

2/503d

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



We try
harder.

VIETNAM

newsletter

December 2012, Issue 48
Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

See all issues to date at the 503rd Heritage Battalion website:
http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 2/503 Photos of the Month ~



A great honor at Arlington Cemetery. Roy Lombardo, Dave Glick, Jim Robinson & Joe Logan (B/2/503) place a wreath from troopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade at the Tomb of the Unknowns on Veteran's Day 2012.
(Photos by Ed Kearney, B/2/503d)

Here rests in honored glory an American Soldier known but to God.



Chaplain's Corner



Christmas – Vietnam

Christmas Past

As you think back to Christmas in Vietnam, what are your thoughts? Let me go first and share several thoughts of Christmas 1966.

My wife had mailed me a two foot Christmas tree which I set up immediately.

Then there was time to think about where I was and what was happening. The two things that occupied my mind were the food which we would enjoy and letters from home. Incidentally, it would be the same two thoughts during my second tour in Vietnam during 1969-70.

I had just left A/2/503 and was assigned to the Brigade Staff, and yes, there was more food at Brigade. The activity there was a period of calm and seemed we were standing down for Christmas. Yep, I prayed for my wife and kids and the guys in Alpha (Clem Green) and our battalion. One thing that hasn't changed for me since 1966, is the story of that first Christmas and the birth of my Savior. More on this below.

Bob Guy, who had been with the 1st Platoon of A/2/503 moved to Battalion and became the Bn S-3 Air (guess that was his Christmas present). He would remember that Christmas, and the operation where the 2d Battalion was clearing the road and acting as security as the 196th Infantry Brigade and other units, that were to become the Americal Division, moved in. He will recall it was a time of little action, some skirmishes, but mostly boredom and a chance to spend time with fellow troopers, plus of course, like all Sky Soldiers, thinking of home.

Chaplain Connie Walker would say, "I recall that time as a period from Scripture...Ish 7:10-14 and Luke 2:1-14. The theme for me was 'Fear Not!' I bring you Great Joy. The hymns were Joy to the World and Hark the Herald Angels Sing and Silent Night. There were worship services all day.

I recall our MPs (F Troop) under the command of Capt Dale Friend. They had a Christmas Tree with original trooper art. We sang, read Scripture and prayed



Cap

together. My deepest thoughts were around the Grace of God and His Son, our Lord Jesus who had invaded the earth with pure redemption. I prayed for my wife and three daughters and two sons--and wept."

Gus Vendetti will remember "Our company was securing a part of the road for a replacement division enroute to Phu Loi. We had put up a big Christmas tree and the Red Cross ladies (Donut Dollies) put "boo coo" presents under it for the troops. Father 'Giggs' and another Chaplain held church services. Our ambush patrols had VC movement but did not engage. Dr. Klinestiver served 'GI gin' with a twist and gave himself a face 'profile' so he would not have to shave."

Oh yes!!! During that time we had Hank Snow come and perform for us back at base camp--I recall him saying, "Tell your folks you had Snow for Christmas."

Christmas Present and Future

My prayer, specifically this Christmas season, is that "you would reach out and touch/call those men and women who are now reading this newsletter and draw them close to you. Some will be faced with issues of health, financial problems, fracture of relationships within their family, or problems in business and separation from their relationship with the Lord. I lift each of you in this prayer and ask that you would gather these others and help them meet those specific needs that each has. May we seek to know the Lord better, build our relationship with Him, and commit to serve Him. These things I pray, Sir...in Your Son's name."

Here's the best part. It starts like this, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Thinking back, the story of that first Christmas hasn't changed. I'd ask you to join with me and share the story with others that the Lord Jesus was not only born on that Christmas day, but grew, was crucified, buried and resurrected for you and me. He sits at the right hand of the Father and makes intercession for us. My prayer is that one day each of us will be with Him. How's that possible? Here's the answer: "For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God: and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation." (Romans 9-10). That's the story and it's up to us to tell it...

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

Rev. Jack Kelley, LTC (Ret)

Former CO, A/2/503, RVN, JackTKelley@aol.com



Remarks by the President on Veterans Day, Arlington National Cemetery



President Obama and Maj. Gen. Michael S. Linnington, commander of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington, participate in a wreath-laying ceremony on Veterans Day at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery, November 11, 2012.

(Michael Reynolds / Getty Images)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated. Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Secretary Shinseki, for a lifetime of service to our nation, and for being such a tireless advocate on behalf of America's veterans, including your fellow Vietnam veterans.

To Rick Delaney; to Vice President Biden; to Admiral Winnefeld; Major General Linnington; our outstanding veteran service organizations; our men and women in uniform -- Active, Guard and Reserve -- and most of all, to the proud veterans and family members joining us in this sacred place, it is truly a privilege and an honor to be with all of you here today.

Each year, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, we pause -- as a nation, and as a people -- to pay tribute to you. To thank you. To honor you, the heroes, over the generations, who have served this country of ours with distinction.

And moments ago, I laid a wreath to remember every service member who has ever worn our nation's uniform. And this day, first and foremost, belongs to them and their loved ones: to the father and mother, the husband and wife, the brother and sister, the comrade and the friend who, when we leave here today, will continue to walk these quiet hills and kneel before the final resting place of those they cherished most.

On behalf of the American people, I say to you that the memory of your loved one carries on not just in your hearts, but in ours as well. And I assure you that their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

For it is in that sacrifice that we see the enduring spirit of America. Since even before our founding, we have been blessed with an unbroken chain of patriots who have always come forward to serve. Whenever America has come under attack, you've risen to her defense. Whenever our freedoms have come under assault you've responded with resolve. Time and again, at home and abroad, you and your families have sacrificed to protect that powerful promise that all of us hold so dear -- life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Today, a proud nation expresses our gratitude. But we do so mindful that no ceremony or parade, no hug or handshake is enough to truly honor that service. For that, we must do more. For that, we must commit -- this day and every day -- to serving you as well as you've served us.

When I spoke here three years ago, I spoke about today's generation of service members. This 9/11 Generation who stepped forward after the towers fell, and in the years since, have stepped into history, writing one of the greatest chapters of military service our country has ever known.

You toppled a dictator and battled an insurgency in Iraq. You pushed back the Taliban and decimated al Qaeda in Afghanistan. You delivered justice to Osama bin Laden. Tour after tour, year after year, you and your families have done all that this country has asked -- you've done that and more.

Three years ago, I promised your generation that when your tour comes to an end, when you see our flag, when you touch our soil, you'll be welcomed home to an America that will forever fight for you, just as hard as you've fought for us. And so long as I have the honor of serving as your Commander-in-Chief, that is the promise that we will never stop working to keep.

This is the first Veterans Day in a decade in which there are no American troops fighting and dying in Iraq. Thirty-three thousand of our troops have now returned from Afghanistan, and the transition there is underway. After a decade of war, our heroes are coming home. And over the next few years, more than a million service members will transition back to civilian life. They'll take off their uniforms and take on a new and lasting role. They will be veterans.

As they come home, it falls to us, their fellow citizens, to be there for them and their families -- not just now but always; not just for the first few years, but for as long as they walk this Earth.

(continued....)



To this day, we still care for a child of a Civil War veteran. To this day, we still care for over a hundred spouses and children of the men who fought in the Spanish-American War. Just last year, I came here to pay tribute as Frank Buckles, the last remaining American veteran of World War I, was laid to rest. Frank stepped up and served in World War I for two years. But the United States of America kept its commitment to serve him for many decades that followed.

So long after the battles end, long after our heroes come home, we stay by their side. That's who we are. And that's who we'll be for today's returning service members and their families. Because no one who fights for this country overseas should ever have to fight for a job, or a roof over their head, or the care that they have earned when they come home.

We know the most urgent task many of you face is finding a new way to serve. That's why we've made it a priority to help you find jobs worthy of your incredible skills and talents. That's why, thanks to the hard work of Michelle and Jill Biden, some of our most patriotic businesses have hired or trained 125,000 veterans and military spouses. It's why we're transforming, for the first time in decades, how the military transitions service members from the battlefield to the workplace. And because you deserve to share in the opportunities you defend, we are making sure that the Post-9/11 GI Bill stays strong so you can earn a college education and pursue your dreams.

If you find yourself struggling with the wounds of war — such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or Traumatic Brain Injuries — we'll be there as well, with the care and treatment you need. No veteran should have to wait months or years for the benefits that you've earned, so we will continue to attack the claims backlog. We won't let up. We will not let up. And as we mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we have secured new disability benefits for Vietnam-era veterans exposed to Agent Orange. You needed it, you fought for it, and we got it done.

That's what we do in America. We take care of our own. We take care of our veterans. We take care of your families. Not just by saluting you on one day, once a year, but by fighting for you and your families every day of every year. That's our obligation — a sacred obligation — to all of you.

And it's an obligation that we gladly accept for Americans like Petty Officer Taylor Morris.

Six months ago, Taylor was serving our nation in Afghanistan. And as a member of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, his job was one of the most dangerous there is: to lead the way through territory littered with hidden explosives; to clear the way for his brothers-in-arms.

On May 3rd, while out on patrol, Taylor stepped on an IED. The blast threw him into the air. And when he hit

the ground, Taylor realized that both his legs were gone. And his left arm. And his right hand.

But as Taylor lay there, fully conscious, bleeding to death, he cautioned the medics to wait before rushing his way. He feared another IED was nearby. Taylor's concern wasn't for his own life; it was for theirs.

Eventually, they cleared the area. They tended to Taylor's wounds. They carried him off the battlefield. And days later, Taylor was carried into Walter Reed, where he became only the fifth American treated there to survive the amputation of all four limbs.

Now, Taylor's recovery has been long. And it has been arduous. And it's captivated the nation. A few months after the attack, with the help of prosthetics, the love and support of his family, and above all his girlfriend Danielle, who never left his side, Taylor wasn't just walking again. In a video that went viral, the world watched he and Danielle dance again.

I've often said the most humbling part of my job is serving as Commander-in-Chief. And one of the reasons is that, every day, I get to meet heroes. I met Taylor at Walter Reed. And then in July, at the White House, I presented him with the Purple Heart. And right now, hanging on a wall in the West Wing is a photo of that day, a photo of Taylor Morris smiling wide and standing tall.

I should point out that Taylor couldn't make it here today because he and Danielle are out kayaking. In Taylor we see the best of America — a spirit that says, when we get knocked down, we rise again. When times are tough, we come together. When one of us falters, we lift them up. In this country we take care of our own — especially our veterans who have served so bravely and sacrificed so selflessly in our name. And we carry on, knowing that our best days always lie ahead.

On this day, we thank all of our veterans from all of our wars — not just for your service to this country, but for reminding us why America is and always will be the greatest nation on Earth.

God bless you. God bless our veterans. God bless our men and women in uniform. And God bless these United States of America. Thank you very much.



A Message from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Day 2012

Three days ago, the citizens of this great land decided who would have the privilege of leading our Nation for the next four years. It is a time-honored process reflecting both the wisdom and the power of the American people. Today, America honors the men and women whose profound acts of citizenship — service in the armed forces of the United States of America — have safeguarded our country for 237 years and guaranteed our rights as Americans to choose our leaders.

Twenty-two million living Americans today have distinguished themselves by their service in uniform. Their devotion and sacrifice have been the bedrock of our sovereignty as a Nation, our values as a people, our security as a democracy, and our offer of hope to those in other lands, who dream our dreams of “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

For the past 11 years, the men and women of our armed forces have stood watch in Iraq, in Afghanistan, Europe, Korea, and more than 150 other countries around the globe. More than 1.5 million Veterans have served in the combat theaters of Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. Since 9/11, nearly 3 million Veterans have departed the military, having fulfilled their duty to the Nation, and become eligible for the benefits and services we offer here at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

We are often reminded that, today, less than 1% of Americans wear the uniforms of our Nation. The sum of their service to the country, however, is beyond measure. Our rights and privileges as American citizens have been their gifts to each of us. We must not take those gifts for granted. On behalf of the American people, each of us here at VA has the responsibility of caring for these giants among us. Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence — I CARE — are our watchwords.

VA is renewing our country’s historic covenant with its Veterans. By leveraging 21st century technology and empowered by a dedicated workforce, over one-third of whom are Veterans themselves, VA is boldly

transforming itself in healthcare and benefits delivery, and in memorial affairs, to better serve all Veterans. Our goals remain unchanged: increase access to VA benefits and services; eliminate the backlog in compensation claims in 2015; and end Veterans’ homelessness, as well, in 2015. In this Department, every day is Veterans Day. We celebrate their contributions, take pride in their achievements, and as their national advocates, care, nurture, and protect them as well as they protected all of us.

I extend my thanks and admiration to our Nation’s Veterans on this, their special day of recognition, and I express my deep appreciation to my colleagues at VA for their dedication, their loyalty, and their partnership in this noble mission.

Eric. K. Shinseki



A Hell of a Trombone Player And Buddies Remembered On This Veteran's Day



173d Memorial stone at Arlington Cemetery.

Dear Friends and Family:

Here are a few photos taken by Ed Kearney (B/2/503) during our Veteran's Day activities at Arlington.

We assembled at General Williamson's grave. General Williamson was the first brigade commander of the 173d. In 1963, he was given the job to assemble and train a strike force based in Okinawa that was able to assault anywhere in Southeast Asia within 24 hours.

In May of 1965, it was thought Saigon was about to be overrun. At first we were to jump. However, the plan was changed to land in Bien Hoa. After the Special Forces, we were the first army unit to enter Vietnam (and the last to leave). General Williamson in later years preferred to be called Butch.



Arlington Cemetery: Sky Soldiers of the Bravo Bulls paying their respects at gravesite of General Williamson.

Anyway, Butch started his army career as a trombone player in the North Carolina National Guard! After coming ashore at Normandy, he survived the carpet bombing at the "St. Lowe breakout". He started leading troops east, turned north and ended up in Berlin. Along the way he accumulated 4 DSC's, 6 Silver Stars, 4 Purple

Hearts and a pile of other stuff. He was a hell of a trombone player.

We then moved to our monument. This year we had a very small turnout. The hurricane had a real impact. We conducted a memorial with the assistance of a color guard from the 82nd. At the memorial the names of our KIA's were read. A flag was placed as each name was read. There was always a group of onlookers. This year there were 3 youngsters from C Company.



Joined by family and friends, LTC Roy Lombardo (Ret), former commanding officer of B/2/503 along with fellow Sky Soldiers, salute the Colors.

There is no discrete way to say this, so I'll just charge ahead. Although there are not many of us left, in some military circles we are pretty well known. Consequently, we were asked to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. This was quite an honor.

Afterwards, we were given a briefing in the Old Guard orderly room. There are many urban legends concerning this unit. I'm sure you have read some of them. An interesting fact that you might not know is, the guard walking the "post" wears no rank. The Sergeant of the Guard does, but the guard does not. This is to assure that the guard does not outrank the deceased.

After the briefing we visited the horses that pull the caissons. I learned that instead of becoming a forward observer, I should have applied for horse wrangler.

Not in the photos, and after the horses, the Commanding Officer of the Old Guard and his wife invited us to supper at their residence. All in all, it was a unforgettable experience.

Ed and I hope you enjoy the photos.

Jim Robinson
B/2/503d



Operation Smash

Dec. 18, 1965, 3rd Platoon, C/2/503d

By Charles (Andy) Anderson
Major, USAF (Ret)
cmaja@aol.com

On the second day of Operation Smash we were assigned the recon platoon that encountered an entrenched battalion of VC on the above date. I was one of the machine gunners in weapons squad. At about 10:00 in the morning we chanced upon them as we walked into their trap. We were surrounded by dug-in VC on three sides with additional VC in trees to our rear.



Andy

We exchanged fire repeatedly for a while and during that time my buddy, Dave Swanson, who was in one of the rifle squads and who I knew since I was four years old, spotted a Viet Cong in the tree and pointed him out to me. Before I could swing my gun around to engage the tree-hugger, Dave fired his M-79 grenade launcher at him and hit him in the chest. The explosion left only his leg dangling from a chain. We looked at each other in shock of the brutality.

SFC Christ, our platoon sergeant, had us cease fire until we could better identify the VC positions. Once identified, artillery and air support were called in to loosen up the entrenchment. In the quiet we realized that our point man was not with us. He was between us and the VC. We called out to him, "Chittum, Chittum", and to our surprise he stood up and started walking back to our position. The whole line of VC opened fire; we returned cover fire, but amazingly they were unable to hit our ambling 6 ft., 3 in. point man. And that's probably why he was our point man.

After that round of fire it became silent again. Then, directly in front of my machine gun, two VC scouts appeared from behind the bushes. I quickly fired a burst of rounds at them, but they were

dragged back to the trenches by rope. I figured that was their rope-a-dope tactic. It was about as effective as the tree-hugger gig.

After a while we got into another exchange of fire and when it was over SFC Christ had us check to see if anyone was hit. Sgt. Robert Allen Gray, who was probably the smallest soldier in the 173d, had been hit. He was just to the right of my machine gun position. I called for the medic, but the call was in vain. As I kneeled next to him, he asked me only one thing,

"Andy, was I a good soldier?"

"Sarge, you were the best."

And his soul immediately retreated.

Using that same tactic, we waited until dusk, and then retreated. Bravo Company and the rest of Charlie Company then came in a flank and polished off the VC battalion.

That night it rained a drenching rain on the coldest, wettest night of my Vietnam tour. Sore and tired our weapons squad gathered together under ponchos to stay warm. And, as I drifted in and out of sleep, all I could think about were the last words of a true Sky Soldier who journeyed all-the-way. May God be with him always.

Robert Allen Gray, Sergeant

C Company, 2nd BN, 503rd Infantry,

173d Airborne Brigade, USARV

Avilla, Indiana

September 23, 1930 to December 18, 1965

Robert Gray is on the Wall at Panel 4E, Line 23



Hill 882

Dak To, Vietnam

Story by SP Robert Craig
Photos by SP5 Gordon W. Gahan
U.S. Army Vietnam
March 1968

"The accompanying battle scenes photographed by SP Gahan are backed by actual sounds of fighting and shouts of soldiers who fought for Hill 882. Machineguns roar, the whine of snipers' bullets zipping by and the shouts of men in combat were tape recorded by SP Craig. Excerpts from that recording form the text of this story:"

Editor, Army Digest

*"We got enemy over here to the west."
"Get 'em, shoot 'em – Now!" "Hey, we got that..."*

"Ah, Lima Kilo Six...I'm gonna start puttin' artillery on the whiskey side." "Ah, Roger, Mike Six, Out."

The fight for Hill 882 began as another "no contact" day for men of the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. For two days they tracked their enemy relentlessly through the mountains near Dak To. And they had found plenty of evidence that the 66th NVA (North Vietnamese Army) Regiment was hurt.

At mid-afternoon on 18 November (1967), a scout dog stopped short and tenses – a soundless warning to his handler – and saved 180 men from walking into an enemy ambush. The airborne troopers dug in.

The battle was joined.

What was believed to be an enemy squad, a delaying force, turned out to be a reinforced company. Determined U.S. infantrymen caught everything the NVA troops could throw, and returned it in spades as they pushed the up-hill fight.

"Put it up there!" "I told ya there was one up there...Hell you..."

"Maybe he's the last, man." "Don't say that." "There they are!" "No luck, baby." "There they are...Go!"

"We're in a helluva place...We got a sniper overinna tree." "Hey, they worked right in behind us, back to our side, to the right – right flank." "Hey, Top..."

"Get 'em – get 'em – get 'em!!!"

The battle ended three hours later. Airborne infantrymen had reached the top of Hill 882.

[From Army Digest, sent in by Thomas Ayers, A/2/503d]



Making A Difference

Throughout life we often encounter people who make a difference. Sometimes we envy their talents. Other times we opine that they should get a reward for going the extra mile. If you know someone who has made a difference regarding our Brigade and wish to recognize their contributions, YOU can nominate them to be designated as *Distinguished* or *Honorary Members* of the 503d Infantry Regiment.

