



March 2013, Issue 51
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 Photo of the Month ~



The “D” Zone jungle. Sky Soldiers of the 2/503 arrive LZ Zulu Zulu on 15 March 1966, during Operation Silver City.

(Photo by Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d)



Chaplain's Corner

Never Quit

Perhaps, like me you faced a number of events when the urge to quit or step back or perhaps even just give a mediocre effort to what's being done? Maybe? Think back recently...was there a time when you felt the pressure and stress on a project or task that was yours...but it just seemed the effort was too much to handle. Did you quit?

Could it be a time when you or I were asked to help with an event at our kid's or grandkid's school or in the neighborhood, and we felt...I just can't do it! Quit? Ever been tasked to ensure the final protective fires were laid in correctly, or your weapon needed cleaning...but it didn't happen. Quit? *"Americans never quit,"* Douglas MacArthur.

For me all the above have been items that I've faced--and like you I had a decision to make. The topic *Never Quit* is one for our current generation and for the children and grandchildren that we have. Thinking about this -- Never Quit.. I'd ask you to let me share two examples:

First - Emmitt Smith - Running Back with Dallas Cowboys and the Arizona Cardinals. The records say he rushed for 18,355 yards and had 3,224 receiving yards for a total of 21,579 yards and there were always 11 guys trying to stop him. He was knocked down on the average of every 4 times, but averaged 4.2 yards per carry. That means he got knocked down 4,000 times -- but got up and kept going. Sure, times will be tough, but never time to quit -- *"too soon to quit."* Yep, the best is yet to come. For Emmitt Smith and for us the question is will we keep on going? We'll be tempted and the question is will we keep on keeping on?

Stories like that above on Smith and the one below are like grains of sand -- you can't count them -- and they bring up the word "Persistence." When the world says, *"Give up,"* Hope whispers, *"Try it one more time."* The word quit can't be in our vocabulary. *"I will not quit!"* The Bible says, *"and let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not give up,"* Galatians 6:9.

Second.

"We are often troubled, but not crushed; sometimes in doubt, but never in despair; there are many enemies, but we are never without a friend; and though badly hurt at times, we are not destroyed." 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. LB. This is a verse I feel we can all relate to, for success and victory doesn't come easy. Sometimes we fail, but we need to get back up, dust ourselves off and continue to press on. Quitters never win. Before we move on, let



Cap

me share a favorite scripture of mine...*"I can do all things thru Him who gives me strength."* Philippians 4:13 NIV. Now if you are ready...walk with me for a moment and see the things that I witnessed in a soldier who didn't give up. It was 10:45 a.m., and.....

Seeing indications of the enemy's presence in the area, he deployed his squad and continued forward alone to make a reconnaissance. He unknowingly crawled within 20 meters of any enemy machine gun, whereupon the gunner fired, wounding him in the chest. He instantly returned the fire and killed the gunner. Continuing to crawl within a few feet of the gun, he hurled a grenade and killed the remainder of the enemy crew. Returning to the platoon area, he reported the results of his reconnaissance to the platoon leader. As he spoke, the platoon came under heavy fire. Refusing medical attention, he deployed his men in better firing positions confronting a superior enemy force entrenched to his front. Withdrawal was impossible without abandoning many wounded and dead (we would suffer 12 KIA and 27 WIA). Finding the platoon medic dead, he administered first aid to himself and was returning to treat the wounded members of his squad with the medic's first aid kit when he was again wounded. Knocked down and stunned, he regained consciousness and continued to treat the wounded and reposition his men. Wounded again when an enemy grenade shattered his left hand, nonetheless he threw several grenades which killed a number of enemy soldiers. Seeing that an enemy machine gun had maneuvered behind his platoon and was delivering fire upon his men, he and another man crawled toward the gun to knock it out. His comrade was killed and he sustained another wound, but, silenced the enemy machine gun. Returning to the platoon, he courageously exposed himself to enemy fire to drag the wounded to a protected area, and with utter disregard for his personal safety, he continued to lead and direct the efforts of his men until relief arrived. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on June 29, 1966, S/Sgt. Charles Morris, A/2/503 would be awarded the *Medal of Honor*.



The hands of Charlie Morris
(Photo from Jim Healy, A/2/503)

He Never Quit...and neither should we...

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

Rev. Jack Kelley, LTC (Ret)
Former CO, A/2/503, RVN
JackTKelley@aol.com



From the Association's Archives and Worth Repeating...

This article originally appeared in the Spring 1992, Vol. 7, No. 2 edition of *Sky Soldier Newsletter*, the predecessor to *Sky Soldier Magazine*. Photos added. Ed



Liberated: Manila during February 8-12, 1945. U.S. Army Nurses who were taken prisoner. *"The Battling Belles of Bataan"*.

HEROES ALL!

By Ken Smth
A/D/2/503d

In the past few months, this tired soldier has changed jobs. Gone is the fast pace of Army Operations and plans; my new job is Director for Army Programs with the 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee. It is a tremendously challenging job – to commemorate those who fought more than half a century ago for the freedoms we now have, and also to educate Americans about the war and its legacies. Any of our committee members will be glad to work with Chapters to become Commemorative Committees. Drop me a line and get on board!

But the purpose of this article is much broader than talking about a new job – it deals with the people with whom we come in contact, the veterans and their families. Both are important! Last week, 15 nurses out of 45 still living (from an original group of 87) who were taken prisoner in Bataan and Corregidor in 1942 came to DC. It was my privilege to escort them. What a tremendous group of ladies! Throughout 2 ½ years of captivity or more, they resisted, they survived and they

came home unbowed and unbroken. Little is known about them, but they are heroes one and all.

Of more immediate interest and relevance to most of us are the Gold Star wives and mothers. What an exclusive group! In all of history, has there ever been an

organization where the qualification standards – the price of membership – has been so high? The sacrifices that they made, in their hearts and with their lives to now help others in so many ways is remarkable. From their sorrow a positive force has emerged. Individuals and Sky Soldier Chapters should take every opportunity to support the Gold Star Wives and Mothers, for they too are. Heroes All.

Finally, there are the private heroes – the guys beside you at the Chapter meeting or at our conventions. In very few cases, their heroism was recognized by the Army. But within each soldier's heart there are secret acts of heroism, the conquering of some

fear, the acceptance of some challenge, the willingness to do the seemingly impossible for the unit and for each other.



173d Gold Star family members.

Take the time to look, to listen, and recognize in each other the remarkable achievements we have accomplished – we band of brothers. Take note of the act which turned green boys into men, legs into airborne warriors, individuals into one of the finest combat organizations the Army has ever seen. Each, in his own way, contributed in an extraordinary manner to our successes and our victories, and shares, as a hero, in the pride of the name Sky Soldier. Heroes All!

All the Way!





INCOMING!



~ Ham & Limas ~

What a coincidence. Yesterday I went to the funeral of the wife of our chief parachute rigger from way back in the 70's. Like him, she was also a WWII vet.

Afterward three of us went to lunch, a CSM and the SF Association Chapter 16 Chaplain. The subject of Ham and Limas came up. Being a Southern boy I personally liked them. The CSM said they were not bad if you could heat them up or had Tabasco Sauce but the chaplain hated them. But we all agreed that we liked C-rats and LRRPs in general. Then to see a two star (MG Scales page 10-11, Issue 50) discussing Ham and Limas at length the very next day was a nice coincidence. It made me laugh. I would have traded most of the things in C-rats for his Ham and Limas. People would have probably thought I was being a brown nose though.



Dave Adkins
SF Viet Vet

Reply: Hi Dave. Will trade you my Ham & Lima Beans for your Chicken Noodle concoction anytime! We often cut that nasty brew with wild onions we'd find or anything available. Entering a ville one day a buddy and I came across two squatting ARVN boiling eggs. With hand gestures they asked us if we'd like some. *Hell yeah!* Hell yeah until they cracked them open to expose the half-cooked embryos inside. *Balut, a delicacy my ass, no thank you ma'am.* I can still hear the beaks and feet crunching as they ate the damn things. Then again, we weren't SF who'll eat anything....like snakes, more snakes, bricks, etc. Ed ☺



Thanks, but I prefer mine scrambled.

~ Another Vietnamese Delicacy ~



Cooked rats. And you thought you were eating hamburger at that roadside café.

~ A Delta Trooper ~

Joe Littig's note in your February issue encouraged me to do the same; I too was with D/2/503d from 03/68 to 01/69. Although a lot of years have passed since then, the memories of my service are still bright and clear. Unfortunately, and the thing I regret most, is that I haven't kept in touch with many of the troopers I served with; I'm hoping our newsletter will help correct that and bring more of us out in the open and together again.

John Barrett
D/2/503d

Reply: Hi John, good hearing from you. Please send me a VN era photo of you if you have one, and we'll run your note and email address in March hoping some of your buddies hookup with you. I was a 'non-vet' for 32 years, so understand what you're saying. You might also consider attending the 50th anniversary of the 173d at Benning in March, and/or the Association reunion in Vegas this coming August. ATW bro. Ed

Note: Any buddies looking to hookup with John drop me a note and I'll put you in touch, rto173d@cfl.rr.com





Emergency Medical Care Thru VA

What is Non-VA Care: Non-VA Care is medical care provided to eligible Veterans outside of VA when VA facilities are not available. All VA medical centers can use this program when needed. The use of the Non-VA Care program is governed by federal laws containing eligibility criteria and other policies specifying when and why it can be used. A pre-authorization for treatment in the community is required for Non-VA Care -- unless the medical event is an emergency. Emergency events may be reimbursed on behalf of the Veteran in certain cases. See the Emergency Non-VA Care brochure for information.

Unavailability of VA Medical Facilities or Services: Non-VA Care is used when VA medical facilities are not “feasibly available.” The local VA medical facility has criteria to determine whether Non-VA Care may be used. If a Veteran is eligible for certain medical care, the VA hospital or clinic should provide it as the first option. If they can’t -- due to a lack of available specialists, long wait times, or extraordinary distances from the Veteran’s home -- the VA may consider Non-VA Care in the Veteran’s community. Non-VA Care is not an entitlement program or a permanent treatment option.

*“Never argue with
stupid people, they will
drag you down to their
level and then beat you
with experience.”*

~ Mark Twain

[Sent in by Donald Lewis Smith, III,
Leg son of the editor)

First Parachute Jump?



In 1797 (October 22), Andrew Garnerin was the first person recorded to jump with a parachute without a rigid frame. Garnerin jumped from hot air balloons as high as 8,000 feet in the air. Garnerin also designed the first air vent in a parachute intended to reduce oscillations.

Last Parachute Jump?





Cam Ranh Bay, 1967
(Web photo)

“It’s The Only War We Got”

Westmoreland gambled by bringing in his forces before he had developed a system to support them. The gamble paid off. Within two years, he had achieved a logistical miracle.

American army engineers and private contractors labored around the clock, often accomplishing stupendous tasks in a matter of months. Their giant tractors and bulldozers and cranes carved out roads and put up bridges, and at one place in the Mekong Delta they dredged the river to create a six-hundred-acre island as a secure campsite. They erected mammoth fuel depots and warehouses, some refrigerated. They constructed hundreds of helicopter pads and scores of

airfields, including huge jet strips at Da Nang and Bien Hoa. Until their arrival, Saigon had been South Vietnam’s only major port, and its antiquated facilities were able to handle only modest ships. Now, almost overnight, they built six new deep-draft harbors, among them a gigantic complex at Cam Ranh Bay, which they completed at breakneck speed by towing prefabricated floating piers across the Pacific. They connected remote parts of the country with an intricate communications grid, and they linked Saigon to Washington with submarine cables and radio networks so efficient that U.S. embassy officials could dial the White House in seconds – and President Johnson could, as he did frequently, call to check on progress.

(continued....)





Bien Hoa AFB
(Web photo)

By 1967, a million tons of supplies a month were pouring into Vietnam to sustain the U.S. force – an average of a hundred pounds a day for every American there. An American infantryman could rely on the latest hardware. He was transported to the battle scene by helicopter and, if wounded, flown out aboard medical evacuation choppers known as dust-offs because of the dust kicked up by their rotors as they landed. His target had usually been “softened” beforehand by air strikes and artillery bombardments, and he could summon additional air and artillery assistance during a fight. Tanks and other armored vehicles often flanked him in action, and his unit carried the most up-to-date arms – mortars, machine guns, grenade launchers, and the M-16, a fully automatic rifle.

With the exception of the nuclear weapon, nearly every piece of equipment in America’s mighty arsenal was sooner or later used in Vietnam. The skies were clogged with bombers, fighters, helicopters, and other airplanes, among them high-altitude B-52s and such contrivances as “Puff the Magic Dragon,” a converted DC-3 transport outfitted with rapid-fire machine guns capable of raking targets at the rate of eighteen thousand rounds per minute. So dense was the air traffic, in fact, that South Vietnam’s airports became the world’s busiest. In addition to flying from bases inside the country, the air armada operated out of Guam and Thailand and from carriers in the South China Sea. And the U.S. flotilla deployed off Vietnam also

included cruisers, destroyers, patrol boats, tankers, hospital ships, and light craft to penetrate the rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta. Every service sought to be represented in Vietnam because, as American officers explained at the time, *“It’s the only war we got.”*

Excerpt from “Vietnam, A History, The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War, by Stanely Karnow
(Photos added)



Boeing B-52D 'Stratofortress'
©USAF Museum Photo Archives

Rocking their world



"Garry served with three different infantry battalions (1st, 6th and 4th Royal Australian Regiment) serving alongside the US 173d Airborne Brigade, the "Big Red One" division and Kiwis, and was wounded in action on both tours."

Ray Payne, 1RAR

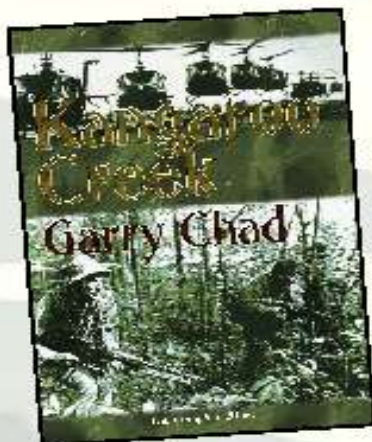
KANGAROO CREEK

THE COMPLETE STORY

By *Garry Chad*

ISBN: 978-1-921919-59-6

Non fiction/Vietnam



THIS real-life Aussie adventure story is about two youths. GARRY CHAD from outback Australia grew up with close Aboriginal connections, learning of their beliefs, laws and bush skills. He was born in Sydney in June 1941 before travelling to the North West to his home, Kangaroo Creek. His father, Tom, served in World War II in the Solomon Islands fighting against the Japanese.

WANG CHI HOE was born in January 1946 in the seaside town of Dat So, east of Hanoi, North Vietnam— a rice farmer and fisherman. His father, Hoi, had fought against the French with the Viet Min under General Giap.

Both men's lives are uncanny and paralleled. They were worlds apart culturally and in their upbringing, but both came from rural backgrounds. One day they will collide in the deep jungles of South Vietnam.

Chad served with three different infantry battalions (1st, 6th and 4th Royal Australian Regiment) serving alongside the US 173rd Airborne Brigade, the "Big Red One" division and Kiwis and was wounded in action on both tours.

Wang was in the Viet Cong 5th division. He, like many of the North Vietnamese army, walked the extremely hazardous Ho Chi Minh trail while serving as a 'filler' (reinforcement).

"I wanted to tell my story because of the many interesting characters and people with whom I've shared many varied experiences in my civilian and army life. Everything in this book actually happened, although there are some small elements fictionalised to add interest and connection, but it is to the best of my memory."

This epic sharply defines romance, humour, bonding, mateship, bar activities, battles and bravery.

This book is more than a soldier's life; it goes *beyond* the usual Vietnam veterans' experiences of mateship, war stories and war history. Sometimes humorous, sometimes brutal, always honest, it tells it as it is—how he felt, what he smelled, what he saw and heard.

Available from:

www.zeus-publications.com



ZEUS PUBLICATIONS

Publishers and Booksellers

AND

amazon.com



Last Month's WHODAT?



Sgt. Jim Quick, B/2/503d with his little buddies.

"Jim says he doesn't remember it, but on the night of March 16, 1966, I was carrying ammo to the perimeter and couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I stepped on Jim's stomach and said I was looking for Sgt. Quick's platoon. "Well, you found it," he said.

Larry Paladino, B/2/503d

"The WHODAT on page 59 is James (Big Jim) Quick of B/2/503, RVN '65-'66. Thanks again, ATW."

Ken "Doc" Eastman, B/2/503d

In Honor of the First Jump

A dedication ceremony for a marker honoring the 1st jump from an airplane by parachute will be held on March 1 at noon at the Missouri Air National Guard Field at Jefferson Barracks Park. This is directly across from the main gate where a jet fighter sits. Also a memorial tribute stone for the five airborne units sponsoring this event will be unveiled. The St Louis Area Veterans Consortium donated funds and both Rich Krueger and the Consortium are listed as sponsors at the bottom of the marker.

A parachute jump onto the field by 80 year old Lew Sanborn, a member of the Gateway Chapter 82nd Airborne Association will take place at 12:45. There may be a beer truck with beverages at this event.

The contact person for the event is Paul Arca at 314-757 2000. This is an outdoor event. Bob Beller

[Sent in by Danny Sartori, D/4/503d]

He's Smiling...Really He Is



Seen here at his home in Baltimore wearing his hat with lights following his successful rotator cuff operation is good buddy Ed Kearney, B/2/503, celebrating the Ravens' win over the 9er's in the Super Bowl. He was heard to say to his beautiful bride, Joyce, "*Once this heals I'll be ready for a try-out with the Ravens.*" Now we're smiling. Get well bro.

"A gun is like a parachute. If you need one, and don't have one, you'll probably never need one again."

[Courtesy of Bill Vose, A/2/503]



Cowboy Helicopter Pilots Are Truly Honorable



One day, while a Cowboy Helicopter Pilot was cutting a branch of a tree above a river, his axe fell into the river. When he cried out, the Lord appeared and asked, "Why are you crying?"

