

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

**WE TRY  
HARDER!**

**2/503d**  
**VIETNAM**  
\*\*\*\*\**newsletter*



February 2012, Issue 37

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)

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



Near Song Be, RVN, 2/503 medics tend to wounded Charlie Company trooper. (Photo by SP4 Alan Price, Bde PIO)



# Chaplain's Corner



**Our Leapin' Deacon with  
Mrs. Deacon, his bride Ann**

Dear and Honored Sky Soldiers, Families and Friends:

Grace and Peace!

### **Psalm 105:1-4**

Give the Lord thanks and invoke him by name, make his deeds known in the world around. Pay him honor with song and psalm and think upon all his wonders. Exult in his hallowed name; let those who seek the Lord be joyful in heart. Turn to the Lord, your strength, seek his presence always.

### **Galatians 5:22**

But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these.

In the Season of Beginnings, we frequently lift up our Founding Fathers, particularly Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, in that their birthdays loom before us. However, this time we concentrate on another of our Heroes of Heroes, a distinguished past senior citizen and wise leader, Benjamin Franklin. Benjamin's father Josiah, hoped that his son would be a clergy-person, but Ben had other ideas of service and servant-hood to our Lord, and that was to care for people and our Nation in extraordinary ways. His accomplishments in serving humankind and our Lord are staggering. He lived a life of curiosity, wit, and wisdom and was brilliant beyond description even though he had only two years of formal education. He declared numerous times that he did not remember a time when he could not read. He spoke at least five languages. This historic genius expressed himself in service to his fellow human beings as an inventor, printer, writer, scientist, statesman, diplomat, teacher/philosopher, humorist, economist, and as a musician, playing several instruments including the violin.

Franklin dearly loved to improve the quality of life for people. His helpful endeavors and inventions included the Franklin stove, which used less wood and provided greater safety; bifocal eye glasses; the lightning rod; a practical odometer to measure distance of travel; a long arm to assist short people to reach higher objects without

dangerously climbing; watertight bulkheads to enable ships to work more safely and effectively – and the list goes on. He refused to profit from his many inventions. His personal way to glorify his Heavenly Father was to help people be more comfortable and fulfilled.

This quiet, inspirational Founding Father found much of his personal happiness in his dear wife, Deborah Read, and their 44 blessed years together, even though he was deployed for 11 of their 44 years on special Ambassador duty to England and France.

Ben Franklin was the only Founding Father who assisted in preparing and signing all four of the vital documents, which led to the beginning of the United States: Declaration of Independence in 1776; the Treaty of Alliance with France 1778; Treaty of Paris 1782, a peace agreement with England which ended the Revolution; and the United States Constitution 1787.

Ben Franklin's wise, clever and witty statements are quoted worldwide: *"A penny saved is a penny earned," "Well done is better than well said," "Early to bed, early to rise makes a person healthy, wealthy and wise."* His wise advice about money and savings helped shape our Country's economy and set the course for the American Dream. His wide-spread fame as a writer and publisher came from *"Poor Richard's Almanac"* published each year from 1733 until 1758. He also founded an academy that became the University of Pennsylvania. WOW! What a happy and helpful leader who still amazes and inspires citizens to set the pace to lead with care and wisdom.

When our Constitutional Convention was in dire discord nearly destroying our new Nation, Ben Franklin rose to his feet and everyone carefully listened as he spoke. He proposed that every session be opened with prayer imploring the assistance of our Lord in all Assembly deliberations. To this day, Congress follows his pristine advice and holy wisdom and opens with prayer. Thank God for this happy and hope-filled servant, Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. In his last public act he signed an appeal to Congress to abolish slavery and grant freedom to all.

Thanks be to God! In the Name of our Lord God, Savior Jesus, and Winsome Holy Spirit,

**Chaplain Conrad Walker, COL, Ret.**  
**"The Leapin' Deacon"**  
**National Chaplain Emeritus**  
**173d Airborne Association and**  
**Military Order of the Purple Heart**



## Charlie Company CO '66/'67 having a Blast with Chinese Paratroopers



The young Captain Jack in the boonies in RVN.

He was the Defense and Army Attaché in China during that time as a Brigadier General. This was just before the turmoil of the Tiananmen incident in 1990. "This was a very, very rare if not the only case of a foreigner jumping with the Chinese," says the General.

The aircraft was an AN-2 Colt. "It may look very archaic, but is a great jump airplane -- very big door. I had to pack my own chute and after the jump we had dinner in the regimental mess hall, drank too much Mao Tai, and spent the night. A great airborne experience. Fortunately, my Chinese language helped me to have a great visit." says Jack.

These are a couple of pictures of MG Jack Leide prior to jumping with a Chinese PLA airborne regiment (that's Jack on the left in the two guy picture, and below standing in front of the red star on the plane).



As with most airborne units around the world, they were very professional, says Jack, "tough as nails, hard drinking and you could feel the sincere camaraderie with fellow airborne soldiers. Interestingly, this is the same airborne regiment that was sent in to physically occupy Tiananmen during the height of the crisis -- the key PLA mission during the whole operation."

Airborne all the way!

Cap

Jack Leide, MG (Ret)  
CO C/2/503d



Our Cap, outnumbered, but he has them surrounded. You can't see it, but on Jack's right shoulder is the 173d patch making the jump with him in China.



## From a Sky Soldier

I don't think of this stuff very often, just another thing in the rice paddy of shit that we hump thru every day. But, while reading it I got a strange feeling. Don't know what it was; happiness, relief or maybe just that someone realized how we got shit on. It was a good feeling and I did end up teary eyed; it didn't last long as my training took over and I stuffed it and moved on. Maybe you could share this in our newsletter, who knows, maybe some of the brothers might get a moment of a good feeling.



Mike

**Mike Sturges**  
A/2/503d

### AN OPEN LETTER TO ANYONE WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM

Dear Hero,

I was in my twenties during the Vietnam era. I was a single mother and, I'm sad to say, I was probably one of the most self-centered people on the planet. To be perfectly honest...I didn't care one way or the other about the war.

All I cared about was me—how I looked, what I wore, and where I was going. I worked and I played. I was never politically involved in anything, but I allowed my opinions to be formed by the media. It happened without my ever being aware. I listened to the protest songs and I watched the six o'clock news and I listened to all the people who were talking. After a while, I began to repeat their words and, if you were to ask me, I'd have told you I was against the war. It was very popular. Everyone was doing it, and we never saw what it was doing to our men. All we were shown was what they were doing to the people of Vietnam.


My brother joined the Navy and then he was sent to Vietnam. When he came home, I repeated the words to him. It surprised me at how angry he became. I hurt him very deeply and there were years of separation—not only of miles, but also of character. I didn't understand.

In fact, I didn't understand anything until one day I opened my newspaper and saw the anguished face of a Vietnam veteran. The picture was taken at the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. His countenance revealed the terrible burden of his soul. As I looked at his picture and his tears, I finally understood a tiny portion of what you had given for us and what we had done to you. I understood that I had been manipulated, but I also knew that I had failed to think for myself. It was like waking up out of a nightmare, except that the nightmare was real. I didn't know what to do.

One day about three years ago, I went to a member of the church I attended at that time, because he had served in Vietnam. I asked him if he had been in Vietnam, and he got a look on his face and said, "Yes." Then, I took his hand, looked him square in the face, and said, "Thank you for going." His jaw dropped, he got an amazed look on his face, and then he said, "No one has ever said that to me." He hugged me and I could see that he was about to get tears in his eyes. It gave me an idea, because there is much more that needs to be said. How do we put into words...all the regret of so many years? I don't know, but when I have an opportunity, I take it...so here goes.

Have you been to Vietnam? If so, I have something I want to say to you—*Thank you for going!* Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Please forgive me for my insensitivity. I don't know how I could have been so blind, but I was. When I woke up, you were wounded and the damage was done, and I don't know how to fix it. I will never stop regretting my actions, and I will never let it happen again.

Please understand that I am speaking for the general public also. We know we blew it and we don't know how to make it up to you. We wish we had been there for you when you came home from Vietnam because you were a hero and you deserved better. Inside of you there is a pain that will never completely go away...and you know what? It's inside of us, too; because when we let you down, we hurt ourselves, too. We all know it...and we suffer guilt and we don't know what to do...so we cheer for our troops and write letters to "any soldier" and we hang out the yellow ribbons and fly the flag and we love America. We love you too, even if it doesn't feel like it to you. I know in my heart that, when we cheer wildly for our troops, part of the reason is trying to make up for Vietnam. And while it may work for us, it does nothing for you. We failed you. You didn't fail us, but we failed you and we lost our only chance to be grateful to you at the time when you needed and deserved it. We have disgraced ourselves and brought shame to our country. We did it and we need your forgiveness. Please say you will forgive us and please take your rightful place as heroes of our country. We have learned a terribly painful lesson at your expense and we don't know how to fix it.

From the heart,  
  
Julie Weaver  
Burleson, Texas

**Consider it shared, Mike. And hey, brothers, thank you for going. Damn fog. Ed**





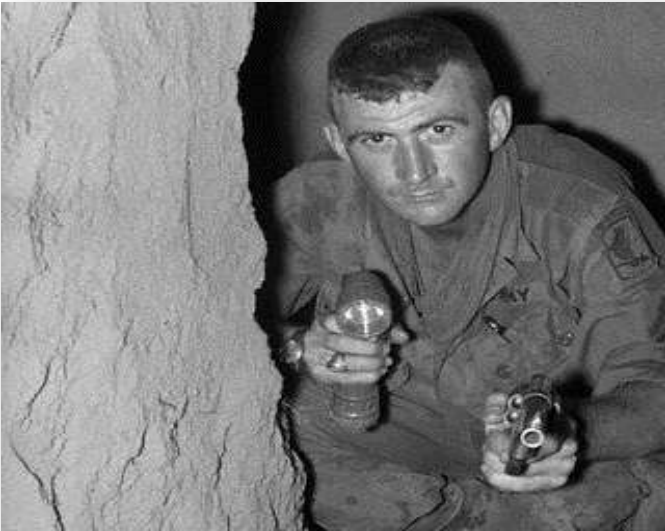
# Incoming!



## Surprise Photo

Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. Where'd you dig up the picture of me in the tunnel? I'm casually reading thru the January newsletter and there I am staring out at me. What a hoot!!!

**Charles "Pappy" Patchin**  
B/D/3/319th



Pappy

## Not a CSM...Then

I don't think they had CSM's (Command Sergeant Majors) in '65. Mish's rank would have been SMG (Sergeant Major), we didn't get the CSM rank until 1968.

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



We identified SGM Mish, HHC/2/503d, shown here on the right, as a CSM in this January '66 photo which appeared in last month's newsletter. Top Searcy set us straight; but I ain't doin' those 20 pushups Top! Five at best, and that's on a good day. The last RTO in the canal is moi. Ed

## A/2/503d CO and his CO Send Good Wishes to the Sky Soldier Family

The Lord has truly blessed us with a wonderful family and great friends. May His Hand be upon you each day and may this holy season and 2012 hold for you His blessings and opportunities. *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."*

I Chronicles 16:34.

**Rev. Jack and Lynn Kelley**



~ Family Kelley ~

## A Big Thanks from Radar to Hawkeye

A big thanks to Ken Kaplan (CO B/2/503d). Meeting him again put me back in time; like we had never been separated. One of the best reunions ever.

**RTO Harry Cleland**  
HHC/B/2/503d

## Van Campen, B/2/503d MIA

In the summer of 1989, the Western States Chapter 10, had the 1st ever 173d reunion on the "left coast". The reunion was held in Santa Rosa, CA, "the wine country". General William Westmoreland was the Guest Speaker. Beringer Wine was served at the banquet and it turns out that an employee of Beringer Wine would become an elected California Assembly Member, and Congressman Mike Thompson, who served in the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate).

At the reunion Memorial ceremony, we honored our fallen and our Missing In Action. The Van Campen (MIA B/2/503) Gold Star Mother was there along with a sister from Oroville, CA. The mother has since passed away, a sister still lives in Oroville, CA, and another sister was living in Fresno, CA, about two years ago.

There is no longer a newspaper in Oroville, CA, that could help us with a news story about Van Campen.

One of the things that the JPAC persons sometimes ask for are Photos and Dental information such as Dental records. Dental remains can then be matched with the MIA remains.

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



# THREATS TO EUROPE IN 2011

By John Cleese

The English are feeling the pinch in relation to recent events in Libya and have therefore raised their security level from "Miffed" to "Peeved." Soon, though, security levels may be raised yet again to "Irritated" or even "A Bit Cross."



The Germans have increased their alert state from "Disdainful Arrogance" to "Dress in Uniform and Sing Marching Songs." They also have two higher levels: "Invade a Neighbour" and "Lose."



Belgians, on the other hand, are all on holiday as usual; the only threat they are worried about is NATO pulling out of Brussels.

A wonderful Belgian lady



The English have not been "A Bit Cross" since the blitz in 1940 when tea supplies nearly ran out. Terrorists have been re-categorized from "Tiresome" to "A Bloody Nuisance." The last time the British issued a "Bloody Nuisance" warning level was in 1588, when threatened by the

Spanish Armada.

The Scots have raised their threat level from "Pooed Off" to "Let's get the mongrels." They don't have any other levels. This is the reason they have been used on the front line of the British army for the last 300 years.



Damn. It's true!

The Spanish are all excited to see their new submarines ready to deploy. These beautifully designed subs have glass bottoms so the new Spanish navy can get a really good look at the old Spanish navy.



Australia, meanwhile, has raised its security level from "No worries" to "She'll be all right, Mate." Two more escalation levels remain: "Crikey! I think we'll need to cancel the barbie this weekend!" and "The barbie is cancelled." So far no situation has ever warranted use of the final escalation level.



Australian barbie

-- John Cleese - British writer (of Monty Python fame), actor and tall person

An instigator of some of the more groundbreaking developments in twentieth-century comedy, John Cleese is one of Britain's best-known actors, writers, and comedians. Famous primarily for his comic efforts, such as the television series *Fawlty Towers* and the exploits of the *Monty Python* troupe, he has also become a well-respected actor in his own right.

[Article sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA, photos added]



The French government announced yesterday that it has raised its terror alert level from "Run" to "Hide." The only two higher levels in France are "Collaborate" and "Surrender." The rise was precipitated by a recent fire that destroyed France's white flag factory, effectively paralyzing the country's military capability.

Italy has increased the alert level from "Shout Loudly and Excitedly" to "Elaborate Military Posturing." Two more levels remain: "Ineffective Combat Operations" and "Change Sides."



# The Bridge on the River Kwai



Historical parallels

*The Bridge on the River Kwai* is a 1957 British World War II film by David Lean based on *The Bridge over the River Kwai* by French writer Pierre Boulle. The film is a work of fiction but borrows the construction of the Burma Railway in 1942–43 for its historical setting. It stars William Holden, Jack Hawkins, Alec Guinness and Sessue Hayakawa. The film was shot in Sri Lanka (credited as Ceylon, as it was known at the time). The bridge in the movie was located near Kitulgala.



**The bridge over the River Kwai in June 2004. The round truss spans are the originals; the angular replacements were supplied by the Japanese as war reparations.**

The largely fictional film plot is loosely based on the building in 1943 of one of the railway bridges over the Mae Klong—renamed Khwae Yai in the 1960s—at a place called Tha Ma Kham, five kilometres from the Thai town of Kanchanaburi.

In 1997, this film was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and selected for preservation in the United States Library of Congress National Film Registry.

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission:

*"The notorious Burma-Siam railway, built by Commonwealth, Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, approximately 13,000 prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar). Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre."*



The incidents portrayed in the film are mostly fictional, and though it depicts bad conditions and suffering caused by the building of the Burma Railway and its bridges, historically the conditions were much worse than depicted.

The real senior Allied officer at the bridge was British Lieutenant Colonel Philip Toosey. Some consider the film to be an insulting parody of Toosey.





**An allied P.O.W. wearing only loin cloth stands alongside primitive tripod used for leveling ground for the Thai-Burmese railway.**

On a BBC *Timewatch* programme, a former prisoner at the camp states that it is unlikely that a man like the fictional Nicholson could have risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel; and if he had, due to his collaboration he would have been "quietly eliminated" by the other prisoners. Julie Summers, in her book *The Colonel of Tamarkan*, writes that Pierre Boule, who had been a prisoner of war in Thailand, created the fictional Nicholson character as an amalgam of his memories of collaborating French officers. He strongly denied the claim that the book was anti-British, though many involved in the film itself (including Alec Guinness) felt otherwise.



**Allied POWs. Thai-Burmese Railway**

Toosey was very different from Nicholson and was certainly not a collaborator who felt obliged to work with the Japanese. Toosey in fact did as much to delay the building of the bridge as possible. Whereas

Nicholson disapproves of acts of sabotage and other deliberate attempts to delay progress, Toosey encouraged this: termites were collected in large numbers to eat the wooden structures, and the concrete was badly mixed.



Some of the characters in the film have the names of real people who were involved in the Burma Railway. Their roles and characters, however, are fictionalized. For example, a Sergeant-Major Risaburo Saito was in real life second in command at the camp. In the film, a Colonel Saito is camp commandant. In reality, Risaburo Saito was respected by his prisoners for being comparatively merciful and fair towards them; Toosey later defended him in his war crimes trial after the war, and the two became friends.



**Victims from the construction of the railway.**

The destruction of the bridge as depicted in the film is entirely fictional. In fact, two bridges were built: a temporary wooden bridge and a permanent steel/concrete bridge a few months later. Both bridges were used for two years, until they were destroyed by Allied aerial bombing. The steel bridge was repaired and is still in use today.



[Sent in by Ken Gann, 1RAR/RAA, as part of a slide presentation. See video [MOST\\_NA\\_RZECE\\_KWAI.pps](#)]





# Florida Publishes 2012 Veterans' Benefits Guide

Courtesy of the Governor's Communications Office

TALLAHASSEE -- Gov. Rick Scott recently announced nearly \$2.5 million in defense grants to local communities and organizations which support Florida military installations. These funds will continue to enhance and maintain Florida's reputation as the most military friendly state in the nation.

*"I am proud that Florida continues to support our military bases, military service members and their families, and the defense industry through the defense grant programs,"* said Gov. Rick Scott. *"Additionally, these programs work to protect a \$65 billion economic impact, and the over 686,181 direct and indirect jobs, which the defense industry annually infuses into Florida."*

Of the grants, eleven are Defense Reinvestment Grants, totaling \$850,000. that have been awarded to defense communities in support of military base retention and economic diversification. The program helps communities develop and implement base sustainment and economic diversification strategies. The other nine awards are Defense Infrastructure Grants totaling \$1,581,245.

These grants address infrastructure needs of communities which host military installations. For more details, visit [www.floridadefense.org](http://www.floridadefense.org).

*Governor Scott Awards 2011-12 Defense Grants*

TALLAHASSEE -- The 2012 edition of the *Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide* has been released by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs. The 24-page guide, sponsored by the Florida Veterans Foundation, provides information about federal and state veterans' benefits and how to obtain them.



*"As we strive to expand our outreach efforts, this guide becomes a primary tool in our arsenal to advocate for our state's veteran population,"* said Mike Prendergast, FDVA Executive Director.

Copies of the guide are being distributed to county veteran service offices, VA facilities and state colleges and universities. An interactive version is available online at [www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org). For more information or to request a guide, call (850) 487-1533.

## New Temporary Exhibit "The Animal Called POW"

Opening at 10 a.m. on February 10, 2012 in the Temporary Exhibit Gallery of the ASOM, this exhibit will stay open through January 2013.



Examine a realistic "Tiger Cage" like the one Colonel James "Nick" Rowe lived in for five years.

This exhibit is made possible by the support of Booz/Allen/Hamilton; The SERE School, Camp Mackall, NC; The United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) Public Affairs office; Fort Bragg's Division of Plans, Training and Mobilization; many former POWs and their families; and the Airborne & Special Operations Foundation.



Support the Museum. To continue to see these types of exhibits you can make a donation to the Foundation which supports the museum at:

[www.asomf.org/pages/donations/donation.php](http://www.asomf.org/pages/donations/donation.php)

[Sent in by Ron "Ropes" Rice, C/1/503d, 173d LRRP]



~ *Letter of Appreciation* ~

*2d Battalion (Airborne)  
503d Infantry Regiment  
173d AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)  
in the Republic of Vietnam*



~ *2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2011* ~

Roy S. Lombardo, Jr., LTC (Ret)  
*Sky Soldier-Ranger Extraordinaire*  
Bravo Company  
2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment  
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)  
Republic of Vietnam

Dear Ranger Roy:

The officers and men of your Bravo Bulls and the entire 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), Republic of Vietnam, share in the distinct honor of presenting you with this award in recognition of your dedicated and never ceasing support of and care for the troopers of the Bravo Bulls, all men of our battalion and brigade and their families.

Please accept the statue of this soldier ‘leading the way’ as testament to you, Sir, as you continue to *lead the way*.

With our deepest gratitude and respect,

The officers and men of the Bravo Bulls and the 2/503d

*Airborne...All The Way, Sir!*



***“I am very grateful for this recognition and humbled by the comments.”***

~ Roy Lombardo

Our thanks to Ed Kearney, B/2/503d, and his lovely bride Joyce, for presenting the *2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year 2011* award to LTC Roy S. Lombardo, Jr., (Ret), CO B/2/503d, on behalf of the Bravo Bulls and the officers and men of the 2/503d. We asked Ed to have a few pics taken which we could share with everyone. Ed says there were some damp eyes at that table. Ed



Joyce reading Letter of Appreciation to the Ranger.



Roy accepts trophy presented by Ed.



BDQ Roy, 2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year....Airborne!

***“Take two salt tables, and drive on!”***

*“Hats off to Jack Schimpf (B/2/503d) for initiating Roy's nomination and all the Bulls who seconded that nomination.” ~ Ed Kearney*



# THE NOEMFOOR SUBWAY

By Louis G. Aiken, Sr.  
B/503rd PRCT, WWII

## HOW MAC RODE HIS SUBWAY FROM NOEMFOOR, DUTCH INDIES TO SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



After the Noemfoor operation was completed the various units were assigned company areas, etc. Tents were erected, company streets laid out and so on. So I guess we were in a semi-garrison set up. The year was 1944, September or early October.