Those designated as Distinguished Members of the Regiment must have served in one of the 503d Infantry Battalions. Those designated as Honorary Members of the Regiment can be soldiers, their spouses, or individuals who have made a contribution or provided a service to our Brigade or the Army but who have not served in any of the 503d Infantry Battalions.

The basic criteria for designation as a Distinguished or Honorary Member of the Regiment is service to the soldiers of the Brigade, or the Army, of an exceptional/continuing nature, including those that perpetuate the history and traditions of the 503d Infantry Regiment. AR 600-82, Chapter 5-3 sets the criteria for selection of these individuals.

In 2012, three individuals were appointed by the Office of the Secretary of the Army as Distinguished Members of the 503d Infantry Regiment, joining fifty living peers of all ranks from civilians through 4-star generals. They were Colonel Andrew Rohling, CSM Jeffrey Hartless and LTC (Ret) Hal Nobles.

All that is required to make a difference is to send a letter outlining the accomplishments of the individual you wish to nominate, and a brief biography, to Ken Smith at 1160 Lake Royale, Louisburg NC 27549. All nominations must be received by 15 January 2013.

Think about it. Step Forward. Nominate someone who has contributed significantly to our Brigade and our Army. Honor someone who has made a difference!

Ken Smith, A/D/2/503d



Ken with his beautiful bride Susan.

Future Sky Soldier?



My granddaughter, Bexley, in a jump simulator at the Rigger School, Ft. Lee, Virginia.

Roger Dick
C/2/503d

About the Sky Soldier's Exchange

I love it. I have been going to E-bay. I now will go to my brothers' sites and order.

Thanks again,

Jim Stacey
A/2/503d

Contact
rto173d@cfl.rr.com
for your free copy of
the Sky Soldier's
Exchange



The Hard Chargers



Photo of a communion service Chaplain Swartz conducted for his guys in C/1/503d. This was on an over-watch position in Tangi Valley in February 2010. The only names Mike remembers are fourth from left is CPT Michael Finch, seventh from left is CPT Scott Porter, and Mike on the far right.

It is a privilege to talk with you Vietnam era 173d Troopers! We are all part of the Herd! Was awesome to serve with the Herd. I was 1-503d and my buddy Bryan was 2-503d. We were both in Vicenza, Italy then went over to Afghanistan for 12 months to play in the sand. :) To the right is a snapshot of me and a couple others from B Company just after an air assault mission. Take care. Ranger out!

Chaplain Michael E. Swartz, CPT
U.S. Army



L-R: From Battle Company, Chaplain (CPT) Mike Swartz, SSG Drew Beauchamp, PFC Jones & SSG Adkins.

Airborne....All The Way!





SKY SOLDIERS KIA ~ VIETNAM DECEMBER



~ *Lest We Forget* ~

~ 1965 ~

John Joseph Carlone, II, C/2/503
Daniel Albert Dickinson, HHC/2/503

Lary Dale Fogle, B/2/503

This is just to say a little about the uncle I never knew but know a lot about. My name is Michael D. Fogle Jr. I first learned about my uncle as a small boy. My father told me about him and I am very proud of what my uncle did for me and the rest of the Americans. When I was a Junior in High School (the same school Lary and his brothers and sisters went to) I got an assignment in history class - I had to write a report on someone I thought was a big inspiration to me. Most kids would write about one of their parents or friends but I chose to write about my uncle Lary and his life and accomplishments. I used visual aids I got from the library and the key to my report was not only the fact and history I collected by talking to family members and friends of Lary but I brought in a guest speaker who told about my uncle's life and how he was with everyone around him. He enlisted in the Army on July 13, 1965, and was killed December 20, 1965. He was 17 when he entered the Army. He was killed four days after his 18th birthday. This is a little about my uncle and my feelings for him. If I could tell him anything right now I would say "Thank You - it is Americans like you that make it possible for all of us today" and I love you.

Robert Allen Gray, C/2/503

Sammie Griffin, C/2/503
Griffin, who enlisted in the Army in September 1964, confided in his last letter home from Vietnam that "I'm trying very hard to stay alive and get back home". The private first class, a rifleman assigned to Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, died one week before Christmas Day 1965. He was 18 years old. Survivors include his father, two brothers and two sisters.



James A. Gruezke, A/82nd Aviation Bn
James Clifton Guillory, C/2/503

*"To live in the hearts we leave behind,
is never to have died."
(Thomas Campbell, circa 1888)*

Daniel J. Guilmet, C/2/503
Stephen Dyer Jewett, C/2/503

Charles Richard Kier, C/2/503

He was a very nice man, he loved us all and we all loved him, he died at a young age serving our country! We miss him and we STILL have him in our hearts and in our memories! I will pray for him!....He was very loved by his family – definitely by his mother, Betty Kier. She talks about him a lot! He was very nice to her!!! He definitely has the "Kier Ears", she says!!! Love from his grand-daughter, Tracy Carmicle



Note from The Virtual Wall

Although the 3rd and 4th Marine Regiments were the first major American ground forces to arrive in Vietnam, the 173rd Airborne Brigade wasn't far behind, arriving at Bien Hoa in mid-May 1965. The "Sky Soldiers" promptly took the fight to the enemy and continued to do so for the next six years - but they paid a terrible price: over 1500 Sky Soldiers were killed in action or died of wounds received.

Delmore Byron Nerveza, HHC/2/503
Richard W. Peterson, C/2/503
Romiro C. Rodriguez, D/2/503
Paul Clive O. Taylor, C/2/503
Joseph Paul Yatsko, Jr., C/2/503

(continued....)



~ 1966 ~

Coley L. Andrews, 335th AHC
Lorenzo Clark, E-Trp, 17th Cav
Richard Edwin Powell, E-Trp, 17th Cav

~ 1967 ~

Clarence Mattue Adams, A/3/503
John Robert Arrington, A/3/503
Donald Ray Burgess, C/3/319
Mark James Cullen, A/2/503, B/3/503*
Richard Nelson Eddy, A/3/503

Michael David Fuller,
A/3/503



Francis David Greenwood, A/3/503

Bruce Hall, A/3/503
Bruce moved to Midland, Texas from Hobbs, New Mexico where he was born, when he was a year old. He attended Midland schools and had completed his junior year at Midland High when he dropped out of high school to enter the Army in October 1965. He trained in infantry and completed jump school. Before he departed for Vietnam, he was a member of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He volunteered for Vietnam



and then broke his arm in a jeep accident and after healing and a 30 day leave home, he departed for Vietnam October 3, 1967. When he arrived he was immediately thrown into heavy fighting with the 503rd Infantry Regiment. He went through the Battle of Dak To which was most of the month of November 1967. Two days after Christmas 1967, he was

being air lifted into a hot LZ near Tuy Hoa. He was shot to death shortly after hitting the ground. In a letter home from Bruce which was received shortly after his death, he didn't talk about the war that much, was sending his dad \$500 as a Christmas gift to be used to build a fence and in a separate envelope he thanked his younger brother for a cigarette and match that he had sent. He stated he dropped it in a cup of Koolaid but it was drying out on a rock and he would smoke it later. He was buried in his home town of Midland, Texas in the Resthaven Cemetery. He is remembered by his family, his mother, his sister, and his younger brother, his hometown and by the Permian Basin Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Midland, Texas. His father is now deceased. His mother still lives in the family home since 1948. From a PBVVM representative, Billy M. Brown

Bruce Hall was a friend who was a classmate at Midland High School. To this day I think of him often. Ron (Bo) Green, Sergeant Major, Retired, U.S. Army

Paul George Hamilton, Jr., C/3/319th
Moses Hegler, Jr. A/3/503, C/3/503*
Ted Delane Holliman, Jr., A/3/503
Dan Thomas Klindt, A/3/503, C/3/503*
Irville J. Knox, A/3/503, HHC/3/503*
Michael Raye McCord, B/3/319th
Ivan Dean Miller, Jr., B/3/503, B/1/503*
Michael James Minor, A/3/503
Robert L. Morris, B/2/503
Benny Ray Owens, A/3/503
Ronald Allen Parsons, C/1/503
Gary Ralph Schwellenbach, A/3/503, HHC/3/503*

~ 1968 ~

William Leroy Brown, C/3/319
Billie Byrd, C/4/503

Elton Bradley Collins, D/4/503
I got to Nam in June of 1968 and Elton had been there a few months already. He used to get great "care" packages from home. I can still see his smiling face, tan, he had a real deep voice. I jumped on a chopper to go to Bangkok for R&R on New Year's Eve of '68 and we were just leaving a fire support base so we could go to Ban Me Thuot and build another one. I couldn't wait to get out of there. I returned about the 5th of January, 1969 and couldn't believe it when I heard that he and Stephen O. White of Chicago, the two guys I assigned my job, were both killed instantly when a mortar round landed in the 81mm mortar "gun pit." I think of him all the time, and Stephen. For years I felt guilty that it was them instead of me. I will always honor and regard their friendship and the ultimate sacrifice they made for this great country. From a comrade-in-arms.

*Records indicate service in both units.

(continued....)



Note from The Virtual Wall

The MACV Summary for December 1968 contains the following entry for 30 December: 1 FFV (Binh Dinh Prov): At approx. 1800, a 173rd Abn Bde fire spt base 19 mi NNW of An Khe rec approx. 30 rds of 60mm mort fire. Counter mort arty msns, hel gunships & AC-47 gunship fires were dir onto suspected en firing psns with unk res. US cas were 1 while no mat dam was reptd.

Garry Michael Forkum, D/4/503
Robert Charles Fox, B/2/503
Thomas Hayes, A/4/503
Stephen Douglas Langler, HHC/4/503
John Edgar Marason, B/2/503, B/1/503*
Kenneth Wayne Molton, A/2/503

James Joseph Morrissey,
B/1/503

"According to the Philadelphia Examiner, in a December 29, 2010 "On this Day In History" article, nearly 700 Philadelphians lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Among those lost to the Vietnam War from Philadelphia, were 54 alumni of Thomas Edison School; the largest number of Vietnam War Casualties of any high school in the nation. There were 27 alumni of Father Judge High School, and 27 alumni from Cardinal Dougherty High School.



There were two men from Philadelphia killed in action on the same day, December 29, 1968 during the Vietnam War. Although the two men were from different type units, they both were assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade,"

Albert Lee Peggs, A/2/503
Joseph Lester Rinehart, D/2/503, HHC/2/503*
Kenneth Allen Tuttle, C/1/503
Willie C. Walker, B/4/503
Gary Allen Warner, C/1/503

Stephen O'Meara White, D/4/503

I had been there since June of '68 and Stephen got there around September I recall. I remember him telling me he was drafted and was from the south side of Chicago. I was from Minnesota. We were on an operation one day and he told me that he wasn't going to make it home, it must have been late November of '68. On December 30th I got on a chopper to head for Bangkok for R&R. Little did I know that I would never see him again. A few minutes after the chopper resupplied us and let me aboard, the fire-support base was mortared and the first round landed in the 81mm mortar gun pit and killed both he and a fella from Fort Wayne, IN, named Elton Bradley Collins. When I returned

from Bangkok I couldn't believe my ears. I felt terrible because I had assigned them my job of FDC (fire direction center) for the mortar. They were where I would have been, in the gun pit returning fire. I have since learned that he was from Beverly, a south-side Chicago neighborhood. I have also learned that he was quite a character in school. Once when the moving wall came to Chicago I was told that I just missed his parents, apparently they left just before I got there. I'll never forget Stephen, I kind of took him under my wing when he got there. I reassured him that he would get back to "the world" and everything would be fine. He didn't. I miss him. I think about him often and totally appreciate the ultimate sacrifice that he and Elton made for our great country. Rest in peace my friend. From a comrade-in arms.

Lawrence James Wissell, C/2/503

~ 1969 ~

Richard Gary Buccille,
E-LRP/20th Inf/173d Bde
"SP4 Richard Buccille,
US Army, KIA December
20, 1969, RVN. My friend
Ricky was killed in action in
Vietnam. He was in Vietnam
because he chose to serve his
country, putting the interests
of his nation before interests
of his own. You see, Ricky
didn't have to be in Vietnam.
Ricky didn't have to be in the
Army. Ricky was a smart kid
with a scholarship to play
football in college. And
Ricky was very good at
football. And Ricky went to
college and Ricky played
football. He could have said it wasn't his war. He could
have said he had a future and hid behind that. He could
have done a lot of things. But he didn't. He quit school and
enlisted in the Army and went to Vietnam. Because it was
the right thing to do. I wish I could see Ricky playing for the
Steelers this weekend and cheer like an idiot and watch the
little locomotive plow his way through the defense and say "I
knew him when..." I wish I could run into him in the Giant
Eagle or at the VFW. But I can't. All I can say is Ricky
Buccille was my friend and I miss him and I'm very proud to
have known a man of his stature." SEMPER FIDELIS,
George W. Jessop III, USMC, RVN 1966-1967



*Records indicate service in both units.

(continued....)



Anthony William Dean, C/4/503

James Fitzroy Ghee, A/4/503

Casmir Kulik, B/4/503

Sergeant Kulik was killed in action while serving on a three man killer team in the village of Tuy Ahn in the An Lo valley north of Bong Son. This was an all-volunteer mission which included Staff Sergeant Tommy Stidham of Fresno, CA, and Sergeant Richard Wells of Sandy Hook, KY, as well as Sergeant Kulik. The cause of death and injuries was due to a command detonated booby trap. Both SSgt Stidham and Sgt Wells were severely injured requiring medevac. SSgt Stidham was returned to the US and discharged. Sgt Wells completed his tour of duty and extended for another tour. From a comrade, Richard S. Wells



Mitchell Magee, Jr., HHC/1/503

Ronald Dean McMillen, HHC/1/503

Daniel Allen Peters, D/4/503

Thomas Anthony Scibelli, B/3/503

Raleigh John Snell, Jr., HHC/1/503

My brother "Bobby" was a kind young man. From his sister, Elizabeth

Francisco M. Trujillo, C/1/503

~ 1970 ~

Clayton Gerome Craig, B/1/503

Robert Dorian Cranson, B/4/503

Over 30 years have passed, yet I still think of you every day. You were my "big brother" and when you left that August day, I could not imagine you would not come back. You did not come back, but you have always been with me. Some small piece of me still believes that somehow you were lost there, and that someday I will pick up the telephone or open the door and you will be there, but I guess that is only a way to hold onto my only brother. I miss you and love you, and I made sure Dad was well cared for until he came to rest next to you. Sleep peacefully, Robby.



Joseph Paul Curtis, C/1/503

Tony Howard Myers, E/4/503

Ferenc John Ramm, C/1/503

Bruce Gordon Sempstrott, B/4/503

Henry James Sims, E/1/503,

Gary Wayne Smith, B/4/503, E/4/503*

Sources: KIA lists from 173d Bde & Virtual Wall websites

*Records indicate service in both units.

Remembering....It's What We Do

"My wife and I live in the Caribbean and we only spend a few weeks a year in the states. This year we were in Clarmont, FL on Veteran's Day. While there I attended a ceremony sponsored by the city in which they recognized and honored all veterans collectively. It was a very emotional ceremony for me to attend. While sitting there I remembered, as it were yesterday, the events of '65 and '66 and our brothers who did not return home. They were much too young to die and most of them were barely out of high school. They were too young for spouses and children. Today, their parents would be in their 80's and most would have passed on. It is wonderful for the country to honor our veterans collectively. However, those of us that were there remember them as individuals. While sitting there, I wanted to stand up and tell the audience about Sgt. Butler, Sgt. Morton, Tim Aikey, Marvin Harper, Jerry Daley, Jerry Levy and so many more. I did not speak up, but perhaps I should have....if we don't remember them as individuals than who will?"

Larry Cox, C/2/503d



Reunions of the Airborne Kind



~ 2013 ~



3rd Annual Airborne Reunion, Kentucky Airborne Chapter, 82nd Abn Div., February 8-10, 2013, Lexington, KY.

Contact:
Joe Steen

Phn: 502-937-8234

Eml: kyairbornechapter@yahoo.com



50th Anniversary Celebration of the 173d Airborne Activation, March 21-24, 2013, National Infantry Museum Campus, Columbus / Fort Benning, Georgia. See Page 17 for additional information.

Contact:

Web: www.173dairbornememorial.org



The Edmonton Airborne Social Club next Airborne Regiment Re-Union at the Edmonton Aviation Museum June 7-9, 2013. The Theme Chosen by the Re-Union Committee is "REMEMBER THE FALLEN".

Contact:

Bill Tremain

Committee Chairperson

Eml: tremain.bill@gmail.com



Special Forces Association National Convention 2013, hosted by Chapter XV, June 26-30, 2013, Hyatt Regency Hotel, San Antonio, TX.

Contact:

Fred Solis, 201-491-2783

Pat Connolly, 210-826-8023



B-2/501st, 101st Airborne Div., Reunion 2013, July 10-14, 2013, Ramada Plaza Suites, Fargo, ND.

Contact:

Chuck & Sue German

Phn: 701-783-4386

Eml: chucks@drtel.net



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, August 23-29, 2013, Las Vegas, NV. See Page 16 for details.

Contact:

Jim Bradley

Phn: 727-376-2576 (after 4:30 p.m. EST)

Eml: webmaster@173rdairborne.com

Web: www.2013Reunion.com



101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans 19th Annual Reunion, September 5-8, 2013. Reunion HQ Best Western Ramokta Hotel, Rapid City, SD.

Contact:

Rodney Green

Reunion Coordinator

Eml: randhgreen@sio.midco.net



11th Airborne Division Association Reunion, September 22-26, 2013, Fayetteville, NC.

Contact:

Bert Kurland

President

Eml: berwan@embarqmail.com

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





OPERATION SIN CITY



26 - 29 August 2013

The 173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion

Hosted by:

Chicago and Florida Chapters

~ REGISTRATION FORM ~

Please print & copy form for additional names.

(Indicate shirt size for each individual. S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL)

Name: _____

Shirt Size: ____ Phn: _____ Eml: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Unit served with in the Brigade: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Shirt Size: _____

~ Registration Fees ~

____ \$150. Per Member or Guest before 25 July 2013,

\$165. Per Member or Guest after 25 July 2013.

____ \$150. Gold Star Family Member

____ \$100. Per Vendor Table (173d Vendors only)*

____ \$75. Per Active Duty Soldier (Not on Orders)

Free Active Duty Soldier (On Orders, i.e. Command, Color Guard)

Free Gold Star Luncheon (173d Gold Star Family Members)

____ \$25. Sky Soldier Adoption Program* "Have your meals on me".

____ **Total of check enclosed in USD.**

**Sky Soldier Adoption Program: We have active duty Sky Soldiers fly in from Italy who must pay airfare, hotel, meals and reunion fees costing them thousands of dollars. We try and offset their cost by giving them a break on the registration cost. You can help out by purchasing a meal voucher so our active duty Sky Soldiers traveling in from Europe will have reduced cost. Please contribute to our Sky Soldier Adoption Program and let him/her have their meals donated and sponsored by you!*

Please Make Checks Payable to:

173d ABA 2013 Reunion

and mail to:

2013 Reunion

5640 Wellfield Road

New Port Richey, FL 34655

Host Hotel

The Orleans

4500 W. Tropicana Ave.

Las Vegas, Nevada 89103

Phone: 702-365-7111 Toll Free: 800-675-3267

ID Code A3SSC08

Room Rate: \$29. per night + Tax and fees.

Rate good for 25 to 29 August 2013. Or register on-line at www.orleanscasino.com/groups

Refunds if notified by 25 July 2013, no refunds after 25 July 2013.

Only authorized 173d vendors may hold a raffle, one per table in the vendors' area only.

