

In November 1967, on a mission in Laos, he encountered 4 NVA and killed all with one magazine of ammunition. His team became pinned down by a camouflaged machine-gun Bunker. He crawled toward the bunker, killed a sniper along the way, then rushed the machine-gun nest and killed all its occupants at point blank range with his M-16. He immediately came under fire from another machine-gun position. He killed its occupants with a hand grenade. When more NVA took over the

machine-gun position, he destroyed the position with a LAW rocket launcher. His one-man attack caused the NVA to abandon the area. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor, but received the Distinguished Service Cross instead.

November 1968 in Laos, although hit with shrapnel from an RPG rocket in the back and legs, he crawled forward and destroyed an NVA tank. He dragged two wounded lieutenants to safety. Although wounded twice, he dashed 300 yards to a downed helicopter, picked up an injured door-gunner and ran back to safety through a hail of enemy bullets. At daybreak, he was hit again in the back and legs in 14 places by razor-like RPG rocket fragments embedded in his flesh. Like a crazed wounded lion, he charged the enemy and killed two and captured a third. The prisoner told them that they were surrounded by a battalion and an entire NVA regiment, only 3 miles away, was moving toward them. They couldn't be extracted until the next day, if they lasted through the night. They stacked dead bodies around them like sandbags for protection from enemy bullets.

At daybreak, the NVA unleashed a heavy barrage of mortars and RPG's, but air strikes kept the NVA infantry back. A 37mm antiaircraft gun only 600 yards away threatened to prevent helicopters from landing. Howard crept within 100 yards of the gun and killed the entire crew with M-79 40mm grenades. Again he was recommended for the Medal of Honor, but the award was downgraded to a Silver Star.



SFC Robert Howard (front left) in Vietnam with some of the guys - MACVSOG (CCC). SGT Chuck Erickson (RT Colorado) is standing behind at far left. Erickson was later on the Son Tay Raid "Blueboy Element" chopper with Dick Meadows. (Photo courtesy John Plaster)

(continued...)





**Col. Robert Howard Medal of Honor recipient**

Three weeks later, he volunteered for a prisoner snatch operation into Laos. On insertion, his team of 10 were attacked by 100 NVA. Bullets poured into the helicopter from 3 directions. An ARVN (South Vietnamese) officer was killed, the door-gunner and pilot were wounded. Only Howard and another Green Beret were not hit. They saw two Soviet helicopters under camouflage nets and the NVA all-out assault was intended to kill the team before they could get a radio message off. It was a shootout beneath the still spinning rotor of the helicopter. Some NVA got within 15 yards of the Huey before being killed. One Green Beret was shot three times before falling to the ground unconscious. Howard and the other Green Beret killed dozens of the NVA, got the wounded man into the Huey and the pilot was able to lift off. Air strikes were called in to destroy the enemy helicopters. Howard received no award for this action.

Three weeks later, Howard went into Cambodia with a 40-man platoon to search for a missing Green Beret. As they climbed the hill where his emergency radio beacon was transmitting, an explosion from a Chinese claymore mine knocked Howard unconscious, knocked his rifle away and shredded his fingers. When he came to he saw an NVA soldier 10 feet away spraying a flamethrower on dead bodies. Howard grabbed a grenade and got to his knees as the NVA turned and spotted him. Howard pulled the pin and shook the grenade at the NVA taunting him. The NVA soldier turned and walked away. Howard was too badly wounded to stand so he crawled to another unconscious Green Beret and started dragging him down hill. With no weapon he hid the Green Beret in thick brush and crept downhill. An NVA jumped up firing at him, hitting his ammo pouch setting off an M-16 cartridge with such force that Howard was tossed the last few yards down the slope landing beside an American NCO. They went back up the hill killing a number of NVA and started dragging the Green Beret downhill. Heavy enemy fire and massed NVA caused them to abandon the Green Beret once more. Again they

went back for him and finally got him in friendly hands. By nightfall, only twenty or so men were left and Howard no longer expected to get out alive.

During the night the platoon repelled numerous NVA assaults. Twice Howard called gunship fire through his own position. By 4 a.m., they were almost out of ammunition and Howard was almost too exhausted and injured to think. An unusual night extraction caught the NVA by surprise and they were able to get out, but some bodies had to be left behind. For this action, he finally received the Medal of Honor.



**Bob Howard buried at Arlington Cemetery**

Where does America get such men? We are so fortunate that these men choose to serve in our military. In another time, books and movies would have been made about Bob Howard. At the very least, I can help pass along his story and I hope many of you will do the same. Read the book about other SOG missions that will just blow your mind.

**Robert Millner**  
A/2/503d





**Office of the  
Honorary Colonel  
503rd Infantry  
Regiment**

2 November 2011



**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

Distinguished and Honorary Members,  
503d Infantry Regiment  
SUBJECT: Update

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Veterans Day is fast approaching, and although we think of our deployed warriors every day, we often fail to remember those vast scores of Americans who have served our nation in both peace and war. It matters not whether veterans served three years or thirty, or were deployed to combat zones or never left CONUS. All are worthy of our admiration and our gratitude.

I have attached letters from our forward deployed commanders. Note that Brigade Commander Colonel Andy Rohling's message informs that Sky Soldiers will deploy again to Afghanistan in the early summer of 2012. My understanding of the current deployment schedule is that tours will be limited to nine months as opposed to 12-15 month deployments that were common in the past.

Some news about some of our brothers in Arms: Colonel Kevin Owens retired in July and is currently employed as a DA Civilian in Vicenza. COL Bill Ostlund surrendered his position as Deputy Commander of the Ranger Regiment and is currently ensconced at the Fletcher School, Tufts University. There will be an article in Vanity Fair magazine in the not too distant future about the Battle of Wanat. Bill provided some pictures for the article and donated the proceeds to the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation. Former Battalion Commanders Mark Stammer (2-503) and Tim McGuire (1-508 and now 1-503) were recently selected for promotion to Brigadier General.

The 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation recently launched an initiative to provide a \$300,000.00 endowment fund for the Memorial. Called the *Spartan Club*, the program is predicated on limited donations by 300 or more "*Spartan Warriors*" over ten years. For more information on the Memorial Foundation's Spartan Club and how you can participate, please visit the Foundation Website at [www.173dairbornememorial.org](http://www.173dairbornememorial.org).

Best wishes for a meaningful and joyous Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday.

*Kenneth V. Smith*

COL, USA (Ret)

Honorary Colonel, 503rd Infantry Regiment

**Sky Soldiers:**



It is a great honor to return to the 173rd Airborne Brigade and honestly quite humbling to be the Commander of such a storied organization. This Brigade has proven itself on both the Fields of Battle and during times of peace. As we prepare ourselves for yet another deployment, again to Afghanistan, I would like to assure you that today's Sky Soldiers are committed, trained and ready to complete the mission and uphold the standards expected by themselves, the 173rd Association, the Army and most importantly the people of the United States.

Like always, the Brigade is moving 100 mph. Since returning in June, we have sent a company to the Ukraine, the entire Brigade to Grafenwohr Germany, and a company to Poland. PFC Travis Williams from 2-503IN was selected by the USAREUR Commander and CSM as the United States Army Europe Soldier of the Year and will represent both the Brigade and USAREUR in the U.S Army Soldier of the Year competition in Washington next month. Another standout is SGT Rolfe from 4-319AFAR who was the Distinguished honor graduate of Air Assault School in August. These are but a few of the highlights of the last few months, much more can be found at our website at <http://www.173airborne.army.mil/index.htm>

The next couple of months hardly bring a break for the Brigade. We head to Hohenfels, Germany and the Joint Maneuver Readiness Center for the month of October to conduct a Full Spectrum Training Rotation. This event will commence with the first Brigade size Airborne Operation since our jump into Iraq in 2003. Here we will face both a near peer and unconventional enemy in a scenario that will force the Brigade to not only utilize the lessons gained during the last four Iraq/Afghanistan deployments but to recall the large scale conventional tactics so common prior to the War on Terror. It will surely be a great training event.

We will spend Nov-Dec recovering and retraining before kicking off our pre-deployment training events in Jan-Feb 2012. After loading our equipment and preparing our families, we will deploy to Afghanistan in early Summer 2012. There are sure to be exciting times ahead.

Again, it is an honor to be back in the Brigade. I look forward to the next two years as part of the team and a continued relationship with the Association.

Colonel Andrew Rohling  
"Bayonet 6"



Dear Fellow Paratroopers, friends, and families of the 503d Infantry Association:



It is my sincere privilege to write to each of you as the Commander of the FIRST ROCK Battalion. I most recently served at US Special Operations Command and assumed command of 1-503d on June 3d, 2011. Until now, I had never served in the 173d ABCT or in Vicenza, Italy so I have been overwhelmed and impressed with the pride and amazing lineage of such a prestigious unit. I am very proud to be a part of this organization and feel as though I have won the lottery to be selected to command this exemplary outfit.

It is an exciting time to serve in the First Rock! I assumed command at the close of the Army Forces Generation Cycle I (ARFORGEN I) for the 173d ABCT, meaning that the Brigade's 180-day post-deployment window was complete and the moratorium on overnight and collective training was lifted effective June 1st. Since then, the Battalion has deployed to Grafenwoehr, Germany for Expert Infantryman Badge training and testing, for individual and collective live-fire training densities, and the 173d ABCT just returned from the first Full Spectrum Training Environment (FSTE) Rotation at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany since about 2002. This event was very significant for the Battalion, the Brigade, and the Army, as this construct forms the basis for training operational units on the new model of operating in an expeditionary environment against a hybrid enemy threat. 11 nations brought parts of their armies and air forces to participate and to see how the mighty US Army and 173d ABCT prepare our soldiers for "the next war." Some aspects were very familiar to high-intensity conflict and force-on-force operations against a near-peer military force, others smacked of counter-insurgency tactics, while other aspects bent the rules and mindsets of how future warfare might be conducted. It was very challenging and rewarding to say the least. During this rotation, First Rock Paratroopers inserted by parachute assault constituting over half of the 1000-man Brigade assault force, and culminated our last mission with a Battalion (-) air assault.

On November 28th, we will conduct a Battalion Change of Responsibility Ceremony between outgoing SGM Michael D. Williamson, who has been my faithful airborne buddy since I arrived and will go to Fort Benning, Georgia to assume CSM duties, and incoming CSM Mickey R. Rutledge, who arrives to us from US Army Pacific. As we prepare for combat yet again, the Battalion team continues to build fidelity while ensuring our paratroopers and their families are balanced with all the competing demands of a high training operational tempo. This Brigade's fourth Afghanistan deployment since 2006 is on the horizon, and our First Rock Team grows stronger with each training event and new leaders' arrival. The State of the Battalion is great and we will strive to make our 503rd Infantry Regiment veterans proud. Thank you for your continued patronage of the unit and our nation's military. Proud to serve!

*Sky Soldiers! First Rock!*

**"EAGLE 6"**

Jeremy J. Schroeder  
Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding

Friends of The ROCK:



It is an honor to introduce myself as the new Battalion Commander of 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry. I am extremely proud to join CSM Mike Ferrusi as part of the command team. I assumed command of the battalion on 02 JUN 2011 and I am extremely humbled to have the opportunity to serve in the regiment. There is nowhere else I would rather be! Despite my pride of my past service in other units, it is very tough to compete with the esprit and amazing lineage of the 503rd Infantry Regiment.

As we prepare for combat yet again, the battalion will maintain a high training OPTEMPO until next Spring. Since I joined the Sky Soldiers of 2nd Battalion we have executed EIB training and multiple deployments up to Germany for collective live fire training. Soon we will execute US Army Europe's first Full Spectrum Operations (FSO) rotation at JMRC. Earlier this summer we executed Expert Infantryman's Badge (EIB) training. Our EIB candidates had a very high success rate and the CSM and I were most pleased with the high amount of PVTs and PFCs who were awarded their EIBs. This is a great indicator of the future superb young NCO population for this battalion; our future is bright!

As we look ahead, we prepare ourselves for our fourth Afghanistan deployment since 2006. The CSM and I are confident the 2nd Battalion Sky Soldiers will display amazing resiliency again and successfully accomplish the myriad of difficult combat tasks that our Nation asks of us. We will continue to strive to make our 503rd Infantry Regiment veterans proud.

Sky Soldiers! The ROCK!

**"ROCK 6"**

MICHAEL M. LARSEN  
LTC, IN  
Commanding



"Members of the 173d Airborne Brigade jump out of a military airplane during a training in Hohenfels, southern Germany, on Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011. Some 1,500 US paratroops have jumped over the Hohenfels training area in a massive airborne training operation."  
(AP Photo/Matthias Schrader)



# A call to honor: Veteran remembers fierce fight, lost friends

By Donna Jones  
Santa Cruz Sentinel



On left, Steve Welch in Dak To, Vietnam, 1967.



Steve's dad, Harold



Father and son, combat vets....soldiering on together.

**SANTA CRUZ** — Steve Welch has carried a bullet in his spine for more than four decades, a souvenir from his tour of duty in Vietnam.

But it's the memories he holds in his head that hurt. Welch, who served in the U.S. Army's 173d Airborne Brigade, fought in one of the deadliest battles of the war. Today, as America honors its veterans, that experience gives Welch special insight into their sacrifice.

"Sometimes you can't know what a person's been through just by looking at them," said Welch, 64. Welch, a Santa Cruz High School graduate, enlisted in the Army. His father, Harold, knowing something of putting your life on the line from his service in Gen. George Patton's 3rd Army during World War II, tried to talk his son out of becoming a soldier.

"I said, 'son, you're going to see things you've never seen before,'" said Harold Welch, 87. "Some things you'll never forget."

