



The banner features a blue background with a pattern of small white parachutes. On the left, there are two overlapping photographs: one of a soldier in a field and another of a landscape with a plane. A white circle with the text "We try harder." is overlaid on the photos. To the right is the "AIRBORNE" logo, which consists of a blue shield with a white flame and a red sword. Further right, the text "2/503d VIETNAM newsletter" is displayed in a stylized font. Below this, it reads "FOR THE MEN, AND THEIR FAMILIES, OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)".

March 2012, Issue 38

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

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

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



Photo from the web. According to caption, these are 2/503 Bravo Bulls prior to moving out to "D" Zone on 24 June 1965.

(Photo by SSG Lyle V. Boggess, Bde PIO)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / March 2012 – Issue 38

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Chaplain's Corner



The Leapin' Deacon

Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord bless you and protect you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace.

Honored and Steadfast Sky Soldiers, Families and Friends:

Peace and Blessings!

“SO HELP ME GOD!”

Our first president uttered these powerful and boldly clear faith and trust words on 30 April 1789, when Washington was sworn in as our heroic leader. Since that important historical day, after repeating the oath of office, he spontaneously added the words, “*SO HELP ME GOD.*” These simple, wonderful and powerful words, “*SO HELP ME GOD*”, have been considered part of the presidential oath of office.

Washington was unanimously elected for a second term. He is the only president to be unanimously elected not once, but twice. When asked to serve a third term, he declined. In his Farewell Address George Washington vividly spoke:

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens...Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without

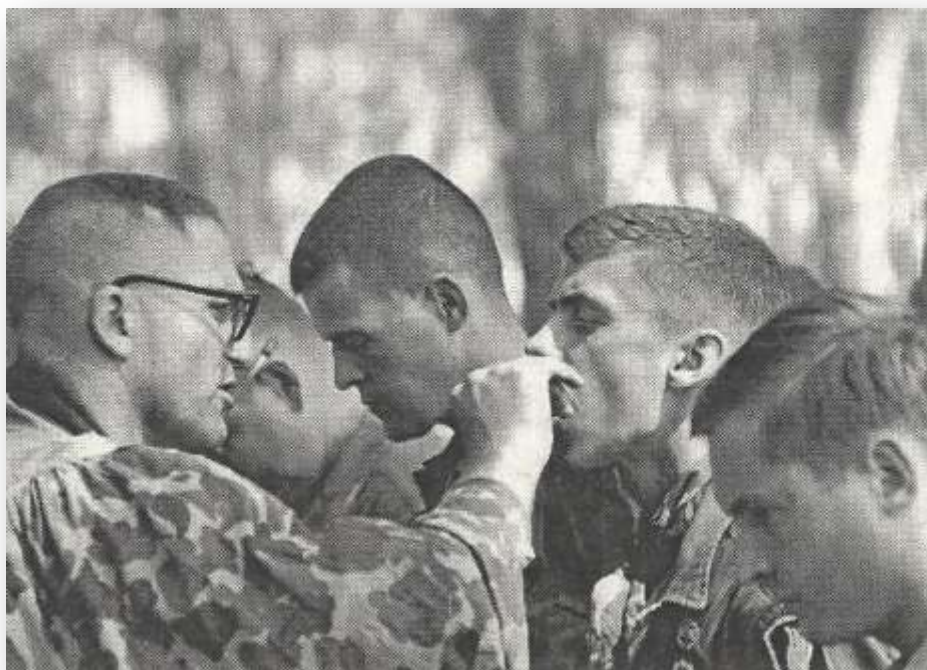
religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education...reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.”

Sky Soldiers All: We are truly a blessed nation deeply rooted in our Lord's Word and His greatest commandments: “*Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.*” This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it. “*Love others as well as you love yourself.*”

These two commands are pegs; “*everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them.*” (Matthew 22: 37-40)

Our Founding Fathers were remarkably gifted leaders of unrivaled character and integrity, with few exceptions, in their love of our Lord God and Nation and in declaring our Living Hope in the Name of our Great God, our Lord Jesus and the calling Holy Spirit.

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



Chaplain Connie with his boys in the boonies.



173rd Opens 2nd Year

BACK TO WAR ZONE 'D'

The Army Reporter, May 21, 1966

BIEN HOA (173rd ABN-IO) – The 173rd Airborne Brigade celebrates its first year in Vietnam by plunging again into an area near War Zone D.

The operation, called “Dexter”, began on May 4, 1966, exactly one year after the arrival of the brigade at Bien Hoa, and one year after the monsoon, which the Viet Cong idly boasted, was to mark the beginning of the final victorious offensive.

Ninety-eight officers and 1863 enlisted men with supporting equipment, supplies and ammunition left Okinawa on May 5, 1965, on heavily laden C-130s and C-124s. The remainder sailed from Naha Port, May 7.

The brigade, less the 1st Battalion of the 503rd Infantry, established a defensive position at the Bien Hoa Air Base, an installation once controlled by the French and a vital target to the Viet Cong. The 1st Battalion established a perimeter at the airfield at Vung Tau, and on its first night in the war-torn country, the 173rd Airborne Brigade began operations by sending out ambush patrols.

A history-making year began for 173rd soldiers that day in May. They were the first Army ground combat unit to serve in Vietnam, the first to enter the supposedly impenetrable Iron Triangle, the first American ground unit to fight in the highlands. They added to the list the first trip into War Zone D by an American unit, the first trip into the Delta by an American ground combat unit. They became the first unit to conduct a joint American-Vietnamese combat operation, and they were the first ground combat unit in War Zone C.

Operation “Hump” produced the heaviest single day’s fighting for the 173rd in Vietnam. It began on Nov. 5, 1965, approximately 25 kilometers northeast of Bien Hoa. In one of the most hard-fought battles of the war, the 173rd Airborne Brigade virtually annihilated a Viet Cong battalion in War Zone D. Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson, who commanded the brigade at the time said, *“This was the largest kill by the smallest unit, in the shortest time in the war to date.”*

The most successful operation for the brigade was Silver City, in which the paratroopers killed 328 Viet Cong and had only minor losses themselves. Conducting the search and destroy operation near the village of Phouc Vinh, the brigade captured 136 weapons, 140,000 rounds of ammunition, 1000 assorted explosive devices, 11,000

documents, truckload of miscellaneous equipment, and 165 tons of rice, salt, and cooking oil.



TACTICS DISCUSSED – Civic action projects are discussed by Brig. Gen. Paul F. Smith, commanding general of the 173rd Abn. Bde., a Special Forces advisor and the local Buddhist representative.

(Photo by 173rd ABN-IO)

Operation Marauder in the Delta, Operation Crimp in the Ho Bo Woods, Ben Cat I and the Iron Triangle, the road convoy to Kontum, spearheaded by the brigade’s D-16 Armor, which relieved the beleaguered forces of Kontum, and which opened Route 14 for travel. There was Pleiku and Operation Smash.

Not all of its first year was spent in battle and fighting, however. Highlighting the year was the visit to the brigade by *Playboy Magazine’s* Playmate of the Year, Jo Collins. Miss Collins arrived at the brigade area in Bien Hoa in January, and in one short week gave a remarkable boost to the morale of the Sky Soldiers.



Playmate Jo Collins raising the morale of Bravo Bulls at Camp Zinn.
(Photo from Les Brownlee)

(continued....)



The brigade was adopted by the city of Rochester, Minn., and the city invited a sergeant from the brigade to visit Rochester with his wife. First Sergeant William E. Workman of Co. A, 1st Bn. was chosen to represent the brigade back home.

The 173rd began conducting civic action operations upon its arrival in country. Its C-5 (Civic Action) section was not officially formed until September, 1965. Currently the brigade Civic Action section has a strength of three officers and seven enlisted men.

During operations the civic action teams went into the towns and villages visited by the brigade. Since operations limit time, high-impact short-term civic action projects were undertaken. The projects consisted of medical attention, clean-up, paint-up campaigns, and public works repair projects.

The brigade engineers have many times provided heavy equipment operators to improve roads and structures in the area.

The C-5 section has compiled an impressive list of accomplishments. They have built and repaired schools, bridges, dispensaries and roads. Tons of captured food have been turned over to GVN and hundreds of thousands of piasters have been donated for hospitals, orphanages, and scholarships for deserving students.

In February, 1966, command of the 173rd Airborne was assumed by Brig. Gen. Paul F. Smith, who replaced General Williamson. Under new leadership the brigade continued to add to their lists of firsts and successful operations.

Plain of Reeds, Marauder, Cu Chi, Ben Cat, War Zone D, Iron Triangle, Kontum, Vo Dat, Courtney, are all names of operations and villages. They are meaningless to many; to others they will serve as reference points for stories about the war, as Port Chop Hill and T-Bone Hill and Salerno serve for other wars.

They remain to the men of the 173rd Airborne Brigade as solemn reminders of battles fought and lives lost and blood spilled.

These insignificant dots on a map mark the battles for men who slept in mud, bore the sweltering heat, shared their beds with jungle insects, remembered the men who died 10,000 miles from home in a steaming jungle or stinking rice paddy, and who could not say, "this ground is ours, we bought it with our lives".

One year after its arrival in Vietnam, the 173rd Airborne Brigade is again near War Zone D to seek out and destroy the running enemy. As the brigade begins its second year in Vietnam it continues its mission: to seek out, engage, and destroy the enemy wherever he may be.



VA Loan Facts for 2012

January 16, 2012

VA Home Loans allow qualified buyers the opportunity to purchase a home with no down payment. There are also no monthly mortgage insurance premiums to pay, limitations on buyer's closing costs, and an appraisal that informs the buyer of the property value. For most loans on new houses, construction is inspected at appropriate stages and a 1-year warranty is required from the builder. VA also performs personal loan servicing and offers financial counseling to help veterans having temporary financial difficulties. Although there is no maximum VA loan, lenders generally limit the maximum VA loan to \$417,000.

VA reference site:

[herehttp://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/eligibility.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/eligibility.asp)

Powell's Panthers Hook-Up in Florida



2/503d recon troopers from '66/'67, Jerry Hassler (L) from Franklin, TN, and Marcus Powell of Merritt Island, FL have mini-mini reunion at a buddy's house.

"Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. These events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of America's leadership in the world."

~ Gerald Ford, April 1975



Vietnam War Myths

Here we attempt to address some of the most widely spread, yet inaccurate, myths about The Vietnam War.

Myth: The average age of an infantryman fighting in Vietnam was 19.

Assuming KIAs accurately represented age groups serving in Vietnam, the average age of an infantryman serving in Vietnam to be 19 years old is a myth, it is actually 22.8. None of the enlisted grades have an average age of less than 20. The average age of a man who fought in World War II was 26 years of age.



Myth: The domino theory was proved false.

The domino theory was accurate. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand stayed free of Communism because of the U.S. commitment to Vietnam. The Indonesians threw the Soviets out in 1966 because of America's commitment in Vietnam. Without that commitment, Communism would have swept all the way to the Malacca Straits that is south of Singapore and of great strategic importance to the free world. If you ask people who live in these countries that won the war in Vietnam, they have a different opinion from the American news media. The Vietnam War was the turning point for Communism.

Myth: The fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II.

The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. One out of every 10 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,169 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.59 million who served. Although the percent who died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II. 75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded who survived the first 24 hours died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800 mile border with



Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords of 1962 would secure the border). The 1990 unsuccessful movie "Air America" helped to establish the myth of a connection between Air America, the CIA, and the Laotian drug trade. The movie and a book the movie was based on contend that the CIA condoned a drug trade conducted by a Laotian client; both agree that Air America provided the essential transportation for the trade; and both view the pilots with sympathetic understanding. American-owned airlines never knowingly transported opium in or out of Laos, nor did their American pilots ever profit from its transport. Yet undoubtedly every plane in Laos carried opium at some time, unknown to the pilot and his superiors.

Myth: Most Vietnam veterans were drafted.

2/3 of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. 2/3 of the men who served in World War II were drafted. Approximately 70% of those killed were volunteers.

Myth: The media have reported that suicides among Vietnam veterans range from 50,000 to 100,000 - 6 to 11 times the non-Vietnam veteran population.

Mortality studies show that 9,000 is a better estimate. "The CDC Vietnam Experience Study Mortality Assessment showed that during the first 5 years after discharge, deaths from suicide were 1.7 times more likely among Vietnam veterans than non-Vietnam veterans. After that initial post-service period, Vietnam veterans were no more likely to die from suicide than non-Vietnam veterans. In fact, after the 5-year post-service period, the rate of suicides is less in the Vietnam veterans' group."

Myth: A disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War.

86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, 1.2% were other races. Sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, in their recently published book "All That We Can Be," said they analyzed the claim that blacks were used like cannon fodder during Vietnam "and can report definitely that this charge is untrue. Black fatalities amounted to 12 percent of all Americans killed in Southeast Asia - a figure proportional to the number of blacks in the U.S. population at the time and slightly lower than the proportion of blacks in the Army at the close of the war."



(continued....)



Myth: The war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated.

Servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers.

Myth: The United States lost the war in Vietnam.

"The American military was not defeated in Vietnam. The American military did not lose a battle of any consequence. From a military standpoint, it was almost an unprecedented performance." (Westmoreland quoting Douglas Pike, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley a renowned expert on the Vietnam War) [Westmoreland]. This included Tet 68, which was a major military defeat for the VC and NVA.

Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972, was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang.



No American had involvement in this incident near Trang Bang that burned Phan Thi Kim Phuc. The planes doing the bombing near the village were VNAF (Vietnam Air Force) and were being flown by Vietnamese pilots in support of South Vietnamese troops on the ground. The Vietnamese pilot who dropped the napalm in error is currently living in the United States. Even the AP photographer, Nick Ut, who took the picture was Vietnamese. The incident in the photo took place on the second day of a three day battle between the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who occupied the village of Trang Bang and the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) who were trying to force the NVA out of the village. Recent reports in the news media that an American commander ordered the air strike that burned Kim Phuc are incorrect. There were no Americans involved in any capacity. *"We (Americans) had nothing to do with controlling VNAF,"* according to Lieutenant General (Ret) James F. Hollingsworth, the Commanding General of TRAC at that time. Also, it has been incorrectly reported that two of Kim Phuc's brothers were killed in this incident. They were Kim's cousins not her brothers.

Source:

<http://www.vietnam-war.info/myths/>

New Law Change Increases Insurance Coverage for Veterans

January 10, 2012

WASHINGTON – Some Veterans covered under the Veterans Group Life Insurance program (VGLI) now have the opportunity to increase their coverage to the current maximum coverage under the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program.

"Currently, 70 percent of the Veterans covered under VGLI are under age 60, have less than \$400,000 of coverage, and will greatly benefit from this law change," said Allison A. Hickey, Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Benefits.

Under the Veterans' Benefits Act of 2010, enacted on Oct. 13, 2010, Veterans can increase their coverage by \$25,000 at each five-year anniversary date of their policy to the current legislated maximum SGLI coverage, presently, \$400,000.

To date, approximately 21 percent of eligible Veterans have taken advantage of this opportunity, resulting in nearly \$113 million of new coverage being issued.

The VGLI program allows newly discharged Veterans to convert their SGLI coverage they had while in the service to a civilian program. Before enactment of this law, Veterans could not have more VGLI than the amount of SGLI they had at the time of separation from service.

For example, those who got out of the service prior to Sept. 1, 2005, when the maximum SGLI coverage was \$250,000, were limited to \$250,000 in VGLI coverage. Now on their first five-year anniversary, these Veterans can elect to increase their coverage to \$275,000. On their next five-year anniversary, they can increase the coverage to \$300,000, and so forth.

The additional coverage can be issued regardless of the Veteran's health. To be eligible to purchase this additional coverage, the Veteran must:

- Have active VGLI coverage,
- Have less than the current legislated maximum coverage of \$400,000,
- Request the additional coverage during the 120-day period prior to each five-year anniversary date, and
- Be less than 60 years of age on the five-year anniversary date of his or her coverage.

Eligible Veterans are notified of this opportunity a week before the start of the 120-day period prior to their anniversary date, and twice more before the actual anniversary date. For information call 1-800-827-1000.





Who Packs *Your* Parachute?

Charles Plumb

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!" "How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb. "I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!" Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back, and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good Morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor."

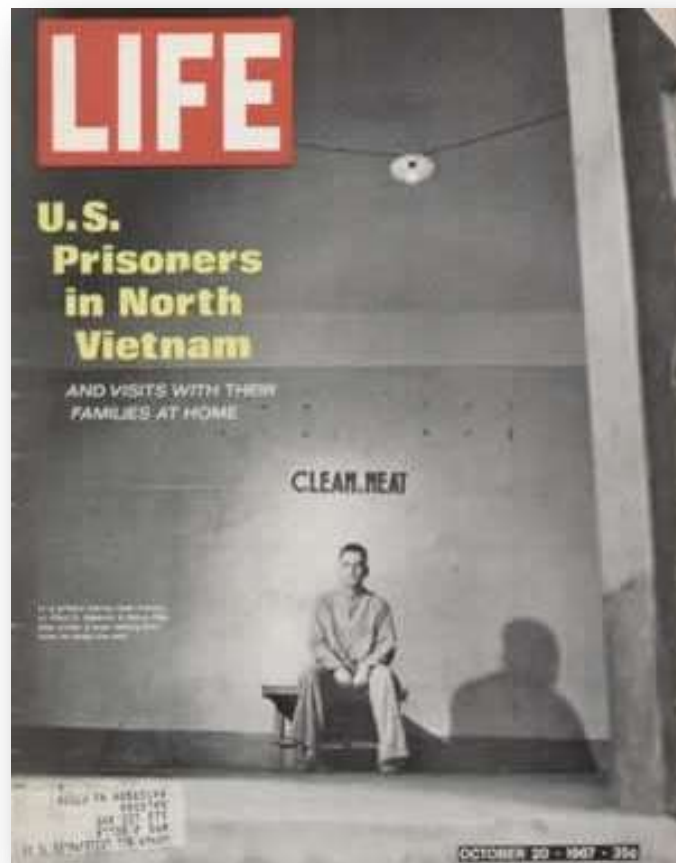
Plumb thought of the man and the hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory -- he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachute.

