

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

**WE TRY
HARDER!**

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



August 2012, Issue 44

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm



REUTERS/Yuri Gripas



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Chaplain's Corner

Putting Holes in the Darkness



Cap

It's good to be back with you! Maybe there are some things that crash in on your schedule and you say "I wish I could get out of that or put it off!" Got to tell you that working on this column is certainly not that kind of chore. I enjoy the opportunity to share with you, and yes, I probably get more out of this than you do!

Recall we're using Shakespeare's words, "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers", as our theme for this series of articles that I have the privilege to share with you. If you have thoughts or ideas about this and where we should go, please drop me a note or call. Thanks.

In our three previous articles we've walked through "Band of Brothers", "Got Your 6", and "Leave No One Behind." In this article I'd like you to walk with me as we think about and hopefully commit ourselves to "Putting Holes in the Darkness." There is a Scripture that should serve as an intro to this message: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 NKJV). Now, here's a story I'd like to share with you which follows that Scripture and one which challenges me, for sure. It came from a devotion I use each morning and I'll tell you about it at the bottom. But, here is how it reads...

"One night when Robert Louis Stevenson was a small boy, his nanny called him to come to bed. Oblivious to her summons, he was staring at something outside his nursery window. The nanny walked over, stood at his shoulder, and inquired patiently, 'Robert, what are you looking at?' The little boy replied, without taking his eyes away from the window, exclaiming in wonder as he pointed to the lamplighter who was lighting the streetlamp, 'Look, Nanny! That man is putting holes in the darkness.'" (a)

We might not be able to change the problems, conditions and needs of our city, state or even our chapter, but surely we can put a hole in the darkness. We can help fill the needs that exist there. What about the widow who is struggling to raise her children, or the

spouse who is looking after a wounded warrior? Might we not put a hole in the darkness that weights her down? Isn't there a wounded warrior (Iraq, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Korea or WWII) who needs help getting to the hospital, the doctor, the store, the chapter meeting or just to get outdoors? Just maybe we can help, *turn on the light and help.*

I remember coming home from one of the 173d Abn Reunions and while waiting for transportation, I spent a few minutes with the president of our Association, Roy Scott. He shared with me a thought I'll never forget. "All saints have a past and all sinners have a future," he said. I believe we're called to reach out and share the gospel. Of course, that does take a little courage – right? A good friend of mine from schooldays (Duke – a Marine – oh well), shared with me what it means and takes to have courage. He used Joshua as an example and used these words from the Bible, "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor dismayed for the Lord will be with you where you go." (Joshua 1:90)

Duke then went on to say, "We military guys know the importance and need to be strong (fit)...mentally, morally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically...and that could preach by itself. And we all want to be courageous. But, why did God need to remind Joshua to be courageous? Because we all get scared and feel inadequate at times for the tasks before us. And then there is the fact that courage is not just a battlefield requirement. We all need to 'man up' in everyday life. As fathers, leaders, bosses, husbands, or just being God's man in everything we do."

"Turn on the light! Share what Jesus means to you and give God's Word to someone else...not everyone has been attracted to the Light, but one by one people have come to Him for truth, wisdom, salvation, and eternal life." (a)

Would you agree that each of us has been called to reach out and to serve? Maybe you'd also agree that the answer for *who* is being called is something we both acknowledge -- because those being called are...

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

Rev. Jack Kelley, LTC (Ret)

CO A/2/503d, '66

910-488-0165, JackTKelley@aol.com

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Kit Carson Scout Frees Troop

By PFC Paul Sheehan

BONG SON — A former Viet Cong Officer recently saved the life of a Paratrooper who was caught in a deadly booby trap. Nguyen Thanh a Kit Carson Scout, crawled 30 feet to clip a trip wire entangled in the boots of SP4 Charles W. Scudder of Kansas City, Mo. *"I was moving toward a gap in a hedgerow when it happened,"* said Scudder. *"I pushed aside a bamboo stick, took a couple of steps and heard a sharp click. All I could think of was booby trap!"*

Stood Rigid

Scudder then looked down and saw a thin strand of wire caught on his left boot and twisted behind his right foot. Keeping his cool, Scudder turned his head to the soldier behind him. *"I think I'm in a booby trap,"* he said. *"Get some help."* For the next 20 minutes the 25-year-old paratrooper with Alpha Company, 2/503d Infantry waited rigidly in place afraid that the slightest twitch might set off the bomb. The area surrounding Scudder was cleared of all troops and an Explosives Ordnance team was summoned.

Examine Trip Wire

"My feet were stationary but I think my knees were knocking," recalled Scudder afterward. *"I tried smoking a cigarette."*

The explosives experts moved in and examined the wire, but were unable to see the trap because of camouflage. It was then that Thanh, a former VC Company Commander who had rallied to the Allied Forces, arrived and inspected the situation. The 38-year-old Thanh urged SP4 Scudder to remain rigid and backed off quickly.

Minutes later Thanh returned to the area with a pair of scissors. However, fearing that Scudder might set off the bomb at any second, this time the Kit Carson Scout inched forward on his belly. Reaching Scudder, he slipped his hand between the Paratrooper's legs, and with a simple clip of the scissors cut the trip wire.

Together Thanh and Scudder inspected the disengaged trap before Thanh disarmed it. Called a butterfly bomb, the trap was rigged so that the wire would pull a piece of wood allowing the trap to snap shut and detonate the charge -- Scudder heard the small stick slip from its position and stopped in time to keep it from completely dislodging. The slightest movement and the stick would have slipped out.



SAVES LIFE – Charles W. Scudder of Alpha Company, 2/503d Infantry, clasps Kit Carson Scout, Nguyen Thanh, who freed the paratrooper from the jaws of an armed booby trap. (Photo by PFC Paul Sheehan)

"I'm glad to be of help to the American troops," said Thanh who was once trained to set up similar traps. *"I will gladly go out of my way to teach them anything I know."* After freeing Scudder, Thanh found four more booby traps in the area.

Thanh was killed a few days later on a similar mission.

[Source: *Fire Base 173*, 16 September 1968]

American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong is calling on Congress to pass a new version of the Stolen Valor Act, one that would stand up to constitutional scrutiny. The U.S. Supreme Court issued a "plurality" ruling Thursday morning, a 6-3 decision that protects those who lie about their military experiences, including those who falsely claim to have received combat wounds and medals, in order to advance their careers.



"While we are obviously saddened and aggrieved by the overall decision in this case, we felt good about the portions of the decision which suggest that a more narrowly tailored bill, which incorporates traditional fraud elements, would be upheld," Wong said. *"Since the vast bulk of the more notorious valor thieves engage in this to gain something of value as a result, they will not be able to claim legal immunity once a new bill is passed."*



~ Story Behind the Mustang ~



This yellow Mustang was on display during the 173d Airborne Brigade Association reunion this past June in Lexington, KY. It was originally purchased by Michael Lehmillier, who was killed in action on 21 August 2005 while serving with the 2/503d of the 173d ABCT in Afghanistan. As a tribute to and in honor and memory of his son, Robert Lehmillier transformed the automobile into this moving memorial. (Photos by Lin Basham, daughter of WWII 503rd Trooper, Ray Basham)

Sgt. Michael Robert Lehmillier, 23, of Tampa, passed away August 21, 2005 in Afghanistan from injuries he received during hostile fire. He was born in Tampa, and was preceded in death by his grandparents, Charles and June Faraci, and Doug and Donna Vest. He is survived by his loving mother, Gail Michaels (Paul); sister, Shelly Castro (Noriel); niece, Amber Castro; stepbrother, Paul Michaels Jr.; stepsister, Christie Kirkendoll; father, Robert Lehmillier; stepsister, Crystal Clark (Jared); brothers, William and Elliott Lehmillier. He is also survived by all of his Army buddies, and many friends, aunts and uncles.



~ IT IS THE SOLDIER ~

*It is the Soldier not the Reporter
who has given us Freedom of the press*

*It is the Soldier not the Poet who has given us
Freedom of speech*

*It is the Soldier not the Campus organizer who
gives Us the freedom to demonstrate*

*It is the Soldier who salutes The flag, who
serves beneath The flag, and whose coffin
is Draped by the flag, who allows
The protester to burn the flag.*



From *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, December 4, 1965

No Bunny for B Co.

CHICAGO (UPI) – Playboy magazine had had news Thursday for B Co.—no bunny.

B Co., 2d Bn, 503d Inf, 173d Airborne Brigade, now stationed in the Republic of Vietnam, bought a lifetime subscription to the magazine, because an advertisement said that such subscriptions' first copy is delivered personally by a Playboy bunny.

So they subscribed and asked the magazine "how about it?"

Said Playboy today: "We can't send a girl."



Playboy Playmate of the Year Joe Collins passing in review of Bravo Bulls at Camp Zinn, 1966.



Jo visiting WIA

~ Birthdays Ain't No Bull ~

(July birthday wishes from former B/2/503 CO, Les Brownlee, to his former RTO, Larry Paladino)

Larry,
Congratulations on your birthday! I didn't know that we almost shared birthdays as mine was yesterday. Thanks for all you did for me in humping my radio through a bunch of tough times many years ago. You and "Cotanch" were the absolute best at that and I think many times about the great job that you all did for me and B Company. One of the toughest decisions I ever made was selecting which of you got to kiss our Playmate, Jo Collins. As we walked off the LZ, and approached her (and all the press), I knew it couldn't be me so I had to pick someone – I quickly narrowed the choice down to my two RTO's. I think I reached back and selected you. Who knew I would make you world-famous!! Anyway, all the best to you and thanks again for your great service to your country many years ago in a country far away. All the best, Les

Les Brownlee, COL (Ret)

CO B/2/503d

Former Acting Secretary of the Army



2/503 Bravo Bull Larry Paladino & Playmate Jo Collins 1966.
"Just following orders."





San Diego 173d Airborne Association

"Supporting Our Wounded Warrior Fund Raiser"

Dinner Dance, Saturday, August 25, 2012

American Legion Post 149, Escondido, CA



Pre-Registration Required for Saturday

~ What ~

Saturday Dinner and Dance tickets: \$12.00 per person

Social time starts at 2:00 pm in Club Room

Dinner seating at 4:30 pm, Main Hall

~ When & Where ~

Saturday, August 25, 2012

Posting of the Colors at 5:00 pm

Dinner at 5:15 pm

Dance at 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm

American Legion

230 Park Avenue

Escondido, CA 92025

1-760-745-1159

~ Directions ~

North County Hwy 5 or 15 South, to Hwy 78 East to Broadway. Right on Broadway two blocks. Left on Park Avenue, half block to American Legion.

~ Hotels ~

Please make your own reservations and verify room rate.



Motel 6

(\$53-\$59)

(760-745-9252)

Super 8

(\$79-\$89)

(760-747-3711)

Best Value

(\$75-\$78)

(760-745-9252)

Other Events ~ Pay These at Door

Sunday Post Breakfast (7:30 am to 10:30 am)

Club Room Open 10:00 am

Contact for Information

Gilbert Reynoso, Chapter President

Phn: 1-760-294-8741

Cell: 1-760-500-1944

E-mail: g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com

~ Registration Form ~

For Saturday, Aug. 25th

(Please Print & Copy Form for Additional Names)

Name: _____

Unit: _____

Guest 1: _____

Guest 2: _____

Guest 3: _____

Guest 4: _____

Address: _____

City _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is my check for ___ people at \$12. Per Person
in the total amount of: \$_____

Please make check payable and mail to:

San Diego 173d Airborne Association

2400 W. Valley Parkway

Sp# 24

Escondido, CA 92029

*Come and enjoy the fun....&
Support Our Wounded Warriors*



TOP SECRET

(Declassified, photos added)

THE HISTORY OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

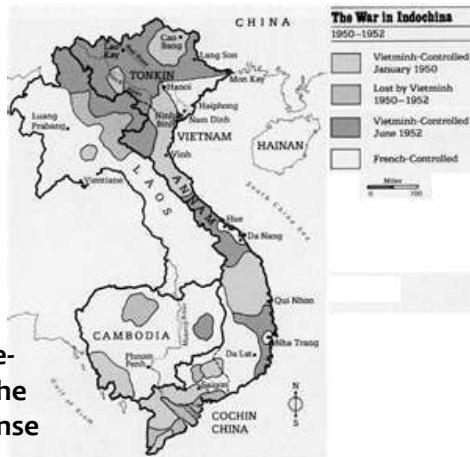
THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM 1971 – 1973

By Willard J. Webb
Historical Division, Joint Secretariat
Joint Chiefs of Staff



As the year 1971 began, the US involvement in Vietnam was over twenty years old and US troops had been fighting there for more than six years. To that point, 44,249 members of the US armed forces had lost their lives in hostile action in a war that had cost the United States an estimated \$104.4 billion. Moreover, the war had stirred great political dissent at home and reaped public criticism of the United States around the world from friends and enemies alike.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had participated in the decisions on Vietnam from the very start of the US commitment. At each stage in the deepening involvement, they gave the Secretary of Defense and the President their opinions and recommendations and, once the combat phase began, they directed the operations. But the ultimate objective in Vietnam was a political one and, in the final decisions, political rather than military factors prevailed. This was true not only in the period when the United States gave only assistance and advice but subsequently when the United States was engaged in ground and air combat in Vietnam.



The US commitment in Vietnam dated back to 1950 when the United States began a program of economic and military aid for Indochina. The military portion was channeled through the French to assist in building indigenous Indochinese forces to oppose the communist-controlled Viet Minh who were fighting to oust the French of Indochina. President Truman and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had hoped this aid would prevent Indochina from falling under communist domination. The initial contingent of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), consisting of 38 US Army, Navy, and Air Force officers and men, arrived in Vietnam during August 1950.



The Viet Minh

Despite the US assistance, the French position in Indochina deteriorated during the next several years. An international conference of concerned nations meeting in Geneva considered the Indochina problem during the spring and early summer of 1954. The resulting Accords, signed on 20 July 1954, confirmed the independence of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which France had already granted, and provided for an end to hostilities throughout all three Indochinese states.

With regard to Vietnam, the Geneva Accords divided the country along the 17th Parallel with the Viet Minh regrouping to the north and the French forces to the south. No new foreign military personnel or equipment would be introduced into Vietnam and an International Control Commission would ensure compliance. Further, the question of a final political settlement for all of Vietnam was to be resolved by internationally-supervised elections two years hence.

(continued...)



The United States did not sign the Accords, but did pledge to respect them.

The Geneva Accords ended the French control of Indochina. Thereafter, the Vietnam, pro-Western factions formed the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) below the 17th parallel under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem while, to the north, the Viet Minh established the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. But the communists did not abandon their objectives of taking over all of Vietnam, and the insurgents remained active in the south. As a consequence, the provisions of the Geneva Accords for political settlement in Vietnam were never implemented, and Vietnam remained divided. The United States provided the Republic of Vietnam military assistance under the terms of the Accords. The objective was to build an indigenous South Vietnamese armed force that could meet both the continuing internal insurgency and the external threat from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.



Ngo Dinh Diem meets with Ike in the U.S. The Vietnamese president's fate would soon be written.

The latter years of the decade of the 1950s brought a period of relative calm to Vietnam and the Republic of Vietnam appeared to be succeeding in controlling the communist insurgency. But beneath this calm, the insurgents, now called the Viet Cong, were carefully organizing and planning and by 1957 had launched a campaign of terrorism and subversion. Encouraged and supported by Ho Chi Minh and his government to the north, the Viet Cong slowly, but steadily, increased their activities and were ready for full-scale warfare against the Republic of Vietnam by the beginning of 1960. Evidence of this turn of events came in January 1960 when the Viet Cong successfully attacked a RVN regimental command post in Tay Ninh.

In the succeeding months, the Viet Cong pressed ahead with their campaign and the situation in South Vietnam continued to deteriorate. The Geneva Accords had restricted the presence of foreign military personnel in Vietnam and, to this stage, the United States had meticulously limited the number of military advisers sent to Vietnam. Now, however, the United States increased military assistance to the Republic of Vietnam, supplying additional equipment and more advisers, and soon all pretense of compliance with the Geneva restrictions was abandoned.



Soldiers and civilians helped the war effort by taking supplies south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail (1959).

Still the military situation deteriorated and, in November 1961, President Kennedy approved greatly expanded assistance for South Vietnam on condition that President Diem would carry out various internal political and social reforms. Specifically, the United States undertook actions to increase the airlift available to the South Vietnamese, to improve air reconnaissance and air-ground support, to supply better coastal surveillance and control, to enhance the RVN intelligence capabilities, and to train paramilitary forces. Although no US combat forces were involved, US advisers, for the first time, began to accompany RVN forces on combat missions. Consequently, the United States experienced the first casualties as the result of hostile action in Vietnam in 1961.

(continued...)



The President's November 1961 decisions governed the pattern of US involvement in Vietnam well into 1963, and the United States sent vast quantities of materiel and increasing numbers of US advisers. The rapidly expanding US presence in Vietnam required revised command arrangement, and on 8 February 1962 the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV), replaced the MAAG. The new organization was a subordinate unified command under the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who in turn reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the new commander, COMUSMACV, exercised operational command over all US military forces in Vietnam.

President Diem never carried out the promised internal reforms, and any military progress achieved in South Vietnam by 1963 was dissipated by the growing political turmoil and opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem. The dissatisfaction culminated in a coup and the assassination of the South Vietnamese President on 1 November 1963, but the removal of Diem did not bring political stability to the Republic of Vietnam. The Viet Cong took advantage of the situation, increasing military activity throughout South Vietnam, and North Vietnam stepped up assistance to the insurgents in the south.

To meet the worsening situation, the United States augmented existing efforts and undertook additional ones during the early months of 1964 to assist the Republic of Vietnam. Specifically included was support for the South Vietnamese pacification program to win control of the countryside. It was at this point that the United States began to consider possible retaliatory action, including air strikes, against North Vietnam.

General William C. Westmoreland, USA, who became COMUSMACV on 20 June 1964, immediately requested almost 5,000 additional forces and more cargo aircraft and helicopters to give the RVN forces increased logistics and airlift support. The request was quickly approved with the added troops arriving in Vietnam during the period August 1964 through February 1965. When the movement was complete, the United States had more than 23,000 men in Vietnam.

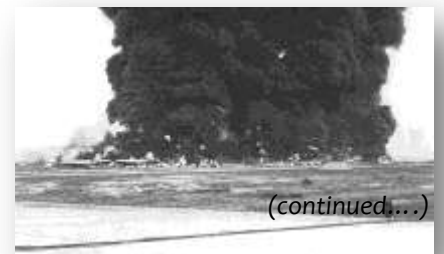


Westmoreland at an outpost in Vietnam, May 1964.

Meantime, on 2 August 1964, and again two days later, North Vietnamese patrol craft had attacked US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam. In retaliation, the United States carried out air strikes against targets in North Vietnam. In further reaction to the North Vietnamese attacks, President Johnson asked the Congress for and received, with only two dissenting votes, authority *"to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."*

During the fall of 1964, political instability in South Vietnam continued and the Viet Cong showed no letup in their drive to take over the country. A Viet Cong attack on 1 November on Bien Hoa Air Base outside of Saigon, which killed four US servicemen and wounded 72 more, brought an immediate recommendation by the field commanders and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for reprisals against North Vietnam. President Johnson did not approve such action, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff and CINCPAC proceeded with plans for both retaliatory strikes and an extended air campaign against North Vietnam to check the continuing flow of war materiel to the south.

Burning Aircraft on ramp at Bien Hoa AB after explosion.



(continued...)



By the beginning of 1965, the communists seemed headed toward victory in South Vietnam. Political turmoil hindered the effectiveness of the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong clearly held the initiative. They controlled one quarter of the population and half of the territory of South Vietnam. No longer restricting themselves to hit-and-run tactics, they were beginning to operate in regiment-size forces, portending a more intense phase of the war. Materiel support of the Viet Cong flowed in by land and sea from the north in increasing quantities, and captured documents and other sources indicated that policy direction and strategy came from Hanoi as well. Moreover, by January 1965, though still undetected by the US and South Vietnamese forces, regular North Vietnamese units were in the south for the first time. Clearly, stronger action would be needed if South Vietnam was to be prevented from falling under communist domination.

On 7 February 1965, the Viet Cong shelled a US adviser compound and airfield at Pleiku, killing eight US military personnel, wounding 108 others, and destroying 20 US aircraft. This time a JCS recommendation for reprisal was heeded, and the United States responded with air strikes in the lower portion of North Vietnam, the movement of a HAWK missile battalion to Vietnam, and the evacuation of all US dependents from Vietnam. Another Viet Cong attack against a US installation at Qui Nhon three days later brought the US decision for a sustained bombing campaign against the north. After several delays, regular bombing of North Vietnam began on 2 March 1965. Nicknamed ROLLING THUNDER, the initial missions were against military targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam.