His father proved right about the psychic scars, but Welch couldn't ignore the call of duty. "I felt that we had dues to pay for living in a free country," he said.

Welch arrived in Vietnam in January 1967, and was a battle-seasoned sergeant by Nov. 19 when he and 329 other members of the brigade's 2nd Battalion were ordered to take part in an assault on Hill 875 in Kontum Province.

As he and his squad headed up the mountain, Welch noticed humps he suspected were enemy bunkers. He grew uneasy and before leaving the shelter of trees radioed his concerns to a commanding officer, who told the men to go forward.

As the soldiers advanced in the open, they came under heavy fire. With no cover, they were cut down by an enemy protected by trenches and bunkers shored up with stout logs. Before long, Welch was surrounded by the dead and wounded. Intense fighting prevented helicopters from evacuating the injured and resupplying survivors. Worse, from downhill came the sound of weapons, a sign that they were surrounded.

By nightfall, most of their officers were dead, and the nightmare was just beginning. As dark fell, a U.S. pilot dropped a 500-pound bomb on the American lines. More than 40 U.S. soldiers perished, and many more were wounded. Lying in shallow trenches dug with their helmets, the remaining soldiers fought on. By the time relief arrived late the next day, more than a quarter of the soldiers in the 2nd battalion had been killed.

"I lost a lot of friends on that hill," Welch said. Just before he left Vietnam in January 1968, a fellow soldier accidentally shot Welch while cleaning his gun. The bullet lodged in his spine, and he went numb below the waist. But Welch's body recovered from the trauma of the hit and feeling returned, though the bullet was not removed.

The emotional numbness he felt during the battle for Hill 875 lasted much longer. It wasn't until the 1990s that Welch sought help. A therapist encouraged him to put his feelings down on paper, and Welch began to write poetry.

"Just want it to end, memories of all those lost friends," he wrote. "How can one year of your life, 44 years later still haunt you at night?"

-----



After visiting *The Wall* in Washington D.C., Steve Welch wrote this poem

### Washington Memorial

Many families beckon to its call.  
As they travel many miles to see this black granite wall.  
Many sons and daughters live in this place.  
Mothers cry, as they will never again see their loved ones faces.

Standing there touching the many names.  
Remembering the soldiers at the door who came.  
A father wept as part of him died.  
Welling up inside feeling all the loss and pride.

Wives can remember his tender touch.  
Because of how she loved him so very much.  
She looks at her grown-up children and starts to weep.  
Because the pain of his death went so deep.

A small girl kneels to place a card to be sent.  
Turns to her mother and says, *"Is this where grandpa lives?"*  
Her mother starts to cry as the tears roll down her face.  
*"Yes honey this is my father's and many others honored place."*

The young men and women who never knew their dad.  
Grew up without his love and guidance, which was sad.  
Many women also died in this horrible War.  
And they are remembered deeply in the Wall's Core.

Many Veterans' brothers fill the walkways' path.  
Hugging and crying thinking of those days in the past.  
Searching for names of the ones they will always miss.  
Showing all the emotions and respect as they read the Wall's list.

Thousands of grateful tears have fallen on this path.  
There will never come a day when we will see the last.  
For this is what happens when a War ends.  
As the honored young men and women are remembered by family and friends.



A 2/503d trooper ready for his combat jump in Vietnam, February 22, 1967, as French photo-journalist Catherine Leroy prepares to snap a photo. The late Catherine Leroy also made the combat jump with the 173d.

(Photo by Steve Welch)

### WHAT PILOTS SEE WHEN LANDING AT OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE

A farmer does this with his tractor. He uses GPS to get the letters readable. He has done this every fall for several years now. Here's the view from the flight pattern into Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue, NE just south of Omaha. This is what our servicemen and women see when landing at the base. Hat tip to the Bellevue farmer who made it happen!



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

### A Quick Look at Veterans' Issues By The Numbers

Sent in by "Sgt. Rock" Steve Vargo, C/2/503d

**950**

Number of suicide attempts per month among veterans receiving care at VA.

**700,000**

Number of troops who have been deployed to war zone twice or more.

**77%**

Of troops have shot or directed fire at the enemy.

**86%**

Of troops who know someone who was seriously injured or killed.

**13.5%**

Unemployment rate for female veterans of the long-running wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**15 per 100,000**

Number of female veterans who commit suicide when downrange.

[Source: *American Veteran*, Fall 2001 issue]



## Reunions of the Airborne Kind



**517 PRCT Florida Mini-Reunion**, January 14 - 16, 2012, Ramada Hotel & Inn Gateway, Kissimmee, FL.

**Contact:**

**Brenda Verbeck Mortensen**

**Phn: 813-335-8002**

**Eml: [bverbeck@gmail.com](mailto:bverbeck@gmail.com)**

-----



**2012 Currahee Reunion, 3rd Battalion 506th Infantry Regiment (Airborne)**, May 2 - 5, 2012. Hilton Garden Inn, Columbus, GA

**Contact:**

**Hoyt Bruce Moore, III**

**Web: [www.506infantry.org/reunion.htm](http://www.506infantry.org/reunion.htm)**

-----



**101st Airborne, 2012 Snowbird Reunion**. February 15 - 18, 2012. The Doubletree Hotel, Tampa, FL. *Hosted by the 101st Florida Gulf Coast and Sunshine State Chapters.*

**Contact:**

**Web: [www.101abnfgcc.org](http://www.101abnfgcc.org)**

-----



**Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67** is having a reunion in Lexington, Kentucky the same days as the 173d Association annual reunion next June. So far, about 12 members have indicated they will attend. Watch this space for details to follow.

-----



**82nd Airborne Div., Winter Weekend Getaway**, February 24 - 26, 2012, Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa, Hilton Head, SC, hosted by Ben Vandervoort Chapter.

**Contact:**

**Bill Eberle**

**Phn: 843-682-4171**

**Eml: [airborneben#hargray.com](mailto:airborneben#hargray.com)**

-----



**173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion**, June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Pages 13-16.

**Contact:**

**Dave Carmon**

**Eml: [dcarmon@roadrunner.com](mailto:dcarmon@roadrunner.com)**

**Web: [www.skysoldier17.com](http://www.skysoldier17.com)**

-----



**A Company 2/327, 101st Airborne, Vietnam Veterans 2012 Gathering**. April 26 - 28, 2012, The Marten House Hotel, Indianapolis, IN,

**Contact:**

**Dennis Sheridan**

**Phn: 817-504-1750**

-----



**Casper Platoon Reunion 2012**, June 28 - 30 & July 1, 2012, Hilton San Francisco Financial District, San Francisco, CA

**Contact:**

**Steve Greene**

**Reunion Chairman**

**Web: [greenaire@mac.com](mailto:greenaire@mac.com)**

-----

**Note:** If you're aware of any upcoming Airborne reunions please send details to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)



# 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](http://www.lexington.hyatt.com)

Information and Forms will be posted soon at [www.skysoldier.org](http://www.skysoldier.org) and [www.Skysoldier17.com](http://www.Skysoldier17.com)



# ~ REUNION PROGRAM ~

Hosted by Midwest Chapter 17



## June 6 - Wednesday

0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
0900 – 2230 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
1800 – 2000 President's Reception @ Jasmine-Franklin

## June 7 - Thursday

0700 – 1230 Golf Outing TBA GC  
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar

## June 8 - Friday

0830 – 1030 Gold Star Reception & Breakfast @ Regency 1  
0900 – 1100 Board of Directors Meeting @ Regency 3  
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Lobby  
0900 – 2200 Vendors @ Kentucky Room  
1000 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
1100 – 1500 Kentucky Veterans Memorial – Frankfort – VFW Lunch

## June 9 - Saturday

0830 – 1000 Ladies Brunch @ Bluegrass Pre-function Area  
0900 – 1130 General Membership Meeting @ Regency 1&2  
0900 – 1700 Registration @ Regency 1 Foyer  
0900 – 2330 Hospitality @ Hyttops Sports Bar  
0900 – 2300 Vendors @ Kentucky Room

## Banquet

1800 – 1845 Cocktail Hour @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
1845 – 1900 Post Colors/Convocation @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
1900 – 2035 Dinner @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
2035 – 2115 Speakers & Awards @ Bluegrass Ballroom  
2115 Retire the Colors

## June 10 Sunday

0800 – 0900 Memorial Service @ Regency 1  
1130 Reunion Closing

**BE SURE TO ATTEND OPERATION CORREGIDOR II**



## 173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION 2012 REUNION



JUNE 6-10, 2012, LEXINGTON, KY

### ~ Registration Form ~

Please print. Copy form for additional guest(s)

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Brigade Unit Served With: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates served: \_\_\_\_\_

### Registration/Event Fees

(Check boxes)

Per Sky Soldier Association Member  \$99.  
Per Each Guest. (Number of Guest(s) \_\_\_\_ )  \$75.  
Children free - unless attending Reunion dinner  
Per Child or all other extra dinner only guests  \$40.  
Per Gold Star Family Member  \$75.  
Per Active duty Soldier (Not on Orders)  \$75.  
Per Active Duty Soldier on Orders  Free  
(i.e. Command, Color Guard)  
Per Vendor Table  \$75.  
Ladies Brunch (Number attending \_\_\_\_ )  Includ  
Per player in Golf Tournament (No: \_\_\_\_ )  \$45

Enclosed is my check for this Total Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make Check Payable and Mail to:

Midwest Chapter 17  
P.O. Box 09640  
Columbus, OH 43209

### Hotel Reservations:

Hyatt Regency – Lexington, \$115.00 + tax per night.  
Reservations: 1-800-233-1234

Request group rate for 173d Airborne Assn. guestroom block or code G-173A. This is also the code to use if making reservations on-line at - [www.lexington.hyatt.com](http://www.lexington.hyatt.com)

Overflow Hotel:

To be announced

### "HISTORY, HORSES & HOOCH"

2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / December 2011 – Issue 35

Page 14 of 50



# OPERATION CORREGIDOR II

## Honoring our WWII Paratroopers of the 503<sup>rd</sup> PRCT

Midwest Chapter 17 is proud to announce we will be inviting paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought throughout the Pacific during WWII to attend next year's 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY as guests of the officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade. This is *troopers honoring troopers* and is not sanctioned by either the 173d or 503rd Associations. It's a paratrooper thang.

In 2010, at the annual reunion in N. Myrtle Beach, SC hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30, five (5) troopers of the 503rd attended as guests of men of our Brigade and friends of the 173d and 503rd. As honest Abe once said,

***“Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure,”***

and that's just what we'll be doing in Lexington, honoring these men.

Of the over 3000 men who served with the 503rd during WWII, sadly, less than 100 troopers are still with us. We hope you'll join in not only helping out with the funding (until sufficient funds have been raised), but attending our reunion next June and meeting these troopers personally and attending the WWII interactive presentations.

To date, these Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d and 503rd have made contributions getting us to about 2/3 the way to where we need to be. Our thanks to each of you! *Airborne!!*

Steve Aballa, 2/503  
 Ron Amyot, 2/503  
 John Arnold, 1RAR  
 Jim Baskin, 4/503  
 Bob Beemer, 2/503  
 Jerry Berry, 4/503  
 Pat Bowe, 2/503  
 Wayne Bowers, 2/503  
 Jim Brookmiller, 4/503  
 Bob Bruce, 1/503  
 Bob Carmichael, 2/503  
 Chapter 27, Australia  
 Chapter 30, 173d  
 Bob Clark, 5<sup>th</sup> SF  
 Harry Cleland, 2/503  
 John Cleland, 173d Bde  
 Dave Colbert, 2/503  
 Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP  
 Terry Davis, 2/503  
 Bruce Demboski, C/2/503  
 George Dexter, 2/503  
 Roger Dick, 2/503  
 Tom Dooley, 2/503  
 Jim Dresser, 2/503  
 Frank Dukes, 2/503  
 Scott Fairchild, 82<sup>nd</sup> Abn  
 Pat Feely, B Med  
 Paul Fisher, 3/503  
 Craig Ford, 1/503  
 Joe Franklin, 173d Bde  
 A.B. Garcia, 2/503  
 Tony Geishouser, Cowboys  
 Jim Gettel, 2/503  
 Johnny Graham, 2/503  
 Larry Hampton, 1/503  
 Jerry Hassler, 2/503  
 Dick Holt, 2/503  
 Nick Hun, 2/503  
 Ken Kaplan, 2/503  
 Ed Kearney, 2/503  
 Jack Kelley, 2/503  
 Bill Knapp, 2/503  
 Gary Kozdron, 1/503  
 John Kyne, 2/503  
 Joe Lamb, 2/503  
 Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503  
 Joe Logan, 2/503  
 Roy Lombardo, 2/503

Bob Lucas, 2/503  
 Richard Martinez, 2/503  
 Jim Montague, 2/503  
 Butch Nery, 4/503, N75  
 Hal Nobles, 3/503  
 Bill Ostlund, 173d  
 Jack Owens, 2/503  
 Larry Paladino, 2/503  
 Ed Perkins, 2/503  
 Lou Pincock, 2/503  
 Jack Price, 2/503  
 Gary Prisk, 2/503  
 Lou Pincock, 2/503  
 Bill Reynolds, 2/503  
 Jack Ribera, 2/503  
 Jim Robinson, 2/503  
 Lee Robinson, 2/503  
 Graham Rollings, 2/503  
 Jack Schimpf, 2/503  
 Bill Shipp, 2/503 N75  
 Roy Scott, 3/319  
 Lew Smith, 2/503  
 Jerry Sopko, 2/503  
 Larry Speed, 1/503  
 Jim Stanford, 2/503  
 George Stapleton, 3/503  
 Mike Sturges, 2/503  
 Bob Sweeney, 2/503  
 Bill Thomas, 2/503  
 Marc Thurston, 2/503  
 Alt Turner, 2/503  
 Steve Vargo, 2/503  
 Jerry Wiles, B/2/503  
 Ron Woodley, 2/503  
 Bill Wyatt, 2/503

We're raising necessary funds to cover the cost associated with inviting between 3 and 5 503rd troopers and their spouses or a family member. For information about donating to this worthy effort, please contact [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) for details, or use the form on the following page to send in your donation to this worth effort.