The officer replied that his axe had fallen into the water, and he needed the axe to make his living. The Lord went down into the water and reappeared with a golden axe. "Is this your axe?" the Lord asked.

The Cowboy replied, "No."

The Lord again went down and came up with a silver axe. "Is this your axe?" the Lord asked.

Again, the Cowboy Helicopter Pilot replied, "No."

The Lord went down again and came up with an iron axe. "Is this your axe?" the Lord asked.

The Cowboys Helicopter Pilot replied, "Yes."

The Lord was pleased with the Cowboy Helicopter Pilot's honesty and gave him all three axes to keep, and the pilot went home happy.

Sometime later the Cowboy Helicopter Pilot was walking with his wife along the riverbank, and his wife fell into the river. When he cried out, the Lord again appeared and asked him, "Why are you crying?"

"Oh Lord, my wife has fallen into the water!"



The Lord went down into the water and came up with ANGELINA JOLIE. "Is this your wife?" the Lord asked.

"YES!" cried the Cowboy.

The Lord was furious. "You lied! That is an untruth!"

The pilot replied, "Oh, forgive me, my Lord. It is a misunderstanding. You see, if I had said 'no' to ANGELINA JOLIE, you would have come up with CAMERON DIAZ. Then if I said 'no' to her, you would have come up with my wife. Had I then said 'yes,' you would have given me all three."

"Lord, I am a poor man, and am not able to take care of all three wives, so THAT'S why I said yes to ANGELINA JOLIE."

The moral of this story is:

Whenever a Cowboy Helicopter Pilot lies, it is for a good and honorable reason, and for the benefit of others.

That's our story, and we're sticking to it!

"COWBOY HELICOPTER PILOTS ARE TRULY HONORABLE!!!"

[Sent in by Jim Stanford, B/2/503, slightly modified, with photos added]

~ Chopper Dude Stories ~

We're still collecting stories from our guys and guys of the Cowboys, Caspers and Razorbacks for a future edition of our newsletter. Please send your story or recollections with any photos you might have to rto173d@cfl.rr.com Please put "Choppers" on the subject line of your message. Thanks!



The Bravo Bull with the Dulcet Tones



Bravo Bull, Felix Almestica, with the dulcet tones.

Following our time in Vietnam some of us chose to make a career out of the army, while others went on to work in law enforcement, education, technology the trades and many other life callings. Felix Almestica of B/2/503d, however, along with his bride Dagmar chose a shared life in music; and once you hear their work you'll agree, it was a good choice. Ed



During a recording session.

Lightbeings

Dagmar was born in Austria and lived and worked in Japan. She is certified as an Interior and floral designer; she is a connoisseur of fine dining, an artist, music producer, and student of high life. Dagmar was influenced by classical music such as Mozart, Strauss, and Chopin, she also enjoyed Popular artists from Austria, America and other European countries. Dagmar speaks fluent Japanese and has an appreciation for Japanese music. She loves the outdoors and enjoys skiing, soccer, basketball and gardening. Besides her gift for poetry and song writing she loves creating

children stories. Dagmar has appeared on Hawaiian Public Television sharing her expertise in fine dining.



Felix and Dagmar coming from a performance in Waikiki.

Felix was born in New York. He studied music at the Universities of Hawaii and Texas. He sings, plays percussion and has performed throughout the islands of Hawaii, mainland U.S.A., Japan and Europe. Felix was inspired to sing at a very young age but sang back-up until coming to Hawaii. Vocally his influences include Stevie Wonder and Gabby Pahinui.

Felix has been on Radio, T.V. programs and commercials, in Hawaii and Japan. He has had the pleasure of singing and sharing the stage with Hawaiian and Mainland artist such as Don Ho, Danny Kaleikini, John Rowles, Loyal Garner, Gabby Pahinui, Crystal Gale, Stevie Wonder, Bill Summers percussionist of Herbie Hancock, Bruno Mars and many others. Some of the local group names Felix has performed with are Genesis, BS+2, Greenwood, Brentwood, Hum Ha Jam, JO-AL, Nueva Vida, Jetstream, the Lovenotes, and the Fabulous Tradewinds. Being a "Neworican" gives him an appreciation for Latin music.

Felix and Dagmar love to dance. While composing "*I'm so glad*" they introduced elements of Funk, Jazz, Classical and Contemporary Pop. Other songs they are working on are a blend of influences such as Asian, Latin, Hip Hop and Rap music. This is the reason for calling their style *Fusion*.



For a real musical treat visit Felix and Dagmar's web site and listen to their upbeat love song "*I'm so glad*". Ed

www.felixanddagmarbonet.com/band_bio/



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RUSSELL DON HOWE, 78

U.S. Army Paratrooper

POLK CITY - Russell Don Howe, 78, passed away peacefully at Lakeland Regional Medical Center on February 21, 2013, of heart failure. Born in Chesterfield, Indiana on June 4, 1934, he was a resident of Polk City, Florida. He was a retired Army Paratrooper in the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. He attended Ball State University, in Indiana. Survivors: wife: Mary Whitt Howe, son: Timothy R. Howe (Tonia), daughter: Kimberly Johnson (Tim), brother: John H. Howe of Ponca City, Oklahoma, brother: Jerry L. Howe of Orange Park, Florida, ten grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.



Memories

Russ was the second person I met in the 173d. I arrived at B/2/503 one evening in May, '64. John Sahm was a Sp/4 at that time and he drove me to the Company from either the repl company or BN HQ. Russ was waiting for me at the door of B Co.

He was a Sgt E5 and was the acting Weapons Platoon Sgt. His greeting to me was: *"You're an E6 with a Weapons Platoon MOS. Thank God! You will be the new Platoon Sergeant and I won't have to do that f@#\$ing job anymore!"*

Russ became a good friend and we remained so until his recent death. Russ was a medic in Korea during that war. His knowledge of medicine, especially hangover cures, probably saved my stripes on Okinawa. That's a story for another day. AATW!

Jack Schimpf
B/2/503d



I first met Russ in about April 1961 when I went through jump school at Fort Benning. 2LT Herbert Henry (aka "Henry the Hawk") was our Tac then, and Corporal Howe was one of his staff instructors. I think he had a dislike for brand new shave tails. He ran our asses into the ground, and we did thousands of push-ups. But when we graduated, we were very proud of our achievement and very airborne.

In 1963, I joined the 503d in Okinawa right before the Brigade was activated. After activation I ended up in B Company, 2/503, where I spent time as a platoon leader and executive officer. One day the First Sergeant announced: *"Sir, we just got some new personnel assigned to the company"*, so I went out to meet them. There stood Sergeant Howe. I said: *"Oh, I remember YOU from jump school!"* He sort of paled and mumbled something like *"oh shit"*. Anyway from that day on we had a good, friendly relationship.

He was a hard driving, competent NCO that you could always depend on to get a job done. I remember working many long hours with him preparing equipment for heavy drop when we went on alert status. As time passed, I left B Co and ended up commanding C Co. But whenever I met Sergeant Howe, I got a hearty *"Airborne All the Way"* and a big smile.

A couple of years ago, I learned that he was in the hospital and I wished him well. I am very sad to learn of his passing. He was one of a kind and Airborne All the Way!

Fred Henschell
B/C/2/503d



Russ with his daughter, Kimberly.



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~

~ 2013 ~



50th Anniversary Celebration of the 173d Airborne Activation, March 21-24, 2013, National Infantry Museum Campus, Columbus / Fort Benning, Georgia. See Page 15 for additional information.

Contact:

Web: www.173dairbornememorial.org



36th Annual Airborne Awards Festival, hosted by the Donald D. Lassen Atlanta All Airborne Chapter & 82nd Abn Div Assoc., April 3-6, 2013, Atlanta Airport Marriott Hotel, Atlanta, GA.

Contact:

Tommy Tillman

Phn: 404-255-1674

Web: www.82nd-atl.com



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



335th Assault Helicopter Company, 11th Reunion, June 17-22, 2013, at the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV.

Contact:

Andy Hooker

Special Projects Coordinator

Cell: (941) 320-2463

Eml: Andyhooker1@aol.com



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

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 14 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



All The Way!





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





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



TERRY “TERUO” KAWAMURA

Rank and organization: Corporal, U.S. Army, 173d Engineer Company, 173d Airborne Brigade

Place and date: Camp Radcliff, Republic of Vietnam, 20 March 1969

Entered service at: Oahu, Hawaii

Born: 10 December 1949, Wahiawa, Oahu, Hawaii

Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Cpl. Kawamura distinguished himself by heroic action while serving as a member of the 173d Engineer Company. An enemy demolition team infiltrated the unit quarters area and opened fire with automatic weapons. Disregarding the intense fire, Cpl. Kawamura ran for his weapon. At that moment, a violent explosion tore a hole in the roof and stunned the occupants of the room. Cpl. Kawamura jumped to his feet, secured his weapon and, as he ran toward the door to return the enemy fire, he observed that another explosive charge had been thrown through the hole in the roof to the floor. He immediately realized that



2 stunned fellow soldiers were in great peril and shouted a warning. Although in a position to escape, Cpl. Kawamura unhesitatingly wheeled around and threw himself on the charge. In completely disregarding his safety, Cpl. Kawamura prevented serious injury or death to several members of his unit. The extraordinary courage and selflessness displayed by Cpl. Kawamura are in the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.





~ SKY SOLDIERS / VIETNAM ~



KIA in March, '66-'71

"One Backward Glance"

*173d Airborne Brigade Association and Vietnam Virtual Wall records indicate service in these units.

~ March 1966 ~



John Henry Beauchamp, Jr., B/2/503
(See story about John on Page 56)



Charles Arthur Bell, A/2/503, B/2/503*

The following article is taken from *The Philadelphia Daily News*, special supplement entitled 'SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTY,' October 26, 1987. The special supplement was issued in conjunction with the dedication of the Philadelphia Viet Nam Memorial.

"By the time Bell graduated from St. Thomas More High School in 1964, he had earned letters in basketball, football, baseball and track. He played on the St. Joseph's College freshman team before entering the Army in August 1965. He shipped out to Viet Nam in February 1966 and was assigned to Company A of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. The private first class, a rifleman, died near Phuoc Vinh on March 16, 1966, 10 days before his 21st birthday. Bell had been wounded earlier in the day, but continued to fight before being

fatally wounded as he tried to neutralize a Viet Cong machine-gun emplacement. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star. Bell was engaged to be married. He was survived by his mother, brother and two sisters."

From a native Philadelphian and Marine,
Jim McIlhenney

Kenneth A. Bodell, D/16th Armor
Marion C. Brown, B/2/503, C/2/503*
Earlie James Butler, Jr., C/2/503



Merwin Alexander Delano, Jr., C/1/503

"Your tour of duty started on the 24th of May 1965. I am your nephew David W. Delano Frees and I was born on the 24th of May 1966, the same day you were scheduled to return from Vietnam. Your ultimate sacrifice influenced my life changing decision to serve our country with the United States Navy. You are not only my uncle, you are my Hero!"

David W. Delano Frees

"If you are able, save for them a place inside of you and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go..."

(continued....)



Robert Paul Gipson, B/2/503
William O. Gossett, HHC/2/503
Marvin Harper, C/2/503



John Henry Herlihy, Jr., D/16th Armor

Barnette Gartrell Jenkins, A/2/503



Kenneth Max Knudson, A/2/503

"Dear Max, here it is 46 years since your death and it seems that instead of getting easier accepting your death, I think of you more. I think about what life would have been like with you here living it with us, enjoying my children, watching your mother age and us watching you and your family in life. I honor you for your service and your death. Thank you."

Connie K. Schultz, brother

"My name is Larry Sword and i was with Ken from basic to jump school. We had only been in country a few weeks when he was hit. It was devastating to me because he was the first of many friends I lost. I remember him with a great sense of humor and a very good friend. I also lost our other friend in November, Doug Kern. I was wounded the same day Doug was killed. God bless Ken and his surviving family."

Larry Sword
A/2/503d



Jerry D. Lewis, HHC/1/503

"Have you ever meant a person that with your first impression you knew everything about him? Even before you had a chance to talk to him. I remember one person that fit into that category very well but, not quite. He was a Big raw boned Red headed Farmer or logger or service station attendant or maybe he was a ball player or a race car driver or maybe a lawyer or an intern. This guy could have been any of the above. I remember this young guy with a smile on his face and a can of C rations in his over large hands. He would always offer to share any food he had with everyone there. I remember one day while we were on snow training, it was so wet and cold that a thought would freeze before you could get it out. This guy with that big old smile would go around to everyone around and ask. 'Do want my parka to keep warm?' or 'are you OK?' And as always with that big ol claw wrapped around a can of rats, 'are you hungry?' Inside of this carefree guy there was also the trooper that would stand toe to toe with the biggest bad ass of the company and would not back down under any circumstances. He would take charge of a given situation and maintain control as long as needed to continue the mission. If you were in trouble he was there to help you, and would not leave you. He loved to jump he even took up skydiving. This young guy must have loved life as much as he loved everything else. I think when he volunteered to go to Viet Nam, he did it to go and help. There is an old song that has a line in it that goes like this 'only the good die young'. Well, along with all of our LRRP brothers that died in Viet Nam, Jerry (RED) Lewis was as good as they come. Jerry won't be missed by me! I see Jerry every day. He is that kid working at the service station down the street. He is the Big cop that just passed me on the freeway."

(continued....)



He is the doctor that takes care of my animals and friends. He is the minister at the local church. He is all of these things to me and I will never forget one thing he told me. He said, 'Airborne troopers never say goodbye.

Goodbye is forever. They say see ya later buddy'. I don't know where he got that from but, it works for me. I know I am not much of a writer but this is the memory

I have of Red Lewis."

Pat "McNasty" Smith

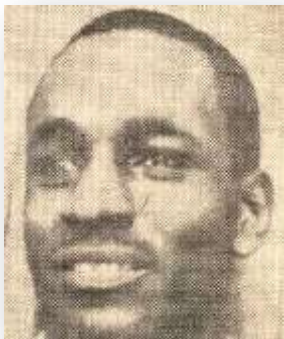
We served together

Alexander D. Rodarte, A/1/503

"I served in 1968 and I remember Alex as the first person whom we knew to die in the war. This brought the war home. Many more since Alex died including my brother Daniel Sandoval in 1968. 30 years later I still remember my old neighbor and pal. We hung out as kids. He had fine and decent parents."

Louis Sandoval

Billy Ray Slade, C/2/503



Richard Floyd Smith, B/2/503, C/2/503*

Allan Stegall, Jr. C/2/503

"My name is Dale Olson. I served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade from 1965-1966. Allan Stegall was killed in South Vietnam, March 15th 1966. I would like to contact his family if at all possible.

From a fellow Sky Soldier,"

Dale Olson

(deceased)



~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

In mid-March 1966 the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, undertook a major search and destroy operation near Phuoc Vinh. On 14 March, C Company had a significant engagement with enemy forces, with four men killed in the action. On 15 March C Company had one man, PFC Allan Stegall, killed in action as A and B Companies moved to exploit the C Company contact. On 16 March, the entire battalion was engaged in a five hour battle, losing ten more men while inflicting far greater casualties on the engaged Viet Cong forces and forcing them to withdraw.



Phil Tabb, C/2/503

"Phil was my big brother, always a gentleman with a heart of gold."

Joyce Pearson



"On March 13....around noon a unique twist of fate occurred when (Lt. Phil) Tabb and his small element unknowingly overshot the 800-meter gap between the battalion's companies and unexpectedly became the initial assault element in a southern portion of George. A savage firefight broke out with a well-entrenched Viet Cong force. Associated Press reporter Horst Faas was moving with the battalion and, in a March 18, 1966, article, captured the first moments of the firefight: 'I walked ahead of the file,' said Sergeant Albert Guarusco, the little group's point man. 'I'd just passed through a ravine and a big bomb crater when about 40 yards away I saw a VC. He was heading my way and looked surprised. I fired a burst from my rifle and dived to the ground. Then I raised my head and saw two more VC. One had a steel helmet. I fired another burst and they disappeared into a trench.' Then, as Sergeant Marvin Chapman added, 'All hell broke loose. Bullets flew in all directions...."

(continued....)



....Grenades headed for us and exploded in the trees.' Lieutenant Tabb immediately reported the contact to the battalion command group, but there was some initial confusion as to where Tabb really was because he believed he was still behind the battalion. This was quickly sorted out, and Lt. Col. Walsh ordered the closest leading company, Bravo Company, under Captain Les Brownlee, to reinforce Tabb. Contact between the two paratrooper units was made within 1 ½ hours, and now a savage battle ensued, with casualties being taken on both sides. Horst Faas reported that PFC Jerry Rippee of Bravo Company shot a Viet Cong in the side just as the VC was preparing to throw a grenade. In one shower of grenades, Tabb was mortally wounded by a fragment behind the ear, and shortly afterward Captain Brownlee suffered numerous fragment wounds in the left arm as he tried to slap away an incoming grenade. Now both sides fed more reinforcements into the fight. Charlie Company, under Captain Tom Faley, closed in on the left flank of Bravo Company, doubling the amount of direct fire on the enemy. The Viet Cong commander also deployed more troops and several heavy machine guns into his entrenchments ...Lieutenant Clancy Johnson became acting commander of Bravo Company, while Sergeant Chapman took over support platoon's survivors. The battle continued to rage, with each side trying to outflank the other. At the same time paratroop casualties were being taken to a bomb crater several hundred meters to the rear and evacuated by using either stretcher-basket or a penetrator dropped by an Air Force 'Husky' helicopter hovering 150 or more feet above the crater."

Tom Faley
C/2/503d

William N. Thompson, HHC/1/503

Charlie C. Walker, B/2/503

"Charlie, it's been a long time since 3/16/66 but I won't forget you. I will go to church and say a special prayer on Memorial Day for you and my other brothers from the Brigade who didn't make it back home.

God bless you RIP."

A Brother from B Company

We served together



Charles A. Zionts, B/2/503

"I grew up with Chuck. Great young man. Love you and may God take care of you."

Joseph Hora

We were close friends

~ March 1967 ~

Steven Jack Adams, C/2/503, A/2/503*

"Steven you will never be forgotten as your memory lives on through your nieces and nephews. As the anniversary of your death approaches, it feels as though it was yesterday. You are still missed."