Facing the threat of continuing Viet Cong attack of US installations, as well as possible North Vietnamese reprisals against the ROLLING THUNDER bombing, General Westmoreland wanted US combat troops to protect US personnel and installations. Accordingly, in mid-February 1965, the United States began deployment of combat forces to Vietnam. In the following several months, both US Marine Corps and Army troops were sent, raising the US force level in Vietnam to more than 50,000 men by early June. In July, further deployments were approved to provide a force of approximately 187,000 men by the end of the year. Accompanying this buildup came the decision to commit US forces to combat operations in South Vietnam. As early as 22 April 1965, a small patrol of US Marines and RVN troops engaged in a fire fight with the Viet Cong near Da Nang and by June US forces were regularly participating in search and destroy missions.



Operation 'Rolling Thunder'. B-52 Stratofortress over Vietnam.

From mid-1965 through early 1968, the United States waged a full-scale war in South Vietnam and a gradually expanding air campaign against the north. In that period, US troops strength rose to almost 500,000 men and the ROLLING THUNDER bombing grew from initial strikes against military targets in the lower part of North Vietnam to unlimited bombing throughout the entire country except for prohibited areas around Hanoi and Haiphong and a buffer zone along the Chinese border.

(continued...)



2/503 troopers sailing to Vietnam for 'temporary duty', 1965. (Jim "Top" Dresser, A/HHC/2/503d, photos)



During these years, the United States followed a policy of gradualism with the escalation proceeding in steps. At each one the President, usually against the advice of the Joint Chief of Staff, limited the US commitment only to decide some months later that additional US forces or expanded bombing, or both, were needed to force the enemy to cease his aggression. But, by the time these actions were implemented, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had similarly increased their strength.

Nonetheless, the military situation in South Vietnam by the beginning of 1968 had been turned around. The US and South Vietnamese forces now held the initiative. They had pushed enemy main forces back to border areas, and enemy control of the population and territory had been slowly but steadily reduced. Even so, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese showed no readiness to give up the struggle. Both public and private initiatives by the United States had been bluntly rejected in the years 1965 through 1967.

Dramatic evidence of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese determination came in February 1968. During the Tet holiday, enemy forces launched massive surprise attacks throughout South Vietnam. The offensive was quickly repulsed at great cost to the enemy, but the sudden show of enemy strength, combined with the shock the offensive engendered in the United States and around the world, proved a psychological victory for the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Public disenchantment in the United States with the war, which had grown steadily as the US combat involvement increased, reached new heights.



Tet Offensive begins in 1968.

President Johnson now decided on a major change in US policy. In late March 1968, he halted further large troop deployments to South Vietnam, limited the bombing of North Vietnam, and called for

negotiations to end the war. Further, to preclude his quest for peace from becoming involved in the forthcoming US presidential campaign, President Johnson decided not to seek reelection. Accordingly, the bombing of North Vietnam was restricted to the area below 20 degrees north and the United States and North Vietnam began talks in Paris in May. The talks quickly deadlocked on procedural matters, and in a further effort to stimulate meaningful negotiations, President Johnson suspended all bombing of North Vietnam on 31 October 1968, five days before the US presidential election. At that time, he also announced the expansion of the talks to include both the Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF), the political arm of the Viet Cong.



“In Washington yesterday with a draft peace proposal.”

Richard Nixon assumed the presidency in January 1969 convinced that the United States must end its involvement in Vietnam. The ever spiraling expenditures required by the US presence there were needed for other programs and the American public no longer supported the war. The one question, and a major one, was how to withdraw from Vietnam without sacrificing South Vietnam to communist domination. President Nixon decided upon a two-faceted approach: the United States would proceed with negotiations in the hope of reaching a political agreement; failing that, the United States would rely on Vietnamization -- building up the South Vietnamese forces to assume the combat responsibility while gradually withdrawing US military forces.

(continued...)



Accompanying this policy decision came a slight, but subtle, change in the US objective in South Vietnam. No longer did the United States call for defeat of the Viet Cong-North Vietnamese aggression and attainment of a “stable non-communist government” in South Vietnam. Rather the United States now sought the “opportunity” for the South Vietnamese to determine their own political future from “outside interference.”

In implementation of this new policy, the United States proceeded with the Paris talks throughout 1969 and 1970 and made several secret initiatives as well, but North Vietnam showed little interest in a negotiated settlement. Consequently, the United States moved forward with Vietnamization. Improvement of the South Vietnamese forces was accelerated and, in July 1969 the United States began the first withdrawal of forces and had removed slightly more than 205,000 by the end of 1970.



1971 Vietnam War protest/march.

Now, at the beginning of 1971, the United States was well on the way to reducing its combat involvement in Vietnam. In the months ahead, the United States would undoubtedly proceed with the negotiations and, in the absence of a political agreement, would press on with improvement of the RVN forces while continuing its troop withdrawals. But despite the reduction of forces, the United States was no nearer to ending the fighting or achieving free choice for the people of South Vietnam to decide their own future than when the combat commitment was undertaken. The enemy was, apparently, willing and ready to carry on the war as long as necessary to achieve his goals. Obviously, something was needed to dissuade him from prolonging the fighting. One possibility was action to stem the continuing flow of supplies from North Vietnam. Since a return to the bombing of North Vietnam was unlikely for political reasons, there was the alternative of destroying the supplies as they moved through Lao and Cambodia. This had been the purpose of the US and RVN invasion of Cambodia during May and June 1970, and some sort of similar operation into Laos was a prospect in the coming months. //

The war begins for the 173d Yanks and their Digger buddies...

U.S., AUSSIE TROOPS JOIN VIET CONG HUNT



“American helicopters leave the landing zone in the D zone, 30 miles north of Saigon, as paratroopers of the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade move out through tall grass at the beginning of an operation against the Viet Cong. Australian and Republic of Vietnam troops also took part in the operation.” (AP Radiophoto)

SAIGON (UPI) – U.S. paratroopers and Australian infantrymen converged in a giant pincer movement in War Zone D, 30 miles north of Saigon.

They were working with two Republic of Vietnam battalions in an effort to trap a large guerrilla force which overran Dong Xoai two weeks ago.

As of early Wednesday, however, the guerrillas appeared to be successfully eluding the net and only light contact was being reported.

The 1st Bn. Royal Australian Regt., commanded by Lt. Col. I.R. Brumfield, was helilifted into the combat zone, south of Bien Hoa late Tuesday after being held in reserve for a day.

They occupy the right flank in the combined task force of more than 2,000 troops.

The offensive was launched Monday into the communist infested Viet Cong D Zone with a massive helilift by more than 120 U.S. Army choppers and 10 Vietnamese helicopters carrying elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade and Vietnamese paratroopers....

[Cover story & photo *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Tue., July 1, 1965]



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~



“Parachutes Over Pittsburgh”, 2012 Convention,
August 8-11, 2012, Monroeville/Pittsburgh, PA.

Contact:

Tommy Thompson, 724-206-0290
Eml: 82paratrooper@comcast.net



101st Airborne Division Association 67th Annual Reunion, August 14-17, 2012. Marriott Nashville Airport, Nashville, TN.

Contact:

Phn: 931-431-0199



2nd International Paratrooper Reunion, August 17-19, 2012, The Interessengemeinschaft Fallschirmjäger n.e. V, Leipziger Chaussee 111, Am Flugplatz, 39120 Magdeburg.

Contact:

Eml: http://www.paratroops-reunion.de/html/home_.html



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
Eml: youngncy@comcast.net



San Diego 173d Airborne Association, Dinner/Dance,
August 25, 2012, Escondido, CA. See Page 6 for more information.

Contact:

Gilbert Reynoso, Chapter President
Phn: 1-760-294-8741
Cell: 1-760-500-1944
E-mail: g_reynoso_r@yahoo.com



2012 FSB Ripcord Association Reunion, October 3-6, 2012, Indianapolis Marriott East, Indianapolis, IN.

Contact:

Web: www.ripcordassociation.com



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion,
August 25-29, 2013, Las Vegas, NV. Watch this space for upcoming details. See Page 42.

~ Other Reunions ~



29th Annual Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Reunion, July 30 - August 5, 2012. Hilton Hotel, New Orleans, LA.

Contact:

Phn: 800-505-8472

Battle of the Bulge Veterans, September 26-30, 2012. New Orleans, LA.

Contact:

Doris Davis

Phn: 650-654-0101

Eml: doris@battleofthebulge.org
Web: <http://www.battleofthebulge.org/>



2012 Combat Infantryman's Reunion, October 18-21, 2012. Nashville, TN.

Contact:

Web: <http://cibassoc.com>

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



~ This Month in History ~

"They were the best of times; they were the worst of times."

~ August 1965 ~

August: Combined Action Platoons are formed by U.S. Marines utilizing South Vietnamese militia units to protect villages and conduct patrols to root out Viet Cong guerrillas.



August 1965

2nd: Operation Frag Order ends for the 173d Airborne



Brigade. On 27 June, the brigade participated in the first joint U.S.-ARVN operation of the war. Nine battalions were involved in this mission which penetrated deep into the Western part of the Tan Uyen area of War Zone "D". Over 400 VC casualties resulted from this combined operation. This was the first major engagement between the VC and the 173d. The brigade destroyed a hard-core VC battalion.

2nd: Reporter Morley Safer sends 1st Vietnam report indicating we are losing.

3rd: The destruction of suspected Viet Cong villages near Da Nang by a U.S. Marine rifle company is shown on CBS TV and generates controversy in America. Earlier, seven Marines had been killed nearby while searching for Viet Cong following a mortar attack against the air base at Da Nang.

4th: President Johnson asks Congress for an additional \$1.7 billion for the war.

5th: Viet Cong destroy two million gallons of fuel in storage tanks near Da Nang.

6th: Federal Voting Rights Act guarantees black voting rights.

8th: The U.S. conducts major air strikes against the Viet Cong.

10th thru 5th Sep: 173d Airborne conduct Operation Pleiku. The brigade loaded its men on C-130s and C-123s to relieve the siege of the Special Forces CIDG Camp at Du Co, about four kilometers from Cambodia. The 173d provided security in the Thanh Binh Pass by conducting many platoon and



company size sweeps of the area. Early September, the 1/503rd were ordered to Kontum. During this operation VC activity decreased to an 18 month low.

11th: Race riots (the Watts riots) begin in Watts area of Los Angeles, California.

13th: Ikeda Hayato, Prime Minister of Japan (b. 1899), dies.

14th: Beatles tape an appearance for the Ed Sullivan Show.

14th: Sonny and Cher's "I Got You Babe" hits #1.

18th-24th: Operation Starlite begins the first major U.S. ground operation in Vietnam as U.S. Marines wage a preemptive strike against 1500 Viet Cong planning to assault the American airfield at Chu Lai. The Marines arrive by helicopter and by sea following heavy artillery and air bombardment of Viet Cong positions. 45 Marines are killed and 120 wounded. Viet Cong suffer 614 dead and 9 taken prisoner. This decisive first victory gives a big boost to U.S. troop morale.

19th: Auschwitz trials end with 6 life sentences.



Auschwitz



Auschwitz

(continued...)



20th: Native American paramilitary officer, Lewis Ojibway, died along with four others as their helicopter crashed into the Mekong. Due to poor visibility, pilot Bob Nunez was flying using the river as a marker and flew too low. Ojibway's territory was near the Golden Triangle in Northwest Laos, the quietest location.



U.S. Marines with captured Viet Cong in Van Toung.

21st: Chu Lai, Vietnam. The U.S. Marines reported Thursday they had smashed a big Viet Cong concentration on the Van Tuong Peninsula, inflicting bloody losses on the communist forces. It was reported 552 VC killed, 1,000 VC wounded.

31st: President Johnson signs a law criminalizing draft card burning. Although it may result in a five year prison sentence and \$1000 fine, the burnings become common during anti-war rallies and often attract the attention of news media.

“In a demonstration staged by the student-run National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the first public burning of a draft card in the United States takes place. These demonstrations drew 100,000 people in 40 cities across the country. In New York, David Miller, a young Catholic pacifist, became the first U.S. war protestor to burn his draft card in direct violation of a recently passed law forbidding such acts. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation later arrested him; he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to two years imprisonment.”

~ August 1966 ~

1st: Ex Marine 25-year-old Charles Joseph Whitman shot and killed 15 people at the University of Texas before he was gunned down by police.



August 1966

3rd - Oct 27th: Operation Prairie was a military operation in northern South Vietnam. Its job was to eliminate North Vietnamese Army forces south of the DMZ.

5th: Martin Luther King, Jr. stoned during Chicago march.

6th: U.S. citizens demonstrate against war in Vietnam.

6th: Muhammad Ali KOs Brian London in 3 for heavyweight boxing title.

7th: Race riot in Lansing, Michigan.

9th: U.S. jets attack two South Vietnamese villages by mistake, killing 63 civilians and wounding over 100.

10th thru 7th Sep: 173d Airborne conduct Operation Toledo in Phuoc Tuy & Binh Tuy Provinces. The Sky Soldiers uncovered over 125,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, over 50 tons of rice, 10 base camps, 75 huts and 5 tunnel systems in the May Tao Secret Zone.



10th: First lunar orbiter launched by US.

11th: John Lennon apologizes at a Chicago news conference for saying the Beatles were "more popular than Jesus."

16th: Jack Mather, actor (Cisco Kid), dies of heart attack at 58.

16th: The House Un-American Activities Committee begins investigations of Americans who have aided the Viet Cong. The committee intends to introduce legislation making these activities illegal. Anti-war demonstrators disrupt the meeting and 50 people are arrested.

18th: The Battle at Long Tan occurs, when a patrol of Royal Australian Regiment encounter the Viet Cong.

Long Tan, Vietnam. 19 August 1966. Private David J. Collins guards a captured Viet Cong found hiding on the battle field by Delta Company, 6RAR. (From Australian War Memorial)



[See *The Battle at Long Tan* on Page 29]

27th: Sir Francis Chichester begins 1st solo ocean voyage around the world.

27th: Race riot in Waukegan, Illinois.

30th: Hanoi announces China will provide economic and technical assistance.

(continued...)



~ August 1967 ~

August: Operation Greeley continues for the 173d Airborne Brigade in Dak To.



August 1967

August: In Hanoi, as Communist forces are building up for the Tet Offensive, 200 senior officials are arrested in a crackdown on opponents of the Tet strategy.

2nd: HMAS Hobart, USS St. Paul and USS Blue received enemy fire while bombarding Cong Phu railway spur (Hobart's seventh time under fire).



Armoured personnel carrier (APC) from A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC), lumbers over an embankment during Operation Ballarat which began 4 August 1967 and ended 16 August 1967.

5th: Bobby Gentry releases her only hit "Ode to Billy Joe".

7th: The People's Republic of China agrees to give North Vietnam an undisclosed amount of aid in the form of a grant.

9th: The Senate Armed Services Committee begins closed-door hearings concerning the influence of civilian advisors on military planning. During the hearings, Defense Secretary McNamara testifies that the extensive and costly U.S. bombing campaign in Vietnam is failing to impact North Vietnam's war making ability in South Vietnam and that nothing short of *"the virtual annihilation of North Vietnam and its people"* through bombing would ever succeed.

9th: Deion Sanders, NFL defensive back, Cowboys, centerfielder, Yankees, born.



2nd-11th: The mile-long Paul Doumer Railway and Highway Bridge was hit for the first time knocking out the center span and damaging two others.

3rd: 45,000 U.S. soldiers sent to Vietnam.



(continued...)



14th: U.S. Discloses Laos Bombing. SAIGON (UPI) – The U.S. Air Force revealed officially Sunday for the first time that American warplanes are bombing communist targets in Laos, Vietnam’s neighbor to the west.

The U.S. fighter-bombers are conducting air raids “at the request of the Royal Laotian government,” a spokesman for the Air Force in Saigon said Sunday.

The Air Force confirmed that American warplanes have been running “armed reconnaissance” missions over Laos, and have been for more than three years. “We are looking for targets and we bomb at the request of the Royal Laotian government,” the spokesman said.

The spokesman was unable to list the exact targets, nor would he say how many American planes had been shot down over Laos.

It was reported the main target is the so-called “Ho Chi Minh Trail” that runs from North Vietnam through Laos into South Vietnam.

The trail is a supply route so elaborate sources in Laos say that it includes a two-lane all-weather, surfaced road and carries five-ton Czechoslovakian-made trucks loaded with war supplies....[*Pacific Stars and Stripes*]

18th: California Governor Ronald Reagan says the U.S. should get out of Vietnam citing the difficulties of winning a war when “too many qualified targets have been put off limits to bombing.”



21st: The Chinese shoot down two U.S. fighter-bombers that accidentally crossed their border during air raids in North Vietnam along the Chinese border.

26th: Dutch 2nd Chamber demands U.S. stop bombing North Vietnam.

29th: Final TV episode of “Fugitive”.

30th: U.S. Senate confirm Thurgood Marshall as 1st black justice.

~ August 1968 ~

August: Operation Walker continues for the 173d Airborne Brigade.



August: The USAF mission in Laos was growing fast and North Vietnamese troops poured across into Laos. Casualties mounted while families were displaced from their homes in great numbers and the cost of war soared.



August 1968

8th: Richard M. Nixon is chosen as the Republican presidential candidate and promises “an honorable end to the war in Vietnam.”

10th: Race riots in Miami, Chicago and Little Rock.

14th: Halle Berry, born in Cleveland, Ohio, Miss World USA, 1986, actress, Boomerang.

19th: Sara Jane Roberts, child actress (Our Gang), dies after surgery at 44.

20th: The Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact nations began invading Czechoslovakia to crush the “Prague Spring” liberalization drive of Alexander Dubcek’s regime.

21st:  Private First Class **James Anderson, Jr.**

(January 22, 1947 – February 28, 1967) was a United States Marine who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for heroism while serving in Vietnam in February 1967. When his Medal of Honor was awarded on August 21, 1968, he became the first African-American U.S. Marine recipient of the Medal of Honor.

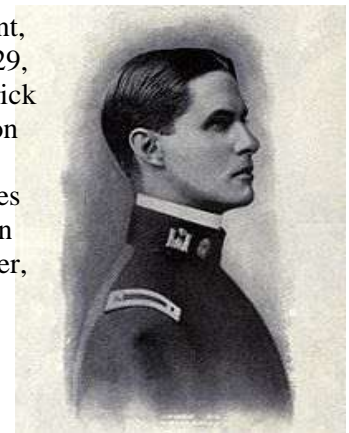


24th: France became the world’s fifth thermonuclear power as it exploded a hydrogen bomb in the South Pacific.

25th: Arthur Ashe becomes 1st black to win U.S. tennis singles championship.

28th: During the Democratic national convention in Chicago, 10,000 anti-war protesters gather on downtown streets and are then confronted by 26,000 police and national guardsmen. The brutal crackdown is covered live on network TV. 800 demonstrators are injured.

29th: Ulysses Simpson Grant, III (July 4, 1881 – August 29, 1968) was the son of Frederick Dent Grant, and the grandson of General of the Army and President of the United States Ulysses S. Grant. He was an American soldier and planner, died.



29th: Democrats nominate Hubert H. Humphrey for president (Chicago).

(continued....)



~ August 1969 ~

August: Operation Washington Green continues for the 173d Airborne Brigade in Binh Dinh Province.



August 1969

1st: 'It's Up to Reds'
NIXON VISITS GI'S IN VIET, Bangkok (AP) --
President Nixon swept in and out of South Vietnam Wednesday, saying: "We have gone as far as we can or should go in opening the door of negotiations which will bring peace."

Nixon made his statement at Independence Palace in Saigon where he conferred with President Nguyen Van Thieu.

Recounting the peace offers made by the allies at the Paris talks, Nixon said it is now time for the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong *"to sit down with us and talk seriously about ways to stop the killing."*

Later at a combat base near Saigon, he said U.S. infantrymen: *"Out there in this dreary, difficult war, I think history will record that this may have been one of America's finest hours, because we took a difficult task and we succeeded."*

Nixon dashed to nearby Vietnam and back before heading for India Thursday, on his round-the-world tour.
[Pacific Stars and Stripes]

4th: Henry Kissinger conducts his first secret meeting in Paris with representatives from Hanoi.

10th: A day after murdering Sharon Tate and four others, members of Charles Manson's cult kill Leno and Rosemary LaBianca.