# ~ OPERATION CORREGIDOR II ~



## Honoring our WWII 503rd Paratroopers at 173d Reunion in Lexington

**Yes! I am honored to support bringing to the 173d Airborne Brigade Association's annual reunion in Lexington, KY paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought in the Pacific during WWII as guests of our Brigade.**

**My name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit: \_\_\_\_\_**

**To help offset the cost for this, enclosed is my check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.**

**Please add to note line "503rd Guest Donation" and mail check payable to:**

**Midwest Chapter 17**

**P.O. Box 09640**

**Columbus, OH 43209**

**Note: Your donation, not to exceed \$100., will be used to help defray the cost of hotel rooms, reunion registrations and special gifts to our 503rd PRCT guests on behalf of the officers and men of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep).**



**L-R: WWII 503rd PRCT troopers who attended the Myrtle Beach Reunion in 2010 as guests of our Brigade: Chet Nycum, Chuck Breit, Charlie Hylton, Paul Hinds and John Cleland.**



**Chuck teaching lyrics to *Blood on the Risers* to 1st Bat's Craig Ford in SC.**



**Charlie ready to burst out in song before doing a mean Texas 2 Step.**



**You could hear a pin drop as Chet told of his PLF on *The Rock*.**



**Honoring those 503<sup>rd</sup> super troopers at 173d reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC, 2010.**



***"Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure"***

***~ President Abraham Lincoln***



# FADING MEMORIES

As many webmasters have discovered, when you build it, they will come. No, not the legendary baseball playing apparitions from a corn-*Field of Dreams*, but snapshots from the bottom of old WWII Army footlockers and from musty, decrepit shoe-boxes!

Our Aussie mate, Paul Whitman, started <http://corregidor.org> about Corregidor back in about 1998, and he is amazed how many snapshots taken by paratroopers of the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team are still around. It is from these materials that he provides our newsletter with stories and photos from WWII.

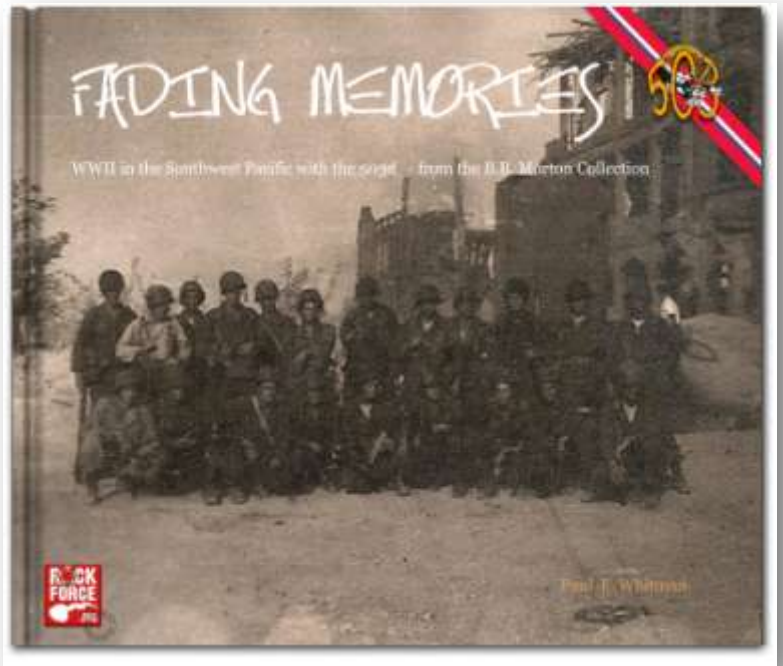
“Occasionally, there’s a trooper who has passed, and his family is left with a collection of faded, dog-eared snapshots of the young men he served with, but with no names and no places,” he says, “and very little they can do about it. When ‘print on demand’ publishing came along, I decided to compile my personal off-line archive of them. It was a project that just grew. Hopefully I can give their family lineage a Heritage they can readily understand the importance of, and be proud of.” (“And keep them off eBay,” he adds.)

The men who managed to carry cameras with them through their years in the SWPA weren’t assigned to tell photographic stories, and their photos were not intended to do anything other than to provide them with images of the faces of their friends, and what they had seen and done, so their families could know. They had another job to do, of course, to follow orders and to fight a war. Thus, many of the personal images are an afterthought of combat, or are of what happened in their off hours.” “They also swapped snapshots a lot,” he says.

“**FADING MEMORIES**” is Paul’s seventh publication and it includes images from three WWII paratrooper personalities, B. B. Morton, Sherman L. “Bull” Durham and Mike Parendo who each survived New Guinea, Noemfoor, Mindoro, Corregidor and Negros - a “Mac’s” tour of SWPA.

The images are courtesy of Cindy Durham Crawford.

Published by Blurb.com



## More about the 503d PRCT WWII Series

Without ever intending it, <http://503prct.org>, an offshoot of Corregidor.Org, has built up a series of informative historic publications which present aspects of Corregidor and of the travels and travails the men of 503d experienced in the SWPA.

- **Combat Over Corregidor** – by Dr. Charles Bradford, the 2d Bn Surgeon – the only eye-witness memoir written solely about the 503d on Corregidor. The best, most personal Corregidor manuscript available.
- **Amid Th’ Encircling Gloom** – Al McGrew’s retrospective of Corregidor in 1941-2 and his unlikely survival as a prisoner of the Japanese – Bilibid, Cabanatuan III, Pasay School, the Hell Ships.
- **503 The Rock Regiment in the Southern Philippines** – a pictorial of the 503d post-Corregidor, in the Negros Campaign.
- **Moments in Passing** – a pictorial of the “early Days” of the 503d PIR in Australia & New Guinea, selected from Chet Nycum’s Collection
- **More Moments** – a companion pictorial with selections from the Emmett Wester Collection
- **Rock Force – The All-American Team retakes Corregidor** - a pictorial collection of Corregidor 1945 images you’d get if you spent two weeks at the National Archives with your scanner.
- **Fading Memories – WWII in the SWPA with the 503d** – Images from the B.B. Morton Collection. 200 pages, 201 images.

Previews of the books are available – go to <http://503prct.org> and click on the Publications tab.



BOOK PREVIEWS ARE AVAILABLE AT: <http://corregidor.org/publications.htm>



Note: Paul asked we include this final notice for Battalion coins.

## Last Opportunity to Order Your Battalion Coin

I am introducing you to 4 coins I did to honor the service of the combat paratroopers of all 4 Battalions in the Brigade. AVAILABLE NOW.

They are \$10. per coin plus \$2.50 for shipping of one or two coins. Shipping for 3 or more coins is \$4.50 in U.S.

If interested please pass on to your readership the availability of these coins. I only produced 100 of the 1, 3, 4 Battalion coins, and 200 of the 2nd Batt coins. After they are gone I am done.

After expenses ALL profits are donated to the 173d Memorial and to a local Food Bank. ALL PROFITS are given away.

Please send a note indicating which coin(s) you are ordering and include your check payable to:

**Paul R. Fisher, LTC (Ret)**  
**3/503d**  
**81 Oak Lane**  
**Eatontown, NJ 07724**

If you have any questions please call me:

**Cell (908) 489-0366**  
**Home (732) 542-1598**

### Coin Design ~ Front:

Battalion Number Banner.

Circle of the countries where the Brigade has fought (3rd and 4th did not go to Iraq or Afghanistan but the Brigade did).

Center is the WWII Eagle patch of the 503rd Airborne Infantry.

### Coin Design ~ Back:

Top: Master Jumps wings (for the Brigade not each individual).

Gold Star for 5 combat Jumps (3 in WWII, 1 VN and 1 Iraq)

CIB: 1st and 2nd Battalions three awards for WWII, VN and SW Asia).

3rd and 4th (2 awards of CIB WWII and VN).

Rock designation 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4<sup>th</sup>.

Dual Battalion Crests.

Brigade Patch.

Sky Soldier for the name the Chinese gave the Brigade.

Coin color Dark Purple for the blood combat paratroopers spilled on the battlefield.

**1/503d**



**2/503d**



**3/503d**



**4/503d**



*Airborne.....All The Way!*



# Obama signs bipartisan bill to help jobless vets

By JULIE PACE | AP – Tue, Nov 22, 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — Heralding a rare moment of bipartisan agreement, President Barack Obama signed into law Monday legislation aimed at helping unemployed veterans find work while putting more cash in the hands of companies with government contracts. The legislation, which creates tax breaks for companies that hire jobless veterans, marks the first proposal from Obama's \$447 billion jobs bill to be signed into law. The rest of the package of new taxes and spending has largely failed to garner support from Republican lawmakers.

*"Because Democrats and Republicans came together, I'm proud to sign those proposals into law,"* Obama said during a signing ceremony Monday.

Looming over the brief moment of unity, however, was the apparent failure of lawmakers from both parties to agree on \$1.2 trillion in spending cuts ahead of a Wednesday deadline by a special committee. While Obama didn't directly address the looming deadline, he said the American people deserve bold, bipartisan action. *"My message to every member of Congress is keep going. Keep working. Keep finding more ways to put partisanship aside and put more Americans back to work,"* he said.

The veterans' legislation had overwhelming support from both parties, with the House passing the measure 422-0 and the Senate approving it 95-0. In addition to the tax breaks for businesses, it also beefs up job-training and counselling programs for unemployed veterans. The legislation also repeals a 2006 law that would have required the federal, state and local governments to withhold 3 percent of their payments to nearly all contractors. That statute, which doesn't take effect until 2013, was supposed to pressure contractors to pay their taxes in full, but lawmakers now say the law would deny cash to companies that need it to hire more workers.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said passage of the bill showed that it is possible for both parties to reach a consensus. *"By focusing on areas of agreement — rather than partisan stimulus bills — we can pass legislation to help foster job growth. Neither of these measures alone is going to solve the jobs crisis, but they'll provide relief to job creators and help American veterans,"* McConnell said.

McConnell praised Obama for inviting Republican Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts to attend the ceremony. It was Brown who had introduced the 3 percent withholding bill.

Brown was joined on stage with the president by two other GOP lawmakers — Florida Rep. Jeff Miller and Tennessee Rep. Diane Black — as well as a handful of Democrats.

The tax credits for hiring veterans will cost the government an estimated \$95 million — a tiny fraction of Obama's overall jobs plan. The credits would be as much as \$9,600 for companies hiring disabled vets who have looked for work for more than half a year. The size of the credit would be based on the worker's salary and how long the worker was unemployed.

The programs would be financed mostly by extending a fee the Veterans Affairs Department charges to back mortgages. Erasing the withholding requirement for contractors would reduce federal revenues by an estimated \$11.2 billion over the coming decade. It would be paid for by making it harder for some elderly people to qualify for Medicaid by changing the formula used to determine their eligibility.

Many economists have said annulling the withholding law would have a minimal impact on hiring.



**We Can't Wait: Leading Veterans Organizations Back Returning Heroes, Wounded Warrior Tax Credits. President Barack Obama greets representatives from leading veterans' service organizations in the Oval Office before delivering remarks on the American Jobs Act in the Rose Garden, Nov. 7, 2011. The President spoke about tax credits included in the American Jobs Act and new executive actions that will help get veterans back to work.**

(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)



# Phan Thai

Over 45 years ago,  
Republic of South  
Vietnam, 173d  
Airborne Brigade

By Steve Konek, Sr.

Once in a while you are sometimes fortunate enough to meet a special individual. I consider my friend Phan Thai to be one such person. At the time I could not imagine that our lives would be entangled from that time forward.

I transferred in to the Brigade S-5, Civil Affairs from the Brigade Staff Commo Section. Civil Affairs gave me the opportunity to get exposed to the Vietnamese -- that is what I had come to Vietnam for.



**Operation in Ho Bo Woods. Civil Affairs – Dr. Anderson on left, with S-5 interpreter Sgt. Phan Thai**



**Operation in Ho Bo Woods. Civil Affairs – Sgt. Phan Thai, unknown doctor and PFC Karl Witt from S-5.**

There were approximately 50 interpreters attached to the Brigade at the time. They were assigned throughout the Brigade, rotating around from the line companies to the staff sections and everywhere in between. Thai had

started out with the 172d MID, Brigade Military Intelligence section after joining the RSVN Army in 1965.

In 1966 he transferred to the S-5 as interpreter and this is where we first crossed paths. Shortly after I arrived in S-5, the Brigade interpreters were offered the opportunity to become jump qualified. Of the 50 interpreters, only two volunteered; Thai was one of the two and off he went to jump school. I gained new respect for him, as he was a volunteer, one of us. We became friends during our time in civil affairs.



**LT Emery Mikula, Civil Affairs -- KIA, Operation Robin.**

Thai rotated and hooked up with B/2/503d during operations in the Iron Triangle, Cedar Falls, Junction City and north to Dak To. I would run across him at times and always worried after his welfare. In November of 1967, I finished 19 months with the Brigade and transferred to Saigon to finish out my enlistment and time in Vietnam with the 4th PSYOP Group. The NVA followed me south as the Tet offensive shattered the peace of the city a few months later.