The CO during the operation was Capt. Chester Smith and he would remain CO until he was WIA during the Mindoro operation.

I guess it was about 9 or 10 a.m. one hot morning that I decided to walk up to the orderly (room) to check the bulletin board, or whatever. Our company street was probably 300 ft more or less in length with tents erected on both sides facing each other.

I was squad leader of the 2nd squad, 2nd platoon and T/Sgt. Wesley Rice was the platoon sergeant. On my way up to the orderly room I had to pass in front of Sgt. Rice's tent; however before I reached the sergeant's tent I saw a young soldier, who will be called Mac, exit from the tent. Mac continued on up toward the orderly room. Just before I reached the sergeant's tent, Rice also emerged from his tent into the company street and is watching Mac as he walked away.

I could see the sergeant was shaking his head and chuckling to himself as if he was slightly puzzled about something. He turns to go back into his tent and spies me, he stops and says, "Come here, Aiken. You ain't gonna believe what Mac just told me, that boy has done lost his marbles."

Sgt. Rice explained that Mac walked into his tent and unfolded a rough sketch of a proposed underground subway running the entire length of "B" Co's street. He then explained to Sgt. Rice that the troops could ride up to the orderly room during rainy weather, plus they

would not have to walk on the hard coral surface of which Noemfoor was composed. Mac further suggested that Sgt. Rice bring this matter to the CO's attention for his consideration and comments on the proposed project.

Just what Sgt. Rice did about the situation at that particular time I do not remember. However, we both agreed that Mac was either coming loose at the seams, or that he was just having a bit of fun at the expense of Sgt. Rice.

Actually to the best of my memory nothing much else was ever said about the matter while we were still on Noemfoor awaiting our next assignment, which was to be a move to Leyte, P.I. in late 1944.

We arrived on Leyte where, I guess, we could be considered at that point as being held in reserves just in case we are needed.

Somewhere between the proposed subway on Noemfoor and our arrival on Leyte I end up with Mac in my squad. Somewhat later word comes down that we are to prepare for the Mindoro operation and, of course, we get prepared. Then comes the day we are to load on an APD (*Assault Personnel Destroyer*) for the trip to Mindoro, or wherever we are supposed to land.

I decided to check the squad one last time, to see that each man has the necessary equip, ammo, rations, etc. I assign this task to Charlie Boyes from Mobile, Alabama.



He makes the rounds checking the squad and then comes back to me, shaking his head and grinning. I said "What's the matter, Charlie?" He said, "It's Mac - you know what that crazy bastard said to me when I asked him where his entrenching tool was?" I said, "I have no idea."

Charlie tells me that when he checked Mac that his entrenching tool is missing and when he asked Mac why he didn't have an entrenching tool. That Mac looked at him and said, "Who the hell needs an entrenching tool on the steel deck of a destroyer, you certainly don't think I can dig in on that thing, do you?" Perhaps these aren't the exact verbatim words spoken but they are close to it.

Well, it didn't take me long to recall the subway incident on Noemfoor. However, I was still somewhat skeptical and felt that Mac was trying to convince us that he had flipped his lid and was section eight material.

(continued....)



We took him back to his old tent area and found his entrenching tool. I told him he had better have it when we hit whatever beach it was we were supposed to hit. Charlie Boyes just shook his head and mumbled something to himself and walked away.

"B" Co. loaded on the APD; it was an old, oval deck, 2 stack vessel. I guess we were on board for less than 72 hrs., or perhaps less than 48 hrs., just sitting at anchor, I can't remember. Word comes down that there has been a Jap breakthrough up the line at Ormoc Bay. We are off loaded so that the ship can be used in that immediate area. It may have transported some of the 77th Division troops into the Ormoc area. I heard that the old ship incurred damage or was sunk in the fracas, or at least that was the explanation I remember.

We were not off loaded in our old Company area, but up the beach at a new spot a short distance from the old area.

Perhaps it was the second day in the new area that Mac comes up missing and, of course, we realize now that he is acting very peculiar to say the least. Someone suggested that he may have gone back to the company area. That's exactly what he had done and he left a trail to make sure that someone would follow him. He left bits and pieces of gear strung out as he moved toward the old area, he even disassembled his M-1 and left it strung out to make his trail. However the trail played out as he either ran out of articles to drop or decided the trail was marked sufficiently.

The native personnel near the old area were questioned and, yes, some of them believed they had seen an American soldier such as we described, but they had no idea where he was now. Some of us kinda believed that he may have been in one of the native huts with perhaps someone he knew. Anyway, it's getting late and the search party decides to return to our company area.

Very shortly after we return, ole Mac comes walking in, singing and laughing, talking loud and none of it making any sense. The troops give him the eye, wondering what comes next.

He calms down and I assign him to an area where he can be observed and watched throughout the nite. All seems to be going well, and then about midnite he starts singing and laughing all over again. Ole Teddy Kazor, one of the men who was keeping tabs on Mac, came to me and says, *"Aiken, we got to do something about that crazy feller, damn if I'm gonna let him keep me awake all nite."*

Actually, Kazor used much stronger language than I have accredited to him.

I go down to where Mac is leaning up against a big palm or coconut tree and he is still laughing and singing. I told him to sit down and shut up. He did exactly as he was told. I told him that if he didn't shut up and behave himself for the rest of the night, that I had no alternative but to take him out into the boondocks where I would tie him to a large tree so he could sing and laugh all he pleased, and disturb no one else but himself. He looked at me and said, *"O.K. I'll be quiet."* He kept his word and there was no more disturbance for the rest of the nite. However, I doubt very seriously if Teddy Kezar slept very much the rest of that nite.

Comes morning and Mac is escorted to the company CP. There the CO, the 1st Sgt., Sgt. Rice, myself and others watch Mac climb aboard a jeep that had been summoned for the purpose of escorting him, presumably, to some psychiatrist's office further up the line. As the jeep rolled gently down the beach on Leyte Island, P.I., with Mac sitting in the backseat, he turned and waved goodbye.

I can imagine he was saying to himself, *"I built my subway on Noemfoor, I rode it to Leyte, and now I'm gonna ride that sucker all the way to San Francisco, U.S.A.!"*

You know, he probably sang and laughed all the way back to the Good Ole U.S.A. as he rode home on his Noemfoor Subway.

This story wasn't made up, but actually occurred. I may have embellished it a bit here and there. Forty-six years is a long time ago and it's kinda hard to remember all the exact details.

**Louis G. Aiken, Sr.**  
**Co. "B" 503 Prcht Inf**  
**11/15/90**

P.S. I have no idea what actually happened to Mac when he left "B" Co. riding on that jeep. However, if anybody could ride a subway from the U.S.A, Mac did it.



**Wounded troopers  
coming out of  
Noemfoor.**



# The True Legacy of the Vietnam War

by William Outlaw



Like most other Vietnam Veterans, I returned home from the Vietnam War to an environment in the United States that viewed Vietnam Vets as possible “baby killers;” resulting from the aftermath of publicity surrounding horrible crimes at My Lai and other lesser known incidents. Those were

indeed terrible crimes, but in no way should they have tainted all Vietnam era Vets. The impact of the anti-War protests across the nation in the late 1960s and early 1970s fostered an anti-Vietnam Veteran atmosphere here at home that lasted for more than 20 years.

When I used my GI Bill benefits and returned to college, I rarely said anything to anyone about serving in Vietnam. I had friends that knew me for years who did not know about my service there. I think most Vietnam Vets felt the same way I did. Movies and

television shows at the time often portrayed Vietnam Vets as taking part in drug-induced killing sprees. Things did not really start changing on that front until the mid to late 1980s, and part of the credit for that must go to the building of the Wall, whose design was controversial among many Vets who did not like it at that time because it placed a “dark, grave-like” emphasis on the deaths of the more than 58,000 who died. However, it has proven that it has served as a place for healing those psychological wounds.

As a reporter at *The Washington Times* from 1983 to 1985, I reported on the controversy surrounding the design and construction of the Wall, and I also reported on many of the Vietnam Vets who began hanging around the Wall at the POW-MIA tents that were pitched close by. I interviewed many of them and spent the night on the Mall with them several times to observe, watch – and to listen. It was clear to me that many of them were still dealing with difficult issues related to their experience in Vietnam.

There were few programs designed to help them receive needed counseling. Many had PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – but had not received treatment or

counseling for it since public recognition of the issue did not begin to become a significant factor until the early 1990s – nearly 20 years after the end of the War.

Now, I am glad to say, things have changed for the better – and are continuing to evolve. There are a host of counseling programs available for Veterans and active duty servicemembers. VA has been a leader in the treatment of PTSD and has a great suicide prevention program in place through its Veterans Crisis Line that has documented success in preventing thousands of possible suicides. VA’s new outreach program, *Make the Connection*, is reaching out to Veterans of all eras to help them obtain benefits and services they need and deserve. (VA suicide prevention: [1-800-273-TALK \(8255\)](tel:1-800-273-TALK))

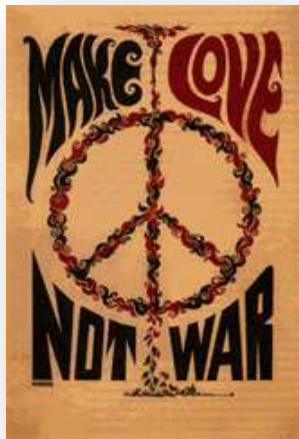
Veterans Service Organizations also are conducting massive outreach programs and helping millions of Veterans. One newly formed one called *Listening to America’s Veterans* is gearing up to provide Veterans with a forum to write and express themselves. It is not intended to provide counseling; rather it is to become an outlet for expression about what is happening with them now that they have returned from the combat zone. Another new group, *Code of Support*, has been formed to help Veterans and their family members become aware that the public does in fact support them and that help is available.

These services provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense as well as the VSOs were sorely missing in the aftermath of Vietnam. Problems may still exist, but the services and public support are now there as well. The public attitude about service in the military during times of war now has evolved to “*hate the war, not the soldier.*” Perhaps the real legacy of Vietnam is just that—never again should America’s service members return home to find the people holding them in disdain for fighting for their country. Separating the soldier and Veteran from the politics of the War is the true, lasting legacy of Vietnam.

Hail Brothers!!

**William Outlaw is the Director of Communications for the Office of Patient Care Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a Vietnam Veteran.**

[Sent in by Jeff Mazer 3/503d]



Vietnam War protest sign



~ Sky Soldiers Lost to the Iraq War ~



**Sean C. Reynolds**  
 DOD: 5/3/2003  
 Age: 25  
 Rank: SGT  
 Unit: 74LRSD  
 Reason: Non-hostile, weapon accident  
 Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
 Home: E. Lansing, Michigan



**Justin W. Hebert**  
 DOD: 8/1/2003  
 Age: 20  
 Rank: CPL  
 Unit: D/319th  
 Reason: Hostile fire, RPG attack  
 Location: Shumayt (south of), Iraq  
 Home: Arlington, Washington



**Craig S. Ivory**  
 8/17/2003  
 Age: 26  
 Rank: SPC  
 Unit: 501FSC  
 Reason: Non-hostile, heat related  
 Location: Homberg Unv. Hosp., Iraq  
 Home: Port Matilda, Pennsylvania



**Kyle G. Thomas**  
 DOD: 9/25/2003  
 Age: 23  
 Rank: SPC  
 Unit: A/2/503rd  
 Reason: RPG attack  
 Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
 Home: Topeka, Kansas



**David R. Bernstein**  
 DOD: 10/18/2003  
 Age: 24  
 Rank: 1LT  
 Unit: C/1/508th  
 Reason: Hostile fire, ambush  
 Location: Taza (W of Kirkuk), Iraq  
 Home: Phoenixville, Pennsylvania



**John D. Hart**  
 DOD: 10/18/2003  
 Age: 20  
 Rank: PFC  
 Unit: C/1/508th  
 Reason: Hostile fire, ambush  
 Location: Taza (W of Kirkuk), Iraq  
 Home: Bedford, Massachusetts



**Joseph Minucci, II**  
 DOD: 11/13/2003  
 Age: 23  
 Rank: SGT  
 Unit: C/2/503rd  
 Reason: Hostile fire, IED attack  
 Location: Samarra (N of), Iraq  
 Home: Richeyville, Pennsylvania



**Jacob S. Fletcher**  
 DOD: 11/13/2003  
 Age: 28  
 Rank: PFC  
 Unit: C/2/503rd  
 Reason: Hostile fire, IED attack  
 Location: Samarra (N of), Iraq  
 Home: Bay Shore, New York



**Michael E. Yashinski**  
 DOD: 12/24/2003  
 Age: 24  
 Rank: SGT  
 Unit: 501FSC  
 Reason: Non hostile, electrocution  
 Location: Kirkuk, Iraq  
 Home: Monument, Colorado



## All American The Last Soldier to Die

On Nov. 14, 2011, just a month before the final US troops left Iraq, a 23-year-old soldier lost his life to an improvised explosive device.

David Emanuel Hickman was the last American to be killed in a war that cost some 4,500 Americans their lives, the Associated Press reports.

With the US mission over, his family and friends are remembering him as a joker with the nickname "Zeus" (because, he playfully said, his physique was so impressive the gods would be envious); as an outside linebacker who was the linchpin of a defense so complicated his high school had to scrap it after he graduated because no other teen could figure it out; as someone with a goal of one day joining the Special Forces, and who, in the words of a friend, *"He didn't sign up to get his life on track. He wanted to be a physically and mentally elite soldier."*



David aka Zeus



~ Rest Easy Troopers... All The Way ~



## We Remember This

I came across this article that was cut from a newspaper a long time ago. Don't know what rag it came from but it must have hit me that I had stashed it away.

**Harry Cleland**  
HHC/B/2/503d

"The late N.C. State University professor Richard Walser was the author of "*Nematodes in My Garden of Verse*," a collection of home-grown, usually atrocious, poems.

Browsing through it recently, I came across "*The Paratrooper's Lament*", which seems timely now that members of the 82nd Airborne are shuttling home from the Gulf War.

Paratroopers are not given to poetry (*oh yeah, you dumb Leg!!! Ed*), and this one is to be excused for improvising on Joyce Kilmer's thing about trees. During the early 1950s, a Fort Bragg librarian found the ink-scratched manuscript in a notebook never claimed by its owner."

### ~ The Paratrooper's Lament ~

**I think that I shall never see  
A drop-zone lovely as a tree,  
A tree who scans the skies all day  
And lifts her hungry arms to prey,  
A tree whose jagged limbs are pressed  
Against the jumper's bleeding breast  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A mess of troopers in her hair  
Upon whose bosom they have lain  
And infinitely screamed with pain  
Jump-pay is drawn by fools like me,  
But only God can miss a tree.**



*And more on the subject.....*

Pacific  
**STARS AND STRIPES**

## Paratrooper Caught in Tree Sweats Snipers for 7 Hours

S&S Vietnam Bureau  
Saturday, February 25, 1967



(AP Photo)

**MINH THANH, Vietnam** – A paratrooper from the 173d Airborne Brigade walked away unharmed Wednesday after seven harrowing hours snagged in a 150-foot tree.

The trooper, PFC Robert Hill of Kansas City, Mo, was making his first combat jump – Operation Junction City in War Zone D – when his parachute tangled in the branches of the tree.

Dangling like a helpless puppet, Hill was unable to untwist his snagged lines. Hill hung from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., an open target for Viet Cong snipers.

After 7 hours a shout rang up from the ground, "*Pop your second chute!*" Hill yanked his emergency cord hoping to scramble down the parachute lines, but a sudden wind blew the second chute away.

Hill had only one choice left. He jumped. Hill hurdled through his own parachute and braced his legs parachute-style as he hit the ground unhurt.

Hill rejoined his outfit, crediting his airborne training with helping him survive the 150-foot fall.

***Airborne!!!***



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / February 2012 – Issue 37

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## ~ This Month in History ~

### February 1965

**1st:** Martin Luther King Jr. and 700 demonstrators arrested in Selma, Alabama.

**4th:** McGeorge Bundy, American Special Assistant for National Security, arrives in Saigon for talks with US Ambassador General Maxwell Taylor.

**6th:** Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin arrives in Hanoi. He pledges support for forces working towards the unification of Vietnam and condemns American policy.

**6th:** Viet Cong guerrillas attack the U.S. military compound at Pleiku in the Central Highlands, killing eight Americans, wounding 126 and destroying ten aircraft.

**7th:** Cassius Clay becomes a Muslim and adopts the name Muhammad Ali.

**7th-8th:** "I've had enough of this," President Johnson tells his National Security advisors. He then approves *Operation Flaming Dart*, the bombing of a North Vietnamese army camp near Dong Hoi by U.S. Navy jets from the carrier *Ranger*. Johnson makes no speeches or public statements concerning his decision. Opinion polls taken in the U.S. shortly after the bombing indicate a 70 percent approval rating for the President and an 80 percent approval of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Johnson now agrees to a long-standing recommendation from his advisors for a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam. In Hanoi, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin is pressured by the North Vietnamese to provide unlimited military aid to counter the American "aggression." Kosygin gives in to their demands. As a result, sophisticated Soviet surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) begin arriving in Hanoi within weeks.

**7th:** Viet Cong make combined attacks on US bases, the most effective of which are against Pleiku in the Central Highlands where eight Americans are killed and 126 wounded. Losses in material include 10 aircraft destroyed and 15 damaged.

**7th:** Retaliation for the Viet Cong attacks includes air strikes into North Vietnam.

**13th:** President Johnson decides to give the go-ahead for the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam - *Operation Rolling Thunder*.



**16th:** The *Vung Ro Bay Incident* refers to the discovery of a 100-ton North Vietnamese naval trawler unloading munitions on a beach in South Vietnam's Vung Ro Bay on 16 February 1965. The incident spurred further U.S. Navy involvement in the Vietnam War. A U.S. Army officer flying his helicopter along the coast of central South Vietnam suddenly spotted a large, camouflaged vessel perpendicular to the shore. Cargo was being unloaded and stacked on the beach at Vung Ro, an isolated bay on the rocky coast. The pilot immediately radioed his sighting to Lieutenant Commander Harvey P. Rodgers, the Senior Advisor to the South Vietnamese 2nd Coastal District headquartered in Nha Trang, who in turn notified the coastal district commander, Lieutenant Commander Ho Van Ky Thoai. Thoai dispatched South Vietnamese A-1 Skyraiders to the bay where they capsized and sank the ship.



War cargo ship for Viet Cong sunk at Vung Ro.

**18th:** Another military coup in Saigon results in General Khanh finally ousted from power and a new military/civilian government installed, led by Dr. Phan Huy Quat.

**22nd:** General William Westmoreland requests US Marines to protect the base at Da Nang.

**22nd:** General Westmoreland requests two battalions of U.S. Marines to protect the American air base at Da Nang from 6000 Viet Cong massed in the vicinity. The President approves his request, despite the "grave reservations" of Ambassador Taylor in Vietnam who warns that America may be about to repeat the same mistakes made by the French in sending ever-increasing numbers of soldiers into the Asian forests and jungles of a "hostile foreign country" where friend and foe are indistinguishable.

(continued....)



**23rd:** A Viet Cong bomb explodes in a hotel in Qui Nonh, killing 23 servicemen.

**24th:** Beatles begin filming the movie "Help" in the Bahamas.

**26th:** The first South Korean troops arrive in Vietnam.

## February 1966

**February 1966:** The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Sen. J. William Fulbright, holds televised hearings examining America's policy in Vietnam. Appearing before the committee, Defense Secretary McNamara states that U.S. objectives in Vietnam are "*not to destroy or overthrow the Communist government of North Vietnam. They are limited to the destruction of the insurrection and aggression directed by North Vietnamese against the political institutions of South Vietnam.*"

**3rd:** Influential newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann lambastes President Johnson's strategy in Vietnam, stating, "*Gestures, propaganda, public relations and bombing and more bombing will not work.*" Lippmann predicts Vietnam will divide America as combat casualties mount.

**6th-9th:** President Johnson and South Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky meet in Honolulu.



U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson, General William Westmoreland, Thiệu and Kỳ together in 1966

**11th:** Johnson announces that the 205,000 troops will be increased gradually.

**26th-March 22nd:** 173d Airborne Brigade commence Operation Phoenix in Binh Duong & Bien Hoa Province. The 173d ABN and elements from the 1st Inf. Div. killed 35 VC

in this operation. According to CPT Thomas Faley, CO of C/2/503rd, 173d ABN BDE, this operation was planned on Feb 25th as a quick strike at a VC force that had been repeatedly observed in the area five kilometers west of Tan Uyen since the 18th. At 0900 on the 26th, A and B companies were choppered into LZ Chris without contact. B Company moved northwest and A Company directly north. The jungle was so thick that it was described as a '15-foot high briar patch.' At 1510, A Company made contact with a well-dug-in enemy force that put out a murderous rate of fire. As the GI's attempted to pull back, the VC employed the 'hugging tactic' to avoid the allied supporting arms. The distance between the forces was at times less than 30 meters. After pulling back just a short distance, the first airstrike consisted of CBUs seemed to break the back of the VC force. Sadly, a few minutes later the second CBU strike caused several infantry casualties. The airstrikes did force the VC to break off their hugging tactic and fall back to their entrenchments. LTC George Dexter, the battalion CO, was in a C&C Huey. He had directed B Company to move to flank the VC force engaging A Company. At 1715, C Company landed in an LZ 1,500 meters northwest of the battle and moved into a blocking position in a rubber plantation. Shortly after briefing CPT Faley following their insert, LTC Dexter was wounded by enemy fire that came up through the floor of the Huey. Severely wounded, Dexter radio'd his battalion executive officer, Major Robert Carmichael, to

take command of the battalion. At 2000, B Company linked up with the remnant of A Company who had suffered 14 known dead and 76 others wounded. The enemy withdrew during the night and was able to police the battlefield. The next day, B and A Company searched the trenches and moved to link up with C Co.. On March 1, General Smith, the 173d ABN BDE CO, terminated Phoenix and the 2/503rd was extracted at 1130. They closed the brigade's base camp at Bien Hoa at 1335.

**28th:** Sandy Koufax & Don Drysdale begin a joint holdout against Dodgers.

## February 1967

**2nd:** President Johnson states there are no "*serious indications that the other side is ready to stop the war.*"

**8th-10th:** American religious groups stage a nationwide "*Fast for Peace.*"

(continued...)