12th: Viet Cong begin a new offensive attacking 150 targets throughout South Vietnam.

14th: Massive Communist shelling and ground attacks raged throughout South Vietnam Tuesday in the heaviest outbreak of enemy-initiated actions in three months.

14th: British troops arrived in Northern Ireland to intervene in sectarian violence between Protestants and Roman Catholics.



15th: Woodstock Music and Art Fair opens in New York State on Max Yasgur's Dairy Farm.



Woodstock

Where are they now?



15th: Operation About Face began as good weather and U.S. jets backed Van Pao and his Meo guerrillas.

31st: Boxer Rocky Marciano died in a light airplane crash in Iowa, a day before his 46th birthday. Born *Rocco Francis Marchegiano*, he is the only Heavyweight Champion of the World to retire undefeated.



~ August 1970 ~

1st: Willie Stargell (Pirates) ties record of 5 extra base hits in a game.

11th: South Vietnamese troops take over the defense of border positions from U.S. troops.

18th: Richie Cunningham, kicker for the Dallas Cowboys, born.

24th: Heavy B-52 bombing raids occur along the Demilitarized Zone.

29th: Black Panthers confront cops in Philadelphia (1 police officer killed).



August 1970

(continued...)



~ August 1971 ~

August: USAF jets fly 473 sorties in effort to curb enemy road construction across the DMZ. Also, information was made public regarding approximately 30,000 CIA-directed indigenous tribesmen who disrupted Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese efforts in Laos.

2nd: The U.S. admits there are some 30,000 CIA-sponsored irregulars operating in Laos.

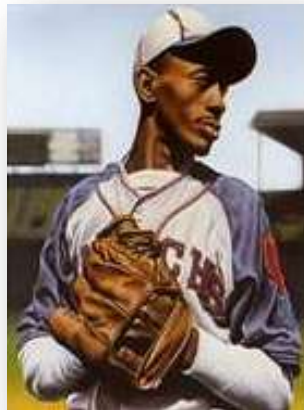
9th: Le Roy (Satchel) Paige inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame. One of his quotes: *"Age is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."*

15th: President Nixon announces 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents.

18th: Australia and New Zealand announce the pending withdrawal of their troops from Vietnam.



August 1971



6th: Gary Player wins PGA golf tournament

8th: Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, ordered changes in the United States Navy's rules to permit women to serve on ships, become aviators, and attend the U.S. Naval Academy.

9th: Rockwell receives NASA contract to construct Space Shuttle.

11th: Last United States ground combat unit departs South Vietnam.

12th: Quang Tri fight rages on. South Vietnam marines cleared the southern sector of Quang Tri City except for isolated snipers, field reports said Thursday, and South Vietnamese bomber pilots claimed they knocked out 14 enemy tanks six miles to the southwest.



North Vietnamese army soldiers pause for a photograph following fierce fighting inside the Quang Tri citadel. The soldier on right was killed shortly after this photograph was made."

(Photo by Doan Cong Tinh)

12th: In a victory for President Nixon, the House Thursday rejected a mandate to pull U.S. forces out of the Indochina war by Oct. 1 in return for release of American prisoners and a limited cease-fire.

13th: Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark returned from North Vietnam, where he had traveled as a private individual as part of a fact-finding group. Clark said that he had confirmed that the United States was bombing hospitals and dikes, and that he had been told that American prisoners *"will be released immediately when we stop this senseless, murderous bombing and end the war and get out, get home, and get to the business of building the peace and giving happiness to little children around the world."*

14th: Oscar Levant, 65, American pianist and actor, dies.

15th: Ben Affleck, American film actor, born in Berkeley, CA.

(continued....)

~ August 1972 ~

1st: Henry Kissinger meets again with Le Duc Tho in Paris.

1st: Future President George W. Bush, son of former president George Herbert Walker Bush, is suspended from flying with the Texas Air National Guard for missing an annual medical examination.

2nd: Gold hits record \$70 an ounce in London.

4th: Arthur Bremer jailed for 63 years for shooting Alabama Governor Wallace.

4th: President Carter signed the bill to create the Department of Energy.



August 1972



~ August 1973 ~

17th: Pentagon officials say thousands of fresh North Vietnamese troops have crossed the Demilitarized Zone into South Vietnam during the past "week or so."

17th: Borger, TX: A drive-in theater manager has canceled plans to screen the movie, "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" starring actress Jane Fonda in protest of her recent trip to Hanoi.

20th: Admiral Harold R. Stark, 91, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations when Pearl Harbor was attacked, dies.

23rd: The last U.S. combat troops depart Vietnam.

24th: Gordie Howe and Jean Beliveau inducted in Hockey Hall of Fame.

26th: Games of the XX Olympiad open in Munich, Germany.

26th: University of Texas (Arlington) is 1st accredited school to offer belly dancing.



Yeah, I know. Not what you had in mind. See next page for the pretty belly dancer.

27th: U.S. bombs Haiphong North Vietnam.

28th: Capt. Richard S. "Steve" Ritchie flying an F-4D Phantom II, of 555 TFS, 432 TRW became the USAF's first ace of the Vietnam War when he downed a MiG 21 aircraft. His WSO, Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue was credited with his 4th kill.

30th: Cameron Diaz, American film actress, born in San Diego.

31st: Olga Korbut, U.S.S.R., wins the Olympic gold medal in gymnastics.



2nd: Vietnam War: Thousands of civilian refugees flee from the Quang Ngai Province in front of advancing North Vietnamese troops.

3rd: Richard Marshall, U.S. Army General (b. 1895), dies.

5th: Arab terrorists open fire at Athens airport, kills 3 injures 55.

6th: Roberto Clemente and Warren Spahn inducted into Hall of Fame.

14th: U.S. bombing activities in Cambodia are halted in accordance with the Congressional ban resulting from the Case-Church amendment.

15th: USAF A-7Ds fly the last combat mission of the war attacking targets near Phnom Penh, Cambodia. An EC-121 at Korat landed after the A-7s and earned the distinction of flying the last U.S. mission of the war.



DAYTON, Ohio -- LTV A-7D Corsair II in the Southeast Asia War Gallery at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo)

22nd: Henry Kissinger is appointed by President Nixon as the new Secretary of State, replacing William Rogers.

28th: "Monster Mash" goes gold. Decades later, *Digger*, *Dogface*, *Brownjob*, *Grunt* would languish at Silver.

30th: Watergate Scandal: President Richard Nixon announces that top White House aids H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and others have resigned.

(continued...)

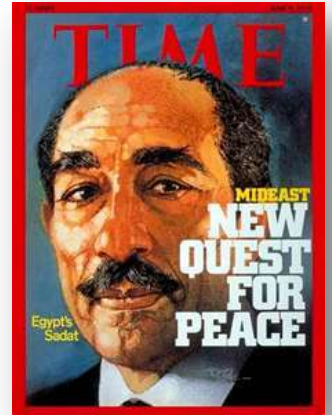


~ August 1975 ~



Gotcha!

2nd: In New Orleans, LA, the Superdome officially opens with an NFL football game between the New Orleans Saints and Houston Oilers.



August 1975

4th: The Japanese Red Army takes more than 50 hostages at the AIA building housing several embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The hostages included the U.S. consul and the Swedish charge d'affaires. The gunmen win the release of five imprisoned comrades and fly with them to Libya.

5th: Stevie Wonder signs \$13M contract with Motown.

10th: David Frost purchases exclusive rights to interview Nixon.

11th: Anthony C. McAuliffe, US General/Commandant 101st Airborne Division, dies at 77.



~ August 1974 ~

5th: The U.S. Congress places a \$1 billion dollar limit on military aid to South Vietnam.



August 1974

5th: President Nixon admits he withheld information about Watergate break-in.

7th: French stuntman Philippe Petit walked a tightrope strung between the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center.

9th: Richard Nixon becomes the first President of the United States to resign from office, an action reportedly taken to prevent time from being wasted in impeachment proceedings in response to his role in the Watergate scandal. His Vice President, Gerald Ford, takes the oath of office and becomes the 38th president, becoming the 6th President coping with Vietnam.



12th: Yankees Mickey Mantle and Whitey Ford become 1st teammates elected to Hall of Fame on same day.

26th: Charles Lindbergh — the first man to fly solo, non-stop across the Atlantic — dies at his home in Hawaii at age 72.

“NUTS!”



General Anthony Clement McAuliffe (July 2, 1898 – August 11, 1975) was the United States Army general who commanded the 101st Airborne Division troops defending Bastogne, Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. He is famous for his single-word reply to a German surrender ultimatum: "Nuts!" After the Battle of the Bulge, McAuliffe was given command of his own division, the 103rd Infantry Division of the US 7th Army, which he led from January 15, 1945, to July 1945, after the war in Europe ended.

11th: U.S. vetoes proposed admission of North and South Vietnam to U.N.

23rd: The Pathet Lao consolidates the Communist take-over of Laos and the administration of Vientiane City.

31st: Former Teamsters' president James Hoffa reported missing.



~ Famous People Who Served in the Military ~

Alan Alda joined the Army Reserve after graduating from Fordham. He completed the minimum six-month tour of duty as a gunnery officer during the Korean War.



James Arness (Gunsmoke) was born James Arness in Minneapolis; he dropped the "u" when he started acting. Arness' younger brother was actor Peter Graves (1926–2010). Peter used the stage name "Graves", a maternal family name. Arness wanted to be a naval fighter pilot, but he felt his poor eyesight would bar him. His height of 6 feet 7 inches ended his hopes, since 6 feet 2 inches was the limit for aviators. Instead, he was called for the Army and reported to Fort Snelling, Minnesota in March 1943. Arness served as a rifleman with the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, and was severely wounded during Operation *Shingle*, at Anzio, Italy. According to *James Arness – An Autobiography*, he landed on Anzio Beachhead on January 22, 1944 as a rifleman with 2nd Platoon, E Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division. Because of his height, he was the first ordered off his landing craft to determine the depth of the water; it came up to his waist. On January 29, 1945, having undergone surgery several times, Arness was honorably discharged. His wounds continued to bother him, and in later years Arness suffered from chronic leg pain, which sometimes hurt when mounting a horse. His decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three bronze battle stars, the World War II Victory Medal and the Combat Infantryman Badge.



Arthur Ashe – Champion tennis player
Gene Autry – Film actor, singer, and professional baseball team owner, dies.

Tony Bennett, born Anthony Dominick Benedetto in New York City on August 3, 1926, was the youngest of three children and was already performing at the age of six. He was called up for the Army in 1944 during WWII. After basic training, Bennett was assigned to the 63rd Infantry Division (the "Blood and Fire" Division) where he served in France and Germany.



Max Baer, Jr – Hollywood actor
Martin Balsam – Hollywood actor
Chuck Bednarik – Professional football player
Lloyd Bentsen – Senator of Texas, 1988 vice presidential nominee, 69th Secretary of the Treasury
John Boccieri – Member of Congress of Ohio

Ernest Borgnine, the beefy screen star known for blustery, often villainous roles, but who won the best actor Oscar for playing against type as a lovesick butcher in "Marty" in 1955, died July 8, 2012. He was 95.



Borgnine, who endeared himself to a generation of Baby Boomers with the 1960s TV comedy "*McHale's Navy*," first attracted notice in the early 1950s in villain roles, notably as the vicious Fatso Judson, who beat Frank Sinatra's character to death in "*From Here to Eternity*". Borgnine joined the Navy in 1935 and served on a destroyer during World War II. He weighed 135 pounds when he enlisted. He left the Navy 10 years later, weighing exactly 100 pounds more. "*I wouldn't trade those 10 years for anything*," he said in 1956. "*The Navy taught me a lot of things. It molded me as a man, and I made a lot of wonderful friends.*"

Boxcar Willie – Country music entertainer
Charles Bronson – Hollywood actor
Dale Brown – Author
Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. – Tuskegee Airman, educator, and TV personality
William Bundy – CIA analyst and foreign affairs advisor

George H. W. Bush, Former President of the United States of America enlisted in the U.S. Navy on his 18th birthday, June 12, 1942, as a Seaman 2nd Class. He was commissioned an ensign and pilot and served aboard the USS San Jacinto flying Grumman Avenger bombers with the 3rd and 5th Fleets. On September 2, 1944, Bush was assigned to take out a radio station located in the Bonin Islands. In the course of the action, Bush's plane was hit with enemy fire. Though the plane was on fire, he completed his strafing run on the targeted Japanese installation before flying towards sea to bail out offshore from Chichi Jima, a Japanese-held island near the more well-known Iwo Jima. He was rescued by a Navy submarine, the USS Finback. A genuine hero, Bush was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals. He was discharged in September 1945 with the rank of lieutenant.



(continued...)



George W. Bush, President



Drew Carey, the famous comedian and star of *The Drew Carey Show*, served in the Marine Corps Reserves from 1980 - 1986. According to Carey, he adopted his trademark crew cut and horn-rimmed glasses during his time of service.

George Carlin – Actor & Comedian



Johnny Carson, the king of late-night TV for over three decades, was born in Corning, Iowa, on October 23, 1925. He was working as a theater usher when World War II began. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy on June 8, 1943, as an apprentice seaman enrolled in the V-5 program, which trained Navy and Marine pilots. He hoped to train as a pilot, but was sent instead to Columbia University for midshipman training. He performed magic for classmates on the side. Commissioned an ensign late in the war, Carson was assigned to the USS Pennsylvania, a battleship on station in the Pacific. He was en route to the combat zone aboard a troopship when the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war to a close. The Pennsylvania was torpedoed on August 12, 1945 and Carson reported for duty on the 14th — the last day of the war. Although he arrived too late for combat, he got a firsthand education in the consequences of war.

Johnny Cash – Country Music Singer

Johnny Cash may have been known as “The Man In Black” and fostered an outlaw image by performing in US prisons, but the influential singer was a military man who enlisted in the US Air Force in 1950. He was also a bit of a US hero as the first Morse code operator to pick up the news of US enemy Joseph Stalin’s death. Cash was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant on July 3, 1954.



Harry Chapin – Singer/songwriter

Red Cochran – Professional football player and coach

Jackie Coogan – Hollywood and television actor

Jackie Coogan enlisted in the United States Army in March 1941. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he requested a transfer to United States Army Air Forces as a glider pilot because of his civilian flying experience. After graduating from glider school, he was made a flight officer and he volunteered for hazardous duty with the 1st Air Commando Group. In December 1943, the unit was sent to India. He flew British troops, the Chindits, under General Orde Wingate on March 5, 1944, landing them at night in a small jungle clearing 100 miles behind Japanese lines in the Burma campaign.



Bill Cosby, born William Henry Cosby, Jr.

on July 12, 1937, in North Philadelphia, he enlisted in the Navy in 1956. He trained as a hospital corpsman and served aboard ships and at the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia, before being sent to Bethesda Naval Hospital. He was assigned to work with Korean War casualties. Cosby won awards running on the Navy track team, but also experienced racial discrimination, being forced to eat in the kitchen of cafes where the team stopped to eat while on the road. He was honorably discharged after four years of service in 1960.



Bob Cummings – Hollywood actor

Tom Daschle – Senator of South Dakota

Brian Donlevy – Hollywood actor

Dr. Seuss – Author

(continued...)



Clint Eastwood, born Clinton Eastwood, Jr. in San Francisco on May 31, 1930, was the older of two children whose family traveled across Northern California during the Great Depression. He took up competitive swimming and basketball during high school. After graduation, he worked as a lumberjack and forest fighter in Oregon, and a steelworker in Seattle. Drafted into the Army during the war in Korea, Eastwood was sent to Ft. Ord in California for basic training. He lucked into a job as a swimming instructor and remained at Ft. Ord. He worked nights and weekends as a bouncer at the NCO club. On a trip home to Seattle to visit his parents and girlfriend, Eastwood caught a ride aboard a Navy plane at Moffett Field. On the ride back aboard a Navy torpedo bomber, the plane developed engine trouble and was forced to make a water landing off San Francisco. Eastwood was forced to swim over a mile through the tide to shore. It was while on duty at Ft. Ord that Eastwood met fellow soldiers and actors Martin Milner ("Route 66"), David Janssen ("The Fugitive"), and Richard Long ("The Big Valley"). He was discharged in 1953.



Malcolm Forbes is one of the most famous names in the world of business. Forbes was born in 1919 in Brooklyn to Scottish immigrant parents. He graduated from Princeton University in 1941, and was inducted into the army as a private at the start of World War II. Forbes was assigned to a heavy machine gun section in the 334th Infantry, 84th Infantry Division — the "Railsplitters." He served in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. Wounded in the thigh in combat at the Battle of Aachen, he spent ten months recovering in military hospitals before being discharged in August 1945 with the rank of staff sergeant. He was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.



Tennessee Ernie Ford – Television comedian and recording artist

Morgan Freeman – Film actor

Clark Gable – Film actor

Marvin Gaye – Singer

Arthur Godfrey – Television personality

George Gobel – Television comedian and actor

Barry Goldwater – Senator of Arizona and 1964 presidential candidate

Alberto Gonzalez – 80th United States Attorney General

Lindsey Graham – Senator of South Carolina

Peter Graves – Film and television actor

Hank Greenberg – Professional baseball player

Van Heflin – Hollywood actor

H. John Heinz III – Senator of Pennsylvania.

Skitch Henderson – Band leader and musician

Chad Hennings – Professional football player

Don Herbert – Television personality as "Mr. Wizard"

Born in Waconia, MN, Herbert was a general science and English major at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse who was interested in drama. His career as an actor was interrupted by World War II when he enlisted in the U.S. Army as a Private. Herbert later joined the Army Air Forces, took pilot training and became a B-24 bomber pilot who flew 56 combat missions from Italy with the 767th Bomb Squadron, 461st Bomb Group of the Fifteenth Air Force. When Herbert was discharged in 1945 he was a Captain and had earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters.



Joycelyn Elders, U.S. Surgeon General, physician, was born Minnie Lee Jones in Schaal, Arkansas, on August 13, 1933. Elders came from humble beginnings. She entered Philander Smith College in Little Rock at the age of 15 on a scholarship from the United Methodist Church. In college, she changed her name to Minnie Joycelyn Lee (later using just Joycelyn). She earned her bachelor's degree in three years while working as a maid to support herself. In 1952, she received her B.A. in biology from Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas. Elders worked as a nurse's aide in a veterans hospital in Milwaukee until she enlisted in the Army in May 1953, using the name Minnie J. Jones. She was sent to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston where she was the only black person in her class. She was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Medical Specialist Corps in October 1953, and began her internship as a physical therapist. She was stationed at Letterman Army Hospital in San Francisco treating returning combat wounded from the Korean War which ended in July of 1953. In April 1954, Elders was licensed as a physical therapist and transferred to Fitzsimmons Hospital in Denver. She was one of two therapists who treated President Eisenhower after his heart attack. She resigned her commission in May 1956.



John Fogerty, Musician, songwriter, singer

(continued...)



Charlton Heston – Hollywood actor
John Hillerman – Hollywood actor
William Holden – Hollywood actor
Tim Holt – Hollywood actor
Sam Johnson – Vietnam POW and Congressman of Texas

Bobby Jones – Golf champion, founder of the Masters Tournament



On June 9, 1942, Bobby Jones was commissioned a captain in the Army Air Force. Being 40 years old he was not compelled to go to war, but he signed up anyway. *"I'm very happy over this opportunity to serve" he said, "and anxious to get going."*

DeForest Kelley – Film and television actor
Arthur Kennedy – Film actor
Alan Ladd – Film actor
Fiorello H. La Guardia – Mayor of New York City
Norman Lear – Television and motion picture producer
Charles Lindbergh – Legendary aviator
MC Tee – Musician
Gordon MacRae – Broadway and Hollywood actor
Karl Malden – Hollywood actor

Rocky Marciano was born Rocco Francis Marchegiano in Brockton, Massachusetts, on September 1, 1923. Marciano won the heavyweight championship by defeating Jersey Joe Walcott for the title on September 23, 1952. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943. Marciano was assigned to the 150th Combat Engineers. He was stationed in Wales where he was involved in operations on the English Channel. The 150th was awarded service stars for Normandy, North France, Rheinland, Ardennes-Asace and Central Europe. It was in the Army that Marciano first boxed, starting with unofficial bouts, and working up to junior amateur by the time of his discharge in 1947. After failing a tryout for catcher with the Chicago Cubs, baseball team, Marciano returned to boxing. His record was 49 wins, no losses.