173d Gold Star Family Members of our KIA's: Spouse, Parent, Sibling, Children)

Reunion Contact:

Jim Bradley

727-376-2576 after 4:30 pm EST (Please)

www.2013Reunion.com



50th Anniversary Celebration of the 173d Airborne Brigade Activation

21 – 24 March 2013

**National Infantry Museum Campus
Columbus / Fort Benning, Georgia**

21 March Golf Tournament

**Bull Creek Golf Course, Midland, GA -- 0830
Tee Off -- Sponsored by the 173d Airborne
Brigade Association's Columbus/Fort Benning
Chapter.**

**Participate in Mini "Unit" Reunions with
Brothers in Arms.**

22 March Tours and Visits

**Tour the "New" Fort Benning. Return to the
Jump Towers. Experience the "Last 100 Yards"
and other exciting displays, activities and
exhibits in the National Infantry Museum.
Visit the Walk of Honor Adjacent to the Parade
Field on the National Infantry Museum Campus
and view numerous unit Memorials. The Walk
of Honor is anchored by the 173d Airborne
Brigade National Memorial.**

23 March Ceremonies

**Participate in the Memorial Cleaning (0930-
1100). View the Silver Wings Jump and
Participate in the "Reading of the Names"
Tribute to our Fallen Vietnam Warriors starting
at 1330 in the Parade Field Grandstands.
Return to the Memorial at 1930 for a Candle-
Light Service and Honors. The Names of
warriors who fell in Iraq and Afghanistan will be
read.**

24 March Ceremonies

Prayer service at 0900 at the Memorial.

Information on How to Participate

**For information regarding how to sign up for the
Golf Tournament and to Participate in the
Reading of the Names of Vietnam Fallen (30-40
more readers are needed), and for information
updates for tours and events, visit the 173d
Airborne Brigade National Memorial
Foundation website at**

www.173dairbornememorial.org



Living With Honor

By SSG Salvatore Giunta
B/2/503
Medal of Honor Recipient

Published by Simon & Schuster, the memoir will be released December 4th.



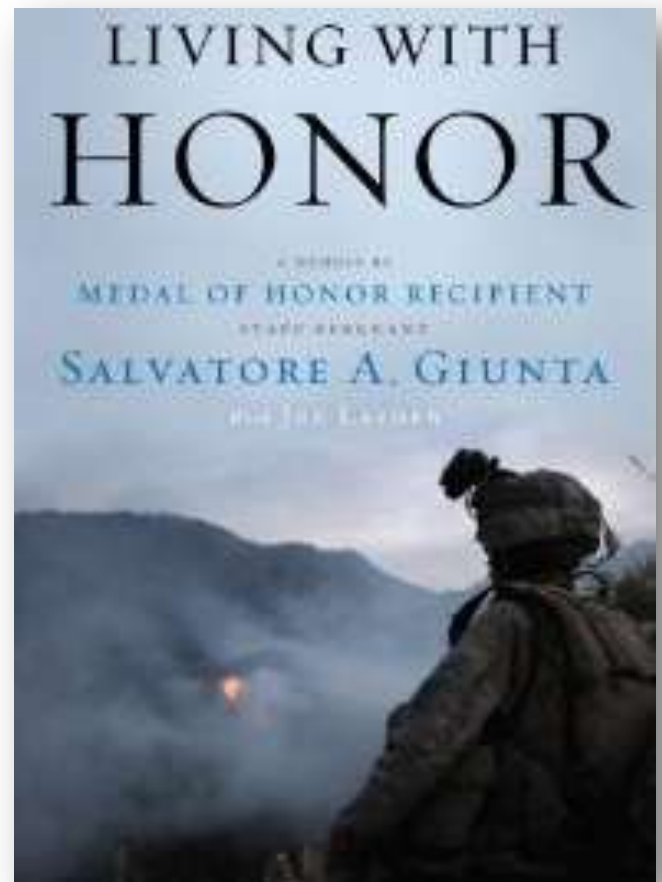
“There was the sound of a single bullet, and then . . . a deafening barrage of gunfire and explosions. There were, literally, thousands of bullets in the air at once, and more tracers streaking across the sky than there were stars over-head. It was a miracle that most of us weren’t killed instantly.”

Staff Sergeant Salvatore, “Sal,” Giunta was the first living person to receive the Medal of Honor—the highest honor presented by the U.S. military—since the conclusion of the Vietnam War. In *Living with Honor*, this hero who maintains he is “just a soldier” tells us the story of the fateful day in Afghanistan that led to his receiving the unique honor. With candor, insight, and humility, Giunta not only recounts the harrowing events leading up to when he and his company fell under siege, but also illustrates the empowering, invaluable lessons he learned.

As a seventeen-year-old teen working at Subway, Giunta was like any other kid trying to figure out which step to take next with his life after graduating from high school. When Giunta walked into the local Army recruiting center in his hometown, he just wanted a free T-shirt. But when he walked out, his curiosity had been piqued and he enlisted in the Army.

Deployed to Afghanistan, Giunta soon learned from the more seasoned soldiers how “different” this war was compared to others that America had fought. Stationed with the 173d Airborne Brigade near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the Korengal Valley—also known as the “Valley of Death”—Giunta and his company were ambushed by Taliban insurgents. Giunta went into action after seeing that his squad leader had fallen. Exposing himself to blistering enemy fire, Giunta charged toward his squad leader and administered first aid while he covered him with his own body. Though Giunta was struck by the relentless barrage of bullets, he engaged the enemy and then attempted to reach additional wounded soldiers. When he realized that yet another soldier was separated from his unit, he advanced forward. Discovering two rebels carrying away a U.S. soldier, Giunta killed one insurgent and wounded the other, and immediately provided aid to the injured soldier.

More than just a remarkable memoir by a remarkable person, *Living with Honor* is a powerful testament to the human spirit and all that one can achieve when faced with seemingly impossible obstacles.



Available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)





PART II

This is a continuation of 503d PIR trooper Jerry B. Riseley's 'official journal'. See Part I in October Issue 46, Pages 46-51 of our newsletter. Ed

17 August 1943



Final preparation planned. Time of initial entrucking will be 0430 18 August 1943. 207 officers and men of Hq. & Hq. Co. 2nd Battalion with reinforcement from HQ & Service Companies.

18 August 1943

At **0700 hours** the first plane carrying the first tactical load of parachute jumpers from Australia took off at Cairns airport. Weather, slightly cloudy, cool, some mist. Troop commander, 1st Lt. John M. Cole. (Capt. Padgett, Battalion S-2, Battalion S-1 also aboard. Morale: Attitudes: Eventually, why not now. Men seem to be doing some thinking regarding the possibility of dying.



0710 Hrs: Present altitude 2000.

0712 Hrs: Australian coast is vanishing.

0725 Hrs: It looks as though we were flying just above an endless snow field. (Flying just above cumulus clouds but below stratus clouds). At the edge of one horizon, just off the left of the tail can be seen a line which is probably the receding Australian shore. Behind somewhere are the other planes. From its early days in September 1940, the original 501st Prcht Bn at last moves to a forward base from whence she will move to find the enemy. There are no test platoons aboard this plane of 22. But S/Sgt Lee L. Thompson and other cooks (nonjumpers) who have helped cook the first meal the 501st ever ate here. (Remember, the 501st Prcht Bn became the 2nd Bn 503d).

0730 Hrs: Beginning to see water underneath again. Capt. Padgett is in the tail of the ship. He has his maps out and is figuring on his slide rule. He seems to be enjoying himself.



Plans and Training People make a big thing about engaging in intellectual activity of a mysterious type. It is their stock in trade. Wilburn E. "Bitsy"

Grant studied under Padgett and in time became his assistant. Bitsy did just fine until there came a time when he was pushed to the wall by Joe S. Lawrie. Lawrie was Regimental Executive Officer under Colonel Kinsler. Every man and officer in the regiment knew that even though Lt. Col. George M. Jones was commander of the 2nd Bn, and was not Regimental Officer, that Colonel Jones in fact did rank Joe S. Lawrie, who was also a Lt. Colonel. There came a time in the tour, when the regiment needed masking tape to tape up the jump planes. Lawrie called Bitsy before him and demanded to know why Grant had not been able to obtain masking tape. *"I've looked everywhere for masking tape,"* is the legendary Grant reply, *"and I haven't been able to find any. I even drank a barrel of glue, ate a barrel of sawdust and tried to get some that way, but it didn't work."*

Grant came back to join my club of Mess Officers, Ex mess Officers, and Assistant Platoon Leaders. In other words Lawrie got him fired.

0735 Hrs: I can recognize in the water what appears to be a swampy shore. At first islands. We are edging along the shore of what appears to be a long peninsula off the port tail.

0737 Hrs: Off the port wing on the horizon there is a thin line—might be mountains. Capt. Padgett is looking intently out the starboard tail. More long islands off starboard tail and wing.

0740 Hrs: Just occurred to me that the "long islands" are undoubtedly the Great Barrier reef.

0945 Hrs: Lt Cole stood up and counted the plane load to see if we were all there. A typical Coleism. His uncle was at one time the President of Czechoslovakia. Benes?

(continued....)



18 August 1943 (con't)

1015 Hrs: Landed at Ward Strip, Port Moresby, New Guinea. Set up camp 17 miles from Port Moresby. The Australians named this "17 Mile" which is a way the Australians have of not wasting anything. This plane, under Lt Cole, was the first of tactical parachutists to arrive in New Guinea.

1045 Hrs: Co's D, E, and F arrived at Ward Strip, coming from Cairns, Queensland by air. Lt. J. Dick, now in the S-4 business, goes with 5 men forward by air to what I assume is a second forward base. Supplies which are flown by air are also being moved forward.

(This may have been a place called Tsilli-Tsilli—it is pronounced "Silly-silly" and it may have only been a military base, National Geographic Atlas of the World does not show it. Nadzab, on the other hand, is shown plain and clear).

1800-0800 Hrs: All organized Jap resistance has been cleared in the area patrolled by 503rd with exception of 20 Japs reported near Menoekwari, 1st Bn is investigating that.

20 August 1943

The balance of the regiment arrived today by boat and is being fed by this Bn. Housing: Pyramid tents, each one housing 6 men or 4 officers. Everyone has his parachute with him, and takes great care to keep it off the ground and dry. There is a mild rain, a heavy dew.

21 August 1943

Saturday. Work on camp continues. The parachutes being kept by each person in his tent will not be too good if kept this way long. The danger of a wet parachute is that it may not open, or that it may be slow in opening.

22 August 1943

Sunday. First pass regulations are announced —1 man each tent, 1 officer each company. Sort of a futile thing because there is no place to go. Port Moresby offers no beer, no women, a small post exchange. The only women on the island are said to be nurses. Haven't seen any of these. First Guinea Golds* today.



(continued....)

*Locally printed military newspaper containing mostly Australian news, race results, etc.



23 August 1943

S/Sgt B-D-U*, Bn Sgt Major relieved.



B-D-U was inherited from J. Dick, and he was not a modest man. But fortunately, he took care of his own assignment. What he did, in a word, was the wrong thing. We had a regimental sergeant major named Bull Garner. He is Vernon H. Garner. He was passing by B-D-U and told him there would be a Sergeant Major's Call at 1800. *"Blow it out your ass!"* said B-D-U, who had previously been very rude to Captain Padgett. Padgett did not report it to Jones, but I did. Jones let it pass. Garner did not let it pass. Cpl Q-R-S* became acting sgt-major, and he would keep the job, as a corporal, until months later he would be sent to Officer Candidate School in Brisbane, then he would be assigned to (#) Company. Q-R-S survived to retire as a Superintendent of Schools or some such, in California. In 1988 I suggested I would like to use his account of the Battle of Nadzab, but he really got excited about it. He said he was sure some of the Headquarters Company people would be put out with him if he did. I suggest that it was foolish of me to ask about it. To survive in the California Education System, one has to be the greatest of diplomats and take great care never to do anything that might offend anyone in anyway whatever. One should never allow a belief or ideal to figure when one's whole career is measured by survival. But in Barlett's Familiar Quotations, repeated fifty different ways, is the proposition that if all the good men kept quiet for the sake of peace and harmony, the world would soon be taken over by all the bad men.

Bn makes 1st march in New Guinea—about 4 miles over mountains in rear of camp. Reaction: Not too much. Movie in Regtl area.

**Names omitted by author.*

24 August 1943

Bn make 2nd hike—over hill and dale, returns at noon. Reaction: Somewhat negative. The men are old hands at the tropics.

25 August 1943



Regtl formation during which the Regtl Surgeon, Major Monroe P. Gail, who glories in his title of "Iron Claw", gave a talk on the contents of the new jungle medical kit -- Sulphadiazine tablets, Sulphamylamide Powder, Halazone, Morphine (with hypodermic needle), salt tablets, atabrine. No Bn hike today. Reaction: Enthusiastic.

Bn hike today. Eight miles over hill and dale. Fell out: L-F-T* Co F. Reaction: Very negative. Some of the men are beginning to fear that they will be worn out when the combat jump finally comes off. Capt. Robert Lamar, M.D., and Bn medical officer went on these marches with his crew of medical aid men. This includes T-5 Mangles, who was later awarded the Rascobian Degree of Philosophy. Mangles managed this, on one of these hellish marches, by observing a man fall out cold. Mangles ran toward the head of the column, full speed, shouting *"A man is out! Get a medic!"* Then Mangles suddenly turns, *"I am a medic!"*, and he runs to the fallen soldier.

**Name omitted. L-F-T was a very rugged individual, a member of the Regimental boxing team. This is only one instance—for some reason some of the members of that boxing team were either more fragile or less dedicated than their non-boxing team fellow soldiers.*



2nd Bn over hill and dale.

(continued...)





27 August 1943

The scourge of dysentery. Almost 50 men of the Bn are suffering with dysentery. There are 10 men in the hospital, mostly because of this.

28 August 1943

Two officers detailed to watch the mess kit washing line. A medic is put on to guard the lister bag to see that all water that goes into it is chlorinated. This is done by chlorine in a small glass vial which is broken and then the contents are dumped into the white lister bag, and it takes one-half hour before the water is thought to be purified. The Halazone tablets do the same thing for water in the men's canteens. Before we had the Halazone tablets, men would carry the glass vials, and dump a little into the canteen.



(continued...)



29 August 1943

Seven men were caught by the Bn Cmdr out on the road. They had their weapons and they were on their way to indulge in a bit of Sunday afternoon shooting with their tactical ammunition. EM Rec T* is being furnished each night and 60 men may go from the Bn. This goes into Port Moresby. And since there are women nurses there, one must assume that love will find a way. One of the greatest astonishing things about soldiers is their ability to find the way to the hearts of women. In other words, if there is any sexual activity to be located, a soldier will locate it.



On the original Adjutant's Journal (presently located in Archive 744 or 944 of the UCLA Special Collections) there are yellow spots on this page. These were caused by the first Freon "Bug Bombs", a substantial black canister about five inches long and three inches in diameter. It was the forerunner of all of the spray cans. The bombs were used for 10 seconds in each tent, each day.

The sand table is now set up in the CO's tent. It is under 24 hour guard, the guard being armed with Thompson Sub Machine Guns. Captain Padgett is preparing the sand table.

31 August 1943

Lt. Max Hansen Bradbury, an "F" Co officer, left his tent in the Bn officers area (to the west of camp) and started toward the latrine. Flashing his flashlight, Bradbury saw a man, brown clad, no arms (weapons), sleeves rolled down, maybe a fatigue hat. The man jumped from the grass and ran over the hill into the gully to the north. Bradbury had hardly returned to his tent to recount the incident when a terrific explosion (TNT, or grenade?) occurred in the vicinity of the 3d Bn officer's area which is located 50 yards to the south of us. No explanation of either **the man** or the explosion. The man is unusual. The explosion is not unusual.

TNT was issued in packaged blocks about 3"x3"x4", and dynamite caps were also issued, and also stuff called Primacord, and anyone who put those things together right and lit the thing could get a real loud "bang".

0130 Hrs: Lt J. Dick returned from advance supply base and left again. A type of insulated wire had been issued, the insulation burned off, the strands separated and rerolled. The results is a strong, almost invisible, wire which will be used for booby trapping. The last small items of ordnance repair are being taken care of. Jump master records ie, the exact list of man by plane loads for the operation were turned in today to Regtl HQ. This is the first copy. Before the men adjust their chutes actually pack themselves into the transports several times, due to men going from duty to hospital or being marked "quarters", for sick soldiers not sick enough to send to the hospital. No man who is marked for duty will be permitted to refuse to jump. Any man who hesitates in the cycle of fall-out-with chutes, entruck, detruck, enplane, and jump will probably be left at the spot of the refusal and the next-of-kin notified.

(continued....)



***Enlisted man recreational transportation Nurses Qtrs., Port Moresby**

30 August 1943

Short hike this day over the same route as the first day's hike. Nobody fell out. Service and HQ Companies stopped eating with the 2nd Bn and go to another Bn for feeding. These two companies are not maintaining their own messes. The reason for this is that the Regtl Cmdr (Colonel Kenneth Kinsler) has taken over the Service Co-HQ Co mess for the sole purpose of feeding the officers of the regimental staff and the battalion commanders. Colonel Jones is supposed to eat there, but he will have none of it and he eats at our own kitchen. Results: Because of the additional work of feeding the "4th Battalion", when our mess had to feed Service and Headquarters Company, the following extra kitchen help was needed: KP's 10, but it averaged about 15-20 since the mess opened for activity about 400 hrs and seldom finished before 2000 hrs, so those men were kept from training by Kinsler's elite mess.



The knowledge of the Bn Cmdr,* the S-3, the Exec**, and the surgeon*** as to the capacities of each of the individual men down in the rifle squads would seem an impossibility to a layman. Only two men out of the Bn are suspected of weakness. The following men**** joined from the rear base (Gordonvale): Pvt Wooten, Green, Ownsby, Dablock, Co D.

*Lt. Col. George M. Jones

**Capt Ralph Greco

***Capt. Robert Lamar

****These men had been in the hospital, or otherwise engaged in military or personal affairs.

1 September 1943



"Hardrock" Hamel gets familiar with the Nambu Heavy Machine Gun - a Model 92 7.7-mm (0.303 inch) Heavy Machine Gun. It is a gas-operated, strip-fed, full automatic, air-cooled, modified Hotchkiss-type weapon, and was the standard Japanese heavy machine gun.

Japanese Weapons in the hands of the Regt S-2 are released to Lt Cole for instruction in their operation. Capt. Padgett with the aid of silhouettes, give talk to Bn instructing on friendly aircraft operating in this area. They are: C-47, P-38, P-39, P-40, P-47, cubs, B-17, B-24, B-25, A-20, A-26. All pers in the Bn have had their teeth classed for identification.* Lt. Col. Jones got in the jeep and took the driver off to look for a flat area with 6 foot tall grass. There will be Bn inspection tomorrow and lecture by the CG 7th Australian Division. This is the famed "we fought for you in Greece and Crete" outfit. To which our reply was "Fought hell, you ran for your lives in Greece and Crete." Which was not exactly true. For the operation, we will be attached to the 7th Australian Division.

*This is to assist the graves registration people.

TYPE 89 HEAVY GRENADE DISCHARGER - a short ranged mortar desired to be fired braced on the ground, the "knee mortar" gave the Japanese infantryman a huge

advantage in short-range firepower. The best an average GI might throw a grenade is around 100 feet, 35 yards. The Type 89 could place a grenade up to twenty times that distance. They were cheap, light, simple, not primitive, extremely dangerous and utterly ubiquitous. The 503d had a mortar platoon in each Company, normally with three 60mm mortars. The Japanese would have a 50mm mortar launcher in each squad. The US standard launcher weighed in at about 43 lbs, whereas the Type 89 weighed in at 12 lbs. They were easy to use, robust, and in the control of an experienced man, amazingly accurate. It was initially called a "leg mortar" because it was carried strapped to the leg. In captured documents, "leg mortar" was mistranslated as "knee mortar". It was fired by a toggle string, not by dropping the mortar round down the weapon's barrel. How many allied servicemen broke their thigh using trophy examples of this weapon is unknown, so hopefully this is not a photograph of an idiot about to get himself a self-inflicted wound.