And now for the rest of the story...

by Paul Galanti



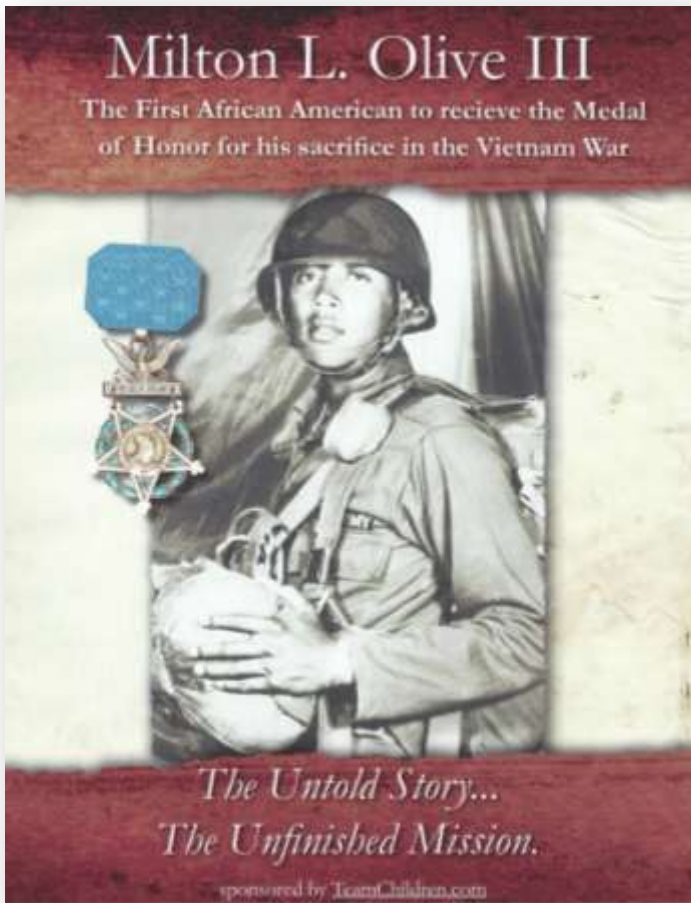
Charlie Plumb was one of my plebes at Annapolis during the summer of 1960. Later I flew a couple of check flights with him in Pensacola when I was a primary flight instructor. In June 1967, the "V" had some East German visitors filming "Pilots in Pajamas" in our camp. I was in the October 1967 *Life Magazine* cover "Clean & Neat" cell plotting how to foil any attempts to use us for propaganda when I heard a clatter outside the room.

I ran to the window (it had fixed slats and was the only cell I lived in from which I could look out) and saw a guard followed by a POW going under the window. As they passed out of sight, another POW appeared moving more slowly. As he passed under the window, I whispered, "I'm Paul Galanti. Who are you?" The POW looked startled and pressed on to get his food. When they returned he fell very far behind his cellmate and the guard, glanced up at the window and whispered back, "I'm Charlie Plumb. Thanks for not washing me out of the check ride, you S.O.B."

[Sent in by Craig Murphy, E/Recon/2/503d]



An Unlikely Brotherhood



In 1965, Milton Olive, a young black man from the south side of Chicago, Illinois, and Robert Toporek, an 18-year-old white man from the city of Charleston, South Carolina, met while in the Vietnam War. Separated by deeply imbedded racism, their relationship began on a rocky road. To resolve the tension between them, Toporek and Olive went behind their tent one day and “beat the hell out of each other.”

When the fight ended, so did the racial tension. All that was left were men whose lives depended on one another. Their relationship became one of mutual respect and deep friendship. Both were members of Company B, 2/505rd Inf., 173d Airborne Brigade, third platoon.

A word from the Author:

“I fought side-by-side with Milton in Vietnam. The day he so selflessly gave his life to protect the lives of 4 members of our platoon forever changed my life. From that day on, I vowed to devote my life to making a positive difference in the lives of others.”

~ Robert Toporek

A Lesson in Courage:

On October 22, 1965, while on a mission in Phu Cong Province, the third platoon was ambushed. Although heavy gunfire temporarily pinned them down, the platoon was able to attack strategic enemy positions. As the Viet Cong fled, Private First Class Olive and his squad pursued the enemy. Suddenly, an enemy hand grenade was thrown into their midst.

PFC Olive immediately grabbed the grenade and absorbed the blast by falling on it with his own body, ending his life. Through his bravery, unhesitating actions and complete disregard for his own safety, he prevented additional loss of life or injury to the members of his platoon.

A Commitment Pledged:

As Robert Toporek helped carry his friend’s body out of the jungle that unforgettable day, he made a commitment to dedicate his life to honor Milton Olive’s memory and heroism. If he survived, Robert vowed to find a way to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Toporek served two terms with the 173d Airborne Brigade. He received the Bronze Star with V for Valor; the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm Leaf, one of the highest awards given by the Vietnamese Government; and was decorated with a Purple Heart. After the war, Toporek was awarded a fellowship from the Ford Foundation to study methods of personal growth and the impact of



Robert, 1965

that relationship on public education. This led step-by-step to several other pursuits; always with the goal of helping others realize their potential.

Remembering a Hero:

(Excerpt from remarks by President Lyndon Johnson during the posthumous presentation of the Medal of Honor to the parents of Milton Olive):

“So let us never exult over war. Let us not for one moment disguise in the grandest justifications of policy the inescapable fact that war feeds on the lives of young men, good young men like Milton Olive. And I can never forget it. I am reminded of it every moment of every day. And in a moment such as this, I am reminded all over again how brave the young are, and how great is our debt to them, and how endless is the sacrifice that we call upon them to make for us.”

[Source: The eBook, *An Unlikely Brotherhood*]



~ The 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam ~



In the early '60s, the Army predicted a large involvement in Southeast Asia and began building up the 101st Airborne Division in addition to several other units. In July of 1965, the 101st was ordered into combat. The 1st Brigade (Separate) of the 101st Airborne Division landed at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam on July 29, 1965. It was the third unit to be shipped to the new war zone and was comprised of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 327th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry.

After a brief period where the Soldiers acclimated themselves and received all their equipment, the 1st Brigade (Separate) went into action.

The Brigade was ordered into the Song Con Valley, about 20 miles northeast of the town of An Khe. During one mission, the 2nd Bn, 502nd Infantry encountered heavy enemy fire at their landing zone. Three company commanders were killed and the contact was so close, air support and artillery could not be called in until they pulled back. That night, 100 sorties and 11,000 rounds of artillery hit the enemy. The next morning, the 2nd Bn 502nd Infantry was pulled out. They later discovered that they had landed in the middle of a heavily entrenched enemy base.

For the rest of 1965, the 1st Brigade (Separate) continued to mount patrols and interdicted the enemy supplies lines.

At the beginning of 1966, the enemy greatly reduced his operations. In May, the enemy began massing in the Pleiku and Kontum provinces. The 1st Brigade was moved from An Khe to Dak To, a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) base camp in the northern area of South Vietnam. Here a South Vietnamese force was surrounded by the 24th North Vietnamese Regiment.

The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered in to reinforce the South Vietnamese position.

After evacuating the South Vietnamese forces, the 2nd Bn, 502nd Infantry established their lines inside the abandoned camp and sent C Company forward in an exposed defensive position. On the night of June 6, the 24th NVA Regiment attacked C Company in a brutal assault. In a desperate attempt to stop the enemy advance, the commander of C Company called in air strikes on top of his own position, killing NVA and Americans alike. It was a hard decision to make, but it worked. The 24th NVA Regiment pulled back long enough for A Company 1/327 Infantry to be brought in by helicopter to reinforce the C Company positions. With the arrival of A 1/327 Infantry, the 24th NVA Regiment began to retreat.

The soldiers of 1st Brigade (Separate) pursued the enemy and several large scale air attacks were called in. Hundreds of enemy soldiers were killed but the 24th NVA Regiment managed to escape into Laos.

In October and November 1966, the 4th Infantry Division and 1st Cavalry Divisions were heavily engaged with enemy forces in the Kontum province. When it became clear that the enemy was attempting to withdraw into Laos, a massive helicopter airlift of the 1st Brigade (Separate), 101st Airborne Division landed just as the enemy was crossing into Laos and safety. The 1st Brigade (Separate) was ordered into reserve at Phu Yen.



101st troopers helping a wounded buddy, May '66.

In early 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) acted as a rapid reaction force, reinforcing American and South Vietnamese forces when necessary and responding to enemy attacks. They had become experts in rapid helicopter assaults.

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In April of 1967, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was attached to Task Force OREGON and placed under operational control of the III Marine Amphibious Force and moved to Chu Lai. At Chu Lai, the 1st Brigade (Separate) assisted in a large-scale pacification effort in the Quang Tri province. Later, the 1st Brigade (Separate) was called in to assist a Marine battalion to finish off an enemy attack around Khe Sanh, which would be the scene of a long, bloody siege in 1968.



One tour was not enough for this Screaming Eagle.

In the fall of 1967, Task Force Oregon was reorganized into the 23rd Infantry Division, better known as the Americal Division.

The 1st Brigade (Separate) was detached and waited for the arrival of the 2nd and 3rd Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division, which arrived in December 1967.

On January 31, 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet Offensive. Tet, the traditional Vietnamese New Year Celebration, was supposed to be a peaceful time. The enemy attacks caught the Americans by surprise. The 101st Airborne Division, along with the 1st Cavalry Division and the 5th Marine Regiment, began to fight for control of Hue City. Hue was considered vital to the Communist effort because of its history of Buddhist activism and Communist sympathy. The North Vietnamese felt that Hue would be their first political foothold into South Vietnam and committed Regular forces to its capture.

When Tet began, Hue was defended by South Vietnamese Army units who were quickly driven from the city. The 101st Airborne and the 1st Cavalry were sent to recapture the city.

The battle for Hue raged for three weeks and was the only extended urban combat of the war. Later, the 5th Marine Regiment would be called in to reinforce the 101st Airborne and 1st Cavalry.

Fighting in Hue was intense and advances were measured by houses. Each building seemed to hold enemy soldiers. In some cases, the soldiers of the 101st Airborne fought hand to hand. Finally, after much destruction to the city, Hue was liberated from the North Vietnamese.



During the Tet Offensive, over 33,000 enemy soldiers were killed and many thousands more captured. Tet was a major American victory despite the appearance of defeat back home in the political arena.

It is interesting to note, that one platoon from C Company, 1st Bn 502nd Infantry, 2nd Brigade was airlifted into Saigon and fought a pitched battle on the roof of the American Embassy after it had been infiltrated by enemy forces.

Following Tet, American forces began launching hundreds of small unit counter attacks designed to contain and destroy any remaining infiltrated enemy units operating in South Vietnam.

In March and April, the 101st Airborne attacked enemy supply bases in the A Shau valley during Operation SOMERSET PLAIN. During this operation, several hundred tons of enemy supplies were captured.

Captain Joe Ronnie Hooper (August 8, 1938 – May 6, 1979) was a Vietnam veteran whose combat decorations surpassed those of Audie Murphy or Alvin York. He was the recipient of the Medal of Honor, America's highest military decoration for valor in combat. During two tours of duty with Delta Company, 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 501st Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, he received the Medal of Honor (February 21, 1968 outside of Hue), two Silver Stars for gallantry, 6 Bronze Stars for heroism, 8 Purple Hearts, and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He is credited with 115 enemy kills in ground combat, 22 of which occurred on February 21, 1968.

The 101st Airborne was next ordered into the coastal lowlands in the Thua Thien province in Operation NEVADA EAGLE which began May 1968.

(continued....)



For 288 days, the 101st Airborne conducted sweeping patrols of the area and engaged the enemy almost daily. After it was over, the province was cleared of enemy forces and the 101st Airborne had captured enough rice, weapons and equipment for 10 enemy battalions.

Following NEVADA EAGLE, the 101st Airborne returned to the A Shau valley and began a series of operations to clear the valley of enemy forces. During one operation, the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry assaulted Dong Ap Bia Mountain, aka Hill 937, where the enemy had established a well-fortified base camp. For 10 days, 3/187 Infantry launched attack after attack on the enemy position but could only advance yards at a time. The enemy had established several lines of defense. Fighting on Hill 937 was some of the most brutal of the war and was often hand-to-hand. The 2nd Bn 501st Infantry, 1st Bn 506th Infantry and A & D Co 2nd Bn 506th Infantry of the 101st Airborne were called in to take Hill 937. In the end, Hill 937, now called "Hamburger Hill", was captured.

The battle was very controversial because it had no tactical or strategic importance and the Army later abandoned it.



Screaming Eagles on Hamburger Hill

Defending the operation, the commander of the 101st Airborne acknowledged that the hill's only significance was that the enemy occupied it. *"My mission, was to destroy enemy forces and installations. We found the enemy on Hill 937, and that is where we fought them,"* he later said.

The A Shau valley was finally cleared and armored forces were brought in to reopen abandoned airstrips. After these operations, the 101st Airborne went through a series of reorganizations. Their name was changed to the 101st Air Cavalry Division and later the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). With the change in names came a change in mission. The 101st Airborne was ordered back into Thua Thien to participate in Civil operations designed to bolster the South Vietnamese government forces. They established a series of fire and patrol bases and conducted several operations that prevented the enemy from re-entering Thua Thien. In addition, the 101st Airborne provided valuable technical training to the South Vietnamese forces and supported several South Vietnamese operations into Laos to cut off enemy supply and infiltration lines. These operations were designed to allow the South Vietnamese Army to operate on their own and turn over the fight to them. This was called "Vietnamization."

In late 1971 and early 1972 the 101st Airborne Division began returning home to Fort Campbell.

The 101st Airborne Division spent almost 7 years in combat in South Vietnam. During that time, the Division became one of the most feared units of the American Army. During Vietnam, Army forces were ordered to create black and green subdued shoulder insignia that were designed to blend in with the green uniform. The 101st Airborne is the only unit to retain their colored emblem.

The North Vietnamese called the 101st Airborne the "Chicken Men" because of their insignia. (The Vietnamese had never seen an eagle before). Many enemy commanders warned their men to avoid the Chicken Men at all costs because any engagement with them, they were sure to lose.

This brief summary of the History of the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam is not all inclusive of all Combat Operations.

Source:

<http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/101abndivvietvets/page15history101.html>



National Veterans Golden Age Games

May 31 – June 5, 2012 - St. Louis, Missouri



About the National Veterans Golden Age Games

Life begins at 55, at least it does for more than 700 Veterans competing in this national event, the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States. It is the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. It is one of the most progressive and adaptive rehabilitative senior sports programs in the world, offering 14 different sports and recreational activities.



www.va.gov/adaptivesports

Contacts

Event Director

Dewayne Vaughan
(202) 632-7138

Local Host Coordinator

Maura Campbell
(314) 894-6113

Media Contact

Anthony Hardman
(734) 845-5059

Sponsors & Hosts

Presented by VA, Help Hospitalized Veterans and Veterans Canteen Service (VCS), with financial assistance from corporate sponsors and individual donors.



Athletes at the Arch

Registration for the 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games in St. Louis is now open! The Games will be held May 31 – June 5 offering exciting competition for Veterans age 55 and

older who receive care at the VA. NVGAG 2012 is also a qualifying event for the 2013 National Senior Games. See you in St. Louis!



~ This Month in History ~

March 1965

2nd: Operation Rolling Thunder begins as over 100 American fighter-bombers attack targets in North Vietnam. Scheduled to last eight weeks, Rolling Thunder will instead go on for three years. The first U.S. air strikes also occur against the Ho Chi Minh trail. Throughout the war, the trail is heavily bombed by American jets with little actual success in halting the tremendous flow of soldiers and supplies from the North. 500 American jets will be lost attacking the trail. After each attack, bomb damage along the trail is repaired by female construction crews. During the entire war, the U.S. will fly 3 million sorties and drop nearly 8 million tons of bombs, four times the tonnage dropped during all of World War II, in the largest display of firepower in the history of warfare. The majority of bombs are dropped in South Vietnam against Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army positions, resulting in 3 million civilian refugees due to the destruction of numerous villages. In North Vietnam, military targets include fuel depots and factories. The North Vietnamese react to the air strikes by decentralizing their factories and supply bases, thus minimizing their vulnerability to bomb damage.



3rd: Temptations' "My Girl" reaches #1.

8th: The first U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam as 3500 Marines land at China Beach to defend the American air base at Da Nang. They join 23,000 American military advisors already in Vietnam.



U.S. Marines arrive Vietnam. *Semper Fi!*

Note: The 173d Airborne Brigade was originally slated to be the first combat unit committed to the war at Da Nang. (Pentagon Papers)

9th: President Johnson authorizes the use of Napalm, a petroleum based anti-personnel bomb that showers hundreds of explosive pellets upon impact.