**8th-12th:** A truce occurs during Tet, the lunar New Year, a traditional Vietnamese holiday.

**9th:** Dow-Jones Index hits record 995 points.

**13th:** Following the failure of diplomatic peace efforts, President Johnson announces the U.S. will resume full-scale bombing of North Vietnam.



**Aretha Franklin**

**14th:** Aretha Franklin records "*Respect*".

**16th:** *Operation Big Springs* terminates for the 173d Airborne Brigade in War Zone "D". Twenty-six base camps were discovered in "D" Zone, and enemy troops were often encountered during the search of these camps. Brigade elements located and destroyed over 1,000 bunkers, 78 huts, more than 24 tons of rice and 24 weapons. Brigade ground units with air support accounted for 79 Viet Cong dead.

**22nd-May 14th:** **The largest** military offensive of the war occurs. *Operation Junction City* involves 22 U.S. and four South Vietnamese battalions attempting to destroy the NVA's Central Office headquarters in South Vietnam. The offensive includes the only (mass) parachute assault by U.S. troops during the entire war.

During the fighting at Ap Gu, U.S. 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry is commanded by Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Haig who will later become an influential White House aide. *Junction City* ends with 2728 Viet Cong killed and 34 captured. American losses are 282 killed and 1576 wounded. NVA relocate their Central Office headquarters inside Cambodia, thus avoiding capture.

**25th:** 36 U.S. Marines are killed by NVA who raid their base camp near the Demilitarized Zone.

**27th:** Influential CBS TV news anchorman Walter Cronkite, who just returned from Saigon, tells Americans during his CBS Evening News broadcast that he is certain "*the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate.*"

**28th:** Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Wheeler, at the behest of Gen. Westmoreland, asks President Johnson for an additional 206,000 soldiers and mobilization of reserve units in the U.S.

## February 1968

**1st:** In Saigon during Tet, a suspected Viet Cong guerrilla is shot in the head by South Vietnam's police chief Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, in full view of an NBC news cameraman and an Associated Press still

photographer. The haunting AP photo taken by Eddie Adams appears on the front page of most American newspapers the next morning. Americans also observe the filmed execution on NBC TV. Another controversy during Tet, and one of the most controversial statements of the entire war, is made by an American officer who states, "*We had to destroy it, in order to save it,*" referring to a small city near Saigon leveled by American bombs. His statement is later used by many as a metaphor for the American experience in Vietnam.

**1st:** Former VP Richard Nixon announces candidacy for president.

**2nd:** President Johnson labels the Tet Offensive "*a complete failure.*" For the North Vietnamese, the Tet Offensive is both a military and political failure in Vietnam. The "general uprising" they had hoped to ignite among South Vietnamese peasants against the Saigon government never materialized. Viet Cong had also come out of hiding to do most of the actual fighting, suffered devastating losses, and never regained their former strength. As a result, most of the fighting will be taken over by North Vietnamese regulars fighting a conventional war. Tet's only success, and an unexpected one, was in eroding grassroots support among Americans and in Congress for continuing the war indefinitely.

**6th-7th:** The Battle of Lang Vei was a battle of the Vietnam War fought on the night of 6 February 1968, between elements of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and the United States-led Detachment A-101, 5th Special Forces Group. Lang Vei was an American Special Forces camp, located approximately 7 km (4.5 mi) west of the Khe Sanh Combat Base in Quang Tri Province, in the northwestern corner of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN or South Vietnam), near its borders with the DRV and the Kingdom of Laos.



**U.S Air Force reconnaissance aircraft revealed the destruction of two North Vietnamese PT-76 tanks in Lang Vei**

(continued....)



The camp was constructed in 1967 for operations of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) along the Laotian frontier. It was overwhelmed by North Vietnamese forces on 7 February 1968. The history of the camp and the battle for the camp are also described in some detail in the article on the Battle of Khe Sanh. Lang Vei was positioned some nine kilometers (5.5 mi) west of Khe Sanh village on Route Coloniale 9. Known to Americans as Highway 9, this major roadway stretched through Quang Tri Province from Dong Ha on the coast west to Lao Bao, Laos, passing through places such as Cam Lo as well as Khe Sanh. Lang Vei was defended by a force of 500 CIDG Montagnards and 24 U.S. Special Forces personnel.

**8th:** 21 U.S. Marines are killed by NVA at Khe Sanh.

**10th:** Peggy Fleming wins Olympic figure skating gold medal, Grenoble, France.

**18th:** 10,000 demonstrators against US in Vietnam War in West-Berlin.



**Germans protest Vietnam War in front of American Haus in West Berlin**

**22nd:** In a major offensive, assault teams and artillery attack American bases all over South Vietnam, killing 1,140 Americans. At the same time, South Vietnamese towns and cities are also hit. The heaviest fighting is around Saigon, but fights rage all over South Vietnam. Eventually, American artillery and airpower overwhelm the Vietcong offensive.

**23rd:** Viet Cong attack 110 targets throughout South Vietnam including Saigon.

**23rd:** Over 1,300 artillery rounds hit the Marine base at Khe Sanh and its outposts, more than on any previous day of attacks. To withstand the constant assaults, bunkers at Khe Sanh are rebuilt to withstand 82mm mortar rounds.

## February 1969

**February 1969:** In spite of government restrictions, President Nixon authorizes Operation Menu, the bombing of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong bases within Cambodia. Over the following four years, U.S. forces will drop more than a half million tons of bombs on Cambodia.

**1st-16th:** 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby Trail 1 in Bong Son area.

**1st-6th March:** 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby March in Tuy Hoa area.

**2nd:** Boris Karloff, British actor (Frankenstein), dies at 81.

**5th:** US population reaches 200 million.



## February 1970

**1st:** Ford Frick, Earle Combs & Jesse Haines elected to Hall of Fame

**2nd:** B-52 bombers strike the Ho Chi Minh trail in retaliation for the increasing number of Viet Cong raids throughout the South.

**21st:** Although the official peace talks remain deadlocked in Paris, behind the scenes, Henry Kissinger begins a series of secret talks with North Vietnam's Le Duc Tho, which will go on for two years.

## February 1971

**February 1971:** *Operation Greene Lighting* in the Binh Dinh Province continues for 173d Airborne Brigade, its' 52nd operation in-country.

**4th:** British car maker Rolls Royce declared itself bankrupt.

**8th:** In Operation Lam Son 719, three South Vietnamese divisions drive into Laos to attack two major enemy bases. Unknowingly, they are walking into a North Vietnamese trap. Over the next month, more than 9,000 South Vietnamese troops are killed or wounded. More than two thirds of the South Vietnamese Army's armored vehicles are destroyed, along with hundreds of U.S. helicopters and planes.

*(continued...)*



**14th:** Richard Nixon installs secret taping system in White House.

## February 1972

**1st:** 1st scientific hand-held calculator (HP-35) introduced (\$395).

**21st-28th:** President Nixon visits China and meets with Mao Zedong and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai to forge new diplomatic relations with the Communist nation. Nixon's visit causes great concern in Hanoi that their wartime ally China might be inclined to agree to an unfavorable settlement of the war to improve Chinese relations with the U.S.

## February 1973

**5th:** Funeral for LTC William Nolde, last US soldier killed in Vietnam War.

**12th:** Operation Homecoming begins the release of 591 American POWs from Hanoi.

## February 1974

**6th:** US House of Representatives begins determining grounds for impeachment of Nixon.

**17th:** Robert K. Preston, a disgruntled U.S. Army private, buzzes the White House with a stolen helicopter.

## February 1975

**5th:** NVA military leader General Van Tien Dung secretly crosses into South Vietnam to take command of the final offensive.

**21st:** John Mitchell, H.R. Haldeman & John D. Ehrlichman sentenced to 2½-8 yrs.

**27th:** House of Representatives pass \$21.3 billion anti-recession tax-cut bill.



Former U.S. POWs heading home on “Hanoi Taxi”, a Lockheed C-141.



# STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT S. McNAMARA

Once closed testimony to the United States Congress

## Southeast Asia

No region is more vulnerable and exposed to Communist subversion than Southeast Asia. Living in the shadow of the Communist giant to the north, the far smaller nations in this region are torn between their desire to be free and independent and their fear of being overrun by the Chinese hordes.



Robert McNamara

It is quite understandable therefore that a policy of neutralism in that area realize the danger of placing themselves at the mercy of Communist China and have sought to retain some ties with the Western powers, particularly the United States.

The principal objective of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia is simply to maintain the integrity and independence of the non-Communist nations in that area. We do not require that they be allied with us, but we do attempt to convince them that any tendency to be neutral on the side of Communist China will inevitably lead to Communist control. Accordingly, we have tried in every possible way to support the independence of the non-Communist nations in Southeast Asia wherever our help is wanted, and we have respected the positions of those nations which prefer to seek their security in neutrality. Thus we have a small military program in Burma in addition to a commitment to build a road in that country. However, we have terminated both our military and economic aid programs for Cambodia.

In the case of South Vietnam, our help is clearly wanted and we are deeply engaged in supporting the Vietnamese government and people in their war against Communist Viet Cong. In addition to large-scale economic and military assistance, we are also maintaining a very substantial training and logistics

mission in that country. Including Military Assistance Advisory Group, there are now about 15,500 U.S. military personnel in Vietnam providing training, airlift, communications and advice to the Vietnamese forces and administering the Military Assistance Program.

But the situation there continues grave. Last September we had hoped we could bring sufficient pressure to bear on the Diem government to persuade it to abandon its oppressive measures against the Vietnamese people and get on with the task of winning the war against the Viet Cong. Although the military situation in the Delta region was still very bad, good progress had been made in the northern areas and especially noteworthy work had been done in the key coastal provinces where Viet Cong strength had once threatened to cut the country in half. In the central area and the highland, progress had been steady, though slower. The situation was still difficult in the provinces to the west and north of Saigon itself. Throughout the northern two-thirds of the country, the strategic hamlet program had developed very well and freedom of movement in the rural areas.

Robert S. McNamara

## Vietnamese Government Over-Thrown

The arrest and assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm, then president of South Vietnam, marked the culmination of a successful CIA-backed *coup d'état* led by General Dương Văn Minh in November 1963. On the morning of November 2, 1963, Diệm and his adviser, younger brother Ngô Đình Nhu, were arrested after the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) had been successful in a bloody overnight siege on Gia Long Palace in Saigon.



Ngô Dinh Diem

(continued...)



The *coup* was the culmination of nine years of autocratic and nepotistic family rule in South Vietnam. Discontent with the Diem regime had been simmering below the surface, and exploded with mass Buddhist protests against long-standing religious discrimination after the government shooting of protesters who defied a ban on the flying of the Buddhist flag.

When rebel forces entered the palace, the Ngô were not present, as they had escaped before to a loyalist shelter in Cholon. The brothers had kept in communication with the rebels through a direct link from the shelter to the palace, and misled them into believing that they were still in the palace. The Ngô brothers soon agreed to surrender and were promised safe exile; after being arrested, they were instead executed in the back of an armoured personnel carrier by ARVN officers on the journey back to military headquarters at Tân Sơn Nhứt Air Base.



### **Ngo Dinh Diem**

While no formal inquiry was conducted, the responsibility for the deaths of the Ngô brothers is commonly placed on Minh's bodyguard, Captain Nguyễn Văn Nhung, and on Major Dương Hiếu Nghĩa, both of whom guarded the brothers during the trip. Minh's army colleagues and US officials in Saigon agreed that Minh ordered the executions. They postulated various motives, including that the brothers had embarrassed Minh by fleeing the Gia Long Palace, and that the brothers were killed to prevent a later political comeback. The generals initially attempted to cover up the execution by suggesting that the brothers had committed suicide, but this was contradicted when photos of the Ngôs' bloodied bodies surfaced in the media.

### **U.S. Reaction**

Kennedy learned of the deaths on the following morning when National Security Council staffer Michael Forrestal rushed into the cabinet room with a telegram reporting the Ngo brothers' suicides. According to General Maxwell Taylor, "*Kennedy leaped to his feet and rushed from the room with a look of shock and dismay on his face which I had never seen before.*" Kennedy had planned that Diem would be safely exiled and Arthur Schlesinger recalled that the U.S. president was "somber and shaken". Kennedy later penned a memo, lamenting that the assassination was "particularly abhorrent" and blaming himself for approving Cable 243, which authorized Lodge to explore coup options in the wake of Nhu's attacks on the Buddhist pagodas. Forrestal said that, "*It shook him personally...bothered him as a moral and religious matter. It shook his confidence, I think, in the kind of advice he was getting about South Vietnam.*" When Kennedy was consoled by a friend who told him he need not feel sorry for the Ngo brothers on the grounds of despotism, Kennedy replied, "*No. They were in a difficult position. They did the best they could for their country.*"



### **Reflections of a Defense Secretary**

*"Be prepared to reexamine your reasoning... What makes us omniscient?"* asked McNamara, referring to Vietnam but also looking at the world then around him. *"Have we a record of omniscience? We are the strongest nation in the world today. I do not believe that we should ever apply that economic, political and military power unilaterally. If we had followed that rule in Vietnam, we wouldn't have been there. None of our allies supported us. Not Japan, not Germany, not Britain or France. If we can't persuade nations with comparable values of the merit of our cause, we'd better reexamine our reasoning."*

**Robert S. McNamara**

***"Now we have a problem in making our power credible, and Vietnam is the place."***

**-- John F. Kennedy, 1961**



# Senate panel hears of battles for care by veterans with PTSD

By Gregg Zoroya  
*USA TODAY*  
12/1/2011

Accounts of chronic staff shortages among Department of Veterans Affairs mental health staff and veterans discouraged over delays in therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder were brought before a Senate Veterans' Affairs committee hearing today.



**The U.S. government tests hundreds of Marines and soldiers before they ship out to help predict who is most susceptible to PTSD**

Photo by Jae C. Hong, AP

"Too often, I am told that the patient will have to wait as long as six weeks for the first appointment. But after waiting that long, many patients lose the motivation for treatment, or their PTSD worsens while they are waiting," testified Michelle Washington, a coordinator of PTSD care at a VA hospital in Wilmington, Del. Forty percent of about 600 Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans surveyed by the non-profit Wounded Warrior Project in recent weeks, and who were seeking VA mental health treatment, reportedly struggled in getting help. And among those, 40% received no therapy at all, said John Roberts, executive vice president of the organization.

Roberts called the survey result a "stark call-to-action." The committee has been pressing the VA hard in recent months on delays in treating mental health cases after a survey done within the department earlier this year showed that 70% of clinicians believe the VA lacks staffing or space to handle the mounting numbers of veterans seeking care.

A *USA TODAY* analysis of VA data showed that new mental health patients at about a third of department hospitals wait longer than the VA's goal of treating patients within 14 days or less.

The VA insists that it is meeting scheduling deadlines and that any delays are the result of problems it cannot control, such as patient rescheduling or failing to show up for appointments. *USA TODAY* reported Wednesday that 10,000 combat veterans with PTSD sought care at VA hospitals every three months this year, pushing the total number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans treated by the VA for the disorder to 211,000.

Washington was the first VA employee to step forward publicly in recent months and describe severe delays in mental health treatment. "I am frequently frustrated in my ability to provide care," said Washington, who has also been authorized to speak on behalf of the 600,000 member American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal employees union. Washington said VA schedulers are under enormous pressure to meet the VA's 14-day deadline for new patients and this robs therapists of the ability to manage growing numbers of veterans requiring ongoing and lengthy counseling.

She said problems will persist "as long as scheduling continues to be driven by clerks pressured by management to make the numbers look good — and as long as mental health providers have little or no say about where and when to best serve patients."

The VA director of mental health operations, Mary Schoen, says the department has increased its staffing by nearly 50% since 2006, and continues to look for ways to improve access to care. The VA's failure, however, to acknowledge significant problems led committee member to question the credibility of Schoen and her staff.

"I just want to hear the truth," said Sen. John Rockefeller, D-W.Va.

**Source: Veterans United for Truth newsletter**

***"I am too positive to be doubtful, too optimistic to be fearful, too determined to be defeated."***

Colonel Vance Forepaugh  
173d Airborne Brigade

[Sent in by Art Fry, A/2/503d, '69/'70]





# 173rd Airborne Brigade

## 503rd Infantry - 4th Battalion Geronimo

### GERONIMO'S JOURNEY TO 'NAM

By Elmer "Buddy" Davis  
C/4/503d

Everyone knows that the 4/503d was originally the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, Ft. Campbell, KY. The famous nickname of the 1/501st was "Geronimo". Of course, we had a wooden Indian that stood proudly at the door of our Battalion Headquarters. When the 1/501st deployed to Vietnam as the 4/503d to join the 173rd Airborne Brigade in 'Nam, we left our wooden buddy back at Campbell.

I was the supply sergeant of Company C, 4/503d. A couple of months after arriving in Vietnam, the Red Cross was in the process of sending me home for my wife's child birth at Fort Campbell, KY. The company commander, Captain Jack K. Tarr, stopped me on my way to the Bn S-4 at the Bien Hoa rear area. Captain Tarr said that the Battalion CO, LTC Healy, knew I was going to Fort Campbell to be with my wife. Iron Mike wanted me to locate our mascot, Geronimo, and ship him to Vietnam. Since Geronimo was a wooden Indian, he was not transferred with the rest of us to Vietnam.



MG Michael D. Healy

When I got back to Ft Campbell, I located Geronimo on my first stop, the Brigade Headquarters. Geronimo was about 5' 4" and weighed about 90 pounds. A fine looking wooden Indian. There he was standing at the inside entrance. It really was good to see him again. Seemed as he looked at me like, "What the hell took you so long?"

I had to convince the Brigade Commander, a full colonel, that I was sent by LTC Healy. He was surprised, but gave approval to send our buddy to Vietnam. There was no problem lifting and loading

Geronimo in my pickup. I put him in the front seat with me. Nothing else to do, so I talked to Geronimo on the way to Post Transportation. I asked Geronimo if he knew he was dropped from the rolls of the 4th Battalion as a deserter?

I went in the Transportation Warehouse and told a couple civilians that I had a wooden Indian that I needed to ship to Vietnam. They looked at each other and smiled, nodding their heads. Really a couple of very helpful individuals. I had to convince them by dragging Geronimo in the door. They immediately started putting a wooden box together. I guess that would be like a wooden Indian's quarters for the long trip. It was a "hand shake deal". Nothing in writing. What did I know about returning AWOL wooden Indians to their unit?

About 7 weeks later, I was back in 'Nam and Captain Tarr again stopped me in almost the same spot. In a very serious voice, he said that LTC Healy wanted to know if I had stolen Geronimo? Clearly a "Who me?" situation, and I looked over my shoulder to make sure he was talking to me. My integrity was at stake. My reputation alone should have taken care of the Colonel's thinking, and this situation was based on honesty, and merit as a supply sergeant.

Thank God Geronimo showed up a few weeks after the conversation with Captain Tarr. I went to the Battalion Headquarters building when I got the good news of his arrival. There was Geronimo standing inside the entrance in his headdress and all his color. He never looked better. I looked him straight in the eyes and let him know that he had gotten me in a great deal of trouble.

Years later, I had a few days left in the military before retirement, when the 4/503d colors were returned to Fort Campbell. Geronimo was not in the advance party. To the best of my knowledge, he was not in the main body either.

I often wonder if he's getting old. Could he still be serving? Would sure like to see him. Anyone know how I can locate Geronimo?

(continued...)



## GERONIMO FOUND

By Dayton Herrington  
HHC/4/503d

I came across the story of Geronimo by Sgt. Buddy Davis, so I called him. Buddy can't come to the 4/503d reunion in 2008 because he has COPD. But, he told me the story of Geronimo again. Of course, he asked, "I wonder where Geronimo is now?"

My response was, "I know where Geronimo is and I've seen him since we came home. He's in Alaska and I had my picture taken with him at the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment."

My trip to Alaska came about because, in the planning phase for a D-Day celebration in 2003, the 501st in Alaska decided that a veteran of each of the Regiments should be present. Ft. Campbell was contacted and my name came up. I was invited and I accepted.

I hit the road on 28 May for the June 6th event as I knew it was a long drive (up and back just over 8800 miles, 5 days driving each way). But, what a drive and I have seven rolls of film to show for it.

Upon arrival, I reported to the Commander, LTC John Glenn. Much to my surprise, can you believe that just outside of the Commander's office there was Geronimo "on duty" as always, looking good? You can bet pictures (more than one) were taken and I will bring them to the 2008 reunion.

Anyway, after talking to Buddy Davis, I called the 501st in Alaska that night and talked with the Duty NCO, Geronimo being the subject matter. He said, "Sure, Geronimo is here. I'm looking at him". So, you Geronimo guys of the 4th Battalion, 'Heads Up'. Geronimo is not lost. He is at home in Bldg. #661, Headquarters 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, Ft Richardson, Alaska, standing proudly "on guard" for them as he did for us 40 years ago and Sergeant Davis knows it.

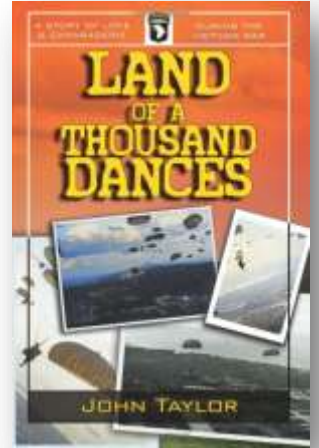


4/503d's Geronimo,  
still on guard.

## Land of a Thousand Dances

By John Taylor  
B/2/503d

"In 1965, medical corpsman Brian Thomas, a white paratrooper in the Vietnam bound 101st Airborne Division, confronts both the coming war and reverse racial discrimination, when he becomes involved in an interracial romance with ebony beauty, Gladys Thompson, and despotic, racist NCO's persecute him for violating the South's most sacred, entrenched taboo. Once he arrives in the war zone, Brian's view of combat as a rite of passage "adventure" is shattered as a naïve illusion. He experiences firsthand the horrors of war and its traumatizing effects. Despite having been ordered to leave a critically wounded man behind during a forced withdrawal, Brian regards himself as a coward, and his guilt and shame haunt him relentlessly. Most veterans called Vietnam, *The 'Nam*. But to Brian it would always be known as, *The Land of a Thousand Dances*."