Paratrooper Dodson does his best 'Private SNAFU' impersonation, illustrating the fastest way to get a shattered thigh.



The correct way.

Riseley's Journal provided with the courtesy of Paul Whitman with the 503rd Heritage Battalion Website.
(Photos from Emmett Lee Wester's Collection)

THIS JOURNAL WILL BE CONTINUED IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF OUR NEWSLETTER



BLESS 'EM ALL

A Pictorial Companion to *The History Of The Second Battalion, 503d P.I.R.*

By Col. William T. Calhoun, 503d PIR, WWII
Paul F. Whitman, 503d Heritage Battalion Website



Bill Calhoun and I have differences on whether history is written to honor the dead or to educate the living, but they've always been an amiable one. We both agreed, early on, that the story needed to be told of his experiences in "F" Company, 503d PIR during WWII. He had joined the 36th Div., Texas National Guard whilst in high school, and enlisted in the Reserve Army Air Corps on 4 Jan 1941. To escape a permanent stateside posting he volunteered for parachute training, and graduated in June 1942, being assigned to the 502d PIR. He attended OCS and was posted to Brisbane, Australia, arriving January 1944. He had been a platoon leader 11 months when he jumped on Corregidor. Thereafter he commanded "F" Co. of the 503d PRCT in Negros. He separated from the Army in March 1946, but stayed a career reservist, retiring as a Colonel.

Based upon his copious notes and papers, we were able to place much of his experience and perspectives into what became "*BLESS 'EM ALL*", an informal history of the 2/503 Parachute Infantry Regiment. I thought it would take the form of a book, but soon discovered that the project was so huge, and had so many facets, that it needed to be told by a website, to which further stories could always be added. It was a project that's taken me more than a decade, which is rather fast given that it took Bill an entire lifetime to live and reassemble. The website

version, found at:

http://corregidor.org/BEA503/navigation/bea_title.htm, still isn't finished, for we are always working on some aspect of improving it. More recently, faced with a large number of images not in the "BEA" website, we've put them together as a pictorial companion to the primary work. Actually, "*Bless 'em All - the Pictorial Companion*" reads well as a stand-alone book version, condensed by being squeezed between a couple of hundred images from his private collection.

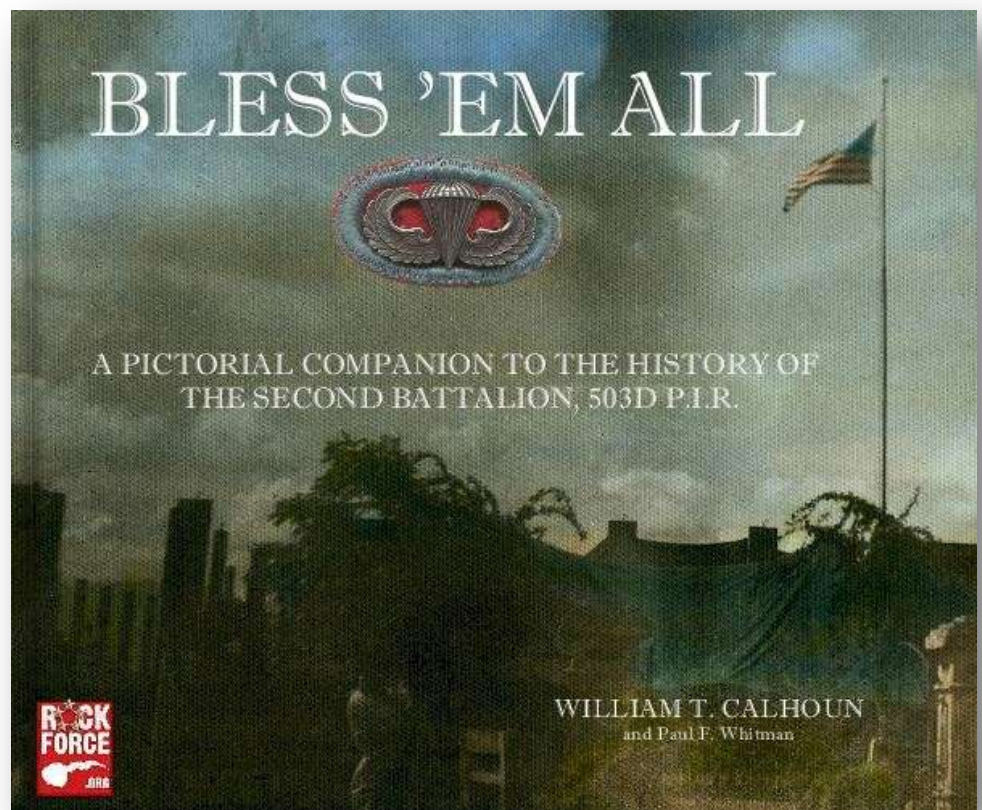
The book also includes a rare set of color photographs of the 503d PRCT on both Corregidor and Negros.

Bless 'em All is self-published through Blurb.com, and is available at <http://corregidor.org/publications.htm>

It delivers in at 240 pages, and the price depends on whether you get a paperback, hard-cover, or photo-cover version.

Paul Whitman

http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/index.htm



**Remarks of the Honorable
R. L. (Les) Brownlee
Former Acting Secretary
of the Army and
Company Commander B/2/503
Doughboy Award Ceremony
Fort Benning, GA
19 September 2012**



Les, center, is presented with the Doughboy Award, joined by COL David B. Haight, the Chief of Infantry to his right, and CSM Timothy L. Guden.

MG McMaster, MG Steele, COL Haight, CSM Guden, thank you all for the presentations of both the Doughboy Award and the Primicerius level of the Order of St Maurice, for your kind words and for hosting and arranging these ceremonies here today – and thanks to all of you who edited films, pictures, scripts and the like whose contributions made these ceremonies so very meaningful.

We are extremely fortunate to have so many of the Army's great leaders -- both active and retired -- here today. I want to express my appreciation to all of you and your families as well for your devotion to our Army and the nation. It has been my good fortune to have benefitted directly from your leadership, commitment to excellence and dedicated service.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all those involved in the nominating and voting process for this award. It was a complete surprise to me to be nominated and beyond my highest expectations to be selected to receive this esteemed award. An award named for the "Doughboy" -- those tough, courageous infantrymen of the American Expeditionary Forces who fought and won World War I. Driven into the deep, muddy trenches by incessant artillery and machine gun fire, they endured almost unimaginable conditions including poison gas and rampant disease. But these brave young Americans did not go "Over There" to remain in the trenches -- and they soon went "over the top", to attack the German positions. Along with our allies, they won that war and returned to the USA, setting a high standard which the Infantry Soldiers of World War II, Korea, Vietnam and all those wars following, including Iraq and Afghanistan have more than upheld. The spirit of the "Doughboy" lives on in the tough and courageous foot soldiers of our Infantry today.

I would like to recognize and express my deep appreciation for their continuing love and support to my daughter, Tracy and my son, John -- and to their mother as well. My son, John, who also served as a Ranger and Airborne-qualified Infantry officer is here today. Following his military service, John chose a career in law and has served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the District of Columbia and for seven years as the United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia. He is now an equity partner and principal attorney with the international law firm of Holland & Knight and has been accused of wearing his Ranger tab in the courtroom.

(continued....)



I also want to recognize a great young military family who is a part of our family and who is here with us today, Captain (P) Russ Necessary and his wife Ashley. They have two young sons, Hayes who is 2 and Barrett who is 1, and if Hayes and Barrett were here with us today I'm sure you would all agree that it is Ashley, their mother, who should be receiving the Doughboy award.

Russ is my son John's brother-in-law. Russ lost his father to cancer when Russ was only 16 years old and when my son married Russ' sister, Lee Ann, John became his mentor. And when Russ graduated from Appalachian State University in 2001, John began to mentor him toward the Army. Soon after the Iraq war started in 2003, Russ joined the Army, went to Basic Training, then OCS here at Ft Benning and fell in love with the Infantry. He managed to switch branches from Intelligence to Infantry, and completed the basic course, airborne and Ranger courses. He was sent immediately to Afghanistan to join the 25th Infantry Division, completed his tour as a platoon leader and returned with the 25th to Hawaii where he immediately applied to return to Ft Benning to be tested as a Ranger platoon leader. He was accepted and despite a death in his immediate family at that time, he deployed immediately back to Afghanistan as a Ranger Platoon Leader.

Serving then as the Secretary, I have to admit that I was a bit worried about Russ as he returned so quickly to Afghanistan. Until I received my first email from him which read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Secretary, I am so happy I am here. The leadership is terrific. The HOOAHS (Soldiers) are wonderful – and I am living my dream every day!"

Russ has now been deployed 7 times to either Afghanistan or Iraq. I'm sure he will deploy again. He has recently taken command of a Ranger Company and has been selected for early promotion to Major. Russ may not forgive me for singling him out in this way, but his family is typical of so many of our military families who are characterized by their great devotion to our Army and our nation and their dedicated service and sacrifice. I thought you might want to meet them and join me in expressing our appreciation to them and all our military families.

Russ, would you and Ashley please stand.

Some fifty years ago when I elected to enroll in the Army ROTC program at the University of Wyoming, anything like a ceremony such as this was beyond my wildest dreams. In short order, as I learned about the Army, I only knew that I wanted to be an Infantry officer and that I wanted to be Airborne and Ranger qualified.

My first unit in the Army was the 101st Airborne Division in 1962 when it was still "airborne". The things I learned from those wonderful NCO's there, along with instructors in Ranger school prepared me to lead young Soldiers in the jungle battlefields of Vietnam and I will always be grateful to them. **I am especially proud of and forever indebted to the young paratroopers of Bravo Company, 2d Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade who I had the privilege and honor to command in 1965-66. Their courage under fire, loyalty, devotion to duty and friendship will remain among my most valued memories.** I know that many of you here served in Vietnam as well and are just as proud of those young Soldiers and their performance in battle as I am and always will be.



2/503 Troopers Les Brownlee (L) and Bob Carmichael, Vietnam.

Later, in the mid 1970's during the Cold War I was fortunate to command a mechanized infantry battalion in the 3d AD in Germany as we prepared to fight that "first battle of the next war" on the plains of Europe.

(continued....)



I would later find myself using both tactical and strategic lessons of combat in the battlefields of the Congress. I loved the more than 17 years I spent in the Senate, mainly on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I was honored to serve as the Staff Director of that great committee for six years. Nothing else I could have done could have possibly prepared me as well for the positions of Under Secretary and Secretary of the Army as the experience I gained there. I have been fortunate. I have always had a great team around me who always found a way to make things work and get things done.

I want to take this opportunity to thank once again all those great Americans in the Army as well as other branches of our government for their patriotic and dedicated service and their invaluable assistance to me as well.

The Chief of Staff of the Army during most of the time I was Secretary was General Pete Schoomaker. I'm pretty confident in saying that is probably the only time in history when both the Chief and the Secretary are both graduates of the University of Wyoming. Pete was a great Soldier, leader and Chief of Staff. He was great fun to be around, a terrific partner in all that we did and remains a great friend. I regret that he could not be here today. Most of you know Pete and I want to publicly thank him again for his loyal and dedicated service and for our special friendship.

I want to thank all those who planned and put together these ceremonies and again all of you for being here today.

It is a special honor for me to be included along with LTG Bob Foley, who I know well and for whom I have the highest respect and admiration – especially for his demonstrated, unparalleled courage in combat – and also, Command Sgt Maj Ted Gaweda, who is known throughout our Army as one of our finest Infantry Leaders, Soldiers and Non-Commissioned Officers. Being recognized along with these two great Army leaders makes this honor even more special for me.

I am very fortunate that I was able to work with and for so many great leaders of our Army throughout my years of service – both in the Army and in government. **But, those who are foremost in my mind as I contemplate the honor of receiving this award are those wonderful, courageous young Soldiers of Bravo Company, 2d Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry I was privileged to command more than 46 years ago in the jungles of South Vietnam – as well as all the wonderful, brave young men and women who, following the terrorist attacks on our**

country on September 11, 2001, have volunteered to serve in our Army in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This award to me is, in reality, a tribute of honor to all of them – their courage, their service and their great sacrifices for our country.

So, this evening, I accept this award on behalf of all those marvelous Soldiers who have fought these long and difficult wars for our country and dedicate it to the memory of their heroic service.

God bless each and every one of them and all of you and God bless and preserve this great and good country, the United States of America.

Thank you.



~ The Doughboy Award ~



Order of Saint Maurice is awarded by the National Infantry Association and the certificate is signed by the Chief of Infantry of the United States Army. It is named after Saint Maurice, the leader of the Roman Theban Legion in the 3rd century.

Primicerius – the highest level of the Order of Saint Maurice, for those who have made a significant contribution to the Infantry. The most significant awardees receive the Doughboy Award. Must be or have been Infantry Branch.



Memories of a Chargin'

Charlie and a Bravo Bull



COL Les Brownlee (Ret), former company commander of B/2/503, was sworn in as Acting Secretary of the Army on May 10, 2003.

LOUDER! LOUDER!

First, Les and I shared the same home town of Odessa, Texas, where the winners win big and the losers lose hard.

One of the few and funniest episodes involved two of our finest in the 2/503; Les Brownlee, Univ. of Wyoming graduate, and the late Dick Eckert, West Point graduate. It happened one day in the mess hall at Camp Zinn, circa '65/'66.

Les was jostling Dick about an upcoming football game between Wyoming and West Point. The bet was made that the loser would have to stand up in the mess hall and sing the Alma Mater of the winners' school. Les lost.

And so, as agreed the next day Les, very reluctantly, rose to sing the Army Fight Song. He began singing so low no one could hear him.....Finally, with shouts of ***LOUDER! LOUDER!*** from Dick and others, he began singing so loud Uncle Ho could hear him all the way to Hanoi. It was a relaxing and enjoyable moment in what was otherwise a very serious and sad time for all of us.

Both Les and Dick were two of the Army's finest and best. It was an honor to serve with both of them.

Les was kind enough to give me a call on my 83rd birthday. We had a fine visit and he sounded just like the Les of 1966. Not a day had passed.

Good luck to you Les, now and always. Thank you



Bob

for the job you did then and later as Secretary of the Army, you brought pride and honor to us all. Your friend,

Bob Carmichael, LTC (Ret)
HHC/2/503d

Bob served as our Battalion XO, and CO after Col. Dexter was severely wounded in February '66.

Between His Legs

I was the FO with the Bulls when Les was wounded in D Zone when we moved up to close on Lt Tabb's location then all hell broke loose and Les got hit. We backed up and got him lifted out by I think a Husky type chopper. I think it was the night before that I fired in my defensive concentration and it hit the Battalion LZ, tore up jerry cans and sprayed the area. No one was hit but I was told a piece went between Cpt Brownlee's legs in his hammock. Glad to hear he is still around and received that award. It was my honor to serve with him. Give him my regards.

Jim Cole, MAJ (Ret)
B/2/503d

One Company Commander Short

Les Brownlee and I became good friends over our years in the Army. But our first meeting was "uncomfortable".

Les was assigned to Charlie Company upon his arrival in the 2d Battalion in 1965. He was a senior 1LT as was I. But I had just completed more "line" time (Platoon Leader) than most in the battalion and Fred Henschell, C Company Commander had just picked me to be the C Company XO. Les thought he should have the job since he 'ranked' me.

Fred and Les went off to "pray" together and Fred essentially told him he didn't "rank" anybody and wouldn't until he got some combat time as a platoon leader. Les asked to speak to George Dexter, our Battalion CO who essentially agreed with Henschell.

But Les' tenure in C Company was short when Bravo came up one company commander short and Les was pinning on Captain's bars.

There was never any animosity between us and we got to serve in later years as Majors in Tradoc HQ. Les was the Aide-de-Camp to the DCG and I was the Assistant Chief of Staff to MG Hixon.

Last time I saw him was when he surprised me at the Cocoa Beach 2/503d reunion a few years back.

Tony Espinosa, LTC (Ret)
C/2/503d



Tony

(continued....)





Future Secretary of the Army being Dusted Off in March '66 in the "D" Zone jungle during Operation Silver City following Bravo Bulls' firefight with bad guys.

A Valuable Lesson

I joined B Company in late September '65. My first real mission was when B Company went into the Iron Triangle in early October.

After leaving the LZ we set off heading north. Les put me in the lead platoon. Although I was new to RVN, I was a senior 1st Lt and thought I really knew my stuff. I had instructions to call Les when we got to HWY 2.

On the map it looked like a hardtop road. I crossed the highway and kept going. In a couple of minutes Les called me and chewed me out for not stopping. We halted and I hustled back for a quick meeting.

The little wide spot with no asphalt that I had passed was actually the highway. I learned a very valuable lesson that day. I will remember that day as long as I live.

It was only two days later when I was in the rear platoon that B Company got hit by a roadway bomb and ambush on HWY 1 and we took heavy casualties to include me as I was evacuated to Okinawa.

I rejoined B Company on Jan 4 of '66 as I refused to be sent to the states. That incident made the cover of *Life Magazine* which I have to this day.

As a side note, Carol Channing (also with the tour of "Hello Dolly") visited us (all the B Company boys) at the Saigon evacuation hospital before we were air lifted out. The flight I was on had to stop at Manila to drop me off as my abdominal wound had opened up from vomiting after take-off. I underwent surgery again and two days later I insisted on going to Okinawa for recovery instead of the states. That resulted in a senatorial inquiry caused by my wife at the time because she thought I should have been sent home. I think Les Brownlee was very surprised when I came back as they thought I had died. Another story.

I was also one of the original four platoon leaders in B Company to send \$100 to *Playboy* for a life-time subscription. We asked that a Bunny be sent to deliver the subscription. Hefner refused. Then Tom Tiede (our B Company embedded reporter) of the *Chicago Tribune* got involved and Hefner changed his mind. I was able to get back to the unit from the hospital in time to meet Jo Collins, Playmate of the Year. I also have the *Playboy* issue of that visit to B Company.



G.I. Jo

**Mike Griffin, LTC (Ret)
B/2/503d**

A Life-Long Friendship

When Les first got to the 173d, he was sent to the 2d Battalion 503. His first assignment was to C Company as my Company Executive Officer. I think that was sometime in July '65. We had just moved out of "the rubber plantation" and were in the process of establishing Camp Zinn. We were also frequently going out on operations.

The Brigade had just received orders that it would go from temporary status (TDY) in RVN to be there for the duration. We had lost some officers and enlisted men that had pulled long tours on Okinawa. Charlie Company had a good set of Platoon Leaders and some of the best airborne Platoon Sergeants ever: Brinkle, Crabtree, Crist and Quidera. And of course we had Desmond Jackson "The Hammer" as First Sergeant. But we didn't have a Company XO.

Besides operational duties and responsibilities, there was seemingly endless administrative duties and responsibilities. I had probably whined about that to Col Dexter, so he assigned Les to C Company as my XO. That started my friendship with Les and lifelong respect for a great infantry officer.

I think after he had only been a week or two in C Company, we left on sudden notice for the Pleiku-Kontum area. I remember a lot of us got stuffed into an old C-123. No seats. The USAF load master said, "*Just sit on the floor, facing the rear and lock arms*". There were also a bunch of Vietnamese families, with misc chickens and who knows what.

(continued....)





Les, on left, with Fred near Pleiku, August 1965.

When we landed, it was "uphill on pierced steel planking" which was a pretty weird and a scary sensation. Like WTF is happening? Anyway, we got assigned to our new area of responsibility.

As the long nights went on, Les and I spent a lot of time talking and philosophizing about the situation. My goal as a Company Commander had become: I'm going to do my best to accomplish assigned missions, but by God I'm going to try my best to bring as many of these guys out of here alive and well as possible. I know Les agreed with that and carried it forward. So a life-long friendship and respect was formed.