11th: Operation Market Time, a joint effort between the U.S. Navy and South Vietnamese Navy, commences to disrupt North Vietnamese sea routes used to funnel supplies into the South. The operation is highly successful in cutting off coastal supply lines and results in the North Vietnamese shifting to the more difficult land route along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

21st: Martin Luther King, Jr. begins march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.



Caption: "When you pray, move your feet."

29th: Viet Cong terrorists bomb the U.S. embassy in Saigon.

March 1966

1st: An attempt to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution fails in the U.S. Senate by a vote of 92 to 5. The attempt was led by Sen. Wayne Morse.

4th: John Lennon, says "We (Beatles) are more popular than Jesus"

9th: The U.S. reveals that 20,000 acres of food crops have been destroyed in suspected Viet Cong villages. The admission generates harsh criticism from the American academic community.

(continued...)



9th - 22nd: The 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP), including elements of the 1st Royal Australian Regiment, conducted a heliborne assault near the Song Be River in War Zone "D" to initiate Operation Silver City in Long Khanh Province. The first few days of the operations consisted of thorough screening of the area, leading to the discovery of vast quantities of food, munitions, bunkers, tunnel systems, documents, and several large VC base camps. The seventh day of Operation Silver City will long be remembered by the troopers of the 173d, for on this day the 2/503rd Infantry was attacked from all directions by the 501st VC Battalion. The troopers held their perimeter while inflicting heavy losses on the guerrillas. Resupply of needy ammunition was delivered during the battle by helicopter at no small risk to equipment and crews. Numerous tactical air strikes were initiated with great effectiveness. The VC had to resort to chaining their machine gunners to the tripods of their weapons, but even these measures could not stop the crack troopers of the 173d. The 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry was directed to reinforce the 2nd Battalion during the battle. The VC element was nearly annihilated by this time and chose to break contact rather than tackle two battalions of Sky Soldiers. Four hours after initial contact, all VC were routed or destroyed. The after-action mop-up patrols counted a total of 302 VC bodies with only seven US losses, the highest kill ratio to date. Throughout the rest of the operation it was indicated that an estimated 150 additional VC dead had been dragged away. [See *OPERATION MARAUDER: ALLIED OFFENSIVE IN THE MEKONG DELTA* by Col. Tom Faley, in Issue 36 of this newsletter].



Col. Tom Faley
CO C/2/503d

10th: South Vietnamese Buddhists begin a violent campaign to oust Prime Minister Ky following his dismissal of a top Buddhist general. This marks the beginning of a period of extreme unrest in several cities in South Vietnam including Saigon, Da Nang and Hue as political squabbling spills out into the streets and interferes with U.S. military operations.

26th: Anti-war protests are held in New York, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco.

March 1967

8th: Congress authorizes \$4.5 billion for the war.

14th: JFK's body moved from temporary grave to a permanent memorial.

22nd Feb - 15th Mar: Tay Ninh Province. At 0900 Hours the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry along with A Battery, 319th Artillery led by Brigadier General John R. Deane, Jr., made the only (mass) combat parachute jump of the war in War Zone "C". The overall operation employed a large contingent of forces: The 1st and 25th Divisions, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, elements of the 4th and 9th Infantry Divisions, South Vietnamese units and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Operation Junction City's objective was to locate and destroy the Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), the supreme headquarters of the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam. The accomplishments of Phase I were significant: 266 VC killed, 4 captured. The complete destruction of the COSVN Public Information Office for Psychological Propaganda and a COSVN Signal site dealt a heavy blow to the enemy propaganda effort.



Gen. Deane



LTC Bob Sigholtz, CO 2/503d, addressing his troops before combat jump during Junction City.

20th: Minh Thanh through 13th April. Phase two of Operation Junction City began with the establishment of fire support bases along Route 13 from Lai Khe to Quan Loi (east of An Loc). A Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry came under attack north of the village of Bau Bang. Massed troops of the VC 273rd Regiment erupted out of the rubber plantation, swarming over the ACAVs and tanks on the southeastern perimeter. Calling in artillery support from A/3/319th the VC were destroyed leaving behind 227 killed while the Americans only suffered 3 casualties.

(continued....)



19th - 21th: President Johnson meets in Guam with South Vietnam's Prime Minister Ky and pressures Ky to hold national elections.

March 1968

1st: Clark Clifford, renowned Washington lawyer and an old friend of the President, becomes the new U.S. Secretary of Defense. For the next few days, Clifford conducts an intensive study of the entire situation in Vietnam, discovers there is no concept or overall plan anywhere in Washington for achieving victory in Vietnam, then reports to President Johnson that the United States should not escalate the war. *"The time has come to decide where we go from here,"* he tells Johnson.

1st: Singers Johnny Cash (36) & June Carter (38) wed.

2nd: 48 U.S. Army soldiers are killed during an ambush at Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon.

4th: Joe Frazier TKOs Buster Mathis in 11th round for heavyweight boxing title.

10th: The *New York Times* breaks the news of Westmoreland's 206,000 troop request. The *Times* story is denied by the White House. Secretary of State Dean Rusk is then called before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and grilled for two days on live TV about the troop request and the overall effectiveness of Johnson's war strategy.

11th: Operation Quyet Thang begins a 28 day offensive by 33 U.S. and South Vietnamese battalions in the Saigon region.

12th: By a very slim margin of just 300 votes, President Johnson defeats anti-war Democrat Eugene McCarthy in the New Hampshire Democratic primary election. This indicates that political support for Johnson is seriously eroding. Public opinion polls taken after the Tet Offensive revealed Johnson's overall approval rating has slipped to 36 percent, while approval of his Vietnam war policy slipped to 26 percent.



14th: Senator Robert F. Kennedy offers President Johnson a confidential political proposition. Kennedy will agree to stay out of the presidential race if Johnson will renounce his earlier Vietnam strategy and appoint a committee, including Kennedy, to chart a new course in Vietnam. Johnson spurns the offer.

16th: Robert F. Kennedy announces his candidacy for the presidency. Polls indicate Kennedy is now more popular than the President. During his campaign, Kennedy addresses the issue of his participation in forming President John F. Kennedy's Vietnam policy by stating, *"past error is no excuse for its own perpetuation."*

16th: Over 300 Vietnamese civilians are slaughtered in My Lai hamlet by members of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry U.S. Army, while participating in an airborne assault against suspected Viet Cong encampments in Quang Ngai Province. Upon entering My Lai and finding no Viet Cong, the Americans begin killing every civilian in sight, interrupted only by helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson who lands and begins evacuating civilians after realizing what is happening.



The massacre at My Lai

23rd: During a secret meeting in the Philippines, Gen. Wheeler informs Gen. Westmoreland that President Johnson will approve only 13,500 additional soldiers out of the original 206,000 requested. Gen. Wheeler also instructs Westmoreland to urge the South Vietnamese to expand their own war effort.

25th: Clark Clifford convenes the "Wise Men," a dozen distinguished elder statesmen and soldiers, including former Secretary of State Dean Acheson and World War II General Omar Bradley at the State Department for dinner. They are given a blunt assessment of the situation in Vietnam, including the widespread corruption of the Saigon government and the unlikely prospect for military victory *"under the present circumstances."*

26th: The "Wise Men" gather at the White House for lunch with the President. They now advocate U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, with only four of those present dissenting from that opinion.

(continued....)



28th: The initial report by participants at My Lai states that 69 Viet Cong soldiers were killed and makes no mention of civilian casualties. The My Lai massacre is successfully concealed for a year, until a series of letters from Vietnam veteran Ronald Ridenhour spark an official Army investigation that results in Charlie Company Commander, Capt. Ernest L. Medina, First Platoon Leader, Lt. William Calley, and 14 others being brought to trial by the Army. A news photos of the carnage, showing a mass of dead children, women and old men, remains one of the most enduring images of America's involvement in Vietnam.

30th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Cochise in Bong Son area through 31 January 1969.

31st: President Johnson stuns the world by announcing his surprise decision not to seek re-election. He also announces a partial bombing halt and urges Hanoi to begin peace talks. *"We are prepared to move immediately toward peace through negotiations."* As a result, peace talks soon begin. The bombing halt only affects targets north of the 20th parallel, including Hanoi.

March 1969

March: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby Crest throughout the month in The Crescent of Hoai An District.

1st: NY Yankees' Mickey Mantle retires.

4th: President Nixon threatens to resume bombing North Vietnam in retaliation for Viet Cong offenses in the South.

6th - 10th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Sting Ray in An Khe area.

10th Mar - 24 May: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Darby Punch in An Khe area.

15th: U.S. troops go on the offensive inside the Demilitarized Zone for the first time since 1968.

17th: President Nixon authorizes Operation Menu, the secret bombing of Cambodia by B-52s, targeting North Vietnamese supply sanctuaries located along the border of Vietnam.

17th: Golda Meir becomes Israel's 4th PM.

20th: US president Nixon proclaims he will end Vietnam war in 1970.

28th: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President, General (WWII), dies in Washington at 78.



General Eisenhower speaks with men of the 101st Airborne Division on eve of invasion.

March 1970

2nd: American Airlines' 1st flight of a Boeing 747.

18th: Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia is deposed by General Lon Nol. Sihanouk, who had been out of the country at the time of the coup, then aligns with Cambodian Communists, known as the Khmer Rouge, in an effort to oust Lon Nol's regime. The Khmer Rouge are led by an unknown figure named Pol Pot, who eagerly capitalizes on the enormous prestige and popularity of Prince Sihanouk to increase support for his Khmer Rouge movement among Cambodians. Pol Pot will later violently oust Lon Nol then begin a radical experiment to create an agrarian utopia, resulting in the deaths of 25 percent of the country's population (2,000,000 persons) from starvation, overwork and systematic executions.

20th: Cambodian troops under Gen. Lon Nol attack Khmer Rouge and North Vietnamese forces inside Cambodia. At the White House, Nixon and top aides discuss plans to assist Lon Nol's pro-American regime.

25th: Concorde makes its 1st supersonic flight (700 mph/1,127 kph).

31st: The U.S. Army brings murder charges against Captain Ernest L. Medina concerning the massacre of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in March of 1968.

(continued....)



March 1971

1st: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Lightning in Binh Dinh Province through April 21st.

March 1971: Opinion polls indicate Nixon's approval rating among Americans has dropped to 50 percent, while approval of his Vietnam strategy has slipped to just 34 percent. Half of all Americans polled believe the war in Vietnam to be *"morally wrong."*

1st: The Capitol building in Washington is damaged by a bomb apparently planted in protest of the invasion of Laos.

8th: Radio Hanoi broadcasts Jimi Hendrix's *"Star Spangled Banner"*.

10th: China pledges complete support for North Vietnam's struggle against the U.S.

15th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Story from 5 February through 15 March in Binh Dinh Province.

17th: 173d Airborne Brigade conducts Operation Greene Sure through 21 April in 1971 in Binh Dinh Province.

29th: Lt. William Calley is found guilty of the murder of 22 My Lai civilians. He is sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor, however, the sentence is later reduced to 20 years, then 10 years. Out of 16 military personnel charged with offenses concerning the My Lai massacre, only five were actually court-martialed, and only Calley was never found guilty.

March 1972

6th: Jack Nicklaus, passes Arnold Palmer as golf's all-time money winner.

10th: The U.S. 101st Airborne Division is withdrawn from Vietnam. [See 101st report on Pages 9-11]

22nd - Congress approves Equal Rights Amendment (never ratified).

23rd: The U.S. stages a boycott of the Paris peace talks as President Nixon accuses Hanoi of refusing to *"negotiate seriously."*



March-September: The Eastertide Offensive occurs as 200,000 North Vietnamese soldiers under the command of General Vo Nguyen Giap wage an all-out attempt to conquer South Vietnam. The offensive is a tremendous gamble by Giap and is undertaken as a result of U.S. troop withdrawal, the strength of the anti-war movement in America likely preventing a U.S. retaliatory response, and the poor performance of South Vietnam's Army during Operation Lam Son 719 in 1971. Giap's immediate strategy involves the capture of Quang Tri in the northern part of South Vietnam, Kontum in the mid section, and An Loc in the south. North Vietnam's Communist leaders also hope a successful offensive will harm Richard Nixon politically during this presidential election year in America, much as President Lyndon Johnson had suffered as a result of the 1968 Tet Offensive. The Communists believe Nixon's removal would disrupt American aid to South Vietnam.

30th: NVA Eastertide attack on Quang Tri begins.

March 1973

19th: Dean tells Nixon, *"There is a cancer growing on the Presidency"*.

29th: The last remaining American troops withdraw from Vietnam as President Nixon declares *"the day we have all worked and prayed for has finally come."* America's longest war, and its first defeat, thus concludes. During 15 years of military involvement, over 2 million Americans served in Vietnam with 500,000 seeing actual combat. 47,244 were killed in action, including 8000 airmen, over 58,000 died during the war. There were 10,446 non-combat deaths. 153,329 were seriously wounded, including 10,000 amputees. Over 2400 American POWs/MIAs were unaccounted for as of 1973.



March 1974

9th: Last Japanese soldier, a guerrilla operating in the Philippines, surrenders, 29 years after World War II ended.

26th: George Foreman TKOs Ken Norton in 2 for heavyweight boxing title.

(continued....)



March 1975

7th: Senate revises filibuster rule, allows 60 senators to limit debate.

10th: The final offensive begins as 25,000 NVA attack Ban Me Thuot located in the Central Highlands.

11th: Ban Me Thuot falls after half of the 4000 South Vietnamese soldiers defending it surrender or desert.

13th: President Thieu decides to abandon the Highlands region and two northern provinces to the NVA. This results in a mass exodus of civilians and soldiers, clogging roads and bringing general chaos. NVA then shell the disorganized retreat which becomes known as "*the convoy of tears.*"

18th: Realizing the South Vietnamese Army is nearing collapse, NVA leaders meet and decide to accelerate their offensive to achieve total victory before May 1.

19th: Quang Tri City falls to NVA.

24th: Tam Ky over-run by NVA.



Phu Binh, South Vietnam -- March 23, 1975 - Phu Binh, The tail end of the war.

25th: Hue falls without resistance after a three day siege. South Vietnamese troops now break and run from other threatened areas. Millions of refugees flee south.

26th: Chu Lai is evacuated.

28th: Da Nang is shelled as 35,000 NVA prepare to attack.

30th: Da Nang falls as 100,000 South Vietnamese soldiers surrender after being abandoned by their commanding officers.

31st: John Wooden's final game, UCLA, wins 10th NCAA championship in 12 years.

31st: NVA begin the 'Ho Chi Minh Campaign,' the final push toward Saigon.

Medical Schools to Increase Focus on PTSD, TBI

January 11, 2012

By Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON -- Medical schools will soon include more course work on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and other common military ailments as part of a White House-led effort to prepare future physicians for the next generation of veteran patients.



First Lady Michelle Obama and officials from the Association of American Medical Colleges will announce the plans Wednesday afternoon. The effort includes more shared research and clinical trials among 130 medical and osteopathic schools around the country, including Ivy League and other major collegiate research institutions.

Officials from the association on Tuesday told reporters the goal is to ensure that young medical professionals are familiar with the signature wounds of war, and able to more effectively treat the millions of veterans who will struggle with those issues for decades to come. White House officials said more than half of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans receiving treatment for mental health issues rely not on Department of Veterans Affairs physicians, but instead on private medical practices.

John Prescott, director of academic affairs for the association, said that while many of the schools touch on military health topics, most don't have them as a core competency for graduates. The new effort will look for ways to better integrate those lessons into schools' curricula, and make sure students are familiar with problems veterans could be facing.

For some students, that will likely mean standalone courses on topics like PTSD and TBI, as well as other common battlefield injuries.

The effort is part of the first lady's *Joining Forces* campaign, designed to highlight the sacrifices and needs of troops, veterans and their families. Program officials said no federal money is being used for the college coordination efforts, but Defense Department and VA officials will assist with planning and information sharing.

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



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~



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



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



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, June 6 - 10, 2012, Lexington, Kentucky hosted by Chapter 17. See early notice on Pages 20-24.

Contact:
Dave Carmon
Eml: dcarmon@roadrunner.com
Web: 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.

Contact:
Jerry Hassler
Eml: hassler173@juno.com



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.



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



56th Annual Reunion of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team, September 23 - 26, 2012, Holiday Inn, Richmond Intl. Airport, Sandston, VA.

Contact:
Nancy Young, Secretary
youngncy@comcast.net

~ Other Reunions ~

Vietnam Veterans Homecoming Celebration, March 31, 2012, Charlotte, NC. See Page 37 for details.

Contact:
Web:
http://www.charlottemotorspeedway.com/tickets/vietnam_veterans_homecoming_celebration_2012/600589.html

Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, April 26-29, 2012, Wickham Park, Melbourne, FL. See Page 42 for details.

Contact:
Phn: 321-501-6896
Eml: vets2gether@cfl.rr.com

Note: If you're aware of any upcoming *Airborne* reunions please send details to: **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

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

Overflow Hotel:

To be announced



"HISTORY, HORSES & HOOCH"



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / March 2011 – Issue 38

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OPERATION CORREGIDOR II

Honoring Our WWII 503rd Troopers

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 also attending our reunion this coming June and meeting these troopers personally and attending the WWII interactive presentations.