### Reviews:

★★★★★ Written by a guy who was there.  
Excellent read. Taylor is the new W.E.B. Griffin.

★★★★★ John Taylor's *LAND OF A THOUSAND DANCES* is a better Vietnam war story. Told from a 101st Airborne Division's medic's point of view it is a story that touches on stateside training and the inevitable hard fought combat that followed. For an Army medic any 'hard fought' combat action meant harder and even more desperate fights and struggles to keep wounded soldiers alive...

★ I have served with the 101 and I never experienced anything like that being described in the book. It is a very bad account even as a fiction. Soldiers, NCO's and officers never have conducted themselves in that manner at home or in combat zones.

Available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and at Barnes & Noble. The author reports it was awarded second prize in two novel-writing contests: the Southwest Writers Contest and the Branson Stars & Flags contest.

Note: Seems the one-star trooper missed the part about this book being 'fiction'. I've begun the book, it's a hellofa read so far. Ed



So, you wanna be an Army  
combat helicopter pilot?



“Casper Huey 143 on a support mission for 173d line units  
somewhere out of Dak To 1967” (Casper web site photo)

### ~ Fighter Pilot's Prayer ~

*"Lord, I pray for the eyes of  
an eagle, the heart of a lion  
and the balls of an Army  
combat helicopter pilot."*

[Sent in by Jerry Sopko, D/4/503d]

### Red Leg & Grunt

On my most recent  
visit to Panama, my  
wife Mary and I were  
privileged to spend a  
convivial evening of  
fine food and drink  
with the former Charlie  
Battery 319th Artillery  
commander (4/66-4/67),  
Colonel Court Prisk  
(Ret). This good-  
humored encounter  
was made possible by his younger brother, Gary “Cap”  
Prisk (C/D/2/503, 67-68). Court has resided in Panama  
since 1985 and is married to prominent Panamanian  
dermatologist, Gioconda Guadiano Salud!



Court & Wambi

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

(See a story by Court on Pages 40-44)

## Vietnam Veterans Homecoming Celebration Set for March 31, 2012



The Vietnam Veterans Homecoming  
Celebration for military members and their friends and  
families will be held on Saturday, March 31.

The USO of North Carolina and Charlotte Motor  
Speedway, with support from the North Carolina  
Association of Broadcasters, announced that they will  
hold an incredible *Vietnam Veterans Homecoming  
Celebration* for military members and their friends and  
families that will be held on March 31.

Vietnam veterans never received the type of  
homecoming celebration that today's troops receive as  
they return from service. To honor those who served  
and the military members who returned from combat,  
the USO of North Carolina is holding a long, overdue  
homecoming celebration.

Hosted by the USO of North Carolina and Charlotte  
Motor Speedway, the *Vietnam Veterans Homecoming  
Celebration 2012* is set to be an unforgettable experience  
featuring live entertainment, displays and  
demonstrations, military salutes, and much more.

Visit this web site for details:

[http://www.charlottespeedway.com/tickets/vietnam\\_veterans\\_homecoming\\_celebration\\_2012/600589.html](http://www.charlottespeedway.com/tickets/vietnam_veterans_homecoming_celebration_2012/600589.html)

[Sent in by Larry Hampton, A/1/503d]

*“There is the guilt all soldiers feel for  
having broken the taboo against killing, a  
guilt as old as war itself. Add to this the  
soldier's sense of shame for having fought  
in actions that resulted, indirectly or  
directly, in the deaths of civilians. Then  
pile on top of that an attitude of social  
opprobrium, an attitude that made the  
fighting man feel personally morally  
responsible for the war, and you get your  
proverbial walking time bomb.”*

~ Philip Caputo, 1982



# A GOOD RANT, AND A GOOD STORY

(Plus a bit about Alice's Restaurant)

By George Rivera

A/2/503d

Smitty:

You'd better stop being sentimental and get your tired, shot up, old ass back to work. Nobody is standing in line to do what you do because no one else can, is willing, or is capable. I might. What's the pay? I among many will lament your absence when you stand in the door, get the green light, and *Go!* I hope it's to Heaven buddy. Become a believer. It's easy. I can help. I hope it is green for you. I'll be waiting for you there. In the meantime, say whatever you want. Tear them up!

War music is part of who we are. I didn't like all of it. I hated those hippie bastards. I was surrounded by damn hippie grunts every day wearing their beads and peace signs. But they humped and kicked ass like nobody's business.



Hippie bastards

I knew real hippies who jumped and humped, and yeah, they were goat herders. Imagine that! I even heard some of them smoked pot. I never did myself though, I just read about it you know. Well, except for that one time on a radio relay station midway between English and Phu Cat known as the Hawk's Nest. I was only on it once.



The chopper we were on was flying southwest of Highway 1 when it abruptly, steeply banked and turned left climbing into a horseshoe with a reddish rock spike with two bunkers on it that were shrouded in clouds and fog. It was covered with antennas like a porcupine has quills. I had never seen anything like that. I thought we were headed for the hilltops behind it. But the pilots wanted to play scare the humpers and made a steep left circle. I think I left the impressions of my fingerprints on the bar behind the pilot's seat. He missed the initial approach for fun and because he was going too fast. On the second attempt, they came back around, flared and stopped dead with the left skid on the spike and the other in the air and somebody yelled, "*This is it! Last stop! Everybody out!*" As I leaned forward out of the ship I could see through the left skid to the ground far below. It was straight down for at least a hundred feet.

The team leader was Sergeant Danny Osborne. He was likeable towards me, and he was all business as I was, so I felt an ease with him that comes from confidence in his knowledge and leadership abilities. There were two bunkers. The westward one belonged to a young lieutenant and an older Master Sergeant. They both stared at Sgt Osborne and me as we walked the full perimeter looking for weaknesses or penetrability. It was straight up all around so we were sure no one was coming over looking for trouble, which meant we would be able to sleep a full night. All operations ceased at 1800 countrywide, and it became a free fire zone. That chopper's crew was headed home just in time.

There was a native tenant standing by the enlisted bunker motioning us over. As we entered the bunker there was a section about six feet long that was solid radios from ceiling to floor. It was dark in there. There was a cloud of smoke from the ceiling down to about three feet. I had to bend over to see under the smoke where I was going. It was like in *Apocalypse Now*. There was a throne made of sandbags, and a sandbag table. Bon Bon cans, some full and some empty were on the table. The occupants of the E.M. bunker had these huge glass devices, with brown water in them. By the time SGT Osborne and I got in there, the other team members had already begun testing the waters. I won't speak for Danny Osborne, because I don't remember, but I will speak for myself.

They had beer in there in a refrigerator, and when one made it down to me, I grabbed it. It was a 12 ounce Falstaff 3.2, but it was cold. In the 2/503 we had a ration of two warm beers a month and two warm sodas a month. You all know it's true.

(continued....)



Somebody passed over a joint rolled in yellow paper the diameter of my pinky. I had never seen such a beautiful thing. Perfectly rolled, and crying out, taste me! Taste me! Now I was not a hippie trooper, I disdained their pot smoking. But I could be dead tomorrow, so why not? I looked at Sgt Osborne. He shrugged his shoulders and made a motion that meant every man for himself. I didn't see him again until 0500. I am saying this at such a late date because if the President can say he smoked crack, and did cocaine, I can say I smoked a joint. Well, I had no experience with drugs so I took a couple of hits and passed out. The guys all talked about what a great time they had had, and I had no recollection. What can I say? I was a virgin.

I didn't inhale. I held my breath for as long as I could. Then I don't remember what happened except that they later told me that I had eaten ham and mother fuckers mixed with ham and eggs. I really had never known a mother fucker and I sure wouldn't have eaten one, much less a posse of them. But I had. I still spit when I think of it.

Any Recon guy who says he got to listen to music at LZ English is likely a liar. At least in '68. The only radio I had was a AN/PRC-25 and the only music I had listened to primarily



**F-100F Super Sabre at Phu Cat**

was the static when I broke squelch for a hourly Sit-Rep while in the field, or when one of the Air Force Fighters out of Phu Cat were being guided down their glide slope by Phu Cat Approach Control when their tubes blew, and I also had a lot of night fire missions. I did not even know of Radio Saigon (where was that? Good morning Vietnam!?). I saw the movie when it came out. I never went anywhere but An Khe, Pleiku, and Bong Song, and the scenic mountains, streams and villages thereabouts. I never heard of AFVN, or anything else either until years after the war was over. Damn it, I'm having a flashback!

Okay, I'm better. I want to tell a war story now.

In early June of 1971, there was a platoon of Bravo 3/319th with M-102 Howitzers on the small prominence of a mountain of 2650 meters acting in support of the rest of the 2/503d which was conducting hunter-killer operations in the surrounding valleys. It was part of the mountain



**M-102**

range in North-Eastern II Tactical Corps just a few kilometers south of I Corps. There was also a platoon of infantry and a recon team of which Richard Celaya and I were members along with others I can't recall because I have severe CRS syndrome now. The recon team patrolled with a squad of infantry during the day and set up night ambushes on the ridgeline approaching the fire support base. I did no patrolling on this base, only F.O. work.

Everything went well for a time. The gun bunnies cleaned their pieces during the day, fired a few minor missions and did heavy Harassment & Interdiction (H&I) fires at night. It was hard to sleep there at night with all the firing-associated noise and commotion of people yelling orders, charge cutters and gunners reading back-fire commands, and moving around all night and the nearly constant firing. Then between watch changes, just about when I was about to pass out from fatigue, **BOOM! BOOM!!** More H&Is.



**Night Fire**

Finally, the day came when we were ordered off the mountain. And not a day too soon. I was stressed from having to defecate in view of everyone, friend and foe. We were ordered to be extracted the next morning. The NVA must have received the orders too, because they spent the entire night keeping us up with probing fires. We were going home. Well, LZ English, close enough, and they were trying to prevent us. Bad NVA.

That night, the 4th Infantry got into a big fire fight, maybe even a battle north of us, which was when I first realized just how far north we were. I was an artillery observer as you all know by now, so I had full map sheets, but not of maps outside of the currently assigned AO.

*(continued....)*



They were getting their butts whipped. There were tracers going both ways -- a lot of them. At some point there were the flood lamps of Dust Offs, then silence, then more firing, but not as intense as before. It amazed me that Dust Offs and slicks could fly at night but gunships could not.

Finally, the interminable silence of approaching dawn. No artillery or fire support of any kind for the duration of the night. It must have been emotional hell on that mountain. There was nothing I could do. Nothing I could have done. It has bothered me every time I think about it.

The next morning was a little more exciting. CH-47 Chinooks were ferrying ammo in all morning because some grunts had bumped into a medium to large NVA on-the-run unit that did not want to engage and scattered them all over the valley. Finally, the NVA decided to forego the infantry and maneuver one of their sister units to attack the fire support base that was ruining their Nuoc Mam. The NVA had set-up just the other side of the north-south ridgeline and begun sniping, or harassing fire, if you can call a few NVA sporadically firing semi and full auto in teams sniping.



**CH-47 Chinook in support of 173d Airborne**

Photo by Fitz-Enz

Our infantry platoon had condensed into a smaller perimeter because of the now directed sniper fire being delivered by the NVA, and because nobody wanted another Hill 875 type engagement where troops were scattered all over as they were being butchered by NVA. The NVA stopped for their union contract lunch break, and as soon as they re-engaged us, the two remaining M-102s on the north facing slope engaged them with MTSQ HE and Beehive. But still, the local NVA political cadre insisted on saying good bye to the famous 173d Airborne Brigade.

I was short, about a week and some days on my second tour, and I wanted to make it out on my feet with my eyes blinking, not inside a black or OD bag. I had spent the last night in a hole on the southeast facing slope of the mountain and I was a little nervous. Okay, I was highly concerned, but still collected. Remember when you were short, how your vision and hearing improved? Mine had too.

The NVA were interrupting the ride home and hot chow, which can all now recall, was nothing to fight over. You knew it was never hot, or even warm, but it was understood by all after years of indoctrination to be hot chow, so it was hot chow. We were not happy. They stopped firing, but every time a CH-47 approached, the NVA resumed firing at the ships, which then had to abort the extraction attempt. We were hot, the base was hot and we had no LZ, just a hover point that kept shifting over the different positions of the three M-102s. At one point, we were down to one M-102, and less than a hundred assorted rounds of 105MM. I remember a full 55 round pallet slung and some extra, so the ammo count was more than 55, but less than one hundred. More importantly, the NVA knew where we were, how many of us there were, and what we had. Yeah, they had seen our nakedness. And more kept coming to the party.

A few sorties had been forced to divert from the red smoke. A Chinook is a big ship, and except for the severely visually impaired, an easy target. There was an immediate cessation of NVA fire at one point, and one of the ships finally made it all the way in and out with the surplus 105MM. It was almost the last run. It came in, picked a sling load of ammo and left. The last basic load and Scorpion were netted. A few minutes later, another, maybe the same ship rolled in. It hovered just above the ground, rear door open, everyone raced in, then it lifted off to about 6-10 feet and moved over to pick up the last M-102 with its' basic load of 55 rounds. Everyone was on the ship. All of the NVA opened fire in volume all at once. Those who had set up just the other side of the north-ridge line began full firing. I was on the left side, front most seating position behind the door gun.

I could feel and hear the fire hitting the left side of the ship. It sounded as if someone were throwing handfuls of pea gravel at it. Thinking I might get shot in the back of the head, I leaned forward, but where they were on the ground and where I was in the ship, the fire would have made the round(s) pass through me from my lower back, through my abdomen and thorax, maybe travel and exit through my head and me in a bag immediately came to mind.

*(continued....)*



I bolted upright just in time to see a burst of rounds travel from the extreme left rear and hit a large diameter aluminum hydraulic line on the right side. The line exploded gushing a thick, high pressure stream of bright red hydraulic oil onto the floor. It was like severing an artery. I began screaming at the Load Master while pointing to the rear of the ship, but he thought it was he who was hit and he looked down and felt his chest and abdomen. I screamed again, *"No, back there!"*

Right after that as I stood straddling over the open load bay, he must have received an intercom call from one of the pilots. The ship began shaking and the ass end began violently moving left to right. The ship was bouncing like a rodeo bull. I looked through the cockpit bulkhead and I could see the right seat pilot struggling with the cyclic. He was white, tall, slender, blonde hair and he was half out of his seat pulling up as hard as he could with both arms. Somebody jettisoned the M-102 with its basic load and the ship jumped up and screamed down the east side of the mountain with the pilot's manually inputting control. I looked around and saw blank stares on the faces of everyone on that ship whose faces I could see. I still do not know why they were looking at me while I was looking at them, but I thought, *"I'm going to die, so I might as well see where,"* and I half stood up to get a better view out the cockpit Lexan foot wells.

I clearly remember thinking, *"Well, it can't hurt that much and if it does it won't be for that long,"* so I leaned forward more to see what was going on. I could hear loud "Popping." The belly of the ship was breaking off tree tops. I could see the base of the mountain where I was going to die. I was not afraid. I knew I was going to die and I was not going to die afraid. What could I do? I kept looking at the right seater struggling to maintain control. It did not look good for us. Just when the ship was about to impact the valley floor, the ship leveled off at maybe one hundred feet, maybe fifty. For the briefest time I felt relief, then I looked straight ahead at a fast approaching hill ridge and I thought, *"Okay, that is where we are going to die."* It was flying fast while yawing left. Not having been an aviator and having only seconds to live, I tried to figure out what was going to happen next. I could only guess that they could not flare or steer the ship so it was headed where it was pointed, and it was pointing at mid-height on ascending terrain just below the ridge.

It was slowing down and I was hoping it wouldn't hurt much. Then as we rapidly closed on the ridge, just a second or two before impact the ship made it to jump over the ridge and crash on a shallow river on the other side. Okay, I hurt my back, but I took command and began barking orders. To my surprise, at this stage of my life, everyone did exactly as I said without question

except for two infantry guys. There was a M-60 squad that I helped set up. Well, I was instructing them in how to set up the M-60. My instructions were interrupted. I was twenty feet away from the right seater as he began calling, *"Mayday, Mayday, Mayday"* on his Emergency Radio. Man, that guy was tall! He was well over six feet. Then he said something I couldn't make out. The river at that point was oriented approximately South-North.

The riverbed was covered with river boulders of approximately 200mm in diameter. I turned to the gunner and assistant gunner of the '60, *"You two start stacking these boulders to make a parapet and set your gun up behind it facing that way,"* pointing approximately West.

Then I turned to the other two and said, *"You two, go forward and set up an O.P."* One of them asked, *"But what if we take fire?"* I said, *"Then return fire and make it back here."* *"But what if somebody back here opens fire on us?"* I said, *"Nobody back here is firing anything until you get back here."* *"But what if we get hit?"* they asked. I looked them straight in their eyes just as I answered, *"Then I'm coming for you."* They looked at me, then at each other, nodded okay, and disappeared into the elephant grass.

Then I went over to set up the north side. My then friend, Doc Celaya, yelled at me, *"You're hit!"* I didn't feel hit. I looked down at myself much as the Load Master had done, and I couldn't see any pain or feel my blood. Yes, that's correct. Pain can be seen and blood can be felt. I had seen it many times when someone else was hit and they didn't make a sound until they saw their pain. Then they began screaming. I yelled back, *"Where?"*

Doc answered, *"Your head!"*

Having my rifle in my right hand, I reached up with my left hand and wiped my forehead from right to left, then down the left side of my face to the back of my head, and everything was where it was supposed to be. I felt fine, no holes, no blood.

Then he yelled, *"No, the other side!"* I reached up and wiped from front to back the right side of my face and there a bump and there was blood. Doc Celaya yelled, *"Do you want me to put you in for a purple heart?"* I said, *"No, I'd be embarrassed for such a minor injury."* There was blood, but it wasn't running much. I was a good clotter. I'd live. I don't know how I was cut; a graze? (Richard, if you read this, you can still put me in for that Purple Heart).

*(continued....)*



Almost at the same time as my words were leaving my parched lips, two Cobras wound their way through the valley towards us. They were beautiful. Almost black dark green. But I could see the light through their 2.75" empty rocket launchers. They circled once and left because they were, "Bingo fuel." Bingo, "Are they going to play Bingo?" The right seater said, "That means they are low on fuel. They'll be back. There are others on the way." They never did return, but two OH-60 Loaches with mini-guns came, stayed a while hunting and then left.



**Bell AH-1G Cobra**

Loaches were better for close in work. After a while a recovery crew in a Slick came in with big nets, straps and tool bags. They began taking the wounded ship apart by dumping her fuel in the river. They then climbed up on top of her, worked a few minutes on the rotor heads and threw the rotors to the ground. I would not have ridden in them if I had known they came apart so easily.

Now, the fear and the anger began settling in. The enemy had not only tried to, "Motherfuckin kill us, M.F. 'n murder us when we were M.F. 'n trying to M.F. 'n peacefully leave, they got a free M.F. 'n Scorpion with a M.F. 'n 'Secret' sight, and a M.F. 'n free basic load. We were going to have to M.F. 'n sleep in the M.F. 'n woods full of M.F. 'n blood sucking parasitic bugs, with a tired M.F. 'n platoon of goat herders that was out of M.F. 'n food, water, M.F. 'n critically low on M.F. 'n ammo, and Damn it, no M.F. 'n Hot Chow either! You M.F. 'n NVA M.F. 'ers! You M.F. 'n took my M.F. 'n Hot M.F. 'n Chow, you M.F. 'n NVA M.F. 'ing bastards," I yelled hysterically as my comrades looked on in stunned silence.

I was nothing if not fashionable. I wore the finest in Jungle Fatigues, and the best weaponry. "Motherfucker is the word of the day!" Once I caught on with a new curse word, I really used it up. I became shrouded in reality.

I yelled up, "Hey! Don't throw those rotors down so hard! You're breaking them," concerning the downed CH-47's rotors. "Pass them down to me." But he yelled back something like, "It's okay, they will never see service again!" "What do you mean, 'They'll never see service again?'"

Once a ship goes down, we have to strip it to ship it back to the "World" for overhaul. "This baby's going home brother!" "Great!" I asked, thinking I could profit from the post-war rotor surplus, "How much do these things cost?" "Oh, they cost around \$32,000 each!" "\$32,000? Can I have one?" "No you can't. We have to account for them by serial number, then destroy them. When we get back, we saw them into pieces."

I thought, "Dammit, man. I get paid a couple of hundred bucks a month Base Pay to be abused, malnourished, and dehydrated, \$65. Combat Pay monthly to let people I don't know shoot at me, and \$65. Jump Pay per month for attempting suicide every three months. Give me a damned rotor!" "Sorry man. No can do."

Then it started to become dark. It became dark quickly in the Central Highlands. Then it was dark. Jungle dark. Not as dark as ocean dark, but dark. No moon, no stars, just dark. In the Coastal mountains, the moist, warm sea evaporates meets cooler mountain air and entire mountain ranges disappear in enveloping fog. Except for the deafening chirp of hundreds of thousands of tons of bugs, the prop wash of insect wings, and whine of turbine powered Vietnamese mosquitoes, it was quiet too. It was good for us. When the enemy was on the move, the jungle became dead silent. Any movement by anyone at all would silence billions of insects who were trying to eat or get laid. Me too motherfuckers! "If I can't get any, why should you?" I whispered to myself.

After some point in time, I could make out the squeal of armored vehicles. You can't sneak around in M-551 Sheridan Light tanks otherwise known as ARAAV for "Armored Reconnaissance Airborne Assault Vehicles" or M-113 APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers) without everyone in the valley knowing where you were. It was an Infantry Company with tracks, maybe from Troop E 1/17th Cavalry Airborne with Captain (later to become General) Joe Jellison as CO. I knew his voice from before. He was barking orders.



**APC**

(continued...)



A CH-54 "Flying Crane" came on station and lit up the entire operation and men with it's' flood lamp. It was hovering over the downed CH-47 with a recovery crew member trying to hook the sling that held the CH-47 sling load to the load hook of the CH-54 without success. After several failed attempts, Captain Jellison yelled, "*Somebody get up there who knows what they're doing.*" I had never done that, but I could see the problem. The recovery crew member was intimidated by the proximity of the CH-54 and wasn't allowing it to hover low enough to grab the hook. I climbed up the left side, grabbed the sling shackle and motioned for the Flying Crane operator to descend more and more, until I could reach it. I was hunched over between the two ships and when it was close enough to make the hook, I jumped up and hooked it, then slid down the left side of the CH-47 and off she went into the darkness. I don't know what happened to her after that, but she had saved us just before she died.