After a month or two, Les got re-assigned to other battalion duties. In the early years, survival as a company grade officer was a pretty grim and hazardous prospect. In my time, every company commander was wounded and several platoon leaders killed. I was wounded in Jan '66 which ended my time in C Company. I made another trip back in '68-'69 as an advisor.

I know Les was eventually shot out of the saddle as CO of B Company and did yet another tour. Fortunately for us all, he was able to go on and do great things for the U.S. Army.

Fred Henschell
C/2/503d

Over His Shoulder

I was one of the 60gunners with Les when he got wounded. I put out suppressive fire and then gave PSG Ku three or four of my hand grenades, (I always carried eight). Then Sgt. Ku ran to Les throwing the grenades and came running back with Les over his shoulder. At that time I again opened up with my 60!

I was also with Lt. Zinn (KIA) when we got ambushed. I told him that it wasn't a good idea to move from where we were at this time because we were being fired on by anti-aircraft ack-ack guns blowing up trees all around us and heavy machinegun fire. He moved up anyway stating to me that he would be right back!

Mark Mitchell
B/2/503d

One of My Favorites

Les Brownlee's first assignment after Jump School was as a Platoon Leader in Company E (Tiger E of the Currahee) 1st Airborne Battle Group, 506th Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. I was a Section



Leader in Weapons at that time. I can't remember the year, but a good guess would be some time in 1962 or 1963. I was sent to the 173d on Okinawa in May, 1964.

After our deployment to Nam in May 1965, and after at least two Company Commanders before him, Les arrived in country and took command of B/2/503. I can remember meeting with him shortly after he arrived.

Some other NCOs from the 506th who knew him also were there. We counseled him about what he should NOT do when a fire fight started. Unfortunately, he ignored our advice and almost got himself killed on 13 March 1966.

Still one of my favorite Lieutenants/Captains, though! All The Way!!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d



(L) LTC Bob Sweeney (Ret) and COL Les Brownlee (Ret) in Phu Loi, January 1966.
(Photo by Col. George Dexter)



2/503 Operation Crimp

By Col. George Dexter, Abn Inf (Ret)
Battalion Commander, 2/503d, '64-'66

"Whenever I went out on an operation in Vietnam I carried a spiral notebook in my left cargo pocket and whenever things got quiet I'd pull it out and write about what was going on. Then when the operation was over I mailed what I had written back to my wife Katy. She kept all my letters, so when in later years I wanted to get detailed information about an operation, I dug out the appropriate letters to see what I had written at the time. I hope the following report is of help to you." George



Colonel Dexter



2/503 troopers boarding choppers on 2 January 1966 at Bao Trai airstrip to commence Operations Marauder and Crimp

Operation Crimp was conducted in an area known as the "Ho Bo Woods" against what was reported to be a major enemy installation. It was a classic search and destroy mission. I am not sure of the exact location. I cannot find the name Ho Bo on any of my maps, but I believe we were in the vicinity of XT 6821, about 8 km NNE of the town of Cu Chi. It was on the SW side of the Saigon River, across from the Iron Triangle, where we had operated in October 1965.



On the horn. LTC Dexter with his trusty RTO Tom Conley in the rice paddies of the Mekong Delta on 2 Jan 66 during the opening of Operation Marauder which would morph six days later into Operation Crimp.

The area is shown on the map as rubber plantation, but it had apparently been cleared of old trees some-time in the fairly recent past, and there were only a few young trees where we operated. In fact, most of our operations were in a partially abandoned village complex within a few hundred meters of the river. Many of the houses no longer existed, but there were some roads, some homes, a graveyard, and a mixture of trees, though little jungle. The weather was clear and dry throughout the operation. I do not remember what intelligence we had concerning enemy units in the area.

Operation Crimp was a big operation involving six battalions--three from the 173d on the left and three from a brigade of the 1st Division on the right operating in a somewhat more populated area.

(continued....)





LTC George Dexter during Ops Marauder & Crimp '66.
"The early days, when leaders led from the front." Ed

Contrary to any operation we had conducted in Vietnam prior to this, the six battalions were close enough to each other that adjacent units could actually establish contact with each other. It was hoped that the VC in the area would be trapped and driven up against the Saigon River. However, there were not enough helicopters available to lift all battalions in at once.

The operation jumped off at 0930 on 8 January in the Brigade area with the 1/RAR landing in the left part of the brigade sector. They encountered light opposition at first and then got into a heavy fight. The choppers then returned, picked up 1/503, and delivered them at 1200 into the right part of the brigade sector. 2/503 was then landed between the Aussies and the 1st Battalion in midafternoon.

The battalion moved by helicopter from Bao Trai and landed on an LZ in the former rubber plantation area, approximately 2-4 kilometers southwest of the Saigon River. I do not remember what the order of landing was or what formation we used to push northeast into the village complex along the river. I do not believe we encountered any resistance that day; we did not sustain any casualties.



B/2/503 heliborne assault during Operation Crimp

There were signs of recent enemy occupation of the area, including at least one rather vivid illustrated propaganda sign, which I photographed. We established a perimeter defense for the night in the village area, since we had not been able to tie in with the 1/RAR on our left.



The sign George photographed during Crimp.

(continued...)



Just at dark that evening, the Reconnaissance Platoon stumbled on the entrance to a tunnel. They threw smoke in, and found it billowing out of three other entrances. This was our first evidence that we were sitting on top of a vast tunnel complex which extended for miles. Uncovering this complex was the major accomplishment of Operation Crimp.

It turned out that the complex was most extensive in the area of the 1/RAR, and they recovered many weapons in good condition as well as supplies in their area. In our area, we primarily uncovered a large cache of documents which proved to be of considerable intelligence value. Apparently we had uncovered the headquarters complex of the VC Saigon-Gia Dinh Sector Committee, which controlled enemy operations in the vicinity of Saigon.

The battalion remained in the same general area from the 8th to the 14th of January, conducting a thorough search, clearing the area, and crawling through tunnels, but not finding too much. We did uncover a few old weapons, not in too good condition. We encountered occasional sniper fire from which we suffered some casualties, but no solid contacts. There were many women and children in the area, but the men were all "off harvesting rice."

On 9 January, the 2d Battalion took over the area on our right where the 1/503 had initially landed, and the 1st Battalion moved back into reserve. This put us in contact with the 2/28 Infantry of the 1st Division. The battalion commander, LTC George Eyster, a classmate of mine and an acquaintance from army brat days, flew over by chopper that afternoon to coordinate with me. We coordinated, swapped war stories and got caught up on our families, and then he flew off. I was shocked to learn that he was killed the next day by sniper fire.



Sky Soldiers of the 2/503 approach the Ho Bo Woods

On the next day, 10 January, we began the job of evacuating the women and children in our area by chopper back to brigade for interrogation. One old woman of 88 had to be evacuated on a stretcher. They were not allowed to take anything with them. We were under the impression that they would be brought back to the area after they had been interrogated. However, we later learned that all the women and children would be resettled elsewhere and that the Ho Bo Woods area was to be made uninhabitable. To this end, persistent tear gas was to be put into the tunnels, bunkers, etc. I don't remember that we did any such thing, though.



January 1966 along the Vam Co Dong River, L-R Sgt. Brinkle, Bn CO LTC George Dexter and C Company CO Capt. Tom Faley display captured enemy flag.

On the 10th the 1/503 moved up north of the 1/RAR and launched an attack in an area which involved a defended tunnel complex. From time to time during these days, I flew into brigade headquarters at Cu Chi for meetings, etc. A rather large collection of captured weapons was on display there at Cu Chi, and it was apparent that the brigade really had uncovered something.

The first time I flew in, I noticed quite a bit of smoke over the area where the 1st Division was operating. They were in a somewhat extensive village complex, and apparently they had been given orders to burn it all down. It was here, I think, that one of the more damaging pictures of the war was taken, showing a soldier lighting the roof of a nipa hut with a cigarette lighter.

(continued...)



I'd like to back up a little bit. Back in the fall of 1965 Lt John Price of B Company had conceived of a publicity scheme. He collected money from men in B Company and with it ordered a lifetime subscription to *Playboy* for the company and asked that one of the Playmates (I think Miss October) deliver it to the company in Vietnam at Christmas. Well, I guess Hugh Hefner balked, so nothing came off at Christmas, but apparently Tom Tiede, a correspondent who was a former paratroop officer and a good friend of the 173d, persuaded Hefner to change his mind. So the bunny arrived while we were out on Crimp. Lt Price was wounded by that bomb that fell off the plane on 2 January (his platoon was hit) and was in the hospital in Saigon, so she could visit him and the other casualties from B Company, but the PIO people wanted to get the company back so she could visit them and present the lifetime subscription. This led to one of the strangest missions the battalion--or rather B Company--was ever assigned.



1RAR on the move in Vietnam. Love them Cobbers.

On January 12 a squad of Vietnamese National Police came out by helicopter and rounded up all of the larger livestock in our area (water buffalo, cattle, pigs) and herded them back to brigade, while B Company provided security. Actually, I guess, B Company did most of the rounding up too. The herd made quite a bit of noise, and some VC found out what was going on and set a booby trap along the route which caused some casualties among the B Company personnel. A chopper overhead spotted the VC and drove them off with fire. B Company successfully completed the mission, spent the night at brigade, and was taken

back to Bien Hoa the next day where the Playmate visited them (with Price, temporarily released from the hospital, escorting her) and delivered the lifetime subscription.

In the meantime, our troops back in the Ho Bo Woods took advantage of the chickens and ducks which were not evacuated to enhance their evening meals for a couple of days.

The brigade was lifted back to Bien Hoa on January 14th, and it turned out to be somewhat of a hairy extraction. Two LZ's were set up, one for 1/503, and the other for 1/RAR and 2/503. The lift chopper fleet was a mixture of Hueys and Chinooks. Round trip time to Bien Hoa was 50 minutes. The 1/503 had a hot extraction, receiving small arms fire, and several Chinooks were hit, though there were no casualties. So when the choppers arrived to pick up 1/RAR, there were only 5 Chinooks instead of the 9 expected, and for lifting out 2/503 there were only 2. Needless to say, this threw all the planning into a cocked hat.

Anyway, by the time the RAR was out, it appeared that there would not be enough lift to pull out all of our battalion at once, leaving about 100 on the ground. So Chuck Honour, the commander of the 145th Avn Bn, decided to shuttle us out, dropping a group at Trung Lap, five minutes away, and then coming back for the rest. The only trouble was that after doing this, there were still 15 of us left on the LZ. But just at that moment, two more Chinooks showed up! Actually, we never had any opposition on our LZ. We just sweated it!



The 'Old Man' salutes his boys of the 2/503 at 173d reunion in Rochester, MN, 2000.





New watchdog panel examines vets' charities

Walmart bans one group after FLORIDA TODAY investigation

By R. Norman Moody
FLORIDA TODAY

Walmart, the world's largest retailer, maintains a ban on at least one veterans charity from soliciting funds outside its stores after it took a closer look at the practices of the organization.

And determined to make sure that groups operating in Brevard County collecting money on behalf of veterans keep their operations and records transparent, the Brevard Veterans Council — a coalition of about 70 veterans organizations — formed the Veterans Charity Watchdog Committee. The mission: create guidelines for such groups to keep them honest. Both actions were spurred by a FLORIDA TODAY investigation in August that found some groups collecting money in the name of veterans do not meet standard charity guidelines for how much should actually be reaching veterans programs.

Walmart has banned Veterans Support Organization from its properties

Comprised of veterans from Brevard and Indian River counties, the committee was formed in September, and after initial communications, is planning its first formal meeting.



"I'm looking forward to getting it going again in the next few weeks," said committee chairman Skip Bateman, who also is chairman of Brevard Veterans Council, based at the Brevard Veterans Memorial Center. The center maintains records and helps educate people on which organizations are legitimate.

Veterans Support Organization, the charity banned by Walmart from its properties, has tried to appeal to the Brevard Veterans Council and advocate for its legitimacy.

Justin Wells, director of operations for VSO, told veterans at a recent Veterans Council membership meeting that VSO had been described in broad terms without enough details.

Wells started speaking at the end of the gathering before Bill Vagianos, president of the Veterans Memorial Center, stopped him and told him that the topic was not appropriate, suggesting he make his case before the newly formed Veterans Charity Watchdog Committee.

"I tried to be gentle about it but the membership was not," Vagianos said. "Members asked him to leave."

In the wake of FLORIDA TODAY's investigation into the practices of three organizations, including VSO, the Veterans Council has been fielding calls inquiring about groups collecting money in Brevard.

"I get calls, as does Skip Bateman, from commercial enterprises asking about the legitimacy of veterans organizations," Vagianos said. "They want to know if we've heard of these organizations."

Walmart said the ban on VSO is for all its properties nationwide.

(continued....)



“Currently, the Veterans Support Organization is suspended from soliciting at our stores,” said Kayla Whaling, a spokeswoman for Walmart.

Whaling, however, said that the company, which has long supported veterans’ causes in Brevard, continues to work with other organizations.

“We have a long history of supporting veterans groups who serve to help our nation’s heroes,” she said. “We welcome solicitation requests from organizations that support our veterans.”

Publix, which also has granted permission for VSO to solicit money, did not respond to inquiries whether it will continue to permit the group outside its stores.

VSO collects at multiple sites in Brevard and across Florida. The Stuart-based charity reported bringing in \$5.7 million in donations in 2010, and distributing about \$1 million that year in grants to veterans causes and to operation of a residential facility for homeless veterans near Miami.

VSO solicitors were paid \$1.7 million, and another \$1.4 million went to cover what was listed on the group’s tax return as costs of its “work program.”

The industry standard, according to Charity Watch and similar watchdog groups, is for 75 percent of money collected by a charity to go directly to programs. VSO did not meet that standard.



VSO President/Founder Richard VanHouten and Director of Operations Justin Wells show their income tax form.

Reprinted here with courtesy of *Florida Today* and R. Norman Moody at 321-242-3651 or nmoody@floridatoday.com
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Letter to the Daughter of a Fallen Buddy

Dear Miss ____:

I hope this finds you and your family in good health and enjoying life.

Attached is our current 2/503d newsletter which honors your dad and his buddies who made the ultimate sacrifice at Dak To in November 1967. This latest edition, in my opinion, is the finest collection of materials and first-hand testimonials I’ve ever read about those horrific battles so long ago. Our goal as Sky Soldiers remains to never forget those we lost and to do everything we can to help our brothers and their families impacted by this tragic war.

My wife and I are scheduled to visit Vietnam this January for two weeks. My goal is not to return to refight the old battles but to hopefully see a vibrant and recovered country harboring little if any animosity towards America. Hopefully, this very young population will welcome us not as enemies but as supporters of a way of life we always wanted for them.

As always, I hope that you welcome my remembering your Dad through these infrequent but sincere interventions, but if not, please let me know and I will fall back and allow you and your family to remember your loved one in your own way.

Warm regards,

Roger

Note: This letter to the daughter of one of his buddies who died during the battles at Dak To in November ’67, was sent in by Roger Dick, C/2/503d,



Our very own LTC Doc Scott Fairchild, former 82nd Abn (Ret), PTSD guru and all around good guy, with newly-elected Congresswoman and Iraqi War Vet Tammy Duckworth.



U.S. in first effort to clean up Agent Orange in Vietnam

By Jessica King, CNN



Spraying disease and death. (Web photo)

One million people in Vietnam have disabilities or health problems associated with Agent Orange, the Red Cross estimates.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- ~ Areas of Vietnam remain contaminated by the herbicide Agent Orange
- ~ The U.S. military used the toxic chemical during the Vietnam War
- ~ It can cause cancer, birth defects and other health problems
- ~ The U.S. government is working on a cleanup project in Vietnam for the first time

(CNN) -- The United States has pitched in for the first time to clean up part of the toxic legacy left by the millions of gallons of the chemical compound codenamed Agent Orange that it dumped on Vietnam during the war there in the 1960s and '70s. The U.S. military used Agent Orange to kill trees and plants that blocked visibility from the air during the Vietnam War. But the chemical was contaminated with dioxin, which can cause cancer and birth defects. It harmed humans and left areas of Vietnam contaminated.

In an effort to start addressing this noxious remnant of the war, the U.S. and Vietnamese governments, along with partnering organizations, are treating a contaminated zone at the airport of the central Vietnamese city of Danang.

Workers will dig up soil, stockpile it, and treat it using high temperatures that break down the dioxin. "We are both moving earth and taking the first steps to bury the legacies of our past," David Shear, the U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, said Thursday at a ceremony opening the project at the airport. He described the

effort as "a historic milestone" for the relationship between the two countries.

Led by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense, the cleanup in Danang aims to reclaim an area of 29 hectares. It will cost an estimated \$43 million, and is expected to finish in 2015, according to the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington. U.S. officials had no immediate comment on the cost and timetable of the project.

Agent Orange is "one of the most toxic compounds known to humans," according to the United Nations. The use of the chemical by the U.S. military in Southeast Asia between 1961 and 1971 devastated large swathes of the Vietnamese countryside and affected millions of people. As many as one million people in Vietnam have disabilities or other health problems associated with Agent Orange, the Vietnamese Red Cross has estimated, citing local studies.

About 2.6 million U.S. military personnel are believed to have been exposed to the chemical, according to the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Hundreds of thousands of Vietnam veterans are estimated to be alive and eligible for treatment for Agent Orange-related illnesses, the department says. It has compiled a list of health problems believed to be associated with exposure to Agent Orange, including cancer, Parkinson's and a type of heart disease.

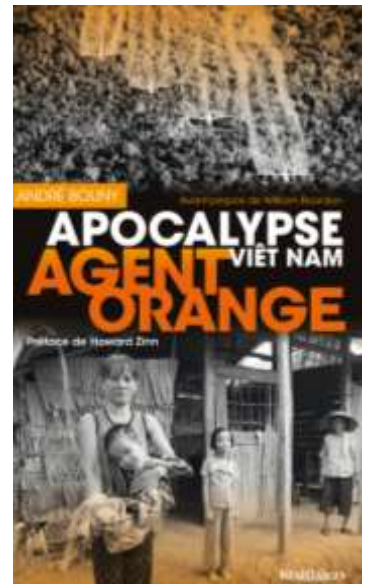
The Vietnamese government has underscored the need to "pursue efforts to overcome the aftermath of toxic substances left by the war" in other areas around the country, according to the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington.

The U.S. government is planning to carry out an environmental assessment of another contaminated area -- in Bien Hoa, southern Vietnam -- in coordination with the Vietnamese government, the United Nations and others, Shear said Thursday.

CNN's Jethro Mullen contributed to this report.

Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/10/world/asia/Vietnam-us-agent-orange/index.html?iphoneemail>

(Photos added)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Disability compensation is available to Vietnam veterans with injuries or diseases that began in, or were aggravated by, their military service. These are called “service-connected” disabilities. VA has several pamphlets describing VA benefits. They are available at: <http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/21pamphlets.html>. If you do not have Internet access at home, you can get free access at most public libraries. Publications are also available at your VA Regional Office or by calling **1-800-827-1000**.

How Much Compensation Will I Get?

Monthly payment rates are based on the veteran’s combined rating for his or her service-connected disabilities. These ratings are based on the severity of the disabilities. Additional amounts are paid to certain veterans with severe disabilities (“special monthly compensation”) and certain veterans with dependents.

Current and Historical [Compensation Rate Tables](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates/index.htm#BM01) are available on the web at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates/index.htm#BM01

What Evidence Do I Need?

In an Agent Orange-based claim by a Vietnam veteran for service-connected benefits, VA requires: a medical diagnosis of a disease which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange, competent evidence of service in Vietnam, and competent medical evidence that the disease began within the deadline (if any).

Who Can Get Benefits?