To date we've raised about 2/3 of the funds needed 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 for details, or use the form on the following page to send in your donation -- please don't contribute if you're having financial difficulties.

As of now these Sky Soldiers and friends of the 173d and 503rd have made contributions. 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, 5th SF
Harry Cleland, 2/503 John Cleland, 173d Bde

Dave Colbert, 2/503 Jim Cole, 2/503
Art Coogler, 1/503 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 Joe Drabin, 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 Jim Green, 2/503
Bernie Griffard, 2/503 Frank Guerrero, 4/503
Eddie Hair, 1/503 Larry Hampton, 1/503
Tom Hanson, 3/503 Mike Harris, 2/503
Matt Harrison, 2/503 Jerry Hassler, 2/503
Hank Hatch, 2/503 Eng. Dennis Hill, 1/503, 3/503
Vince Hoang, SVNAF Dick Holt, 2/503
Nick Hun, 2/503 Johnny Jones, 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 David Leung, 1/503
Dave Linkenhoker, 2/503 Joe Logan, 2/503
Roy Lombardo, 2/503 Bob Lucas, 2/503
Richard Martinez, 2/503 Pat McShane, 173d
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
Marjorie Royer, 173d Friend Jack Schimpf, 2/503
Roy Scott, 3/319 Bill Shippey, 2/503 N75
Steve Skolochenko, D Maint Ken Smith, 2/503
Lew Smith, 2/503 Jerry Sopko, 4/503
Larry Speed, 1/503 Jim Stanford, 2/503
George Stapleton, 3/503 Mike Sturges, 2/503
Bob Sweeney, 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

All The Way!





~ 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 as guests of our Brigade, paratroopers of the 503rd PRCT who fought in the Pacific during WWII.

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, the late 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 503rd 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)



Operation Corregidor II
coming soon to the Kentucky



The concession area
(by Raymond Adams)



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.



~ My First Combat Patrol ~

By Don Abbott

“E” Company, 503rd PRCT, WWII

503
E

I don't know if I have ever mentioned this little experience at Nadzab. As you know I was a young Second Lieutenant, Assistant Platoon Leader at Nadzab. Assistant Platoon Leaders really had only one job, stay alive and take over the Platoon when the First Lieutenant Platoon Leader is killed.

For some reason, however, I was tagged to take a six-man detail on a patrol to the North and West of the Regimental perimeter. After patrolling to a small native village, which showed on aerial photos, we were to set up a listening post and outpost to warn against an enemy encroachment from that quarter. The patrol reached the small (only a half-dozen, or so, huts) village, we found it had been abandoned in a hurry as the natives heard us coming.

The natives never did return during our day or so, occupation. At least the huts got us out of the nightly rainstorms even if they were very dirty. Oddly enough there were interesting wood carvings left behind which showed they had some artistic skills. If we had not been loaded down with equipment I might have carried some of them with me. The small village had a substantial (several acres) plantation of what looked like banana trees. We very carefully checked every tree, however, and never saw anything looking like a banana. We understood banana stems needed to be cut green and ripened by hanging the stem but that would have taken days we didn't expect to have. Since that experience I learned of Plantains, which look like green bananas but never get to a yellow stage. I, now, believe this was just a large Plantain plantation.

In addition to setting up the outpost for the Regiment, I placed two men at a time on an outpost designed to alert us if a Jap patrol came along our track to the front. We never caught sight of a single Jap but, since that was our first combat patrol I was scared to death all the time we were out there that we would be attacked and wiped out.

After a couple days we received word we were being withdrawn and flown back to Port Moresby. We could not have been happier. When we got back to “E” Company, I learned that Lindsay Milikin had been badly wounded when one of our nightly grenade booby traps had been tripped by him and set off. I managed to visit Milly in the small hospital which had been set up. He



Trooper Don

seemed in fair shape to me but he died only a short time later.

It seems that the reason for having an assistant platoon leader was justified since I took over the platoon for the months that followed, including Noemfoor. And a great platoon it was!

As told by Don Abbott to 503rd PRCT trooper John Lindgren, 12 August 2001. (503rd Heritage Battalion web site)

~ Our Own Milly ~

In reading Don's account of his first combat patrol as a young Lieutenant, and his buddy Lindsay Milikin tripping a 'friendly' booby-trap and later dying, I immediately thought of good buddy Dave Kies and his buddy Eric Zoller, both of Recon Platoon '66/'67.



The young Mr. Kies

Dave's and my hooches were right next to one another at Camp Zinn, and while we weren't close friends then, thanks to the internet we've become friends since. After trading notes with the trooper for quite a while, I was looking forward to seeing Dave at his and my first 173d reunion in Rochester, MN in 2000.

It was January, 22, 1967, when Dave and Eric were retrieving claymores set in front of their ambush position the night before. As the gods of war dictate, one of the claymores exploded, killing Eric outright and taking off both of Dave's legs below the knees. Somehow, this giant of a man survived, and following many months and years of rehabilitation, he rebounded from that tragedy and went on to a fulfilling career and family life. We both were looking forward to hooking-up at the reunion.

There were a few of our guys at Rochester pushing themselves around or being pushed around in wheelchairs, but none were Dave. Then, walking toward me in what I've described as a kind of 'Frankenstein monster' gait, but not quite that bad, was the tall, good looking and smiling Mr. Kies. Dave, the late Jim "Skid" Skidmore, also of Recon, and I spent most of the week together, and it was a great reunion and an honor to tag along with these guys.

Dave and I make a point to spend some time together at 173d or 2/503d reunions. He and his bride visited our home here in Florida, and we continue to keep in touch.

The gods of war are a fickle bunch, as Milly, Dave and Eric might attest. Ed



A Combat Jump

By Chaplain Conrad “Connie” Walker

(Excerpt from Connie’s book “*The Leapin’ Deacon*”)

22 February: Operation Junction City. The 2nd/503rd Infantry Task Force spearheaded Operation Junction City by jumping into combat deep in war zone “C,” near the Cambodian border. It was the first and only major American combat jump in Vietnam and the first anywhere since Korea.

The 1st and the 4th battalions came into adjacent landing zones by air/mobile assault. The objective was to locate and destroy the Central Office South Vietnam (COSVN), the supreme headquarters of the Viet Cong in the Republic of Vietnam. Within a short time, the 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Airborne Infantry, as well as artillery, and the central and support teams were ready for full-scale combat. The combat jump was a success!

Three chaplains made the jump from three different aircraft and in three different places in the jump stick. One chaplain was toward the front, one in the middle, and one near the end--pushing the stick. That way if any aircraft, for some reason aborted, two chaplains would make it in with the troops. The placement also assured that the 173rd would have chaplain/pastoral coverage throughout the drop zone; one at each end of the DZ and one in the middle. The wise plan worked perfectly. Chaplain pastoral coverage was complete throughout the drop zone.

Make no mistake; it was a combat jump--dropping the Airborne troops near the 700-foot level so that not too many shots could assail the Sky Soldiers on the way down.

Humor once again manifested itself. Coming close to landing with a parachute landing fall, I was audibly laughing as if I were having a good time. A tremendous young sergeant crawled over, asking, “*Chaplain Walker, did I hear you laughing as we landed?*” My smiling face answered, “*Yes, indeed. The thought entered my mind that the VC had to be pretty poor shots to miss me!*” (Co-author’s note: Remember that Connie was a large lineman and a heavyweight boxer).

He joined me with a quick laugh, then asked, “*Don’t you have a weapon?*” I said, “*Yes, son, I have the mighty Word of God and the Sacraments with me.*”

“*Wow! Thank God for your trust in the Lord,*” he said, “*but I’m telling you that I wouldn’t be out here without a weapon and hand grenades.*” I blessed him and he was on his way as a bold and courageous leader.

I would have the world remember: Chaplain (LTC) Xavier J. Gigliello and Chaplain (Major) Fr. Charlie Watters. Three chaplains participated in the combat jump for Junction City, and only one is living this day. The two that are with the Heavenly Father were absolutely phenomenal pastors and priests with the most gallant of spirits--and a deep willingness to lay their

lives on the line to help, save, and assist our beloved soldiers in their walk with the Lord.

And history records just that.

Chaplain Charlie Watters was awarded the Medal of Honor (posthumously), caring for, and ministering to soldiers at Dak To.



Chaplain Walker in the boonies, giving comfort and hope to his Sky Soldiers, circa ‘66/’67.

The Sky Soldiers would deeply feel the loss of our dear friend, Chaplain Gigliello, as he had fallen prey to wounds from a punji stick on one of our many river crossings. He would leave this earthly existence at Walter Reed Hospital (from other causes) several months after I returned to the States. I was honored to be with him at the time. God truly blessed all that knew him. Fellow priests were at his bedside, blessing, anointing and preparing him to meet our glorious Father face to face in heaven.

The day prior to the jump (21 February), we celebrated with the Word of God and holy communion together. I used, often, messages based on the Jump Commands and the Paratroopers’ Prayer (see both elsewhere in this book). We had three marshaling worship services and private prayer with many Sky Soldiers who were deepened in faith and came to a living faith with our Lord Jesus for the first time. Two special messages were “*Our Good Shepherd;*” Scripture: St. John 10 (“*I am the door*”), and St. Luke 23:39-43; Theme: “*Three Crosses, Representing All of Humanity.*”

All people--all soldiers--are represented here; Jesus is the center, one scoffing and insulting to the end, and one came to Jesus in faith and received the promise: “*Today, you will be with me in Paradise.*” The response was most positive and heartening. Born anew and renewed relationships with our Lord, were grandly experienced.

Some of our “elite” soldiers were on escape and evasion from our Lord but marvelously and miraculously became dedicated and committed to our crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

(continued....)



Thanks be to God! Human urgency and a sense of one needing help does indeed usher a person to and closer to the Lord, our Redeemer and Comforter.

Special recognition should be given to my jump master on that historic day 22 February 1967. Major Jerry Bethke (MG Ret.) was and is a dear friend. I thankfully am able to visit, even to this day, he and his cherished wife, Phyl, in the San Antonio area. He is a great leader, commander, and servant of Christ Jesus.

2 March: My 35th birthday. On this date, I was awarded the Silver Star presented by General John Deane. I praise God to just be alive and pastoring soldiers. To God be the glory.

3 March: Heavy contact and the fire fights on 3 March, Alpha and Charlie Companies were hard hit with many soldiers killed and wounded, and still the chaplain/shepherds were there with the dear soldiers.

On 12 March the Scripture was Numbers 13, John 3:14 and following.

Theme: *"The Cross--The Way Home"*

Hymns: *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"* and *"My Faith Looks up to Thee"*

On 13 March we returned to home base, Bien Hoa, for a well-attended service of Thanksgiving. We had a cluster of commitments to the Lord and several baptisms. Notably, we had a luscious steak dinner of Thanksgiving with the troops.

26 March: Easter Day. The Resurrection of our Lord! Scripture: Mark 16

Theme: *"The Great Gospel Day"*

Hymns: *"Jesus Christ Is Risen Today," "Children of the Heavenly Father,"* and *"Christ the Lord is Risen Today--Alleluia."*

We had twelve services from early morn to late evening--and had four more on Easter Monday with a tremendous Resurrection response and bold action of love and faith with the Sky Soldiers through the command.

We visited all troops in the hospital. I was also able to visit with a dear mentor and friend (from 101st Airborne Ft. Benning days) in the II Field Forces Command, Chaplain (Col.) Holland Hope, a chaplain's chaplain, but mainly the soldiers' chaplain, also now in the bosom of our Lord.

2 April: First Sunday after Easter. Scripture Proverbs 7:1-3, Mark 16;

Theme: *"God's Word to Us—Jesus Christ is Lord!"*

Hymns: *"Rise Up O' Men of God"* and *"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."*

~ Editor's Note ~

March 2 marks Connie's 80th birthday, and he has informed us his final message to the troops in our newsletter's *Chaplain's Corner* will appear next month. On behalf of all paratroopers of the 2/503d, we send best birthday wishes to our Leapin' Deacon and a hearty *JOB WELL DONE in Vietnam and beyond!! All the Way, Sir!*

Award of the Silver Star

Walker, Conrad N., Col. (Ret)
Republic of Vietnam

"For gallantry in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Major (then Captain) Walker distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 29 June, 1966 while serving as chaplain with a unit engaged with a large Viet Cong force near Xuan Loc. Chaplain Walker accompanied a relief platoon to the site of a vicious firefight where many men were dying or wounded. He ignored the hostile rounds striking all around him, to bring spiritual aid to the casualties. He also helped the medic to bring the wounded men back from the direct line of fire, despite the machine gun fire, which intermittently raked the area. When the Viet Cong were driven from the crucial positions, Chaplain Walker further exposed himself to incoming fire to prepare a landing zone for evacuation helicopters. He tied ropes onto the trees being chopped down and stood in vulnerable places, to pull the trees away from the wounded, as they fell. Without a thought for his own safety, he then carried wounded men to the aircraft. Throughout this firefight, Chaplain Walker gave no heed to the unexploded, but highly dangerous grenades littering the zone, or the deadly sniper fire. Major Walker's gallantry in action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."



~ By direction of the President ~

"And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'"

Mark 9:1



Together they grow to see the light...



Col. Bill Thomas

My favorite story about my days in Vietnam with Charlie 2/503 has nothing to do with the blood and guts that we all try in vain to forget.

I had an airborne brother named Robert Mason who was the son of an Alabama black Baptist Minister. Bobby wrote a letter to Robert Shelton who was at the time the Grand Imperial Exalted Lizard of the KKK International. He was the head bed sheet boy for the whole deal.

Bobby wrote that he was a southern boy and was raised with Christian values. He said that back home in Alabama you would never see blacks and whites eating at the same table and sleeping in the same quarters. Bobby informed the head of the pointy-heads that he was very uncomfortable with the practice of racial integration practiced by the Army. Obviously, the young black trooper did not enclose a photo of himself.

Shelton sent Bobby a return letter sympathizing with his plight. He authorized Bobby to open a Klan Cavern in Charlie Company. Bobby was delighted and recruited every black guy in the company, short of the NCO's, to join his Klan Cavern.



In retaliation, I sent a similar letter to Huey Newton in Oakland, the founder of the Black Panthers. I did not include a photo either. Mr. Newton returned my objection to whites and blacks being integrated. Like Shelton had been with Bobby, Newton was very sympathetic to my cause and authorized me to open a chapter of the Black Panthers in Charlie Company. I was of course delighted and promptly got all the white troopers to join the Black Panthers.



While we were out on patrol my squad tent was visited by a MACV inspector. He saw the black power sign above my bunk and Bobby's picture of a Klansman on a horse with a burning cross in his hands. We were of course reported to MACV and told to report to the AG in Saigon.

Bobby was in the hall outside the Colonel's office as I was the first to be called in by the investigating officer. The Colonel took one look at my tanned but obvious white skin. He was of course taken aback and looked at the paperwork on his desk. *"I needed to see Sp/4 Thomas not Mason first"*, he stammered. *"I'm Sp/4 Thomas, Sir"*, I replied.

All of a sudden the clouds seemed to part in his confused little head. He got a more relaxed look on his face and almost smiled when he asked, *"Let me get this straight Thomas. You are the head of the Black Panthers in your company and Sp/4 Mason is the head of the Ku Klux Klan?"* *"Yes Sir"*, I replied in my best airborne fashion.

The smile on the obviously amused Colonel's face broadened. *"Thomas, is Sp/4 Mason by any chance one of our black paratroopers?"* *"As the Ace of Spades"*, I answered. At this point the Colonel totally lost his composure and cracked up laughing. *"You two airborne clowns get the hell out of my office and you will cease and desist your political activity in my Army, trooper!"* *"Airborne!"* I replied.

Bobby and I then hit a couple of bars. We were not due to catch a ride back to Bien Hoa until 0700 the next morning.

Bill Thomas
C/2/503d, '65/'66

Note: Bill served three tours in VN, one each with the 173d, 82nd and SF. On all three tours he was wounded as a short-timer and evac'd to the U.S. Upon arrival in-country to begin his third tour, he got off the plane and yelled, *"Hit me now damn it, don't wait till I'm about to go home anyway!"*





Application Window Extended for Gulf War Illness Claims

Veterans from the Gulf War suffering undiagnosed illnesses now have an additional five years to qualify for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The change in VA regulations extends the application deadline to Dec. 31, 2016.

Congress set the original deadline of Dec. 31, 2011 in 1994 in response to cases of Gulf War illness which still lack a clearly defined diagnosis. This extension allows veterans of the Gulf War and the Iraq War to remain eligible for disability payments and VA programs while more research is done to investigate the cause of the symptoms.

Veterans or survivors who believe they qualify for these benefits are urged to contact the nearest National Service Officer for assistance with a claim.

Source:

<http://www.dav.org/news/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=531>

Critical Issues for Veterans



The DAV and other leading veteran’s service organizations continue efforts urging the administration and Congress to protect and strengthen VA health care and benefits as they meet the challenge of tackling our nation’s debt and deficit challenges.

The Independent Budget Critical Issues Report released by AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars is designed to alert the administration, Congress, VA and the public to those issues that deserve special scrutiny and attention. The report is a guide for policymakers to help them prepare an adequate budget for the current fiscal year and fill policy gaps, while preparing to develop the advance appropriation for the medical care accounts for fiscal year 2013.

“Protecting VA health care and benefits programs is especially crucial in the current economic and budgetary climate,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski.