Dean Paul Martin - Singer and actor
Jerry Mathers – Television actor
Walter Matthau – Hollywood actor
Kevin McCarthy – Hollywood actor
George McGovern – Senator of South Dakota, 1972 presidential nominee
Gary Merrill – Hollywood actor
Major Glenn Miller – Musician, band leader
Cameron Mitchell – Hollywood actor
George Montgomery – Hollywood and television actor

Chuck Norris was born Carlos Ray Norris on March 10, 1940 in Ryan, Oklahoma. His mother was Irish-English and his father was Cherokee. Norris joined the Air Force after high school, with the goal of training in the Security Police in preparation for a career in law enforcement. It was in the Air Force, while stationed in Korea, that Chuck was introduced to martial arts. Norris has used his success to give back to the military community. He has been a spokesman on behalf of the Veteran's Administration and hospitalized veterans. He was named "Veteran of the Year" at the American Veteran awards show.



Edmond O'Brien – Hollywood actor
Jack Palance – Hollywood actor
Ron Paul – Member of Congress; 1988, 2008 & 2012 Presidential candidate
John Payne – Hollywood actor
H. Ross Perot, Jr. – Member of the Forbes 400 and son of Ross Perot
Rick Perry – 47th Governor of Texas
Paul Picerni – Actor
Tom Poston – Television comedian

(continued....)



Greg Popovich – Professional basketball head coach
Jody Powell – White House Press Secretary
Robert Preston – Hollywood and Broadway actor
Robin Quivers – Co-host of the Howard Stern Show
Dennis Rader – BTK Serial Killer
Gene Raymond – Hollywood actor

Ronald Reagan – 40th President of the United States, enrolled in a series of home-study Army Extension Courses on 18 March 1935. After completing 14 of the courses, he enlisted in the Army Enlisted Reserve on 29 April 1937, as a Private assigned to Troop B, 322nd Cavalry at Des Moines, Iowa. He was appointed Second Lieutenant in the Officers Reserve Corps of the Cavalry on 25 May 1937. On June 18 of that year Reagan, who had just moved to Los Angeles to begin his film career, accepted his Officer's Commission and was assigned to the 323rd Cavalry. Lieutenant Reagan was ordered to active duty on 19 April 1942. Due to eyesight difficulties, he was classified for limited service only, which excluded him from serving overseas. His first assignment was at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation at Fort Mason, California, as liaison officer of the Port and Transportation Office. Upon the request of the Army Air Forces (AAF), he applied for a transfer from the Cavalry to the AAF on 15 May 1942; the transfer was approved on 9 June 1942. He was assigned to AAF Public Relations and subsequently to the 1st Motion Picture Unit in Culver City, California. Reagan was promoted to First Lieutenant on 14 January 1943 and was sent to the Provisional Task Force Show Unit of *This Is The Army* at Burbank, California. Following this duty, he returned to the 1st Motion Picture Unit, and on 22 July 1943 was promoted to Captain. In January 1944, Captain Reagan was ordered to temporary duty in New York City to participate in the opening of the sixth War Loan Drive. He was assigned to the 18th AAF Base Unit, Culver City, California on 14 November 1944, where he remained until the end of the war. He was recommended for promotion to Major on 2 February 1945, but this recommendation was disapproved on July 17 of that year. On 8 September 1945, he was ordered to report to Fort MacArthur, California, where he was separated from active duty on 9 December 1945. While on active duty with the 1st Motion Picture Unit and the 18th Army Air Forces Base Unit, Captain Reagan served as Personnel Officer, Post Adjutant, and Executive Officer. By the end of the war, his units had produced some 400 training films for the Army Air Forces. Reagan's Reserve Commission automatically terminated on 1 April 1953. However, he became Commander-in-Chief of all U.S. Armed Forces when he became President on 20 January 1981.



George Reeves – Television actor portraying *Superman*
William Rehnquist – Chief Justice of the United States

Roy Riegels – All-American football player
Gene Roddenberry – American television producer, *Star Trek* creator
Chelcie Ross – Hollywood actor
Dan Rowan – Comedian and television actor, "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In"

Rowan joined the U.S. Army Air Force in World War II, where he distinguished himself as a P-40 fighter plane pilot in the Pacific Theater. Rowan was credited with downing two Japanese aircraft (it took five kills to be named an ace), but he was shot down and seriously wounded in New Guinea. During his military career, Rowan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal, and the Purple Heart.



Roy Scheider – Actor
Bob Schieffer – Television journalist
Sinbad – Actor & Comedian

Shaggy, was born Orville Richard Burrell on October 22, 1968 in Kingston, Jamaica. He was nicknamed "Shaggy" by his friends. While growing up, Shaggy was a fan not only of reggae but also ska, dancehall, and R&B. Shaggy left Jamaica for the United States when he turned 18. After spending a tough year attempting to find work, Shaggy joined the Marines in 1988. Two years later, he found himself in the Gulf War. The experience sobered him, and Shaggy decided to commit himself even more fully to his music.



Fred Smith is chairman, president and chief executive officer of FedEx Corporation. Smith founded FedEx Express in 1971, and the company began operations on April 17, 1973. A native of Marks, Mississippi, Smith attended Yale University, where he earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in economics in 1966. Smith served as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam from 1966-1970.



Aaron Spelling – Film and television producer
Mickey Spillane – Hardboiled crime novelist

(continued....)



George Steinbrenner was born in Rocky River, Ohio on July 4, 1930. He enlisted in the Air Force in 1952 after graduating from Williams College. He served as an aide to the commanding general at Lockbourne AFB in Ohio. He was responsible for setting up athletic programs and sporting events. After the Air Force, Steinbrenner worked in college football as an assistant coach at Northwestern and Purdue. He later joined the family business, American Shipbuilding Company, and made a fortune. He bought the New York Yankees in 1973.



Robert Sterling – Hollywood actor
Craig Stevens – Television actor
Ted Stevens – Senator of Alaska
James Stewart – Hollywood actor
Ralph Story – Television personality
Chesley Sullenberger – Airline pilot, hero of Miracle on the Hudson
Bobby Thomson – Professional baseball player

David Thomas was born in Atlantic City on July 2, 1932, and founder of Wendy's fast food chain. He dropped out of high school, moved in with the family who owned the Hobby House and focused on ways to promote the restaurant. During the Korean War he volunteered for the Army to avoid the draft and have some choice in assignments. Thomas chose Cook and Bakers School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He was sent overseas to Germany as a mess sergeant and was responsible for feeding 2000 soldiers daily. He attributes this experience in mass feedings to his success in fast food. He was discharged in 1953 as a staff sergeant.



Pat Tillman (KIA), NFL player
Stewart Udall – 37th United States Secretary of the Interior

Charles Walgreen, of Walgreen Drug Stores, was born in Knox County, Illinois, on October 9, 1873. At the start of the Spanish-American War, Walgreen enlisted with the 1st Illinois Volunteer Cavalry. While serving in Cuba, he contracted malaria and yellow fever, which continued to plague him for the rest of his life.



George Wallace – 45th Governor of Alabama and presidential candidate
Jack L. Warner – Hollywood film executive
Jack Webb – Hollywood and television actor, director, and producer

George Westinghouse was born in Central Bridge, New York, on October 6, 1846. Westinghouse enlisted in the Union Army at age 17 and served from 1862 to 1863. He then transferred to the Union Navy as an engineer. He was discharged in 1865. After the war, Westinghouse became involved in developing railroad technology. He invented and patented the air brake in 1869, which became widely used. He also invented the gas meter and a natural gas pipe system for homes. He was awarded over 400 patents during his lifetime. He founded the Westinghouse Electric Company in 1886, which became one of the most successful companies in the U.S.



Thornton Wilder – Novelist and playwright

Montel Williams was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on July 3, 1956. Williams enlisted in the U.S. Marines upon graduating high school in 1974. He completed boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina, where he was promoted to platoon guide. He was recommended for, and accepted to, the Naval Academy Preparatory school at Newport, Rhode Island. While at Annapolis, Williams studied Mandarin Chinese and graduated with a degree in general engineering and a minor in International Security Affairs. Upon his graduation in 1980, he became the first black enlisted marine to complete and graduate both the Academy Prep School and Annapolis. In 1982 he was transferred to Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, where he studied the Russian language for one year. In 1983 he was transferred to Ft. Meade in Maryland, where he worked with the National Security Agency. After three years aboard submarines, Williams, now a full lieutenant, was made supervising cryptologic officer with the Naval Security Fleet Support Division at Ft. Meade.



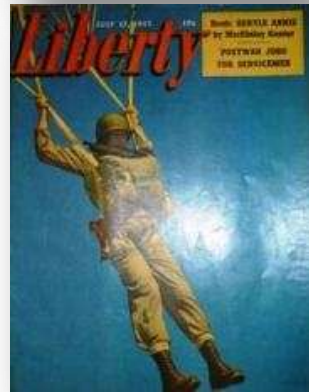
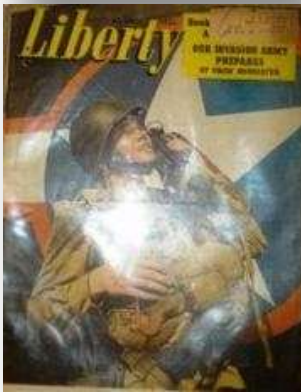
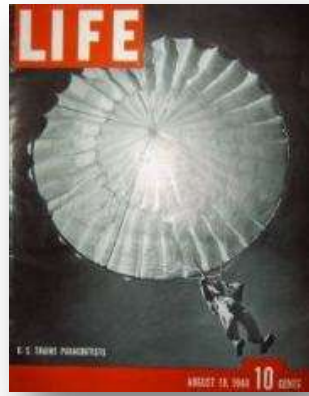
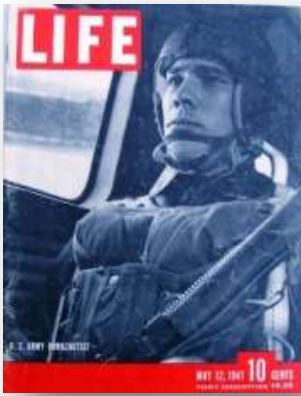
Ted Williams, Professional baseball player
Flip Wilson - Comedian

Heather Wilson – Member of Congress of New Mexico

Former New Mexico Congresswoman, Wilson graduated the Air Force Academy and was the first woman to command basic training and the first woman Vice Wing Commander. She graduated in 1982 as a Distinguished Graduate (*magna cum laude* equivalent).



~ PARATROOPERS ON THE COVERS ~



Operation Vendetta & Smithfield

THE BATTLE OF LONG TAN



Duty First

D Company was on a company patrol named “Operation Vendetta” that remained in place until approximately 2300 hours 18 August 1966. The Task Force then commenced “Operation Smithfield.”

The Battle of Long Tan occurred in the late afternoon of 18 August 1966 in a rubber plantation some 4500 metres to the east of the Task Force base at Nui Dat. The events of the previous days set the scene.

On the 16th of August, 5RAR were patrolling in an area of jungle to the north of the Australian Task Force (1ATF) Base. They were trying to locate enemy identified in the latest intelligence reports. Estimates of enemy strengths operating in the area varied from 300 – 3500. However, the most recent patrols had only fleeting contacts with 3 – 5 man groups. There appeared to be little to add any substance to reports of three enemy Regiments operating in the area.

A Coy, 6RAR were also away from the Nui Dat base involved in patrol work, but they were operating to the east and northeast. A Coy had been in three small contacts, killing 2 VC and capturing one. Once again, nothing to indicate a large force.

Back at Nui Dat the remaining soldiers were looking forward to a planned concert by Col. Joyce and Little Patti on the 18th of August. The constant poor conditions

while in the field were generally little better than in camp as at this stage there was a lot of work required in the base camp area to build up defences.

At 0243 hours (02:43 am) on the morning of the 17th of August the 1st Australian Task Force Base (1 ATF Base) came under mortar and recoilless rifle (RCL) attack. Compass bearings were taken by various units as to the direction from which the mortars had been fired, and soon the Artillery at the base camp returned counter bombardment fire. The following morning a further patrol – B Coy, 6RAR – was sent from the base to find the firing location of the enemy mortars, and harass the VC responsible. Earlier intelligence reports had still not ruled out the threat of 274 and 275 NVA Regiments, plus D445 VC Battalion, mounting an attack on the 1 ATF Base. This was considered unlikely, although not impossible, and thus 5RAR were ordered to return to Nui Dat.

B Coy, 6RAR spent the day of the 17th of August sweeping the area to the east north east and east of Nui Dat, and finding the mortar baseplate position. Meanwhile, A Coy had several sightings of small groups of enemy to the north east, but still nothing to suggest a larger force. On 18 August, D Coy, under the command of Major Harry Smith, were ordered to relieve B Coy and follow up tracks leading from the baseplate position used for the earlier attack. For most men in D Coy this was seen as just another patrol. The only difference was this one was going to deprive them of the concert.



Aerial View: Long Tan Battlefield 18th August 1966

(continued....)

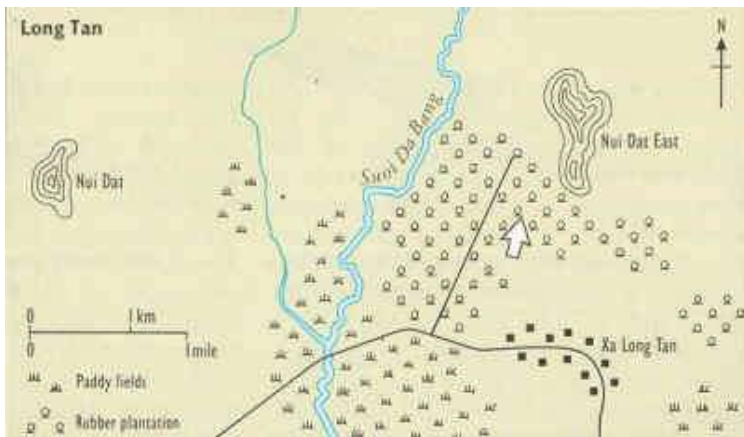


At 1035 hrs, just as D Coy were preparing to leave Nui Dat, B Coy reported discovering a dug-in position with weapon pits for about 20 men. They also found signs of the 75mm RCL that had fired at the Base. B Coy then sent patrols to the east and south to follow enemy tracks leading from the position.

At 1100 hrs, D Coy left the base and began their patrol eastwards, at that stage, a company with a strength of 108 all ranks (105 Aussies and 3 New Zealanders). Meanwhile, A Coy was continuing their patrol back to the 1 ATF Base.

At 1200 hrs, the B Coy patrol that had followed the enemy trail to the south found another RCL position with signs of at least 2 wounded VC, presumably as a result of the artillery counter bombardment fire.

The men of D Coy met up with B Coy at 1300 hrs. The two company commanders exchanged the relevant information about the enemy positions and then B Coy set out for Nui Dat. Major Smith decided to follow the trail to the east and D Coy began its search along the track running east into the Long Tan rubber plantation. After a while the track divided into two, and ran about 300 metres apart but roughly parallel. Major Smith adjusted his company patrol formation to suit. He placed 10 Platoon (pl) under Second Lieutenant (2Lt), Geoff Kendall as the forward left, 11 pl under 2Lt Gordon Sharp on the high ground to the forward right and 12 pl under 2Lt David Sabben to the centre rear behind Coy Head Quarters (CHQ).



At 1540 hrs a group of six VC literally walked into 11 pl. They were fired at and subsequently withdrew, leaving one dead and taking two wounded with the 11 pl reported the contact to CHQ and stated that the enemy was dressed in Khaki uniforms. This went basically unnoticed by all concerned but indicated that the enemy may have been Main Force soldiers and not the anticipated village guerrillas. The Platoon Commander of 11 pl, 2Lt Sharp called in artillery fire on the enemy withdrawal route about 500 metres from the original contact. 11 pl then followed up the enemy and chased

them to a small hut, where a platoon attack was conducted to ensure the hut was free of enemy. No was one found, despite extensive bloodstains, so they then continued the advance further into the rubber plantation. The soldiers were now fully alert and 11 pl were moving south southeast, following a fence on the right flank, towards a small clearing in the rubber.

It was 1608 hrs and 11 pl had reached the near side of the clearing, when heavy fire broke out to their left flank. The platoon went to ground and began to return fire. There was a pause in the fire and 5 section (Sect) was moved to bring fire onto the enemy position. No sooner had 5 Sect begun to carry out this task when the heavy fire commenced again. This time the fire appeared to be more deliberate and intense than on the first occasion. 2Lt Sharp reported a platoon size enemy to his direct front, changing this to a company size enemy in the ensuing minutes. At this time, 60 mm mortars began to fall near the position of CHQ, 10 pl and 12 pl so Major Smith moved these elements to the north of the mortar blasts into an area which was to become the company's final defensive position. 11 pl was ordered to withdraw as the artillery from the Task Force began to fall, with missions of 10 rounds Fire For Effect (FFE) and repeats being called. The Battle of Long Tan had begun.

Meanwhile A Coy had just returned to Nui Dat, and were warned out for movement on 15 minutes notice. The continual thumping of the gun line told the story - somebody was in trouble. B Coy was halted on its return to base and told to move back to the D Coy location. 1 APC Sqn was also placed on 15 minutes notice to move A Coy out to the rubber plantation.

11 pl were being flanked, suffering heavy casualties and unable to withdraw. 2Lt Sharp was killed and Sergeant (Sgt) Bob Buick took over. 10 Pl were ordered to move around from the north to give support to 11 pl and allow them to withdraw. A mass of fire started in the 10 Pl location and all radio communications between 10, 11 and CHQ were lost. The second signaller from CHQ dashed to 10 pl and communications were soon restored. Artillery fire engaged targets to the south and helped to suppress the fire of an enemy mortar position to the east. Casualties were mounting in 10 pl, but they managed to get to within 100 metres of 11 pl before being halted by intense small arms fire. 2Lt Kendall and his platoon were then ordered to withdraw to the CHQ position due to the large numbers of casualties it had received.

(continued...)



The time was now 1710 hrs and D Coy reported "Enemy now 200 metres to our direct front, 42 (the radio call sign for 11 pl) being attacked from north, east and south, 43 (the radio call sign for 12 pl) pinned down attempting to reach them." The artillery continued with rounds now falling dangerously close to the friendly locations. The success this had on preventing the enemy from overrunning the position was immeasurable. At 1720 hrs, artillery began firing regimental missions as ordered by the Forward Observer (FO), Captain Stanley. The expenditure of Artillery ammunition became a concern, and additional supplies were ordered from the Logistics Support Base at Vung Tau. Soon, a flight of Chinook helicopters were delivering pallet-loads of shells directly into the Artillery area, despite the near impossible flying conditions.

At the same time, 12 pl was sent out to approach 11 pl from its west. As they left CHQ, Major Smith was advised that 10 pl was withdrawing with its casualties, so Smith retained the 12 pl Sections to reinforce CHQ's strength.

As 10 pl arrived in the company location a Company Aid Post (CAP) was established, and CHQ, 10 pl and the 12 pl Section were placed on the ground to provide protection for the casualties.



Accurate and sustained artillery support was vital to the outcome of the battle. The photo above shows a 105-mm L5 Pack Howitzer of 105th Field Battery firing from the Bien Hoa gun position, South Vietnam, 1965. (L-R: Sgt Ian Morley, Gnr Frank Guylus, Gnr Dick Hall). Eighteen similar guns at the 1 ATF base at Nui Dat provided D Coy close support during the battle. (Photo from 105th Battery RAA Historical Collection, Ian Morley photograph)

12 pl reached a position about 200 metres behind 11 pl and came under heavy fire: they were subsequently attacked from their north east and south east. With the

attacks continuing on 11 pl, CHQ and 10 pl were also now being subjected to attacks from the east by the enemy who were following up 10 platoon's withdrawal. Major Smith called for an air strike at 1702 hrs and would accept napalm to 100 metres. At the same time an ammunition resupply by helicopter was called for.

The time was now 1710 hrs and D Coy reported "Enemy now 200 metres to our direct front, 42 (the radio call sign for 11 pl) being attacked from north, east and south, 43 (the radio call sign for 12 pl) pinned down attempting to reach them." The artillery continued with rounds now falling dangerously close to the friendly locations. The success this had on preventing the enemy from overrunning the position was immeasurable. At 1720 hrs, artillery began firing regimental missions as ordered by the Forward Observer (FO), Captain Stanley. The expenditure of Artillery ammunition became a concern, and additional supplies were ordered from the Logistics Support Base at Vung Tau. Soon, a flight of Chinook helicopters were delivering pallet-loads of shells directly into the Artillery area, despite the near impossible flying conditions.