Under the law, veterans who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 (including those who visited Vietnam even briefly), and who have a disease that VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange, are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange.

These veterans are eligible for service-connected compensation based on their service, if they have one of the diseases on VA’s list of “*Diseases associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents*.” This list is found in VA’s regulation, Section 3.309(e), in title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations. VA updates this list regularly based on reports from the National Academy of Sciences, an independent research and education institution. *(If you do not have Microsoft Word software installed, you may download free viewer and reader software to view the Section 3.309 document.)*

Diseases Associated With Exposure to Agent Orange

These are the diseases which VA currently presumes resulted from exposure to herbicides like Agent Orange. The law requires that some of these diseases be at least 10% disabling under VA’s rating regulations within a deadline that began to run the day you left Vietnam. If there is a deadline, it is listed in the information regarding the disease.

What Benefits Can My Family Get?

Learn more about Spina bifida birth defect and other Agent Orange birth defects benefits.

In 1996, President Clinton and VA Secretary Jesse Brown asked Congress to pass legislation providing health care, monthly disability compensation, and vocational rehabilitation to the children of Vietnam veterans suffering from the serious birth defect spina bifida, which has been linked to the veterans’ exposure to Agent Orange. Congress passed the legislation, marking the first time our nation had ever compensated the children of veterans for a birth defect associated with their parent’s exposure to toxic chemicals during their military service.

Effective December 16, 2003, Congress authorized these benefits to children with spina bifida of certain veterans who served at or near the demilitarized zone in Korea between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971, because Agent Orange is known to have been sprayed in that area.

Survivor Benefits

Survivors of veterans (including spouses, children and dependent parents) who died as the result of a service-connected disease may be eligible for monthly Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits. These survivors may also be eligible for education, home loan and medical care benefits.

How Can I Apply for VA Benefits?

To apply for benefits, apply on-line or send the VA Regional Office a letter stating that you have a specific health problem and that you claim it is due to your exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam. This is called an informal claim and will set the effective date for your benefits payments, if your claim is granted. The VA Regional Office will then send you an application form, which you must fill out and return. To get the address of your VA Regional Office, call 1-800-827-1000.

(continued....)



Can I Get a Representative to Advocate for Me?

You may get a representative to help you present your claim to the VA. Most veterans service organizations and state and county veterans service agencies offer free representation. A listing of veterans service organizations is available on the Internet at:

www.va.gov/vso/index.htm. A listing of state veterans agencies is available on the Internet at:

www.va.gov/partners/stateoffice/index.htm.

What If My Claim is Denied?

If the VA Regional Office says your disability is not service-connected or if the percentage of disability is lower than what you think is fair, you have the right to appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. The first step in appealing is to send the VA Regional Office a "Notice of Disagreement." This Notice of Disagreement is a written statement saying that you "disagree" with the denial. Be sure your Notice includes the date of the VA's denial letter and be sure to list the benefits you are still seeking.

The Notice of Disagreement must be mailed to the VA Regional Office within one year of the VA Regional Office's denial of your claim or you cannot appeal.

In response to the Notice of Disagreement, you will get a "Statement of the Case" from the VA Regional Office. This will repeat the reasons stated in the VA's denial letter why your claim was denied and will include the relevant VA regulations. Once you get the Statement of the Case, if you still wish to pursue your appeal, you should file a VA Form 9, "Appeal to Board Veterans' Appeals," which is sent to with the Statement of the Case. You have 60 days from the date on the Statement of the Case, or one year from the date the VA first denied your claim, to file the VA Form 9. Whichever date is later is your deadline.

Can I Appeal Beyond the VA Regional Office?

The Board of Veterans' Appeals (also known as "BVA") is a part of the VA, located in Washington, D.C. Members of the BVA review benefit claims decisions made by VA Regional Offices and issue a new decision. You may have a hearing before the BVA in Washington, DC or at your VA Regional Office.

Anyone appealing to the BVA should read the "Understanding the Appeal Process" pamphlet. It explains the steps involved in filing an appeal and to serve as a reference for the terms and abbreviations used in the appeal process. The Board mails a copy of this pamphlet to anyone who appeals their case. It is also available on the Internet at:

www.bva.va.gov/docs/Pamphlets/010202A.pdf

Can I Appeal to a Court?

1. If the BVA does not grant all the benefits you are seeking, you have four choices:

1. decide not to pursue your claim
2. Appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
3. Ask the BVA to reconsider its decision; or
4. Re-open your case at the VA Regional Office with new and material evidence.

Appeal to the Court

You may appeal to the Court only if BVA has denied some or all of your benefits. You may not appeal a BVA decision to remand your claim back to the VA Regional Office. You must file your appeal by mail or by fax. Send your name, address, phone number, and the date of the BVA decision to:

Clerk of the Court

U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

625 Indiana Avenue NW

Washington DC 20004

Fax number: (202) 501-5848

To get a list of veterans' representatives who practice at the Court, and for more information on the Court, see the Court's web site at:

www.vetapp.uscourts.gov/about/how_to_appeal/

This list is also available by calling the Court at 1-800-869-8654.

Ask BVA to reconsider

The BVA will reconsider its denial decision, if it finds an "obvious error of fact or law" in that decision. Such a request should be sent to the BVA.

Reopen your case

If you can get additional evidence that is both new and material, you can reopen your claim at the VA Regional Office and get a new decision.

What If I Served in Vietnam and Have a Disease Not on VA's List

If you served in Vietnam and believe that you have a disease caused by herbicide exposure, but that disease is not on VA's list of diseases associated with herbicides like Agent Orange, you may still apply for service-connection. Such a veteran needs to establish entitlement to service connection on a "direct" (rather than "presumptive") basis. In these cases, VA requires: competent medical evidence of a current disability; competent evidence of exposure to an herbicide in Vietnam; and competent medical evidence of a nexus (causal relationship) between the herbicide exposure and the current disability.

(continued....)



What If I Was Exposed to an Herbicide Outside Vietnam?

Herbicides were used by the U.S. military to defoliate military facilities in the U.S. and in other countries as far back as the 1950s. This page contains information from the Department of Defense (DoD) on projects to test, dispose of, or store herbicides in the U.S. Even if you did not serve in Vietnam, you can still apply for service-connected benefits if you were exposed to an herbicide while in the military which you believe caused your disease or injury. If you have a disease which is on the list of diseases which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange, the VA requires:

- a medical diagnosis of a disease which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange,
- competent evidence of exposure to a chemical contained in one of the herbicides used in Vietnam (2,4-D; 2,4,5-T and its contaminant TCDD; cacodylic acid; or picloram), and
- competent medical evidence that the disease began within the deadline for that disease (if any).

If you have a disease which is not on the list of diseases which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange, VA requires:

- competent medical evidence of a current disability;
- competent evidence of exposure to an herbicide during military service; and
- competent medical evidence of a nexus (causal relationship) between the herbicide exposure and the current disability.

Medical Care

VA offers a variety of health care benefits to veterans for diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure. Learn more about the health care benefits VA offers.

Social Security Benefits

The Social Security Administration (SSA) offers both disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income benefits. Veterans can receive both Social Security disability insurance benefits and VA disability compensation. (The supplemental security income benefit (SSI) is offset for VA pension or compensation). Unlike VA compensation benefits that are measured in degrees of disability, SSA benefits require a total disability that will last at least one year. If you cannot work because of your disability, contact the nearest district office of SSA at 1-800-772-1213. SSA benefits information is available on the Internet at www.ssa.gov

Word of Caution

It is strongly recommended veterans filing a disability claim with the VA appoint one of the Veteran's Service Organizations to represent you; such as the DAV (Disabled American Veterans). There is no cost with the DAV, and you needn't be a member.



“The Disabled American Veterans is dedicated to a single purpose: building better lives for all of our nation’s disabled veterans and their families. In fulfilling its mission, the DAV has developed the preeminent service program for America’s veterans. That service is provided free of charge through a nationwide network of 88 DAV National Service Offices, 38 Transition Service Offices, 198 DAV Hospital Service Coordinator Offices, 52 state-level DAV Departments, 249 DAV VA Voluntary Service Representatives, and more than 1900 local DAV Chapters.”

www.dav.org



William R. Clouart, Jr. *A Sky Soldier*

EASTHAMPTON, MASS. – William R. Clouart, Jr., (Bill), 65, of 35 West Street, died at home on October 10, 2012.

Bill was born in Woonsocket, RI, a son of the late William R. and Margaret A. (Casey) Clouart. He was a Blackstone resident most of his life.



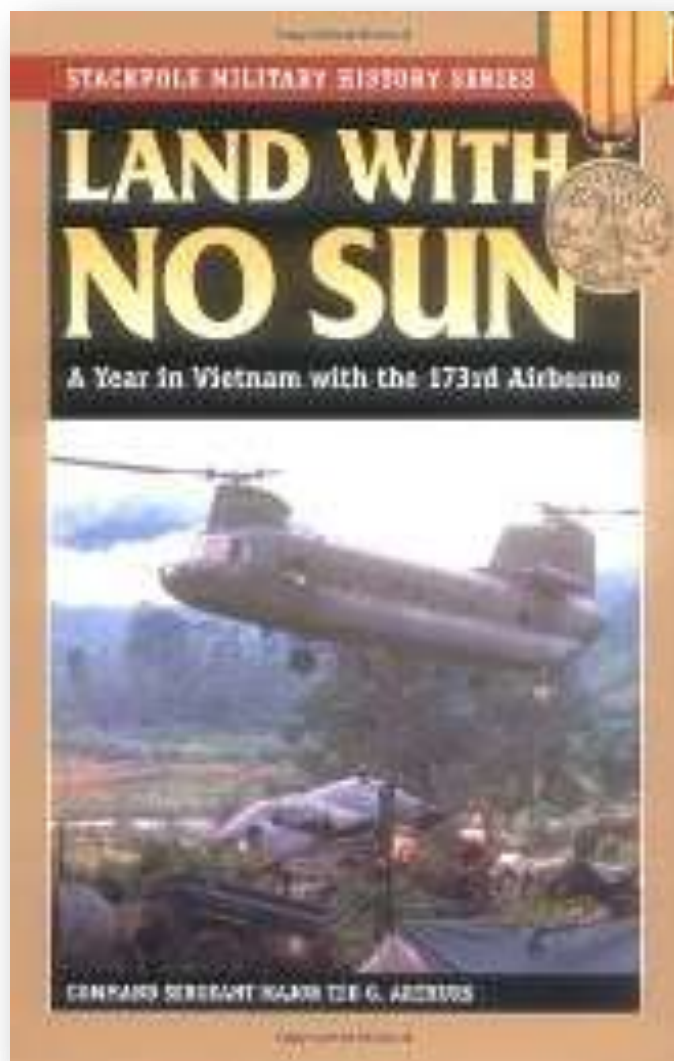
Bill served with Charlie Company of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment of the 173d Airborne Brigade, (Separate) in Vietnam from 1965-1966, serving under General Westmoreland.

Bill spent many years meeting up with fellow veterans who also served in Vietnam, known as "The Herd", in various cities across the country where they would "jump from planes" like they did as paratroopers for the U.S. Army. He was later Commander of the Michael Francis Curtin Post 8006 in Florence, Massachusetts from 1994-1995.

He is survived by his three sisters Barbara Croce of Cranston R.I.; Margaret Mazzarella of Cumberland, R.I. and Donna Millette of Blackstone, MA, and many nieces and nephews. He is also survived by his former loving wife Rosemary Keeler of Indiana with whom they shared guardianship of Son Danh-Kim of Lynn, MA. He was also brother to the late Randall Clouart and Timothy Clouart.

Graveside burial was held at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Agawam, MA on November 8th.

~ Rest Easy Trooper ~



By CSM Ted Arthurs, 4/503d

“A no-holds-barred, straight-in-your-face account of combat in Vietnam. You know it's going to be hot when your brigade is referred to as a Fireball unit. From May 1967 through May 1968, Ted Arthurs was in the thick of it, humping an eighty-pound rucksack through triple canopy jungle, chasing down the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. As sergeant major for a battalion of 800 men, it was his job to see them through this jungle hell and get them back home again.”

Note: According to Ken Smith (A/D/2/503), Ted donates all royalties to the 173d Memorial Foundation.

Available on Amazon.com



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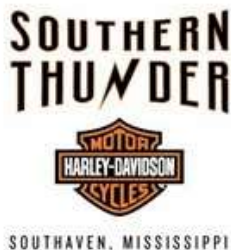
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www.mohride2013.blogspot.com



~ Sky Soldier Memories of a December Long Ago ~



Tannor Dupard, C/2/503d, Christmas 1967. His decorated Christmas tree is to his right.

Recalling The Better Days And Tolerating The Worst Ones

I'm sorry I cannot help you with your request. All I can recall was before Christmas, 1970, we had left LZ English and went to Pleiku, and we may have been there for the holiday, but it was not much of one.

I was hoping to see the Bob Hope Show, having watched his shows before I joined up. I recalled seeing thousands of service men and women in his audience, so maybe I would get to go, even if I was stuck way in the back row. As it turned out, we ended up on high alert, if I recall correctly, since we could not trust the word of the opposing forces to honor a truce. But by then it didn't matter, as I had heard (and to this day, I don't know if it was true) that out of the entire 2nd Bn, only two (2) soldiers were picked to go.

Such is the life of a grunt, I guess. I can appreciate your comment about never having left there, for I have often felt the same way. Our newsletter makes some of us, at least me, recall the better days and tolerate the worst ones. Thanks.

Don Ball
HHC/2/503d

That Cheered ME Up!

It was December 1967. I had spent December '65 and December '66 in Viet Nam, now I was spending December '67 in the hospital at Camp Zama, Japan. I had been wounded in the opening rounds of 875. I was in traction in the surgical/orthopedic ward, not exactly the happiest ward in the hospital. Everyone was in traction or an amputee.



Don

The USO was in full holiday mode, and there was a college choral group going around to all the wards singing Christmas carols. Ten girls, ten boys, college age. They lined up in the middle of the ward, and started to sing. They had not even got through the first verse when the girls, looking at us, began to cry, and ran off the ward, leaving the boys behind to finish by themselves. The boys were looking at us too, and you could tell what they were thinking, "fail a class, drop a class, make one mistake, and next year it's me in this ward."

To their credit, they did not run off the ward, just stopped singing, and quietly walked off. It was deadly silent for a couple of minutes, the doctors and nurses didn't know what to do, or say. Finally, one of the amputee's raised up, looked around and said, **"Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but that cheered ME up."** Of course we all began to laugh, at which point the doctors and nurses declared us insane, and went back to work.

George "Scotty" Colson
HHC/B/2/503d



George

Just Take Orders And Drive On

I have a little Bob Hope story also.

After Dak To, November 67, we were back in Tuy Hoa for what seemed like a hot minute. Can't tell you how long we were there. But, Bob Hope and his gang were going to perform just before Christmas and I was all jacked up to see him for the one and only time in my life. Alas, that didn't happen. A couple days prior to his show my team was sent to Kontum. I was bummed at the time as I recall. Oh well, we just had to take orders and drive on, right? :) Hope you are well Brothers.

Corky Corcoran
HHC/2/503d & 173d Signal



Corky

(continued....)



Who Was That Man?

Here is my story as I remember it.

It was late in December of 1967, maybe the 23rd. I was making my way back to my unit, A/2/503, after being released from the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay, after being wounded on Hill 875. I am not exactly sure how it happened but I was kidnapped by the Army and found myself at an airbase, I think it might have been Pleiku but I can't say for sure. It could have been anywhere. There were soldiers by the hundreds, maybe thousands on the airstrip. We were relieved of our weapons and rucks and put in formation on the tarmac in two columns with a space of about ten feet between columns. Here we were, out in the middle of the strip with nothing but our fatigues and steel pots in the hot sun waiting for something.



Les



Original caption: 12/23/1967 - Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam: President Johnson hangs onto a handrail at the back of a jeep as he reviews the troops at Cam Ranh Bay, 190 miles north of Saigon. Standing next to the president is General William Westmoreland. (UPI Photo)

In the distance we could see an airplane. It was not a military plane we were sure of because we knew what they looked like. It circled around and landed, then

taxied up to about a hundred feet in front of us. I happened to be near the front and on the side nearest the space between the columns. Then suddenly a jeep with General Westmoreland comes zooming past right up the middle of the columns and right up to this 707 that turned out to be Air Force 1. The steps were rolled into place and out stepped President Johnson looking like he had slept in his clothes for several days. He walked down the steps and got into the back of the jeep with Westmoreland. They then proceeded to drive right down the middle the same way Westmoreland came in. When they got to the end they turned around and came back. They drove back to the plane and the President climbed back up the stairs. The plane turned around and took off, leaving us in his jet blast.

We were then escorted back to the connex boxes where our gear was and then released. I then continued on my journey and got back to my unit in time for Christmas. I read years later that the President had made a trip to Viet Nam to visit the troops for Christmas of 1967. I, along with several hundred others were left with a (what the hell just happened?) feeling. It was all very strange but we just figured it was SOP for the Army.

I stayed out in the jungle until 15 Feb 68 and then happily left Viet Nam on my own 707.

**Les Fuller
A/2/503d**

Flight Commander to Sydney

This is my War Story concerning Christmas '69 while I was assigned to The Herd.

The best thing about being assigned to Vietnam was the possibility of an R&R to Australia. On my first tour, it had just been opened and I had a chance to go but that's another story.



Sydney Opera House, 1972

(continued....)



On my second tour, I was married (our first anniversary fell on December 28, 1969) and in communication with my wife. About two weeks before the flight, I received notification that I was scheduled for a flight into Sydney and I got word to her and she made arrangements to go to Hawaii with her parents to visit her sister and then fly down to Australia. I was to arrive on the day after Christmas and she was to leave Hawaii on the day before Christmas. She actually missed Christmas Day because she flew over the International Date Line on the day before and landed in Sydney on the morning of the day after Christmas (I was scheduled to arrive in the afternoon).



Surf City, Sydney, 1960s

Now this ain't no bullshit. When the planes landed in Sydney, the Australians were very particular about the bugs one brought into their country and the Stewardesses (there were no Stewards in the 60's) sprayed the compartments before the doors were opened to the terminals to kill all the bugs. Then they took the civilian passengers to go through customs. The doctor who had given my wife her smallpox vaccination had not shown it properly on her shot record. So, they took her to the Custom's Doc and made her take another vaccination. This was a bit unsettling but she was young and knew, as we all did, that we were too young to die.

Then she checks into the Wentworth Hotel and takes a cab to the location where we were coming in from Vietnam. In the meantime, I had boarded the plane in Saigon. They boarded the officers and enlisted by rank – lowest to the rear. They were 707's which were normally three seats on one side of the aisle and two on the other; but since this was a military flight, they had the seating set three to each side of a very narrow aisle. We were packed in like sardines. Well, I lucked out in the front seat on the left by the door where it was only two seats with the stewardesses on our right. I was a Captain sitting next to a Full Bird Colonel. Each flight needed to have a Commander who was normally the

senior officer. On this flight, the Colonel did not wish to be the Commander; so, the designation fell to me – the next senior. I was presented with the manifest and told to give it to the Detachment in Sydney on my arrival.

No big thing, thinks I, and we take off. Those take offs were very stimulating. You sit on the runway and they rev the engines up like you never hear a civilian plane rev and start down the runway. About half way down, the plane leaps straight up into the air and you feel like you're a cannon ball being shot into the air straight up. Don't want to have Charlie shoot you down on the way to Sydney with a full load of av-gas do you? Once up above Charlie's range, the pilot takes off his fighter pilot hat and puts on his civilian transport pilot's hat and the flight resumes its normal flight.

Upon landing in Sydney, I had a very nice surprise. I found that the Flight Commander is separated from the other passengers and taken to a private sedan. While the others are transported by bus, the Flight Commander with manifest is taken to the briefing by air conditioned sedan (Christmas is mid-summer in Australia). That was truly delightful and they brought me into a separate entrance to the briefing room. I had to drop off the manifest in the office and sign in everyone to Sydney.