Andrea Erickson

We were close friends



Charles Byron Alandt, C/2/503

"I can remember him saying 'you're OK kid'. It was just a simple acknowledgement that made me feel special standing there with my buddies. One of my brother's friends who gave his all. I heard Charlie was a 'tunnel rat' which was high risk duty. RIP Charlie...you are remembered."

Mark Stesney

A friend

(continued....)





Charles C. Anderson, Jr., A/3/319th

"Beloved older brother whose loss has lessened our world in unimaginable ways.

He is always in our thoughts and prayers."

Jon L. Anderson
Brother

"Captain Charles Calder Anderson, Jr. He was a distinguished graduate of The United States Military Academy at West Point, New York in the Class of 1962 who lost his young life on 22 March 1967. He was posthumously awarded the Army Commendation Medal and the Purple Heart Medal. Today he rests in honored glory in the West Point cemetery. You are not forgotten...nor shall you ever be. REMBRANCE...23 January 1999."

Clay Marston

Ivy Thomas Anderson, A/4/503

Lionel S. Anthony, C/2/503



Gerald Edward Bartram, HHC/4/503, B/4/503*

"My mind is flooded with memories of our childhood together. It pains me that you never had the opportunity of knowing your nieces and nephews. I still don't understand why we have to have wars where we have to lose our beloved ones. For me still this is like the first day we were told..how do you ever get past something like this. I miss you so much."

His brother

"Jerry, it's me, Gerry Stesiak. Yea, it's been a while hasn't it. I've got to tell you buddy, what happened to you has haunted me all these years - for we both know

why it was you and not me. Remember...you took my place out on the line when I went to Hawaii on R&R. I went into shock when I came back and our platoon sergeant, Shepherd, told me what happened to you. Hey, I finally wrote that book from notes I kept in my diary, remember? Yea, I really did it buddy, I told it. Of course you're in it; how could I write about our time there without mentioning you, come on! The title? "Raptors Prey." Yea, Steve Probst is in it too, as are most of the guys; Brutus, Chuck Huller, Mike Goodwin, Tom Cook, Mcdade, Williams, Walker, Dr. Price. Yea, I wrote about Shepherd. Not in the best of light, but he's in there; a main character too - the main raptor. You'd enjoy reading it. Well Jerry, I'll close for now. And soon I'm sure, we'll be together again, shoulder to shoulder in platoon formation. You probably won't recognize me though. You see Jerry, age brings many changes, some pleasant, some not so pleasant. What time is it? Ah,...it's 9:00 A.M. May 27, 2001. Yea, I know, it seems like it's just been five minutes. Yes, it's 35 years later - I know. Don't rub it in. Well Jerry, I just had to talk to you, and thank you. I'm sorry too. I'm sorry it wasn't me as opposed to you....Hey, say hello to Freddie, Carlos, Daryl, John, and Louie Soward for me will ya? Oh, by the way, if you see my son, Kenneth Gerald, give him a kiss for me. Signed, eternally grateful, your fellow medic, Gerald Kenneth Stesiak. Yes, I'm 54 years old Jerry - don't rub it in. Rest well pal, see ya soon. 'Airborne' 4/503rd 173rd. 'All The Way Gerry' Thanks Jerry. Good-bye for now."

Gerald Kenneth Stesiak



Charles Herman Bennett, C/2/503



(continued....)





Clyde Joseph Caires, A/2/503, C/2/503*

"My first cousin, my best friend. You will never be forgotten. It's been 45 years since you left us but I remember you like it was yesterday. We all lost something in that war, but you lost your life.

God bless you Clyde."

Rod Moura

We grew up together



Welborn A. Callahan, Jr., C/2/503

"Welborn was my company CO at NGC and my friend. I will always have fond memories of him. He was a very special person and his death is a great loss to all who knew him."

David Cooper

Douglas Joe Carpenter, C/2/503



"His memorial marker tells nothing of his service to his country in Vietnam and the sacrifice he made on its behalf."

Arnold M. Huskins

George Tollovar Cox, B/2/503

Bennie Lee Cross, D/4/503



Paul William Curran, C/2/503

"Paul Curran was the original designated hitter. He had a beautiful lefty swing and love to hit the ball. I hope I play with him again. Bill"

Bill McLean



Michael John Drake, C/2/503

"Drake and I were in flight school together. I was happy to be stationed with him in Cu Chi. We had a lot of laughs together. I remember the morning when I got the news that he had been killed. I couldn't hardly believe it. He was a good kid. I often think about his family. I wonder if anyone could possibly get over the trauma of losing a son, or a brother. I hope he knows that he's not forgotten. I think about him every day.

Warmest Regards My Friend."

Ski



David Alan Drown, A/4/503, C/4/503*

(continued....)





Michael Leo Ebald, C/2/503

"Mickey" Ebald had a great fastball, a wonderful smile and an endless number of girlfriends, a sister recalled. He would rush outside at the first sign of spring and play baseball even if snow was still on the ground. Ebald pitched for the Venango Midgents, Jules E. Mastbaum High School and the Pepsi-Cola team in the Pennel League. He attended Mastbaum and Spring Garden Institute before he put his mechanical skills to work at a truck manufacturing firm. Ebald was a member of the Nativity BVM Roman Catholic Church, Belgrade Street and Allegheny Avenue. He and his brother, Daniel, enlisted in the Army together in May 1966. Michael wanted to become a Green Beret, but had to settle for being a light weapons infantryman. He was sent to Viet Nam, where he participated in the first parachute jump of the war. He and many of the men in his platoon were killed on March 3, 1967, when his unit, part of Company C of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne, 173rd Airborne Brigade, (-) was ambushed by a large enemy force. In addition to his brother, the private first class was survived by his mother, another brother and three sisters.

Philadelphia Daily News

Posted by Jim McIlhenney
Native Philadelphian & VietVet



James Larry Evans, A/3/319th

"On this day 43 years ago we lost a husband, son, brother and friend. We will always love and remember you Larry."

Betty, friend of the family

James William Evans, C/2/503

Freddie Lynn Friar, B/4/503

"Freddie went into the service because of me and my brother, his best friends. I remember sitting and telling his mother that he had not died for nothing, that he had died fighting for his country. And that it could never be for nothing! In later years I questioned this. I still feel some guilt for the War stories I brought home that made you want to jump out of planes and go to far places. I still miss you brother. The trio just never sounded as good without you. Thank you for the happiness you brought to a poor little boy who shared your youth. I never realized how much you were part of my life until you were gone. Jim"

Jim Graham, Brother of the heart



Willis Lee Furney, B/4/503

"A few years ago I did a rubbing of Willis's name for his sister, who is in my church, and now I'm posting his photo for his family."

Dennis Henderson

Melvin Clyde Gaines, C/2/503



(continued....)





Pedro Incarnacion Garcia, HHC/2/503

~ Award of the Silver Star ~

"For gallantry in action. Private First Class Garcia distinguished himself by gallantry in action on 5 October 1966, while serving as platoon medic. The company encountered a dug-in enemy force while conducting a search and destroy operation and engaged the enemy at very close range. With complete disregard for his own life and safety, Private First Class Garcia advanced through a hail of enemy small arms fire and hand grenades to treat the wounded. He dragged wounded men back to safer positions to treat them. He continued to move throughout the area exposing himself to the enemy fire on numerous occasions, completely disregarding his own wounds in order to ensure that all the wounded men were cared for and prepared for evacuation. Private First Class Garcia was wounded a second time but again refused medical aid for himself and continued to treat the other wounded men until the fight ended. Private First Class Garcia's outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army."

Earl Stanely Garrison, C/2/503

"You were gentle, quiet and kind. Sitting next to each other, we giggled in Mrs. Coombs 3rd grade class when she 'inspected' our nails! When you joined up before high school graduation, I feared for your safe return, rightfully so. Our class dedicated the BHS 1967 yearbook to you. It was the least we could do - so frustrated that you were gone. I will never forget you or the sacrifice you made in the name of freedom."

Sheri Testa, Classmates

David Lewis Glasscock, A/4/503

Just a young cowboy whose life had just began, when one day a letter came that would lead him to Viet-Nam. He didn't shrink, he didn't run, for those people he had scorn, that's why I believe he volunteered for the Airborne.

*To be one of the best for this nation and freedoms to defend,
that was his way - he was someone on whom you could depend.
He fought his fight - he lived what he believed - he gave his all,
and now we only have some old photos and his name on a Wall.
Of this nation I am not so proud - it turned its back on these men,
through protest and dissent it lost its will to win.
From his brother.*

"David Glasscock, I will see you in Heaven. You are missed by many. You were a hero. I was proud to serve with you."

Kenneth J. McCullough, C/4/503d

Moses Green, HHC/2/503, C/2/503*



Dwight Lee Hackworth, A/1/503



Rockwell Selden Herron, C/2/503

"Rocky...you never got the chance to be old and hang around the legion hall, but those of us from Haworth, know you gave your best."

T. Grimason
Neighbor

"It was an honor to befriend you. Your goodness was the worlds loss."

Joe Cleary, 101st Airborne, 1967

(continued....)



William Holthoff, 173d Eng.

"God rest your soul Bill, thank you for your service to this country. You are always remembered as a friend and a loving family man."

Thomas G. Bell
My brother-in-law's brother

John Henry James, Jr., A/4/503

"A lot of years have passed since we left the jungle together but you are still in my thoughts."

Your Friend Ziggy"
A. Zeigler



James Kelly Keith, III, B/4/503

*"We the family Miss and Love You Very Much.
We will all be together again someday."*

Mom (Wilma Hydas) & Herman,
Linda & Family, Jack & Family, Mark & Family

"Jimmy was best buddy at AIT training at Fort Gordon. I went on to Special Forces Medic training and Jimmy went to Viet Nam with the 173rd. I got a letter from him one month before his death. I still carry his picture with me every single day! God Bless you my friend."

Steve Klompus, SF medic veteran



Charles F. Kennedy, D/4/503

"Sergeant Kennedy was in the Recon Platoon 1/501 Inf. 101 AB. When we went to Viet Nam we became the 4/503 Inf 173rd AB and the Recon Platoon became Dog Co, 4/503 Inf. Sergeant Kennedy was a good soldier and a good friend. He was a professional who trained his men well. God bless him and we miss him."

From a friend,
Robert S. Carpenter

"Sgt. Kennedy, we sure had our time sharing smokes and a few cold ones. There isn't a day that I don't think about you and the others. I still can see you as you were ordering us to get on line and return fire and where to fire at. Always remembering, your fire team leader,"

Juan M. Herrera

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

On 07 Mar 1967 D Company, 4/503rd Infantry, lost two men in a patrol engagement in Tay Ninh Province:
SGT Bennie L. Cross, Cairo, IL, and
SGT Charles F. Kennedy, Blytheville, AR.



Ronald Wayne Lyerly, A/4/503

Robert L. Matthews, A/3/319th

Stephen Michael Minick, A/4/503

"I remember our last night together we went Christmas caroling with our church, how cold it was and you gave me your army jacket because I was shivering. You walked me home and we talked. We knew we may never see each other again. I was brave for you Stephen, not wanting to be. You held me so securely and we kissed for our last time, but I still remember how it felt and the promise we made that night to remember how much we loved. I could not come here till now 36 year later to say I Love You Stephen, always have, and always will be you girl. Rest In Peace My Love."

Nancy Lung
I am his girl forever

Be not ashamed to say you loved them, though you may or may not have always...

(continued....)





Douglas Eugene Moore, C/2/503

"I only wish I could've known you, before you were lost. But, as so many others, you were defending your country, trying to hold on to your families, and stay alive. Your brother has helped me get to know you, but I'll always wonder. You will always be loved and missed."

YOUR SON, Michael Papson



Randall Lawrence Perry, A/3/319th, B/319th*

"Randy, I was shocked to find your name on 'The Wall'. I still have the pictures of us horsing around at the Patton Museum at Ft. Knox in '65. I will never forget you, or any of my other fallen brothers."

Bill Rambow

We served together



Norman A. Renfro, A/2/503, C/2/503*

"I wish I could have known him. I never even got to call him dad. I have always been so proud of him. I know he has always watched over me. I would love to hear from guys who knew my Dad. Love,"

Rosie Marie Leontini, Little Sister

"Norman was my loving big brother. I barely knew him but what memories I do have are ones of pride. One of my fondest memories of Norman was the day he surprised me by showing up at my grammar school all dressed up in his uniform. I wanted all the kids to see my big brother. I was so proud of him.

He died for his belief in doing what was right in Vietnam. He died doing the only thing he ever wanted to do and that was being a soldier.

He will always be close to my heart. Love,"

Debbie

Angel Perfir Saez-Ramirez, C/2/503

Donald Ray Sanders, B/1/503



Peter John Schutz, A/2/503, C/2/503*

"Dear Peter, You died with my brother that terrible day in March. I have a picture of you and Norman and your other buddies at the base camp in Vietnam. You are standing behind and above Norman in the picture. I found your name on the Wall in D.C. this weekend, you and Norman are next to each other there too, one above, one below. It makes me so sad to see your sweet young face in those pictures and to know you never got to live a full life. You are not forgotten. Love,"

Norman Renfro's little sister, Debie

"I went to high school with Pete and knew him well. After all he was the center and I the quarterback on the football team. We were more than that. We were great friends. He was one of the first I met at high school since I was new to the school. The best way to describe Pete is this. One Monday football practice our coach was really giving it to us for being 'soft' the previous game. He yelled that we let the guy across from us continually beat us up and we had no guts. Finally Pete stood up and addressed the coach.

(Pretty bold for a 17 yr old)....

(continued....



....He said 'coach don't you think it takes guts to keep getting up knowing you're going to get beat up again and again. But you keep getting up because you won't quit? I do.' The coach looked surprised and then said. 'Pete, your right. It does take guts. I'm sorry.' That was Pete. Stand up for himself, stand up for others. Stood up valiantly for his country. I was in college when I got the news that Pete died. I cried then. I cry now. Pete was a hero before his 19th birthday. I'm 56 and could only hope to be as courageous as he."

John Rumph
Best Friends

James Arthur Skiles, C/2/503

*"To live in the hearts we leave behind,
is never to have died."*

(Thomas Campbell, circa 1888)

From a cousin

"Jimmy, I remember You singing on the activities bus after school. I did 2 tours in Nam and wonder why some came back and some didn't. You were part of history making the only combat jump in Nam. I know wherever You are You are singing."

A. Dalessandro
High School Classmate



John Raymond Stalter, C/2/503

"John enlisted in the Army within a year of graduating from high school. In high school he lettered in wrestling and football. Although only 5'8", John was not afraid of anyone nor did he ever walk away from a challenge. John had his basic training at Fort Polk, LA - Advanced Infantry training at Ft. Gordon, GA and jump school at Ft. Benning, GA. He was assigned to 173rd Airborne C2503. He was one of a select few to participate in the only airborne combat jump in Vietnam. John loved life to the fullest. He also gave his life so that others may live theirs."

Charles Stalter
He is my brother

"We dated when you were a Senior at El Rancho and I was a sophomore...I remember your great laugh, and

meeting your terrific parents. What a tragedy you were taken so early."

Cody Combs Jennings
High School Classmate

Lawrence Strack, C/2/503

"I have never forgotten you, little brother. You've come back in my Sons. My Love and memories are with you always, Bruce."

Bruce Wiens
He is my brother

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

"A" and "C" Companies, 2/503rd Infantry, lost 19 men in an engagement east of Katum in Tay Ninh Province on 03 Mar 1967.

Selvester Joe Vasques, C/2/503

Herbert Wilson, Jr., C/2/503

~ March 1968 ~



Robert William Abernathy, D 16th Armor

"Miss you. Your friend and neighbor, Bob Keefer."
We grew up together



(continued....)



Terrence William Achor, D 16th Armor

*"Terrence is buried at Rose Hills Memorial Park,
Whittier, California."*



"A portion of Sepulveda Boulevard/State Highway Route 1 in El Segundo near Los Angeles International Airport has been dedicated to the residents of Los Angeles County who served in Vietnam. This section of highway is now designated the Los Angeles County Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway. Adopted by the California State Legislature in 2000, the highway honors the more than 350,000 California veterans who served in the Vietnam War, including the 5,822 killed or missing in action. Los Angeles County has the largest number of Vietnam veterans in California and 1,857 of its residents were killed or missing in action during that war. This memorial corridor provides a fitting and proper way for the residents of Los Angeles County to express their gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifices these Vietnam veterans have made for their country."



James David Barr, B/1/503, D/1/503*

Charles Richard Beall, E/17th Cav

*"Richard, I love you old buddy and I miss you every day.
I hope you are resting at peace. See you soon."*

Ed

Cousin, friend and VN vet

Carl Hans Bernhart, B/1/503

"Carl and I were in the 173rd MP Co, but we volunteered to serve with a line unit after Dak To, November '67. He was carrying the M-60 on Hill 1000 when he was hit, near Plei Mrang, Kontum. My squad leader, Sgt Merrill was also killed."

Emmett Lauer

We served together



James Richard Biernacki, A/4/503

*"You were a great guy Rich, You have never been forgotten. I am the girl who waited for you at home.
Rest in Peace."*

Unsigned

"I served with Sgt. Biernacki in A Co. 4th Bn. 503rd Inf. 173rd Abn.Bde. He was a Sgt. in the weapons platoon and I was in the 2nd.platoon of A Co. I remember the day he was shot by a sniper. I think of him and all the Skysoldiers that were killed every day."

Melvin Ray Thomas

We served together



James Guy Blackshear, A/1/503

"In memory of my best friend, Jimmy, who died too young while protecting our country. I still miss you buddy and cherish all the wonderful growing up memories of you."

Lucy

We were close friends

(continued....)