The Jim King Story describes the scene on the Gun Line. Morrie Stanley's Story describes his experience as the Delta Coy FOO (Forward Observation Officer)

D Coy reported that all platoons and CHQ were now under constant attack from the east and south. Artillery fire was brought within 100 metres from 11 pl. The strike aircraft requested earlier reported they were unable to give close support to the now desperate D Coy due to the cloud cover and torrential rain. Their visibility was reduced to nil, so the aircraft dropped their ordnance to the north east.

Back at the 1 ATF Base 5 RAR took over the defence of the perimeter. Two "Huey" choppers from 9 Sqn RAAF had been tasked to fly the ammunition resupply out to D Coy. The 6 RAR RSM, WO1 George Chinn, organised the ammunition resupply on to the choppers, and at 1800 hrs the artillery ceased for 15 minutes to allow the helicopter resupply to get to D Coy. Again, the dreadful flying conditions were overcome, and with the aid of a coloured smoke grenade the critical resupply was successful; falling literally into the hands of the CSM WO2 Kirby (who subsequently was killed later in the tour), who quickly organised its distribution.

(continued...)



Meanwhile, 2Lt Sabben's 12 pl had sustained 6 casualties out of its 20 man strength in keeping the 11 pl escape route open. Another coloured smoke grenade thrown by 12 pl allowed the remainder of 11 pl to finally withdraw to the 12 pl position. After fighting off several more assaults, the 11 pl and 12 pl group withdrew the 300 metres to the Company position.

Concurrently, 3Tp 1 APC Sqn with A Coy on board were heading towards the D Coy location. The going in the late afternoon torrential downpour was very slow and the move was not without its problems, the departure from base having been delayed for over an hour and a crossing of the flooded Suoi Da Bang River yet to be negotiated. However none of their problems quite matched the problems of D Coy at that point of time. Light was fading, as was the Coy's ammunition supply. It seemed impossible for D Coy to hold on any longer.

The enemy continued to attack from the east, north east and south east. D Coy were finally regrouped as a Company. At 1820 hrs Major Smith reported that the enemy could be reorganising for another attack and that they had temporarily broken contact. He stated that he had two platoons about 75% effective and one platoon virtually non - effective. The Company had hastily reorganised into all-round defence and the ammunition resupply was distributed, just as the enemy launched another series of massive wave-style attacks on the Coy front. These lasted until it was noticeable that it was approaching last night.



Soldiers who served in D Company, 6RAR, examine a battered rusty weapon at the site of the Battle at Long Tan. (Photo from vnafmamn.com/longtan_battle.html)

A Coy and 3 Tp were about 800 metres away and they were struggling to get to D Coy. As they got closer they began to take fire, and reported that they had contacted possibly three enemy Companies who withdrew after being fired upon by the APCs. B Coy, moving on foot, were also closing up behind D Coy and the Commanding Officer (CO) of 6 RAR, Lt Colonel (Lt Col) Townsend aboard another APC joined A Coy as the force relieved D Coy.

As the last of the massive enemy assaults faded, B Coy arrived in Delta's position and were used to cover the approach from the west. It was just on dark. The Artillery was stopped to allow APCs to approach the Company position, and in the silence, the D Coy survivors could hear the APCs approaching. The battle was over.

On their arrival, 3 Tp and A Coy moved across D Coy's front, firing the 50 calcs of the APCs as a precaution. The 6 RAR CO, who had arrived with A Coy, then took control of the aftermath. A Coy formed a screen to the east while D Coy took care of their dead and wounded. A casualty evacuation was organised in a clearing some 750 metres to the west, with the APCs forming a hollow square using their internal lights with top hatches open to guide the incoming choppers. The following morning, after a sleepless night with constant threat of further attacks, battlefield clearance commenced. D Coy again were up front for this task.

This was "*The Battle of Long Tan*".

THE ENEMY

The enemy was found to be the 275 NVA Regt and D445 VC Provincial Battalion plus one other NVA battalion in support. The original contact was believed to with a standing patrol or screening force. The enemy constantly tried to envelope the Australians, from the northern and southern flanks. The dispersion and movement of D Coy and all three Platoons probably deceived the enemy as to the size of the force they had contacted. The large amount of fire support would have aided in this deception.

The enemy were well equipped and were almost certainly prepared for a major assault on the base rather than a contact out in the field. Most of the enemy soldiers carried ammunition for crew-served weapons which were not in evidence on the battlefield in addition to their personal AK or SKS rifle with up to 250 rounds of ammunition. Furthermore, most were found to have 2 or 3 grenades on them, with some Grenadiers carrying satchels of 15 to 20 grenades. These were not used during the battle. The individual soldier was not camouflaged, yet had netting or frames on which to hang camouflage. His drills and discipline were of a high standard. He was apparently well fed and his clothing and equipment were in good order. Most Australians were surprised at the personal proficiency and battle discipline of their counterpart.

(continued...)





Diggers returning to base after battle.

Footnote (VC Defector) In 1969, Ex Sgt Loc of D445 Bn, Battle of Long Tan, a guide and interpreter with 6 RAR stated that most casualties were caused by artillery. That the total number of VC killed in the battle was well in excess of 1,000. Most of these they were able to carry out on the night of 18 August to a very large hospital complex dug out in the mountains to the North-East of the battlefield. There were also 1,000 missing from the units. He refused to believe that the total Australian force was only about 100 men with casualties of 18 killed and 25 wounded.

Enemy Casualties

- 245 KIA (Body Count)
- 3 Captured
- 150 KIA (Subsequent Intelligence estimate)
- 500 WIA (Subsequent Intelligence estimate)
- Note: During Operation Marsden in late 1969, Australian forces captured a Viet Cong dispensary that had a list of dead and wounded attributed to Long Tan. Those figures were 878 KIA/Missing/Died of wounds and approximately 1500 WIA.

Friendly Casualties

6RAR

- D Coy: 17 KIA, 23 WIA
- A Coy: 3 injured
- B Coy: 3 injured

3Tp 1 APC Sqn

- 1 KIA (Cpt Clements) 1 WIA (remained on duty)

Finds

Documents; large quantities of enemy webbing and clothing; 33 assault rifles; 5 SKS rifles; 8 light machine guns; 3 carbines; 1 heavy machine gun on wheels; 2 recoilless rifles; 4 rocket launchers; 1 60mm mortar; ammunition (12,000 rounds of various small arms, 300 grenades of different types, 100 rounds of mortar, recoilless rifle and rocket launcher ammunition).



Warrant Officer 2 Jack Kirby, Company Sergeant Major (left) and Major Harry Smith, Officer Commanding D Company 6RAR, pose with the 7.62 Chinese communist heavy machine-gun captured at the Battle of Long Tan.

Congratulatory Messages

From Army Canberra

To 1 ATF

"The Prime Minister's Press Secretary has asked that the following message be passed to you. QUOTE. Our forces in their latest engagement have acquitted themselves with skill effectiveness and high courage in the best Australian tradition. Please tell them that Australia is proud of them. I have publicly expressed my sympathy to the bereaved. My sympathy also goes to the wounded. I send them best wishes for a speedy recovery."

Signed Harold Holt, Prime Minister

"Hearty congratulations to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and a company of the 5th Battalion RAR for their fine show in Operation SMITHFIELD. Your troops have won a most significant victory over the enemy and one of the most spectacular in Vietnam to date."

**Signed W.C. Westmoreland, General
Commander USMACV**

(continued....)



"Please pass on to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. My heartiest congratulations for the outstanding results attained during Operation SMITHFIELD. The large number of enemy killed as compared to the light casualties of the Australians is indicative of the professionalism of your Task Force. I especially want to congratulate D Company for its outstanding performance."

**Signed Maj. General Seaman, Commanding General
II Field Force Victor**

Approval to wear CGCP

Following the Battle of Long Tan, Delta Company was awarded on 28th May 1968, the *United States Presidential Unit Citation* for "Extraordinary Heroism in Military Operations Against an Armed Enemy."

It was the intention of the South Vietnamese Government to also award the Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation (CGCP) to Delta Company however this was not approved at the time by the Australian Government.

Following a number of reviews and changes of government, on 15th August 2008, the Australian Government announced changes to military awards in response to the independent review of Battle of Long Tan recognition.

Cabinet Secretary, Senator John Faulkner, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, Dr Mike Kelly, have carefully considered the reports of the independent review panel and a number of public responses to the reports.

Key decision, approved by the Governor-General, are:

Harry Smith, Commander D Company 6RAR, will be offered the Star of Gallantry (equivalent to the Distinguished Service Order), and Platoon Commanders Dave Sabben and Geoff Kendall, will be offered the Medal for Gallantry (equivalent to the Military Cross). This restores the original award recommended for Smith by his commanding officers, and accepts that the intention was to award Sabben and Kendall higher honours.

- The strength of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam on 18 August 1966 will receive approval to wear the former Republic of Vietnam's gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation Emblem.

Any other unresolved concerns regarding individual awards for Long Tan will be referred to the independent Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal. The Government will consider itself bound by the Tribunal's recommendations on these matters.

Implementation of these recommendations will properly recognise the individual and collective gallantry of these men on 18 August 1966, provide an equitable mix of awards for the battle, and will confer considerable honour on all the men of D Company 6RAR in Vietnam who fought in the Battle of Long Tan.

Awarded UCG

Following a review and recommendations made by the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal, on 31st March 2010, the following award was gazetted.

UNIT CITATION FOR GALLANTRY- AUSTRALIAN ARMY



Delta Company, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR)

For acts of extraordinary gallantry in action at the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

**By Her Excellency's Command
Stephen Brady
Official Secretary to the Governor-General**

[Source: 6RARassociation.com]



Aussies erecting memorial in the rubber trees at Long Tan.



The Fallen at Long Tan 6RAR & 1 APC

2Lt Gordon Sharp

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21;
National Serviceman
Born: Tamworth, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Richard A. Aldersea

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Perth, WA
Married
KIA - Chest wounds



Cpl Peter E. Clements

Unit: 3 Tp 1 APC Sqn
Age: 21
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Cunderdin, WA
Single
WIA - died at hospital



Pte Glenn A. Drabble

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q.
Single
KIA - Gunshot wound



Pte Kenneth H. Gant

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Ernest F. Grant

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Thurgoona, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Victor Grice

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Ballarat V
Single
KIA



Pte James M. Houston

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Wallsend, NSW
Married
KIA - Gunshot wounds



L/Cpl Jack Jewry

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: St Mary's NSW
Married
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Paul A. Large

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
National Serviceman
Born: Wellington, NSW
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte A. F. (Lionel) McCormack

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Launceston, Tas
Single
WIA - Died at hospital



Pte Dennis J. McCormack

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Adelaide, SA
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Warren D. Mitchell

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Dalby, Q
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte Douglas J. Salveron

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 20
National Serviceman
Born: Brisbane, Q
Single
KIA - Gunshot wounds



Pte David J. Thomas

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Bendigo, V
Single
KIA - Chest wounds



Pte Francis B. Topp

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 19
Regular Army enlistee
Born: Toowoomba, Q
Single
KIA



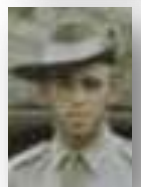
Pte Maxwell R. Wales

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 22
Regular Army Enlistee
Born: Goondiwindi, Q
Single
KIA



Pte Colin J. Whiston

Unit: D Coy 6RAR
Age: 21
National Serviceman
Born: Sydney, NSW
KIA - Gunshot wounds



*"In Memory of those members of
D Coy 6 RAR and 3 Tp 1 APC
Sqn who gave their lives near this
spot during the Battle of Long
Tan on 18th August 1966.
Erected by 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC)
Bn 18 Aug 69"*



Duty First





Les Brownlee

Les served as the Acting Secretary of the Army from 10 May 2003 until his resignation effective 2 Dec. 2004. He became the 27th Under Secretary of the Army on 14 Nov.



2001, following his nomination by President George W. Bush and confirmation by the United States Senate. From 10 May 2003 until 19 Nov. 2004, he served as the Acting Secretary of the Army. As Under Secretary, Brownlee assisted the Secretary in fulfilling statutory responsibilities for recruiting, organizing, supplying, equipping, training and mobilizing the United States Army and managing its \$98.5 billion annual budget and more than 1.3 million active duty, National Guard, Army Reserve and civilian personnel. Brownlee served on the Republican staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee beginning in Jan. 1987, under both Senator Strom Thurmond and Senator John Warner. In Mar. 1996, Brownlee was designated Staff Director of the Senate Committee on Armed Services by then Chairman, Sen. Thurmond. In Jan. 1999, he was designated Staff Director for then Chairman, Sen. Warner, serving until November 2001 when he was confirmed as the Under Secretary of the Army. From 1987 to 1996, he was a Professional Staff member responsible for Army and Marine Corps programs, special ops forces and drug interdiction policy and support. In addition, as Deputy Staff Director, he was deeply involved in policies and programs relating to ballistic missile defense, strategic deterrence and naval strategy, shipbuilding and weapons programs. Les is a retired Army colonel. He was commissioned in 1962 as a lieutenant in the infantry through the ROTC program at the University of Wyoming. He is a distinguished honor graduate of the U.S. Army Ranger Course, an honor graduate of both the Infantry Officer Advanced Course and the Command and General Staff College, and a graduate of the Army's airborne course as well as the U.S. Army War College. During his last two and a half years in the Pentagon, he was Military Executive to Under Secretary of the Army James Ambrose. He holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of Alabama. Les served two tours in Vietnam, including as company commander of B/2/503, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep). His military decorations include the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart.

Robert J. "Bob" Fleming, Jr.

Bob was born January 27, 1945, in Homestead, PA. He joined the army on August 29, 1965, and completed basic training at Fort Knox, KY, and AIT at Ft. Jackson, SC, with an 11B MOS. Bob graduated jump school at Ft. Benning, GA where he made two jumps on his birthday in January 1966. He served with the 101st Airborne at Ft. Campbell, KY and joined A/2/503 in Vietnam where he served from June-August 1967, until re-assigned to Delta Company until 1968. On November 19, 1967, during the Battle for Hill 875 at Dak To, Bob was wounded. That evening a jet dropped a large bomb on the command post killing the majority of already wounded troopers and those caring of them. The concussion of the bomb knocked him unconscious. When he finally came to, he crawled around the CP trying to bandage the survivors. He then climbed into a hole with Sgt. Tenney for the rest of the night. On November 21 he was still waiting for the battle to slow enough for the dust off choppers to get in. By this time he knew his wound was becoming gangrene. Bob was eventually sent to a hospital in Vietnam where the majority of his left buttock was removed. He was then sent to Japan to be sewn-up and healed. After recuperating, he returned to his unit in Vietnam to complete his tour of duty. Bob left the service on June 22, 1968, with the rank of Sergeant E-5. He was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Vietnamese Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman's Badge and Parachutist Badge. Bob served as a police officer with the U.S. Postal Service until his retirement. He and his wife Angela live in Pittsburgh, PA.



Bob & Angela at 173d Reunion in 2012



Jumping into the Iraq War: a daring combat jump under the cover of darkness deposited the 173rd Airborne Brigade into northern Iraq in March. Its presence virtually sealed off the oil-rich region.

by Tim Dyhouse



173d ABCT enroute to jump into Iraq
"A Can O' Whoopass"

They couldn't drive to the battlefield, so they did what they do best: jump feet first into the fray. Two battalions of the Army's storied 173rd Airborne Brigade conducted a successful, nighttime parachute drop into northern Iraq on March 26. The brigade, part of the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, was reactivated in June 2000 and was primed for just such a mission.

It was the biggest combat jump since the invasion of Panama in 1989, and the 173rd's first wartime drop in 35 years, when it jumped near Katum, South Vietnam, during Operation Junction City on Feb. 22, 1967. [On that mission, 845 paratroopers of the 2nd Bn., 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) and A Battery, 3rd Bn., 319th Field Artillery participated].

For the Iraq jump, some 1,000 173rd paratroopers, Rangers and support personnel dropped after a five-hour

flight from Aviano Air Base near their home post at Camp Ederle in Vicenza, Italy. The 2nd Bn., 503rd PIR and the 1st Bn., 508th PIR comprised about 80% of the airborne troops. The rest were engineers, sniper and long-range surveillance teams, Air Force special ops troops, a combat support company and a six-man medical/surgical detachment.

According to *Airman* magazine, 19 airmen of the 86th Expeditionary Contingency Response Group participated.

"It was pitch black," said Air Force Master Sgt. Charles Cremeans, an independent duty medical technician with the 786th Security Forces Squadron. *"But the jump was a relief -- all the weight [from his 100-pound rucksack] was gone."*

The 173rd's commander had words of motivation for the troops before the drop.

"Americans are asking you to make the world a better place by jumping into the unknown for the benefit of others," Col. William Mayville said. *"Paratroopers, our cause is just and victory is certain. I want you to join me tonight on an airborne assault."*

They descended from 30,000 feet in 17 C-17s to jump at 600 feet. *Airman* magazine reported 20 soldiers were hurt upon landing, and C-17s had to medevac out six who suffered spinal, leg and other injuries. Another 36 unfortunate troopers couldn't participate because the one-minute time limit to clear the planes had expired. The troops landed in muddy fields about 75 miles east-northeast of Mosul to secure Harir Airfield near Bashur. Paratroopers spent the night looking for and digging out heavy equipment--including Humvees--that was dropped first. The airfield was later used to deliver tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

Next stop, Iraq.



(continued....)



The 173rd's area of operations is in an oil-rich, Kurdish- and U.S. Special Forces-controlled region of northeastern Iraq bordering Turkey and Iran. One of the paratroopers' main missions upon landing was to secure oil fields around Mosul and Kirkuk.

"Kirkuk is key," said Army Maj. Mike Hastings in early April. *"The Iraqis want it, the Turks want it and various other ethnic groups also want it. What this drop means is that we can secure it until we are relieved by other forces."*

After Turkey denied the U.S. permission to base ground troops on its soil and use land routes to drive into northern Iraq, U.S. commanders considered flying the brigade into Harir Airfield. But that scenario, they decided, would have taken too long. Commanders figured a full-blown airborne assault also would have a deep psychological impact on the Turks, Iraqis and Kurds.

"I was very excited," said Sgt. James Michael Brown, of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 1st Bn., 508th PIR, on his feelings immediately prior to the jump. *"It was very muddy and pitch black. I couldn't see my hands, let alone any enemy."*

No Enemy Resistance

Thanks to U.S. warplanes that covered their landing, paratroopers met no enemy resistance. The threat from an estimated 100,000 Iraqi troops dug in along the line separating the Kurdish-controlled region from the rest of the country never materialized.

"I saw no enemy soldiers," said Capt. Kyle Hadlock, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 508th PIR. *"I landed in mud that became my enemy until the next day."*

Beyond securing oil fields, another task for the brigade, as with many other U.S. units in the country, is to provide a semblance of order following the war. Two rival Kurdish factions--the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan--dominate the north. In Mosul, Kurds have reportedly forced Arabs from their homes, set up checkpoints to search cars and charged customers at gunpoint to enter gas stations.

Al Qaeda-linked, Tehran-backed

One potentially nasty foe the 173rd trained to fight in Iraq was the al Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Islam. Holed up in mountainous villages on the border with Iran, the group of some 700 Islamic extremists had been fighting against the secular Kurdish government of northern Iraq --out of Saddam Hussein's control since 1991--for nearly two years. The group also had been blamed for several terrorist attacks in northern Iraq.

The Kurds say Ansar al-Islam is backed and funded by Tehran. About 150 of the group's members are thought to be pro-Taliban fighters who escaped from Afghanistan in late 2001. They include members from Algeria and other Arab countries.

In late March, 100 U.S. Special Forces and 10,000 Kurdish pesh merga ("those who face death") troops struck Ansar guerrillas, killing between 150-200 and capturing two, including a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip. Documents, such as the Jihad Encyclopedia, and information from the prisoners confirmed the group's al Qaeda links.

"One of the problems with al Qaeda is that it is not a clearly identifiable organization," explained a Special Forces officer involved in the attack. *"They don't wear an al Qaeda uniform or carry an al Qaeda passport, but they launch out these professionals who train and start groups."*

Vets Provide Link to Home

Since members of the 173rd deployed to Iraq, their families and the unit's veterans have been able to stay connected with them in ways never experienced in past wars. The Web site for the Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade -- www.173rdairborne.com -- has become a magnet for friends and relatives of those deployed in Iraq.

Though U.S. operations in northern Iraq have been successful, an unfortunate incident on May 3 resulted in the death of a 173rd trooper. According to the Pentagon, Sgt. Sean C. Reynolds of the brigade's 74th Long-Range Surveillance Company was *"climbing a ladder when he fell,"* causing his M-9 pistol to accidentally discharge.