In the meantime, my wife is sitting in the lobby waiting for the passengers on our flight to arrive. She sits next to a couple who are meeting their son who has missed a number of flights out of Vietnam to Australia. He had some trouble in the boonies getting to Saigon and was about eight days late. Not a problem thinks my wife as I never am late for anything. However, as my flight arrives and she watches the faces pass by, I'm not there! There must be some mistake!!

She goes up to the counter in the lobby set up by the military and explains that I'm supposed to be on the plane. They look over the listing of passengers expected, my name is on there but I'm not there. Now a bit of panic develops. It turns out that I am in the back office signing in having a Coke while they are looking for me. As I walked into the briefing room, there is an announcement for CPT Getz to come to the podium. They took me out into the lobby and there was my wife. We had a great embrace and then she told me about her watching everyone from the plane except me walk by into the briefing room. We then had another great embrace!

We had a fantastic time and celebration of our 1st Anniversary.

Robert A. Getz "RAGMAN"
Task Force CO, 2/503d

(continued....)



Christmas 1966

My folks sent me plenty of snacks and a case of Tabasco Sauce to kill the taste of C-Ration Lima Beans! No we didn't eat the puppy!!! Just loved it for a few days.

Found this picture that was taken by my buddy Doc O'Donald, December 1966.



Griff & little buddy during Christmas in Vietnam, 1966

Operation Canary Duck. 2nd Bat was providing security for the 199th Light Infantry. The location was Hwy 15 between Long Binh and Phu My to Bear Cat. This lasted until January 5, 1967. During this time frame, Christmas and New Year's, we had a Cease Fire and Holiday Truce in place but only on Christmas Day and New Year's. That was a Joke!

Our Platoon got the call to help a LRRP Team who was trying to be extracted under fire near our location. We hustled a reinforced squad led by our Platoon Leader LT Mitchell and headed towards the LRRP Team. As we approached them we saw the last LRRP on the ground running to catch a extraction rope dangling from the Chopper.

The LRRP grabbed rope and the Chopper pulled up and out in a hurry while the LRRP continued to return fire while holding onto the rope with one arm and leg. One more brave son of a gun.

So for 173d Airborne LRRPs and Recon men, you're the *best of the best*. Not to forget 2nd Platoon B Company for running to the rescue! And on New Year's Eve we set up an ambush patrol just to keep the Peace! In this same area we had a successful L Shape Ambush patrol with Sgt Dulins' squad. 1 VC KIA. Not bad for a Holiday Truce!

By this time, December 1966, we still had 5 months to Go. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Griff Out.

Dave "Griff" Griffin
HHC/B/2/503d

Kentucky's Finest

The Christmas of 1967 was a rough one for Charlie Company... I was a several week old cherry Platoon Leader, having replaced one hell of a good man that was killed on Hill 875. The men that walked off that hill are for me, the bravest men I have ever met. It wasn't easy fitting in to that mix, but somehow these men accepted my way of doing things as I always asked how things ought to go.



Cap

Sergeant First Class Oscar B. Cruz was the Platoon Sergeant, a hard, quiet man that showed up after the Hill from the Black Hats at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Reading a map was no problem for us, but truthfully to this day I have no idea where we were. I do know it was somewhere near the Kontum airstrip and that the pilot had a shiny white flight helmet with 'Alfred E. Neuman' painted on it along with the words... "What, Me Worry?"

On Christmas day mail was dropped into the perimeter from on high and the bags bounced off every limb. I found SFC Cruz drinking bourbon from the corner of a fully wrapped package...drop by drop... his holiday fifth of Kentucky's finest was shattered on its last leg... Cap

Gary Prisk
C/D/2/503d

Bob Hope Show Comes to Town, And So Do The Bad Guys

It was December '65, and I had been with the 2/503 for just a couple weeks, coming over from the 101st at Campbell.

Everyone was back at Camp Zinn late in the month and word was going round something big was coming up for the first of the year; 'Mekong Delta' peppered the grapevine. To this FNG, Mekong Delta spelled rice paddies and little else; little else other than that would be my first taste of combat with these combat-hardened Sky Soldiers. This RTO was more apprehensive than scared....scared would come later.



Smitty (R), visited by his older brother Bob at Camp Zinn in December '65.

(continued....)



With the holidays near there was excitement about the Bob Hope Christmas Show coming to Bien Hoa Airbase. Being the new kid in the hooch, I had little hope of making the list of troopers who would be attending, and hell, those guys were more deserving as I hadn't been shot at once and hadn't done or seen anything. But alas, some dummy somewhere added to the list another dummy, PFC Donald L. Smith, Jr., and off in some deuces we went to see Mr. Hope and his showgirls.

There were thousands upon thousands of airmen, G.I.'s, medical personnel, walking and non-walking wounded, and gads of Brass, plus our small contingent of paratroopers waiting there for Bob Hope's entrance. I had always been a big fan and especially enjoyed the Hope/Crosby road movies growing up as a kid.

Striding to the microphone wearing a hat while casually waving his patented golf club, Hope was welcomed with thunderous applause and shrieks and hoots as he began his monologue. Barely into his first joke someone caught his attention from off-stage. He then said to the audience, to paraphrase, *"Sorry guys, the cameras were not rolling so I'm going to go back there and come out again and you act like I'm coming out for the first time,"* and he left the stage. He returned again to the same reception, and he and his cast put on a memorable show.



"The brass always managed to find Hope on stage somewhere, to thank him and his performers for bringing a bit of Christmas cheer to the troops."

While the show and showgirls were great, I was disappointed in Hope and the management of that event. To me, it seemed they were more interested in selling the war back home than entertaining the troops as their first objective.



Bob Hope Show, Bien Hoa Airbase, December 1965

(Photo by Gary Stemen, 3rd Platoon, C Company, 168th Engineers)

On 2 January '66, above our heads inside our Huey we were hit with incoming going into a hot LZ in the Delta, *welcome to the war kid*, and thoughts of Hope and Christmas Shows were of little concern; instead focus would be fixed on another December, December '66 when I'd be able to leave this place.

Funny, that was nearly 50 years ago, and I still haven't left that place. *Merry Christmas boys.*

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

Tiger Piss, Beer 33, But No Hope

Great story! Now let me tell you about the 101st Bob Hope debacle.

The 2/327 was back for a stand-down in Phan Rang in December, 1965, after three months running all over 'Nam securing the A/O's for the 1st Cav, the Big Red One, and the Korean Tiger Division. Word came down that the battalion would attend the Hope show, and excitement swept through the ranks eager for any kind of entertainment.

On the Big Day, we loaded into cattle trucks for the trip to Cam Ranh Bay. My Headquarters Co medical platoon wedged into a truck with A Co, and the grunts were a tad rowdy. It had rained heavily the night before and we had to plow through some pretty deep stretches of standing water. Each time the convoy stopped for the lead truck to wade across one of these "lakes," the troopers on board would start bartering with the Viet mama-sans, following along the route trying to make a living, for warm Tiger Piss and Beer 33.



John

(continued....)



At first the NCO's on board tolerated the transactions, but then a platoon leader looked back from his position as shotgun rider and brought the beer sales to an immediate halt. The order was greeted with sullenness, but for the most part the order was obeyed.

To make a long story short, our convoy eventually reached a portion of road that the trucks could not ford, and the entire column had to turn around and head back to Phan Rang. To say that we were disappointed would be a gross understatement. Now, the previous order not to purchase any beer from the Viets was totally ignored, and bottles of Tiger Piss and Beer 33 soon found their way into our greedy hands. Again, the NCO's tried to ignore this disobedience, but one hapless E-5 tried to enforce the order. At this time in my three years in the Army, I'd never seen ANY trooper disobey either an officer or an NCO. But when the E-5 reached over and snatched a bottle of beer out of one trooper's hands, the trooper and several other of his A Company buddies retaliated by attacking the NCO and damn near knocking him unconscious. The whole truck went silent as we watched this in shock. At this point, the truck stopped and the platoon leader tried to stop the revolt, but the melee continued until the Company Commander suddenly appeared at the front of the truck and climbed up to a position where all of us could see him. In no uncertain terms, he ordered the disturbance to halt and told us he would empty the truck and march us all the way back to Phan Rang if his order was ignored. The disturbance stopped.

I originally included this incident in my novel, but because my publisher restricted me to 90,000 words I had to omit it in order to trim the novel down. However, after I was discharged and later heard about "fragging," I could imagine such things happening. We had a Sergeant Major who EVERYONE hated with a passion. We called him The Duke, and he was my inspiration for "The King" in my novel. We were only in-country a couple of months, when he transferred out of the battalion to run an NCO club in Saigon. Rumors were rampant that the reason he transferred was that he heard he would be targeted in the next operation.

Anyway, thought you'd be interested in my Bob Hope experience. Take care,

John Taylor
B/2/503d

Note: The Vietnam war novel John authored is *Land of a Thousand Dances* and is available on Amazon.com Ed

She Remembered Him!

I remember the Bob Hope Christmas Show at Bien Hoa because somebody remembered I had done some theater in high school so I got detailed to help set up the area for the performance, including the dressing rooms (tents) for the performers.

My luck had me setting up a tent for Martha Raye and, as I came out of that tent she was entering and stopped me to say she recognized me. It turned out she had done a performance at a theater in San Diego when I was an usher in high school (16). I couldn't believe she would remember a dumb kid like me, but it was the only time in 'Nam anyone noticed me.

Russ Webb
HHC/2/503d



Russ

Hey Russ! I noticed you, and so did Lee and Wayne, and Jim and Magglos and Albright! Ed ☺

Some Cared Back Home

December wasn't too far off from November when Hill 875 happened, but with those memories still in our heads we were infused with Legs (non-airborne) replacements. I guess it was hard to trust those who didn't go through the same training we did, but they were still soldiers so we tried to get along. I guess the one thing I remember was on December 30 they had a mail delivery out in the bush. My Mom always tried to send care packages to me, although sometimes they were quite late in getting to me, but still appreciated nonetheless. I guess it was nice to see something from home in the way of food or pictures because it meant that you weren't alone and if you could make it home, well, people were there who cared about you. I always shared what I received in the field because I wanted them to feel like me -- that back home people cared for us even if the nation didn't.

Steve Welch
C/2/503d



**L-R: Steve and his buddy
Jack Croxdale**



Geronimo Battalion Mini Reunion Planned

The 50th Anniversary of the 173d Airborne Brigade activation will be celebrated during the period Thursday, March 21 - Sunday March 24, 2013, at Ft Benning, GA. Ceremonies will honor the memory of fallen Sky Soldiers and their families. A formal announcement and events schedule is attached (See Page 17).

Friday evening, March 22, 2013, there will be a mini-reunion for the original 4/503d "Geronimo Battalion", which served in 'Nam from June 1966 to early June, 1967. Family members of our comrades who were KIA in Vietnam and those who have died later are invited. The 2d Year 4th Battalion (June 67 - June 68) is also planning a dinner Friday night. You might have served in both years.

We have reserved 40 rooms and a banquet room and welcome room at the Holiday Inn North, where we had a large reunion two years ago at the 173d Memorial dedication. Initial plans are to have the welcome room open Thursday noon until Saturday noon as we have always done. The dinner is planned to be along the lines of our other get togethers. Rooms were \$79 per day two years ago. I do not have the current cost.

What we need ASAP:

* **A Reunion Team to plan and lead activities.** That includes a Team Lead, Team Treasurer to handle applications and checks, a Pathfinder to handle on the ground planning, and a Welcome Room Leader.

* **Input from everyone ASAP as to your interest.** This is critical to our planning for the number of rooms to reserve and the size of banquet room. Tell me how many do you plan to bring.

As always, I will send out correspondence and provide a lot of experience to the Team. Casey and I will be in Africa so cannot attend.

***NOTE:**

- Some of you plan on going to the 173d Association Reunion in Las Vegas. Remember that this is your best chance to meet and reconnect with the guys you were in combat with at a reasonable cost. Since we are planning the reunion ourselves vs the Association going thru an expensive third party, your cost will be what it costs us.

- If you have not seen the beautiful 173d Brigade Memorial at Ft Benning, you will find your heart in your throat. You will read the names of all our buddies who died, updated with those from our current conflicts. And the Infantry Museum is an incredible tribute to American fighting soldiers. You will see many mementos from our days with the 'Herd.'

Need your input ASAP.

Jack Tarr, C/4/503d, jtarr5@verizon.net

VA's Home Loan Program Continues to Lead Mortgage Industry

WASHINGTON – Today the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has guaranteed 20 million home loans since its home loan program was established in 1944 as part of the original GI Bill of Rights for returning World War II Veterans. The 20 millionth loan was guaranteed for a home in Woodbridge, Va., purchased by the surviving spouse of an Iraq War Veteran who passed away in 2010.

Given the current low interest rates, the program has grown significantly in the past five years, with 71 percent more purchases and 20 times as many refinances processed in fiscal year (FY) 2012 than in FY 2007. Currently, there are 1.7 million VA guaranteed home loans in existence with a total value of \$284 billion. VA has guaranteed 540,000 mortgages in 2012.

"The 20 millionth VA home loan is a major milestone and is a testament to VA's commitment to support and enhance the lives of Veterans, Servicemembers, their families and survivors," said Allison A. Hickey, VA's undersecretary for benefits. *"As a result of their service and sacrifice, as a group, they prove to be disciplined, reliable, and honorable—traits that are ideal for this kind of national investment."*

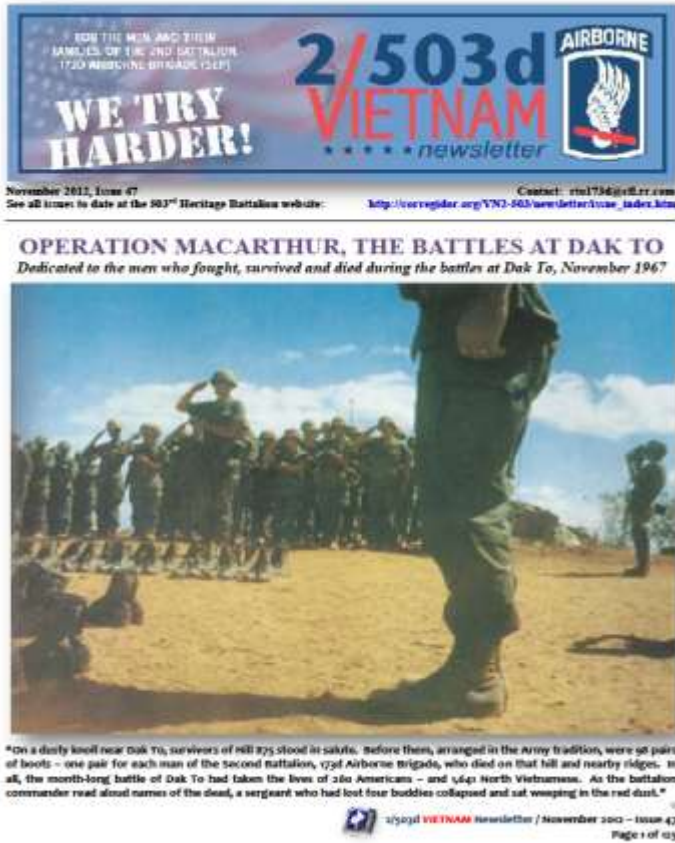
The program makes home ownership more affordable for eligible Veterans, Servicemembers, and surviving spouses by providing access to lower cost financing. VA loans are also attractive within the mortgage industry because they protect lenders from loss if the borrower fails to repay the loan. Mortgages guaranteed by VA have had the lowest foreclosure rate for the last 17 quarters and the lowest delinquency rate for the last 14 quarters compared to all other types of home loans in the nation, including prime loans, according to a report by the Mortgage Bankers Association.

Much of the strength of VA's home loan program stems from the efforts of VA employees and its industry partners nationwide to ensure Veterans receive every possible opportunity to remain in their homes and avoid foreclosure. Since 2009, VA's efforts have resulted in over \$8 billion in savings to taxpayers in foreclosure avoidance.

Veterans may obtain a certificate of eligibility for a VA-guaranteed home loan through the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal eBenefits at www.ebenefits.va.gov. To obtain more information about the VA Home Loan Program, visit the program's home page at www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans.



More About The Battles at Dak To ~ Issue 47



Correction

On page 87 of 125 on the November newsletter, my comments were for 6-22-67 Battle of the Slopes, Hill 1338. On 10-1-67, I left the Herd for good when I joined Co. F., 51st Inf, LRP ABN. Since the majority of the LURP unit was composed of Sky Soldiers, we were of course devastated when we got the reports about Hill 875.

Steve Vargo (Sgt. Rock)
C/2/503d, 3rd Platoon Fire Team Leader
Co. F 51st Inf. LRP ABN team 1/5 atl

Who Wrote That?

Can you tell me who Jurate Kazickas (author of *Paratroopers Find Death On Hill 882*, page 118) is? Most of what is there I can relate to and I would like to communicate with that person if they were there. The only thing I have a problem with is the statement about the LZ. I am very certain we (Engineers) blew most of that (a bombing run prior to our arrival took out a big portion of it) and it was not for any awards ceremony, that I recall. Besides, the site was a very steep slope and the blown trees were all over the place. There was not any flat area to speak of and the dust offs did not set down even after the area was secured. As I recall the mortar pit was at the top of it and that was the flattest area in all of the clearing. After it was secured the wounded and bodies were staged there

before being loaded. Anyway, can you get me in touch with Kazickas? Airborne,

Bill (AZ Bill) Berry
173 Engineers

Reply: Hi Bill. That story was part of a package of newspaper articles sent in by Tom Remington (A/2/503), a survivor of those battles. I suspect it appeared in the *Orlando Sentinel* in 1967; the lady who authored it, Jurate Kazickas, was no doubt a writer for them at the time. Don't know if she's still affiliated with that paper, but here's a site with info about her:
<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/jurate-kazickas/21/801/451> We must always strive to make the historical record as accurate as possible. Hope this helps bro. ATW! Ed

A Coincidence?

As always, thank you for the Newsletter. I have not finished reading this one yet due to length but will soon. This is the real deal. No movie or novel. There are all the faces, names, and stories. I just returned from a visit with my parents in Kentucky. They are still remembering the great time in Lexington (Lin's parents were guests of our Bde at the Lexington reunion. Ed). I am still reading the current Newsletter. I noted that one Sky Soldier listed as KIA in Nov. 1967 was named Clarence Alvie Miller, Jr. One of my Dad's best friends in the 503rd was named Clarence A. Miller, T-5. Clarence was killed on Corregidor on 2/23/45. I plan to call Dad tomorrow and ask him if he knows if Clarence had a son. As I recall Clarence was from New Orleans, La. Dad has pictures of Clarence at Ft. Benning when they completed jump training and before they left for the War. Bless 'em All.

Lin Basham, SFC (Ret)
Daughter of Ray Basham, 503rd PIR, WWII

Reply: Hi Lin. Clarence sure sounds like he's the son of your dad's friend. Our Miller was from Illinois, according to the Virtual Wall. Please let me know what you learn. Thanks much! Ed

More From Lin

I spoke with Dad yesterday about Clarence Miller issue. Dad's Clarence was one of his best friends. They were together the entire War until Corregidor where Clarence was killed. He did not die until the day after his wounds and Dad said that he got to see and talk with him before he did pass. Clarence was critically wounded by machine gun and had stomach wounds.

(continued....)



Dad remembers that he was from New Orleans, LA and had worked at the docks loading cargo before joining the army. Dad said that he was married and his wife had a baby while they were in the war but he recalls Clarence stating that the baby was a girl. I have no idea how we can find out if Clarence Jr. was the son of Dad's Clarence unless we had access to their military records. I believe that is restricted to next of kin. I have been told that after a certain number of years from the soldier's discharge that the records become public information but I cannot state this as a true fact. Dad has a small address book that he kept and he had his closest friends listed along with their service numbers. If Dad has Clarence's number I would be happy to pass it on to you if you have any interest in checking on this any further. I found it amazing that there is a possibility that father and son both served with the 503rd in different wars and made the ultimate sacrifice. It can be a small world at times. I will let you know if I find out any more information.