“Our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and grandchildren who serve on the frontier of freedom need to know that they will come home to a nation that respects and honors them for their service, provides the best medical care to restore them, orchestrates the best vocational rehabilitation to help them overcome employment barriers created by injury and furnishes a supportive claims-processing system that delivers education, compensation, and survivors’ benefits with efficiency to those who sustained harm in their service to our nation,” the report states.

The Independent Budget for Fiscal Year 2013—an annual comprehensive budget and policy document, will be released in February 2012 concurrent with the release of the administration’s proposed budget for the VA.

Download the report at www.independentbudget.org

Join the Disabled American Veterans

Who is Eligible?

Any man or woman, who:

- served in the armed forces during a period of war or under conditions simulating war, **and**
- were wounded, disabled to any degree, or left with long-term illness as a result of military service, **and**
- were discharged or retired from military service under honorable conditions

Go to: <http://www.dav.org/membership/JoinDAV.aspx>



Folgore Parachute Brigade



Shoulder Insignia of the
Folgore Parachute Brigade
“*paracadutisti*”

The Folgore Parachute Brigade is the largest unit of paratroopers (*paracadutisti*) of the Italian Army; a second smaller unit is the 4th Alpini Parachutist Regiment. The name *Folgore* is Italian for lightning. The Folgore (*Thunderbolt*) operates as Light Infantry, capable of both air-landing and parachute operations, and has a marginal mechanized role. It is part of the Projection Forces under the 1° Commando FOD.



Folgore paratrooper in Rome

The first units of Italian parachutists were trained and formed shortly before the Second World War in Castelbenito, near Tripoli, where the first Military school of Parachuting was located.

The first troops trained were two Libyan battalions (one composed by "nationals", i.e. Italian elements, the other by Libyan elements of the Royal Colonial Corps). To these were added the first battalion of Italian troops and the Carabinieri Parachute Battalion.

Later moved to Italy, the staff at Castelbenito was expanded into the School at Tarquinia and became the first elements of the future Folgore Division.

The Folgore Division

In 1941, a Parachutist division was completed and was designated the 185th Airborne Division Folgore. The division trained together with their German allies for the planned assault on Malta in Operation Hercules which did not eventuate. During the course of the North African Campaign, it was engaged in ground combat operations.



“An Italian paratrooper from the Folgore Division throws himself under the tracks of a British Sherman tank with his mine to blow it up (North Africa, 1942)”

During the Second battle of El Alamein the *Folgore* Division resisted the attack of the British 131st (Queen's) Infantry Brigade, the 44th Infantry Division, the 7th Armoured Division (*Desert Rats*) and the Free French Brigade. The remnants of the Folgore Division were withdrawn from El Alamein on 3 November 1942, without water and carrying their anti-tank guns by hand in pieces. The survivors were reorganized into the 185th Folgore Parachute Battalion. At 2:35 pm on November 6, after having exhausted all its ammunition, the remainder of the Division finally surrendered to the British forces. In honour of their bravery, the British commander allowed them to surrender without having to show a white flag or raise their hands.

(continued....)





Paratroopers of the 183rd Regiment parading in Rome on 2 June 2006

The second Italian paratroop division, 184 Airborne Division *Nembo* ("Nimbus") was formed in 1943 from new units along with the 185th Regiment of *the Folgore*.

On 8 September, Marshal Badoglio announced the surrender of Italy, and the German forces in Italy acted quickly to take over the government. The *Nembo* division was sent to Sardinia that evening, where a malaria outbreak took a terrible toll on its manpower. Both the *Nembo* and *Folgore* divisions went on to fight for the Italian Social Republic (RSI) against the Allies at Anzio. Two thirds of the *Nembo* division's effective strength were killed in the battle and subsequent retreat. Various units formed by elements of both Divisions fought in the Italian campaign, in the battles of Filottrano, Grizzano Houses and in Operation Herring (these last ones in the Combat Group *Folgore*).

Towards the end of the Second World War the *Nembo* division became a Mechanized Infantry Regiment, based in Belluno, Villa Vicentina, Cervignano of Friuli and Gradisca d' Isonzo, where it was based until 1991, when it was reconstituted as the 183rd Parachute Battalion *Nembo*, within the *Folgore* Parachute Brigade.

The Folgore Brigade

Currently the *Folgore* is a Brigade, with six single battalion Regiments, with the Headquarters in Livorno and the various Regiments stationed in Livorno, Pistoia, Siena, Pisa and Legnago (VR).

The Brigade is composed of three Parachute Infantry Regiments (183rd, 186th and 187th), an Assault (Special Forces) Regiment (the 9th Col Moschin), an "Artillery" Regiment (185th, actually an OP/LRRP/LRS unit) a Regiment Supply Unit (185th), the "Guastatori"

Engineer Regiment (8th), and a Headquarters and Signals Company. It also includes the CAPAR Of Pisa (Parachute Training Centre, former SMIPAR - Military Parachute School, in its turn former CAP).

23 October celebrates the anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein (1942). Patron saint: Archangel Michael (29 September).

"Folgore"

The name "Folgore" refers to two different units (coexisting until the "Division" level was removed from the Italian Army Order of Battle in 1986) of the Italian army: the *Folgore* Airborne Brigade and the *Folgore* Mechanized Division, the latter based in eastern Italy and tasked to defend the "Soglia di Gorizia".

Common heraldic elements to both units: the winged gladius on the moirine/Cap Badge (integrated with a parachute for the Airborne Brigade) and the yellow lightning bolt, symbol of the unit (on red field for the Mechanized Division, on sky blue field, with superimposed stylized white wings for the Airborne Brigade). Currently the Military Parachute Center (CAPAR) is based in Pisa.

185th Regiment

The 185th Regiment is a part of the Brigade Parachutists *Folgore*, where it is in charge of training and preparation of the unit, but depends on the technical-functional plan and therefore the employment on land, from the Commando Operations of Special Forces (COFS), as the other units of river basin FS/FOS of the Army, the Operating Group Incursori (GOI) of Military Navy, the Incursori Unit of the Aeronautics and for some functions also the Special Intervention Group (GIS), of the Police officers.

Previously a Parachute Artillery unit, its main tasks are now Target Acquisition, Reconnaissance (both to be carried out in hostile territory) and laser designation for "smart" ammunition. Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Enlisted personnel of the unit are recruited by selection or by cooptation (with a previous verification of psychological and physical requirements) from other units of the Army.

The Regiment has been engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq (where Sergeant Salvatore Marracino and Captain Nicholas Ciardelli lost their lives).

(continued....)





Italian Army Paratroopers from the Folgore Parachute Brigade during a Free Fall Parachute Jump from CH-47 Chinook Helicopter in heart of Afghanistan, 21st June 2011

In August 2007 they took part in operation "Leonte 2" in Lebanon, under the aegis of the UN (Resolution 1701), as a result of the war between Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006.

Peacekeeping

The Brigade has been employed in numerous peacekeeping missions in the recent years. Lebanon in 1982 (one of the first international missions of peace). In 1991 a Parachutist Tactical group was in Kurdistan with the objective of the mission being humanitarian aid "Italfor Airone".

From July 1992, the Brigade supplied personnel for operation "Vespri Siciliani" (anti-crime operation in Sicily). The Folgore participated in Operation Restore Hope, in Somalia, from 3 December 1992 to September 1993.

Parts of the Brigade have been employed many times in the Balkans (Missions IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia, and KFOR in Kosovo), with Multinational Forces in Albania and elements of the brigade participated in UN Mission INTERFET in East Timor. The Folgore participated from August 2005 to September 2005 in operation "Antica Babilonia" in Iraq.



Folgore, All the Way!



Welcome Home Trooper...

I was at a wedding in Savannah a few years ago. The groom was the son of a friend, and his grandmother and my mother were very close. Having been invited, I flew down from New England and attended the wedding. The father of the groom is an old friend, and he is the golf pro at Ft. Jackson, SC. The groom was just finishing 7 years in the Army as a paratrooper.

The church was beautiful, and when walking out of the church, to the immediate left, right across the street, was the park where Forrest Gump told his story at the bus stop.



The reception was in a beautiful hotel and I was sitting inside with my mother's friend, when two monsters came up behind my chair, standing on each side of me, and said I had to go with them. Thinking I did something wrong, and not wanting to fight (and lose), I went with them.

We walked out into a patio area that had two chairs in the middle, and all these young folks milling about. When we walked in, they all started yelling and cheering, and started to have photos taken. As it turns out, everyone, including the female in the photo, was a paratrooper in the 2nd Bn, 503rd Inf Regt, 173d Abn Bde, and they all served in Iraq together (except the female), having jumped in at the start of that war. The reason they were yelling is that I was in the same exact battalion some 40 years earlier, and never was I so well treated by any group of people.

When they started taking photos, the groom sat down in one chair and I asked the lady to sit in the other. They all yelled, saying that chair was reserved for me (It may be that they thought I would fall down, given the advanced age...). So I sat next to the groom. Then someone yelled to raise your drinks for the picture. I told them I didn't have a drink, so they said to get me a beer. I told them, "No thanks. I was in the 173d when I had my last beer." (I never liked the taste).

So they asked me what I drank, and I told them, "Diet soda". They got me a diet soda, which is what I am holding in my hands in the photo. Unbeknownst to me, they also put a good dose of Jack Daniels in there, and according to one of the many traditions of the Airborne, you drink what's put in front of you. So I drank it and my stomach did flip flops for about 3 days.

These young folks were so good (and some of them were going back to the Middle East), I got all their email addresses, and wrote them a letter, to which some of them responded.

After reading the letters from these young troops, I find that there are things that just don't change. Many Vietnam veterans came home to hostility and disinterest. Most of us just moved on with our lives, putting our memories and our medals away in the closet. For the most part, the civilian population seemed to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to our experiences.

Then, all of a sudden and very unexpectedly, I came across a group of young, professional soldiers who treated me with more respect for my military service in one afternoon than I had received since leaving the Nam so many years before. I have since become a firm believer that if we ever want it done right, we, the Airborne, have to do it ourselves!

Don Ball
HHC/2/503d



A surprised honored guest, Don, sitting in chair next to the pretty 2/503d paratrooper.



Tribute to SGT MacKenzie

The West Point Glee Club, with others, and the images (on the web site below) tell what words could never express. This was used in the movie, *We Were Soldiers Once, and Young*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KGGHhEJdfFM>

Sgt. MacKenzie

Lay me doon in the caul caul groon
Whaur afore monie mair huv gaun
Lay me doon in the caul caul groon
Whaur afore monie mair huv gaun

When they come a wull staun ma groon
Staun ma groon al nae be afraid
Thoughts awe hame tak awa ma fear
Sweat an bluid hide ma veil awe tears

Ains a year say a prayer faur me
Close yir een an remember me
Nair mair shall a see the sun
For a fell tae a Germans gun

Lay me doon in the caul caul groon
Whaur afore monie mair huv gaun
Lay me doon in the caul caul groon
Whaur afore monie mair huv gaun
Whaur afore monie mair huv gaun

English Translation

Lay me down in the cold cold ground
Where before many more have gone
Lay me down in the cold cold ground
Where before many more have gone

When they come I will stand my ground
Stand my ground I'll not be afraid
Thoughts of home take away my fear
Sweat and blood hide my veil of tears

Once a year say a prayer for me
Close your eyes and remember me
Never more shall I see the sun
For I fell to a Germans gun

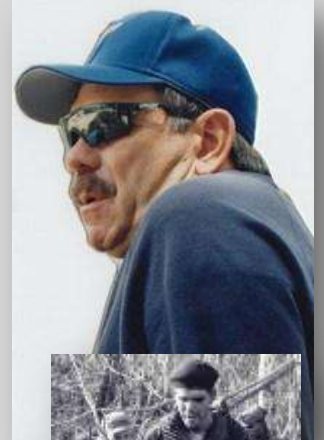
Lay me down in the cold cold ground
Where before many more have gone
Lay me down in the cold cold ground
Where before many more have gone
Where before many more have gone

In memory of Sgt. Charles Stuart MacKenzie, Seaforth Highlanders, who along with many others gave up his life in WWI, so that we can live free.

[Sent in by MG John "Uncle Jack" Deane]

Farewell to Bob Stammersky Recon Panther

Robert "Bob" Stammersky, 67, of Kearney, MO passed away January 26, 2012. Memorial Mass was held at St. James Catholic Church, in Liberty, Missouri. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions are suggested to helping Kansas City area Homeless Veteran's.



Bob was an Army veteran of the Vietnam conflict. He was owner of Retro Bowl in Liberty, MO, and former General Manager of Samuel Bingham Co., retiring after 50 years' service. Bob began coaching his son's baseball teams and continued coaching high school and collegiate teams until 2010. Those teams included The Wildcats, Diamond Kings, The Train, The Crashers, The Bombers, The Orioles, Worth Harley Davidson, and The River Bandits. If anyone wanted to find Bob, they would find him at the bar at Retro Bowl with his Crown Reserve.



Survivors include his wife, Margie Stammersky, children, Damian (Val) and Anne Stammersky, brothers, Art (Susan) and Tom Stammersky, sisters, Betty Williams, Carol Soltesz, grandchildren, Taylor Robert Stammersky, Tyler Rose Stammersky, and brother in law, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Ralph R. (Clare) Williams.

Condolences may be sent to mountmoriahterracepark.com

~ From a Buddy ~

"4/66-4/67 Machine Gunner, 3rd Squad, Recon Platoon, HHC, 2/503 Abn Inf, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) RVN. Born 3 November 1944; died 26 January 2012, age 67. Successful husband, father, grandfather and businessman. Leaves his wife, Margie, son Damian, daughter, Anne, and two grandchildren, boy and girl, Taylor & Tyler. RIP big guy."

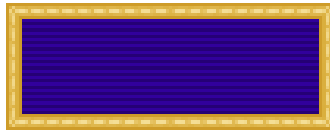
Jerry Hassler
Recon/2/503d, '66/'67



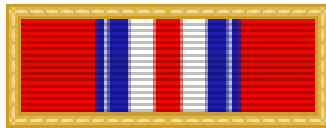
Vicenza unit earns 2 awards for Afghan missions

By Michelle Tan - Staff Writer

One of the most highly decorated battalions to fight in Afghanistan can now add two prestigious unit awards. For its Afghanistan deployment from June 2007 to August 2008, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Brigade Combat Team, out of Vicenza, Italy, earned the Presidential Unit Citation and the Valorous Unit Award.



Presidential Unit Citation



Valorous Unit Citation

This unit-level recognition is in addition to a slate of individual valor awards presented to soldiers from that battalion, including the first Medal of Honor awarded to a living service member since the Vietnam War. Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta, who has since left the Army, received the nation's highest award for valor after running through heavy enemy fire to rescue a badly wounded comrade during a deadly ambush Oct. 25, 2007, in the Korengal Valley.

Soldiers from the battalion also earned two Distinguished Service Crosses, the second-highest valor award, and 27 Silver Stars, the third-highest award for valor.



Sky Soldiers on patrol

The battalion's Presidential Unit Citation was awarded for the soldiers' "extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy" from June 5 to Nov. 10, 2007, according to an order issued Oct. 26. The Valorous Unit Award was awarded for the soldiers' actions from Jan. 25 to July 30, 2008.

According to the Army regulation on military awards, the degree of heroism required to earn a President Unit Citation is equivalent to that which would warrant award of a Distinguished Service Cross to an individual. The Valorous Unit Award is equivalent to awarding the Silver Star to an individual.

The battalion, while highly lauded for its actions during a difficult deployment to one of Afghanistan's most treacherous and contested regions, also came under fire for a deadly attack in Wanat. Nine soldiers were killed and 27 others wounded in the July 13, 2008, attack, and family members of the fallen soldiers demanded the Army hold accountable members of the unit's chain of command for failing to properly plan and resource the soldiers' mission, leaving them vulnerable to the attack. The families' efforts prompted a Central Command-directed review that led to recommendations to discipline three officers in the battalion and brigade. The officers were later exonerated after further review by the Army, and the officers were given a chance to appeal.

[Sent in by Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503d]



Military Review is printed bi-monthly in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and quarterly in Arabic. Approximately 12,000 copies of the various editions are distributed in more than 100 countries.

Military Review is widely quoted and reprinted in other publications throughout the world and is readily available for reference at research agencies, civilian university libraries, most military libraries in the US and abroad, and via the Worldwide Web.

Military Review provides a forum for the open exchange of ideas about military matters of importance to the U.S. Army with a focus on the concepts, doctrine, and warfighting at the tactical and operational levels of war.

Military Review supports the education, training, and development of doctrine and the integration missions of the Combined Arms Center (CAC) and the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) of the U.S. Army.

<http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/aboutus.pdf>



“The 173rd Airborne Brigade started out the new year on January 1, 1966, with a major strike into the Mekong Delta. Operation Marauder, as the mission was dubbed, soon found its quarry, the VC 267th Main Force Battalion, and a three-day battle ensued.” Tom Faley, C/2/503d

2 January 1966 Marauder as I Remember It

By Stephen P. Steets
B/2/503d

We were flying into a hot LZ. I remember seeing the spotter aircraft flying low over the area. On the ground we got word that the Bird Dog had been shot down, presumably by enemy fire.