[Source: 2003 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.]
(Photos added)



Love them riggers.



~ COVER PHOTO OF THE YEAR 2011 ~

We asked our readers to rank from 1st to 3rd their favorite covers of our Newsletter from last year. A wide majority selected the March 2011 cover with the photo by Pat Bowe (Recon/2/503d) of a trooper parachuting in Vietnam as their Numba 1 pick. May took 2nd Place, with September & October tied for 3rd. Everyone who participated wins one (1) free PLF in your backyard. *Hey, be careful out there!*

1st Place - March 2011



2nd Place - May 2011



3rd Place - September 2011



3rd Place - October 2011





INCOMING!



~ A PTSD Note ~

After she received a report listing symptoms of PTSD suffered by many combat vets, she sent this note:

“Yes, I did see my Dad in there. Everyone needs to be educated on this disease and it should be treated with all the concern and skill medicine treats any other disease. In learning more about it I have a better understanding of my beloved Dad and all other vets of combat. In my opinion nothing our country can do can ever come close to repaying combat vets for their devoted service and sacrifice.”

Daughter of a WWII 503rd Trooper

~ Zippo Made it Home ~



Both Jerry Sopko, D/4/503, and his Zippo survived the war.

~ Aussie Arty ~

Thanks for another great read in your newsletter mate.

I suppose a lot of Paratroopers in the 173d would not have known that they had at one time an Aussie Artillery Battery supporting them. The 105th field Battery Royal Australian Artillery was part of the 173d at Bien Hoa 1965-1966, the first Australian Artillery Battery in Vietnam.

Our connection with the 2/503rd came on Operation Silver City 9 to 22 March 1966.

The Infantry during the battle were fighting with the bravery you would expect. We were in a position close to the two Battery's of the 3/319th Artillery. The American Artillerymen were running short of ammunition, we continued to fire in support with more ammunition being brought in by Aircraft.

I can remember the aircraft were Caribou's, they flew in very low and the Ammunition exited from the rear of the plane with parachutes. It was very good flying by the pilots and must have been dangerous for them.

As the Ammunition hit the ground some cases would break open and shells and cartridge cases would fly all over the place but most of the valuable cargo was carried back to our position and used to good effect.

After the battle the CO of the 2/503rd sent a message to our Battery Commander and said, *"Thanks for saving our lives, I've never seen finer shooting"*. The battle was reported in the newspapers back home in Sydney and my Mother saved the clippings for me.

One of the saddest memories of the Australian Gunners was that the Paratroopers killed in action were brought back near our position close to where we gathered the Ammunition.

More than one Gunner commented, *"I hope the dropping Ammo doesn't break open near these men. They can't protect themselves anymore and must be treated with honour"*.

Even after all these years, what happened on the gun line on this operation still affects a lot of my mates.

We were glad to do our part with the American Gunners in the battle and happy that we could make a difference that day.

Best wishes from "Down Under"

Ubique.

Graham Woodward
President Chapter 23. Queensland.



Who Dats?

This photo appeared in last month's issue of six brothers, one wife, and a horse named Sugar, noting three of the brothers included one *All American*, one *Sky Soldier* and one *Green Beret* in the brood.



Thanks to two dads and one mom the back row are L-R Kriss, Tim & Pat Smith, the front row are Rick Clark (82nd Abn) and his wife Judy, Lew "Smitty" Smith (173d Abn), and Bob "Big Bear" Clark (1st/5th/7th SF). Smitty & Bob both served in Vietnam. While with the 5th SF on his third tour Bob's army career ended when the bad guys claimed one of his eyes in a firefight in the Dak To area. This photo was taken in 1957 at our parent's chicken ranch in Chino, CA. We couldn't afford shirts, altho Judy & Bob could. One crazyass chicken-plucking, horse-riding & airplane-jumping family. Sadly, we lost Judy years ago. Ed



173d Airborne Brigade....doing what they do best.

Future Sky Soldier?



I would like to announce that Charlotte and I welcomed into this world on June 25th at 7:57, weighing in at 7 lbs. 11 oz. and 21 inches, our Great Grandson "Shane Mathew Frost" and we are DAMN PROUD!!!! I just love this picture!

Gary "Cooch" Cucinitti
1/503d

Congratulations Pops!

*"It mattered not what politicians argued.
It mattered not what history would reveal.
We had no expectation but to serve where duty called us.
We asked for no reward except a nation's thanks."*

Albert J. Nahas, COL, USA (Ret)
Vietnam Veteran



173d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion



Las Vegas

August 25-29, 2013

Here's some early information about the 2013 Reunion.

~ Reunion Registration Fees ~

\$150 per Member & per Guest, before 25 July 2013

\$165. per Member & per Guest, after 25 July 2013

\$150. per Gold Star Family Member*

\$75. per Active Duty Soldiers (not on orders)

Free per Active Duty Soldiers (on orders)

\$100. per Vendor Table (173d Vendors only)

\$25. Sky Soldier Adoption Program

"Have your meals on me."

* Free Gold Star Luncheon, 173d Gold Star Families

~ Hotel ~

The Orleans

4500 W. Tropicana Avenue

Las Vegas, NV 89103

Phn: 702-365-7111 or;

800-675-3267

ID Code: A3SSC08

Rate good for 25-29 Aug. 2013

www.orleanscasino.com/groups



Processing Milestone Allows VA to Refocus on Claims Backlog (From DAV)

The VA's claims system will soon be getting up to speed as it clears the gridlock of nearly 230,000 claims related to the three newest Agent Orange-related presumptive service-connected illnesses of ischemic heart disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemia and Parkinson's disease. The completion of work on the claims means that 1,200 senior claims representatives dedicated to review the Agent Orange claims can now be reassigned to tackle the current backlog of other disability claims.

The VA announced it was nearing completion of the Agent Orange-related claims which had been assigned to about 37 percent of its rating staff. The VA's Veterans Benefits Administration had set up 13 resource centers exclusively dedicated to deciding these claims.

"We are very pleased the VA is nearing the end of a massive endeavor to give justice to our veterans suffering from these three presumptive service-connected diseases," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. *"The VA dedicated its most senior claims workers to complete the task of fulfilling the promises made to the men and women who served."*

Among the cases were more than 150,000 complex claims that required review under a U.S. District Court order. These so-called Nehmer claims cases had been denied before the VA decision to award presumptive service-connection for the three illnesses due to Agent Orange exposure.

"As a result of the VA's diligence, all of the Agent Orange Nehmer claims for living veterans have been completed, and there are fewer than 500 remaining claims that benefit survivors," said Jesinoski. *"Now these skilled VA raters can direct their talents to reducing the huge backlog of claims pending."*

The Agent Orange claims originated from a 2010 VA amendment to its regulations to add the three diseases to the list of those presumed to be related to exposure to the herbicide. It affected Vietnam veterans who served between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975. It also included Korean veterans exposed to Agent Orange along the demilitarized zone between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971 and service members exposed to herbicide tests and storage at military bases within and outside the United States.





VA NEWS ~ G.I. BILL

WASHINGTON – Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs applauded a decision by the attorneys general of several states to give VA the rights to use the GIBill.com website, after the website's original owners QuinStreet Inc. agreed to give up the internet site to settle a lawsuit by the states.

“This action is a victory for Veterans and a victory for the GI Bill. Veterans and VA applaud the great work by the states’ attorneys general, along with Holly Petraeus and her team,” said W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs. *“We all want Veterans to be informed consumers and for schools to meet their obligations in training this Nation’s next ‘Greatest Generation.’”*

Holly Petraeus is assistant director for service member affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The attorneys general of several states had sued QuinStreet Inc., the owner of the GI Bill.com domain, charging it with deceptive practices by directing Veterans and Service Members on its website exclusively to for-profit schools that were clients of QuinStreet.

The announcement comes as VA is seeking legal authority to trademark the term *GI Bill*. An executive order by President Obama on April 26 directed VA and the Department of Defense to undertake a number of measures to “*stop deceptive and misleading*” promotional efforts that target the GI Bill educational benefits of Service members, Veterans, and eligible family members and survivors.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was authorized by Congress in 2008, is the most extensive educational assistance program since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944. VA has issued nearly \$20 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit payments to more than 759,000 people and their educational institutions. All of VA's education benefits are designed to be flexible and give Veterans the power of choice by enabling them to pursue college degrees, technical certifications, or vocational training according to their preferences and needs, at public, private non-profit and private for-profit schools.

For-profit schools are held to the same approval standards as all other schools, and VA education programs at for-profit institutions are approved by the State Approving Agencies, which act independently on behalf of the federal government to ensure quality education and training is provided to Veterans within each state.

Gould said Veterans should not be recruited aggressively by institutions principally because of financial motives, and that VA's and other federal and state agencies' oversight activities provide strong monitoring. VA is engaging with other federal agencies to provide this oversight, including the departments of Defense, Education, and Justice, as well as the Federal Trade Commission and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

“VA looks forward to helping Veterans make informed decisions by accepting this gift of the GIBill.com domain. We will continue to support our Veterans by helping them obtain the best education of their choosing—a right for which they have bravely served, and which they have rightly earned,” Gould said.

For more information on GI Bill programs, please visit www.GIBILL.va.gov or call 1-888-GI-Bill-1 (1-888-442-4551) to speak with a GI Bill representative.

VA Selects Site for the New Louisville Replacement Hospital

The Department of Veterans Affairs has selected a site to serve as the location of a 21st century medical center in Louisville, Ky., replacing an existing 60-year-old facility.

VA Gulf War Task Force Report Released

VA has released the second in a series of annual reports from its Gulf War Veterans Illnesses Task Force, outlining how the department will address the concerns of Veterans deployed during the Gulf War of 1990-1991. The report focuses on efforts to improve the delivery of health care for Gulf War Veterans, including the launch of a prototype clinical care model specifically for Gulf War Veterans.

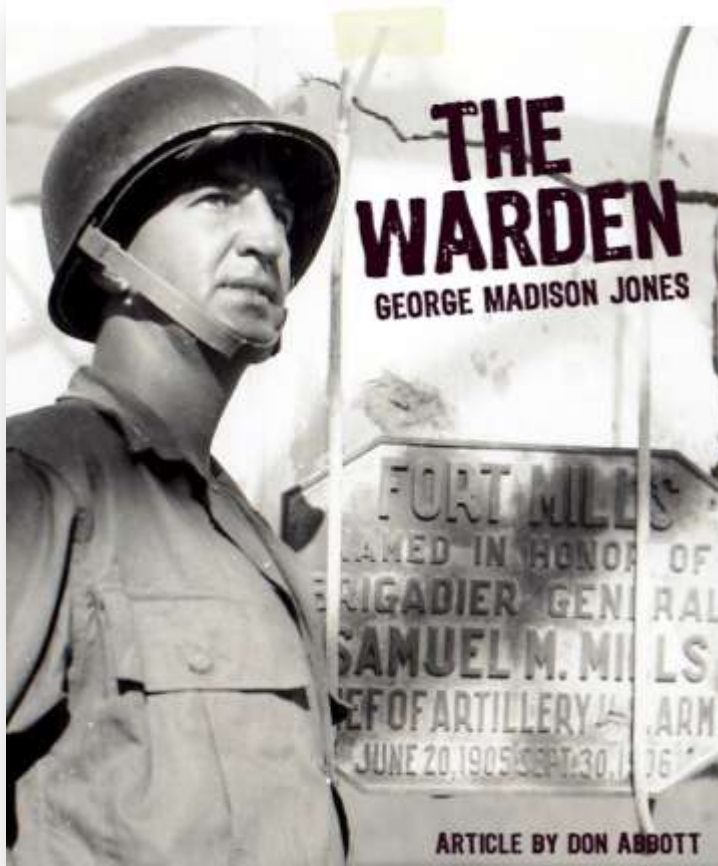


"George is an all-around something or other. He is a goat, but only in such unimportant things as academics. He is quite an athlete, but he can sit down and rest without being a "key jangler." He can converse, but he can also keep still when silence is in order. He can be serious, but not any more often than is necessary. He is near enough correct to keep reverses out of the room, but near enough incorrect to make living with him comfortable. He'll ask for advice when he needs it, and give it freely when asked for it (and not give it too often when he's not asked). All in all, he has added a lot to our stay at West Point."
THE HOWITZER 1936

During a good deal of his career in the service of the United States, Brigadier General George M. Jones was widely known – behind his back and out of earshot – as "The Warden". Throughout that time only a few people knew the real reason for his having picked up this peculiar title. Some said that he served in the Military Police. Since that branch was involved with the command of stockades where prisoners were incarcerated under a warden, they assumed that is where he picked up the title. Discussions with the General in his later life, shortly before he died in December 1997, confirmed he was very well aware of where the title really originated.

Having been one of the "prisoners" of the Warden, Don Abbott is one of a select group of veterans of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment who knew first-hand about the incident of how "The Warden" picked up his title.

Here now, Don Abbott "fesses up" and pleads guilty.



How The Warden Got His Name



By **Don Abbott**
503rd PIR

The 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment left the United States on 20 October 1942 on the old Dutch Motor, the Poelau Laut, which had just been converted from a cargo ship to a troop transport.

The ship was built in 1929 in Amsterdam, Netherlands and had served, in the interim, to handle cargo between Europe and the Dutch East Indies. For the time she was built her speed of 15 knots must have been very satisfactory for that trade. The ship had five cargo holds and gear for handling miscellaneous cargo utilizing a lot of longshoremen.

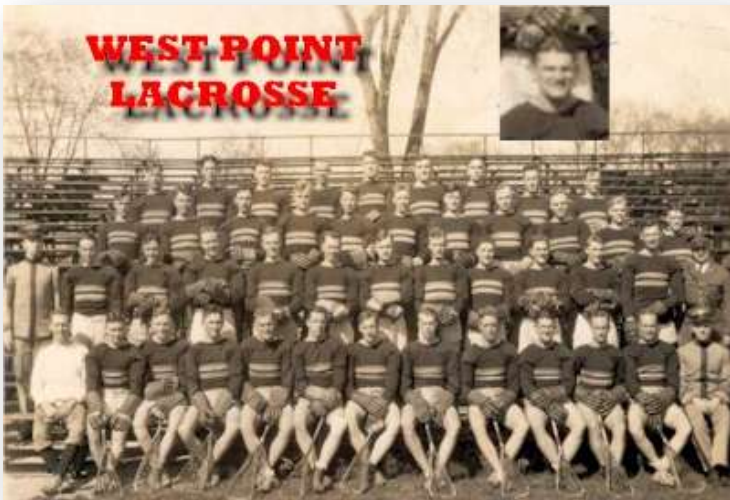
The Poelau Laut had been designed to handle about thirty passengers on its voyages to the Dutch East Indies. The passengers, who must have lived a unhurried life of leisure, occupying small but comfortable staterooms. They had a spacious lounge where they could read, smoke and play cards. The dining room, as well, was spacious for the number of people on the passenger list.



The Poelau Laut

(continued....)





"The Warden" at West Point

When the United States entered World War II the country had only a few ships designed to haul troops. Those, which existed, were far from adequate to move the huge numbers of troops having to be moved to the far reaches of the world. Consequently, ships like the Poelau Laut were taken over by the United States and converted into vessels capable of moving large numbers of troops.

In the case of Poelau Laut all five cargo holds were fitted with tiers of canvas bunks, piled one on top of the other. Frequently, where there was (almost) adequate room, six tiers of these bunks would be installed. The top man had a long climb and woe to the man who would fall out of his bunk -- it was a long way to the deck. The bunks were so close together it took a cooperative effort of the whole stack of men for any one man to turn over. This was a bit difficult to coordinate in the middle of the night. Every Enlisted man was assigned to one of these dismal abodes.

Part of the deck in one hold was converted into mess facilities for the troops. Since, in theory, the men had no heavy work to perform they would not get hungry and need to have three meals a day, the whole shipload of men were fed only twice a day. With the ship almost at capacity and only two mess lines to handle the feeding of the troops, the men spent many hours in line waiting for their food.

The officers had things a bit more luxurious. The dining room which had served the 30 passengers was used to feed the, roughly, two hundred officers of all ranks. Individual tables, seating four, had been replaced by two long tables serving about 20 officers at a time. A wait was required for these tables but nothing to approach the Enlisted "chow line".

Beginning with the Lieutenant Colonels, of which there were a handful, and reaching down into the high seniority Captains, some officers were given state rooms. Where there had been two civilian passengers now there were six officers. This left the low ranking Captains and the First and Second Lieutenants. There were, probably, about 150 of these. Four plywood boxes were built, two on each side of the ship, to house these Officers. About 40 Officers were crammed into each of these "cabins". The bunks here were stacked three high, in most places, which, while not well-appointed, can be endured. Each of these "cabins" had a head, wash stands and showers served with fresh salt water. Once in a very long time the showers were supplied with fresh water from the ships' evaporators. The evaporators were barely adequate for the needs of the ship machinery, so fresh water showers were a rarity.

The night the Poelau Laut left San Francisco Bay she was in a convoy with about ten other ships and several destroyers as escorts. At dawn the next morning the troops awoke to see the convoy, with its escorts, disappearing over the horizon to the West while the Poelau Laut turned to Port and headed, more or less, to the South.



At the sand table on Mindoro, Col. Jones points out to the unit and battalion commanders the features of Corregidor.

(continued...)



After several days the ship pulled into Panama City where it took on the 501st Parachute Infantry Battalion, which was later merged into the 503rd as its Second Battalion. The Poelau Laut didn't let any sea weeds grow on its keel at Panama and by the end of a day for loading the 501, it resumed its voyage.

The Commanding Officer of the 501 was Lieutenant Colonel George M. Jones. The Commanding Officer of the 503 was Colonel Kenneth Kinsler, who had preceded the outfit by flying to Australia. LTC Jones was the ranking Lieutenant Colonel on the ship so became the troop commander.

By the time the ship left Panama the Poelau Laut held about 1700 Paratroopers and another 300, or so, other people such as Air Corp, Quartermaster and Anti-Aircraft Artillery troops. She was very near her stated capacity of about 2100 troops.

Being limited to a speed of 15 knots the ship had not been able to keep up with the other ships in the convoy out of San Francisco. We were destined for a solo crossing of the Southern Pacific Ocean to Australia (as it turned out). Our voyage took place not long after the first Battle of the Coral Sea and it was feared there might be damaged Japanese warships which had headed South to "lick their wounds". They would not stand a chance against American warships but could easily sink the Poelau Laut which had only a few small guns aboard. Consequently, our course took us well to the South of the great circle route and actually below the Antarctic circle.

Our voyage was, eventually, to take 43 nights and 42 days. Paratroopers were not noted for going long periods without any alcoholic beverages. There was a good deal of discussion between the troops about how nice it would be to have a "nice cold beer", a "gin and tonic", or whatever. Having some 2,000 men crammed into a relatively small ship it was, reasonably, decreed that there would be no alcohol of any kind allowed. Everyone understood the reason for such prohibition but would have taken a chance to get their hands on something, if they had the opportunity.

Sometime, after being at sea for a little over 30 days that opportunity presented itself one night. One of the junior officers in the "stateroom" I'd been assigned to, managed to make contact with one of the Malay waiters from the "Officers Mess" and talked him into getting cases of beer for us.

A collection was taken up and the man delivered several cases of Dutch beer to the "stateroom". We set out to guzzle the beer as fast as the bottles could be opened. After more than a month of enforced prohibition the officers became quite mellow very fast.



Col. Jones ("The Warden") on the roof of Mile Long Barracks, Corregidor. In the mid-distance is the post hospital, and Bataan is across the North Channel.

Someone suggested, perhaps, our man should be contacted to see if he could get us something more substantial, like bourbon, scotch or gin. The man was easily bought and soon he returned with several bottles of Dutch Gin.

The party, then, began to get a bit rowdy. The singing and shouting made quite a bit of noise but with the overriding noise of the ship, all the merriment should not have been heard outside the "stateroom", but it was. Someone had heard all the noise and squealed on us, probably because he had not been invited to participate.

The Troop Commander, a Quartermaster Major, was informed and he soon entered our "stateroom". To say he was shocked is to put it most mildly. He nearly had a stroke seeing all the beer bottles rolling around the deck and the canteen cups of gin being nursed. He said "*I am going to get your Commanding Officer and he will certainly court martial the lot of you!*"

(continued...)



We recognized this threat as a real possibility because we were defying direct orders prohibiting drinking. We made fast work of dumping all the bottles over the side. This action in itself could have had us all court martialed since we were under very strict orders to throw nothing overboard. Debris tossed overboard could be found by Japanese submarines and used to determine our course. But we were desperate by that time and disobeyed another direct order.