Lin B.

Reply: Hi Lin. Will research it on this end and let you know what we find. How sad for the mother and families if they were father and son. Will include our notes in the December issue, maybe some of our guys who served with Clarence can help with this. Thanks much! Ed

Guys: Does anyone have background info on **Clarence Alvie Miller Jr.**, from Steger, IL, KIA November 6, 1967?

Keeping it for Posterity

What a helluva report and sit-rep. Damn, unbelievable. No; *as long as we walk; so will they be with us.* Going to try to move this document (Issue 47) to the 173d Airborne Brigade Alumni Site on Facebook. Excellent sit-rep. AATW. Headhunter 2Kilo, Out.

Eddie Hair
C/1/503d

From an SF Buddy

That was a great issue, I have been looking at it for a couple of hours at least. I am really pissed at myself because I worked on an expanded version of what I sent you before and then thought it could use some touch up. So I never got around to sending it. I hope there will be some follow up in the next issue.

Thanks for including the part that I did send (see Page 125, Issue 47). Just for your own information, if nothing else, I have included the parts I didn't send as an attachment to this email. I keep telling people I have been hit in the head too many times so I am forgetful.

Dave Adkins
5th SFG (ABN)

P.S. The guy identified as Dave in the photo above what I wrote is someone else. OK though, he is probably better looking than I am.

Note: See Dave's story on Pages 53-55. Ed

A Gold Star Sister

Once again I was so happy to receive the newsletter that so many Sky Soldiers contributed such heartfelt, informative accounts of their time in service of our country. I had recently e-mailed Wambi Cook asking for information about Fr. Watters, who was the chaplain in my brother's unit. Then here in this one is the info I wanted. Thank you.

Pat Mika McGrew
Sister of Stephen A. Mika, KIA, June 22, 1967

Stephen Adam Mika

Private First Class
A CO, 2ND BN, 503RD INFANTRY,
173D ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Willowick, Ohio
May 9, 1945 to June 22, 1967

~ A Special Thanks ~

I wish to extend a very special thanks and with heartfelt gratitude to the many 2/503 troopers, their families and other Vietnam vets for sending me their good wishes on my 83rd birthday. It's been many years since I served with you great paratroopers, you Sky Soldiers, and the memories of our time together while often sad, are filled with a certain pride we all share in knowing we did our best during the most difficult of times. It was my honor to walk that earth with you, and I wish you and your families the very best always. Airborne!



The young Major Carmichael
Mekong Delta, January '66

Bob

Note: Above commo sent in by LTC Bob Carmichael (Ret), 2/503 XO/CO '65/'66 in VN, and BN CO again with the 25th Inf on his second tour. As his old RTO I can only add, he's as ornery as ever, and still refuses to give me my third stripe no matter how much I beg. Ed

Happy Birthday Bob!



From a Green Beret at Dak To

That was a great issue, I have been looking at it for a couple of hours at least.

I am really pissed at myself because I worked on an expanded version of what I sent you before and then thought it could use some touch up, so I never got around to sending it. I hope there will be some follow up in the next issue.

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Dave Adkins
5th SFG (ABN)

P.S. The guy identified as Dave in the photo above what I wrote is someone else. OK though, he is probably better looking than I am.

Note: See Dave's complete story below. Ed

Thanksgiving Day, November 23, 1967

I was on a patrol north of Plateau GI with the Senior Command NCO and the junior medic and about 50 Montagnards. The area we were in had been occupied by elements of the 24th NVA Regiment for several months. We walked up to a very nicely-built very wide trail complete with square timbers for steps that had been built by the 40th NVA Engineer Company. It was my first time in that area but previous patrols usually made contact. This time there was nobody. We figured out later they had all left for Dak To.

We headed back south toward Plateau GI. At some point I stepped on an underground wasp nest. We were in bamboo and I was trying to hold on to my rifle while fighting the bamboo. In the jungle, bamboo grows in every direction except straight up. I hated the stuff. Around Dak Seang, just north of Dak To, it was even worse. I was wearing rain gear but the

wasps found their way inside very quickly. After about 20 to 30 stings, I finally dropped my rifle. Meanwhile, the Montagnards were popping smoke grenades and I think they also popped at least one CS grenade.



Airstrip at Dak Seang, Vietnam. (Web photo)

I started getting numb all over my body except for my left arm. Even my face was numb. The medic gave me a couple of Benadryl and called for a medevac. By the time the medevac got there I was feeling better and I told him to send the chopper away. There was heavy fog in the valleys and I could hear the chopper going up one valley after another looking for us, and then backing out. I was afraid they would crash. The medic refused. He said if you call for a medevac and then don't use it, the next time they may not come. He told me to act sick when I got on board.

The Montagnards were cutting down trees to make an LZ but that didn't work. The trees were strung together by so many vines that all they would do was lean away from the attempted LZ without falling.

The pilot decided to use a jungle penetrator. The open area among the trees was strung with vines like a cat's cradle, so I would have to push away from any vines as I went up. When I got into the chopper I didn't fake it. I told the pilot I was sorry he had to come all that way and take such a risk. He said,

***“Don't worry about it. The last
bee sting I picked up died on
the way back.”***

That made me feel a little less guilty, until I got to Dak To and saw all the body bags alongside the airstrip.

(continued...)



I don't remember, but I probably walked to the aid station and got another dose of Benadryl by needle. As I recall, there was a boardwalk perpendicular to the airstrip. As you walked away from the runway there was a Graves Registration tent on the right, right on the edge of the strip. A little further was 2nd Bn aid station. All the way down on the left was the tent where Doc Grosso lived with his medics. I didn't see Doc in the aid station so I headed for the medic's hooch. Sad to say, most of the medics I had met and got to know during my first medevac experience on August 2, just 112 days before, were now either dead or wounded. Doc had gone up on Hill 875 to handle casualties in person because he was running out of medics.

I found out Doc had been wounded by a mortar round that practically landed in his back pocket and was now a patient in the 71st Evac in Pleiku. I was walking toward the airstrip hoping to catch a ride to Pleiku when I noticed the flaps



71st Evac Hospital

were open on the Graves Registration tent, which I had not noticed before. There was one lone black man with hair on the sides but totally bald on top lying on his back. I decided in my own mind, because of the degree of baldness, that he was probably a senior NCO with a wife and kids back home. I wondered if they had gotten the bad news yet. Probably not. They were probably sitting around the Thanksgiving Day table praying for his return. That thought made me really sad. There was a graves registration guy sitting in a folding chair at a small table reading a paperback and eating an apple. It was sad to think of this man all alone in the tent while his buddies were outside together in a group in their body bags. For a second I resented the guy with the apple not finishing up and getting this fallen trooper out to be with his buddies. Then I figured he deserves a lunch break the same as anyone else. Maybe he was waiting for an ID. Who knows? I thought about walking in and standing by the dead man. I wanted to look at his face and see what he looked like. I felt like he deserved to have someone, even a stranger, remember his face. I figured the graves registration guy would get upset so

I stayed outside and just took in the scene for a while. I still wish I had gone in.

I walked out to the strip and turned left. There, next to the tent, were two refrigerated CONEXES full of bodies, and beyond that a lot of body bags. I didn't count them, that seemed ghoulish, but there must have been over



Senator John Tower, 1925-1991

a hundred. Then, maybe 100 yards away, a chopper landed and Sen. John Tower of Texas got out along with some brass and a couple Red Cross ladies. Sen. Tower was on a 'fact finding mission'. He never recognized the body bags for what they were. I thought, "So much for congressional fact finding".

While I was standing alongside the airstrip at least one C-130 came in and taxied up close to where I was standing, and out came a bunch of replacements fresh from the States. I saw scared looking Leg replacements coming off the ramp with their civilian suitcases still in their hands and no LBE or weapons whatsoever. They were about to be thrown into the fight with no preparation or orientation at all. Reminded me of the stories I heard from veterans of the Pusan Perimeter during Korea. I felt sorry for them. Talk about a case of instant PTSD. They had probably landed at Cam Rahn that morning or the night before. They had no chance to get used to the idea of even being in Vietnam before going right into a hellish nightmare where green jungle was now a manmade dust bowl. I heard later that the 173d Commander refused to accept them at first because they were Legs. Westmoreland overruled him on that. I guess he probably transferred them out at the first opportunity or sent them to jump school in-country.

I got a ride to Pleiku and went to the 71st Evac Hospital. It was a twelve-ward hospital all spread out at ground level. I walked through at least five wards looking for Doc. In combat area hospitals there are unit liaison NCOs who take care of problems for the guys from their units....

(continued...)



...One of their duties is to put a card in a holder at the foot of the bed with the unit shoulder patch and some information like name, unit, etc. As I walked through the wards the cards on the beds were almost 100% 173d Airborne. There were one to three 4th Infantry cards and a few others. The 173d guys were all yelling "Airborne" across the aisles to each other. Having been there myself I recognized that this was partly Airborne esprit de corps, but even more so pure joy at being alive and out of the field. That was the same feeling I had lying on a stretcher in the 2nd Bn aid station at Dak To on August 3, '67, when Doc Grosso, my old roommate from jump school said in his South Philly accent, more like a gangster than a doctor, "I'm gonna work on dis one over here." That was the first time I knew he was even in Vietnam.

I stopped one of the nurses and told her who I was looking for. I mentioned how many 173d guys were there. She said,

"This is nothing, all the hospitals in Vietnam are full, even Third Field in Saigon. They are sending guys from Dak To airstrip straight to Japan with nothing but battle dressings."



Front of 3rd Field Army Hospital in Saigon in 2005, today a war arms museum. (Photo by our late friend, Dale Olson, A/2/503)

She sent me off in another direction to find Doc. I can't remember whether it was that nurse or someone else who told me that they were sending

walking wounded back into the fight after a quick battle dressing and a big shot of penicillin in the ass. I finally found Doc. He was lying on one side because the opposite side was covered with black dots from his face to his lower leg, he looked like someone had emptied a box of 12 ga rounds into that side. I think it was his right side. He was filthy from all the dust on 875 but they couldn't give him a bath because of all the holes. You could see black dots of shrapnel all over. The sheets were filthy too. He couldn't shave but he hadn't been there long enough to have much of a beard. He said he was trying to get the doctors at 71st Evac to let him go back to the field because he had his own supply system that was much better than the Army's system and he worried that someone would replace him and screw everything up. He asked me to get him a carton of cigarettes, so I took off to find some. I think he wanted unfiltered Camels -- that would fit his personality. It seems like all I could find was menthols. He was more like a commando with a medical degree.

I also gave him \$20.00 which he tried to refuse. He said, "No worry, my pay will catch up with me." I said, that's what I was told but I spent almost a month in the 67th Evac and couldn't even go the snack bar and buy a Coke. He finally accepted the money. It's not like he could have gotten out of bed and forced me to take it back anyway.

That night in the SF Club in Pleiku (we didn't have O Clubs and NCO Clubs in 5th Group, we only had Clubs). Anyway, for the first time in my life I broke my rule of never drinking when you are in a bad mood. Seemed like a good way to avoid a drinking problem. Didn't work that night. I drank Thanksgiving dinner.

Airborne

Dave Adkins
5th SFG (ABN)



SGT. NATHAN A. GOLLNITZ

Nathan A. Gollnitz, 28, passed away on Friday, September 26, 2012 in Pul-E Alam, Afghanistan.

U.S. Army Sgt. Nathan A. Gollnitz, was killed by a suicide bomber in Afghanistan on September 26th, while service with the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team. Nate also served a tour of Duty in Iraq, where he participated in The Stryker Brigade Troop withdrawal. Prior to his service in the Army, Nate served 5 years in the U.S. Navy.

Despite suffering an injury where the truck he was riding in was destroyed by an IED in Afghanistan on July 20, 2012, he continued to go on missions. A true soldier to the end.

Nate was the beloved nephew of Martin and Diane Kennedy who Nate considered his parents and always called them Dad and Mom. Dear father of Lukas Conrad Gollnitz of Port Orchard, WA, and Lukas' mother Bridgett Bradford.

Also survived by his biological parents, Alan and Kim Gollnitz and five brothers, Kirk, Nick, Tyler, Noah and Chad. Along with grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Family and friends celebrated his life at Funeraria Del Angel Buena Vista with a Memorial Service held on October 7, 2012.

In accordance to Nate's wishes an inurnment and full military honors took place at The Rio Grande Valley State Veterans Cemetery in Mission, Texas on October 8, 2012. You may sign the guestbook, and send your condolences online to the Nathan A. Gollnitz family at www.funerariadelangelbuenavista.com

Flags were flying at half-staff in this western New York town following Nate's death in Afghanistan.



STAFF SGT. ORION N. SPARKS

Orion was looking forward to moving home near Gig Harbor in February, his mother said. The 29-year-old was on his third deployment when he and another soldier were killed Wednesday by shrapnel from a bomb in Pul-E Alam, in eastern Afghanistan. Sparks, who was raised in Gig Harbor, was assigned to the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team at Schweinfurt, Germany.



Sparks, along with Nathan A. Gollnitz, died from *"injuries suffered when an insurgent wearing a suicide vest detonated the device near their patrol."*

Sparks joined the Army in 2003 at age 19 and had deployed twice to Iraq before this deployment. He was born at Tacoma General Hospital and lived most of his life in Gig Harbor, attending Peninsula High School and later earning his GED. In 2002, he went to stay with his father, Garry, who lives in Tucson, Ariz. *"He's a doer, not a studier,"* Jan Hurnblad Sparks said of her son.

He had been studying Indonesian, a skill he had hoped would make it possible for him to transfer to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, his mother said. When he learned the move wasn't an option, he made plans to leave the Army in February.

"He wanted to come home, and if he had to get out of the Army to come home, that's what he was going to do," his mother said, adding that Sparks loved Washington. *"If they would station him at Fort Lewis, then he would stay in."*

She said Orion Sparks and his brothers Erik, 31, and Zack, 26, had been planning his return for a couple of years. Sparks was also looking forward to getting to know his nephew.

"They wanted to buy some property, they all thought about jobs," she said. *"But they're also snowboarders. All three of them enjoy the outdoors, camping, hiking."*

Sparks was dubbed the "gentle giant" by his Army peers, his mother said. He stood at about 6 feet, 6 inches. *"They said that he had an infectious smile,"* she said. *"He was always optimistic. He would do anything he could for anybody there. And he was a leader."*



Family and friends say goodbye to Sergeant First Class Daniel Metcalfe

Posted at: 10/04/2012

By: Joangel Concepcion | WHEC.com

A fallen soldier is remembered by friends, family and the Penfield community Thursday.

Almost two hundred people came to a memorial service to support the grieving family of Sergeant Daniel Metcalfe, who was killed in action on Saturday. Military officials say he died of injuries when enemy forces attacked his unit. Sergeant Metcalfe leaves behind a wife and three young children.

Sergeant Metcalfe was based in Vicenza, Italy and he was deployed several times throughout his career. He was only 29 years old.

Even though his body is in route to Arlington National Cemetery, his spirit was very much alive in Penfield Thursday as friends and family gathered to say good bye.

Brittany Stewart, Sgt. Daniel Metcalfe's cousin, said, "You know it's just hard when you lose someone especially a family member."

To the community, he is a hero, an 11 year Army veteran who fought for our freedom. But for the Metcalfe family, he was a son, a husband and a father.

Stewart said, "We all love him very much he's going to be missed like crazy."

Stewart says her family was torn apart when they heard her cousin, Sergeant Daniel Metcalfe, wouldn't be returning home. He was killed in Afghanistan last Saturday in what is being described as an ambush.

He leaves behind a wife and three children. The children are too young to understand they will have to grow up without their dad.

The tragic news has affected this entire community. The love and support extends beyond his tight knit family.

Bob Green said, "It does become an emotional time because when your own family is involved and when you come to a situation like this it becomes very emotional for not just family but for the whole community."

It's a loss the family will probably never get over, but they say Sgt. Metcalfe is leaving behind a lasting legacy.

Stewart, "It takes a lot of courage and someone really brave to go overseas and fight for our country. For him to give his life up for that it just means a lot to everyone."

Governor Cuomo has directed that flags on state government buildings be flown at half-staff on this Tuesday, October 9. He released this statement,

"On behalf of all New Yorkers, I extend my sympathy and condolences to the family, friends and fellow soldiers of Sgt. 1st Class Metcalfe. We will honor this soldier's service and be grateful for his dedication to our country."



Sgt. First Class Metcalfe was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Caserma Ederle in Vicenza, Italy.



Home for Christmas

From Gus Vendetti, Maj. (Ret)
A/2/503d

I'd like to share with you an opportunity I have that deals with helping Wounded Warriors.

I belong to Bragg Chapter 2226 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. There are a number of opportunities that we have to reach out and help soldiers, active and retired, but I'd like to share two that our chapter is involved with.



Our very own Gus
doing good work as usual.

First, several months ago we placed 3 wide-screen television sets in the Fisher House here on Ft. Bragg. Right now we are in the process of raising funds to enable combat wounded warriors (guys and gals who've been awarded the Purple Heart) from the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) here at Bragg, to go home for Christmas. The project involves raising funds from sponsors that will then be made available for a roundtrip trip Home for Christmas.

There is solid coordination with the leadership of the WTB to insure that we are reaching those who can make the trip and, likewise, ensuring that we are aware of the number and the financial need that are required to carry this out.

Sounds good, right? Oh yeah – if you'd like to help, drop me a note or call 910-476-9414.

Gus Vendetti
avendetti@nc.rr.com

[Sent in by Jack Kelley, A/2/503]

Welcome Home!

Awards of the Cowboys

As one senior pilot said,

***"We are the Cowboys,
we do this every day,
this is our job."***



It was seen as regular duty not above and beyond. In fact we have pilots that have not received their air medals and I only have about a month's worth of air medals. One of the folks at a reunion a while back said it was too much work to keep track of all the flight hours for every person in the flight platoons so we put all flight personnel in for enough flight hours to maintain their flight pay.

Greg Offinga
Cowboys/Falcons

We love them chopper dudes!



PRAYER TO SAINT MICHAEL (For Paratroopers)

Dear Saint Michael, protector of Heaven's Gate,
Guide your Paratroopers, to a victorious fate....
Please keep us safe, in peace or war,
To right the wrongs, that God abhors....

Grant us speed, the flight of your wings,
The element of surprise, to deliver our sting....
Give our weapons, the fighting edge of your sword,
Equip us well, your Airborne wards....

Protect our flesh, with your heavenly shield,
Your warrior heart, that we won't yield....
Grant us strength, to endure the hardships,
Fairness in dealing, with those who would harm us....

Bend your wings, to form our perimeters,
That no enemy assault, could ever wither....
Grant us courage, in attack,
Protect our flanks, and our backs....

Pray for us, on bended knee,
Lead us through hell, to victory....
To God's enemies, grant your vision to see,
That evil will fall, to those who are free....

Tell them, freedom is a gift from God,
"The Home of the Brave", His blessed sod....
"America, America, God sheds his grace on thee",
Saint Michael, Patron Saint of Paratroopers, lead us to
victory...!

Peter S. Griffin
Co. A, 2/502nd Infantry
101st Airborne Division
Viet Nam, 1965-66



On Behalf of Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d We send You Our Very Best Wishes for a Very Merry Christmas, and All The Way



2/503d, HHC/Recon Platoon troopers 'celebrating' Christmas 1966 in the boonies. On left is Rev. Jehue 'Jo-Jo' White with his buddy, somewhere in Vietnam. (Photo provided by Jerry Hassler, HHC/Recon, 2/503d)