We were advancing across a rice paddy, well ahead of our smoke. When we reached the other side of the paddy I saw an enemy gun position, probably a 50, not more than 10 meters in front of us. I opened fire at it and, goddamit, my M-60 jammed. I set it on the berm to clear it, and the next thing I knew; it was raining tons of mud. I never saw anything, I never heard anything, and I never felt anything. I was confused, I couldn't find my gun. I just saw mud and blood.

I looked down at my legs and saw blood pouring on them from my head. I realized that I must have been hit; I tried to get up and passed out.

As I lay there, I remember hearing a few soft moans next to me; it was MacIntyre, my assistant gunner. I called to him, but, no answer. Sgt Baker was just to the right of him. They both died. There were several others KIA and WIA in that incident but I do not know their names.

Today, I do not blame that aircraft. I take solace in the knowledge that the Air Force had lost its eyes, we were well in front of our smoke, the Air Force had a legitimate target, the bomb landed forward of our position, the target was within 10 meters forward of our position, and no doubt they wiped out that target and got a few of the enemy. Otherwise, those gooks might have taken our ears.



Steve

I don't know how long I lay there. It was dark, quiet, peaceful and warm. I just wanted to sleep. Then I heard voices. As they got closer, I heard one say,

“Here's one, aw fuck him, he's dead.”

I thought they were talking about me. Then I feel a tug at my chest, *“Hey buddy, you ok?”* I said, *“I can't see, my eyes, I can't see”*. He pushed me down, poured water on my head and face and cleaned the blood from my eyelids and lashes, and I opened my eyes. I wasn't dead, and I wasn't blind. I could see, I could see the orange flashes from the guns on that dammed Skyraider diving directly at us. Rounds kicking up all around us. *“Shoot the motherfucker.”* *“He's on our side.”* *“Yeah right, tell him that.”*

We survived. I don't know who this guy was, he wasn't a medic. He just picked up the medic's bag and helped with first aid. May God bless him. He tells me I lost a lot of blood and he was going to give me an IV. He sticks the needle in my arm and misses the vein -- that hurt. He takes it out and sticks it in again and misses the vein again. He takes it out, drops it in the mud, picks it up and wipes the needle on his shirt. I summoned the strength of a bull and pulled my arm away, pinned it to my chest, and told him, *“Don't stick me with that thing again”*. He asked if I want some morphine to make me feel better. I told him no, that I wasn't hurt. He gave me a funny look.

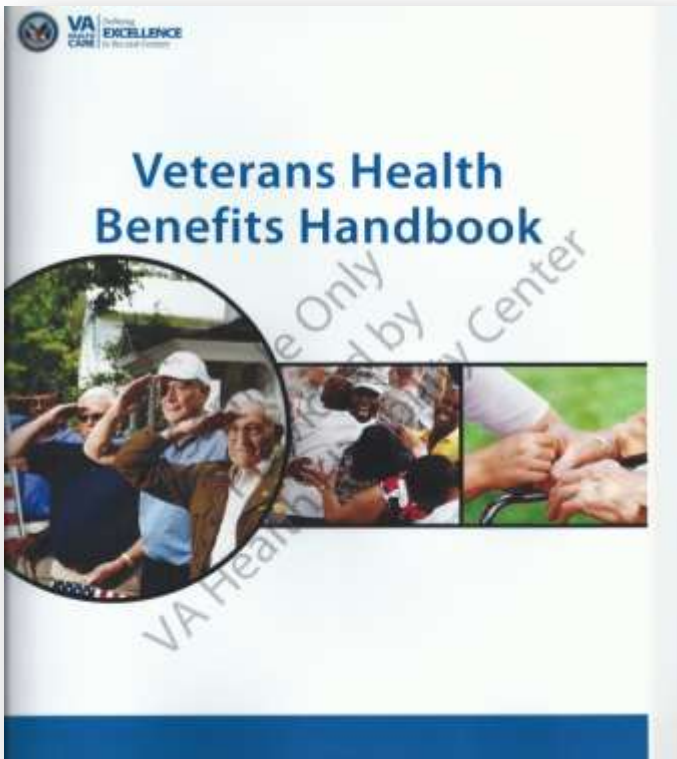
They needed to get me back to Med Evac. I tried but couldn't walk, so they get a stretcher, only they didn't have stretcher poles. They get six guys to carry me. The lead guys splashed paddy water on my face; that burned like hell from the tear gas that was in the water. As we get halfway across we come under enemy fire. They dropped me in the water and ran for cover, all but one, Furman.

Stanley Furman was a big dude, one really big man. He gets me up out of the water, grabs the back of my belt and says *“Run!”* As we hauled ass out of there, I don't know if my feet ever touched anything solid. I was probably just treading water while he carried me. He got me safely back to the Med Evac area and Dust Off.

Now hear this. Furman totally disregarded his own safety, and under heavy automatic weapons fire, hauled my sorry ass out of harm's way. Don't they give medals for that?



Veterans Health Benefits Handbook



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to informing the Veteran community about VA health benefits and services. Currently, VA is producing personalized Veteran Health Benefits Handbooks for Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care. The new handbooks are *tailored specific* for each Veteran and provides detailed information about the VA health services the Veteran may be eligible to receive.

The Veteran Health Benefit Handbook provides answers to common questions such as contact information for the Veteran's local facility, instructions on how to schedule appointments, guidelines for communicating treatment needs and an explanation of the Veteran's responsibilities, such as co-pays, if applicable.

Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare will receive their personalized handbooks via mail as part of a national rollout campaign starting in **February 2012** based on Priority Group, beginning with Priority Group 1 and ending with Priority Group 8. In the near future, VA will develop an online version of the handbook for Veterans to access via [MyHealthVet](#). This will allow Veterans to access their up-to-date health benefit information anywhere, anytime.

For additional information about the Veterans Health Benefits Handbook call VA at **1 877-222-VETS (8387)**.

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

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 and to reserve free seating: http://www.charlottespeedway.com/tickets/vietnam_veterans_homecoming_celebration_2012/600589.html

[Sent in by Larry Hampton, A/1/503d]
bigdog173.lh@gmail.com



Note: You can email Larry for a list of local area hotels near the Speedway. He also said, "Maybe we all wear our 173d hats."



Paratrooper Retirement

Is the timing right for you?

This note came in from a Sky Soldier buddy.

Hey, Lew, got a second?

Every day I ponder retirement; all is lined up for an imminent departure. I don't care much for my job any longer, but is easy enough for me to perform. Suffice to say that I have enough minor physical ailments that would limit the range of work that I could do in retirement, and my pensions alone would require a change in my lifestyle (such as I have). I wonder WHAT I would do in retirement? I understand there are hobbies, home improvement, part-time work, as well as volunteer work, and R&R. You'd mentioned that you are retired down in Florida. The 2B Newsletter seems a passion and VERY time consuming. Tell me... how do you like retirement? Do you have items that fill your days (aside from the Newsletter, that is)? Most people tell me *"If you have nothing planned for in retirement, don't do it."*

Maybe we all wear our 173d hats. (MAYBE?)

Hi bro:

You pretty much hit it on the nose. For anyone with half a mind, and as paratroopers that's probably what we have, one must have a purpose to busy one's self with in retirement, or at least a fulfilling hobby. As you rightly point out, our



newsletter is mine for the time being. Reggie's and my other hobby is "going to the doctor", which isn't much of a hobby at all – she counted our combined visits from last year, 64 in all. When we worked we seldom saw doctors. In retirement, even with a purpose or hobby, the days zip by. We wake up, have coffee, read the paper, go to the supermarket, watch the political news, then off to bed. Given a bad back I do very little work around the house, fortunately we're able to hire expertise when needed. Reggie, on the other hand, goes to the gym, grows orchids, yells at me and plants flowers; either that or she has a lover, one of the two for sure. In spite of a bad back (probably heading for surgery this year), I slip in a couple rounds of golf with the buds, and a nite or two a month at the V telling lies with old soldiers; the following day is filled with nursing the headache which is often the result of those visits.

Semi often we'll drive to Miami to visit grandkids or they'll come up here for a few days...very time consuming, and chasing rug rats around may have something to do with the bad back. We bought a Roadtrek (a small RV/van) a couple years ago with plans to tour the country...Reggie had a benign brain tumor removed a while back, then my back gave out, so we fill some days looking at the RV and *wondering*; but we're getting closer to actually using the thing. There's probably some truth in the statement

"If you have nothing planned for in retirement, don't do it."

For the last 25 years or so of my career I owned my own business, pretty much focused on producing trade shows and conferences for the airline industry. It was challenging and professionally satisfying, but even if the days now zip by, I'll take going to the supermarket over a real job anytime. What we both noticed is, once retired, even in the early days, there is virtually no interest in returning to work. I heard sky diving is fun...if I could only get out of this chair. Good luck with your decision, bro.

Smitty Out

~ Bravo Bull Captures VC ~



An amazing action photo of Jerry Wiles B/2/503d on R&R in Florida capturing Victor Charlie. That's Jerry on the left.

503rd PRCT in the Pacific

Enjoy reading about the troopers of the 503rd PRCT during WWII in the Pacific? Check out these books:

<http://corregidor.org/publications.htm>



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WEB SITES OF IMPORTANCE TO VETS

Someone has gone to a lot of trouble to compile this list. Below are web-sites which provide information on Veterans' benefits and how to file/ask for them. Accordingly, there are many sites explaining how to obtain books, military/medical records, information and how to appeal a denied claim with the VA. Nearly 100% of this information is free and available to all veterans.

Appeals

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin2/1/m21_1/mr/part1/ch05.doc

Board of Veteran's Appeals

<http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>

CARES Commission

<http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/> CARES

Draft National Plan

<http://www1.va.gov/cares/page.cfm?pg=105>

Center for Minority Veterans

<http://www1.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>

Center for Veterans Enterprise

<http://www.vetbiz.gov/default2.htm>

Center for Women Veterans

<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>

Clarification on the changes in VA healthcare for Gulf War Veterans

<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000016.html>

Classified Records - American Gulf War Veterans Assoc

<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum18/HTML/000011.html>

Compensation for Disabilities

Associated with the Gulf War Service

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin2/1/m21_1/part6%20/ch07.doc

Compensation Rate Tables, 12-1-03

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm>

Department of Veterans Affairs

Home Page <http://www.va.gov/>

Directory of Veterans Service Organizations

<http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=view>

Disability Examination Worksheets Index, Comp

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm>

Due Process

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin2/1/m21_1/mr/part1/ch02.doc

Duty to Assist

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin2/1/m21_1/mr/part1/ch01.doc

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr/>

Emergency, Non-Emergency, and Fee Basis Care

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>

Environmental Agents

<http://www1.va.gov/environagents/>

Environmental Agents M10

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1002

Establishing Combat Veteran Eligibility

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=315

Evaluation Protocol for Gulf War and Iraqi Freedom Veterans with Potential Exposure to Depleted Uranium (DU)

<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DUHandbook1303122304.DOC> and

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1158

See also, Depleted Uranium Fact Sheet

<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DepletedUraniumFAQSheet.doc>

Evaluation Protocol for Non-Gulf War Veterans with Potential Exposure to Depleted Uranium

<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/DUHANDBOOKNONGW130340304.DOC>

Fee Basis, Priority for Outpatient Medical Services and Inpatient

Hospital Care

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=206

Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents 2005

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf> or,

http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm

Forms and Records Request

<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>

General Compensation Provisions

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter11_subchaptervi.html

Geriatrics and Extended Care

<http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/>

Guideline for Chronic Pain and Fatigue MUS-CPG

http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/cpgn/mus/mus_base.htm

Guide to Gulf War Veteran's Health

<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/VHIGulfwar.pdf>

Gulf War Subject Index

<http://www1.va.gov/GulfWar/page.cfm?pg=7&template=main&letter=A>

Gulf War Veteran's Illnesses Q&As

<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/GWIllnessesQandAsIB1041.pdf>

Hearings

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin2/1/m21_1/mr/part1/ch04.doc

Homeless Veterans

<http://www1.va.gov/homeless/>

HSR&D Home

<http://www.hsr.dresearch.va.gov/>

Index to Disability Examination

Worksheets C&P exams

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/benefits/exams/index.htm>

Ionizing Radiation

<http://www1.va.gov/irad/>

Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom Veterans VBA

<http://www.vba.va.gov/EFIF/>

M 10 for spouses and children

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1007

M10 Part III Change 1

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1008

M21-1 Table of Contents

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/M21_1.html

Mental Disorders, Schedule of Ratings

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38CFR/BOOKC/PART4/S4_130.DOC

Mental Health Program Guidelines

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1094

Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers

<http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov/>

MS (Multiple Sclerosis) Centers of Excellence

<http://www.va.gov/ms/about.asp>

(continued...)



My Health e Vet

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov/>

NASDVA.COM

<http://nasdva.com/>

**National Association of State
Directors**

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

National Center for Health

Promotion and Disease Prevention

<http://www.nchpdp.med.va.gov/postdeploymentlinks.asp>

**Neurological Conditions and
Convulsive Disorders, Schedule of
Ratings**

<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/regs/38cfr/bookc/part4/s4%5F124a.doc>

OMI (Office of Medical Inspector)

<http://www.omi.cio.med.va.gov/>

Online VA Form 10-10EZ

<https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez/>

**Parkinson's Disease and Related
Neurodegenerative Disorders**

<http://www1.va.gov/resdev/funding/solicitations/docs/parkinsons.pdf>

and, <http://www1.va.gov/padrecc/>

Peacetime Disability Compensation

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+38USC1131

**Pension for Non-Service-Connected
Disability or Death**

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapteri.html and,

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapterii.html and,

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter15_subchapteriii.html

Persian Gulf Registry

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1003

This program is now referred to as **Gulf War Registry Program** (to include Operation Iraqi Freedom) as of March 7, 2005:

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1232

Persian Gulf Registry Referral

Centers

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1006

Persian Gulf Veterans' Illnesses

**Research 1999, Annual Report To
Congress**

http://www1.va.gov/resdev/1999_GulfWarVeteransIllnessesAppendices.doc

Persian Gulf Veterans' Illnesses

**Research 2002, Annual Report To
Congress**

http://www1.va.gov/resdev/prt/gulf_war_2002/GulfWarRpt02.pdf

Phase I PGR

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1004

Phase II PGR

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1005

Policy Manual Index

<http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/eds/edsmps.htm>

Power of Attorney

http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch03.doc

Project 112 (Including Project

SHAD)

<http://www1.va.gov/shad/>

Prosthetics Eligibility

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=337

**Public Health and Environmental
Hazards Home Page**

<http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/>

Public Health/SARS

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/SARS/>

Publications Manuals

<http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?Pub=4>

Publications and Reports

http://www1.va.gov/resdev/prt/pubs_individual.cfm?webpage=gulf_war.htm

Records Center and Vault

Homepage

<http://www.aac.va.gov/vault/default.html>

Records Center and Vault Site Map

<http://www.aac.va.gov/vault/sitemap.html>

**Request for and Consent to Release
of Information from Claimants**

Records

<http://www.forms.va.gov/va/Internet/VARE/getformharness.asp?formName=3288-form.xft>

**Research Advisory Committee on
Gulf War Veterans Illnesses April
11, 2002**

http://www1.va.gov/racgwvi/docs/Minutes_April112002.doc

**Research Advisory Committee on
Gulf War Veterans Illnesses**

http://www1.va.gov/racgwvi/docs/ReportandRecommendations_2004.pdf

Research and Development

http://www.appc1.va.gov/resdev/programs/all_programs.cfm

Survivor's and Dependents'

Educational Assistance

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partiii_chapter35.html

Title 38 Index Parts 0-17

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv1_02.tpl

Part 18

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfrv2_02.tpl

Title 38 Part 3 Adjudication

**Subpart A "Pension, Compensation,
and Dependency and Indemnity**

Compensation

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfr3_main_02.tpl

Title 38 Pensions, Bonuses &

Veterans Relief (also A, A § 3.317

**Compensation for certain
disabilities due to undiagnosed
illnesses found here)**

http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title38/38cfr3_main_02.tpl

**Title 38, Part 4 – Schedule for
Rating Disabilities Subpart B –
Disability Ratings**

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=ab7641afd195c84a49a2067dbbcf95c0&rgn=div6&view=text&node=38:1.0.1.1.5.2&idno=38Title38A§4.16>

**Total disability ratings for
compensation based on
unemployability of the individual.**

**Part A "Schedule for Rating
Disabilities Subpart A" General
Policy in Rating**

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=1b0c269b510d3157fbf8f8801bc9b3dc&rgn=div8&view=text&node=38:1.0.1.1.5.1.96.11&idno=38>

**U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans
Claims**

<http://www.vetapp.gov/>

(continued....)