To the victors go the spoils. Col. Jones welcomes Gen. MacArthur to Corregidor on 2 March 1945. Later he will present "Fortress Corregidor" to the General, and in return will be presented with a DSC.

After all the bottles went over the side we all jumped into our bunks and tried to look innocent.

LTC Jones arrived after 15 or 20 minutes and was somewhat shocked at what he saw. Having been a Parachutist for several years he survived the shock somewhat better than the QM Major.

One of the "casuals" in the "stateroom" was a Quartermaster, Captain Jones, who was an expert in unloading ships. He and his assistant, a 1st Lieutenant, were on their way to Australia to organize the unloading of American ships with war supplies which began to pour into Australia. LTC Jones asked for the Senior Officer Present. This happened to be Captain Jones. Captain Jones was a tall fellow, about six foot four. He had, of course, been imbibing as much or more than the rest of us.

Colonel Jones, who was not a short man himself, stepped in front of the taller man and, looking up, said "*Captain, you have been drinking*". Captain Jones, whose speech slurred at the wrong time, said "*No Sir, I haven't been drinking*".

Captain Jones' assistant's bunk was right below mine. About this time he stuck his head out of his bunk and said "*I think I'm going to be sick*". I whispered down to him "*Not now you bum, not now*". Luckily he didn't get sick or we'd been in worse trouble than we were already in.

There was no question. We would be punished. Would it be a court martial, or what? About the tamest punishment available was restriction to quarters. Colonel Jones chose to restrict the whole cabin to quarters for the remainder of the voyage. Thus Colonel Jones became the Warden and I became one of the Wardees.

At the time we had no idea how long the voyage was going to last. The days would dawn and here we were confined to quarters. The exception was the two meal times when we were allowed to make our way to the dining room. After a day, or so, we got sick and tired of being cooped up with only the other Wardees to look at. After you have had a day, or so, of reading or rereading your books, you really long to spend your time watching the sea. But we were not allowed to do that.

When we were placed under confinement we had no inkling of how long our voyage would last. The reasoning must have been that we might have passed word to the Japanese so they could find us as hit us with a torpedo. It is a bit hard to figure how we could do that but we didn't know where we were.

Fortunately, it turned out we were only about 4 days out of Brisbane, and when we pulled into the entrance to the harbor we were released from confinement.

Our experience as Wardees of the Warden was not as long as we had feared it might be.

[Source: 503rd Heritage Battalion website]



Captain Thanks Girl For Sending Doll to War

Washington Star
23 Feb 1966

GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) -- Little Jenny Scarborough, who sent one of her dolls to Viet Nam as a gift, has received a letter from a U.S. Army officer thanking her for "spreading the feeling of American friendship to the Vietnamese people."

"I realize you are only 5 years old," wrote Capt. John. E. Dunlap, Jr., commanding officer of Company D, 16th Armor, 173rd Airborne Brigade, "But I write this letter with the thought that you may read it again when you are 10, or maybe 18."

"Grownups know it's not easy for a little girl to part with one of her dolls and send it on a long journey to a strange land. So in your very kind and gentle way, Jenny, you made a great sacrifice and done a great deal to spread the feeling of American friendship to the Vietnamese people."

Dunlap told Jenny that a little Vietnamese girl named Nguyen Thi Le Thay received the doll.

"Le Thay is a 5 year-old girl, too. She has no mother or father...and has lived at the Ke Sat Orphanage four years now," Dunlap said. "But because of you, Jenny, she is a much happier little girl...And like all little girls, when she says her prayers and goes to sleep her doll will be there beside her."

"Though you are too young now to know all the reasons why American soldiers are here, you and your gift has helped us all to realize that even more than love, kindness, freedom and the smile of a young child's face when she sees a new doll, are basic ingredients of the happy, peaceful life we are trying to preserve for these people," the letter said.



Orphaned girls, Vietnam, 1966

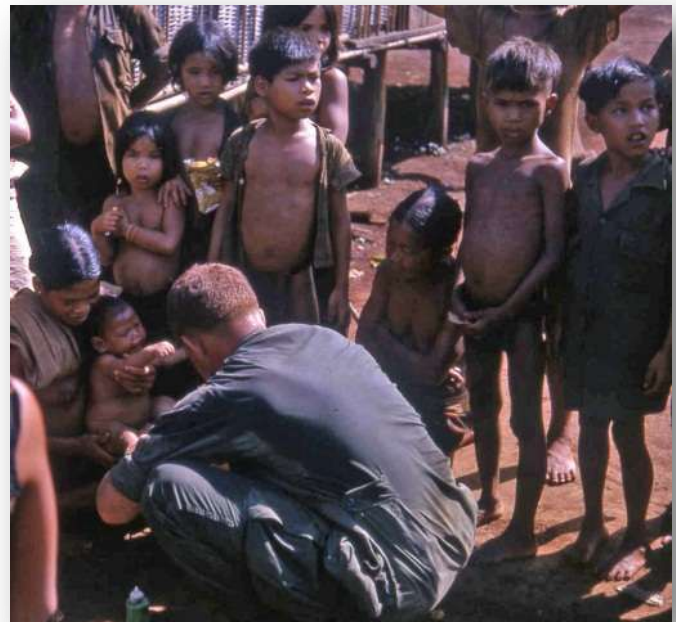
Who Dat?



Who recognizes this 2/503d Trooper keeping up with current events in the middle of a war? Musta been hard dirt, that's not a very deep trench. Ummm, pound cake.

~ Honoring our Medics ~

We put out a request some time ago asking for stories, recollections and photos of 173d medics for special coverage in our newsletter. Please take a moment to send in something to rto173d@cfl.rr.com so we can honor these men who did so much for so many of us.



2/503d Medic Jerry Levy, KIA 2 Jan 66 during Operation Marauder in the Mekong Delta, providing medical care to indigenous kids in 1965.



The 82nd Airborne during World War II

Campaigns – Rhineland



The young and brave loading up for Holland.

After a foothold was gained in France, the Allies reorganized their airborne divisions. In August, 1944 the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) was formed under the command of Lt General Lewis H. Brereton. It was composed of the U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps, the IX Troop Carrier Command, and the British I Airborne Corps. The U.S. XVIII Airborne Corps consisted of the 82nd, 101st and 17th Airborne Divisions. It was commanded by General Ridgway while General Gavin now assumed command of the 82nd Airborne Division. The new airborne army's first operation would be Operation Market Garden.

Operation Market Garden



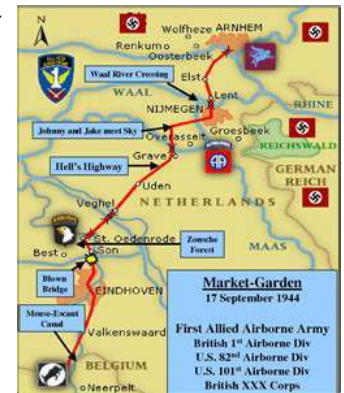
The jump during Operation Market Garden.

This was a plan concocted by British Field Marshal Montgomery that would be the first major daylight air assault attempted by a military power since Germany's attack on Crete. Similar to the Germans assault of four years earlier, the Allies initial plan for September 17, 1944 was to use the paratroopers and glidermen of the 82nd and 101st U.S. Airborne Divisions and England's First Airborne Division in a daring daylight drop into Holland. The airborne Allied troops were to seize roads, bridges and the key communication cities of Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem, thus cutting Holland in half and clearing a corridor for British armored and motorized columns all the way to the German border.

This would be the fourth and final World War II combat drop for the All-Americans of the 82nd Airborne. The word came on 15 September for the 82nd to jump in ahead of the Second British Army, 57 miles behind enemy lines in the vicinity of Grave, Holland with the objective of capturing and holding the key bridges at Grave and Nijmegen as well as some subsidiary bridges over a canal to the east of Grave.



The 504th was given the objective of seizing the longest bridge in Europe over the Maas River and several other bridges over the Maas-Waal Canal. Because of previous cancellations the men of the 82nd were doubtful that the mission would go especially when told that the planned flight was through the Scheldt Estuary (nicknamed "Flak Alley" by Allied bomber pilots) and that they were reportedly outnumbered by 4,000 of Hitler's Schutzstaffel (SS) troops and an unknown number of German tanks.



No cancellation was received, however, and on 17 September at 1231 hours, the pathfinders landed on the drop zone, followed thirty minutes later by the rest of the Regiment and C Company, 307th Engineers, to become the first Allied troops to land in Holland as part of Operation Market Garden - the largest airborne operation in history. By 1800 hours, the 504th had accomplished its assigned mission (although the enemy had managed to destroy one of the bridges). In just four hours, the Regiment had jumped, assembled, engaged the enemy, and seized its objectives.

(continued....)



Meanwhile, the 508th was under heavy enemy fire from the German paratroopers of the 3rd Fallschirmjager Division. The enemy continually counter attacked. The fight was intense at times but the 508th held the high ground on a place that earned the nickname "Devil's Hill."

For two days, the 82nd held its ground and conducted aggressive combat and reconnaissance patrols until the Irish Guards made the ground link-up, spearheading the advance of the 30th Corps of the Second British Army. However, the Nijmegen road and rail bridges, which were the last remaining link to British Airborne forces in Arnhem, remained in enemy hands.



German troops counter-attack during Market Garden.

While the 508th maintained the eastern flank, the 2nd Battalion of the 505th and tanks from XXX Corps attacked the south end of Nijmegen and the railroad bridges on September 20th. Again the 82nd encountered stiff resistance from the Germans as the fighting moved from house to house. At the same time a German Panzer-Grenadier division was being dispatched to Nijmegen to bolster the vital span. An assault crossing of the river was necessary but it was a seemingly impossible task because it required moving in boats across the 400-yard wide river against German 88's, flak wagons, 20mm cannons, machine guns and riflemen. Nonetheless, the crossing was ordered.

On September 20, in order to support the 505th attack and secure the bridge at Nijmegen, Major Julian Cook was ordered to cross the rushing Waal River in daylight with his 3rd Battalion and the support of Company C, 307th Engineer Battalion. In 26 canvas boats Major Cook and his battalion performed the death-defying feat of securing the north side of the bridges. Casualties were high and only thirteen boats returned to carry the second wave of the assault. But the 504th found the intestinal fortitude to persevere and triumph.



SGT Robert B. White
82 ABN veteran of
Normandy and
Holland jumps.

The British General, Sir Miles Dempsey, after witnessing the 504th crossing the Waal, characterized the attack with a single word as he shook his head and said, "Unbelievable."



Two soldiers of the US 82nd Airborne Division watch as Cromwell tanks of the Guards Armoured Division of the 2nd Armoured Recon Battalion the Welsh Guards cross Nijmegen bridge in Netherlands, Thursday, September 17, 1944.

On the following day near Oosterhut, Holland, Pvt. John Towle of Cleveland, Ohio, Company C, 504th PIR earned the Congressional Medal of Honor. Armed with a rocket launcher, he single-handedly - and without orders - moved into an exposed position and broke up a German counter attack of 100 infantrymen, two tanks and a half-track. He was finally mortally wounded by a barrage of German mortar shells.



Operation
Market Garden

Finally, on November 11 the 82nd was relieved by Canadian troops after 56 days of combat. The division moved to camps near Rheims, France and placed in reserve along with other airborne units.

[Source: <http://www.ww2-airborne.us/division/campaigns/holland.html>]

(Photos added)



*The President of the United States
in the name of The Congress
takes pleasure in presenting the
Medal of Honor
to*

TOWLE, JOHN R.

Rank and Organization: Private, U.S. Army, Company C, 504th Parachute Infantry, 82d Airborne Division.

Place and Date: Near Oosterhout, Holland
21 September 1944.

Entered Service at: Cleveland, Ohio.

Birth: Cleveland, Ohio.

G.O. No.: 18, 15 March 1945.



Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty on 21 September 1944, near Oosterhout, Holland. The rifle company in which Pvt. Towle served as rocket launcher gunner was occupying a defensive position in the west sector of the recently established Nijmegen bridgehead when a strong enemy force of approximately 100 infantry supported by 2 tanks and a half-track formed for a counterattack. With full knowledge of the disastrous consequences resulting not only to his company but to the entire bridgehead by an enemy breakthrough, Pvt. Towle immediately and without orders left his foxhole and moved 200 yards in the face of intense small-arms fire to a position on an exposed dike roadbed. From this precarious position Pvt. Towle fired his rocket launcher at and hit both tanks to his immediate front. Armored skirting on both tanks prevented penetration by the projectiles, but both vehicles withdrew slightly damaged. Still under intense fire and fully exposed to the enemy, Pvt. Towle then engaged a nearby house which 9 Germans had entered and were using as a strongpoint and with 1 round killed all 9. Hurriedly replenishing his supply of ammunition, Pvt. Towle, motivated only by his high conception of duty which called for the destruction of the enemy at any cost, then rushed approximately 125 yards through grazing enemy fire to an exposed position from which he could engage the

enemy half-track with his rocket launcher. While in a kneeling position preparatory to firing on the enemy vehicle, Pvt. Towle was mortally wounded by a mortar shell. By his heroic tenacity, at the price of his life, Pvt. Towle saved the lives of many of his comrades and was directly instrumental in breaking up the enemy counterattack.

A Rose Bush named Dale

In 2001, good friend Dale Olson (A/2/503) and I, along with a group of other Sky Soldiers returned to Vietnam. During our week-long visit, an afternoon was spent at a high school near Saigon where we participated in a



dedication ceremony of a dormitory built by Mike Thibault (A/2/503) for needy kids. Dale, at great risk, had smuggled into the country a fledgling rose bush which he presented to the kids of the school that day, and he had each of his Sky Soldier buddies water the flower to start it on its way. It was a kind gesture by a kind man. We lost Dale on October 22, 2011, and this world lost a good man, husband, father and granddad. In memory of our friend, my wife and I planted the rose bush seen here in our back yard and gave it the name, Dale. We walk past it every day and think of our friend.
Ed



**Dale Olson
1943 - 2011**

The best of all good men



New Procedures Ensure Benefits Delivery to Veterans in Need

WASHINGTON, July 11, 2012 – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is deploying a new model for processing compensation benefits claims at 16 VA regional offices. The new model is part of a comprehensive transformation plan designed to yield an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 additional compensation claim decisions annually, while ensuring Veterans most in need receive priority attention.

“This new model is a part of our comprehensive plan to eliminate the compensation claims backlog,” said Under Secretary for Benefits, Allison A. Hickey. *“Our redesigned model follows comprehensive planning and testing to ensure we have the right recipe for success.”* The new organizational model involves special handling of claims from Veterans who are facing the most serious injuries or illnesses or experiencing financial hardships or homelessness, and therefore need immediate attention. Through a new “intake processing center,” claims are routed to one of three segmented lanes:

Express: Claims that have only one or two medical conditions, or have all the supporting documentation, medical evidence and service records needed for an expeditious rating decision—referred to as “fully developed claims”.

Special Operations: Claims requiring special handling because of the unique circumstances of the Veterans. These include financial hardship; homelessness; serious wounds, injuries or illnesses; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder associated with military sexual trauma; and former prisoner of war status.

Core: Claims with more than two medical conditions, or those that will need additional evidence to make a compensation decision.

The segmented-lanes approach helps increase speed and accuracy because the claims specialists become familiar with processing claims of similar complexity. Veterans and their Veterans Service Organization representatives are encouraged to provide all the needed evidence along with their application in a “fully developed claim” in order to expedite the process.

Sixteen regional offices have received the new organizational and process model, including Huntington, WV; Hartford, CT.; Portland, OR; Houston, TX; Cleveland, OH; Des Moines, IA; Boise, ID; Phoenix, ArZ; New Orleans, LA; San Juan, PR; Atlanta, GA; Indianapolis, IN; Wichita, KS; Milwaukee, WI; Newark, NJ and Fort Harrison, MT. These offices will also receive new technology systems and software upgrades

over the next 3 months. All 56 VA regional offices will have fully implemented all of the people, process, and technology initiatives in VA’s transformation plan by the end of 2013.

To learn more about how to file “fully developed claims” using VA’s new Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs), visit <http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>



Sky Soldiers & family members visiting 173d Memorial at Fort Benning, GA.

~ The Sky Soldier Exchange ~ Troopers helping Troopers

If you served or are serving with the 173d or one of our attached units (i.e. RAR, Kiwis, 75th, Cowboys, Caspers, etc.), don’t forget to send in by September 1st to rto173d@cfl.rr.com your 1/2 or 1/4 page *free advertisement* of something new or used you want to sell. *The Sky Soldier Exchange* publication with your ad will be sent to upwards of 2000 troopers on October 1st, in time for the holidays.

Space is not available to advertise stuff sold by an employer unless you are the business owner, and no real estate, auto, personal guns or investment/financial services ads will be run. Any ad the editor deems inappropriate will not be included. One ad per trooper, please. Half-page ads are subject to reformatting to 1/4 page at editor’s discretion.

If we receive enough submissions we’ll consider running this special publication of free ads once yearly. *ATW!*



Tribute to Lt. Billie D. Harris

The 62-year search by Peggy Seale Harris for her husband, Lt. Billie Dowe Harris, who was listed as missing in action in France during World War II.

By Joyce Ann Ashley



When Billie Dowe Harris and Peggy Seale married on Sept. 22, 1943, they were like most young couples of that time – young, in love and full of hope. Despite the fact that the United States was fully involved in World War II, and lives were being changed daily, the 2nd Lt. and his bride were full of confidence in the future as they said their vows. Little did they realize how very different that future would be.



Peggy and Billie Harris

“We actually met through the mail,” Peggy Harris recalled. She was working as an electronic instrument mechanic at Altus Air Force Base at the time. A daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W.P. Seale of Vernon, Harris commuted each day to her job in Altus where she spent her time climbing in and out of airplanes, checking and replacing instruments.

“Billie’s father and I both worked at the base, and he kept telling me about his son, who was stationed in San Antonio. He wanted us to meet,” Harris said. A son of Virgil and Nell Harris, Billie D. Harris was an Army Air Corp flying cadet at Brooks Air Field in San Antonio where he was undergoing flight training. He and Peggy Seale corresponded for several months, and shortly after meeting, the handsome lieutenant proposed to the pretty Texas girl. He was 21 and she was 18. The couple was married in Florida where Lt. Harris had been sent to undergo advanced training prior to being shipped overseas.

“I didn’t even have money to buy him a wedding ring,” Harris said. “I used my Vernon High School class ring instead, and he wore it as his wedding ring.” Although the couple was expecting to have two weeks leave for their honeymoon, their time was cut short when a troop ship of pilots was torpedoed in the Atlantic.



Lt. Harris at A-2, an advance landing field near Criqueville, France, June 1944

Lt. Harris’ group was tapped to take their place. “His group was all taken to Tallahassee, and the wives were taken there to a huge hotel. When the men were called up, the wives were told to go home and not tell anyone that their husbands had been sent overseas until they had arrived there safely.” It was October 1943, and unbeknownst to Harris, it would be the last time she would see her husband.

Lt. Harris was assigned to the 355th Fighter Squadron/ 354th Fighter Group, stationed in southeast England. During the next few months, he would fly bomber support missions into Germany in the P-51 Mustang. After the invasion of Normandy, France, the attacks changed to ground targets with Lt. Harris flying multiple daily missions across the English Channel. During this time, he would earn two Air Medals with 11 oak leaf clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross. “He told me very little about what he was doing,” Harris said. “There was a lot of censoring of the mail, but I knew he was flying missions.”

(continued...)



By July 1944, Lt. Harris had completed over 60 to 100 missions and was eligible to be sent home. *“He wrote to me that he would soon be home. In fact, he had been assigned a place on a returning troop ship only to learn that wounded had priority, and he would have to wait for another ship. I thought it was only a matter of time until he would be able to come home.”* The date was July 8, 1944.

In late July, Harris received a telegram stating that her husband was “missing in action” as of July 7, 1944. The telegram would be the first mistake in a long series of errors that would interweave itself into Harris’ life for the next 62 years. *“After I got over the shock, I went to the telegraph office and told them there had been a mistake,”* Harris said. *“I told them I had a handwritten letter dated July 8, so he couldn’t have been missing on July 7. I didn’t know if the telegraph operator had made a mistake or if it was a mistake at the war department.”* Harris subsequently received a second telegram correcting the missing in action date to July 17, 1944.