Prentis Barney Boykin, Jr., D 16th Armor

"I grew up with Prentis Barney Boykin, Jr. I first met Prentis at the try out field of the Columbia (Vancouver, WA) Little League in 1962. He was the catcher and I was the pitcher. He had played for the Yankees and was about to be picked for the majors for OK Rubber Tires. I was younger than Prentis, so I had to stay with the minors, going from pitching for the Dodgers to pitching for the Yankees. PRENTIS had another good friend, Dale Anderson, who also played catcher. I also attended McLoughlin Junior High School (1962-63) and Hudson's Bay High School (1964-65) with Prentis. The loss of Prentis Barney Boykin, Jr, was felt all over Vancouver, Washington. Now may he rest in Peace in the golden light of eternal Love, from now and forever more! Your good friend," Greg Payne

Frank Lester Brown, D/1/503

Warren Gene Brown, E/17th Cav

Daniel Lee Burr, A/1/503

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

On 03 March 1968 the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, lost eight men in a bitter fight in Kontum Province.



Kenneth Allen Buys, D/1/503

"It is better to have lived one day as a lion than one thousand days as a sheep."

"Our medic, PFC Don Lattman, was killed when he tried to go to Kenny's aid. Forty-four years later, and your Delta Company brothers are still in remembrance of your bravery."

Larry "Doc" Speed, 1/503d

(See Kenny's Bronze Star w/V award on Page 46)

Henry J. Chester, Jr., D/1/503

"Chicken chest", on Jan. 14, 1968, you and I alone rode a resupply Huey out to our unit B-Troop, 3/5 Armored Cav., 9th Inf. Jan 7, 1969, I got to come home. You left March 1968 in a flag-draped coffin. Only our Lord knows why. I mourn for your loved ones that are still missing you coming home. I wonder all the time, why is it that I was spared? Thank you Lord for I have a wonderful wife, 4 great kids and 3 beautiful grandchildren. As I write and many more times before I meet my Lord, I'll ask, why not me?"

Charels M. Davis, SP5/E5

We were close friends



William Earl Cofran, B/1/503, D/1/503*

"Thank you for your service my dad has told me many stories about you and him growing up together in Homewood. You truly are a hero in my eyes and I wish I got to meet my uncle."

Cory Cofran

Nephew

"Little League, Halloween pranks, and other mischief! I was in Vietnam when Bill was killed. He went into the Airborne because he was afraid of heights. In high school, we got into trouble when we set off a firecracker in the movie theater....One memory after another flows through my mind when I think of 'Billy.' My buddy, taken way too early in a war that is about as sorry as it can get. No reason for it. Billy should still be here with us. I miss him, but I am thankful to have known him and his family."

Robert Kirkconnell

We grew up together

....Take what they have taught you with their dying and keep it with your own.

(continued....)



Adrian Leroy Del Camp, HHC/3/319th

**Remembrance for Maj. Adrian Leroy Del Camp,
USA...who made the ultimate sacrifice:**

*"If I should die, and leave you here awhile, be not like
others, sore undone, who keep long vigils by the silent
dust, and weep...for MY sake, turn again to life, and
smile...Nerving thy heart, and trembling hand to do
something to comfort other hearts than
thine...Complete these dear, unfinished tasks of
mine...and I, perchance, may therein comfort you."*

Unsigned



Mark Lane Dickson, D/3/503

Ronald Dwight Ducker, D/1/503



Harry Joseph Ellis, III, C/1/503

*"I am Harry's sister, Peggy, and am trying to reach
out to David Brocklebank and Abraham (Hoppy) Holster.
My phone number is 856-753-0832 and e-mail is
kmb2301@yahoo.com. I would love to speak to both of
you. Thank you."*

Peggy Ellis

(Posted December 21, 2011)



John Anthony Fera, B/1/503, D/1/503*

*"Jack and I served in the same company (B/1/503) for
a few months in mid-1967. Although he was a West
Point grad and I was an ROTC grad, we had several
mutual friends from the Academy. From the first time
I met him, I was impressed not only that he was an
excellent troop leader but also that he was such a
down to earth person -- very bright, unpretentious, and
with a good sense of humor. His troops seemed both to
respect and like him a great deal. He got the job done
very well but without any fanfare. He engendered trust
in his men and up the chain of command. I remember
so vividly that he was deeply in love with his wife. I
recall how thrilled he was to meet her in Hawaii for
R&R. Obviously they shared a very special love. I felt so
devastated when I found out that Jack had been killed in
action. All comrades killed or maimed leave an indelible
mark on the souls of those who survive them. Some to a
greater or lesser degree than others. Jack's memory is
emblazoned on our minds and hearts for life.*

Dennis Hupp

We served together

**JOHN ANTHONY FERA
REMEMBERED**

First Lieutenant John Fera was graduated from the
United States Military Academy with the Class of 1966.
One unconfirmed report states he served with the 501st
Infantry in 1966-1967. It is noted that 1LT Fera began
his Vietnam tour on 07 June 1967 while the 501st's
three battalions arrived in Vietnam six months later.
He is buried in the US Military Academy Cemetery at
West Point, New York.

by a fellow USMA grad,
Ramon M. Ong
Brigadier General (Ret)
Armed Forces of the Philippines
USMA Class of 1963

(continued....)



~ A Note from the Virtual Wall ~

On 18 March 1968 D Company, 1/503rd Infantry, lost seven men in an engagement northwest of Kontum City.

Michael Don Ferguson, D/4/503

"Mike was one of the kids that lived on the north end of Riverside. His dad had a church there at the corner of Main and Columbia. For years I would drive by that church and think of Mike. I lived right up the street. There was a strange silence. Mike was good guy."

Doug Heron
We grew up together

Willie Frank Foster, D 16th Armor

Jackie Wayne Garner, D/1/503, D/3/503*



Donald Lee Gearhart, C/3/503



Richard James Grooms, A/4/503

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

John 14:27

"God Bless Your Soul Eternally."

Your Nephew Jamal

John Jacob Gunther, HHC/1/503, C/1/503*

"Dearest John, You are thought of constantly by all of the Maloney & Myrabo family. I love you and miss you deeply. Love, your cousin,"

Patty Maloney

"I remember when you showed up at Bragg with the Sportster. You haven't been forgotten. It's just taken a long time for me to get here."

Unsigned, We served together

Gary Dodds Hall, D 16th Armor



Jimmie Ray Harrison, C/1/503

"My whole childhood I thought he was the greatest man on the planet. He died when I was 10. I pulled over 5 years with the Army's motorcycle scouts in an attempt to be like him. Thanks to God's Grace, I now know he is still a great man and now watches over me. I wish I could tell him how much he is missed, but I would not wish that he did not serve. He served over 10 years with the paratroopers proving death is better than dishonor. I am ashamed to say that most who enjoy the freedom he gave them, do not even know what honor is. I do now." Roger, his nephew

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

D Company, 16th Armor Regiment, provided an airborne anti-tank capability to the 173rd Airborne Brigade with its M-56 self-propelled 90mm "Scorpion" guns. On 04 March 1968 the company lost eight men.

Harold Holmes, HHC/1/503, D/1/503*

Robert Eugene Jackson, B/2/503

"Bob, It's been 42 years since I saw your smiling face at our South High graduation. We both went our separate ways into the WORLD...But we both chose the same path leading to Vietnam. My heart sank when I heard you had been killed in action. I will always say a prayer for you my brother but don't fret! I feel you were granted peace while I must live through the ordeal of being a Vietnam Vet, never understood, always looked down on. I will live as long as I can as I'm still looking for that 'Welcome Home Bro' whenever I'm not in my home. I miss you Brother and I will never forget you Robert E. Jackson."

Butch
High School Classmates

(continued....)





Gary Lee Jatich, D/4/503

David Arthur Johnson, D/3/503

"We swam the raging Colorado River."

Sandra

We grew up together

Henry L. Johnson, D/3/503

"Although I was a very young girl...I remember Henry as being one of my favorite cousins. I remember his wonderful smile. I remember his awesome brilliance...I have always been so proud of Henry...I remember...."

Diana

First Cousin



Larry William Jones, A/3/503

Lawrence Edward Jones, C/1/503, D/1/503*

"Although he is listed on the Wall as being from Denver, Lawrence lived in McKinney, Texas, with his grandmother, Mrs. Mamie Pearson. He was a good kid, loved to play football and basketball. He was a good soldier, a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne 'Skysoldiers', and was killed in action on March 3, '68, near Kontum. All who knew him miss him."

Ronnie D. Foster

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

On 03 March 1968 the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, lost eight men in a bitter fight in Kontum Province. The military "Home of Record" is the place where someone enters the military and frequently differs from the person's actual place of permanent residence. In this instance, PFC Jones apparently enlisted while in Denver,

Colorado, although his permanent residence seems to have been McKinney, Texas.

Victor A. Justiniano, Jr., HHC/3/503, B/3/319th*

"The first time I ever visited the Wall was when I was only 9 years old. Then I thought it was the greatest thing to see my name on the wall, however, I didn't understand "why" it was so important. Now, nearly 10 years later and after enlistment, I realize what an honor it is to have a family member give his life for our country in her darkest hours.

Now, I understand. Sir, I salute you."

A1C Carrissa J. Justiniano

Relative



Donny Ramon Kidd, HHC/173d Flt. Plt.

"We have spent thirty plus years trying to forget what Vietnam had done to us, but it is very difficult when you return there each night. It is very difficult to forget when the memories are still clear and vivid in one's own mind and try to deal with the pain alone. It has taken thirty years, but the Casper Platoon over the past two years has learned that we need to be together as a family and share the pain with others who understand what we hold inside. The healing, we have learned, comes from being together, remembering together, celebrating together and mourning together. Our brothers who died in combat are missed as any family member would be, and at each reunion those of you that were lost to us are remembered in a ceremony dedicated to the memories we all share. You were our brother, you are our brother, and our family is incomplete without you, but your memory lives on within us forever. You are greatly missed at each reunion, but we do feel your spirit among us. God bless America, God bless the Vietnam Combat Veteran."

Casper Aviation Platoon Organization

(continued....)



Robert W. Koivupalo, Jr., C/1/503

Donald Wayne Lattman, D/1/503, B/3/319th

"Donnie, I miss you...Is Jerry with you? Please take care of him, his was a tortured soul...I hope he has peace.

Love you both, your little sister, Joy."

Joy Lattman Hart

"On 8 March 1968, the 1st Platoon, D Company, was point on a sweep operation. 1st squad was lead, and the squad leader, Sergeant Kenny Buys, was at the head of the squad. Kenny saw three bunkers a few feet ahead and to one side and realized that his men were all in the bunkers' line of fire. He immediately made a one-man attack on the bunkers, giving his men the chance to take cover before they could be cut down. Kenny took no cover and was badly hit. Our medic tried to save Kenny and lost his life doing so. Several members of our 1st platoon have gotten together over the past few years and I just found out that this medic never got recognized for his valor. His name is Don Lattman...He went the extra mile for those who were wounded on point, but his courage went unnoticed as far as I know."

Larry "Doc" Speed

1/503d



Patrick Arnold Lucero, D/1/503

"Pat, We honor you every day and miss you even more.

We are meeting in Colorado with brother Bill and Janie to pay our respects. You are always with us."

Jim Lewis, Class of '66

"I owe a great deal to Patrick. As kids growing up in Pueblo we did a lot of things together; however, it was in the Army that Patrick's encouragement and friendship really came out. I'll never forget the times that Pat, Sam Spinuzzi, myself and Chuck Meeks shared together at Fort Bliss, while we were all in basic training. We had loads of fun together but the thing that I'll always cherish most about Pat was his "friendship". He encouraged me to challenge my fears and to be a better man. I'll always be thankful to him for this. I will remember Pat as long as I live. My only regret is that I wish I could have been there for him when he was

killed. His memory and words of encouragement will always be with me. I miss you my friend. 'Airborne.'"

Jim Ashmore

Robert Luna, C/3/503



Tommy Darrell Mabe, B/1/503, D/1/503*

Ralph Warren Maney, HHC/3/503, C/3/503*



William P. Mason, HHC 173d Bde, D/16th Armor*



Family of William Mason, recipient of the Silver Star.



(continued....)





Carl Lee Merchant, B/1/503, D/1/503*



Weldon Bernard Merrill, B/1/503

"This time of year I always remember the ride we took that ended in the ditch in the lane. I had to borrow my uncle's tractor to pull us out."

Ben Merrill, Cousin

Steven Alfred Middleton, C/1/503



Michael Keith Moore, HHC/1/503, C/1/503*

"Moore enlisted in the Army three months after graduating from Simon Gratz High School in June 1967. He was an ammunition bearer, gunner and team leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Moore died on March 13, 1968, with only 12 days left to his tour of duty in Vietnam. The 20-year-old staff sergeant was survived by his parents and two sisters."

The Philadelphia Daily News



Harold Bradley Muller, C/1/503

"I am honored to have been chosen to read your name on the 30th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Memorial on November 9, 2012. God bless you for your sacrifice. I will never forget."

Bob Hug

Thomas Jefferson Murray, C/3/503

Hey Tommy, we had some fun growing up in the Bronx, didn't we. Well, thanks for serving our country. I visited the wall about a year or so ago and looked you up. Man, I couldn't believe how sad it made me feel and how proud I am of you. Webster Ave lost a good one, buddy. Thanks again for giving your all.

Frank Cain, We grew up together



Donald A. Nahodil, Jr., D/1/503

"Butch, we think of you often and love you always. See you soon...love...sisters & brothers."

Donna, he is my brother

"Donald, you have not been forgotten, I think of you often, as I'm sure your family and many friends do. Though I did not serve at your side, I too did serve my country, and I feel that we have accomplished our mission, as your family and friends are still free, as are mine. It is with much sorrow and heartbreak that I send these words to you, as I am in debt to you, as should be all Americans, for you have given your life for us.

May God forever hold you near...

From a school friend and friend of the family,"

Sp5 Robert D. Senoski

(continued....)





David Robert Ogle, D/1/503, B/3/503*

*"We had so little time together as I was so young.
But I know you made many people proud. As I
grow older this only becomes more clear. You are
always remembered well and remembered often."*

Fred Smidt, he is my brother



David & Fred

Domingo Ortiz, C/1/503, D/1/503*

Thomas Robert Pope, HHC/1/503, D/1/503*



Roberto Pena Rios, D 16th Armor

Robert was born and raised in San Angelo, Texas. He graduated from San Angelo Central High School in May 1967 (the photos are from their 1966 and 1967 annuals).

He completed basic training at Fort Polk and Armor School. He completed parachute training at Fort Benning. He was assigned as an armored crewman to D Company, 16th Armored Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). The 16th Armored Regiment provided an airborne anti-tank capability to the 173rd Airborne Brigade with its M-56 self-propelled 90mm "Scorpion" guns. On March 4, 1968 D Company lost eight men in a fire fight with an NVA division. Pvt Rios

was on a 90mm gun that took a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade and exploded. Pvt Rios was burned in the explosion and from the intense heat. He died before he could be medevaced. He was buried in San Angelo, Texas with full military honors. He is remembered by San Angelo Central High School, Class of the 60's, the Concho Valley Vietnam Memorial in San Angelo and by the Permian Basin Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Midland, Texas."

"Lest we Forget"

From a PBVVM representative,
Billy M. Brown



M-56 Scorpion antitank gun

James Paul Rogan, B/2/503

*"Major James Paul Rogan was posthumously
awarded the Distinguished Service Cross."*

Clay Marston

"Jim Rogan was a fellow chemistry major, section marcher, good friend, and Brother Rat in the VMI class of 1962. His natural leadership always showed; he was the leader of the second section of '62 chem majors. He seemed gruff, but there was always a smile behind his serious demeanor. He was the best of us chemists in military aptitude and attitude. He always had the balance to be both friend and leader and avoided or worked around the natural conflicts between the two. Had he survived Vietnam, I believe he'd have given Brother Rat Binnie Peay* a 'run for the money' in getting four stars. I've often thought over the years about Jim Rogan and the loss all of us have suffered from no longer having his humorous/stern visage around, and I miss him a lot."

Dan Prall

We were college classmates

*General JHB Peay, CG 101st Airborne Division, Desert Storm 1991; later CG Central Command with 4 stars; VMI, 1962.

[See Jim's DSC citation on Page 48]

(continued....)



Jeremias Roman, B/2/503

Charles Gregory Ross, B/3/503, D/3/503*

David Michael Schuh, E/17th Cav

Howard Bruce Smith, B/1/503, C/1/503*



Franklin Elliott Speight, C/3/503

John Joseph Sullivan, HHC/2/503



Patrick Joseph Tremblay, A/1/503

"Patrick is my brother. He died trying to take a hill called 'Rocket Ridge'. It was his first combat mission. There were at least 6 fire fights that day. He was just introduced to his company commander, and just met several men from his squad ... He went straight into combat. He didn't get much of a chance to know the men he was fighting with. He was hit by a mortar ... after talking to the men he was with, I know his death was instantaneous. I know they all wanted to make it home ... Some were not as lucky as others. I HOPE WE NEVER FORGET THEM. I will see you in Heaven, Brother."

From his brother, Henry Tremblay

Garrity Vogel, E/17th Cav



Robert Harvey Walker, D 16th Armor

"Mrs. Ethel L. Walker, Spur, has been advised by the Commanding General of the Fourth Army that her son, S5 Robert H. Walker, has been posthumously awarded the Military Merit Medal by the Republic of Vietnam.

The following citation accompanies the award: "

"Servicemen of courage and rare self-sacrifice, they displayed at all times the most tactful cooperation while aiding the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam to repel the Red wave undermining South Vietnam and Southeast Asia. With a ready zeal and commendable response, they fought on to the end in every mission and set a brilliant example for their fellow soldiers. They died in the performance of duty. Behind them they leave the abiding grief of their former comrades-in-arms, Vietnamese as well as American."

Sp5 Walker was killed in Vietnam, March 4, 1968.

Taken from the:

The Texas Spur; Thursday, January 30, 1969.

Posted by Arnold Huskins, Interested Observer



Johnny Wayne Wanamaker, A/1/503

"Our only brother. Johnny's correct birthdate is 07-17-1948. Johnny is survived by three sisters, Sandra Hiza, Palmyra, VA, Madeline Roberts and Linda Wanamaker, Nashville, TN."

Madeline Roberts
He is my brother

(continued....)



Terry Emerson Webb, 173d Eng.