I was dead tired. I don't remember anything more. I know that we spent another night in the woods feeding mosquitoes.

I contracted P. Falciparum and Vivax Malaria there and almost died there and here at home. As recently as 1994, I was having recurring episodes of Plasmodium Falciparum Malaria at least twice a year. The VA said it was impossible. Finally, a Dominican neighborhood physician named Dr. Torres told me to go to Metropolitan Hospital in Harlem, North Manhattan, "*where there were many doctors from Africa and Asia. If you have Malaria, they will find it.*" Which they did in three days. Diagnosis; Plasmodium falciparum Malaria. They treated me and I have been symptom free since then.

I do know that a few days later, my First Sergeant told me, "*There's a slick waiting for you on the Crap Table. Get on it.*" It was not unusual for me to be ordered to take a slick. I thought I was going back out to the field, because that was how I moved from company to company. I had many frequent flier miles with Casper and Lucky Seven Aviation. When I got to the crap table, the pilot told me, "*This is your lucky day,*" and he took off gaining altitude enough to clear the high Tiger Mountains on the way to Ahn Khe.



Mountain range near LZ English

I wanted to return to English. I did not want to leave my friends behind. I never even got to say goodbye to any of my friends, have our last beer together, hand down my gear, or lose my virginity. If any Wildcats show up, send them to me. I might know them, and we can have that beer. The virginity thing...can we work out? Got any sisters?

-----

**FOR SALE**

## Parachute

**Only used once, never opened, small stain.**

Call Mike Sturges, A/2/503d, Walter Reed Army Hospital





**To: All My Contacts:**  
**Members and those somehow connected to**  
**LRRP/RGR of the 173d Airborne**  
**Sub: Artist (Britt) paying tribute to Veterans**

I met Britt Collins at the July 2011 75th Ranger Regiment Assoc. Reunion. He had a display of his artwork set up at the Holiday Inn Hotel - hospitality room. He was such a pleasure to meet, and his sincerity toward us Vietnam Veterans and his talent displayed that in his artwork. To the right is one of his paintings that most of you have already seen.

Have talked to him on several occasions and he informed me that he has been collecting many items from the Vietnam era. After the reunion, our own member, Bill "Wilkie" Wilkinson N/CO Ranger '68-'71 team Juliet, donated his collection to Britt, which "Wilkie" had in the past, trailed around to events around the country and displayed. "Wilkie" thought it was time to pass the collection on and he thought of no other than Britt to give it to.

Bill "Wilkie's" collection (very large) will continue being displayed by Britt and I admire both for the time involved in displaying items from the past. One

item that I have is a NVA ruck, which I used on missions, and will be sent to Britt as he doesn't have one. Any of you wondering who to contribute your items from Vietnam, to be respectfully displayed to everyone, I recommend you contact Britt, as he and two of his friends are together in gathering / displaying our past.

Below is a message received from Britt and his website. Take the time to view his site and comment. Recommend you save his site to your Favorites.

**Robert "Twin" Henriksen**  
N/CO Ranger with 173d Airborne Brigade

PS: Happy New Year To All

Date: Fri, Dec 30, 2011 at 12:05 PM  
Subject: Re: Robert (173rd Abn Ranger) to Britt  
To: Robt 'twin' Henriksen <[novrgco@gmail.com](mailto:novrgco@gmail.com)>

Robert,

Sorry it's taken me so long to get back. I have just returned from out of town, and I'm old school, so I take a break from email over the holidays.

So, this is the right email address. I will be starting up a new year of work. Most of it Vietnam related.

Good talking with you last week. Stay in touch.

All the Best,

Britt Taylor Collins

**Britt's website:**  
[www.bootsonthegroundART.com](http://www.bootsonthegroundART.com)



# Searching for Lost Brothers

I have sent this to you in hopes that perhaps someone within our ranks can add to this investigation. Bob Fairbairn was the initial recipient of this email.

**Peter Klausner**  
A/4/503d

Mr. Fairbairn,

I am the Case Analyst for several Battle of Dak To missing service-members, primarily the 173rd ABN Sky Soldiers that disappeared during heavy fighting in November 1967 in Kontum Province, Vietnam. Several joint investigations to Vietnam have not resolved many of these cases.

I found your name in our old hard copy wartime files of the missing, regarding the case of PFC Edwin Martinez-Mercado, PFC Gary Shaw, PVT John Stuckey and SP4 Robert Staton who on November 11, 1967 were assigned to Company C/1-503rd INF (ABN). Your letter from 1994 and a sketch were placed in only one of the files. PFC Martinez and your sketch and recollection of key terrain features is highly detailed in my opinion and quite possibly could help a field investigation team go to the site. The mission of the unit was to move to Hill 889. We have interviewed many former "enemy" witnesses in Vietnam, but have not yet found the loss locations. Most of the searches revolve around Hill 875 and I need to refocus efforts on Hill 889 with better detail – hopefully you can help me.

I have many questions for you but want to initially reach out and make contact. Possibly find out if you are aware of fellow service-members who served with these individuals, do these former members have any diaries, old wartime maps or other documents that may be useful in tracing the movements of the units and help us locate their last known location.

I have reviewed several AARs at National Archives for Battle of Dak To November 1967. I would like to send an Investigative team to retrace the unit movements on Hill 889 and Hill 875 but JPAC needs more detail to initiate the mission, that is where you and your fellow veterans come in. I am a firm believer in Veteran knowledge being the key to unlock most of these cold cases. I have had recent success in the recovery of SP4 David Lemcke (of Rochester, NY), killed on Hill 31 in a bunker explosion at an outpost in Quang Tri Province. Veterans who were there, helped me make the case to go back out and excavate, giving me details of the base, construction of the bunker and actions taken that day to recover him. We were successful and he was laid to rest 12 November 2011, it made for a very special Veterans day for me.

Any chance you can reach out to your fellow Veterans? Any upcoming meetings or get-togethers? You would be surprised what little pieces of the puzzle are needed to resolve these cases. Specific cases I work for 173rd ABN BDE include: 1st Platoon, C/2/503rd INF (ABN) members SP4 Croxdale, SGT Iandoli and PFC DeHerrera lost on November 19, 1967 on Hill 875 during an errant friendly CP bombing. As well as PFC David Reynolds 1st Platoon B/4/503rd INF (ABN) the RTO for LT Larry Moore, killed 21 November 1967 on Hill 875.

Thank you in advance for your assistance and more importantly your service to our country.

**Kate van Auken**  
LTC, United States Army  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office  
Office: 703-699-1233  
Mobile: 717-343-1312  
OSD: [kathryn.vanauken@osd.mil](mailto:kathryn.vanauken@osd.mil)  
AKO: [kathryn.vanauken@us.army.mil](mailto:kathryn.vanauken@us.army.mil)  
S-Phone: [katevanauken@gmail.com](mailto:katevanauken@gmail.com)

**Note: Anyone with information which might help please contact her. Ed**

## WHODAT?



**Who is this 2/503 SFC?**  
*Ahhh, the sweet sweat of the boonies.*



## While Pushing the Germans Back From Stalingrad...

At 10:00 p.m. on December 31, Russian artillery around the *Kessel* exploded in a frenzied acknowledgement of the holiday. Because they knew Soviet gunners were operating on Moscow time, two hours ahead of German clocks, Sixth Army troops had prepared for the deluge. Hunkered down in their holes, they rode out the fifteen-minute salvo welcoming in a year of promised glory for Soviet Russia.

Inside Stalingrad, the expectations of Russian troops ran high. The ice bridge across the Volga was the main reason for their attitude. From Acktuba and Krasnaya Sloboda, hundreds of trucks now crossed the river daily, bringing with them camouflage suits to replace tattered gray brown uniforms. In the middle of the river, traffic masters waved food convoys to depots set up under the cliff. Cases of American canned good began to litter foxholes strung along the defense line from Tsaritsa to the tractor works. Ammunition piled up to the point where Russian gunners now fired antitank shells at lone German soldiers.

In all the war Goldstein had never seen a battlefield quite like Stalingrad; a city so utterly broken by bombs and artillery, cluttered with skeletons of hundreds of horses, picked clean by the starving enemy. And always there were the grim police of the Russian NKVD, standing between the front line and the Volga, checking soldiers' papers and shooting suspected deserters dead.



Stalingrad laid waste by German army



Russian army at Stalingrad pushing the Germans back to their Fatherland

The horrible battlefield shocked Goldstein and he played as he never played before, hour after hour for men who obviously loved his music. And while all German works had been banned by the Soviet government, Goldstein doubted that any commissar would protest on New Year's Eve. The melodies he created drifted out through loudspeakers to the German trenches and the shooting suddenly ceased. In the eerie quiet, the music flowed from Goldstein's dipping bow.



German dead at Stalingrad

When he finished, a hushed silence hung over the Russian soldiers. From another loudspeaker, in German territory, a voice broke the spell. In halting Russian it pleaded: ***“Play some more Bach. We won't shoot.”***

[Excerpt from *Enemy at the Gates* by William Craig]



## Oral B. "Terry" Evans, Jr. A Delta Company, 2/503d Sky Soldier

ALEXANDRIA, VA. – Oral B. "Terry" Evans, Jr. died peacefully on Saturday morning, Dec. 17, 2011. Terry was born on Aug. 30, 1947, to Capt. Oral B. Evans, Sr. (U.S. Army, deceased) and Elizabeth G. Evans of Hampton.



Terry was a 1965 graduate of Warwick High School, and attended the University of South Carolina. After college, Terry followed in his father's footsteps by joining the United States Army, eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant. Terry served as Platoon Leader during the Vietnam campaign, and received several awards for his leadership and bravery in combat, including the Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, and the Purple Heart.

Following his military career, Mr. Evans came back to Hampton Roads, where he founded Classic Auto Body Shop in Newport News. Later in life, Terry engaged his artistic interests by becoming the Director of the Chesapeake Museum in Chesapeake, Va. A few years later, Terry was approached by the Department of Defense to be the Museum Curator for the U.S. Army Reserve Command at Fort McPherson, Ga. Most recently, Terry held the position of Museum Curator and Property Manager at the Center of Military History, U.S. Army Museum in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Evans is survived by his two daughters, Elizabeth Jean Sheets of Palm Beach, Fla., and Amanda Leigh Evans of Newport News; his brother, Gordon E. Evans of Burke, Va.; his sister, Deborah Davidson of Newport News; and three grandchildren.

A memorial service was held at W. J. Smith & Son Funeral Home in Newport News. His family welcomes donations to Children's Hospital of the Kings Daughters in memory of Terry.

You may view and post condolences online at [dailypress.com/guestbooks](http://dailypress.com/guestbooks)

~ Rest easy LT ~

## Home is new battle for vets

By Shalla Dewan  
*The New York Times*  
(Excerpt)

In Afghanistan, Cpl. Clayton Rhoden of Columbus earned about \$2,500 a month jumping into helicopters to chase down improvised explosive devices or check out bomb factories.

Now, he lives with his parents on the South Side, sells his blood plasma for \$80 a week and works what extra duty he can get for his Reserve unit, the Columbus-based Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines.

Rhoden, who is 25, gawky and polite with a passion for soldiering, is one of the legions of veterans who served in combat yet have a harder time finding work than other people their age, a situation that officials say will grow worse as the United States completes its pullout of Iraq and as, by a White House estimate, a million new veterans join the work force over the next five years...

**The unemployment rate for veterans ages 20 to 24 has averaged 30 percent this year, more than double that of others the same age, although the rate for older veterans closely matches that of civilians...**

The employment gap cannot be explained by a simple factor like lack of a college degree – despite their discipline and training, young veterans fare worse in the job market than their peers without degrees...

The Obama administration has championed veterans' maturity management skills and even their promptness. Employers have jumped on the bandwagon, and large companies such as JPMorgan Chase and Verizon have signed a pledge to hire a total of 100,000 veterans by 2020. More than 220,000 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are out of work...

The Obama administration has stepped up hiring of veterans, adding more than 85,000 to the government payroll since the 2008 fiscal year...

In his weekly address yesterday, President Barack Obama praised returning veterans and said, "It is time to enlist our veterans and all our people in the work of rebuilding America."

[Sent in by Steve (Sgt. Rock) Vargo, C/2/503d]



# Happy New Year to My Veteran Friends!!

## Veteran to Veteran:

When a Veteran leaves the 'job' and retires to a better life, many are jealous, some are pleased, and others, who may have already retired, wonder if he knows what he is leaving behind, because *we* already know.

We know, for example, that after a lifetime of camaraderie that few experience, it will remain as a longing for those past times.

We know in the Military life there is a fellowship which lasts long after the uniforms are hung up in the back of the closet.

We know even if he throws them away, they will be on him with every step and breath that remains in his life. We also know how the very bearing of the man speaks of what he was and in his heart still is.

These are the burdens of the job. You will still look at people suspiciously, still see what others do not see or choose to ignore, and always will look at the rest of the Military world with a respect for what they do; only grown in a lifetime of knowing.

Never think for one moment you are escaping from that life. You are only escaping the 'job' and merely being allowed to leave 'active' duty.

So what I wish for you is that whenever you ease into retirement, in your heart you never forget for one moment that you are still a member of the greatest fraternity the world has ever known.

A veteran - whether active duty, retired, served one hitch, or reserve - is someone who, at one point in their life, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The Government of the United States of America' for an amount of *'up to and including my life'*. From one Veteran to another, it's an honor to be in your company.

Thank you for your service to our country and defending the freedoms we enjoy.

[Sent in by Corky Corcoran HHC/2/503d & 173d Sig]



Like the 2/503 Bravo Bulls' fraternity, for example

# You Never Forget Your First PLF

Just a thought about PLFs.

My wife and I were in Madison, WI, this week and had time to go to Lake Wisconsin to view the Bald Eagles that come there each winter.



Watching them was beautiful. But, while I was heading down one rock covered hill to the beach, I lost my footing. I was falling forward and the training I received from those NCOs on the Swing Landing Trainer took over. I was going down feet, knees, stomach and face when I felt myself twisting to the right. My body turned, knees bent and my fall was on the right going down on my right side and rolling. I ended up on my back without a bruise or scratch (a little stiff but nothing else). Thank God for Airborne Training!

Which reminds me of a time at LZ English.

While assigned to Headquarters, I occasionally had time to visit the O-Club after the evening mortar attacks. I usually drank with Doc Trainer, the Bde Surgeon. One night



**Headed for a bad PLF** we added the two JAG Officers to our group but they were "legs". So, I offered to work with them on becoming Bar Qualified in PLFs. They were very excited and climbed up on the bar for their Bar PLFs. After five attempts, they were adequate and I christened them as being PLF Bar-Qualified. Doc and I continued to drink and they headed out. I thought they went to their quarters but they climbed up on the roof of the O-Club and jumped off. We heard two screams of pain and ran out to see what had happened. They were both laying on the ground moaning and holding their ankles. Just a little proof that you can't teach "legs" without qualified NCOs.

**Robert A. Getz (RAGMAN)**  
Task Force CO, 2/503d

*"Any PLF you can walk away from is a good PLF." ~ Unknown Paratrooper*



# Veterans & Sleep Apnea (OSA)

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) is a widely misunderstood condition. Unless the veteran has a solid diagnosis of OSA while on active duty, the condition may be impossible to claim as service connected. Snoring may be a sign of OSA or it may not. OSA is a serious health condition and more information is brought into our knowledge banks every day.

To be awarded a benefit for OSA will require a medical record that supports your claim that you had OSA during your military service. A statement from your spouse or a buddy isn't likely to carry any weight. If your OSA has been diagnosed well after your military service has ended but you've heard how lucrative the benefit is (50% if you use a CPAP) you should think long and hard before you apply for the award.

If you were a chronic heavy snorer while on active duty, can you document that? Did you ever make a sick call because of chronic daytime sleepiness? Have you ever been at fault in an accident where you fell asleep at the wheel of your vehicle? During any hospitalization or surgical treatment, did a health care provider make a note to your record about your airway obstruction or a breathing problem during anesthesia?

Once you're sure that you can prove your case, you may want to file that claim. If you don't believe that you have the evidence you'll need, consider delaying any action while you attempt to have a nexus letter written. That could require a formal IME that you'll pay for out of your own pocket.

If you're a heavy snorer today, whether or not you are able to make a service connection and receive a VA benefit, get a sleep study done. Sleep studies are now available for you to have it all done in the privacy of your own bedroom. You no longer must spend a night in a sleep lab...you can take a small piece of equipment home (a headband sort of arrangement) and wear it to bed. When you return it in to your doctor the data gathered will be analyzed for a diagnosis.

Using a CPAP may reduce the incidence of adult onset diabetes, heart disease, strokes and many other of the conditions that come to us as we age. Not only that...the daytime sleepiness you experience from the lack of a good night's sleep will be much less severe.

Medicare and most insurers will pay for the home sleep study and the CPAP you may need afterwards. It's well worth your time.



## Sleep Apnea Treatment May Lower Heart Risks

Sleep specialist Meir Kryger, MD, of the Yale University School of Medicine and the VA Connecticut Health System, tells WebMD the findings highlight the growing recognition that sleep disturbances play a significant role in chronic disease. *"It is now clear that patients with heart disease or a metabolic disease like type 2 diabetes should be asked about their sleep habits, and they should be treated if they have sleep apnea,"* he says.

## Obstructive Sleep Apnea is Elevated in Veterans With PTSD

Do you have a rating for PTSD? Do you also have a positive diagnosis of OSA? Do you use a CPAP?

You may be eligible for OSA service connected benefits as a secondary condition even if you don't have a service medical record of OSA.

Consider that many of the medications that are used to treat sleep disturbances or mental health conditions may have an effect on your sleep patterns. If your OSA was diagnosed after you started taking medicines to aid your sleep or to treat some mental health conditions, you might want to consider filing for OSA as secondary to the service connected PTSD.

Before you decide to do that, review the side effects of the medicines and be ready to offer a sound reasoning for your claim. Once you're sure that the medicines you take cause or aggravate your OSA, file for the appropriate benefit.

## Ratings For 6847 Sleep Apnea Syndromes (Obstructive, Central, Mixed):

- Chronic respiratory failure with carbon dioxide retention or cor pulmonale, or; requires tracheostomy - 100%
- Requires use of breathing assistance device such as continuous airway pressure (CPAP) machine - 50%
- Persistent day-time hypersomnolence - 30%

Asymptomatic but with documented sleep disorder breathing - 0%

Source:



[http://www.vawatchdog.org/Obstructive\\_Sleep\\_Apnea.html](http://www.vawatchdog.org/Obstructive_Sleep_Apnea.html)

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



## A Letter to the Parents from His Buddy

8 July 67

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Zsigo,

I don't know if you remember me or not, my name is Don Austin.

I just got word of Alex's death and I don't really know how to put my feelings in words. I have lost quite a few buddies over here, but none as close as Alex was. When he died, you not only lost a son, and me a good friend, but the world lost a good man.



**Alex Zsigo, A/2/503  
KIA 6/22/67 Dak To**

I've been over here with the 1st Inf. Div., for almost 11 months. I guess I know what's going on over here as much as the next guy.

This is a cold hard war over here, but as far as I'm concerned it must be fought here and now before it is too late. I don't know what you think of the war, or what Alex thought, but I am sure he felt along the same line as I do.

He was a hero in every respect of the word. He proved this by his actions over here. He was stationed only 15 miles from me for a long time, but I never got a chance to see him, I was always out in the field, or he was.

I don't know why the good Lord picks some and not others, but if it is my turn to go, I know I have served for a wonderful nation and a just cause.

I can remember when I was in grade school in Lennon. I went to school with Alex, and then later we went to high school, and played on the football team together. We came down to Detroit to enter the army on the same day, but he was sick and they sent him home. These things I will never forget. Alex was a great guy and will be remembered by many many people.

I hope you don't think he died in vain. I believe the good Lord needed him elsewhere. I best close for now. I hope I did not bother you or inconvenience you in any way, if so, please forgive me.

Sincerely,

Don Austin

[Sent in by Dave Zsigo, Alex's brother]



[Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

## Rules Liberalized for Veterans with Undiagnosed Illnesses

### *Application Window Extended for Five Years*

WASHINGTON – Veterans of the Persian Gulf War with undiagnosed illnesses have an additional five years to qualify for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

*"Not all the wounds of war are fully understood,"* said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

*"When there is uncertainty about the connection between a medical problem and military service, Veterans are entitled to the benefit of the doubt."*

A recent change in VA regulations affects Veterans of the conflict in Southwest Asia. Many have attributed a range of undiagnosed or poorly understood medical problems to their military services. Chemical weapons, environmental hazards and vaccinations are among the possible causes.

At issue is the eligibility of Veterans to claim VA disability compensation based upon those undiagnosed illnesses, and the ability of survivors to qualify for VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Under long-standing VA rules, any undiagnosed illnesses used to establish eligibility for VA benefits must become apparent by Dec. 31, 2011. The new change pushes the date back to Dec. 31, 2016.

Veterans or survivors who believe they qualify for these benefits should contact VA at 1-800-827-1000.

Further information about undiagnosed illnesses is available online at

[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar) and  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/oefoif/index.asp)

About the Vietnam War....

*"It's time that we recognized  
that ours was in truth  
a noble cause."*

~ Ronald Reagan, Oct. 1980



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# Airborne and Jump School Vintage 1961 and 1962

By **Court Prisk, COL (Ret)**  
**CO, C Battery, 3/319th**

## Background

The “Regular Army” I joined in May 1960, after Ranger and Airborne School, was very different than the triangular division Army that fought in Korea or the new one that deployed to Vietnam five years later.

When I reported as a Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery to the Mortar Battery, 504th Airborne Infantry Battle Group, 82nd Abn Division, Fort Bragg in May 1960, I had just finished Ranger and jump school at Fort Benning. Now, for those who joined the Army after 1963, and especially for those current Sky Soldiers who are hepped up about the today’s “new” Striker Brigade, hooya. The Striker Brigade Concept, is really old old old army redressed and like the new old blue uniforms, some of the bling has changed but not the basic ideas. There were independent combat brigades / regiments during the Civil War and during the Indian Wars. The regimental combat team concept was introduced between the World Wars so the “regimental” colors and history could be carried on.