On payday each month, the interpreters were allowed to return home to take their pay to their families. Good fortune for me, Thai and two other interpreters from the 173d lived in Saigon and we would all fall in together each month. We would have dinner at one of the member's homes, rotating around from month to month. Seems there was always a lot of alcohol involved and the Vietnamese took great delight in trying to get me to eat something exotic after I was sufficiently intoxicated.

They had a big laugh after talking me into chewing on a pig's ear! I still haven't gotten even but I have not forgotten. I was accepted into Thai's family as another member. I left Vietnam and the Army in 1968.

*(continued....)*





**Sgt. Phan Thai during Operation Robin – Highway 15, Forward Base Camp.**

Thai left the 173d in 1969 and joined C/75th Abn Rangers and was promoted to E-7. In 1971, he transferred to the Vietnamese Special Forces and in 1973 transferred to the Vietnamese Navy where he was a Chief E-8. Thai, along with his younger brother and new wife, escaped the country by boat on the day Saigon fell in 1975. After a harrowing journey, transferring from a sinking ship at sea, a year in a refugee camp in Hong Kong, and time in a camp in Pennsylvania, they took-up residence at my home in Seattle. For the second time, they had given-up everything they had worked for to ensure they could live freely.

This had not been his first journey to escape the communists. Thai's family had left their home in Hanoi in 1954, under the pretense of going to the shore for

the weekend, but instead boarded a ship south, and escaped the communist government taking power in the North. To all of our joy, Thai's parents, my Vietnamese parents, were able to immigrate a few years later.



**Thai's good buddy, then PFC Steve Konek, near Bien Hoa, RSVN.**

November 5th Thai and me, together with fellow members of the Airborne community marched together in the Auburn, WA veterans day parade under the banner of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep). It has been a great blessing to have this bond and has always been a positive memory of my time in Vietnam.



**Thai, on right, at 2011 Veteran's Day Parade. A Sky Soldier, Vietnam Vet, and U.S. Citizen.**





## VA Plans 3,000 Units of Housing for Veterans at 25 Locations Nationwide

*Continues Ongoing Efforts to Provide Housing to Veterans*

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs has entered agreements to provide more than 3,000 units of permanent and transitional housing for Veterans at 25 VA medical center campuses nationwide. Additionally, agreements are pending on an additional 1,000 units, which we anticipate completing in the coming weeks.

Proposed opportunities include housing for homeless Veterans, senior Veterans, disabled Veterans, other at-risk Veteran populations, and their families. *“As we approach Veterans Day, it is important that we never forget the sacrifices made by our Veterans to ensure the freedom and independence all Americans cherish,”* said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. *“These efforts to ensure the well-being of our Veterans and their families demonstrate our Nation’s gratitude for their service and commitment to honoring their dedication.”*

The agreements are part of VA’s Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative. BURR is a VA strategic effort to identify and repurpose unused VA land and buildings in support of VA’s goal to end Veteran homelessness. VA is using its enhanced-use lease authority to permit third-party providers to finance, design, develop, maintain and operate housing with on-site supportive services, on a priority basis, for Veterans and their families.

The co-location of these projects on VAMC campuses ensures that Veterans have ready access to care and treatment designed to help them attain long-term independence and self-sufficiency.

An estimated total of 5,300 units of affordable and supportive housing will be provided to Veterans. This number includes projects already in operation or underway.

VA is proceeding with agreements with third-party providers at 25 sites nationwide. These sites and proposed developments include:

- Canandaigua, NY – 48 transitional and permanent housing units
- Fort Howard, MD – 1,437 housing units
- Lyons, NJ – 62 permanent housing units
- Newington, CT – 74 permanent housing units
- Alexandria, LA – 70 transitional housing units

- Kerrville, TX – 100 units of assisted living/extended care housing
- Knoxville, IA – 75 units of permanent housing
- Newington, CT – 100 units of assisted living/extended care housing
- Northampton, MA – 48 permanent housing units
- Roseburg, OR – 44 permanent and 10 transitional housing units
- Bath, NY – 40 permanent and transitional housing units
- Battle Creek, MI – 100 permanent housing units
- Bedford, MA – 70 permanent housing units
- Brockton, MA – 14 permanent housing units
- Fort Harrison, MT – 100 permanent housing units
- Hines, IL – 120 permanent housing units
- Menlo Park, CA – 60 permanent housing units
- Minneapolis, MN – 58 permanent housing units
- Northport, NY – 110 permanent housing units
- Sacramento, CA – 99 bed nursing care facility
- Spokane, WA – 60 units of assisted living
- St. Cloud, MN – 35 permanent housing units
- Togus, ME – 50 permanent housing units
- Tuscaloosa, AL – 26 permanent housing units
- Vancouver, WA – 42 permanent housing units

For additional information regarding the BURR initiative, please visit

<http://jvwlistserv.org/emailmarketer/link.php?M=6393&N=117&L=92&F=H>

For all other questions regarding the BURR initiative please contact [VA\\_BURR@va.gov](mailto:VA_BURR@va.gov)

[Sent in by John “Top” Searcy, HHC/2/503d, and circulated by Jose Gonzalez, 1/503d]

### ***What is a Vet?***

*“He is an ordinary and yet an extraordinary human being - a person who offered some of his life's most vital years in the service of his country, and who sacrificed his ambitions so others would not have to sacrifice theirs.*

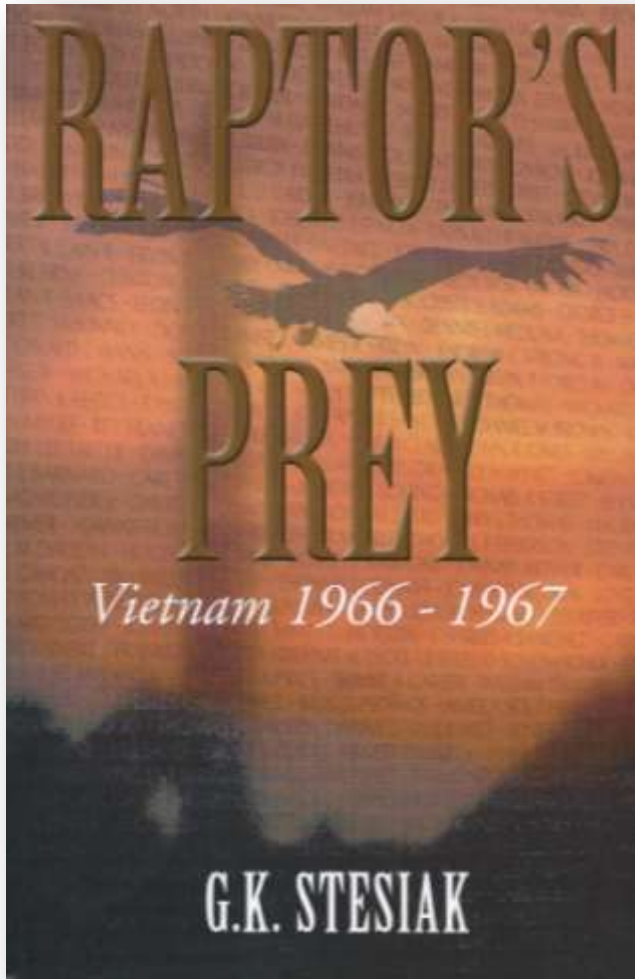
*He is a soldier and a savior and a sword against the darkness, and he is nothing more than the finest, greatest testimony on behalf of the finest, greatest nation ever known.*

*So remember, each time you see someone who has served our country, just lean over and say Thank You. That's all most people need, and in most cases it will mean more than any medals they could have been awarded or were awarded.”*

Father Demos Edward O’Brien, USMC



*A Sky Soldier's Tale of War*  
By G.K. Stesiak



Gerry (Doc) Stesiak served as a Medic with A/4/503 in 1966/67. In 1966, he made a promise to his fellow paratroopers. With the publishing of this book, he has fulfilled that promise.

*“The Author takes the reader on a journey from the world of the US Army in 1964, to Vietnam aboard ship in 1966. Did our boys know what they were getting themselves into? Did the US Government know what they got themselves into? An unforgettably powerful read destined to become a classic of an era some of us would choose not to remember.”*

*“This is more than a book. Raptor's Prey is a time machine that puts the reader directly into the sights and smells, feelings and emotions of that incredible war. This powerful work should be read by everyone too young to remember Vietnam – and everybody old enough to think they have forgotten it.”*

**Jack Lessenberry, former National Editor and Foreign Correspondent, Detroit News**

Available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

~ JOB OPPORTUNITY ~

A friend of mine was asked to circulate this notice for an Executive Director role for Transitional Living Services for Veterans in Woodstock, IL. If you have someone who is qualified and wishes to make contact with this group, my friend is willing to provide an introduction. Have them contact me. RAGMAN.

**Robert A. Getz**  
Task Force CO, 2/503d  
[rgetz173@yahoo.com](mailto:rgetz173@yahoo.com)

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

JOB TITLE: Executive Director

STATUS: Full-time

REPORTS TO: TLS Board of Directors

**SUMMARY:** The position of Executive Director is responsible for managing the operations and fiscal activities of Transitional Living Services. This position is ultimately responsible for monitoring, oversight, supervision and appraisal of staff, program implementation and evaluation, marketing, and accounting. The working rapport between the Executive Director and the Board is critical to the success of the TLS agency. The primary difference in scope of responsibility between the Executive Director and the Board of Directors is the Executive Director is primarily responsible for Administration Management and Operations which applies precedent rather than establishes precedent; whereas the role of the Board of Directors is Governance and establishing policy with a long-term duration or impact on the agency.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** include *Public Relations, Program Development and Administration*. Other duties may be assigned.

**QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:** To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

**EDUCATION and/or EXPERIENCE:** The Executive Director is required to hold a Master's degree from an accredited institution of higher education. Appropriate fields of study and/or experience in public or business administration, social work, community development, educational leadership or equivalents are required.

**Note:** Contact Bob for complete job description and requirements.



## AUSSIES LOOKING TO ACQUIRE VIETNAM WAR HUEY

I am the President of the Loch Sport R.S.L. and have been asked if I could put my hand up for one of these Huey's. We have no military pieces of any sort outside the building. I've inquired about a Leopard Tank, and a 105 Howitzer and this Huey. The price they are asking for the chopper is out of our financial reach. But, wouldn't it be great if somehow we could swing this into motion and to have this piece of history displayed for the World to see in such a small community like where I live? My question is, can you please put this out to my brothers and maybe, just maybe, someone can help me?? I'm willing to put up the first \$1000. One can only wish and ask, can't we?? Thanks.

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

[abugar2010@hotmail.com](mailto:abugar2010@hotmail.com)



Australian Ministry of Defense RAAF image.  
Cost: AU\$10,000.  
(Sale is subject to U.S. Government approval)

Persons and/or organizations interested in helping out with funding for the purchase of the Huey should contact A.B. at the above email address. As of the release of this newsletter, \$1300. has been committed.



A wounded digger, hurt by a booby-trap explosion is evacuated to Vung Tau.

## Correction



Under "WHODAT?" in last month's newsletter the trooper rendering aid to the child was misidentified in the first batch of newsletters sent out before the error was found. The man is **Capt "Doc" Carter**, Battalion Surgeon.  
(Photo by George Dexter)

## Our Medics



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

*"Give me the strength to strike hard, strike swift, strike true. I am the 82nd and this is as far as the bastards are going to get."*



82nd Airborne paratrooper talking to a tank crew during the Battle of the Bulge.



# LOOKING FOR BUDDIES

## *Sgt. Matthews*

I was in Nam '69-'70 and have been desperately looking for an old buddy, Sgt. Matthews of Alpha Company. He served two tours and saved my life several times. I was 19, he was maybe 25. I may be too late in my search. He's an African American. Unfortunately, we all went by our last names or nicknames. I believe he lived in either South or North Carolina. Last year I found my best friend but he died a couple of months after locating him. He never let me know just how sick he was. It left a hole in my heart. Now I need to find this guy Matthews before it's too late. Would you have any ideas. I could use help to locate him. Thanks for your help in my desperate search for this giant of a man. He stood 6'3" 220 lbs. a muscle man. At LZ English we came in from the field as we did every 30 days. We'd go to the steakhouse and raise hell with the legs (s.o.p.), while kicking back with a few snorts of Jack. Back at the tent, a captain from HQ came in and offered a 3-day pass for anyone volunteering for guard duty riding shot gun on one of the APC's with 20mm cannons and a 50 Cal. I said I'd go if I could work out the 50. No problem. Sgt. Matthews, who cared for all his men in his platoon, talked me out of the offer. I stayed behind and played cards and finished the Jack shared between our squad. The next morning Matthews got us up for chow and that's when he told us of the loss of one of our own from Delta Company being snipered off the very APC I was considering for the 3-day pass. Wow! *Ya dig it?* We'd all say that after every sentence and there were a few more times like that throughout my tour. If anyone has any info or ways to locate this guy please email me. Thanks, and God bless.

**Rick Guzman (Guz)**

A/2/503d, '69/'70

[guzmandrywallinc@aol.com](mailto:guzmandrywallinc@aol.com)

## *PFC Benjamin David de Herrera*

PFC Benjamin David de Herrera, 3rd Platoon, C Co., 2nd Bn, 503rd Infantry, KIA/MIA on 19 Nov. 67, in Kontum Province. The JPAC in Hawaii would like to get photos of PFC de Herrera and are trying to locate family members. His Home of Record was Colorado Springs, CO. He also attended Brush High School. Please contact:

**Ray Rameriz**

Recon/4/503d

[ramirez173@hotmail.com](mailto:ramirez173@hotmail.com)

## *LT Ron Rodreick*

I've got this guy, Mathew Wittkins, who wants to know if anyone knows his buddy LT Ron Rodreick. If you contact Matt [Karguy13@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Karguy13@sbcglobal.net) it would be appreciated. Thanks.