She was in Colorado at the time, having been convinced by friends that she needed to get away from her job and take a rest. *“I was working at the air base while Billie was overseas, and one day, I was taking an instrument panel out of an airplane in which someone had been killed. There was dried blood still on the panel. I just couldn’t do it anymore after that, so I went up to Colorado for a while.”*

Later, an official military release was sent to Harris from Supreme Headquarters in Allied France (SHEAF) asserting that Lt. Harris had returned to the United States on leave. But none of the family had heard from him. Not convinced that her husband was in the United States and with no further information on his whereabouts, Harris appealed to the Red Cross for assistance. *“I was told not to be concerned, that no doubt he was being ‘processed,’ possibly at some military hospital,”* Harris recalled. Lt. Harris’ wife and family were hopeful that would be the case. *“Billie’s parents and I chose to believe that he was back in the United States. We were hoping that he was in a hospital somewhere, and maybe just didn’t know who he was or had lost his memory. We had heard of cases like that.”*

By March 1945, when no further word came concerning Lt. Harris, his wife again went to the Red Cross and asked if the military hospitals could be contacted. *“I was told it was too expensive to launch a search, and they were sure Lt. Harris would soon*

appear.” Harris next contacted Congressman Ed Gossett in Washington D.C., who in turn sent the information to the International Red Cross in Switzerland. Thereafter began a long series of conflicting reports, including notification that Lt. Harris was missing in action, then killed in action, then again missing in action. It appeared no one could agree on what had happened to the young pilot. In fact, no one seemed to know what had happened.

In 1948, Harris received a government form requesting her to indicate where Lt. Harris’ remains should be interred. *“I really didn’t believe they were talking about Billie because we still didn’t know where he was,”* she said. In fact, Lt. Harris’ father had been told by a friend in California that he was certain he had spotted the young airmen on an elevator in California. *“Mr. Harris quit his job and went there in hopes that he would find his son. Our thought was maybe he was out there somewhere and had lost his memory.”* However, on advice of a lawyer, Harris signed the papers from the military, and this eventually allowed her to receive military benefits, something she had not been able to do until that time. She did not, however, believe that her husband was dead.

“Until his parents died in the 1980’s, they also continued to have hope that their son was alive,” Harris said. And the story might have ended there with Harris never knowing what had happened were it not for a cousin of Lt. Harris who had become intrigued with the situation.

“Billie’s cousin, Alton Harvey, had heard the story of Billie all of his life. He was born after Billie died. He wanted to know what really happened, and after he retired, he began searching for the truth.”

During his extensive research over the past few years, Harvey found that some pilots had been buried in France, and he discovered that files were now being made available from the Department of the Army. Initially, however, he was told it would be difficult to access the files because of limited staff.



Jim Maloney (nephew) and Peggy Harris at Billie’s grave. Buried at Normandy American Cemetery St. Laurent-sur-Mer, France, 2008.

(continued...)



A few days after his inquiry, however, he received a call from Washington D.C., informing him that a Frenchwoman had also been inquiring about the same files some six months earlier. The files had been pulled and were available.

The Frenchwoman, it turns out, was Valerie Quesnel of Les Ventes, France. Quesnel was a board member of the little French town, which in 2004 decided to observe the 60th anniversary of the French liberation. It was during these preparations that the complete story regarding Lt. Harris would come to light.

Representatives from the French Embassy in Canada were invited to attend the ceremony, which paid tribute at a war memorial to citizens who had been killed in an air raid on the town in 1944, to those who had fought in the French resistance, and to a pilot whose plane had been shot down in the nearby woods - a Canadian named Lt. Billie D'Harris. However, an article detailing the 2004 ceremony caught the attention of a Mr. Huard, president of the Normandy Association for the Remembrance of Aerial. Huard wrote to the town council that he believed the pilot in question was not Canadian, but an American. It was also noted that the pilot's body had been moved from the town in 1946, although a large marker remained there, and had been temporarily buried in another cemetery, then later permanently transferred to the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-Sur-Mer.

Quesnel made a trip to the cemetery and confirmed the information. It was then that she began her research through the Department of the Army in Alexandria, Va. In September 2005, Quesnel received over 200 pages of information concerning Harris. It was about this time that Harvey's research had led him to the same department, and he also was able to obtain the information.

Harvey and his wife drove from Austin, where they currently reside, to Harris' home in Vernon to personally present her with the documentation and perhaps the last piece of a puzzle that had gone unsolved for over 60 years. Among the information was the name and address of Quesnel. Harris immediately wrote a letter expressing her appreciation to the small town of Les Ventes for their original burying of her husband there and the subsequent years of tribute they had paid to his honor. Thereafter a correspondence began between the two women, and Harris was able to finally learn what had happened on that July day in 1944.

Peggy Seale Harris makes a trip to a small town in France to discover the fate of her late husband. In 2004, when the small French village of Les Ventes held a ceremony to observe the 60th anniversary of the French liberation, city councilwoman Valerie Quesnel learned that a gravesite in the town cemetery, which was said to have been the original burial location of a Canadian pilot shot down by the Germans during World War II, was actually that of an American fighter pilot from Altus, Okla., named Lt. Billie Dowe Harris.

Quesnel also learned that the pilot's body had been moved from the town in 1946, although a large marker remained there, and he had been temporarily buried in another cemetery, and then later permanently transferred to the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-Sur-Mer.

Quesnel made a trip to the Normandy cemetery and confirmed the information. She then began research through the Department of the Army in Alexandria, Va.



The community of Les Ventes in the Normandy region dedicated an area "Place the Billie D. Harris".

In September 2005, Quesnel received over 200 pages of information concerning Lt. Harris. It was about this time that Alton Harvey, a cousin of Lt. Harris who had been doing research on his fate for a number of years, contacted the same department, and also was able to obtain information.

(continued...)



Through records, documentations and eye-witness accounts, Harris learned that on July 17, 1944 around 7 p.m., Harris' plane had crashed in the forest outside the small village of Les Ventés, France, about 90 miles southwest of Paris. The plane did not burn, and French resistance members were the first to get to the aircraft and discovered the pilot had not survived. The men removed his handgun and codebook. They quickly left, however, when they heard Germans approaching the crash site.



Permanent granite marker on the original grave of Billie D. Harris in Les Ventés

“Because his flight jacket bore the letters Billie D Harris, it was assumed it was D’Harris,” Harris said. “They thought from that that he was Canadian.”

Among documents Harris received was a letter written on July 20, 1944 by the town’s mayor, a “Mr. Desfriches,” in which he stated that the Germans had removed an identification tag with the pilot’s name, identification number and his mother’s name and address, and a glass medallion containing a four-leaf clover. Found on the pilot was a ring with a “kitten” on it, bearing the inscription PLS, and Vernon HS 1941. This ring was actually Harris’ high school ring, placed on her husband’s finger on their wedding day in 1943 because she couldn’t afford to purchase a wedding band. The ring has subsequently vanished.

“He wore it as his wedding ring,” Harris explained. “I didn’t have money when we married to buy him a ring.” According to the mayor’s letter, the ring was kept by the mayor to be returned to the family along with two photographs also found, but somehow the ring disappeared while in U.S. military custody, Harris reported.

The townspeople retrieved the pilot’s body from the plane wreckage, and it was wrapped in a sheet given by a “Mrs. Frichot” and placed in an oak coffin. It was then buried at the cemetery at 9 a.m., July 19, 1944 in the presence of about 70 people. The coffin was covered with summer flowers brought by the townspeople from their own homes and gardens. The cemetery also contained the graves of others

considered to be “heroes” by the villagers, including those who had died assisting the French freedom fighters. In fact, each year since the country’s liberation, the people of the village had several times a year paid tribute to those buried in the cemetery, including the pilot that had been thought of as Canadian. Even after his body was removed in 1946 by the U.S. Army and moved to a temporary cemetery in Blosville, France, where he was listed as an “unknown,” the townspeople continued to include him in their tribute. “It was as if they adopted him as their own,” Harris said.

In 1947, Lt. Harris’ body was taken to a casketing point in Cherbourg where he was still listed as “unknown.” In September 1948, he was interred in Normandy American Cemetery as Billie D. Harris. The stark white stone cross bears his group and squadron numbers and “Oklahoma.”

“When I received the information and files from Alton, I immediately wrote to Mrs. Quesnel to thank her for the kindness of the townspeople,” Harris said. In her letter, Harris wrote: “I was overwhelmed by the caring kindness of your townspeople and wonder if any of them are yet alive. I want to thank them for their tender care... I learned at last that caring hands took him from the wreckage.”

As the women began to correspond and other town officials became aware of the situation, an invitation was issued to Harris from the current mayor, Christine Fessard, to visit Les Ventés. Meanwhile Harris’ story was reported in a French magazine and on French radio, requesting anyone with additional information to come forward.

With an emotional heart, Harris accepted the invitation to go to France, and on April 6, accompanied by Alton and Gaye Harvey, landed at Charles DeGalle Airport in Paris. The next morning, the group was met by Valerie Quesnel, who drove them to Les Ventés. On the way, they passed through the town of Vernon, France, a coincidence not lost on the travelers. In fact, on their return trip, they would spend a night at a hotel in the town.

In Les Ventés, the group was provided with a house in which to stay, where a hot meal was waiting upon their arrival. ..

(continued...)



... American and French flags had been placed by the front door. The kitchen was stocked, and each day, the group was invited to a home of a different councilman for lunch and dinner. *"It was just overwhelming, the way in which we were treated,"* Harris said.

On a trip to the nearby forest, Harris was at last able to see the site where her husband's plane had crashed. There she met Guy Surleau of Everux. *"He had been a young freedom fighter, and he had actually seen Billie's plane crash,"* Harris said. *"He told me he had run up to the plane, saw the pilot was dead and had run back into the forest because he thought the Germans were coming."*

Harris also met B. Frichot, the son of the woman who had given the sheet for Lt. Harris' burial. *"He told me it was only after he read the magazine article that he found out about his mother's involvement. She had never spoken about it."*

Harris also met a Madame Lorieux, who had heard about Harris through the radio broadcast, and wanted her to know she had been present on the day Lt. Harris was buried in Les Ventes. She gave Harris some small black and white photographs taken on the day showing the burial site piled high with flowers. Harris also received pictures of six young men who had served as pallbearers, and Surleau was able to identify them for Harris. Madame Lorieux also gave Harris a number of other photographs showing Les Ventes and the residents on the day it was liberated.

On Sunday, April 9, some 300 people gathered at a monument at the city hall, where Lt. Harris' name is listed among those martyred during the war. Mayor Fessard read aloud the names inscribed there. The group then made its way to the village cemetery for a ceremony similar to those that had been performed three times a year for over 60 years on May 8, victory in Europe; Aug. 22, the day Les Ventes was liberated, and Nov. 11, the end of the war. A number of local as well as national dignitaries spoke, and an Englishman named Bob Goodall, who lived in the town, served as interpreter. Harris was presented with a large bouquet, which she placed on the gravesite in an emotional moment.

Back at city hall, displays had been set up for public viewing, which included pictures and memorabilia from the era and also pictures that Harris had provided. An eight-course catered luncheon was held in Harris' honor after which she made a speech

thanking the people. In her words, Harris told those present how the actions of the townspeople so many years ago *"quiets and comforts my heart."* Certificates and proclamations from the Oklahoma Governor's office, the State of Oklahoma and the City of Altus were presented to Madame Quesnel and others of the city.

The next day, Harris and the Harveys, accompanied by Madame Quesnel, visited the Normandy cemetery. There they were greeted by Supt. Daniel Neece and his wife, Yolanda. Neece told Harris she was the first widow to visit the World War II cemetery in the past five years. *"It was very emotional for me,"* Harris said.



At the Memorial - Peggy Seale Harris of Vernon (second from left) is joined by Texas Governor Rick Perry (fourth from left) at the memorial at Pointe Du Hock, Normandy, France during a visit Harris and her nephew, Jim Maloney, made in June. Others in the photograph are Jacqueline Pain, wife of Cricqueville, France mayor, John Chatel, translator, and Anita Perry, wife of Rick Perry.

Harris visited the Normandy cemetery several times over the next few days. On one visit, she and Harvey were granted permission to sprinkle soil from Lt. Harris' parents' graves in Altus on their son's gravesite. She also has made arrangements for flowers to be placed on Lt. Harris' grave several times a year, including Valentine's Day, Easter, Christmas and on July 17, the date of the plane crash; Nov. 11, Veteran's Day, and Oct. 14, his birthday.

Harris never remarried. Billie, she said, was the most unusual person she ever knew. She recalled writing poetry in the letters she sent to him while he was overseas. Among the articles she received after Lt. Harris was originally declared missing in action was a page of poetry in his own handwriting, including the lines by a British Canadian poet, Bliss Carmon:

(continued...)



“Lord of the far horizons, give us eyes to see, over the edge of the sundown, the beauty that is to be.”

“We never talked about ‘what if,’” Harris said. “We had friends who got killed. We knew it was possible, but we never wanted to think about it. In his last letter, he was optimistic. He thought he was coming home soon.”

During the ensuing years, Harris lived for a while in Boulder, Colo., where she worked for a mining company, a mineralogist, a surveyor’s office, a savings and loan and the Boulder County Civil Defense as well as the Boulder Valley School District. She also wrote for several publications. She returned to Vernon, and in 1980 she graduated from Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls with a major in humanities and a minor in philosophy. She was librarian at Vernon College for a number of years.

As Harris reflected on the past months, she feels overwhelmingly grateful to the people of the small French village who adopted her husband without knowing anything about him, other than he was a young man fighting for freedom. “He is a hero to the people of Les Ventes,” Harris said. “He represents all the young men who gave their lives.” In fact, during the brief time he was in service, Lt. Harris was awarded two Air Medals with 11 Oak Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was also posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.

Harris finds comfort in words penned in a memory book presented to her in Les Ventes and translated recently by Susan Coker and Mary Neuberger with Kent Butler doing the calligraphy. Many attending the luncheon wrote thanking Harris for her husband’s sacrifice, including these words signed by C. Hardouin: “I was seven years old in 1944. I was there to see the air battles. I now know everything that this young American’s sacrifice stands for, and I also understand in some small measure all the suffering endured by his young wife.”



Peggy at the Texas Historical Museum in Vernon, TX, stands in front a special Billie D. Harris exhibit. The display of photographs are from her visit to Les Ventes and Normandy trip.

The last months have been an emotional experience for Harris, who had preferred to bear her grief in private these past 62 years. “I don’t want to say this has been closure, because I don’t like that word,” Harris said. “I guess the best way to describe it is ‘relief’ to finally know the entire story, to be able to bring it all together, and to know what really happened.”

Credits: Billie D. Harris: Joyce Ann Ashley, Family Life Editor - The Vernon Daily Record. Alton and Gaye Harvey.

[Thanks to Bill Wade, CWO4, U.S. Navy, for bringing this story to our attention. Visit <http://wimp.com/missinghusband/> to view a video of the story]

Lest We Forget

By Berton Braley

Our dead rest on the breast of France
And all around the world
Where by war's grim or splendid chance
Our banners were unfurled:

So whether here or overseas
Their bodies chance to lie,
We pay full honour unto these
Who did not fear to die.

Because they dared, because they died
We and our nation live,
Our liberty, our hope, our pride
Were gifts that they could give:

And since for all these gifts the price
Was life -- they held life cheap
And blithely made the sacrifice
And laid them down to sleep.

O, dead of many wars, who fought
With spirit high and pure,
The noble structure that you wrought
Shall evermore endure!

You held your country's cause above
All else: we, unafraid,
Will keep your country worthy of
The price you gladly paid.



Dayton VAMC hosts 5th Annual Welcome Home celebration!

The week of August 20-25 is Dayton VA Medical Center's (VAMC) Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) 5th Annual Welcome Home week.

Activities kickoff on Monday, Aug. 20, with the 3rd Annual Wounded Warrior Golf Tournament at the Dayton Country Club. This event will benefit Salute Military Golf Association, in cooperation with Dayton VAMC. This is the first year Dayton VAMC will be participating in the golf tournament.

Veteran Jim Fortune will be the keynote speaker at the luncheon. Jim is the Department of Ohio chairman, VA Voluntary Services (VAVS), chief executive officer of the Dayton National Cemetery Support Committee, a member of the VFW Post 9585 of Vandalia, Ohio, and Dayton VAMC's 2011 and 2012 Volunteer of the Year. All anticipate a good time.

On Saturday, Aug. 25, Dayton VAMC will hold its 5th Annual Welcome Home event, "A Night Out at the Ballpark," at the Dayton Dragons' stadium located in Dayton, OH. More than 700 Dayton VAMC Veterans are expected to attend.



Dayton VAMC will honor OEF/OIF/OND Veterans from the five branches of the military for their service to our country. The event is sponsored by Dayton VAMC and its supporters, including Montgomery County Veterans Service Commission, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Kettering Health Network, Dayton VAWS, and Salute Military Golf Association.

Additionally, Dayton VAMC 2012 Welcome Home health promotion focus is "Be Tobacco Free!" Veterans are encouraged to make healthy choices.

Dayton VA Medical Center
937-268-6511 | 800-368-8262

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

Baby LRRP?



And in this corner, thanks to mom Susan and dad Charlie, is Declan (Deck-Lahn) Cundiff, weighing in at 6 lbs. 10 oz, born on Friday the 13th, July 2012. 173d LRRP Reed Cundiff and his bride Elaine, proud grandparents.

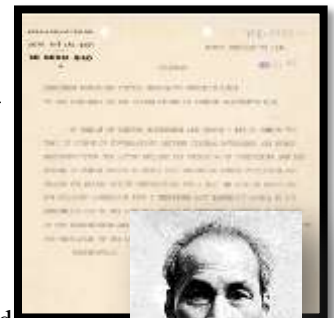
"I wanna be an Airborne Ranger, I wanna live a life...oops, I think I just pooped my pants!"

From Ho to Harry

TELEGRAM FROM HO CHI MINH TO HARRY S. TRUMAN

February 28, 1946

President Hochiminh
Vietnam Democratic
Republic Hanoi
To The President of the United
States of America, Washington, DC



On behalf of Vietnam government and people I beg to inform you that in course of conversations between Vietnam government and French representatives the latter require the secession of Cochinchina and the return of French troops in Hanoi STOP Meanwhile French population and troops are making active preparations for a Coup de Main in Hanoi and for military aggression STOP I therefore most earnestly appeal to you personally and to the American people to interfere urgently in support of our independence and help making the negotiations more in keeping with the principles of the Atlantic and San Francisco charters Respectfully HOCHIMINH

1946



“If You Don’t Write It Down, It Never Happened”

**Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d, ‘65/’66**

Jim makes a lot of sense. Your newsletter is here to record your stories and recollections and photos for all time, while sharing memories with your brothers. In a hundred and more years from now these newsletters will be resting in some dusty old archive or still on the net, and historians and plain everyday people will actually read some of this stuff. Your time at war was important, not only to you, but to your heirs and for posterity. Send in a story; blood and guts stuff is o.k., but so are stories of the amusing kind, or, maybe you want to honor the memory of a buddy? Don’t worry about spelling and grammar, we’ll run it thru the washer to fix such mundane things. Plus, your kids and their kids might one day enjoy reading about their dad and granddad when he was *a young man, and a paratrooper.*

All The Way!

~ Harold W. Riley ~

**War: World War I, 1914
Branch: Army Air Force
Service Location: France
Rank: First Lieutenant
POW: Yes
Place of Birth: MN**



1st LT Harold Riley, 1918

"It seems mine was the death room, each new patient brought in being very sick, no one surviving while I was there."

When the United States entered World War I, Harold Riley wrote, *"I believed that the excitement and thrills of military action could be better appreciated from close contact, with real fighting."* Although his father had just been diagnosed with diabetes, Riley's family urged him to serve. He became a pilot in the newly formed Army Air Corps, dropping propaganda leaflets behind enemy lines and scouting for ground troop movements. In October 1918, his plane was shot down, and his observer, Sam Keesler, was killed. (Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi was later named for him). Riley spent most of his brief time in captivity under medical care for his wounds; the war ended a month later.

The Combat Jumps They Made



The 503rd jumps on Noemfoor Island, July 3, 1944

Unit: 503rd PIR

Date: 5 September 1943

Operation: Alamo

Troopers: 1,700

Country: New Guinea

Drop Zone: Nadzab, Markham Valley

Unit: 503rd PRCT, 1st Battalion

Date: 3 July 1944

Operation: Table Tennis (Cyclone)

Troopers: 739

Country: New Guinea

Drop Zone: Noemfoor Island

Unit: 503rd PRCT, 3rd Battalion

Date: 4 July 1944

Operation: Table Tennis (Cyclone)

Country: New Guinea

Drop Zone: Noemfoor Island

Unit: 503rd PRCT

Date: 16 February 1945

Operation: Topside

Troopers: 2,050

Country: Philippines

Drop Zone: Corregidor