After Korea, the Army started changing structure from the three Infantry or armor regiments with a Division Artillery to the “new” Pentomic Army. By 1960, the Pentomic Army had ten (10) “regular Army” Infantry divisions (including two (2) airborne divisions: 82nd, and 101st) –the 11th Airborne Division was retired in 1957 to be reborn as an Air Assault Test Division for two years (1963 – 1965). In addition to the Infantry Divisions, there were five (5) “regular Army” Armor Divisions. The only STRAC One divisions were the two in Korea and the 82nd; all three were at 85% manning. There were eight (8) Army Corps: the 2nd in Korea, the 5th and 7th in Germany, the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg plus four others. The Corps, in addition to



**Court Prisk in Vietnam**  
aka “**STRAC**”

“regular Army” divisions, were responsible for reserve and National Guard Divisions that had not been deactivated after Korea.

The Pentomic division was cellular in structure and designed to fight on nuclear and conventional battlefields (I am thankful we never had to test the concept on either field). Five infantry battle groups replaced three infantry regiments and became the basic fighting units of the division. Each battle group contained a headquarters company; three rifle companies; an organic mortar battery; a large reconnaissance platoon, an antitank section, and logistics units needed to make it an independent, self-sustaining (or self-annihilating if you listen to the cynics of the time) on the nuclear battlefield. The division’s supporting units (Division Artillery, smaller than before, signal, engineer, support, and command and control) were organized similarly in cellular multiples of five.

For a Field Artillery file being assigned to a “Mortar Battery” was unique. For the Infantry grunt, having the Field Artillery man the 4.2 Inch Mortars meant that he was a bit (perhaps not much) safer—the 4.2 was always an “area” support weapon and no matter how well trained the firing crew, the 4.2 in mortar was not and will never be a close direct support weapon. With a trained cannon crew, the 105mm Howitzer can put 80% of the rounds fired within 50 meters of a point at four clicks; the 4.2 Inch Mortar (by the way also 105mm) will put 50% of the rounds fired within 150 meters of a point at four clicks and the other 50% within 300 meters. The 4.2 Inch Mortar is definitely an area suppression weapon and was not recommended for close support.

A couple of additional tidbits about the regular army airborne I joined in 1960; it was a professional airborne. Captain Schnoor, my battery commander, had 20 years of active duty as an Artillery Officer. He had been a lieutenant with the 11th Airborne Division in the Pacific during World War II. He had had twelve years’ experience as an airborne 105mm Howitzer Battery Commander after WWII. In fact, during the period 1944 until 1960, he had two years as a 75mm Battery Executive Officer and two years in Korea when he had received a temporary promotion to the rank of major. Then there was my battery first sergeant, 1st Sgt Delacati who had twice refused promotion to Sgt Major because he considered himself “*a first sergeant not some Colonel’s lackey.*” After being the Top for 20 years, he considered himself “*somewhat of an expert at the job.*”

(continued....)



My platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant E-6 Bones with more than 16 years' service had served with Delacati in five successive units over the previous 12 years. Likewise in May 1960, all of three of 504th Airborne Battlegroup's Infantry Company Commanders, the Battlegroup's E-7 Recon Chief, and the XO of the Battlegroup, 82nd Abn Division wore a star on their combat infantry badge. The infantry company commanders had a minimum of 12 years in command of an Airborne Infantry Company; the Charlie Company Commander had been an airborne infantry company commander for 16 years. The Recon section in the Battlegroup HHQ Company had four people who had been long-range reconnaissance with the British or Aussies during WWII in Burma or Malaya.

I remember being told that the 504th was about the middle in terms of experience, with the 187th and 503rd Airborne Battlegroups being the most experienced. I have no way of knowing how accurate that information was and only share it because the 503rd Airborne Battlegroup gironed (rotated) as a unit to Okinawa in either late 1962 or early 1963 to become part of the 173d Airborne Brigade.

In May of 1960, needless to say, any idea that I, a snout nose butter-bar, with less than a year in the military, was going to somehow impress anyone or make a difference was quickly forgotten. After 6 months as a forward observer and 8 months platoon leader; I was nominated to be the OIC of the third week (Jump Week) of Basic Airborne Training (BAC). I was selected for the position in July 1961. Once again, I was surrounded by experience and tradition—master blasters wearing one or two bronze stars. Perhaps the most incongruent aspect of my assignment as OIC of Jump Week was not being a novice trooper in charge of master blasters, it was being a novice trooper in charge of the Army Sky Diving Team. (I don't know when they were officially named the "Golden Knights"). I had never jumped without a static line, and everyone on the team had hundreds of free fall jumps and I had none. The picture of me was taken with Staff Sergeant Martinelli, the supply / quartermaster sergeant for the BAC third week and the Team. After 50 years, the only things I remember about SSG Marinelli was that he took it upon himself to see that I stayed out of trouble and that he kept sixteen pairs of fatigues and field jackets, nine with E-6 Stripes and seven with E-7 stripes; I remember him telling me he had been a sergeant first class "at least five times in past six years." The C-119 behind us in the picture was our principal jump platform for the BAC and Jumpmaster courses. In addition to the C-119, in the summer of 1960 a couple of National Guard units supported us once or twice with C-47s; as the C-119's were given to the National Guard and Reserves, the new C-123's were

increasingly being used by the regular Air Force and for alert jumps.

### A Real New Guy

The first story about Fort Bragg BAC took place in the August of 1961. My parents and my brother Gary (CO C/2/503d VN) traveled from Bremerton, Washington to Fort Bragg to see my new son, Stuart. Gary had just graduated from high school; he didn't know shit from shinola about the Army. A few days after they arrived, SSG Martinelli suggested that we put him through ground training and teaching him how to jump out of a Sky Diving Team practice plane on a Saturday.

A plan was born. The next Monday, my brother Gary showed up for the start of ground school in starched fatigues, spit shined boots, a helmet borrowed from someone by Martinelli.



LT Court Prisk & SSG Martinelli

For the first week, nobody noticed Gary's last name, as first week basic troopers went by their student number pasted with tape on the helmet. For someone who had never done a pushup in his life, Gary became an expert. Ten pushups each for not knowing his section leader, his platoon sergeant, his first sergeant, or his company commander....

(continued....)



...Ten pushups for not knowing where his company billets were, ten for not knowing where his mess hall was (he was supposed to run there and back for lunch), ten for not knowing his unit motto, and ten for looking sharp but being dull. SSG Martinelli prepped Gary and Martinelli had Gary run to Division C&C where someone would pick him up and bring him to 3rd Week HQ next to the packing sheds at Pope Airbase, where I gave him a pack lunch.

Throughout the first week of ground training Trooper 319 got better; he could pump out 100 pushups if required and thank heavens, because at the end of the second week that skill was tested over and over. The second week of Gary's ground school started off okay, then on Wednesday morning as Gary was being checked as he shuffled to the door on the 34-foot tower, the tower jump master adjusted his shoulder straps and read the name. That afternoon when Gary returned to sawdust jump and roll pit, his world became much louder with shouting on all sides and he once again was into heavy pushup practice. To his credit, Gary made it through the last two and half days of ground training. And while he thanks me now; (as I am sure all who know him can imagine) at the time there wasn't one word in his vocabulary with me even close to "thanks."



Court, center, eyeballs Gary, his sharp looking but dull brother.

The preceding picture shows the jump grader and acting OIC for the tower jump on Gary's 10th day, the same day that the instructors matched the name. You notice I am closely watching Gary as he listens to the wire jump critique.

The Saturday after ten days of ground training, Gary jumped at 3000 ft with SSG Martinelli as jumpmaster. Me, I was on the ground laughing myself silly. My dad\*, who was filming with an old 8mm camera, was having a wonderful time right up until I told him who was jumping next. The film goes from very steady to very shaky as Gary descends into a Cornfield.

\*[Court and Gary's dad, a Major during WWII, served on the staff of Field Marshall Montgomery. Ed]



WWII photo of Maj. Edward Prisk, second from left, back row, with Field Marshall Montgomery and his staff.

### Stand-up, Hook-up

The second BAC jump school story happened in late September 1961, the month after Gary went back to Bremerton (he still was too shy to tell me thanks for teaching him how to do pushups). Anyway, after two days of rain, the BAC was forced to jump twice a day on Wednesday and Thursday in order to get the five (5) jumps in the week. On Wednesday, I jumped in the morning, but because my uniform was really messed up by the wet sands of Sicily Drop Zone, I decided to just jumpmaster the second flight of the day. The second jump, I went up in boots, shorts, T-shirt, Ball Cap. By unusual chance, there were no B-12 backpacks, so I put on a T-10 and had a reserve B-12 gut pack.

For the second jump of the day I was the right door jumpmaster, that's the right as you look at the tail of the plane. We were flying in a C-119 with the clam doors open; they formed a loose V in back.

*(continued....)*



Since the flight from Pope north and then south to Sicily DZ was less than 20 minutes and the jump sequence routines started at six minutes out; the jump masters normally hooked up immediately and stood against the clam door looking out and of course at the stick. This day, when the red light came on, I mouthed the commands and gave the hand signals to my stick for stand-up and hook-up. (The C-119 shook, bounced from altitude to altitude, and rattled so much and so loudly that voice commands were useless). Everyone stood up and hooked up, but about mid-way back in the stick a dunderhead had his static line crossing his throat from left to right. All the antics I could think of didn't register on the brain behind those doe eyes. So, I unhooked my static line and stomped back to dunderhead, I told him what a sweet boy he was, and jerked on his static line to show him how he would have strangled himself. After getting his static line in his right hand, I stomped back up to the door. As I was reaching up to re-hookup, the plane dropped about 300 feet in a down draft, I fell against the door frame and tumbled out the door.

For anyone who has jumped Sicily drop zone, you may know that there is or was a rather deep (100+ feet) gravel pit with a small lake on the north end of the DZ (just across the road). Anyway, I tumbled out of the plane over the small lake in the center of the gravel pit. As I fell, I held on to the T-10 static line and pulled the B-12 reserve. It opened beautifully, and I floated straight down toward the late September, North Carolina cold gravel pit water. On the way down, as I started to practice how I was going to help dunderhead understand just what kind of low life I thought he was and how screwed he was, I climbed out of the harness and stood on top of the T-10 parachute. The B-12 had very little steer ability, and I really didn't think the rock ledges would be much better, so I was happy to have lake below me as I hauled as much riser down as possible. When I went below the edge of the pit, I let the risers go. There was a pop, the descent almost stopped, and I stepped out of harness into the water.

Meanwhile, since there wasn't any jumpmaster, the left stick jumped as planned, and then the plane flew around and the same jumpmaster jumped the other stick. Someone picked me up at the gravel pit and I was waiting for dunderhead when he reached the bleachers. I'm not sure what eventually happened to dunderhead. I do know that he had to repeat the complete ground school with special attention and instruction by the cadre.

### Testing High-Low Parachutes

Choosing the Army Sky Diving Team at Fort Bragg as one of the test units for the new high-low parachute was a natural. What wasn't natural was a novice without any

free-falls, the OIC of the Team, as part of the test. Not wanting to be a wimp, I said nothing. My first free-fall was from 12,000 feet, chute opening by barometric at 2,000 feet. It was a jump in pure fright. I was not the farthest from the rally point only because they knew I had no experience in steering free-fall chutes and had me jump so that the wind would carry me toward rally point. The jumpers who landed farther away jumped last and were fighting the wind. The test was either 16 or 20 jumps at different altitudes and different metrics of success. I participated in four of the jumps, the last three jumps in order to keep the secret that the OIC was Senior Jumper without adequate free-fall experience for the test.

### STRAC

The Strategic Army Corps (or "stupid troopers running around in circles")

October 1962, I was the still the OIC of the third week of Basic Jump School at Fort Bragg. The STRAC concept had each Regular Army Division with battlegroups on various stages of Alert. STRAC 1, meant one Battlegroup, elements of the Division C&C personnel, and representative support units would be on four hour alert—ready to deploy in four (4) hours. When any element of the 82nd Airborne Division Command and Control Element participated in an alert jump, the cadre of the BAC third week responded to the Alert as Jumpmasters and equipment loading support. Normally, the C&C and BAC third week cadre would go up with the alert elements at least once, most of the time twice, a month.

If jumps were scheduled to be a fly-around to one of the local drop zones or Camp McCall, the cadre would participate in the equipment jump. If the jump was to be at Benning, Campbell, or at any other installation from Florida to North Carolina, or West to the Texas border, the BAC cadre would return to Pope Air Force Base without jumping.

When I was assigned to the Jump School in July 1961, my "shit was STRAC." But, by 16 October 1962, it was just shit. The extra boots had no laces; the socks all had holes in them; there were only two pairs of old shorts; the extra poncho had been loaned to a friend; all of the fatigues had holes and were missing buttons, and I had removed my dopkit (razor, soap, etc.).

On the 16th of October 1962, at 0200 hours, when the 3rd Week Cadre reported to the Quartermaster Packing Sheds at Pope, everything appeared routine.

*(continued....)*



The first hints of something other-than-routine came just before I left for Base Ops and the 0315 morning weather decision. In addition to a few of the Air National Guard flying-boxcars (C-119) and many C-123's moving into the airfield loading area, I saw some of the Regular Air Force's new C-130's being parked in the loading area. The next big hint was the weather decision. Normally the Air Force Weather Officer (a Major) and I were the only two officers awake to make the weather decision for morning jumps. However, on that early morning Pope Base Ops was crowded when I arrived; and my decision was monitored by two Army one-stars, an Air Force one-star, and a herd of Colonels.



USAF C-130E, circa 1962

When I returned to my office near the QM packing shed, the rumors were flying and the pucker factor multiplied geometrically after the first three or four hundred soldiers and officers had left the First Aid Station. Normally, the medic would read your shot-record, take your name if you needed a shot, and schedule you for shots at the dispensary. This morning, however, the medics were directing people to one of a dozen stations where the needles were out and four different types of shots were being administered.

What sent the pucker factor nearly off the gauge was the issue of sealed map packets, to be opened in the air and only when ordered; that, and the directions from the Assistant Division Commander, BG Patrick, to organize a secure area in which to issue live ammunition. Thankfully on the fateful day, no live ammunition was issued; the sealed map packets were not opened (they never left the ground); and in the end the alert Battle Group and a large Division Command Element, did a local jump at Sicily and Salerno drop zones. As for me, I did a fly-around and landed back at Pope. I then went to the PX, the QM Store, and then to the house to pack my gear. *STRAC* was my byword for the next twenty-five years after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

### Consolidation of BAC

The picture at the right shows the 3rd Week BAC in August 1962. More than half of the Sky Diving Team had volunteered to ship out with the 503rd Abn Battlegroup and had been reassigned to that unit to bring it up to 115% manning before gironing to Okinawa to refit and to fill out the 173d Abn Brigade. Even the two

E-5 replacements for the jump week, had over six years of Abn experience.

In September 1962, there was a significant increase in the student load at Fort Bragg BAC and Jumpmaster training course when the 101st Jump School closed at Fort Campbell. In early 1963, the 82nd Airborne Division, BAC closed down with Army consolidating all BAC at Fort Benning. The Jumpmaster School for the 82nd remained open throughout Vietnam. Of course, starting in 1963 the 101st Abn Division, became the 101st Air Assault Division adopting most of the lessons learned from the 11th Air Assault Test Division.

When I joined the Herd in Bien Hoa in April of 1966, I was one of the first replacements for the original contingent. There were still about a fourth of my BAC / sky diving team with the 503rd. They had remained in Okinawa until the Herd deployed to Nam in 1965. I don't know when or how they departed Nam.



3rd Week BAC, 1962

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**Note:** Court is a graduate of West Point and served his country in the U.S. Army for over 27 years. Ed



# Reunions of the Airborne Kind



**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)

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**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)

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**503rd PRCT, 2012 Deep South Chapter Corregidor Reunion.** Margee Linton writes that the reunion will be held February 24-26, 2012, at Hilton Head Resort on Hilton Head Island, SC. They have accepted the invitation to meet with the 82nd Airborne Division Chapter. Registration fee is \$75.00 per person and rooms are \$90.00 plus tax, and is open to all Sky Soldiers. See Page 51 for registration form.

**Contact:**  
**Margee Linton**  
**Eml:** [sleepy503@aol.com](mailto:sleepy503@aol.com)

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**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

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**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)

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**173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion,** June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Pages 46-50.

**Contact:**  
**Dave Carmon**  
**Eml:** [dcarmon@roadrunner.com](mailto:dcarmon@roadrunner.com)  
**Web:** [www.skysoldier17.com](http://www.skysoldier17.com)

**Recon, HHC, 2/503 '66-'67** is having a reunion in Lexington, Kentucky the same days as the 173d Association annual reunion next June. More to follow.

**4/503d Reunion,** Friday, June 8, 2012. We're going to do it during the annual 173d Association reunion in Lexington, KY. Jerry Downard, Donnie Farmer and Joe Flesch are taking the lead. More later, but mark your Calendar.

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**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)

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**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  
1300 – 1600 Operation Corregidor II, Kentucky Theatre

## 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 / February 2011 – Issue 37

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# 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  
Ed Anthony, 172d Mid    John Arnold, 1RAR  
Jim Baskin, 4/503    Bob Beemer, 2/503  
Jerry Berry, 4/503    Pat Bowe, 2/503  
Wayne Bowers, 2/503    Bravo Bulls, 2/503  
Jim Brookmiller, 4/503    Bob Bruce, 1/503  
Bob Carmichael, 2/503    Leta Carruth, 2/503  
Mark Carter, 173d LRRP    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    Jim Cole, 2/503  
Reed Cundiff, 173d LRRP    Gary Davidson, 2/503  
Terry Davis, 2/503    Mike de Gyurky, 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  
Tony Esposito, 2/503    Scott Fairchild, 82nd Abn  
Pat Feely, B Med    Paul Fisher, 3/503  
Craig Ford, 1/503    Joe Franklin, 173d Bde  
Jim Frelak, Cowboys    A.B. Garcia, 2/503  
Tony Geishauser, Cowboys    Jim Gettel, 2/503  
Johnny Graham, 2/503    Bernie Griffard, 2/503  
Larry Hampton, 1/503    Tom Hanson, 3/503  
Mike Harris, 2/503    Jerry Hassler, 2/503  
Dick Holt, 2/503    Nick Hun, 2/503  
Ken Kaplan, 2/503    Ed Kearney, 2/503  
Jack Kelley, 2/503    Dave Kies, 2/503  
Bill Knapp, 2/503    Bobby Kohaya, 2/503  
Gary Kozdron, 1/503    John Kyne, 2/503  
Joe Lamb, 2/503    Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503  
Joe Logan, 2/503    Nick Hun, 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    Dan Reed, 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 Shippey, 2/503 N75    Roy Scott, 3/319  
Ken Smith, 2/503    Lew Smith, 2/503  
Steve Skolochenko D Maint    Jerry Sopko, 4/503  
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 to 5 503rd troopers and their spouses or a family member to the reunion. 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 worthy 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***





**~ Operation Corregidor II ~**

During our 173d reunion next June in Lexington, KY, the Chapter 17 reunion steering committee has secured the *Kentucky Theatre* just a couple blocks from reunion central at the Hyatt Hotel, to serve as site for *Operation Corregidor II*, the interactive meeting with WWII 503rd troopers; *Operation Corregidor I* having been held in N. Myrtle Beach at our 2010 reunion, and *Operation Corregidor* having been held in Corregidor in 1945. This historic building will be ideal for this gathering of paratrooper warriors and their families. Chapter 17 is even providing popcorn and cold drinks!



Publicity stunt for an early “talkie” featuring The Marx Brothers. (Courtesy, University of Kentucky Photo Archives)

**More than just a movie house...**

The Kentucky Theatre is a familiar Landmark to generations of Lexingtonians. It’s richly ornamented walls and glowing stained glass fixtures have hosted gala events and entertained overflowing crowds. They have also endured hard times and disasters, both natural and manmade. And so it stands today, a true palace of memories, a hall full of comedy, tragedy, drama, adventure, and just plain fun.

We hope you enjoy this brief look at her history and join us soon to continue the tradition by making some memories of your own.

**1965**

*The Sound of Music*. Thousands lined up daily to see this summer’s timeless hit.



**The present Kentucky Theatre auditorium**  
(by Lee P. Thomas)

**October, 1921**  
Construction plans announced. The Builder, Lafayette Amusement Company offered \$20 in gold to name Lexington’s “palatial new photoplay house”.

The winner, of course, was the “Kentucky.”



**April 24, 1927**  
Enter the “talkies”. In a major marketing coup, the Kentucky was the first to introduce Warner Brothers’ vitaphone sound films to Lexington.



**Operation Corregidor II**  
coming soon to the Kentucky



**The concession area**  
(by Raymond Adams)



~ 503rd PRCT Reunion ~



# Winter Weekend Getaway Feb 24-26 Hilton Head Marriott Resort & Spa



*Our fourth year hosting this fun mid-winter break, luxury accommodations at fantastic rates - rooms from \$100, and great amenities. You can't beat it for value. Ask any of the 80 who attended last year, from 10 chapters.*

**Make your hotel reservations 888-511-5086**

### REGISTRATION FORM

Mail to **Bill Eberle, 22 Big Woods Dr,  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926-2665**

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

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

Email (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Your chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ attending X \$75/person = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Added donation for Wounded Warrior \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Make check payable to **Ben Vandervoort Chapter**

Fee covers banquet, hospitality (FREE food & drink),  
hotel self park, events transportation.

### EVENT SCHEDULE

**THURSDAY:** Registration 1300-2100,  
FREE Hospitality Room food & drinks  
every day

**FRIDAY:** Parris Island Graduation of  
Marines; Beaufort National Cemetery  
Service of Remembrance for fallen  
paratroopers; Beaufort Historic District  
for lunch and shopping. Hospitality  
Room open with FREE food & drinks.

**SATURDAY:** various Savannah excursions;  
details to follow.

**SATURDAY EVENING:** FREE Happy  
Hour, Banquet, Guest Speaker.

**Hosted by Ben Vandervoort Chapter. Call or email Bill Eberle if you require  
transportation from Savannah Airport: 843 682 4171, airborneben@hargray.com**

Good buddy Chuck Breit of the 503rd PRCT, who made the historic jump onto Corregidor and a lifetime member of the 173d Airborne Association, says all Sky Soldiers are welcome to register to attend their reunion which this year is being held in conjunction with the 82nd Airborne, Ben Vandervoort Chapter. Thanks Chuck!