*"Still missed after all these years.
All the brothers and sister."
John Webb, he is my brother*

Philip Bruce Wenrick, B/3/503

Michel T. Wheeler, D/3/503

Sylvester Wright, Jr., D/4/503

*"A dear friend, remembering. It's been a few years
now, and I still remember we were getting so close,
I don't think I will ever forget. Still missing you."*

Joe Ann Randle
We were close friends



Clinton Earl Wusterbarth, B/1/503, D/1/503*

*"Dear Clint: I remember growing up with you and
your brother Dayton in Kiel, WI. I have touched your
name on The Wall while in Washington, D.C. I will
always remember your name with great respect and
admiration for giving up all of your tomorrows to
preserve mine. My life has been a good and free one
thanks to you and other veterans. God bless you."*

Bob Lawrence
We grew up together



Ernest Harold Young, III, HHC/1/503

Terry Zimmerman, D/3/503

~ March 1969 ~

William Thomas Craig, Jr., B/1/503

Richard Allen Doseck, 173d Eng.

Willie Frank Green, D/16th Armor



Terry Teruo Kawamura, 173d Eng.

"Medal of Honor Recipient"



*"Hey Cuz, just wanted you to know that I love and
miss you. Until this very day I still remember us playing
when we were kids. You'll never be forgotten, you'll
always be in my heart. R.I.P cuz, until we meet again,
God Bless You."*

Steven Enjada
We grew up together

[See Page 16 for Terry's MOH citation]

Eugene John George Kock, C/4/503

*"In remembrance of Eugene Kock. You live in my life
every day and will always have that special corner of my
heart. We laughed together and fought together.
A better man I never knew."*

Russ Underwood
We served together

*"Bluegenes' was my friend and neighbor. My wife
Mary and I saw Eugene for the last time in June of
1968 at the Oakland Army Base just before he left
for Viet Nam. I was also in the Army stationed at
the Presidio. We had a great time talking about old
times. When we shook hands for the last time we
agreed to meet in Iowa when he got back and have a
'cool one'. We never got to do that. Eugene was one of
the 'good guys'. He is missed by lots of people and I'm
one of them."*

"Bluegenes" Friend,
Paul Aylward

(continued....)



Bobby Pat Lindley, D/16th Armor
Gregorio L. Pangelinan, HHC/1/503

"Just want to let you know that I have been following your lead as I am also in the Army. You have been with me since the day in Mar of 69 when you left this earth. I was 5 years old and your only child (son), Mom has done all she could do without you being at her side in raising me, but I think I turned out okay. I am currently married to a wonderful woman who also is in the Army and I also have a beautiful daughter, Abi. You are always on my mind and soul. Please watch over my family the only way you can and remember that I Love You. Missing you always. Your Son,"

Martin Pangelinan, MAJ, USA

(As of 2009, Gregorio's son, Martin, was a LTC). Ed



Richard Mark Pearsall, D/2/503

"We who knew him will never forget. Although you are no longer with us, you will never be forgotten.

Airborne All the Way."

Gary Seiler

D/2/503d

Richard William Pelletier, N75 Rangers

"You are still remembered. The living have not forgotten you. Love, your cousin."

Linda

*....And in that time when men
decide and feel safe to call the war
insane,*



Larry Dean Smith, E/17th Cav, 173d Flt Plat*

"It has been more than 35 years since that night and yet I still visit there each night. Physical scars heal but emotional scars never heal. Coping with scars of this nature sometimes is more difficult than at other times, but nonetheless, we cope. Out of all that were in the hooch that night, you and Terry Kawamura were the only ones who gave 'all'. You were trying to put out the lights and warn every one of the 'incoming' and Terry intentionally threw himself on one of the explosive devices to protect others. The rest of us inside the hooch survived physically and are still learning how to cope. You will never be forgotten by any of the Casper Platoon and I think of you daily.

I still can't say goodbye to you."

Terry Gallagher, We served together

"Recollections of a brave man. Smitty served as my gunner in Phu Hiep, South Vietnam, when we were both members of Casper Platoon, 173d Airborne Brigade. At the time of his death he had only a few days to go before he was to return to his family in Georgia. He had a wonderful sense of humor, a winning personality and he never failed me when I needed him in combat. He was killed during a sapper attack in An Khe and that same night I was wounded by a mortar round in LZ English. I could have been killed but I had been awakened by the telephone and the news that Smitty had been killed. As I lay in my cot thinking about Smitty, I heard the unmistakable 'pop' of a mortar round leaving the tube and it enabled me to have just an extra moment to get on the ground as it hit and peppered the wall of my hooch with shrapnel. I was wounded by a second round as I was trying to reach the safety of the bunker. I will never forget Smitty and the ultimate price he paid in the service of his country."

Charles E. Merkel, Jr., Ph.D

Major, United States Army Retired

(continued....)



John Edmond Walters, C/2/503

*"Johnny was a good kid and he enjoyed life.
I will always remember him.
Mike (Madman) Stapleton
We were high school classmates*



Robert Oliver Wells, D/16th Armor

*"Will always remember our good times in Killeen.
Bobby Wells was a very good friend of mine in Killeen,
Texas. We were in Scouts together and used to share a
lot of dreams and hopes for the future. It's with deep
regret that I had to learn of his death after I returned
from the Navy in February of '70. Bobby was a very kind
and loyal friend. I wish I could contact his parents. I
went to the Wall and saw his name. I wish all his family
the best as I know their loss. God bless."*

Morris J. Rudick
Childhood friend

William Curtis Williamson, B/2/503

*"William died before he ever saw his child - she was 3
months old. He named her Joanna. I wish he could have
been here but he knew what he was doing had to be
done for his child and the rest of the world. He was a
great man and now looks down on all of us from heaven
above. He has 3 grandbabies and a great-grandbaby
who will always be told of the love story of their
grandma and grandpa and how proud he would have
been of them and what a great man he was.*

*The point-of-contact for this memorial is
his girlfriend,"*

Henrietta Franken

Rudolph Wilson, B/1/503

~ March 1970 ~

Paul Vernon Adams, D/1/503

Danny Ray Allen, E/17th Cav

Ronald Duane Carey, B/3/503

John Marez Chavarria, D/4/503

*"I honor and remember my friend from Lamar,
Colorado, Johnny Chavarria, a young man who was an*

*unselfish ballplayer, a kind and friendly classmate, and
as we discovered, one willing to give his life for the rest
of us. I thank the Lord for him and have not forgotten."*

Mike Woelk

We were high school classmates

Fernando De La Cruz, E/17th Cav



Victor Del Greco, Jr., 173d LRRP/N75 Rangers

*"Sgt. Del Greco, I met you for the first time when I
attended your funeral with your sister Grace, and looked
at you in your casket and said to myself 'he is only a
boy'. I joined the U.S. Army in 1974 and spent 22 years
dedicating my years of service to you and to our POW.
Since I cannot honor you with a salute, I honor you by
placing a rose on your grave in Manchester every time I
come home. Thank you for your service. You did not die
in vain. Respectfully,"*

MSgt. Leslie S. Whitney, USAFR (Retired)

*"I will always remember you Victor and being friends
when we were just kids. Warm summer nights playing
Little League baseball, you helping me with my paper
route and riding our bikes all over the place. I will
always remember your smile and the sacrifice you made
for our freedom. I still remember the sadness I felt when
I saw the news of your death in Vietnam. I visited the
Vietnam Memorial in 1997 and found your name. I had
a chance to spend some time with you again. I also visit
the Vietnam Memorial in our hometown of Manchester,
Connecticut whenever I am back there."*

Charlie

We grew up together



Robert Floyd Dice, A/3/503

*"Lost friend. We had a lot of good times together.
Your buddy,"*

Sgt. Bob Frankhauser, High School classmates

(continued....)





Raymond Stephen Inslee, A/1/503

"I am Bobby Inslee, Raymond's little brother. Danny and anyone out there who would like to contact me please do so. Airborne all the Way. From his brother."

Robert Inslee

jumpbootbob@verizon.net

*"Ray, As long as I see the light,
You will always be with me."*

A memorial from a brother in arms, we served together.

You are still my friend and you are surely missed.

I still believe we will meet again.

*I think of you and your family, I hope life has treated
them kindly. Bless all the Inslees.*

Your friend always, Danny."

Daniel J. Rivera

Larry Leon Jordan, C/4/503

*"A buddy remembered. You are in my thoughts daily,
and have never been forgotten. Your comrade in arms,"*

Dave T. Bailey

173 Airborne, 1st Platoon, '69-'70

Raymond Sidney Kipp, E/3/503

*"Raymond Kipp was the first casualty of war that I ever
saw. I flew helicopters and had been in country less
than a month. His death had a dramatic impact on me
then and continues till this day.*

May God bless him and his family."

John L. Davis, 7/17 Cav.



Richard Allen Mohr, E/3/503

*"Dearest Rick, no months go by that I still do not
recall your memory and what your life would have
meant to me. Grief over what might have been for
us remains forever. Perhaps our next life together
will be one of peace. I miss you and our laughs
together. Terry "Doc" visited me after your death
and we were in touch for several years but not quite
a few now. I still have the photos you sent, your letters,
and you still have my love now and through eternity.*

Please rest in peace my love."

Pat Knouse, Friend

*"Rick was born in Pottstown and graduated from
Boyertown High School in 1968. He was on the school
football, wrestling and track teams. He was a member
of Huff's United Church of Christ, Alburtis. Rick enjoyed
the outdoors and was an avid hunter and fisherman. On
summer weekends, he headed for the shore with his
surfboard. He was working at Boyertown Packaging
Corporation before enlisting in the Army in August 1968.
He enjoyed the military and wrote his family that he was
going to make a career of it. Letters home said he
believed he was doing right and all he wanted was
peace for the people, and see that the children over
there have it as good as ours. Rick was a Green Beret
serving with Company E, 3rd Battalion, 503rd Infantry
Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Known as
'Mahotma' to his friends in Vietnam, he was the leader
of a six-man reconnaissance team that would locate
enemy forces for the infantry. He was twice wounded in
action and returned to duty. During an operation in the
An Lo Valley, he was acting as point man when struck
by sniper fire. He was awarded the Bronze Star.
Surviving at the time were his mother, father, five sisters
and five brothers. He was in Vietnam nine months.*

He was 20 years old."

The Berks County Vietnam Memorial Dedication Booklet

Posted by Jim Mc Llheney,

Native Pennsylvanian & VietVet

(continued....)



James Allen Parker, A/4/503

"James, I remember the days in jump school so many years ago, Ft. Benning, Ga. After graduation I was assigned to B Co. 2nd Batt. 503rd Inf. 173rd Airborne in Vietnam. I was wounded in Dec. 69 and recovered and was able to come home to live my life. I will always remember the men like yourself who gave all. Freedom is not free, it comes with a price! I am Blessed in so many ways. God Bless Your Family. Thank You James for your Honor to your Country! A REAL HERO! Words will never express the way I feel for our Servicemen & women who serve our Nation."

Steven Obbards
B/2/503d

Larry Parker, B/4/503**Edmund A. Petrechko, D/4/503**

"Fellow trooper. I served with you in jump school. Your humor and friendship made the training easier. You will always be remembered. Rest easy my friend."

Mike Masters

Malcolm Jerome Pickett, A/4/503**Robert Rodriguez, E/17th Cav****Douglas Ray Roest, A/1/503****Allan Ruttimann, A/1/503**

"Allan, I will always love you and miss you. You were everything a big brother should be, you were so full of love and kindness. And I will never forget you.. Love Always, Your little sister,"

Pearl Wass

Robert Duane Shipman, B/3/503, D/3/503*

"I was only about 18 months old when you died. I wish you would have made it home to watch me grow up. I am 34, married to a wonderful woman and we have 2 beautiful boys. Johnathan is 13 and Tyler is 7. Mom never remarried and raised me on her own."

REMEMBERED

By his son,
Stephen D. Shipman

James Mitchell Stanely, A/4/503

"I worked with his father in the steel mill. He also was a great man and a sad man when he lost his son. He was happy go lucky like his son. God bless Jan Scruggs for all he has done for the vets and their families. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

Charlie Radcliffe
We were close friends

Forrest Darryl Sumter, E/17th Cav

"Darryl Sumter is on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Panel 12W Line 011. Forrest, full of trust and promise, and stronger than lies, young forever, our hearts are your shadow. The point-of-contact for this memorial is his cousin,"

Gene Sikes

"Friends are forever. We joined the Army together on the buddy system and volunteered for airborne training. After basic and AIT we were both sent to Fort Bragg, NC. Forrest left for Vietnam in January of 1970 and was KIA in March of same year. I went to Nam in Sept of 1970 and served with the 11th ACR and the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Many years have gone but I still remember my friend and visit his gravesite yearly. Till we meet again my brother!!! Your friend,"

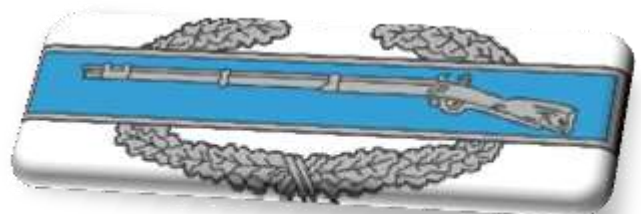
Glenn McLendon
We grew up together

Thomas Urquhart, A/1/503

"For the times we never had I say I love you endless, the love for you I now give to my son. You have been and always will be missed. Your Son,"

Trent

~ March 1971 ~

Terry Lee Blair, HHC/3/503

(continued....)





Jessie Michael Brooks, B/4/503, E/4/503*

"Today is Tuesday, March 2, 1999. It was 28 years ago today that you lost your young life for your country. It was Tuesday, March 2, 1971. You may be gone but you are not forgotten. You are always in our hearts. Your memory will always live on. I will always miss and love you. Your Loving Brother,"

SGT Franklin D. Brooks

310th Chem Co



"Love you uncle Mike. You were a hero to your younger sisters and you were so handsome! I hope to meet you in Heaven and to see you hug your children."

M. Lynch Evans

Jessie's (Mike's) Niece

Kent Douglas Erickson, E/3/503

Patrick Loyal Fricke, B/4/503

"It has been 30 years since you left this earth to go heaven and a day doesn't go by without you in my heart. i want the world to know that you were my hero and most of all my best friend and my idol. Your picture hangs in our living room and all of my children know of you and who you were and yes my son has your name.

Love Sam."

Sam Fricke, Cousin

Michael Shea McLhern, C/2/503

"He was only 18 years old, and none of his friends or relatives have posted a remembrance for him.... it ain't right."

Unsigned

George Robert Morgan, 173d LRRP, N75 Rangers*



Herbert Eugene Mulkey, Jr., E/4/503

"Carroll County Sun, May 28, 1989. U.S. Army Pfc. Herbert E. Mulkey Jr.; died March 2, 1971 while on patrol with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. He had joined the Army in June 1970 before graduating from Linganore High School in Frederick County. He took his basic training at Fort Dix, N.J., AIT at Fort Benning, Ga., and advanced training at Fort Jackson, N.C. At the time of his death, he was serving with Company E, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade. His father, Herbert E. Mulkey Sr., said his son, a paratrooper, was sent to Vietnam two months before he was killed. Private Mulkey was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Army Commendation Medal. He had previously been awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal. Combat Infantryman's Badge, Parachutist Badge, Expert Badge with Grenade Launcher Bar and the Good Conduct Medal. He was born June 5, 1952 in Fairfax, Va. His family came to the Mount Airy area about 10 years prior to his death. Besides his father, Private Mulkey was survived by his mother Fannnie S.; five brothers, Leonard, Robert, Richard, William and Allen; and two sisters, Debbie and Jacqueline. Private Mulkey is buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia."

Posted by Gary Jestes

Fellow Carroll Co. Vn. Vet

(continued....)



~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

PFC Mulkey was one of three men from E Company, 4/503rd Infantry, killed in action on 02 March 1971.

Billy Ray Parnell, D/2/503

"We honor you each year at Legends Ranch with a special hunt for 8 Purple Heart Veterans. We appreciate your service and will never forget your sacrifice."

Glenna Bettis



Richard David Saldana, E/4/503

"This memorial is written for my Brother Richard – I am Barbara, one of his older sisters...My little Brother, every time I think of your being gone, I remember having you with me for your last Christmas and New Year's Eve ... the year ... 1970. I felt so proud to have a little brother that was so responsible, kind, loving, and considerate of others...The day of your Funeral, I remember it so well, yet, I found it very hard to accept that you were gone ... I waited and I waited for your return ... every August, and nothing... I received letters, returned by the military – undeliverable. The gift you sent to me arrived long after you were gone...I will always love you, my little brother, I will miss you always ... although I know that you are better off in the hands of our Loving God, I can honestly say that we are all selfish and would much rather have you here with us.

The memorial that Gene Padilla put online for you touched us all, and now one at a time, we are adding to it, our own feelings, our own thoughts... We were close, brother, and I truly miss having you to talk to but one day, you will be one of the chosen ones, and will live in the next coming ... with lots of love from your Sister

Barbara I want to say that you were, are, and will always be the pride of our Family...I love you Richard, and from heaven we all feel you watching out for us..."

From his sister,
Barbara Saldana

Note: Visit the *Virtual Wall* to read more tributes to Richard by family and friends. Ed



~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

E Company, 4th of the 503rd Infantry, lost 3 men on 02 March 1971.

David Hugh Smith, B/4/503

"My name is Terri Smith and David was the oldest of us four kids and I was the youngest. I was just 16 when he died and in a couple of weeks I'll be turning 50. It's amazing how time flies but what's more amazing is how I can still remember everything about my brother and he will be forever young to me always. There's never been one day that I haven't thought about my brother and I hope he knew how proud I was to be his little sister and how much I love him always. Thank you for this website (Virtual Wall), you just don't know how it helps.

GOD BLESS AMERICA."

*Sincerely yours,
Terri Smith*



Richard Lee Stockett, E/4/503

"Stockett was a tall, strong young man who had already served one tour in a mortar platoon when I met him. I was still a 'cherry' when he returned for another tour, this time as a team member with Echo Recon. He really believed in doing what he could for his country. While on leave just before his last tour of duty; he became engaged. Prior to his being killed in action he personally engaged 3 NVA soldiers. He was a good guy who like so many died too young."