**Steve Welch**

C/2/503d  
-----

## ~ Missing Man Table ~



***The table is round*** – to show our everlasting concern.

The cloth is white – symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty.

***The single red rose*** reminds us of the lives of these men....and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith, while seeking answers.

***A slice of lemon*** reminds us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land.

***A pinch of salt*** symbolizes the tears of our missing and their families who long for answers after decades of uncertainty.

***The glass is inverted*** – to symbolize their inability to share this evening's toast.

***The chairs are empty*** – they are missing.....



# The Airborne Patch

Most airborne units had a distinct oval cloth insignia worn under the parachutist or glider badge on the left breast. In 1941 when then Captain William P. Yarborough of the 501st Parachute Battalion returned to Fort Benning with the first 350 Parachutist's Badges, there was a concern that the badges were small and did not stand out when worn on the uniform. To remedy this Captain Yarborough designed an oval background trimming to be worn under the badge and frame it on the uniform. The original trimmings used by the 501st were red with blue borders and were handmade of felt.

During the course of the Second World War the original 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion was incorporated into the 503rd Parachute Infantry. Other airborne units were formed then adopted their own oval background trimmings in various color combinations.

Army regulations existed that permitted units to adopt trimmings in addition to the familiar enameled crests distinctive insignia. Today the buff strap of the Third Infantry Regiment is the best-known of these regimental trimmings. In the course of the war the War Department suspended adoption of new trimmings and it does not appear that airborne background trimmings were officially approved by the War Department during the Second World War. Nevertheless, they were manufactured using regimental funds and widely worn. Background trimmings found their way into the official uniform regulations during the postwar period and are still proudly worn by airborne units today.

Airborne oval background trimmings existed for most of the parachute infantry regiments. In addition, ovals in the colors of branches of service existed for other combat branches (such as artillery) and also support troops within the airborne divisions and for headquarters units.

An exacting tally of all of the trimming variations and units of the Second World War has not been published, but a good source of information is Les Hughes' article: "Cloth Airborne Insignia of WWII: A Primer". The Trading Post (LIV Jan-Mar 1995):33-40.

Examples:



503<sup>rd</sup> First Design (British)



503<sup>rd</sup> First Design Postwar



503<sup>rd</sup> Second Design Postwar

## A Few More Airborne Pocket Patches



506<sup>th</sup>



513<sup>th</sup>



515<sup>th</sup>



515<sup>th</sup>



Army Para. Team



Quartermaster



11<sup>th</sup> Airborne



82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne



101<sup>st</sup> Airborne

## Some Airborne Cap Patches



Officer



Enlisted



Infantry



Para-Glider Off.



Para Glider Enl.



Inf. Glider Enl.

## And, of course, *The Patch*





# 55 Days

By Lex McAulay  
1RAR

In 55 days on operations in November/December 1965 and January 1966, the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was involved in four separate operations in widely differing locations in South Vietnam involving very different techniques in each. The success of these operations demonstrated with a high degree of flexibility it is possible to achieve with well-trained soldiers, experienced NCOs and good commanders.

The first operation required a sudden move by air to a distant area to secure the rice harvest for the people's own use and not have it taken by the enemy; then a further sudden air movement to a different area to search for enemy combat units. There was a return to base for Christmas, followed by an airlift to another completely different type of terrain, with searches in swamp, rice paddies and canals; then a quick move to another location where the brigade defeated the enemy guard force of several battalions and captured a major headquarters, followed by a week exploiting captured tunnel systems while coping with continuous enemy attempts to penetrate the brigade perimeter.

During those 55 days the brigade took part in airmobile operations across several different types of terrain, infantry-armoured advances and attacks, and, perhaps the most demanding on the individual soldier, tunnel exploration and related activity.

Communist revolutionary warfare of the era was prosecuted in three stages, of which the first two were organisation and development of a political organisation and a guerrilla military force, and the third an offensive by 'regular' or 'main force' armed units to destroy the defense forces of the government and bring the Communists to power. The situation in South Vietnam in 1965 was such that large-scale conventional operations were necessary.

As units arrived, the commander of the Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWMAF), General William C. Westmoreland, sent them on sweeps into selected areas to disrupt the enemy, destroy base camps, and buy time, before Westmoreland could go on the offensive. The first US Army formation committed to South Vietnam was the US 173d Airborne Brigade, commanded by Brigadier-General Ellis Williamson.

In June the 1RAR battalion group deployed from Australia to Bien Hoa, and joined the brigade.

East of Saigon is the La Nga river valley 'rice-bowl', into which North Vietnamese refugees had been resettled after the 1954 division of Vietnam into Communist-ruled North and anti-communist South.



**1RAR Diggers board a UH-1D Huey near Bien Hoa during operations with US paratroopers from the 173d.**

(Photo by Tim Page)

The 173d Airborne Brigade planned a parachute drop into the valley, but security was so poor that local shops began to stock the parachute badge with star denoting a combat jump. Brigadier General Williamson brought forward the operation, cancelled the parachute drop, and used helicopters, fixed-wing airlift and road convoy to bring his force to the operation area.

The brigade deployed by air to the Binh Tuy province capital, Vo Dat. 1RAR was given the task of opening the road to, and securing the town of Chinh Duc. This town had been captured by the Viet Cong, and feeble government attempts to re-take it consisted of driving up the road to the inevitable ambush, exchanging fire and returning to Vo Dat.

1RAR moved on foot through the bush south of Chinh Duc and prepared an early-morning attack from the far side. This surprised the enemy and a free-flowing series of flanking moves and attacks bounced the Viet Cong back, out into the bush. The battalion's next task was an attack on the town of Vo Xu, further along the road into the La Nga valley. This was another success.

The rest of the operation consisted of securing the valley for the harvest, finding enemy supply caches and civic action events.

Strong enemy forces had been reported south of this area; the brigade flew there, and separated into allocated search areas. A heavy contact was experienced by 2/503rd. Christmas was spent at Bien Hoa.

(continued...)



On 1 January 1966 the brigade flew to a completely different area - the canals, swamps and rice fields of the Mekong Delta, again searching for enemy base areas and armed forces. Here movement and searching techniques across water-logged country required immediate adaptation by all ranks. The enemy had identified possible landing zones in their areas and 2/503rd had a heavy contact on arrival.

This operation in the Delta was followed immediately by an airlift to capture an enemy headquarters, which was defended by three main force battalions of Viet Cong – experienced combatants who had graduated from village guerrilla and local force units to the equivalent of regular troops. 1RAR was under fire as it arrived on the landing zone, and soon all four rifle companies were in action.

1/503rd and 2/503rd landed and swept the area, then formed a line with 1RAR and searched their locations. Again, the population had to be removed from the battle area while the Viet Cong units were forced out. An extensive tunnel system was found and exploration went on for the next week. The enemy knew the area and the tunnel system. Rank meant little in tunnel searches – only slim people could pass along the narrow tunnels and men of larger size simply could not enter them. This situation certainly had not been covered in training, but the battalions dominated the area and captured large quantities of material, most important of which were the documents from the enemy headquarters for the entire region.

At no time did the Viet Cong, the ‘home team’ on the home ground, come close to defeating the Brigade in any of these operations.



**Australians bring in a suspected VC during cordon and sweep operations in Phuoc Tuy.**

(Photo by Tim Page)

Each operation required very different techniques from the troopers, NCOs and officers and each time results were a success.

At no other time in the Vietnam War did a single brigade with supporting arms cope with so many different requirements in such a short time in successive operations over such a large area with different types of terrain against well-armed enemy on home ground. This is all to the great credit of the troopers, NCOs and officers of the Brigade and to the reservoir of experience and commonsense within the unit.

## Meritorious Unit Commendation



By the direction of the Secretary of the Army, the Meritorious Unit Commendation is awarded to the 1st BATTALION, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT GROUP for exceptionally meritorious achievement in the performance of outstanding service:

The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, distinguished itself in the conduct of military operation in the Republic of Vietnam from 5 May 1965 to 16 May 1966 while attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade (separate) of the United States Army. As the first ground combat unit in-country; the 173rd Airborne Brigade and its assigned and attached units conducted extensive combat maneuvers in the Bien Hoa area and in the Viet Cong strongholds of War Zone D and the Iron Triangle during the period 5 May 1965 to 4 May 1967. In every confrontation with the stubborn insurgents, the 173rd Airborne Brigade displayed marked aggressiveness which enabled them to neutralize enemy strongholds and capture thousands of logistical items. In addition to remarkable skill and tenacity in combat, the Sky Soldiers of the brigade carried on an extensive civic action program characterized by sincere compassion for the suppressed local populace. During each of the brigade's combat operations, the Sky Soldiers immeasurably aided the allied counterinsurgency effort by winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. The remarkable proficiency and devotion to duty

displayed by the members of the 173d Airborne Brigade are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves, the Armed Forces of the United States, and the Armed Forces of Australia and New Zealand.



PLAQUE IN THE MEMORIAL GARDENS AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR



# Critical Information for Spouses

The following is a complete and verbatim transcription of the pamphlet from the Office of Survivors Assistance, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Thanks to Bill Reynolds A/2/503d, for hunting it down and sending it in. Ed

## Advocating for Survivors of America's Veterans

### History

The Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA) was established in October of 2008, and is the primary advisory to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters related to policies, programs, legislative issues, and other initiatives affecting Veterans' survivors and dependents.

### How We Help

ODA honors the commitments made to our Veterans and military members by serving as a resource regarding all benefits and services furnished by VA to Survivors and dependents of deceased Veterans. OSA ensures that surviving spouses, children and parents of deceased Veterans have access to all applicable benefits and services under the law and serves as an advocate.

- Criteria/Eligibility information
- Assistance in navigating the system
- Resource for families prior to and after immediate need

Please use this guide to learn more about VA benefits for Survivors. Throughout the next few pages you will see a variety of information on various programs, however due to space constraints, not everything is covered. OSA would like to encourage you to investigate further by visiting our web site at

[www.va.gov/survivors](http://www.va.gov/survivors)

### Bereavement Counseling

VA Vet Centers provide bereavement counseling to all family members including spouses, children, parents and siblings of Servicemembers who die while on active duty. This includes federally activated members of the National Guard and reserve components. Bereavement services may be accessed by visiting

[www.vetcenter.va.gov](http://www.vetcenter.va.gov)



### Additional Counseling Options:

Bereavement counseling through any Veterans Health Administration medical center to immediate family members of Veterans who die unexpectedly or while participating in VA hospice or similar program, as long as the immediate family member had been receiving family support services in connection with or in furtherance of the Veteran's treatment.

### Financial Benefits

#### Dependency and Indemnity Compensation:

For a Survivor to be eligible for Dependency and indemnity Compensation (DIC), the Veteran's death must have resulted from one of the following causes:

- A disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty or active duty for training.
- An injury, heart attack, cardiac arrest or stroke, incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on inactive duty for training.
- A service-connected disability or a condition directly related to a service-connected disability.

DIC may also be paid to certain Survivors of Veterans who were totally disabled from service-connected conditions as the time of death, even if their service-connected disabilities did not cause their deaths. The Survivor qualifies if the Veteran was:

- Continuously rated totally disabled for a period of 10 years immediately preceding death.
- Continuously rated totally disabled from the date of military discharge and for at least 5 years immediately preceding death.
- A former POW who died after September 30, 1999, and who was continuously rated totally disabled for a period of at least one year immediately following death.

(continued...)





Payment will be offset by any amount received from judicial proceedings brought on by the Veterans death.

- The Veteran’s discharge must have been under conditions other than dishonorable.

### Death Pension

VA provides pensions to low-income surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased Veterans with wartime service.

#### Eligibility:

- Spouses must not have remarried and children must be under age 18, or under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school, or have become permanently incapable of self-support because of disability before age 18.
- The Veteran must have been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable and must have had 90 days or more of active military service, at least one day of which was during a period of war, or a service-connected disability justifying discharge.
- Longer periods of service may be required for Veterans who entered active duty on or after September 8, 1980, or October 18, 1981, if an officer.
- If the Veteran died in service but not in the line of duty, the death pension may be payable if the Veteran completed at least two years of honorable service.
- Children who become incapable of self-support because of a disability before age 18 may be eligible as long as the condition exists, unless the child marries or the child’s income exceeds the applicable limit.
- A surviving spouse may be entitled to a higher income limit if living in a nursing home, in need of the aid and attendance of another person or is permanently housebound.

### Home Loan Guarantee

A VA loan guaranty to buy a home may be available to:

- An unmarried spouse of a Veteran or Servicemember who died as a result of service-related disabilities.
- A surviving spouse who remarried after age 57.
- A spouse of a Servicemember officially listed as MIA or who is currently a POW for more than 90 days (limited to one loan).

### Life Insurance

#### VGLI/SGLI

- The Veterans Group Life Insurance & Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (VGLI/SGLI) are life insurance products offered to Veterans and active duty personnel. Both programs are voluntary and may be opted out of by the Servicemember or Veteran.
- Not all surviving family members may file a claim on this benefit.
- If your loved one had VGLI/SGLI coverage and you would like to file a claim, or if you have questions about your policy, call the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (OSGLI) at **800-419-1473**.