VA Best Practice Manual for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

<http://www.avapl.org/pub/PTSD%20Manual%20final%206.pdf>

VA Fact Sheet

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/gwfs.html>

VA Health Care Eligibility

<http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/home/hecmain.asp>

VA Instituting Global Assessment of Function (GAF)

<http://www.avapl.org/gaf/gaf.html>

VA Life Insurance Handbook A, Chapter 3

<http://www.insurance.va.gov/inForce/GliSite/GLIhandbook/glibookletch3.htm#310>

VA Loan Lending Limits and Jumbo Loans

http://valoans.com/va_facts_limits.cfm

VA MS Research

<http://www.va.gov/ms/about.asp>

VA National Hepatitis C Program

<http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/>

VA Office of Research and Development

<http://www1.va.gov/resdev/>

VA Trainee Pocket Card on Gulf War

<http://www.va.gov/OAA/pocketcard/gulfwar.asp>

VA WMD EMSHG

<http://www1.va.gov/emshg/>

VA WRIISC-DC

<http://www.va.gov/WRIISC-DC/>

VAOIG Hotline Telephone Number and Address

<http://www.va.gov/oig/hotline/hotline3.htm>

Vet Center Eligibility -

Readjustment Counseling Service

<http://www.va.gov/rcs/Eligibility.htm>

Veterans Benefits Administration Main Web Page

<http://www.vba.va.gov/>

Veterans Legal and Benefits Information

<http://valaw.org/>

VHA Forms, Publications, Manuals

<http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/>

VHA Programs - Clinical Programs & Initiatives

http://www1.va.gov/health_benefits/page.cfm?pg=13<http://webmaila.juno.com/webmail/new/UrlBlockedError.aspx>

VHA Public Health Strategic Health Care Group Home Page

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/>

VHI Guide to Gulf War Veterans Health

http://www1.va.gov/vhi_ind_study/gulfwar/istudy/index.asp

Vocational Rehabilitation

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/>

Vocational Rehabilitation Subsistence

<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/InterSubsistencefy04.doc>

VONAPP online

<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>

WARMS - 38 CFR Book C

<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/bookc.html>

Wartime Disability Compensation

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+38USC1110

War-Related Illness and Injury Study Center - New Jersey

<http://www.wri.med.va.gov/>

Welcome to the GI Bill Web Site

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

What VA Social Workers Do

<http://www1.va.gov/socialwork/page.cfm?pg=3>

WRIISC Patient Eligibility

<http://www.illegion.org/va1.html>

[Sent in by Mike McMillan, A/4/503d]

Last Month's *WHODAT?*



SFC Wheat, A/2/503d, September '66.
(Photo by Robert Guy, A/2/503d)

From the Youngin's



“Staff Sgt. Travis Surber, a native of Franklin County, Va., and a paratrooper with the 173d Brigade Combat Team's Battle Company of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, parachutes out of a C-130 Hercules transport aircraft and into the Ukraine sky. “

(Photo by, who else, Travis Surber)



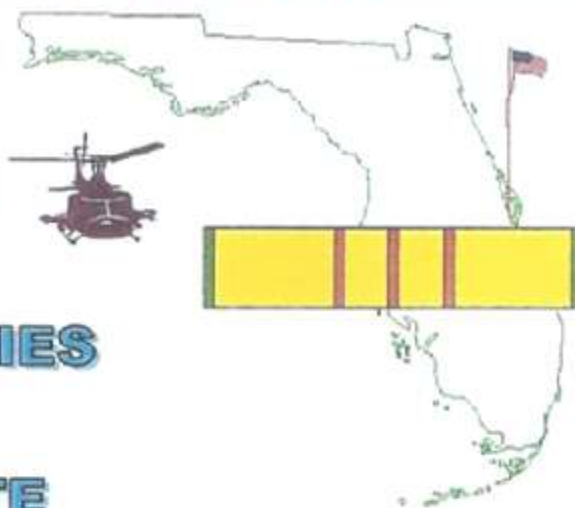
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Also visit the Reunion Web Page at:
floridaveteransreunion.com

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 No Coolers, Glass or Pets allowed
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Daydmmr333@aol.com
 Vendor Information:
dmwassmer@yahoo.com

Echoes from a Distant Battlefield

When First Lieutenant Jonathan Brostrom was killed by Taliban fighters in 2008, while attempting a heroic rescue in a perilously isolated outpost, his war was over. His father's war, to hold the U.S. Army accountable for Brostrom's death, had just begun. And Lieutenant Colonel William Ostlund's war—to defend his own record as commander—was yet to come. With three perspectives on the most scrutinized engagement of the Afghanistan conflict, one that shook the military to its foundations, Mark Bowden learns the true tragedy of the Battle of Wanat.

By Mark Bowden



THE WAR AT HOME The family of Jonathan P. Brostrom, who was killed at Wanat. From left: Brostrom's mother, Mary Jo; his father, David, a retired colonel; and his brother, Blake, a lieutenant.

(Photo by Jonas Fredwall Karlsson)

See story in the December 2011 issue of *Vanity Fair*, Pages 214-237.

[Sent in by Ed Privette, HHC/2/503d]



The Battle of Wanat

The Battle of Wanat occurred on July 13, 2008, when about 200 Taliban guerrillas attacked NATO troops near the village of Wanat in the Waygal district in Afghanistan's far eastern province of Nuristan. The position was defended primarily by U.S. Army soldiers of the 2nd Platoon, Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team.

The Taliban surrounded the remote base and its observation post and attacked it from the village and the surrounding farmland. They destroyed much of the Americans' heavy munitions, broke through U.S. lines, and entered the main base before being repelled by artillery and aircraft. American casualties included nine killed and 27 wounded, while four Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were wounded. The U.S. combat deaths represent the most in a single battle since the start of U.S. operations in 2001.

The Battle of Wanat has been the focus of widespread debate, generating "a great deal of interest and scrutiny among military professionals and from outside observers." This is primarily due to the relatively "significant number of coalition casualties". Several investigations were launched into events leading up to the battle. The initial investigation was completed in August 2008. In July 2009, Senator James Webb requested that the U.S. Army formally investigate the battle and previous investigation. Lieutenant General Richard F. Natonski conducted another investigation in late 2009 which led to orders of reprimand for the chain of command. In June 2010, the U.S. Army revoked the reprimands. They stated that no negligence was involved and said of the soldiers that "by their valor and their skill, they successfully defended their positions and defeated a determined, skillful, and adaptable enemy".



US Army soldiers guard Vehicle Patrol Base (VPB) Kahler the day before the battle.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Wanat.jpg



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AO ROCK

THE BATTLE AT WANAT

By **Bill Ostlund, Col.**
Commander, 2/503d at Wanat



I trained then deployed 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry – The ROCK – for 15 months to rugged, austere, remote, undeveloped, and highly contested Kunar and Nuristan Provinces, Afghanistan adjacent to Pakistan in the Hindu Kush Mountains in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. I am personally and solely responsible for anything viewed as improper or negative that happened in my Area of Operations, AO ROCK, and/or throughout my time in command. I remain emphatically proud of our Paratroopers, The ROCK, our training path, and our cumulative and lasting effects in AO ROCK. In addition, throughout my command, I highlighted the need to remain inextricably linked to our veterans.



Sky Soldiers receive awards for Battle at Wanat:
CPT Myer - SS, SGT Denton - SS, SFC Dzwik - BSMV

Following is a brief description of our tour and some information about Wanat and post-Wanat.

During our tour, The ROCK occupied an area half the size of Connecticut and was dispersed over 15 bases, conducted over 9500 patrols, and was in nearly 1100 engagements with the enemy. The ROCK gained and maintained freedom of movement and had development in 17 of 17 districts as we dispersed 80% of the brigade's development budget. We lost no one killed to an IED, friendly fire, accident, or suicide and lost no aircraft – we recovered an American KIA in another unit's sector after he lay on the ground for nearly 48 hours.

ROCK personnel were awarded more than 400 valor awards, to include the first Medal of Honor awarded to a living Soldier since Vietnam (two are pending), two Distinguished Service Crosses, and 27 Silver Stars; 169 Purple Hearts were awarded – 26 Task Force ROCK members (including a Navy Corpsman and Marine embedded tactical trainer) perished and 143 Paratroopers were wounded. In addition, The ROCK was one of the few units in the GWOT to be awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC), the nation's highest unit award, and I'm told the only unit to also be awarded the Valorous Unit Award (VUA), the nation's second highest unit award, for the same tour.



“Small Arms Failures Contributed to Wanat Debacle”

(Defense Tech)

The Battle of Wanat began on 13 July 2008, less than three weeks before Task Force ROCK was to conclude a well-documented [nearly] 15 month combat tour in Kunar and Nuristan Provinces, Afghanistan. The battle is well documented as we lost nine Paratroopers killed and 27 wounded – the largest loss of life in a single ground battle in Afghanistan. Misinformation about ROCK methods and leader actions in AO ROCK, particularly leading up to and during the Battle of Wanat, was purposefully disseminated in the media and prompted a CENTCOM Investigation.

(continued....)



Echoes from a Distant Battlefield, written by Mark Bowden, accurately if not completely captures the reasons for the misinformation.



Air support over battle site

As a Task Force, like all other Task Forces in Afghanistan, we didn't have everything we needed for the full-spectrum COIN fight we were tasked to affect and we certainly didn't have everything we wanted but we did have a mission and like Paratroopers throughout our Army's history, we did the very best we could with what we had v. what we needed or wanted. I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the fact that we had continuous unparalleled support from our artillery, STB, and BSB brethren – their support mitigated many needs and wants we shared with other Task Forces. ROCK Paratroopers knew a combat tour is from entry into the battle space until exit out; there is no stand down or respite in combat. I/we believed it would be imprudent to lessen activity in the area or lessen pressure on the enemy before a new and less experienced unit is to take responsibility for such a complex and contested AO – thus operations continued through our entire tour.



Army absolves commanders at Wanat Battle
(CBS News video)

The post-battle writings were extensive and include an original investigation (enclosure 36 of the CENTCOM Investigation, located at: http://www.army.mil/article/41241/Wanat_Review/); an agenda driven, purposefully leaked, unofficial (and grossly inaccurate) Combat Studies Institute report written by Doug Cubbison, located at: <http://www.battlefieldtourist.com/content/battle-of-wanat-historical-analysis-rough-draft-release/>; the subsequent *CENTCOM Investigation* led by Marine LTG Natonski and accepted by CENTCOM and the DODIG), located at: http://www.army.mil/article/41241/Wanat_Review/ (same as above); General Campbell's review (unavailable to the public); and an official Combat Studies Institute report – *Wanat, Combat Action in Afghanistan, 2008* is located at: <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/download/csipubs/Wanat.pdf>. *Echoes from a Distant Battlefield* is at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2011/12/battle-of-wanat-201112.print>.

Long after the Battle of Wanat, the chain of command was engaged by persons who sought to discredit The ROCK and make the Paratroopers at Wanat victims of the Taliban and the chain of command. I viewed it as an obligation to ensure the truth and facts were made available to the Army, ROCK Paratroopers, and the families of those that fought and died at Wanat. I organized and forwarded the facts and information to all reviewers – the same information I had made available to each of the investigating bodies. In addition, I sought to protect the honor and reputations of my subordinate leaders and all ROCK Paratroopers. I sought to perpetuate the story of selfless honor and valor of The ROCK – which included ensuring individual Paratroopers and The ROCK were recognized for the effects achieved. Throughout our tour, we received incredible support from ROCK and 173d Veterans. I believe protecting the legacy of The ROCK, and all Sky Soldiers, is an obligation.

The Battle of Wanat was an honorable and heroic tactical victory but the victory was had at a tragically high cost. I did not anticipate the scale of the enemy's attack – nor did any asset or agency in theater. Ultimately, with respect to Wanat I made the best decisions I could based on the information and resources I had at that time. I have soul searched daily, and with objective rigor; given the same information and resources I had in July 2008, I would draw the same conclusions and take the same actions – perhaps tragically.

(continued...)





Sky Soldiers presented awards for bravery during combat action in Afghanistan.

Understanding I was responsible for Paratroopers in combat – and have been in command of our nation's elite counter-terrorism forces since – I appreciate the implications and consequences of decisions I made; I never took (or take) such decisions without careful thought and due consideration. I remain proud of our Paratroopers, The ROCK, our training path, and our cumulative and lasting effects in AO ROCK.

Sky Soldiers and Sky Soldier supporters, thank you for your continuous support of our Paratroopers – they deserve nothing less.

Very Respectfully,

Bill Ostlund



Colonel William B. (Bill) Ostlund is an Army Senior Service College Fellow at Tufts University in Boston, MA. He earned his B.S. degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and an M.A.L.D. degree from Tufts University in Boston, MA. Colonel Ostlund has served in a variety of command and staff positions in the United States, Korea, Europe, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, most notably as commander of 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry in Vicenza, Italy, and Kunar Province, Afghanistan, during Operation Enduring Freedom VIII.



2/503 Nicknames

We can suppose nicknames have been a part of armies since the beginning of armies, and our battalion is no different. Here are nicknames of some of our guys, and in most cases they have nothing to do with the trooper's first or last name:

Airborne	Arne	Aussino	Bazooka	BDQ Roy
Bear	Buzz	Cap	Doc	Dom
Dukes	Eskimo	Frenchy	Fribley	Greek
Griff	Hammer	Hank	Jack	Jackattack
Jake	"JJ"	Joe	Johnny	"K"
Kemp	LT	Luke	Moe	Murf
Nick	Paddy	Pat	Pointman	Ragman
Ranger	Rat	Rob	Robbie	Rock
Rocky	Sarge	Scotty	Shortround	Shorty
Ski	Skid	Smiley	Smitty	Sulli
Tucker	Tulip	Whip	Wild Bill	Wilkie
Wolfman	Woody	Z-Man	Zac	

Military Monikers: According to the American Legion, *"In a world of uniformity and discipline, a nickname can ease the stress, break the tedium and, of course, stick with you for life."*

My personal favorite is of WWII 503rd trooper, Maurice Linton, reported to be a hell of a fighter. But like many troopers, he developed a special knack for catching a few zzz's whenever the opportunity arose. What was the nickname his buddies gave him you ask? But of course, it was *Sleepy*. Ed



Sleepy Linton, 1919-2007
Husband of Margee

Attack...Recover...Attack



Our own B/2/503 RTO and tunnel rate extraordinaire, '65/'66, Larry Paladino during February fencing meet in Detroit.

"Wore baseball pants 'cuz didn't have fencing pants, but not much different anyway. There's no sliding, but when you lunge and don't have good shoes you might do some sliding that won't allow you to get back in your en garde stance. The socks were my fencing socks from the University of Detroit 1962-63 team." ljp

Note: Now, if a VC in a tunnel saw Larry coming at him in his fencing get-up with épée in hand, he'd surely surrender, or die from a heart attack. Ed





INCOMING!



~ Get it Done ~

On Page 37 of last month's issue is a photo of the BULLS (below). Three of those BULLS have died since that photo was taken. The message is: If there is something that needs to be done, do it. If there is someone you need to see, see them. If an apology needs to be made, get it done. We are all getting close to the end of the trail.

Jim Robinson
B/2/503d



2/503 Bravo Bulls

~ Scout Dogs ~

I served with the 39th Platoon Scout Dog (IPSD). The first dog handlers for the 173d arrived in June '66 as the 39th IPSD and were "attached" to the Herd and deactivated in July '71. We worked with all battalions from '66 to '71. I was there '70-'71 at English with dogs named Tiger and Kelly. We have unofficially accounted for 76 war dogs that served with the Herd of which 17 were KIA and officially 8 handlers were KIA. I have hosted the 39th Scout Dog's annual reunion at my place in upstate SC since 2001. Thanks,

Johnny Mayo
39th IPSD



The missing war dog tribute

~ Bob Stammersky....A Recon Trooper ~



Leading the way is Bob with his buddies humping the boonies

Just to let you all know that I attended Bob's Stammersky's funeral in Liberty, MO (Kansas City) this past Friday. Went a day early so went to Bob's Retro Bowl and had a burger and a couple beers, met Bob's wife Margie and had a nice talk. She quickly filled me in on the past 45 years. The visitation was impressive with Bob's Harley friends lining the path to the entrance with American flags, standing at attention in their leathers. Met Bob's son Damian there. After the visitation I attempted to go back to the Retro Bowl for another beer but there wasn't a parking place within blocks so I moved on. Don't know if that was the usual crowd or if they were there for Bob. The funeral was very well attended and after a while I was getting into my car to leave for home when Bob's older brother came up to me (saw my 173d decal on car) and introduced himself. He said Bob often mentioned his time with the Herd in VN. He wanted to know how Sgt (Marcus) Powell was doing. Thought that was nice. He said in recent years Bob talked a lot about guys he was with in VN but his brother couldn't recall names other than Marcus. Thanks Jerry (Hassler) for keeping us updatedSee you all in Lexington.

Dave Kies
Recon/2/503d

[See farewell to Bob on Page 34]



Looking for Buddies

~ About Rusty Engle, A/2/502d ~

Do any of you happen to have any recollection of my brother's friend, **Rusty Engle** from Madison, New Jersey? He joined the 173d in November 1966; he made the combat jump on Feb. 22, 1967; and he was KIA on June 22, 1967, during The Battle of the Slopes at Dak To. He spoke slowly, with a slight southern accent.



Rusty

He played sports in high school, went to college for about a year, and then enlisted. He volunteered for tunnel rat duty. At the time of his death, he was a SP4, and might have been platoon RTO in 2nd or 3rd Platoon, Alpha Company. He was one of two men helicoptered back to the unit from R&R just a day or two before the battle that took his life. If anyone remembers Engle, or the names of any other men who were in his platoon, please contact me by email. Another member of your unit hopes to visit Rusty's sister in March, and it would be great if there were any recollections to share. The photo shown of Rusty was taken from his high school yearbook.