*From a fellow soldier,
Stephen DiSisto*

~ A Note from The Virtual Wall ~

SGT Stockett was one of three men from E Company, 4/503rd Infantry, killed in action on 02 March 1971.

(continued....)



Gregory Martin Stone, HHC/2/503

"I Remember. Greg, not Gregory? Do you mind? Is that a bit too familiar for someone you don't know? I feel like I know you though. I came to know you, from a box full of memories left behind, in the small cozy home in Torrance where you grew up. Black and white pictures of a small boy with his dog. Childish crayon drawings signed 'To Dad'. A Babe Ruth League rule book. An envelope full of stamps from around the world...your memorial guest book. All clues about the young man who grew up to fight and die for his country. It is obvious that these mementos have been lovingly saved and cherished over a lifetime. Bits and pieces of a life...and death. Left behind in a box. How did they end up with a stranger? The answer turned out to be surprisingly simple. You were the only child of an only child. There was no one, other than some distant cousins, left to remember you. So on this Veterans Day, I want to honor the sacrifice you made and say, Thank you, CPL Gregory Martin Stone. I remember."

Alicia Hinzo

Albert Allen Vencel, E/3/503

"Hey A-l-l-l-b-e-r-r-r-t!"

Remember that tag line, how I'd say "Hi" at WGH 1968 when I'd see you in the halls? Just ain't right, you were too gentle to be taken like this. And you went airborne. Son of a gun, Albert, whooda that that, you! Well done. I ain't forgotten you, just like it was yesterday, cutting class for Prince's Pizza. Why don't you walk out of that place tomorrow, "Hey, where'd everybody go?"

--Airborne! VJ, 101st Phu Bai 1969-70

*From a high school friend,
V. J.*

Harris Lee Williams, D/3/503

*...take one moment to embrace those
gentle heroes you left behind."*

**By: Maj. Michael Davis O'Donnell
1 January 1970
Dak To, Vietnam
KIA March 24, 1970**

Editor's Note

We've done our utmost to identify all our fallen during the month of March from available sources. If we missed anyone please let us know at rto173d@cfl.rr.com Thanks, Ed.



VFW HELPS DISABLED VETERANS

125,000 veterans receive over \$3.7 billion from VA

January 31, 2013

WASHINGTON (January 31, 2013) — Last year was a banner year for America's largest combat veterans' organization.

In 2012, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States helped 125,000 veterans to recoup more than \$3.7 billion in earned compensation and pension from the Department of Veterans Affairs. This exceeds 2011's record totals by 23,000 and almost \$1.7 billion, and provides further proof that **all eligible veterans and transitioning military members should seek help from an accredited service officer before they file a VA disability claim.** (emphasis added)

"No wounded, ill or injured veteran should ever complete the detailed 12-page VA claims form without the professional — and free — assistance of an accredited veterans' service officer," said VFW National Commander John E. Hamilton, a Vietnam War Marine Corps rifleman and triple Purple Heart recipient. *"And no military person should ever separate or retire without first seeking assistance from a veterans' service officer stationed on their installation through the Pentagon's Benefits Delivery at Discharge program. It literally means the difference between receiving VA benefits or not."*

The VFW's nationwide force of 1,200 VA-accredited service officers includes more than 200 working inside the 57 VA regional offices, as well as advocates inside the VA Board of Veterans Appeals, who have a win percentage that surpasses attorney-assisted appeals. VFW's BDD service officers are stationed on Army Forts Bragg, Campbell, Hood, Lewis and Stewart; Marine Corps Camps Lejeune and Pendleton; and in military-populated regions like Las Vegas, Orlando, San Diego, Puerto Rico, and the Military District of Washington, to include Andrews AFB, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and MCB Quantico, where the VFW has a special relationship—and contact e-mail (1Marine@vfw.org) — with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment to assist previously discharged wounded, ill and injured Marines with their VA claims or appeals.

"Healthcare is important to every generation, and with very few exceptions, you cannot get into the world class VA medical system without an approved claim first," said Hamilton. *"Seeing an accredited service officer before filing a VA claim needs to be a mandatory checklist item for every veteran and every military Transition Assistance Program class."*

To locate a VFW service officer nearest you, logon to <http://www.vfw.org/NVS/>, e-mail vfw@vfw.org, or call toll-free 1-800-VFW-1899.



Celebrity Volunteers

Many celebrities support the DAV by delivering its message of hope to sick and disabled veterans in VA medical centers around the nation. New York Yankees pitcher Jason Arnold, NASCAR drivers Dale Jarrett and Elliott Sadler and Major League Baseball Umpires Larry Barnett and Jerry Layne are just a few of those who have generously donated their time to remember the men and women who sacrificed greatly in defense of liberty.



Dale Jarrett

The DAV Celebrity Entertainment Program is one of the many ways the DAV tries to bring joy to the men and women veterans being treated at VA medical centers. As many of these wonderful veterans rarely get visitors, it is truly a treat for them when a celebrity comes to brighten their day.

www.dav.org

Ever see these?



My buddy -- Jerry Peconi, 173d -- picked a souvenir bottle up for me when he was in Belgium/Luxemburg on business. Comes with its' own steel pot cup for imbibing. Belgian beer; company is located in Bastogne.

Jerry Sopko, D/4/503d



KENNETH A. BUYS

SERGEANT
UNITED STATES ARMY

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS
173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)
APO San Francisco 96250

27 March 1968

GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 753



AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL FOR HEROISM



TC 320. The following AWARD is announced posthumously. BUYS, KENNETH A. RA19853088 SERGEANT E5 UNITED STATES ARMY, Company D (Provisional) 1st Battalion (Airborne) 503d Infantry

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device
Date Action: 3 March 1968
Theater: Republic of Vietnam
Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force. Sergeant Buys distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 3 March 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam. On this day, the 1st platoon was the lead platoon for Company D and Sergeant Buys' squad was the lead squad. Sergeant Buys was the lead man when he discovered three enemy bunkers well concealed a few meters to his front and flanks. Knowing his entire element was in the line of fire of the bunkers, he knew the only action to take was to surprise the enemy and give his men the few precious seconds needed to seek cover. With this in mind, he initiated contact with a savage one man attack, catching the enemy totally off guard and allowing his men to get out of the line of fire. With no cover for him to hide behind, he held his ground putting out a devastating volume of aggressive fire until an enemy machinegun burst mortally wounded him. Sergeant Buys' outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest military traditions and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962, and USARV Message 16695, AVA-S, 1 July 1966.

Veterans Groups Urge Administration, Congress to Keep Promise Regarding Health Care Funding, Benefits (excerpt)

February 05, 2013

Washington, DC—Four of the nation's leading veterans service organizations—AMVETS, DAV (Disabled American Veterans), Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans), and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), are urging the Administration and Congress to provide \$68.4 billion to sufficiently meet veterans' health care and benefits needs. The recommendation is contained in *The Independent Budget* released today, and available online at www.independentbudget.org

The *Independent Budget* notes that currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) remains funded by a six-month Continuing Resolution for the current fiscal year (FY 2013). This six-month Continuing Resolution, which expires in March, does not include the FY 2014 advance appropriation for health care, and leaves all other VA programs to operate in an uncertain and inefficient manner—a major concern highlighted in the report. This year's *Independent Budget* recommends the following:

\$58.8 billion total for health care for FY 2014—\$1.3 billion more than what the Admin. recommended (\$57.5 billion) in the FY 2014 advance appropriation last year. \$2.4 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration—approximately \$226 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level.

\$2.25 billion for all construction programs—approximately \$900 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level and well below the true funding needs of construction projects the VA must undertake. \$611 million for medical and prosthetic research, which is approximately \$28 million more than the expected FY 2013 appropriated level.

For the first time, the *Independent Budget* includes an advance appropriation recommendation for health care for FY 2015, recommending \$61.6 billion....

Paralyzed Veterans' National President Bill Lawson urged the following:

"Congress must keep its promise to our veterans and part of that promise is to urgently resolve this Continuing Resolution issue...."

[See complete report at: <http://www.vfw.org/News-and-Events/Articles/2013-Articles/Veterans-Organizations-Urge-Administration-and-Congress-to-Keep-Promise-Regarding-Health-Care-Funding-and-Benefits/>]



Edward Lee Richardson

A/2/503d

~ A Sky Soldier ~



Elder Edward Lee Richardson was born September 4, 1945 in Suffolk, Virginia. He was one of six children born to the late George Richardson, Sr. and Alma Wilson Richardson. He transitioned this life January 8, 2013 in Suffolk, Virginia.

Edward joined the United States Marine Corps in April 1963 at the age of 17. He served in the Vietnam War with the 4th Marine Division from 1965-1966 where he was wounded in action and medically discharged. After recovering, he enlisted in the United States Army and returned to Vietnam in 1967, as a Sky Soldier with the 173d Airborne Brigade (A/2/503d). During his tenure, Edward earned many awards and decorations to include a Purple Heart, Air Medal and Army Commendation Medal for Heroism. He completed tours around the world traveling to Germany, Italy, the Philippines, and South Korea. Upon completion of his tour in South Korea, he returned to the United States and retired in July 1984 at Fort Benning, Georgia with a total of 21 years of service.

Edward is survived by Kum Cha Richardson, a son, Robert Lee Richardson (Carole) of Fortson, Georgia; daughters, Michelle Richardson-Streeter (Rickey) of Patuxent River, Maryland and Wanda Johnson of Atlanta, Georgia; three sisters: Martha Ann Hicks of Ft. Washington, Maryland, Jean Olivia Grasso of Hollywood, Florida and Mary Taylor Jones of Richmond, Virginia; three grandchildren: Anna Grace Richardson, Gavin Bryce Streeter and Aiden Javon Richardson; sister-in-law, LaBarbara Richardson; one aunt: Martha Palmer of New York and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. He was preceded in death by his brother, George Richardson, Jr. and sister Frances Mae Richardson.



From the family:

Our dad was a great man who lived his life for God and his family, especially his grandchildren. Although we, his children had grown up, he was still daddy to us, always there to provide the encouragement and advice we needed up until the very end. We thank God for providing such an awesome dad and he is dearly missed. Thank you to all for your condolences and prayers.

Robert and Michelle Richardson, children of Sgt. Edward Lee Richardson (Ret/USA).



He was proud of his Sky Soldier ties and as soon as he found out about the 173d plates being offered at the Virginia DMV, he grabbed his papers and went down to the DMV that day to order. Thank you again for all your help and support.

Michelle Richardson-Streeter



ROGAN, JAMES PAUL

Captain (Infantry), U.S. Army
Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry
Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate),
Date of Action: November 13, 1967

Citation:



The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to James Paul Rogan, Captain (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Captain Rogan distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 13 November 1967 while serving as commanding officer of an airborne infantry company during combat operations near Dak To. His company was pinned down by withering rocket and automatic weapons fire from a large enemy force, and Captain Rogan immediately called for reinforcements and moved through a murderous hail of bullets to direct their deployment in support of his troops. When his two radio operators were killed, he personally took over communications and coordinated the actions of his platoon while maintaining contact with his higher headquarters. Completely disregarding his personal welfare, Captain Rogan repeatedly exposed himself to the enemy weapons and moved among his men to encourage them and treat the wounded. He called for medical evacuation helicopters and personally supervised the clearing of a landing zone despite continuous sniper fire which was being directed at his movements. When the helicopters arrived, he moved into the center of the open landing zone to guide them in. Savage fire forced the aircraft to discontinue their rescue mission, and Captain Rogan deployed his men in a defensive perimeter for the night. Throughout the night, he continued to expose himself to the ravaging enemy barrage to command his men in repelling repeated assaults within twenty meters of his positions. His fearless leadership inspired his troops to fight furiously and inflict a decisive defeat upon the determined enemy. Captain Rogan's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army. HQ US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 1079 (March 11, 1968).

**Major James Paul Rogan was killed in action on
March 8, 1968, in Binh Dinh Province.**



503rd PIR WWII Journal

See Parts I thru IV of WWII 503d PIR trooper Jerry B. Riseley's 'official journal' in Issues 46, 48, 49 & 50 respectively, of our newsletter. Part V of the journal will appear in the April edition of our newsletter Ed



Bravo Bull Hooks-up With His Battalion CO



L-R: Bravo Bull Ted Roybal visits with Col. George Dexter, 2/503 Bn CO, in New Mexico.

Finally got a chance to visit Colonel Dexter. We chatted for a while. Happens he has been here in Albuquerque a while. We talked how Albuquerque was before and he knows where I was born, hospital and all. He is in a retirement place, nice. Phototaker was a little shaky so our picture did not come out too good. I am going to call him again and visit. We will try to get a better picture. Ted

**Ted Roybal
B/2/503d**





ROBERT F. HELMICK

Captain (Armor), U.S. Army
Company D, 16th Armor,
173d Airborne Brigade

Date of Action: March 4, 1968

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Robert F. Helmick, Captain (Armor), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company D, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Captain Helmick distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 4 March 1968 while engaged with a numerically superior North Vietnamese Army/Viet Cong force which had captured the northern half of the city of Tuy Hoa. When one of his armored personnel carriers was hit by an enemy rocket during an attack on the entrenched communists, Captain Helmick moved his vehicle over to the disabled track to prevent it from being overrun until both carrier and crew were evacuated. Although weak from loss of blood because of wounds received in the morning, he continued to spearhead his company's efforts and late in the afternoon the enemy was trapped on all sides. Finding that his fire was having no effect against one fortification on the final assault, he jumped from his track with an automatic rifle and killed the occupants of the bunker. Two armored personnel carriers on his right flank received direct hits from hostile rockets and Captain Helmick was again wounded. With complete disregard for his safety, he brought heavy fire against the communists while his stricken comrades were evacuated and exposed himself to the murderous fusillade until the enemy was defeated. Captain Helmick's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

HQ US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 1196.

Source:

http://www.homeofheroes.com/valor/1_Citations/07_RVN-dsc/dsc_07RVN-armyH.html



RAYMOND E. SPEICHER

First Lieutenant (Armor), U.S. Army
Company D, 16th Armor
173d Airborne Brigade

Date of Action: March 4, 1968

Citation:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to First Lieutenant (Armor), United States Army, for gallantry in action. First Lieutenant Speicher distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions in connection with military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam on 4 March 1968, while serving as Platoon Leader on a search and destroy mission near Tuy Hoa, with Company D, 16th Armor, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). When the company came under fire from well dug in and numerically superior enemy forces of the 5th Battalion, 95th North Vietnamese Army Regiment and the 85th Main Force Viet Cong Battalion, Lieutenant Speicher moved his platoon forward toward the enemy position. As his armored personnel carrier approached the enemy, it was hit by B-40 rocket fire and the explosion threw Lieutenant Speicher off the vehicle. Lieutenant Speicher refused evacuation and with complete disregard for his own safety, got onto another armored personnel carrier and continued to fight. He placed a heavy volume of fire upon the enemy position, which enabled the wounded to withdraw to safety. During this time, he personally accounted for twenty enemy kills. When Lieutenant Speicher saw that another armored personnel carrier commander was coming to join the fight, he left the vehicle upon which he was riding and joined another armored personnel carrier. Throughout the battle which ensued, Lieutenant Speicher personally directed the fire of his platoon while repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire. His extraordinary heroism was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

General Orders: Headquarters, I Field Force Vietnam, General Orders No. 518 (June 17, 1968)



Jake McNiece, Who Led Incorrigible D-Day Unit, Is Dead at 93



Stars & Stripes

By WILLIAM YARDLEY

Published: February 13, 2013

D-Day started early for Sgt. Jake McNiece and his fellow paratroopers. Not long after midnight on June 6, 1944, they parachuted behind German lines just ahead of the invasion of Normandy. Their goal was to destroy Nazi supply lines and escape routes. Some called it a suicide mission. The paratroopers called themselves the Filthy 13.

They were a skilled group, trained as the Demolition Section of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. But they were not the most disciplined of soldiers. They disobeyed orders, bathed infrequently and often disappeared from their barracks for long, liquid and sometimes violent weekends. If they received promotions, odds were good they would eventually be demoted again.

"He spent a lot of time in a stockade," Hugh McNiece said of his father, *"and he was O.K. with that."*

Jake McNiece died on Jan. 21 at his son's home in Chatham, Ill. He was 93 and had lived most of his life in Ponca City, Okla.

Of the 19 men who jumped with him on June 6, 1944 — the Filthy 13 kept its name but not its number as the war wore on — many were killed or captured. Mr.

McNiece was one of the last surviving members of the group and one of its unofficial historians.

Even with the casualties, the soldiers fulfilled their orders: they destroyed two bridges and secured a third. They became heroes — and myths.

More than 20 years after the war, a movie, "The Dirty Dozen," based on a novel by E. M. Nathanson, bore similar plotlines to the mission of the Filthy 13. But while the Filthy 13 were troublemakers, they were not the convicted murderers and felons portrayed in the film by Charles Bronson, Jim Brown, Donald Sutherland and others. (Unlike the Dirty, the Filthy made no vow not to bathe. They just preferred not to). The film centered on D-Day, and its characters also did not expect to survive. But the mission in the movie — to kill German officers — was very different. There was also no face paint.

Shortly before the D-Day invasion, the Filthy 13 soldiers shaved their heads into Mohawks and decorated their faces with war paint. It was Sergeant McNiece's idea. Baldness would be more hygienic on a battlefield strewn with dead bodies, he reasoned, and face paint would add to their camouflage. His mother was part Choctaw.

"I think he was trying to build upon the idea that 'if they're scared of us as crazy paratroopers, well, this just makes us look crazier,' " Hugh McNiece said.

Sergeant McNiece spent more than 30 days behind enemy lines after D-Day. He later joined the Pathfinders, an exclusive paratrooper unit that jumped behind enemy lines to provide logistical help to Allied missions, including in the Battle of Bulge.

Last fall, Mr. McNiece was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government.