### Department of Defense Death Gratuity

- The Department of Defense extends a death gratuity payment to beneficiaries identified by the Servicemember prior to deployment.
- The DoD Death Gratuity is a total of \$100,000. Paid to the identified beneficiaries of those whose death is a result of hostile actions and occurred in a designated combat operation or combat zone or while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

### Education Benefits

For more information please visit [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov)

### Dependents Education Assistance

- The spouse or child of a Servicemember or Veteran who either died of a service-connected disability, or has permanent and total service-connected disability or who died while such a disability existed.
- The spouse or child of a Servicemember listed for more than 90 days as currently Missing In Action (MIA), captured in the line of duty by a hostile force or detained or interned by a foreign government or power.

*(continued....)*





- The spouse or child of a Servicemember who is hospitalized or is receiving outpatient care or treatment for a disability that is determined to be totally and permanently disabling, incurred or aggravated due to active duty and for which the Servicemember is likely to be discharged from military service.

**Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship**

Children of those who die in the line of duty on or since September 11, 2001, are potentially eligible to use Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits of the sponsoring Veteran.

- Are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100% level.
- Have 15 years to use the benefits beginning on their 18th birthday.
- May use the benefit until their 33rd birthday.
- Are not eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

**Education Benefits for Persons with Special Needs**

• Dependents over age 14 with physical or mental disabilities that impair their ability to pursue an education may receive specialized vocational or restorative training, including speech and voice correction, language retraining, lip reading, auditory training, Braille reading and writing, and similar programs.

- Certain disabled or surviving spouses are also eligible.

**Montgomery GI Bill Death Benefit**

• VA will pay a special Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) death benefit to a designated Survivor in the event of the service-connected death of a Servicemember while on active duty or within one year after discharge or release.

• The deceased must either have been entitled to educational assistance under the MGIB program or a participant in the program who would have been so entitled but for the high school diploma or length-of-service requirement.

- The amount paid will be equal to the participant's actual military pay reduction, less any education benefits paid.

**Health Insurance**

For more information please call [800-733-8378](tel:800-733-8378)

**Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs**

Under the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veteran Affairs (CHAMPVA), certain dependents and survivors can receive reimbursement for most medical expenses:

- Inpatient, outpatient
- Mental health
- Prescription medication
- Skilled nursing care
- Durable medical equipment

**Eligibility:**

To be eligible for CHAMPVA, an individual cannot be eligible for TRICARE (the medical program for civilian dependents provided by DoD) and must be one of the following:

- The spouse or child of a Veteran who VA has rated permanently and totally disable due to a service-related disability.
- The surviving spouse or child of a Veteran who died from a VA-rated service-connected disability, or who at the time of death was rated permanently and totally disabled.
- The surviving spouse or child of a Veteran who died on active duty service and in the line of duty, not due to misconduct. However, in most of these cases, these family members are eligible for TRICARE not CHAMPVA.

Please visit [www.va.gov/survivors](http://www.va.gov/survivors) to learn about additional VA Benefits for Survivors.

**Burial and memorial Benefits**

For more information visit [www.com.va.gov](http://www.com.va.gov) or call [800-827-1000](tel:800-827-1000)

Veterans discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and Servicemembers who die while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, as well as spouses and dependent children of Veterans and active duty Servicemembers, may be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits.

**VA Burial and Memorial Benefits**

Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC)

VA will provide a PMC to recognized the United States military service of honorably discharged deceased Veterans.

*(continued....)*





### Burial in a VA National Cemetery

VA will provide burial service for eligible Veterans, their spouses, and dependents, at no cost to the family, including the gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine.



### Headstone/Markers and Medallions

VA will provide an inscribed headstone or marker at no cost to the family for:

- Eligible Veterans, active duty Servicemembers, and retired Reservists and National Guard Servicemembers buried in any cemetery worldwide.
- Eligible spouses and dependent children buried in a national or State Veterans cemetery.



For eligible Veterans who died on or after November 1, 1990, VA may provide a headstone/marker or medallion even if the grave in a private cemetery is already marked with a private headstone or marker.



For information visit [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or call **800-827-1000**.



### Outside Agencies and NGO's Offering Support to Survivors

**Department of Defense**  
Offers extensive services to the surviving family of Servicemembers who die on active duty.



<http://usd.dtk.mil/mapcentral/casualty.html>

### Social Security Administration

Offers benefits to surviving family based upon the earnings history of the deceases. [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

### Office of Personnel Management

Extends Veterans preference hiring status to the spouses and surviving spouses of 1) Active Duty military, 2) 100% Disabled Veterans and 3) Veterans killed in action or who have passed due to a service-connected injury or illness. [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov)

### Internal Revenue Service

The majority of VA benefits available to Survivors and dependents are tax exempt. [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

## HOW TO REACH US

Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA)

**202-461-1077**

[officeofsurvivors.va.gov](http://officeofsurvivors.va.gov)

[www.va.gov/survivors](http://www.va.gov/survivors)

## Help is Available to Our Spouses

My name is Joseph Armstrong, I am the Veterans Service Officer for the John A. Barnes III (MOH) New England Chapter 9, 173d Airborne Association.

I can certainly understand widows' frustration and confusion but the information provided above is excellent. What a surviving spouse needs to do is contact her local **Veterans Outreach Center** and set up an appointment with a **Veterans Service Representative**. They have all the necessary forms that will be required for her to file for (DIC) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation if she is qualified. If the veteran's death was from complications of his service connected disability the spouse may be eligible to receive this benefit.

If any surviving spouse has a question they should not hesitate to contact me at the email address or phone number below. If I do not know the answer immediately I promise I will find the answer and/or refer the spouse to someone who does know the answer.

There must be other Herd members who are **Veterans Service Officers** across this wide nation of ours. Maybe an article in the next edition of the newsletter can ask that members who are advocates to come forward with their contact information for future references?

Airborne,

**Joseph Armstrong**  
**B/4/503d**

**Veterans Service Officer**  
**207-490-2094**

[cwomaine@myfairpoint.net](mailto:cwomaine@myfairpoint.net)

## Call for Veterans Service Officers Within the 173d Ranks

Joe's idea to compile and report a list of Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) within the 173d Airborne Brigade is excellent. When one of us falls our spouses are faced with a cumbersome and daunting task of maneuvering through the VA paperwork and process to receive applicable survivor benefits, and are oft times in desperate need of guidance during the most difficult of times.

If you are a Sky Soldier VSO please send in your name, unit served with, phone number and email address for inclusion in an upcoming issue of our newsletter, to [rt0173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rt0173d@cfl.rr.com)

*(continued....)*



# Survival Assistance – by the numbers

The following report was produced by Bill Reynolds, A/2/503d, following extensive research he conducted on survival assistance. Thank you Bill.

The last notes of Taps are drifting away, the Honor Guard is climbing back into their vehicles, and you're left sitting there with the folded flag in your lap. After the absolute worst day of your life you are left alone and wondering, "What do I do now?"

You and your spouse have prepared for this day, and you have a checklist to help you eliminate confusion and ensure your well being.

## By the numbers:

1. Determine what benefits are available to you as a surviving spouse of a veteran.
2. Gather the supporting documents
3. And, apply for those benefits!

If you have access to the Internet you go to [www.va.gov/SURVIVORS](http://www.va.gov/SURVIVORS) and download the VA's one-stop Form 21---534, dated Mar 2009. This form will enable you to apply for:

## Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Or Death Pension Benefits, or Social Security.

There are also healthcare benefits for which you may be eligible: TRICARE or CHAMPVA benefits.

If the veteran was eligible for either program; as the veteran's spouse you become eligible also.

## Survival Tips:

Gather all documents you'll need to support any application for benefits:

- DD214
- Marriage Certificates
- Birth Certificates
- Records of Divorce(s)
- VA Disability Award Letters

It is a good idea to gather this information together beforehand and scan it to a digital file. When you prepare the application packet include a copy of the death certificate and a physician's statement showing a connection between the veteran's service-connected disabilities and the cause of death. Ensure the statement contains the phrase showing the veteran's death was, "as likely as it is not," linked to the service connected injuries. The phrase, "**as likely as it is not,**" is critical in VA's decision to grant DIC or other benefits.

Scott Bell, Program analyst, Office of Survivors Assistance, Department of Veterans Affairs, also suggests you prepare a cover letter describing the contents of the application package. He says a cover letter will assist VA staff in routing your application to the right office.

*Sky Soldiers helping  
Sky Soldiers....  
All the Way!*

*The only harder thing  
than being a soldier...  
...is loving one.*

~ Unknown



## 2/503d TROOPERS ON VETERAN'S DAY 2011



“Here's a pic taken Veterans Day of five former 1LTs who served in 2/503 during the Dak To era in second half of 1967. The sixth guy, Al Cito, served as an aviator with two of the 173d guys during their second tours. We met for the weekend at Nick Hun's condo at Sunset Beach, NC. From left to right: Walt Brinker, Bart O'Leary, Nick Hun, Al Cito (not 173d, but great guy), Matt Harrison, Phil Bodine.” *I haven't seen this much brass together since the band marched by in 'The Music Man'.* Ed



Capt. Bill Vose, A/2/503d, with his beautiful CO, Roberta, driving his cammo'd jeep in the Orlando, FL Veteran's Day parade. As we watched the parade march by, my wife remarked, “*Bill looks cute in his little French beret.*” Ed



Les Fuller A/2/503d and Gene Counselman A/1/503d at *The Wall* in DC honoring our fallen. Inset is a baggie of dirt from Hill 875 left for Leonard Carter & Jeffery Barker, A/2/503d KIA. Both men were Les' machine gun team.

(continued....)



## Bravo Bulls - Las Vegas Veteran's Day Parade



**Company Commander: LTC (Ret) Roy S. Lombardo, Jr.**

**Guidon: David Glick**

**First row: L-R, Bryan Bowley, Jerry Nissley, Art Martinez, Paul Dinardo, Barry Herbison,  
Phil Farrow (mostly hidden behind the guidon) & MAJ (Ret) Joe Logan**

**Second row: Jim Jackson, Phil Moulaison, Ken (Doc) Eastman, Leon Cooley, Jack Schimpf and Jim Robinson**

**Third row: Ed Johnson, Cave Harris, Gary Davidson, Roger Flowers and Bob Warfield.**



*Everywhere we go - oh .... People wanna know - oh .... Who we are .... Where we come from .... So we tell them ....  
We are the Airborne! .... The mighty, mighty Airborne!*

*(continued....)*



## Brides of the Bulls in Vegas.....*Sky Soldierettes*



Now here's some pretty ladies, all except for that ugly one with the beard! Jack Schimpf, how did you get in there???  
(Thanks to Ed Kearney B/2/503d, for these photos of the Bulls and their CO's)

## *Boots and Chutes All Paratrooper Association* on Veteran's Day in Santa Maria, California



Third trooper from left is our own Jimmy Castillo C/2/503d. Jimmy and his buddies perform Honor and Color Guard ceremonies. Sharp lookin' troopers!

(continued....)



**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Spartan Club Members  
**FROM:** 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial  
Foundation Board of Directors

Date: 15 November 2011

On behalf of the 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation, it is my pleasure to tell you about coming events for your information and planning. The Celebration and associated Ceremony, described here are a “work in progress” but a few comments are in order.

The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP) was activated by the Department of the Army on 26 March 1963 on the Island of Okinawa. 26 March 2013 is the 10th Anniversary of the 173d Airborne Brigade’s parachute assault into Iraq. It is fitting to recognize these seminal events that later impacted and defined who Sky Soldiers are and what they have accomplished.

Periodically, members of Platoons, Companies and Battalions gather to remember and reflect on the life altering events that defined their service with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation believes this Anniversary Celebration is an excellent venue for these gatherings and urges any group of veterans to take advantage of this opportunity to plan and conduct their own unit “mini-reunions.”

Fort Benning is one common thread that unites Airborne soldiers of all generations. The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation is working with the Columbus / Fort Benning Chapter to hold a Golf Tournament and to plan and conduct Post tours including a visit to the Airborne School. Specific details will appear on the Memorial Foundation website ([www.173dairbornememorial.org](http://www.173dairbornememorial.org)) in 2012.

The “Memorial Cleaning Ceremony” is both a practical and a symbolic event. The granite panels periodically require cleaning but only under the supervision of an expert. The Foundation is pleased to announce that Ms. Lynn Evans of the Columbus Monument Company and a member of our Foundation Advisory Board will supervise this effort.

The “Reading of the Names” Ceremony is a tradition that spans all generations. In 2012, the 173d Airborne Brigade Memorial Foundation will post on its website opportunities for Spartan Club Members, Sky Soldiers and their families, and our Gold Star “families” to participate in this sacred ceremony.

Periodically, please check our website and watch for emails and letters for more updates regarding this event.

**Ken Smith**  
**Memorial Foundation President**

## 173d Airborne Brigade 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and “Reading of the Names” Ceremony



Hosted by:

### The 173d Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation

Thursday, 21 March – Sunday, 24 March 2013  
Fort Benning / Columbus Georgia Area

#### ~ Tentative Program ~

##### Thursday 21 March

Arrival and Golf Tournament (Tentative)

##### Friday 22 March

Museum Visits  
Tours of Fort Benning (including Jump School)  
Mini-Reunions conducted by Unit Organizations

##### Saturday 23 March

Memorial Cleaning Ceremony  
Silver Wings Jump  
10th Anniversary - Iraq Parachute Assault  
Commemoration  
Reading of the Names (Vietnam Era)  
Candlelight Ceremony with Honors and Reading of the  
Names (Iraq/Afghanistan)

##### Sunday 24 March

Prayer Service at Memorial  
Departure

**Lest we forget....**





Defense Battalion, Marine Air Control Group 38, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing, I Marine Expeditionary Force — was based at Camp Pendleton, it was attached to the Miramar air station, Johnston said. *"We went through basics school together, and we were off and on in touch throughout our careers,"* Johnston said. *"I talked to him just before he left."*

Maj. Hall would have been promoted to his new rank sometime this year, Johnston said. After graduating from high school, Maj. Hall earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from Washington State University in 1992. While at WSU, he enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, later joining the Marines. He met his future wife while assigned to a base in Florida, and he later served in Georgia, California and Japan.