## ~ Paul L. Hinds, 503rd Paratrooper Extraordinaire ~

Paul L. Hinds joined the 503rd PRCT in early 1942 at Ft. Benning, GA and was transferred to Ft. Bragg, NC for training during the summer prior to deployment to the Pacific Theater of Operations. He sailed from the west coast on October 20, 1942 and landed in Australia on December 2nd, after 42 days aboard the ageing Poelau Laut. The unusually long time at sea was a result of the captain's adamant refusal to sail with a convoy. In Paul's words.....



**Paratrooper Paul**

***“The 503rd PRCT was one lean, mean fighting machine. Anyone doubting that statement should contact the Gatekeeper of Hell to request an interview with one of the hundreds of enemy that our paratroopers sent there.”***

They zip-zagged across the Pacific to evade the Japanese submarines which infested the waters like sharks. Paul was with 2000 troopers sleeping in the ship's hold, packed in like sardines. They had only 2 meals per day, but on Thanksgiving they were served a feast which filled both sides of their mess kits. By that time their stomachs had shrunk to such a degree the excessive quantity of food, partnered with the pitch and roll of the small ship, caused many troopers to become sick.

Paul's only combat jump occurred on July 4, 1944, one national holiday he will never forget! Upon exiting the aircraft his M-1 rifle became entangled in the parachute's risers and created pain in his left shoulder. Then, to make matters worse, he landed in a mud hole on the graveled airport runway. When he stood up, he was cussin' up a blue streak. Paul turned around and who should be standing beside him? None other than the regimental chaplain, whose wry smile indicated that all was forgiven.

On the morning after the initial jump on Corregidor in February 1945, he flew over the island on a resupply mission. After having pushed the supplies out of the Gooney Bird (C-47), Paul took several pictures of the topside by standing in the door with no parachute, steadied only by the lieutenant grasping his belt with one hand while holding onto the static line with the other. *“Fortunately, he had a good, strong grip!!!”*

After surviving 33 months, many of which were spent in the hot, mosquito-ridden, snake-infested jungles of New Guinea and several of the islands of the Philippines, he returned to the United States in August of 1945. *“I was aboard the first troop ship to arrive in San Francisco after the Japanese surrender. What a Glorious Day!!*

### **A standing ovation**

Paul, and his beautiful bride, Ginny, attended the 173d Airborne Association reunion in N. Myrtle Beach in 2010, along with other WWII 503rd troopers and their companions as honored guests of the officers and men of our brigade. During the reunion an interactive meeting was held where these paratroopers shared stories of their time during WWII in the Pacific, including a story from Paul.

During one phase of the fighting, Paul was tasked with processing the paperwork of his buddies killed in battle. While doing this sad work he noticed many of the men who had died hadn't taken out life insurance provided by the army. With no one looking, and with a surreptitious stroke of his pen, he righted this wrong, assuring surviving families would receive the life insurance payment in recognition of the great sacrifice made by their lost paratrooper.

Upon hearing this, the 100-200 Sky Soldiers and their family members in attendance stood and gave Paul a resounding round of applause -- perhaps the only recorded standing ovation received by a WWII 503rd trooper from Sky Soldiers.



**Paul, after the 503rd captured the airstrip on Noemfoor Island, 1945.**

Of the approximate 3000 paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought throughout the Pacific during WWII, sadly, less than 100 men are still with us.

In January, Paul died at the age of 90. Indeed, he was one of the Greatest Generation. We send our condolences to his lovely bride, Ginny, and Paul's family.

*Rest easy trooper, you did a good job, Paul.*



# ~ Red Tails ~ ~



## Forever One of a Kind

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

Howard is a buddy, a retired Air Force guy down here in Cocoa Beach, FL. One evening I stopped by the VFW in that little ocean side village and saw his wife there, Ola, but Howard was nowhere to be found. Ola mentioned he had gone to Alabama to bury his father. A couple weeks later I did see Howard and expressed my condolences for his loss. He happened to mention his dad, Roy Wiggins, served as a ground crew member with the Tuskegee Airmen, something I was never aware of.



Roy Wiggins, 99

Another day, my wife, Reggie, and I were at the local Post Office here in town. An elderly lady was struggling with a rather large package so I offered to carry it to the car for her. As we reached the car a man, whom I assumed was her husband and sitting in the car, pushed a secret button and the trunk of the vehicle miraculously opened. After placing the package in the trunk I noticed the driver was wearing a ball cap with the words *Tuskegee Airmen* emblazoned on the face of the cap. Kiddingly, I said, "I heard of you guys." He smiled. After thanking him for his service to his country, we left.

Sometime later, my wife and I visited the Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum in Titusville, not far from where we live. We walked around the outside area of the museum taking in the various models of aircraft on display, including many WWII, Korean War and Vietnam era flying machines, of course, spending extra time looking at and touching the Huey, now forever grounded, before moving inside to view the static displays.

Against a wall near the rear of the building was sitting an elderly, rather rotund man talking, smiling and shaking hands with visitors. We would soon learn he was LTC Hiram Mann, one of the original Tuskegee Airmen pilots. Finally getting our chance to meet this hero of WWII, we had the opportunity to chat with him for a few moments.

Having not brought a camera with us, I asked a stranger if he'd snap a photo and email it to me. For many weeks that photo never came, and I got into the habit of cursing that inconsiderate stranger (probably a Leg), until one day, here on this computer machine, the image of the Colonel, my wife and this old RTO appeared! I took back everything I had said about the stranger and his mother.

(continued....)





**Smitty, LTC Hiram Mann & Reggie at Warbird Museum**

Ready to leave, I wished the Colonel well, then came to attention and gave him my best Airborne salute, which he returned. Walking away thinking my bride was pulling slack, I turned to see her still talking with Hiram.

As we reached the parking lot she said, "Do you know what he said?" I told her I didn't. She then replied, "He said 'it was good to be saluted again.'" I think I said something like, "Wow, that's great".

As this is being written, this Friday coming to a theater near you, is the Lucasfilm, *Red Tails*, named after the tail color of the aircraft flown by the Airmen in WWII. Mann, who lives in Titusville not far from the museum, along with other Tuskegee Airmen was interviewed a few years ago for the movie, and was reported to say, "It was an experiment that many of the high brass didn't want to see succeed. But we turned that adversity into victory." Indeed, they did.

By the time you read this, Mann will have attended a special showing of the movie which would have included a question and answer period with the invitation-only movie goers in attendance. In anticipation of seeing the film, LTC Mann said, "I want to see how factual it is. I'm interested in seeing how the public will receive it."



Advanced pilot trainer, Bob Hughes of Los Angeles, was assigned by the Army Air Corps to the Tuskegee Army Flying School to train the Airmen. "I started learning what the blacks were going through in Alabama. It was a mixed up thing," he said. "Here these guys went through school against all odds." Given the fact his skin tone didn't match that of the Airmen, the army didn't allow him to lodge on the airbase lest he catch *the Black*.

LTC Hiram Mann, 90, flew 48 combat missions over France and Germany in his P-51D fighter he named "Boss Lady", after his wife Kitty; they've been married 71 years.

And now, our attention seems to turn more and more to the men and women of WWII, our fathers, mothers, aunts and uncles (my mom happened to be a *Rosie the Riveter*). We are occasionally afforded the fortunate opportunity to meet some of these people, these patriots; like the two Airmen I met and the late father of a buddy I heard about; like Paul Hinds of the 503rd, who is no longer with us, and Hiram Mann, who is; although our simple 'thanks' seems so lacking at times.

The *Greatest Generation*? Damn right they are!

### Some facts about the Tuskegee Airmen

- 992 pilots graduated at Tuskegee Army Air Field between 1942 and 1945.
- 450 pilots served overseas in the 99th Pursuit Squadron at the 332nd Fighter Group.
- The pilots escorted bomber planes in North Africa and Europe during World War II.
- Enlisted members were trained as mechanics, armament specialists, radio repairmen, parachute riggers and control tower operators.
- Tuskegee Airmen Inc. formed in 1972 and has 53 chapters, including the Gen. Daniel E. Chappie James Chapter.



**LTC Hiram Mann**

(Photo by Tim Short, *Florida Today*)



## From Wife of Proud Late Paratrooper

I am the wife of Michael B. Ludas who passed away way too soon, on Oct. 1, 2011. I am using Michael's email for his service and friends correspondences.

He served with the 173rd, Co. B & D 2/503d in Vietnam Jan. 1967 to Jan. 1968. He did basic at Ft. Leonard-wood, Mo., Ft. Gordon, & Jump School at Ft. Benning, Ga. in 1966.



**Michael, a proud paratrooper**

He was a machine gunner, wounded 3 times, earning 3 Purple Hearts, 2 Army Commendation Medals with "V", Vietnam Service Medal w/Bronze Service Star, Vietnam Campaign Medal w/device 60, 5 Unit Citations, Parachutist Badge with Gold Battle Jump Star, CIB, among others.

He survived many daily "contact fire-fights", "Ambush Patrols", and "Search & Destroy" Missions. He was proud to serve with a strong group of men in all that was expected of him and participated in "Operation Cedar Falls, Jan '67", made the historic "Jump, on Operation Junction City, Feb, 22, 1967," and thankfully after his last time wounded, survived the horrific "Battle of Hill 875", of which he lay wounded across the area waiting for evac, when Fr Watters' group was disastrously hit by our friendly fire.

Michael was always in question why he survived and those wounded didn't. It was these memories that later haunted him when the Iraq war came about, brought up many issues he had suppressed, as others have. Over the years Agent Orange issues took a toll on his body, as he would say, his shoulders shot, his knees shot, his skin diseased, then a Stroke, Prostate cancer, and PTSD. With all the meds he was on, no one really knew how to help my Michael, there was nothing that made him comfortable any more, and finally his body gave out.

We were high school sweethearts and for 47 years he always called me his "little Trooper", he named everything "Geraldine" for his luck, like his 1965 & 66 cars he raced and his machine gun because he said they were always with him. For Luck he wore my school ring on left little finger, carried things I gave him, 50 cent piece, St Michaels medallion (which I wore also and was blessed by the Priest in Chicago), a broken

watch that got blown off him the first time he was wounded, etc. He and I were our luck through all the years of being together.

Michael was my "Lifeline" and "Hero", I miss him dearly but know that we had the best deepest love and respect for each other than any two people could ever have. We were happy to have 2 daughters, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and 4 fun grandkids. His life was cut too short.

He was devoted to the guys of the 173rd that served with him and was very proud to be associated with this organization.

My daughters and I were wondering if there is anyone who has any photos or stories from those who may have known him; if we could have some copies of such, we would be gratefully appreciative. Maybe you could get the word out for us?

Thank you, and I apologize for the long email but I am extremely proud of my Michael.

Geraldine (Gerrie) Ludas  
<mailto:mludas@wi.rr.com>

**Thanks for writing, Gerrie. We hope some of Michael's buddies will be contacting you.**



**Michael with 2/503d  
in Vietnam circa 1967**



## Last Month's WHODAT?



This strack looking G.I. is SFC Terry "Nick" Sabree, C/2/503d and Special Forces trooper.

*"For those who have fought for it, Freedom has a taste the protected will never know."*

~ Henry Hauser

## Nostalgia

Sophia Loren and Jane Mansfield



*"Hmmm. Sure drinks her tea fast, that cup is already empty."*

[Photo sent in by John "Suli" Sullivan, HHC/2/503d, always on the lookout for nostalgia and full cups]

## THE OLDEST VC

By George Coker

A/4/503d

This is one of the stories that, when we get through telling it, we won't be sure we got it right.

On one operation, we were moving into a VC staging area that was covered with grenade booby traps and punji stick holes. RJ Pool, Edwin Minor and Capt. Hampton were in the right column between the first platoon and the weapons platoon. Myself, the XO, and 1st Sgt Vickers were in the left, between the 1st and 2nd platoons.

RJ and I couldn't have been more than 30 feet apart. RJ said a real old VC with an AK-47 jumped out of a covered foxhole. He wasn't more than 10 feet from RJ, and when he raised the AK, everyone hit the dirt. The old man emptied a magazine in their direction and disappeared.

On my side of the line, a VC took off running down a trail followed by Sgt Anderson and David Raines. Evidently, the VC tripped a booby trap, because, as our guys followed, the grenade exploded. It showered Sgt Anderson's leg with shrapnel and David was hit in the right thigh. With all the shooting and explosions, I was as close to the ground as a person could get. Sgt Vickers yelled at me, *"There's a grenade booby trap a couple feet in front of you"*.

Soon after the action started, David came walking down the path supported by another trooper. He had a hole in his thigh about the size of a fingernail. We had gone to Airborne school together, so when I saw it I said, *"Man that looks like a million dollar wound"*. David replied, *"A trip to Memphis would be nice"*.

Our medics had set up a station behind our position. The medic picked a square piece of metal from a pineapple grenade out of David's thigh, sprayed it with iodine, put a bandage on it and sent him back to his unit. When he passed by me, he said, *"No luck. No luck!"*

We don't know if there were 2 VC or just one. Sgt Anderson had been a member of the Army Rifle Team, winning several meets. He missed that VC 20 times, I guess the old man was just having a good day!

[Sent in by Jack Tarr, 4/503d]

Funny story, Jack. It was one day in May of '66, when I drove a LT from Camp Zinn to Long Binh Hospital; believe he was going there to see his nurse lady friend. We left on the return trip about dusk heading up Highway 1. At one point we took a few rounds of sniper fire from a tree line; we also learned how fast jeeps can really go -- not fast enough. Sounds like the same VC. LT with the lady friend, if you read this, drop me a note. Ed





# 2/503d Troopers....They were Young & Soldiers

## But, where are they now?

### Bob Beemer (B/2/503d),

joined the Army in February 1967. He was sent to Vietnam where he joined the 173d in November 1967, arriving 2 days before Thanks--giving. He was then sent to An Khe for jungle school, then to fire support base "12" at Dak To where he was assigned to 2d Platoon of "B" Company 2/503rd. Bob remained with Bravo until February of 1968, when he requested assignment to the Recon Squad where he spent the remainder of his tour.



When Bob returned stateside he was assigned to "C" Company 1/508th, 82nd Airborne Div. until his separation in February 1970.

Upon his discharge from the army, he planned to join the New York State Police Department until *I demonstrated to them the power of a Mach "1" with a 390 cu in engine. They asked me not to take the test for a while so I became an Apprentice Carpenter.* Bob says this proved to be his best move since being in the 173d.

He advanced in the trade, building everything from single family homes to suspension bridges and for the past 14 years he worked in construction management supervising the projects.

*Today I am happily married for 32 years to Katharine who has been my stability over the years along with enjoying our daughters Tanja and Erin who live nearby.* He also has a son from a short previous marriage who lives in another state. Bob has been active in Veterans issues locally and does not let a day go by when *I am not grateful for having served with some of the finest men ever to have walked the earth.*



So, you wanna be a Sky Soldier? Better have big ones.

### Bob Carmichael (HHC/2/503d),

was born 28 October 1929, in Wewoka, Oklahoma. Bob enlisted in the army in 1952, later completing officer training. LTC Carmichael served as Battalion Executive Officer and Battalion Commander of the 2/503d in 1965/1966. At the request of General Williamson, he returned to Vietnam for a second tour in 1969 as Battalion Commander with the 25th Infantry Div. Bob's storied army career spans nearly 22 years, and in addition to Vietnam, includes service in Korea, Alaska, and the USA Command & General Staff College, among numerous other appointments. Referred to as "RBC" by family and friends, he graduated the University of Texas with a BA in Psychology, and has completed numerous advanced infantry and officer courses while in service to his country. Bob played a critical role during *Operation Silver City* in March of 1966, when his advice to 173d Brigade was followed to tactically and quickly move the battalion to position Zulu Zulu in the "D" Zone where it could set-up a defensive perimeter before being attacked by a reinforced enemy regiment. Years later he was in command of the 25th Inf. Bn which was victorious in one of the most major battles ever fought in Vietnam, during *Operation Crook*. Bob's army service and combat awards are too many to list here, but include the Silver Star, the Army Commendation Medal, the Bronze Star w/V with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart w/1 Oak Leaf Cluster. Bob was and remains to this day a *Soldier's Soldier*, never once losing sight of the value and importance of the lives of the men he commanded. Today, Bob is retired and lives in Austin, Texas with his commanding officer, Mrs. Exie Carmichael. While Exie pretends to fill the role of RTO, our brave leader would much rather face a company of attacking NVA than to disagree with the *real* commander in the Carmichael family. Instead, he spends much of his time fishing, tending to his vegetable garden, rooting the Long Horn's on to victory; and with his lovely wife, helping G.I.'s even when those same G.I.'s have no idea from where the help originates.



(continued....)





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

**George Dexter**  
CO 2/503d, on  
February 26, 1966,  
during Operation  
Phoenix, was  
wounded by enemy  
sniper fire in the  
left leg and arm.



He was evacuated back to the United States where he spent 2 1/2 months at Beaumont Army Hospital in El Paso TX, underwent five operations and spent a year in physical therapy, but was able to get back on jump status 2 1/2 years after being wounded. In August '66 he and his family moved to Carlisle Barracks, PA where he attended the Army War College. From there George was assigned the following summer to the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. In the summer of '69 the Colonel and his family moved to the Panama Canal Zone where he commanded the 8th Special Forces Group for two years. He returned to Vietnam in the summer of '69. By this time most of the American combat units had been returned home. After four months in Can Tho in the Delta, he was sent to MACV Headquarters in Saigon, where he served out the rest of his tour working with the South Vietnamese developing a pacification program for their use after the Americans left. His last tour of duty before retirement was with the ROTC Program at the University of Texas at Austin. George retired in 1975 and moved with his family to Albuquerque NM. *There I built my own solar adobe home in the foothills northeast of town, doing most of the adobe bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing and electrical work myself. Katy and I lived in that house for 26 years.* During this time he did a lot of volunteer work, primarily as a docent with the Anthropology Museum at the University of New Mexico and with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a Catholic charitable organization. In 2004, he and his wife sold their house at the peak of the housing boom and moved into a local retirement home. His wife, Katy, died there in May 2011 of complications from Parkinson Disease. *It has been very lonely without her, but, at 87, my health is good and several of our children and grandchildren live either in Albuquerque or in New Mexico within a couple of hours of here. I see them a lot.*

**Stanley F. Crump** A/2/503d, served with the first platoon as a rifleman, grenadier, and on occasion as a RTO, from May 1965 to May 1966. He joined the Company fresh out of Jump School about two weeks after the brigade landed in Vietnam. Stan is now retired, and living in Winthrop, NY. He is married to Carol and they have two children and two grandsons. *And yes, it is a grand day to be a Sky Soldier.*



**2/503 Chargin' Charlies catch a bad guy, circa '66/'67**  
(Photo by Jack Leide)

### 2/503 Troopers

Send in your before and after photo and a 1/2 page write-up of what you've done since the war, letting your buddies know you're still alive and kicking. Email to:  
[rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

(continued....)



*“Were you a paratrooper,  
daddy?”  
“I still am honey.”*





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

### Frank J. Dukes

(A/2/503d), was born in Lewistown, PA on May 26, 1947. He joined the U.S. Army after graduating from Lewistown High School in Sept. of '65. He enlisted as an Airborne Infantry soldier and went through basic training with Echo Co. 4th Training Bn. at Ft. Gordon GA. After a short leave he went into advanced individual training at Ft. Ord, CA, then on to Airborne Jump School at Fort Benning GA. He completed jump school in early March of '66, then again went on a short leave back to Lewistown, PA. Frank was then assigned to A Co. 2nd Bn 503rd Inf, 173d Abn Bde (Sep) in April of '66. He was just 18 years old when he was handed an M-79 grenade launcher and was told to get some rounds and practice firing outside the perimeter of the base camp in Ben Hoa, Vietnam. Frank says he can't remember all the places he has been through but he does remember 29 June '66, at Xuan Loc, *when a lot of good brothers lost their lives and the rest of us grew up real fast.* He also remembers a recon of the Central Highlands on Aug. 26, '66, when he was wounded by enemy troops with a hand-detonated mine. Frank was airlifted out to a hospital and just when he thought he was ready to go back to the unit his leg became infected. The wound had to be cut open again and left open to re-heal. Frank then got Malaria and was again hospitalized for about 4 more months. After leaving Vietnam, Frank was assigned to B Co. 1st Bn 505th Inf, 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Abn Div at Fort Bragg, NC. During his stay at Bragg, Frank went to the riots in Detroit, MI and then back to Vietnam with the 82nd Abn for the Tet Offensive in February of 1968. Frank left the Army in September of 1968 as a Sergeant E-5 and earned the C.I.B., Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal and Paratrooper Wings. *Love the Silver Wings.* Frank met his sweetheart, Myrlene, in October of 1968 and married her on February 8, 1969. They have been married for 42 years and have one son, Michael, daughter-in-law, Jeri, and two grandsons. *Myrlene gets all the credit for keeping me in line and for that matter alive. I still don't know how she ever put up with me in the early years.* Frank worked in the Steel Mill in Burnham, PA for 16 years and then the steel industry went bust in 1982. He worked there for 26 years and recently retired on December 31, 2011. Frank now keeps busy as a volunteer driving our Veterans to their Doctor appointments in the DAV van.