James Elbert McNiece was born on May 24, 1919, in Maysville, Okla., the ninth of 10 children. His family moved to Ponca City when he was 12. Mr. McNiece dropped out of high school during the Depression to help his father support the family. The Ponca High School football coach, impressed with his ability, lured him back to school by helping him get a job as a firefighter.

(continued....)



Mr. McNiece eventually became captain of the football team and president of his senior class. At the Fire Department, he began developing expertise in explosives, which the department used to level damaged buildings. He also found work in a nearby arsenal. He volunteered for service as an Army paratrooper in September 1942.

In addition to his son, Hugh, his survivors include his wife, Martha; a stepson, Alan Wonders; a daughter, Rebecca Sue Brewer; a stepdaughter, Gerri Vitale; and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

More than 60 years after he enlisted, Mr. McNiece, with the military historian Richard Killblane, wrote a memoir about his war experiences, *"The Filthy Thirteen: From the Dustbowl to Hitler's Eagle's Nest — The True Story of the 101st Airborne's Most Legendary Squad of Combat Paratroopers."* In the book, Mr. McNiece noted the fluidity of his military rank. He was often reduced to private, he said, except when his unit was preparing for a mission. In those times he served as one of its leaders.

"Every time a guy came into the outfit that another sergeant could not handle, they would put him over in my group and isolate him," he recalled. "They knew there was no discipline at all in my section."



Jake McNiece
Jim Beckel/*The Oklahoman*

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

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/14/us/jake-mcniece-a-leader-of-wwiis-filthy-13-dies-at-93.html? r=0>

WELCOME HOME!



There is a contingent of about six Vietnam veterans from the great metropolis of Mims, FL who attend the PTSD Group I conduct on Saturdays. They frequently gather at Denny's for breakfast before coming to group.

Today they were tearful in group as they reported that the Denny's waitress told them that the gentleman who had just left already had paid their bill and had asked that she not tell them until he left.

Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth opens every presentation by saying that, "Any and all benefits our warriors have today are the result of the fight and struggles of our Vietnam Veterans. WE STAND ON THEIR SHOULDERS."

Scott Fairchild, Psy.D, Doctor of Psychology
LTC, 82nd Abn Div (Ret)

~ Ditto ~

Thanks for the nice story, Doc. It reminds me of the time some years ago Bill Vose, A/2/503, and I drove to Tampa to attend the funeral of 2/503 CSM Ed Proffitt. We also stopped at a Denny's for breakfast, and were both wearing our 173d ball caps. Seated at a table near us were two uniformed active duty



Ed in Rochester, MN 2000

nurses, no doubt from MacDill AFB nearby. Upon asking for our check the waitress told us the nurses, who had left, had picked-up our tab. We both learned to love military nurses at 3rd Field Hospital years before, and still love 'em to this day.

Lew Smith, HHC/2/503d



Robert "Bink" Morgan

Recon Wildcats, E/2/503d

1949 ~ 2012



Bink

I wanted to make you aware of the fact that we lost a terrific Sky Soldier in November. I hope that you can include him in our next newsletter.

Sgt. Robert "Bink" Morgan was a member of E/Co 2/503 (Recon), a member of the "Wildcats". He was born and raised in Carnesville, GA. Bink passed away on November 26, 2012. The remaining members of the "Wildcats" came from throughout the country to say goodbye to a very special man, friend and brother.

I have attached photos of Bink.

Craig Murphy
E/Recon/2/503d



CARNESVILLE - Robert Ronald "Bink" Morgan, 63, of Carnesville, passed away Monday, Nov. 26, 2012 at his residence.

Born April 28, 1949 in Stephens County, he was the son of the late Ralph and Bessie Shirley Morgan. He was a 1967 graduate of Franklin County High School, owned and operated Morgan Chevron and Morgan Fina and was a longtime employee of Ginn Funeral Home. He coached Little League baseball, football and basketball. He and Coach Don Warlick organized the Little League basketball program in Franklin County.

A veteran of the Vietnam War, he served in the Army with the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team "Sky Soldiers" 2/503d recon platoon. He was instrumental in the organization to erect the Franklin County War Memorial at the courthouse. He was a member of Liberty Baptist Church and attended Compassion Baptist Church.

He is survived by his wife, Connie Fulbright Morgan; sons and daughters-in-law, Dr. Jody and Jennie Morgan of Griffin and Sergeant First Class Dusty and Kelly Morgan of Lavonia; five grandchildren, Jackson, Jenna, Joshua, Willow and Shiloh; sister and brother-in-law, Ozzie and Bennie Whitworth of Lavonia; sisters-in-law, Ruth Morgan, Jeanette Morgan Andrews and Wanda Morgan Bradley; several nieces and nephews; special niece, friend and caregiver, Lynn Davis and special neighbors and friends, Jonathan and Noel Smith, Chase, Brantley and Parker Smith.

He was the brother of the late Winfred "Pee Wee" Morgan, Donald Morgan, Wendell Morgan and Helen Morgan Floyd Canady.



A young Bink

~ Rest Easy Sky Soldier ~



The Bonds of Loyalty and Love Forged in Combat

By Matthew Bogdanos

(Photos added)

"Any man in combat who lacks comrades who will die for him, or for whom he is willing to die," William Manchester wrote of his time as a Marine in World War II, "is not a man at all. He is truly damned." A century earlier, Robert E. Lee famously remarked that it was good that war *"is so terrible. We should grow too fond of it."* Neither was glorifying war -- they hated its carnage. They were, rather, paying homage to the unique bonds forged in war, especially the one that enables so many to risk their lives, not only for friends but also for those they might have just met or have nothing in common with back home.



(Photo from Jack Leide, C/2/503)

This extraordinary feature of combat is depicted in movies in bold, heroic colors, without depth or explanation. Most leaders in the military, however, spend a lifetime trying to understand its complexity. Our pursuit usually starts at Thermopylae, a mountain pass in northern Greece where, in 480 B.C., 300 Spartans faced the entire Persian army. Leonidas, the Spartan king, had a choice: retreat, and live to fight another day, or stand. When the Persian king offered, *"We do not want your lives, only your arms,"* Leonidas answered, *"Molon labe"* -- come and get them. They held out for seven days, fighting until their weapons broke and then, Herodotus says, *"with bare hands and teeth."* Their spirit lives whenever wounded soldiers ask to return to their units rather than rotate home or sentries rest their chins on the point of a bayonet to stay awake so others sleep safely.



(Photo from Bob Guy, A/2/503d)

Before going into harm's way, we reflect on this remarkable aspect of combat. Using its history as a source of pride and inspiration, we make this bond part of our ethos. We are humbled to follow, yet hopeful to live up to, those who have gone before -- as at Belleau

Wood in 1918. When his men were being cut to pieces by German machine guns, Marine 1st Sgt. Dan Daly, already the recipient of two Medals of Honor, charged the guns shouting, *"Come on, you sons-o'-bitches! Do you want to live forever?"* More than just history, this retelling to each new generation becomes a pledge:

**Although some will die,
those who follow will keep
the faith by keeping our
memory -- a promise of
immortality that asks, instead,
*"Don't you want to live forever?"***

Post-deployment, we are also engaged. Despite countless other tasks after a combat tour and the need to begin preparing for the next mission, we pause to value what has occurred, trying -- not always successfully -- to reconcile the horrors of combat with the bond created during those horrors. Perhaps it is the dimly perceived recognition that together we are better than any one of us had ever been before -- better maybe than we ever would be again. Or the dawning awareness that if we store up enough memories, these might someday be a source of strength, comfort or even our salvation.

(continued....)





(Photo from Jim Robinson, B/2/503d)

Take the simple act of goodbye, of wishing comrades in arms fair winds and following seas. Those who have seen action together are not morbid about it. Just serious. It is, after all, the nature of the profession of arms that goodbyes are frequent and often final. But there is also the recognition that each of us has our own life and family to go back to in the "world." And even if we do "keep in touch," it will never be with the same intensity, never again as pure as it was when I had your "six," (your six o'clock, your back) and you had mine.



(Photo from Pat Bowe, HHC/2/503)

We examine as well the many contradictions of life in a combat zone. Our eyesight and hearing are sharp, our other senses keen. The water always quenches our thirst. The sky is bluer than we thought possible. And we're with the best friends we'll ever have. The good gets better, but the bad gets worse. We always have some minor eye or ear infection, our feet hurt all the time, and sleep is sporadic at best. The heat is sweltering, the cold bone-chilling. We're constantly

tense to the breaking point. And lonelier than we ever imagined.

Once you've experienced it, the memory never leaves -- even after those fair winds and following seas have taken you as far as they did Sen. Mike Mansfield. After serving two years in the Marines as a teenager, he spent 34 years in Congress (the longest-serving majority leader ever) and 11 years as ambassador to Japan. He died in 2001 at age 98. His tombstone in Arlington National Cemetery bears seven words: "*Michael Joseph Mansfield, PVT, US Marine Corps.*"

Ultimately, because of the business we are in, expected to fight, suffer and die without complaint, we also cultivate this bond to call on when needed. At times, it means being ruthlessly hard, as at Balaclava in 1854. When the "thin red line" of the 93rd Highlanders were all that stood between the Russian onslaught and the British camp, Sir Colin Campbell commanded the regiment he loved, "*there is no retreat from here, men -- you must die where you stand.*"

At times, it means having compassion, as on Tulagi Island in the South Pacific in 1942. After an all-night attack, Marine Pfc. Edward "Johnny" Ahrens lay quietly in his foxhole. He'd been shot twice in the chest, and blood welled slowly from three deep bayonet wounds. Thirteen dead Japanese soldiers lay nearby; two others were draped over his legs. Legendarily tough Lewis Walt -- later assistant commandant of the Marine Corps -- gently gathered the dying man in his arms. Ahrens whispered, "*Captain, they tried to come over me last night, but I don't think they made it.*" Choking back tears, Walt replied softly, "*They didn't, Johnny. They didn't.*"



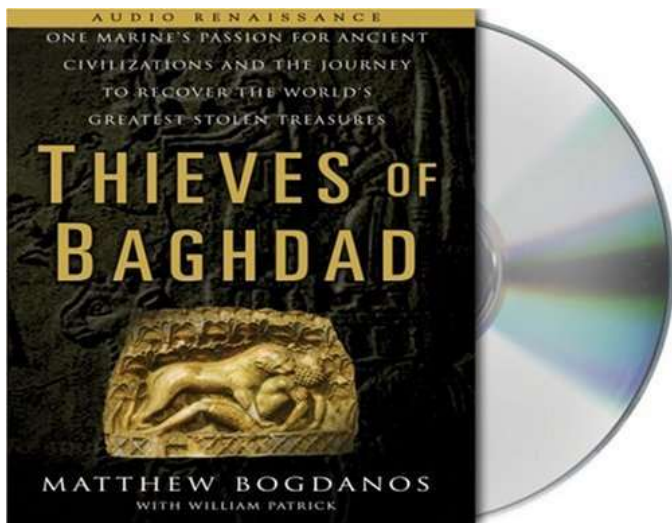
(Photo from John Taylor, B/2/503d)

(continued....)



Being effectively ruthless and genuinely caring are each manifestations of courage. The ability to affect their integration and foster the bond between leader and led can spell the difference between defeat and victory, because wars -- fought with weapons -- are won by people. Your sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, fathers and mothers. We are honored **to lead them.**

Matthew Bogdanos, a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves who has served tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, is an assistant district attorney for New York City and the author of *"Thieves of Baghdad,"* available on Amazon.com



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

VA Hires More Mental Health Professionals to Expand Access for Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it has made significant progress in providing increased access to mental health care services for our Nation's Veterans by hiring new mental health professionals.

Last year, Secretary Eric K. Shinseki announced a goal to hire 1,600 new mental health clinical providers and 300 administrative support staff. The President's Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order requires the positions to be filled by June 30, 2013. As of Jan. 29, VA has hired 1,058 mental health clinical providers and 223 administrative support staff in support of this specific goal.

For complete report see:

<http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2428>

LRRP EXTRAORDINAIRE He's Done What Few Men Would Ever Dare To Do



Superman

Visited Don "Rocky" Rockholt, LRRP, A/2/503, '67-'69 at the hospital, his third hospital admission in as many months. Survivor of both Dak To ops in '67, Silver Star recipient, 3 Purple Hearts over 2 tours, ex cop, ex commercial pilot, sky diver, business owner, sometimes royal pain in the ass, average golfer but he thinks otherwise, dad and wonderful granddad, drinker of too much hard liquor, friend to many, and master of all things lesser men would dare not do. Don is 64 and told us he's decided to live. I love this guy, and if he does live he's Superman. I've always thought of him as Superman. Keep Rocky in your thoughts. Ed



Just Another Day

By Robert Toporek
B/2/503d



L-R: John Beauchamp and close friend Charley Zions, both KIA at Zulu-Zulu, Operation Silver City.

It was just another day in the jungle that March morning. We woke from sleeping on the hard ground with our backpack as a pillow. We were somewhere in the jungle following orders. None of us, as best as I can remember, questioned why we were there. I mean, come on, we were the Americans fighting for Democracy just as our fathers, grandfathers and forefathers had before us. I mean, what greater thing to fight for than human freedom?

Anyway, our squad gathered at the edge of a trail, actually, it was a pretty big trail. If we knew what the Ho Chi Minh Trail was we would have known we were on it, but who the hell knew anything in 1966? For some odd reason, I couldn't tell you who our company commander was, we had lost one it seems every time we went out. I certainly don't remember who our squad leaders were or our platoon sergeant, but I do remember Cpl. Beauchamp. No one ever called him Cpl., it was only Beauchamp. Our squad once again was chosen to patrol the perimeter before the rest of the battalion pulled out. Beauchamp and I argued over who would pull point.

He only had 45 days left. He had spent a year in-country and I just couldn't see him risking it another time. He, on the other hand, felt like it was his turn, and he did out-rank me, so off we went. Why the hell we were walking straight up that trail to this day baffles me.

About 100 yards out all of a sudden Beauchamp turned a corner; from that moment on all hell broke loose. I thought we had walked into an explosion of an ammunition factory! Every conceivable noise a rifle, machine gun, grenade or rocket launchers could make going off simultaneously, went off. Beauchamp was killed instantly and the rest of us were pinned down.

Our platoon behind us was firing out in our direction, not really knowing where we were, and Charlie was pumping about as much lead into our section that was humanly possible. All of a sudden I heard a loud thump in the tree behind me; I realized in that moment there was a God. If I had simply been kneeling differently, I would have been hit through the eyes.

I don't know how we ever got back to the battalion that day, but we did. As we later found out, we were ambushed by a battalion of NVA Regulars. It wasn't a pretty day and I don't really remember much beyond that. Seems like whoever from our platoon hadn't been killed, they were wounded or came real close.

Check out the names on the Wall, and look for the date March 16, 1966. In those graves live stories of amazing bravery and sacrifice.



September 13, 1945
Cicero, IL



March 26, 1946
Princess Anne, MD



Recollections From A Day in March

Our brigade paid dearly during the war. From the 8th of November in 1965, to the Battle of the Slopes and the equally terrible outcome of Hill 875 and surrounding engagements in the mountainous terrain of Dak To in 1967; and countless other battles in places and at times only we know and remember. One such encounter occurred this month 47 years ago on March 16, 1966, in the jungles of the "D" Zone at a place called "LZ Zulu-Zulu". This battle would mark for many of the original Sky Soldiers from Okinawa their final engagement of the war, and for others their final engagement in this life. In military terms, it was a victorious fight for the men of the 2/503d. Yet, most didn't know at the time how very close our battalion came to being annihilated. Here are some of the recollections by the men who fought and survived the Battle at Zulu Zulu. Ed

A Battalion CO/XO Looks Back at Operation Silver City

(Introduction to *The Battle at Bau San*)

This historical account of soldiers conducting a valorous and determined defense against a well-armed and numerically superior enemy force is an outstanding tribute to the Airborne Soldier. This account is particularly remarkable when the action is so accurately described from the viewpoint of the soldier and when the circumstances influencing the battle are known. A short time before Operation Silver City, the 2/503d had been tasked to operate in an area north of Bien Hoa and across the Vam Co Dong River. The operation was expected to be a one day recon effort to remove any threat to air traffic at the air base. However, a well-armed and disciplined enemy force was encountered soon after the heliborne assault. This enemy force required a concentrated effort to eradicate the VC.

Unfortunately, incidental to our air strikes called in to dislodge the enemy, several units of the battalion were struck by a great number of cluster bomblets that wounded and killed many of the troops. Bn Cmdr., Col. George Dexter, was severely wounded by enemy small arms fire and was evacuated. The battalion continued

to clear the area of VC/NVA along the east to Xuan Loc airfield where they were then returned to Camp Zinn.

An assessment of the battalion revealed that one Rifle Company had one Company Commander, a Sergeant and some ten soldiers fit for duty. Circumstances required a wholesale reassignment of leaders and soldiers, as mutually agreed, from one company to another. The result was an under-strength battalion, in effect a new organization of experienced and capable men, yet unit cohesiveness and skills were not tested.

A newly-assigned Battalion commander was designated and Operation Silver City was his first command in-country, a command of an under-strength, untested unit. The combat performance during Silver City of the men and the unit is a resounding tribute to the Airborne Soldier and his leaders.



(Then) Major Bob Carmichael, LTC
2/503d Bn CO/XO, '65-'66

The only apparent tactical or strategic significance of the operation was that it confirmed that snugly nestled under the bomb-proof tall canopy of trees, a very large and determined enemy VC/NVA force was still present and ready to do battle with any intruder. This particular foray into War Zone "D" by U.S. forces confirmed what the 1st Battalion, 503d had proven previously, i.e., that the terminus of the Ho Chi Minh Trail was extensive and well-defended by a very large, experienced enemy force.

The following accounting of the Silver City operation from the Soldier's viewpoint is a remarkable tribute to the soldiers who carry the burden of battle and suffer the outcome.

(continued....)



The Battle at Zulu Zulu As Told by the Men Who Were There

"The situation had the makings of a massacre. It was so immense. Once they opened up and hit the helicopter, all hell broke loose all around our perimeter. Quite frankly, I was stunned. I thought *'What the devil is going on?'* In the end it was a massacre, but not of the Americans. Luckily, the Vietnamese attack was premature. Had it started an hour later, we would have been out of the shelter of our foxholes, strung out on patrols and quickly overwhelmed."