Keith Hale

keith.b.hale@gmail.com

Russel Warren Engle

Specialist Four

A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY, 173RD

ABN BDE, USARV

Army of the United States

Madison, New Jersey

October 04, 1946 to June 22, 1967

RUSSEL W ENGLE is on the Wall at Panel

22E Line 039



**"Army: A body of men
assembled to rectify the
mistakes of the diplomats."**

~ Josephus Daniels

~ Johnny Martinez, C/2/503d ~

I've been looking for a Charlie Company brother whose name is **Johnny Martinez**. He was there in '65/'66. We used to hang around as Charlie Company was just across the way from our mortar pits. I hooked up with him after Nam in Los Angeles. He became a cop with the L.A.P.D. After I moved to Australia we lost contact of course. It is really crazy that most of us didn't bother with addresses or phone numbers on our return. Bloody pity. I've lost brothers who were with me that are no longer with us. All I wanted was to say hello or hear their voices once more. That's why I ring all you guys in the U.S. only for that reason. Love ya brothers,

A.B. (The Aussino) Garcia

HHC/2/503d, 4.2 Platoon

Note: *Aussino* – Nickname given to A.B. by his buddies on a return trip to Vietnam. A cross between an American Chicano and an Aussie Digger.

3/503 LUNCHEON SCHEDULED

Make a note on your calendars: The 3rd Batt in coordination with the National Reunion activities will be holding a Luncheon on 7 Jun 2012 at 11:30 in the Blue Fire Grill in the Hyatt, our reunion hotel in Lexington, KY. The reservation has been made with Emily Dowd, Senior Convention Services Manager, for 30-50 possible attendees with arrangement made for us to order off the existing menu. The prices are really fair.

I will be bringing a Echo Co Guidon. Paul Fisher tells me he will have one for HHC. Don't know at this point whether Mike Switzer will be present with Charlie Co's Guidon and or if Eldon Meade will there with his Charlie Co. We just might have two for Co C.

Now - is there anyone out there in A, B or D with some Airborne Esprit De Corps who might be interested in obtaining and bringing your Guidon? If so, I purchased mine at Benning Awards. It is the real deal. I keep mine on my "I love Me Wall" at home except for when it is at the Reunions.

Mason Branstetter

Nov Plt, D/3/503 Apr-Jun 70

TOC Dty O, Jun-Oct 70

E Co, 3/503 Oct 70 - Apr 71

503.873.3545

mason@silvertonrealty.com



2/503rd Troopers.....They Earned Their Wings



Butch Clark, HHC/2/503d



Barry (Bear) Hart, C/2/503d



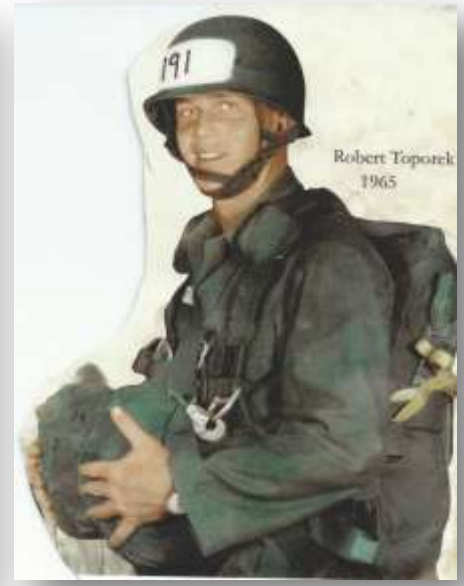
William McKenzie, B/2/503d



Jack (Jackattack) Ribera, A/2/503d



Jim Stanford, B/2/503d



Robert Toporek, B/2/503d

2/503 Troopers, send in a photo of you rigged up in your trusty T-10.



2/503 Troopers...Where Are They Now?

Stephen P. Steets,
B/2/503, was born in
Irvington, New Jersey
on Oct. 4, 1942. He
grew up on the Jersey
Shore in Long Branch,
NJ. He was drafted



into the U.S. Army in December 1964, took basic training at Ft. Dix, NJ, AIT at Fort Gordon, GA, and volunteered for airborne training *for the easy money* (jump pay). He was sent from jump school at Ft. Benning, GA to the 173d Airborne Bde (Sep) at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam and assigned to B/2/503 in June 1965. Steve was WIA on 2 January 1966, during Op Marauder, recovered from severe head and shoulder wounds at Long Binh Hospital and returned to service with the Bulls in Feb. 1966. He was reassigned to the WORLD in June 1966, and discharged from the Army at Ft Riley, KS in Sept. 1966, taking an early out to attend college. He studied at Monmouth College in West Long Branch, NJ for one year and transferred to California State University, Long Beach. He got married, and with a little help from the GI Bill and a lot of help from Loreta, his very loving wife, worked full time jobs at McDonnell Douglas and then Sothern California Edison Co. while taking night classes at Cal State Long Beach. Steve earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1972, and started a career in Research and Development with the U.S. Army Communications Electronics Command in Ft. Monmouth, N.J., specializing mainly in switching systems and command and control systems. While raising two beautiful daughters, he worked on state of the art communications equipment, participated in numerous field exercises, developmental equipment demos and command and control system demos at sites such as the National Training Center Fort Irwin, Fort Huachuca, Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Fort Carson, Fort Leavenworth, Fort Hood, Fort Lewis, White Sands Missile Range, McDill AFB, and several exercises in Germany. He engineered the first ever packet switching overlay on existing tactical army communication systems (few people realize the significance of that accomplishment). In 1987, at Operation Bright Star in Egypt, the packet switching overlay was first demon-strated in a multi-service, multi-national exercise. Towards the end of his career his work was involved with biometric I/O devices for computer systems. Steve retired in October 2002, grandfathered a boy and a girl and, finally came to the realization that *Life is Good*. Now Steve spends his time not doing whatever he doesn't want to do, living that good life with his family in West Long Branch, NJ, and *waiting for the Prize Patrol*.

Brothers at The Wall



The guy on the left is Bob 'Chopper' Gore, yes Jim's older brother. As you can tell he's all Herd -- a Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon, B/2/503, '69-'70, my Riding Brother. I was 2nd Platoon, B/2/503, '67-'68. We found each other in a bar one night while out riding. We didn't start out together but have been attached at the waist ever since, from June '07 I guess. The other guy is Danny Little. He was on a C130 or a 141 on his way to Okinawa with some other Herd attachments when his plane did a sharp right turn and landed in Bien Hoa. Well, he ended up with the 101st with a Bronze Star. Bob is also a hero with a Bronze Star. Bob and I were amazed at how similar *ALL* the guys in his album looked so familiar to us...concluding that a Dog Face is a Dog Face. Faces of war and men don't change, not even the names change. Are we Soldiers of Time who Return to Fight War after War, since Ancient Times?

Richard "Airborne" Martinez
B/2/503d



2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam

~ All Years ~

Years ago I began a project to collect photos taken in Vietnam by 2/503 buddies who served in-country during 1966. Figuring most of us took only a handful of snapshots while there, it seemed a good idea to capture as many pictures as possible before they went missing forever (death and divorce have already claimed many). I also believed our individual photos were not really our own but belonged to us all, and should be saved for posterity and shared within our ranks.

Within a short while, hundreds of photos were collected, with the intent of producing a not-for-profit, printed pictorial all of us could have and pass along to our families, but only for that one year. Being a novice at the computer, much of what was collected was lost due to operator ineptness and a major computer failure.

Today, computer skills have improved, and backup systems are in place. Further, the capabilities to collect, manage and reproduce photos for all years the 2/503d served in Vietnam are also in place. Plus, given the wonders of the internet, the need to produce an expensive, hard-copy of such a pictorial has become unnecessary.

A determined effort will be undertaken to produce the *2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam*, a pictorial covering all years in-country. Once completed, our photo history will be emailed to all 2/503 troopers or their surviving family members for whom we have email contacts. You will then have the option of printing the entire document or only those pages of interest to you.

To have your 2/503 Vietnam photos included, please email all your photos to me as JPEGs to rto173d@cfl.rr.com Where you can, please include names, dates and brief descriptive info, maybe a line or two of text per photo. If that info isn't available, still send your photos. The quality of photos and lack of redundancy will determine which pictures are included in our pictorial.

If you prefer sending pictures on a computer disk or as hard copies, you can mail them to the address below. Please do not send originals or copies which must be returned.

Lew Smith
801 Maple Ridge Drive
Merritt Island, FL 32952

This project will likely take a number of months to complete. Periodic updates will be included in future issues of our newsletter on the progress we're making.

Your photos will be used only for this purpose, or some for inclusion in future issues of our newsletter. No photos will be made available to anyone without your permission, other than in the finished free pictorial. I'm hoping some of our Bde PIO guys will share their great 2/503 photos with us. We'll also attempt to obtain pictures from Army Archives.

Thanks guys. I hope your Vietnam pics will be part of this important historical work.

We try harder, All the Way!

Smitty Out
HHC/2/503, '65/'66

More Info:

By producing the pictorial as a document to be emailed, future additions of photos will be easy to incorporate. We'll invite technical assistance to help us determine the best layout and presentation of photos in year order and alphabetized by trooper name. The following four pages are one example of how pictures might be displayed in our *2/503 Photo History*.



2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam 1965

Jim Robinson, FO, B/2/503, Collection



Bravo in the rubber trees, first home in-country of 2/503d.



LT Jim, on the scene.



L-R: B Company CO CPT Roy Lombardo,
SSGT David Howard (KIA), Bn CO LTC George Dexter



Dust Off. One of the first of countless to come.



Miss Vietnam. The "D" Zone.



2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam 1966

Jack Ribera, A/2/503, Collection



Jack Ribera (L) and Gary Wake
Camp Zinn



Carlos Perez, "under our chute"



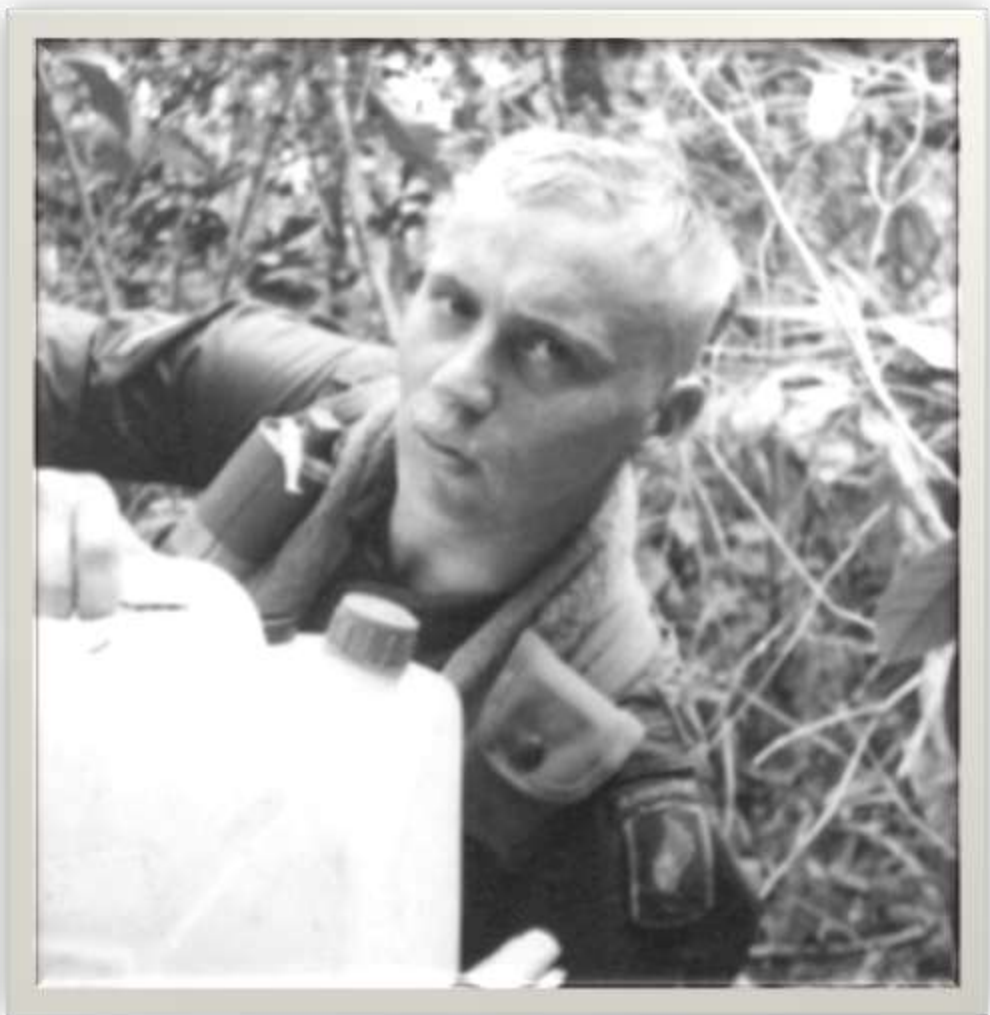
Jon Linx in front of bulletin board at Zinn



Operation Hardiwood, Vung Tau



WIA at aid station in Xuan Loc



Jack in the boonies



2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam 1967

Jerry Hassler, HHC/Recon/2/503, Collection



Briefing at DZ Charlie, Operation Junction City.



CPT Brown, Sgt. Dockery, SP4 Hassler & LT Shelby.



Jerry by his hooch in the jungle.



Mike Hargadon & Jerry at ARVN airborne facility in Saigon.



Manfred W. Dee



MSGT Stephenson



Maggio & Jim "Skid" Skidmore

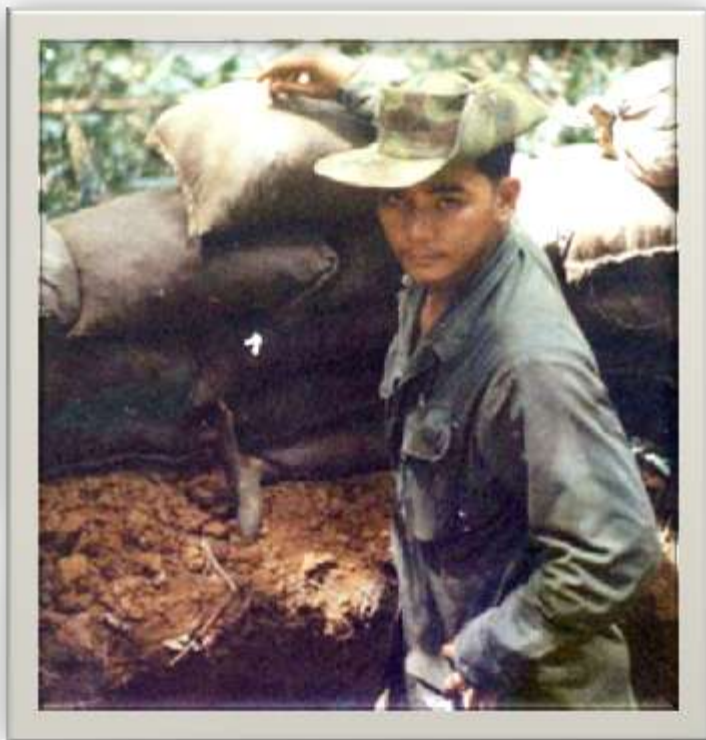


2/503 Photo History ~ Vietnam 1968

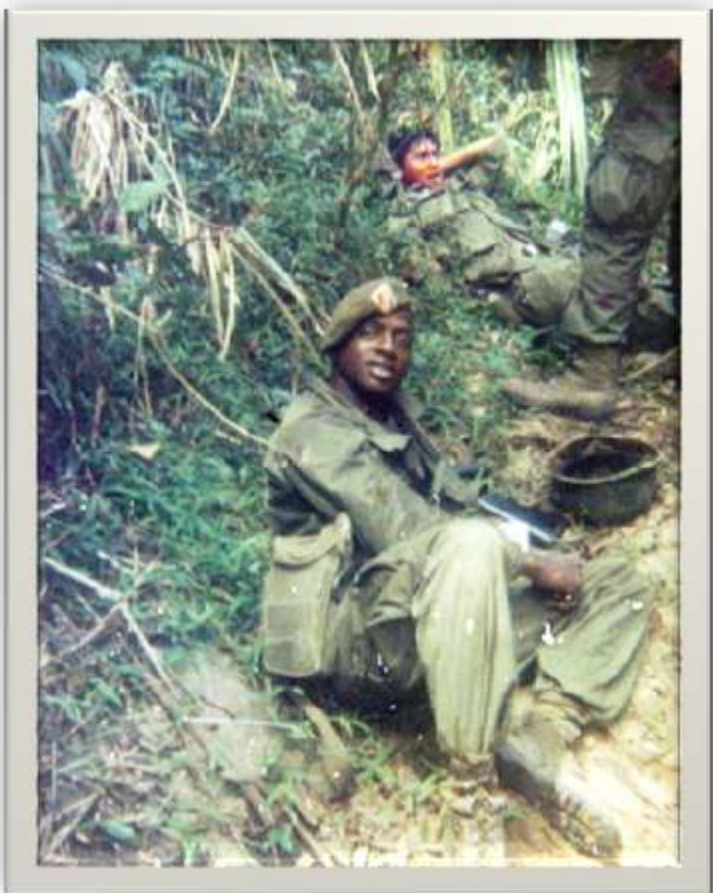
Gary Prisk, C/D/2/503, Collection



C/2/503, 2nd platoon point team, Bong Son paddies



2-man foxhole... Kontum: note aiming sandbags at front rim. Unknown trooper, might be "Mex"



Kontum Province, a Chargin' Charlie.



SSGT Burns being hog-tied by CPT Gary Prisk's "Hill People" before leaving for the World.