### Bernard F. (Bernie) Griffard (B/2/503d),

was born January 13, 1943 in Bloomington, IL. Following his graduation from Loyola University Chicago in January 1965, he received his ROTC commission as a Second Lieutenant. After Jump School at Ft. Benning, GA in August-September 1965, his first Active Duty unit assignment was the 101st Airborne Division, Fort Campbell, KY. While at Fort Campbell he served as a Platoon Leader and XO in B/1-501 ABN IN, and as the Aide de Camp to the Assistant Division Commander. In September 1967 he reported to the 2/503 ABN, 173d ABN BDE (SEP) in Dak To, RVN. Over the next 18 months he served as the Commander, B Company and as the Battalion S4 and S1. He was on Hill 875; in Kontum and Duc Co during Tet 1968; An Khe and Bong Song. During his RVN tour he received two Bronze Stars w/V and two Purple Hearts. During his 28-year military career additional overseas assignments included eighteen months in Korea and eight years in Europe, five years of which were in Berlin. He also served tours with the Army's Operational Test & Evaluation Agency; as an instructor at the Combined Arms & Services Staff School (CAS3); and served as the Director of the first Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) Exercise Team. In 1992, Bernie was assigned as the Commander, Army Forces, Task Force GTMO, Guantanamo Bay Cuba during the first Haitian Migration. He concluded his career at Fort Lewis, WA as the Assistant Chief of Staff G4, I Corps, retiring in April 1993 in the rank of Colonel. A graduate of both the U. S. Army Command & General Staff College (CGSC), and the U. S. Army War College (USAWC), he also has a Master's Degree from the University of Miami, FL. In November 1993, Bernie accepted an appointment as an Associate Professor at the U. S. Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership, Carlisle Barracks, PA, a position he still holds today. He and Honey, his wife of 42 years live in Mechanicsburg, PA. Their son and three grandchildren live in Florida, and their daughter lives in Alaska, providing the optimum places to visit in the winter and summer.



(continued....)





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

### **Barry L. (Bear) Hart (C/2/503d)**

was born in Lancaster, PA on October 20, 1947. He joined the Army on November 22, 1965. He took basic training in A Co., 4th Training Bn, 2nd Bde at Ft. Gordon, GA. He was chosen to attend Leadership Training School in February 1966, Class 87, 3rd Training Regt. Inf., also at Ft. Gordon. Barry took advanced infantry training in E Co., 7th Training Bn, 3rd Bde and Jungle Familiarization School, also at Ft. Gordon, GA. He attended Airborne School at Ft. Benning, GA, Class 40, 45th and 49th Companies, as Jumper #521. He completed jump School on May 20, 1966. Barry arrived in Vietnam in June 1966, and was assigned to Recon Platoon, 2nd Bn, 503rd Inf, 173d Airborne Bde on Operation Yorktown (June 23-July 8). In July 1966, he was assigned to C Co. 2/503 Weapons Platoon where he worked his way from base plate carrier to fire direction control. He jumped in Operation Junction City in War Zone C with the 2/503d, which was the only mass combat jump in Vietnam. On two occasions he served as fire direction control for the battalion's 4.2mm mortars and Co. A, B and C 81mm Mortar Platoons. He was promoted to Sgt. E-5 in August 1967. Barry was in all operations of C Company from July 1966 to December 1967. He was the mortar forward observer for 1st Platoon on Hill 875 at Dak To in Nov. 1967, where C Co. had 42 killed in action and 45 wounded in action, himself included. From Dec. 1967 to Feb. 1968, he was assigned to 5th Special Forces, MACV, and SOG Operations on a voluntary basis. While leading a Civilian Irregular Defense Group on ambush, they themselves were ambushed and left for dead. With a minor arm and back wound which bled profusely, the Viet Cong thought Sgt. Hart was dead and didn't bother to make sure. The CIDG were not so lucky. Barry earned two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge with Wreath, Airborne Silver Wings with Combat Jump Star, ARVN Jump Wings and Pathfinder Badge. He was discharged on October 1968 as Sgt. E-5 from B Co., 1st 325th Inf., 82nd Abn. Div. at Ft. Bragg, NC. Barry is widowed with two children. He has been a machinist and tool maker, and has served as the Kentucky State President of the Vietnam Vets Motorcycle Club. He resides in Paducah, KY.



### **Jack Kelley (A/2/503d)**

was born in Orlando, Florida, July 8, 1937. A member of the Boy Scouts of America he was awarded the Eagle Scout badge. He graduated from The Citadel in 1959 and was commissioned as a 2d Lt of Infantry in the US Army. In December 1979, he retired from the U. S. Army as a LTC, after twenty years of service. He commanded parachute infantry units at platoon, company and battalion levels where his last two assignments were as a Battalion Commander in the 82nd Airborne Division and finally, as Deputy Commander, 5th Special Forces ("Green Berets"). Jack was awarded the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star for Valor with six Oak Leaf Clusters, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Medal (eleven awards), Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and the Senior Parachutist badge. He has also earned Master's Degrees from both American University and Central Michigan, served as a Certified Financial Planner, and as an Adjunct Professor at both Webster University and Campbell University. Jack also served as the Executive Director of Men's Ministries of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC), a position he held from 1985 to 2005. In 2006 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Coalition of Men's Ministries (NCMM). NCMM is a network of denominational and para church ministries which represents more than half of the churches in the United States, and the Commander Bill Linn Award from the Royal Ranger Ministry (IPHC) for shaping the lives of boys. His recent position has been as the Vice President of Advancement/Director of Development for Holmes Bible College from April 2007 to December 31, 2008. Currently he serves as the Chaplain for the Fort Bragg Chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and is a member of the Cumberland County Friends of the Library. Jack and his wife, Lynn, are members of the Northwood Temple Church, where he served on the church staff from 1981 to 1985 as an Associate Pastor.



*(continued....)*

*"Above all, Vietnam was a war that asked everything of a few and nothing of most in America."* ~ Myra MacPherson, 1984





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

**Dave Kies, HHC/2/503d,** was born on a dairy farm in Platteville, Wisconsin. He attended one year of college before deciding that wasn't for him. Off to the big city of Chicago he went, working for American Airlines until Uncle Sam came calling. In October 1965, he took basic training at Ft. Knox, then Advanced Infantry Training at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, spending time hauling bamboo from Texas to Ft. Polk for "Tiger Land". *Not much time preparing for Vietnam.* Volunteering for Jump School was a no brainer after the \$55. stipend was announced by some recruiter during AIT (Wasn't it all about the money?). Dave was assigned to the Anti-Tank Platoon of HQ 2/503 of the 173d at Camp Zinn, in Bien Hoa, and on April 26, 1966, he was dropped off to start his new life as a 173d paratrooper. It didn't take Dave long, with his new buddies in Anti-Tank, to realize that "Charlie" didn't have any tanks and *maybe this anti-tank thing was a sick trick.* After seeing what a bunch of macho, fun loving guys the Recon group were, Dave and four others from Anti-Tank joined Recon under the watchful eye of SSgt. Marcus Powell. *What a difference in leadership.* Now they were part of Powell's Recon Panthers. January 22, 1967, became the day Dave will never forget. That bright, sunny Sunday morning when Eric Zoller and Dave were walking down a trail policing up their booby traps from the previous nights' ambush patrol....a claymore went off killing Eric and taking both of Dave's legs off below the knees -- it's been 45 years since that day. Dave went back to Wisconsin where he returned to school at the University of Wisconsin at Platteville majoring in Art. He later put his art talents to use as an illustrator for the clothing catalog, Lands' End Inc. He retired in 2007. Dave has five grown children and his wife, Anne, who brings him toast and coffee in bed every morning. Dave says, *"How good is that!"* Dave and his wife live outside of Madison, Wisconsin, and he wishes every winter that global warming would make it to Wisconsin. *Airborne!*



**Kenneth C. Redding (HHC/2/503d),** was born in Baltimore, MD on May, 27, 1943. He joined the Army February 1963 where he spent three days at the reception center at Ft. Jackson, SC. He then went to Ft. Gordon, GA for basic training, then leadership school and AIT. Ken attended jump school during the extreme heat of August 1963. After jump school and standing in formation awaiting assignment to either the 101st or 82nd, he was one of 30 troopers assigned to go through specialized training for the "ENTAC", a wire guided missile for anti-tank training. After training he traveled to Okinawa via the USNS Gaffey for 18 days where *"I had the dry heaves for 17 out of the 18 days."* Once in Okinawa Ken was assigned to HHC 2/503rd, stationed at Camp Kue. Two weeks after arriving in Okinawa he made his cherry jump on a training exercise in Taiwan. During the early part of *"I think 1965"*, Ken went to Iriomote for jungle training where he was an assistant instructor on booby traps and snares. He got caught in one of the traps that Sgt. Clark had already set. Ken had to have several stitches placed in his left leg. *"Want to see my scar?"* Ken was promoted to Cpl (E-4) then to Sgt (E-5). In March 1965 he extended his tour of duty in Okinawa to finish out his three year hitch with the US Army. Two months later the entire 173d Airborne Brigade was sent to Vietnam. Because the "ENTAC" was useless in the jungles of VN and being an E-5, he was assigned as the NCOIC of the battalion PX. In February 1966, Ken returned to the world. From 1966 until 1986 he was a Baltimore County Police Officer when he retired as a Sgt. From 1986 until 2009 Ken had a second career with AAI Corporation, which is a Defense Contractor. *"Their current claim to fame is the UAV Shadow."* He fully retired in September 2009. Ken has been married to his wife, Sherry, for 45 years this May 7th. They have three children and 8 grandchildren.



***"We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves."***

~ Lyndon Johnson, Oct. 1964

(continued....)





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

### John (Top) Searcy

(HHC/2/503d) was born Oct. 11, 1943, in Toledo, OH. He entered the US Army Jun 13, 1962, taking basic training at Ft. Knox, KY, and AIT at Ft.



Polk, LA. From there he was assigned to the 2nd (Abn) Battle Grp 504 Abn Inf 82 Abn Div. until Feb '65. John then joined the 173d Abn Bde in Okinawa as a Squad Leader in the 4.2's Plt, HHC 2/503d Abn Inf in '65-'66. He was deployed to Vietnam with the 2d Bn from Okinawa in May of '65. He later served with the 101st Abn as a Jump School and Jumpmaster Instructor. From there he was assigned to the Air-borne Dept. at Ft. Benning, GA as an Instructor for Basic Airborne and Jumpmaster School. Next, Top was assigned to C Co. (Abn) 5th Bn 23rd Inf, 172 Inf Bde at Ft. Richardson, AK. From Nov. '68 until April 2, '70, he was assigned to the USARAL NCO Academy as the Sr. TAC NCO, until Aug. '71, then the 82nd Abn Div NCO Academy as TAC NCO and Instructor. In May '73, John returned to Ft. Richardson as an Instructor and TAC NCO with the NCO Academy until Dec. '74. Top was assigned to C Co. (Abn) 4th Bn 23rd Inf, 172nd Inf Bde as the Weapons Plt. Sgt. Until the end of '75, he was assigned back to the NCO Academy as the Chief Instructor for Primary NCO Course, until Jun '77. Top then was posted to the 9th Inf Div. NCO Academy as an Instructor in the Advanced NCO Course at Ft. Lewis, WA, until Jun '78. Top then joined HHC 2nd of the 1st Inf, 9th Inf Div. as the Co. 1st Sgt, until July '79, then back to Ft. Richardson as the 1st Sgt. of C Co. (Abn) 4th Bn 23rd Inf, 172nd Light Inf Bde, until Jan '81. John was then assigned to the NCO Academy in Alaska as the Asst. Commandant, until he retired on 30 Jun '82. He is the recipient of the Bronze Star w/V device, 2 awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, 2 awards of the Army Commendation Medal, 6 awards of the Good Conduct Medal, and Master Parachute Wings. After retirement, Top instructed JROTC at East High School, in Anchorage, AK, until '85, then he took a position as Correctional Officer with the Dept of Corrections for the State of Alaska until retiring on Oct. 1, '96. Married to his lovely wife, Leona, for 49 years, they have two children, daughter Zina, and son John, Jr. Leona and Top moved to North Las Vegas, NV, in July of 2000, where they spend time RV-ing in their motorhome, *fishing when we can, and enjoying our seven grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, soon to be eight.*

### Lew (Smitty) Smith

(HHC/2/503d), was born Sept. 13, 1947, in Oneida, NY, and grew up in SoCal. He joined the army in 1965, and following jump school was posted to the 101st Abn at Ft. Campbell as a radio operator instructor. He says he was forced to go airborne because two of his older brothers were army paratroopers (82nd & SF) and it *"wouldn't have been safe entering the house as a Leg"*. In Dec. '65, he was assigned to the Bn commo squad with the 2/503d at Bien Hoa, as RTO for the Bn XO and CO, under the commands of Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh & Sigholtz. *Thought I was going to the 101st, and was pissed when they told me I was going to some outfit called the 173d -- I thought they were a Leg unit!* Lew was awarded the Bronze Star w/V for his actions at LZ Zulu Zulu during Op Silver City, in March '66, which he refers to as his "BS" award. He was also wounded that day by a very unfriendly F-4. Lew rose to the heights of SP4 before the Peter Principle kicked in. He never received his third stripe, once the army realized he was not career material, and may hold the record for time-in-grade as an E-4, and directly blames LTC Bob Carmichael for this gross oversight and lost pay. Following Vietnam, he was assigned to the 509th Abn in Mainz, Germany, where he was the first-string catcher on the battalion's baseball team (*which kept me out of a lot of guard duty and KP*). In 1967, he married the beautiful German Fraulein, Regine Sperber, and in '68, he took a European discharge. Lew played semi-pro baseball in L.A., including one summer on the instructional team of the California Angels until they realized he couldn't hit a curve ball, and to this day laments he never found his rightful place in professional baseball. He also owned and played for the Miami Suns, a semi pro team in Florida. He attended college in CA and FL, and earned his Industrial Instructor's Certificate at the Univ. of Wis. at Eau Claire. Lew worked for Flying Tigers in L.A. as a sales and services instructor, and owned his own business serving the airline industry for over 25 years, and taught a college level class on air cargo. He and his Frau, Reggie, have been married for 44 years (Lew says, *I was tricked. I thought she only wanted a Green Card but I haven't been able to get rid of her ever since*). They live on Merritt Island, FL, where he busies himself with writing, reading and golf. They have two sons and two grandchildren. Smitty publishes the monthly *2/503d Vietnam Newsletter* for the men of his battalion, and is honored to be a Sky Soldier.





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

### Steve (Sgt. Rock) Vargo C/2/503d),

came from the 101st at Ft. Campbell and joined the Herd on May 20, 1967. He was Charlie 2nd Bn, 3rd Platoon. After completing jungle school, he was sent to Pleiku as an E-4 (Sp4) and was made a Fire Team Leader. Steve was promoted to Sgt. E-5 and his fire team gave him the nickname of 'Sgt. Rock'. He spent all of his time in the central highlands. On October 2, 1967, *I was levied to go and form a LURP unit being formed out of the 173d.* He joined Co. F 51st Inf. LRP, ABN on October 2, 1967, as the Assistant Team Leader of Team 1/5. His team leader was Bill Lavender who also came from the Herd. *We would go out for up to 5 days on ambush missions, taking two teams with two M-60s. I would pack an M-79 on ambush. I always walked rear-security.* In April 1968, Steve was wounded and left country. He first went to Japan and later to Valley Forge VA Hospital, in PA, where he received an early discharge. Steve retired from the State of Ohio after spending 20 years as a Parole Officer and Parole Program Specialist with the Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. *I did internal investigations and was a hearing officer for pre-discipline hearings.* Steve is a competitive cyclist, competing in the Colavita, Ohio Cycling Club's Timetrial Series the past two years, the Western Series, and this year and next will be doing the Eastern Series.



*My cat buddy of 11 years, Oliver, had to be put to sleep on December 14, 2011, due to cancer. That same day, the vet had a 5 month old female that was dropped off at the door. I took her home and her name is Molly. She is black as coal. I am planning to attend this year's Herd reunion. Airborne!*



**Molly**

### Dave von Reyn (HHC/C/2/503d),

was born in Terre Haute Indiana on May 5th, 1948. He volunteered for the draft in 1967 from his home in Boulder Colorado. He attended Basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas and Infantry AIT at Fort Gordon, Georgia before Jump School at Fort Benning, prior to his deployment to Viet Nam in June of 1968. He was assigned to 2nd Bat., HHC, LZ English, originally as the "people sniffer" operator in "Cowboy" Huey's flying at tree-top level searching for major NVA concentrations in the Central Highlands. After 3 weeks he volunteered to be deployed to the field with his buddies, joining Charlie Company, 3rd Platoon as a rifleman. Dave became the M-60 gunner shortly thereafter and served in that capacity for 6 months before becoming squad leader for the Point Team. He saw action in Kontum, Pleiku, Bong Song, An Khe, the Fishhook and the An Loa Valley. After discharge from the Army he received an AA degree from Aims College in Greeley, Colorado and started work for IBM in Boulder, Colorado as a material handler in 1973. He worked his way up into management positions, relocated many times and left IBM after 22 years to join AT&T as a District Manager in New Jersey. He was named Director in 1997 and joined KPMG Consulting in Boston as a Senior Manager in 1998. He spent the next 10 years in Consulting and retired as a Managing Director at BearingPoint Consulting. In retirement Dave has done volunteer work at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Hospital, taught snowboarding at Mount Sunapee Ski Area and continues to race his dirt bike in local Motocross races with his youngest son Jason. Dave has three sons, Brett who is soon to return to the States from the Marines, Drew and Jason who both live in Bridgewater, CT. Dave and his wife Linda live in Canaan, New Hampshire.



***“Television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of the living room. Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America -- not on the battlefields of Vietnam.”***

*~ Marshall McLuhan, 1975*

*(continued....)*





## 2/503d Troopers....Where are they now?

### Steve Welch (C/2/503d),

says, *I am still kicking, but a lot of people know me, but not much about my family.* Steve has

been married almost 44 years to his wife Diane.

They have two daughters,

Terri 42 and Lori 38. They also have two grand-

daughters, Jillian and Brooke, both 7 years old. Steve retired from civil service in 2006. He enjoys learning to play the guitar, walking and gardening. A couple of times a month *I go to the local storage auctions, but I've only bought 2 lockers in the last 7 months. I think I'd starve if I had to do it for a living.* He enjoys being able to talk with the guys he spent time with in Viet Nam. *I think it's good therapy to keep in touch with those who saw the same things I did. I enjoy reading the 2nd battalion newsletter each month.* Steve still lives in his hometown of Santa Cruz, California, and says life is going along nicely.



### Edward A. Wilby

(HHC/2/503d), was born April 24, 1946 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.

*After flunking out of my First year seeking a*

*business degree, I decided to cross the border to Bangor, ME and enlist in the U.S Army in July of 1963. He took basic training and AIT at Ft. Dix, and after his training he decided to go Airborne. He went to Ft. Benning in the fall of 1963, shortly after President Kennedy's assassination. I enjoyed jump school and more than any other experience at that time, it gave me the fuel to become a man, and made me proud to belong to such an elite group of men. After 3 choices offered for duty, "they" selected the 173d, and off I went to Okinawa for the next 18 months of my life.....I was seething with excitement, and looking forward to the adventure. Ed was assigned to the Light Ground Radar Plt., HHC/2/503, where for almost 12 months he trained in early warning radar equipment. Promoted to PFC, I finally became vested and welcomed into the ranks as a regular, no more to be seen as a green trooper. Shortly after, 3 days to be exact, he wandered up the hill behind Camp Kue, and entered an "off limits" establishment looking for refreshments!! Needless to say the next day I was back to being an E-2. Vietnam then arrived, most of us had no idea what or where Vietnam was, or what we were getting into, but we quickly learned, and learned fast. His platoon was broken up after finding out the equipment they trained on for so long was useless. Our platoon was shifted to the Recon Plt., and then immediately began those lonely, long, scary, "red ant infested", 9 man nightly patrols to protect the perimeter of Bien Hoa airbase. Buddies became family, and a closeness developed which only Vietnam Vets understand. We truly relied on one another, and we all knew it. Ed was involved in 4 helicopter assaults on 4 different missions; Thank god I returned safe and sound from each one. It was time to go home, my time was up, I hated leaving my buddies behind, it affected me more than anyone could imagine. After his return home, he was assigned to Ft. Devens and was promoted to E-5 and participated in training the 196th Light Inf Bde for duty in 'Nam. Following his military service Ed settled in Toronto, Canada for a while and worked in sales and marketing for large Coffee companies, Melitta being one. Ed has resided in Tampa, FL for the past 20 years. My beautiful wife Helen has been by my side for 45 years. We have two sons and a beautiful granddaughter.*



2/503d Troopers, circa '66/'67 (Photo by Jack Leide)



## ~ Looking For Buddies ~

### Shout Out

I keep getting mail for *Michael Potter* and I'm sure he'd like to receive his letters and *Sky Soldier* Magazines. Do you believe you can assist in getting a Shout Out Message, so we can get his address corrected?

**Jim "Top" Dresser**  
A/HHC/2/503d  
[fsqt173d@aol.com](mailto:fsqt173d@aol.com)

### Email Addresses

A couple of our guys may have changed their email addresses. If you're in contact with these troopers please ask them to send me their correct address:

*Ron Amyot*  
*Jim Bailey*  
*Willard Christensen*  
*Bob "Doc" Beaton*  
*Floyd Reister*  
*John Walsh*

Thanks!

**Lew "Smitty" Smith**  
HHC/2/503d  
[rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

## VA Announces Changes to Emergency Care Payment Policy

January 12, 2012

**WASHINGTON** – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today a change in regulations regarding payments for emergency care provided to eligible Veterans in non-VA facilities.

*"This provision helps ensure eligible Veterans continue to get the emergency care they need when VA facilities are not available,"* said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

The new regulation extends VA's authority to pay for emergency care provided to eligible Veterans at non-VA facilities until the Veterans can be safely transferred to a VA medical facility.

More than 100,000 Veterans are estimated to be affected by the new rules, at a cost of about \$44 million annually.

VA operates 121 emergency departments across the country which provide resuscitative therapy and stabilization in life-threatening situations. They operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. VA also has 46 urgent care units, which provide care for patients without scheduled appointments who need immediate medical or psychiatric attention.

For more information about emergency care in non-VA facilities, visit [www.nonvacare.va.gov](http://www.nonvacare.va.gov)

## Eagle Eye Sharp Shooter

Our very own Capt. Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d, chief assistant state attorney in Orlando, Florida, seen here taking a bead.



*"Been up loading my gear to head out to range for shooting competition. Spent all day Saturday in a shotgun tactical training class. Bill"*



Missed the target Cap?

### Your Newsletter

Guys. This is *your* newsletter and we'll continue doing it as long as we can, although our new enemy is the clock. For historical purposes, write down your memories and stories and send them in, with some photos, to be published. As hooch buddy Jim Bethea (HHC/2/503d) reminds us, *"If you don't write it down, it never happened."* Ed

Send to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com) with subject line *"Newsletter"*

**45 Years Ago This Month**  
**2/503d Combat Jump in Vietnam**



**~ Operation Junction City ~**