According to his family, this was Maj. Hall's second deployment to Iraq, where he was training Iraqi troops to take over the duties of American soldiers. And while he didn't try to downplay the danger he faced, Maj. Hall also spoke of the good things happening in the war-torn country.

*"I know most of what you hear on the news about Iraq is not usually good news and that so many are dying over here,"* Maj. Hall wrote in a March 27 e-mail to his family, two days before he was fatally wounded. *"That is true to an extent but it does not paint the total picture, and violence is not everywhere throughout the country. So please don't associate what you see on the news with all of Iraq."* He ended his e-mail with: *"Love you and miss you. I'll write again soon."*

In addition to his sister, Maj. Hall is survived by his wife, Xiomara Hall; daughters Tatianna, 6, and Gladys, 3; stepsons Xavier, 13, and Xander, 9, all of Temecula, Calif.; his mother, Mildred Hall, of Seattle; his sister Margie Bell, of Renton; his aunt, Alberta Hall, of Seattle; his uncle, Howard Berry of Kent; and several nieces and nephews.



LTC Hall was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

[Source: *The Seattle Times Company* 2008]

*An Airborne salute to this Marine  
Semper Fi brother, All the Way!*

## Lt. Col. William G. Hall, 38, gave wise counsel to all

**By Sara Jean Green**  
*Seattle Times* staff reporter

Maj. William G. Hall had a wisdom, a maturity beyond his years that enabled him to provide sound counsel to his elders and, at the same time, guide those far younger than himself. *"He could be having a conversation with me and then my 10-year-old niece could walk in the room and he'd capture her like he'd just captured me,"* said Maj. Hall's eldest sister, Dolores Perry, 56, of Seattle. *"He could talk to anyone — from the minister to a drug addict. He was just that kind of person."*

Maj. Hall, a 1987 graduate of Seattle's Garfield High School, embodied a quiet strength and respect for tradition — both the traditions of the Marine Corps, where he moved up the ranks over the course of his 15-year career, and his family's traditions. Like coming home at Christmas and calling his mother at Easter, which he did this past Easter Sunday.

It was 1 a.m. in Iraq, and his voice sounded tired, Perry said. *"He didn't say a lot. He just gave us the reassurance he was OK,"* she said. It was their last conversation. Maj. Hall — who was called "Billy" by those closest to him — was injured in Iraq's Anbar province by an improvised explosive device on Saturday (March 29) and died the following day. He was 38.

Before his unit deployed to Iraq in mid-February, Maj. Hall was selected for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, said Maj. Jason Johnston, who is based at Marine Corps Airstation Miramar in San Diego. Though Maj. Hall's unit — the 3rd Low Altitude Air



# Our Plane?

Jim Robinson, B/2/503d, said he found our plane at an air show, as evidenced by the photo of this C-130.



## Burial Sites of our Fallen

Is there any way to find the grave sites of fallen brothers?

**Mike Picklesimer**  
A/2/503d

Hi Mike:

That I don't know. It's a tough one, as guys are buried throughout the country. Maybe someone has the answer, and if such a list doesn't exist perhaps the Association can start building one? You might also do a general web search for obituaries by name which will likely name burial sites for most.

Can probably find some of our guys at Arlington:  
[www.arlingtoncemetery.mil](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil)

Sure you're aware of the *Virtual Wall*. Info there could lead you to the city: <http://virtualwall.org/>

ATW

## U.S. Army and Psychology's Largest Failed Experiment—Ever

In the January 2011 issue of *American Psychologist*, the American Psychology Association (APA) dedicated 13 articles, detailing and celebrating a 117 million dollar collaboration with the US Army, called *Comprehensive Soldier Fitness* (CSF). It's being marketed as a resilience training to reduce if not prevent adverse psychological consequences to soldiers who endure combat. Because of the CSF emphasis on “positive psychology”, advocates call it a holistic approach to warrior training.

Criticism arose shortly after the initiative was announced – including ethical questions about whether soldiers *should* be trained to be desensitized to traumatic events. And methodological concerns about large-scale programs similar to this – which have not worked or had adverse effects in the past. **Also problematic, this program is adapted primarily from the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), which had very little success with a non-military population, and now on its first trial run is going to incorporate 1.1 million soldiers. How about trying it out on small groups of soldiers first?**

Lastly, the CSF program measures soldiers' “resilience” in five core areas: emotional, physical, family, social, and spiritual. The spiritual component of the assessment contains questions written predominately for soldiers who believe in god or another deity. This means tens of thousands of nonbelievers will score poorly and be forced to use religious imagery exercises that are counter to their personal beliefs – not likely to foster resilience.

**Rene Arellano, San Francisco State University**  
**Kenn Burrows, San Francisco State University**

*Holistic my ass!!*

*“There's the right way of doing things, and then there's the Army way of doing things.”*

~ Unknown, but definitely a G.I.





# INCOMING!



## 503<sup>rd</sup> Patch

I have a favor to ask. Ask the 503rd guys if they still have one of the original old 503 PIR patches some of them used to wear on the A-2 Flight Jackets. I'd love to have one and will be glad to pay for it. I have an old A-2, 1938 vintage, looks like new. Wallace Berry wore it in the movie Test Pilot with Clark Gable and Myrna Loy. On it I have my old 1/501 PIR patch in honor of the guys I lost during the fight for Hue in 1968 and my stamped leather name tag with my Master Parachute Wings.

**Mike de Gyurky, MAJ**  
HHC/2/503d  
[degurky@sbcglobal.net](mailto:degurky@sbcglobal.net)

## Wallace Fitzgerald Beery

(April 1, 1885 – April 15, 1949) was an American actor. He is best known for his portrayal of Bill in *Min and Bill* opposite Marie Dressler, as Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, as Pancho Villa in *Viva Villa!*, and his titular role in *The Champ*, for which he won the Academy Award for Best Actor. Beery appeared in some 250 movies over a 36-year span.



## Sky Soldier doing good work for breast cancer research

This web link takes you into a blog we prepared to give information on what our project is all about.

[WWW.STAFFOFLIFEONLINE.COM](http://WWW.STAFFOFLIFEONLINE.COM)

A little history behind this: What we are doing is a USA/CANADA project to raise funding for research and awareness for the BRCA hereditary gene.

Hereditary breast cancer is suspected when there is a strong family history of breast cancer: occurrences of the disease in at least three first or second-degree relatives (sisters, mothers, aunts). Currently the only tests available are DNA tests to determine whether an individual in such a high-risk family has a genetic mutation in the BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes.

When someone with a family history of breast cancer has been tested and found to have an altered BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene, the family is said to have a "known mutation." Positive test results only provide information

about the risk of developing breast cancer. The test cannot tell a person whether or when cancer might develop. Many, but not all, women and some men who inherit an altered gene will develop breast cancer. Both men and women who inherit an altered gene, whether or not they develop cancer themselves, can pass the alteration on to their sons and daughters.

This testing system was developed in Canada at the Women's College Hospital in Toronto; they shared this technique with the United States and other countries around the world, thus our efforts begin with assisting them.

I work directly with Dr. Oletta Polls at the Women's College Hospital where funding is badly needed. The wonderful part of this story is that the teams that are out in the field doing the testing are doing it at their own expense, and our efforts are greatly appreciated.

My idea is to gather as many people as I can to support this project. I wear my Vietnam Veteran hat when trying to approach people. I took it on my own to tell people that I am fighting a different battle now, and your support would be so appreciated, and it works.

Through our newsletter I thought we could rally more vets who have some time on their hands to assist in this worthwhile endeavor to reach objectives. If people are too busy, and I certainly understand, donations in support of this effort are always welcome.

I am sure many of our guys are like me, and know someone with breast cancer or someone who has had it.

I'm asking any Sky Soldier or friends of the 173d who are interested in supporting this effort or to donate to the program to contact me.

Best Regards,



To help raise funds for this project, Ed is selling this "Staff of Life" for \$10. each, with all proceeds going to breast cancer research.



**Ed Wilby**  
HHC/2/503d  
[EWilby4111@aol.com](mailto:EWilby4111@aol.com)



# An NVA Meets an ARVN

One of Kien's scouts was Phan, a native of Hai Hung province. He told Kien this story:

"I don't know who he was because he was from the ARVN Special Commandos, on the other side. Anyway, during one fierce battle during the rainy season this guy's company and mine became entangled in a very bloody fight. Rivers of blood; no winner, no loser, both battered. The Americans backed these ARVN units up with artillery from the top of a hill, and when the artillery stopped the Phantoms came in and bombed us. I dropped into a bomb crater and escaped the big bombs. Then the baby bombs, exploding nonstop.

I lay there not moving and then this guy jumped in on me, heavy as a log. I was so frightened I stabbed him twice in the chest through his camouflage uniform, then once more in the belly, then again in the neck. He cried in pain and writhed around convulsing, his eyes rolling. I realized then he'd already been badly wounded before jumping in. His own artillery had blown his foot off and he was bleeding all over, even from the mouth. His hands were trying to hold in his intestines, which were spilling out of his belly and steaming. I didn't know what to do. He was so pitiful. I pushed his guts back into his belly and tore my shirt off to bandage him, but it was so hard to stop the bleeding.

If it had been anyone else, not someone so strong and healthy, he would have died right then. But this guy just moaned louder and louder, tears running down his cheeks. I was horrified and at the same time felt deep pity for him.

So when the raid stopped I jumped out of the crater, telling him to stay there for a while. *'I'm going to find some cloth and bandages,'* I told him. *'I'll be back soon.'*

He blinked at me, the rain pouring down his face, mixing water, tears, and blood. Outside the crater the jungle was destroyed, with trees broken and the ground devastated. Troops from both sides had withdrawn so I searched for a while and found a bag with emergency medical equipment in it, then turned to go back to help him.

But I'd been silly. By then it was dark and I had no idea where the crater was. The trees around me had been broken off and branches scattered all around the place. The ground was pockmarked with hundreds of craters. Where was the one I'd been sharing with the Saigonese? Darkness fell, the heavy rain continued and the water flowed in small streams down the slopes. *'Hey, Saigon, Saigon, hey!'* I called, running around trying to find

him. I fell into a crater. The water came over my knees. That meant that someone sitting inside a crater would now have water up to his chest.

The more I tried to find him the worse the situation became. All I did was exhaust myself. When dawn at last came and the rain eased, you wouldn't believe what I saw. Horrifying. All the bomb craters were filled to the rim with water.

I pushed off. I was going a little mad. I began to imagine his death: water slowly rising on him, a barbaric death stuck in the mud, helpless as the water came over his belly, his chest, his shoulders, his chin, his lips, then reached his nostrils...and he started to drown. He'd died still hoping desperately that I'd come back and save him, as I promised. In which crater had he died?

Now, even after many years, whenever I see a flood I feel a sharp pang in my heart and think of my cruel stupidity. No human being deserved the torture I left him to suffer."

After many years of peace Phan was still tormented by the memory. Would the drowned man ever stop floating through his mind?

The sorrow of war inside a soldier's heart was in a strange way similar to the sorrow of love. It was a kind of nostalgia, like the immense sadness of a world at dusk. It was a sadness, a missing, a pain which could send one soaring back into the past. The sorrow of the battlefield could not normally be pinpointed to one particular event, or even one person. If you focused on any one event it would soon become a tearing pain.

[Source: *The Sorrow of War*, by Bao Ninh]



# Airborne Soldier to Rock Legend

## *A little bit of Airborne History*

Before he became the legend who was to become a rock icon, Jimi Hendrix was a paratrooper. James Hendrix got into trouble with the law for riding in stolen cars. He was given a choice between spending two years in prison or joining the Army. Hendrix chose the latter and enlisted on May 31, 1961.

After completing basic training, in November 1962, Hendrix earned the right to wear the "Screaming Eagles" patch and was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division and stationed in Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

His commanding officers and fellow soldiers considered him to be a sub-par soldier: he slept while on duty, had little regard for regulations, required constant supervision, and showed no skill as a marksman. For these reasons, his commanding officers submitted a request that Hendrix be discharged from the military after he had served only one year. Hendrix did not object when the opportunity to leave arose. He would later tell reporters that he received a medical discharge after breaking his ankle during his 26th parachute jump.

While in the Army, forged a friendship with a fellow soldier, Billy Cox, that would last until shortly before Hendrix's death. In his album, *Axis: Bold as Love*, Hendrix briefly spoke of his first parachuting experience: "...once you get out there everything is so quiet, all you hear is the breezes-s-s-s..."

Jimi Hendrix pioneered the explosive possibilities of the electric guitar. Hendrix's innovative style of combining fuzz, feedback, and controlled distortion created a new musical form. Because he was unable to read or write music, it is nothing short of remarkable that Jimi Hendrix's meteoric rise in the music world took place in just four short years. His musical language continues to influence a host of modern musicians.

One of Hendrix's most famous pieces is his psychedelic rendition of the U.S. national anthem, "*The Star-Spangled Banner*." Hendrix died on September 18th, 1970, from drug-related complications.

Jimi Hendrix, 27 Nov 1942 - 18 Sep 1970

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



# Social Security Special Extra Earnings for Military Service

Since 1957, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you paid Social Security taxes on those earnings. Since 1988, inactive duty service in the Armed Forces reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered by Social Security.

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1957 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings credits are **not** granted for inactive duty training.

If your active military service occurred **From 1957 through 1967**, we will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits. **From 1968 through 2001**, you do not need to do anything to receive these extra credits. The credits were automatically added to your record. **After 2001**, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

## How You Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings

The information that follows applies **only** to active duty military service earnings from 1957 through 2001. Here's how the special **extra** earnings are credited on your record:

### Service in 1957 Through 1977

You are credited with \$300. in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

### Service in 1978 through 2001

For every \$300. in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100. in earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200. a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn't complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.

[Source: Social Security Administration]



# Remembering Colonel Maggie

(Airborne), 503rd Infantry, was up in the Da Nang area of I Corps, under the OPCON of the 3rd Mar Div. & 1st Mar Div. or the USMC.

I was one of the S-3 Air Sergeants of the 4/503d, and we had three Hueys from the Cowboys with us up in Da Nang. I remember getting a call over the phone line that Martha Raye wanted to come up to Da Nang and visit the troops of the 4/503d up in the mountains, hills and old French Forts along the Namu River. I said *"Who wants to see some old women?"* and, *"Our troops would like to see a young lady with those round eyes"*.

Martha Raye did get up the coast to the I Corps, and did visit our troops. Years later, I read a book about Martha Raye's visits to troops in World War II, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam War. I realized that I had to apologize to her and one day I attended the Col. Maggie's Parade and Birthday party in Marina, CA, which was next to Fort Ord, where I took my Basic Training and AIT.

At the local American Legion Post in Marina, CA, I got to meet her and told her about the dumb things that I had said about her in the fall of 1966, and after a drink with her, we changed the subject and took some photos.

When she passed away and was buried at Fort Bragg, NC, I visited her gravesite and a SF Museum on the base that had a lot of items that had come from her old home in the Los Angeles area. I also saved a local newspaper story about her burial at Ft. Bragg, NC, and a photo of the burial was included in the news story.

Years later at a 4/503d mini-reunion in Clarksville, TN, I was able to see some photos of Col. Maggie visiting the 4/503d troops in Viet Nam. Col. Maggie paid her own way to and from Viet Nam, and she was blacklisted by the Hollywood business people for supporting the US troops.

I could not find my black and white photo of Martha Raye while she visited the 4/503d up in Da Nang, RVN. At the "Drop In", Marina, CA, in 1989, is where I apologized to Martha Raye for not wanting to get her a chopper to go and visit the 4/503d troops. She accepted my apology and I then bought her a drink.

I'm in the middle of this photo and the lady to the right is LTC Rolande "Frenchy" Amundsen who served with the OSS in France during World War II. The Gestapo killed her husband and daughter during the war.



## Colonel Maggie.....She is Not Forgotten!

The newspaper story (following page) is about the funeral service that was held for "Colonel" Martha Raye at Ft. Bragg, NC, where she is buried and where an SF Museum has a lot of things she had been given over many years.

I've also included this photo of a Cowboy Chopper up in Da Nang, RVN.



On 24 September 1973, the 4/503d, B/3/319th Arty, 1st Plt., E/17th Cav, 173d Engr. Plt., 173d MP Det., 173d Scout Dog Det., 173d MI Det. and a 335th Avn. Co. Det., were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (Navy).

**Ray Rameriz**  
**Recon/4/503d**



# Comedian honored at Services

## Raye is only civilian buried at Fort Bragg

By Jullane Basinger

Fort Bragg, NC – Army Special Forces soldiers honored entertainer Martha Raye here yesterday at a funeral that began with Green Berets carrying her flag-draped casket and ended with her jazzy theme song, “Mr. Paganini.”



Raye, with her beloved Green Berets

Her raucous rendition of the song in her 1936 debut movie “Rhythm On The Range” with Bing Crosby made her a star. But her greatest love was tirelessly entertaining troops during three wars, including Green Berets in the Vietnam War, who called her “Col. Maggie.”

Raye, who died Wednesday in Los Angeles at age 78, requested several years ago to be buried at Fort Bragg, the home of the Green Berets. Normally, only active duty and retired Army personnel are buried on post. But the Special Forces Association asked military brass to make an exception. They did, and made her the only civilian buried at the post cemetery.

An honor guard from the 7th Special Forces Group Airborne served as pall bearers and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Band play patriotic songs as about 300 soldiers and civilians came to honor her.

“This to Martha Raye is worth more than Hollywood,” her husband, Mark Harris, said after the funeral.

Harris, a 42-year-old Las Vegas agent, became Raye’s seventh husband in 1991 after a 20-day courtship. Raye’s daughter, Melodyne Condos, 49, whose relationship with her mother often had been stormy, also attended the funeral.



Farewell to Col. Maggie at Fort Bragg, NC  
*Home of the Airborne*

Chaplain Tom W. Mitchiner, one of three religious leaders who spoke at the service, said Raye often risked her life to visit soldiers in remote areas. “She brought her song, dance and humanity in times of war,” the Protestant chaplain said. “And those most thankful are the Green Berets.”

Raye was so beloved by members of the Army Special Forces that President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966 made her an honorary lieutenant colonel in the Special Forces. She already was a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve Nurse Corps.

Raye appeared in numerous movies and television shows, and had her own television series “The Martha Raye Show” in the 1950s. In later years, she was best known as “Big Mouth” in television ads for denture adhesive.

Raye received a special Academy Award in 1969 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom last November for her support of the Army.

Former Special Forces soldiers who attended the funeral each had stories to tell about meeting Raye.

Retired Col. Vernon Greene of Fayetteville said Raye once scrawled “Col. Greene, I love you,” in lipstick on his mirror after he let her use his room for a night while she was traveling in the Mekong Delta.





## Wreaths Across Arlington

*The Wreaths Across America* observance began in 1992 under the leadership of Maine businessman, Morrill Worcester. The Wreaths Across America's goal was to decorate the graves at Arlington National Cemetery. Its message: the importance of remembering our fallen heroes, honoring those who serve, and teaching children about the sacrifices veterans and their families made to preserve our freedoms. Wreaths Across America's motto expresses this message well:

***Remember, Honor, and Teach.***

What began as a single day observance is now a week-long series of events and has expanded to thousands of local areas in 50 states. The culmination event remains decorating the veteran graves on the second Saturday in December. This year's theme - "*The Christmas They Never Had*", in honor of those who have had to spend a holiday away from home, and in memory of those who never made it home.

According to Wayne Hanson, the local volunteer-leader, in the past, 4,000 volunteers decorated 24,000 Arlington graves. This year, the Cemetery has asked that all 224,000 graves in the Cemetery be decorated! This year you have an opportunity to place wreaths where the observance began. Our Chapter is leading the Herd 10 December wreath laying delegation.

We will gather for a no-host breakfast at 0830hrs. at the ground-level restaurant of the Key Bridge Marriott and promptly depart at 0945hrs. by taxi or Metro to the Cemetery, where we will be assigned collectively or separately graves to decorate. The day's activities will conclude with a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown at 1200hrs. Because of the number of graves to decorate, we ask our Sky Soldiers and their families and friends to be prepared to continue to work until 1400hrs.

Participants will return to the hotel on their own. The Key Bridge Marriott is just two blocks from the Rosslyn Metro Station.

The holidays are a time when we especially remember the love and warmth of our family and friends and all of us can have this special re-remembrance of our fellow veterans on 10 December. Please join us.

**Ken Smith**  
A/2/503d  
Sigholtz Chapter 1



# Col. George J. Stapleton

## 8<sup>th</sup> Commander of the 3/503d

Mr. Branstetter:

Could you please forward the information that my father Col. George J. Stapleton (US Army Retired) has passed away at his home in St. Simons GA. He commanded the 3rd Battalion 503rd Infantry from 1970-1971. After his 34+ years of service, his proudest moments were his time with the "Sky Soldiers" of the 173d, and was his final wish to be buried with his 173d insignia on his uniform.



Colonel Stapleton, 1932-2011

He gave me the email you sent him about their reunion in Lexington KY because I live in Lexington, and he knew with his declining health he would not be able to attend.

If you could please forward this information to someone who could get it out to his comrades.

Thank you, and also for your service.

*"A man who has nothing which he cares more about than he does about his own personal safety is a miserable creature who has no chance at being free, unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself" - FREEDOM ISNT FREE*

FDNY-343 NEVER FORGET

*"Only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you, Jesus Christ and the American G. I. One died for your soul, the other for your freedom."*

Gregory Stapleton  
[Halli152@aol.com](mailto:Halli152@aol.com)

-----

**Note:** Please see Page 17 of Issue 34 of our Newsletter for a tribute to Col. Stapleton.

*All the Way....Sir!*

# Scott Smith

1/503d

*"The Best of the Best"*

Gary Granade called me just now and informed me that Scott Smith passed away today, November 24th, about 12:00. He passed away in his sleep.

Funeral arrangements are pending. Additional information will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

God bless our fallen brother and his family.

You can contact me if you want at

[barthelemy47@comcast.net](mailto:barthelemy47@comcast.net)

Airborne!

**John Barthelemy**  
1/503d



*My heart's calculatin'  
My true love will be waitin'  
Waitin' at the end of my ride.*

*Move 'em out, head 'em up  
Head 'em up, move 'em on  
Move 'em out, head 'em up  
Rawhide!*



## Last Month's *WHODAT?*



**Dan Langham, C/2/503d**

sears

### **SUPPORTS MILITARY VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Visit this web site to see the countless number of ways Sears works in support of the military and our veterans:  
<http://www.searsmedia.com/tools/press/search.jsp?searchString=military>

## This Month's *WHODAT?*



Who is this super, duper 2/503 trooper loading his M79 grenade launcher?

## Iraq Mule



## Vietnam Mule



**John "Top" Searcy, 4.2 Platoon, 2/503d, circa '65/'66**

The M274, known as the Mechanical Mule, was developed in the 1950s as a light weight cargo carrier to replace both the 1/4-ton jeep and 3/4-ton trucks in infantry and airborne infantry battalions. The M274 was known as the "Truck, Platform, Utility 1/2 Ton, 4x4" or the "Carrier, Light Weapons, Infantry, 1/2 ton, 4x4".

The M274 family could be fitted for many infantry tasks including transport of personnel or cargo (slowly--keeping up with foot soldiers), for stringing wire with a cable reel, for carrying patients on stretchers, and as a weapons platform for a recoilless rifle or TOW anti-tank missile.

Each wheel had shackles for lifting by helicopter or parachute airdrop. The seat and the foot basket can be detached and stored underneath the platform which can then be rigged as a steerable trailer. The steering column could be set in multiple positions so the driver could operate the vehicle from almost any position, including crouching down.



# WWII 503<sup>rd</sup> Paratrooper Tony Lopez Returns to The Rock and Raises the Flag 65 Years After

By: Steve Kwiecinski



A young trooper...Tony Lopez, F Company, 503rd PRCT



A little later Sunday morning (1 March), Tony Lopez, his wife Mary Louise, sons Tom and Steve, daughter Yolanda, and Yolanda's husband Ron arrived on Corregidor for a two-day stay. (One son and one daughter remained behind in the States).

Tony had been a part of the original parachute team that landed here 65 years ago to liberate the island. Tony had trouble getting approved for a passport, which made the news in Denver, Colorado, and sparked nationwide sympathy.



Tony revisits 28-D, where "F" had its CP the first night. He was the section's BAR man. By virtue of its high rate of fire, it was generally regarded as being the most dangerous weapon in a fight, and consequently it was the weapon that attracted most attention from the Japanese.

For several days the family couldn't get any rest as they received phone call after phone call from interested media people.

Despite having served in the U.S. military, he faced citizenship verification questions due to records having been destroyed in a church fire. The passport was finally issued, but so late that he was unable to be here for the February 16th anniversary of the 503rd's parachute landing.



Tony is escorted down the trail towards 'Banzai Point' by his sons Thomas (left) and Steve (right). Ahead are his daughter Yolonda, and her husband Ron. On the night of 16 February 1945, Tony's platoon was placed in the NCO Married Quarters which covered this track. Effectively it was the demarcation point between the US and Japanese areas for the first 24 hours.

(continued....)



Tony checked out the interior of the NCO Married Quarters as the Japanese could easily lob grenades on the verandah, the men would take cover in the inside rooms. Nevertheless, Tony lost his good buddy "Happy" Hoyt, that evening. Tony had visited "Happy" at the American Cemetery at Ft Bonafacio (formerly Ft. McKinley) the previous day.



However, thanks to continued efforts by Paul Whitman, encouragement from many people – including his family members and a blatantly pleading email from us – he decided to come for the March 2 celebration marking the day of MacArthur's return to the island.



By the way, this whole story began in December when Paul met Tony and about 20 other veterans of the 503rd at a reunion. Paul proposed the trip then, and continued to urge Tony to come to Corregidor.

The rest is now history.

We were honored to have Tony in attendance. We wonder if he will be the last American Corregidor survivor to be able to attend an anniversary here. Thanks to Sun Cruises shifting their schedules, their tourists were able to attend the festivities and greet Tony personally. It made for a very nice turnout, and Tony was overcome by the expressions of gratitude and honor he received. We really enjoyed spending time in the evenings with Tony and his family.

**Flag raising ceremony on Corregidor after victory in the Philippines.**



**On 2 March, 65 years after the flag was raised on Corregidor in the presence of General MacArthur, Paratrooper Anthony Lopez raised it again.**

[Source: 503rd Heritage Bn web site]



~ Holiday Card 1968 ~



From Bill Wyatt, HHC/2/503d