Tom Faley, CO, C/2/503d



On March 11, 1966, paratroopers of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade prepare to load choppers at Bien Hoa Airbase (the "Snakepit") for assault into War Zone "D" during Operation Silver City.

(Photo by: Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d)

"They took us in trucks that morning to the Air Base nearby, each of us loaded down with gear, already drenched in sweat from the humidity. A sickly, quiet calm seemed to envelop us; each in his own thoughts, each of us not knowing what to expect. But, we knew whatever it was it wouldn't be good. We had gone through this routine before as we would many times throughout the year.

As the XO's RTO I was again in one of the first assault slicks, something I never became accustomed to. As always, I looked up and down the long line of choppers cranking up their engines with the sticks of men ready to board and, as always, thought *'some of you fuckers aren't coming back alive'*. It was never me, I knew I was always coming back alive – or at least I thought I knew."

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



2/503d enroute to the "D" Zone, March 11, 1966

Photo by: Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d

After Action Report

"1. GENERAL: War Zone "D" is a vast area of dense jungle stretching North from the Dong Nai River in Bien Hoa Province into Long Khanh Province. The area has long been an established and well-defended base camp area for numerous Viet Cong units. Allies and ARVN forces have penetrated War Zone "D" on many occasions, almost always encountering well organized Viet Cong forces and discovering large quantities of Viet Cong supplies and equipment. On 9 March a massive attack by air and land was begun to strike at the very heart of the "D" Zone. The Operation was named "SILVER CITY". The area just north of the Song Be River in Long Khanh Province was believed to hold the Headquarters of the Viet Cong Military Region Seven and its affiliated organizations and installations. The objective of Operation "SILVER CITY" was to locate and destroy or capture all personnel, equipment and intelligence material of this headquarters....



2/503 trooper fording stream during Silver City.

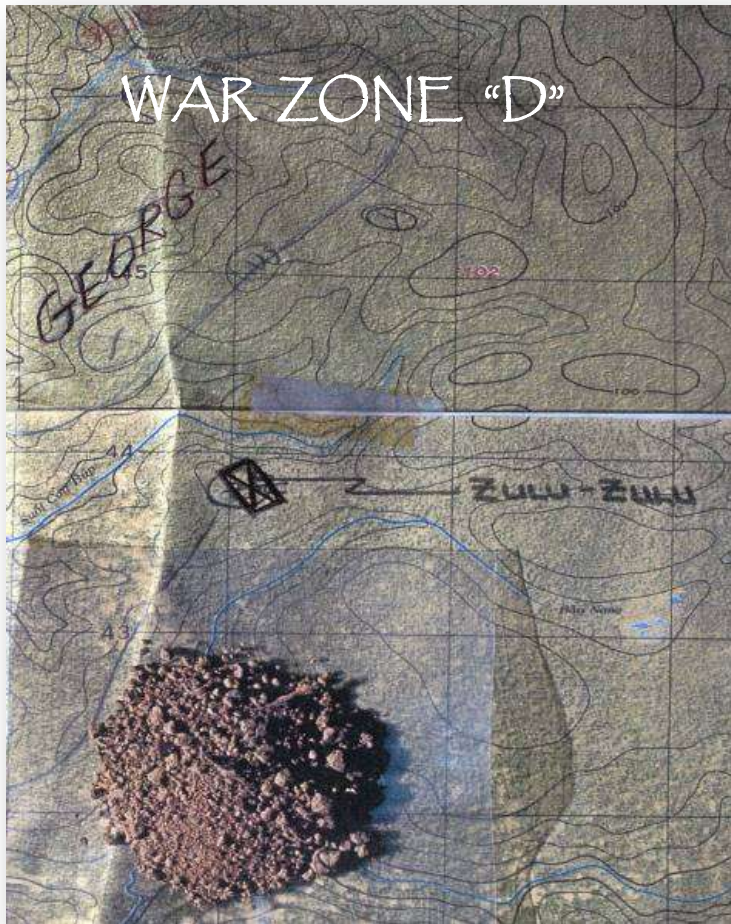
(Photo by: Jerry Bethke, HHC/2/503d)

(continued....)



3. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Intelligence Prior to the Operation: Intelligence prior to the operation was furnished primarily by a Viet Cong Rallier. This Rallier identified the location of the Headquarters Military Region 7 (MR-7), which is the VC headquarters controlling all activities within an area that approximates the Republic of Vietnam III Corps area. The Rallier also identified the locations of several subordinate committees within MR-7. Information received from an agent report (evaluated F-6) identified the location of a VC radio station complex, staffed by 150 VC cadre at YT 142432.



Map of "D" Zone showing location of LZ Zulu Zulu, provided by Tom Faley, C/2/503d. The soil shown was collected at that LZ upon the return there by three 2/503 troopers in 2005.

"When anyone reminds me of Zulu-Zulu several things come to mind. I remember that Col. John Walsh had just assumed command of the battalion. But, since he had just arrived, I thought it was my responsibility to point out to Brigade....1: The battalion, 2/503d, was grossly under strength; 2: One U.S. battalion sent out of friendly artillery support, that was not only out of range, but ineffective in 250 feet tall trees; 3: We needed time and extra chain saws to evacuate our wounded (ask Les Brownlee, "B" Company commander, who later became

Acting Secretary of the Army). Fortunately, we followed in a B-52 strike path that caused us to need only 8 hours to get a evac-helio nearby to winch the wounded and dead out.

After Les and others were zapped, they took my last suggestion, i.e. we retrograde like real quick to a dry lake bed where we could be resupplied, about 3 miles south towards Bien Hoa. That, at least, gave us a chance against overwhelming numbers, and a lot of our men were saved.

After the monkeys had doused the area, to include me, when they departed about daylight, Les Brownlee and his "B" Company took the lead moving forward. The enemy was keeping tabs on our progress and were making 'chicken' calls to our left which were answered by 'rooster' calls to our right. As the unit reached the crest of an incline they came under enemy fire which wounded several troops, to include Capt. Brownlee.

The NVA/VC pulled out to avoid close contact. An inspection of the area revealed a trench line extending as far as the eye could see with overhead cover every 10 or 20 yards. The overhead cover was not very substantial but adequate to absorb bomb fragments and was used to defeat heat sensors we used to locate the enemy.

The Recon Platoon and the forward Commo Section used chain saws to improve a bombed area that could be used to take-out the wounded by slings under the medevac choppers. All the wounded were evac'd and the recommendation was that we pull out ASAP and head for the (then) dry swamp area which came to be known as Zulu-Zulu.

The cock calls and the ambush of the forward units was enough evidence that time was short before we would have a really big show on our hands. The only thing of concern was, could we get to the dry spot with few bushes and trees and open fields of fire before the enemy attacked us while we were strung-out in columns? We were lucky, and the VC/NVA paid the price for their timidity, or their inability to move combat forces fast enough to cut us off. Of course, they didn't have knowledge of our plan to get to a more suitable area to defend against mass attacks.

Fortunately, the 2/503d made it to Zulu-Zulu, and the rest is history. Now, decades later our troops again face similar dangers. Let's hope they have good leaders, with experience, good training, and luck. Lots of good luck."

Bob Carmichael, HHC/2/503d

(continued....)



"The point squads of the battalion's four columns had to slowly hack their way through the dense vegetation with machetes. This limited the battalion's progress to between 200 and 300 meters an hour and required the point squad to be rotated hourly to prevent the men from becoming exhausted."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d



L-R: C Co. CO Tom Faley, Bn XO Willard Christensen & Bn CO John Walsh on Silver City. (Photo from Tom Faley)



Craig, C/1/503d on Silver City

"Operation Silver City was to be my last operation in Vietnam as I was to DEROS soon after the operation ended. Most of the operation preceding 16 March was uneventful. Our 1/503 uncovered a large weapons cache a few days before 16 March. Although the weapons were old, vintage WWII and Korean War era, they were in good shape and functional.

Sometime around the 14th of March, the 1/503d setup a base camp in a large jungle clearing several clicks west of where the 2/503d was operating."

Craig Ford, C/1/503d

"The days passed slowly, but finally the time came to join my unit. About 1300 in the afternoon of 15 March, I loaded on a CH47 and took off for the Forward Area, somewhere in War Zone 'D', the VC stronghold north of Phuoc Vinh. After various changes of choppers I finally arrived in Landing Zone Zulu-Zulu, around 1500. Amusingly, one of my first Huey rides was in the same chopper used to carry Playmate of the Year, Jo Collins, marked with a large Playboy Bunny on each side."

Bill Vose, A/2/503d

"I remember going through the bomb craters and then coming up to a large clearing where we recon'd by fire. We moved ahead and then came upon an enemy camp where rice was still cookin'. We then moved out again. Shortly after that we set-up a night perimeter at what we later learned was LZ Zulu-Zulu. Early in the morning we got word they would be calling in artillery around our perimeter. Not long after we heard the short rounds hit not far behind us, then the screaming began. I had never before heard such sounds of pain and agony, but would hear those same sounds many times in the year ahead. The damn artillery had hit our own men, killing one and blowing the legs off another."



Mike Sturges awarded his first Purple Heart by Bn Commander LTC Bob Sigholtz, 1966.

After Action Report

"D+7 (16 March 1966): On D+7 the most significant VC contact of Operation "SILVER CITY" and the second most significant since the Brigade has been in RVN occurred when TF 2/503d Inf was attacked by the VC 271 Main Force Regiment reinforced by the Z-37 and Z-43 Artillery Battalions. At 160715H a helicopter flying a resupply mission to the TF 2/503d base encountered heavy automatic weapons fire and crashed. Immediately following this the VC attack began against TF 2/503d, which was still in its night perimeter positions. The VC forces initially attacked from the Northeast but were soon attacking from all sides. A second major assault came from the West and the final major assault came from the South. The attack was supported by numerous machine guns, 60mm and 81mm mortars and 57mm Recoiless Rifles. The VC wore plastic camouflaged helmets and green and black uniforms. During the attack numerous Artillery missions and TAC Air Strikes were conducted all around the TF Base on the VC forces. Ammunition resupply was effected by air drop from UH-1 helicopters. Ground fire against the re-supply ships was intense and many aircraft took hits....

(continued....



....At 161140H the VC broke off the main contact and withdrew, leaving what appeared to be delaying forces in strategic locations around TF 2/503d. One (1) machine gun bunker in the A Company sector was particularly bothersome. When the bunker was finally destroyed the VC machine-gunner was found to be chained to the machine gun tripod. Two wounded VC prisoners were captured, one of which died almost immediately. The other captive stated that he was a member of the 501 Battalion, 271 Regiment. He also stated that his battalion was 400 men strong and composed of about 90% North Vietnamese. During the afternoon patrols from TF 2/503d discovered 265 VC bodies and thirteen (13) weapons in the battle area. Of

these 138 bodies and all of the weapons were recovered within 100 meters of the Bn perimeter. The remainder of the bodies were found beyond this point and were badly mutilated by TAC Air and Artillery. It should also be noted that many women were observed carrying bodies and weapons from the battle area during the engagement.... The 271st Regiment suffered over 600 casualties as a result of an engagement with the 1/503d on 8 November 1965, and it is possible that North Vietnamese personnel were used as replacements. The prisoner also stated that his unit had hidden in tunnels on the previous day, and had assembled at 0400 hours for the attack. He died before any further information could be obtained.

The 2/503d arrive at what many men of the battalion would years later refer to as 'ZZ'

On the late afternoon of March 15, 1966 – the bad guys are watching.

(Photo by Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d)



"The only clear signs of recent enemy activity were numerous sharpened long poles erected as helicopter obstacles, but these were quickly knocked down." Tom Faley, C/2/503d

(continued....)



"Some years following the war I read the objective of the enemy was to overrun the LZ and destroy all troopers there. They had been monitoring our search and destroy patterns for days, and knew we were prone to sending out company sized patrols after being settled the previous night. Their plan called for allowing these patrols to pass through their lines before attacking Bravo Company and a small HHC contingent left to defend the landing zone, and, once successful, their attention would be turned to the isolated patrolling companies (Alpha & Charlie).

The signal to commence the attack on the LZ was to have been one of their heavy machine guns opening-up on the troopers left at Zulu-Zulu. Whether luck or fate, their plan was side-tracked. A resupply helicopter had been dispatched to Zulu-Zulu



Smitty in the boonies

carrying hot eggs for breakfast. The 2/503 commander, LTC Walsh, kept the battalion's perimeter in place, delaying the company-sized search and destroy missions, and instead, sent out squad-sized clearing patrols.

As the helicopter approached Zulu-Zulu it is believed by many that one enemy machine gunner may have mistook the *whoop whoop* sound of the chopper blades for that of the machine gun signal to open the attack, or just couldn't resist such an easy target, and himself began firing, shooting the chopper out of the sky as it was attempting to land. Others believe when an early a.m. patrol from "B" Co. was ambushed (see Robert Toporek's *Just Another Day* on Page 56), this alerted the enemy machine gunner and he opened-up on the chopper. Battalion radio logs have the patrol leaving the LZ at 0710 Hrs. and the chopper being destroyed and the attack on the LZ commencing at 0725 Hrs., with no mention of the patrol. Both actions could well have occurred simultaneously.

Regardless of how the battle began, once this initial firing started, the battalion was attacked from all sides. It is not unreasonable to believe the 2/503d could have been at substantial risk of being totally destroyed had our perimeter not been kept in place for the simple delivery of a hot breakfast."

Lew Smith, HHC/2/503d

"Company commanders were briefed by the battalion S-3, Major Willard Christensen, on the next day's operation. At 0800 hours, Alpha and Charlie Companies, minus their weapons platoons, would sweep to the southwest and northwest, respectively. Headquarters and Bravo companies would defend the LZ. The battalion settled down into defensive positions for the evening, placing out two and three-man listening posts, emplacing interlocking machine-gun and Claymore-mine patterns, digging shallow fighting positions and registering indirect fires.

The night passed with only one incident: the VC fired several rounds of 75mm artillery into the clearing, severely wounding two Charlie Company mortarmen; one of them lost the lower half of his legs....incredible as it may seem, however, an enemy regiment had moved in during the night without being detected, and surrounded the 2nd Battalion at Zulu-Zulu.

Regardless of how the battle started, it was soon apparent that the 2nd Battalion was surrounded by a strong enemy force determined to overrun Zulu-Zulu.....While we settled in for the night at Zulu-Zulu, the enemy crept in around us. We should have heard them. I don't know why we didn't."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d



Bad guys everywhere.

(continued...)



"We arrived Zulu-Zulu on 15 March and John T, myself and others set-up our defensive perimeter at about the 3 o'clock position from the open area (see sketch of LZ on preceding page).

Sometime before dark I was told to report across the LZ for LP duty that night, out in front of where the large trees were blown down on the left side of the LZ. We arrived on position and set-up our listening post, then started the waiting game.

Sometime around 0100 Hrs. we heard this strange sound, *'Squeak, Squeak!'* Man, that sound was weird! It wasn't long till we found out what it was – we could see the dark outline of 2 VC pulling a two-wheeled gun. Then came more stuff and more VC, right thru where we were set-up. *'Oh Shit! We're right in the middle of them!'*

We decided that if we didn't move, well, we wouldn't be able to move – so *'high tail it back and I'll cover.'* I counted 50 actuals before I split! I got back inside our perimeter and told 'somebody' what we had seen, and was told to catch some zzz's."

James Bailey, A/2/503d

"The bursting shells looked pretty in the dead of night in the jungle, but true to form some of our buddies were hit. I was standing working on the radio trying to get a Dust-Off in when something hard knocked me to the ground. I looked around and there was no one near me. I finally realized that it must have been a piece of shrapnel, so I yelled for the medic.



Cap Goodwin

Not far off, he quickly found me and used a flashlight with a red night-time filter, to check my back. He said, *'You're O.K., drive on.'* About 25 minutes later, I thought I had worked up a sweat (at 0200 hrs.), so I called the medic back and told him to take that red filter off the flashlight. He did, and when he looked at my right shoulder blade there was a long gash in it that was bleeding. He peeled the T-shirt off me and put on a large bandage....What if that hit straight on, in the shoulder, at 2 a.m. in the dark jungle with 80 foot canopy?

It was luck, but then it was the morning of St. Patrick's Day, and my grandparents were married in County Kerry, Ireland in 1864. Luck of the Irish!"

Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d

"The night (March 15/16) was sleepless; even aside from the few 75mm shells we were taking sporadically, something just felt wrong....The radios came to life. The voice of 1st Sgt. Jackson, 'Hammer' they called him, rang through the handset. He was trying to get a chopper in to pick up one of the boys. I forget how long it took for the Dustoff to get to Zulu-Zulu, it seems like only minutes in my memory; it must have been a lifetime to the wounded trooper.



RTO Wayne Hoitt, fighting the heat of the jungle.

The pilot got close and then I heard him refuse to drop into the LZ. Who could blame him? He was over triple canopy jungle in pitch darkness with artillery shells being lobbed in around him. Did the 1st Sgt. light a flare? Can't recall, but I don't think so. Land his Huey in a tiny opening in this pitch dark jungle and escape? *'No!'* the pilot said again. 1st Sgt. talked to the pilot as if he were standing right next to me; it seemed as though he didn't even need the radio. *'I got a boy here with both his legs gone.'* Powerful, resolute, resilient; Hammer could be heard across the LZ and up into the night. He talked that pilot through his fear of the canopy, down onto the LZ and got that trooper onto the Huey and away into the night... and he never raised his voice."

Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503d

"All was quiet as the battalion had stopped moving for the day and had made just scattered contact with the enemy. Being a replacement to the field, by the way, only to "OBSERVE", I was familiarized with the area and the tactical situation. After digging my prone shelter for the night I found that Gus Vendetti, an OCS classmate of mine was a Platoon Leader in "A" Co. With a guide, I went down to his position to say hello. My stay was short, due to the coming darkness, so I made my way back to the Battalion Command Post and prepared for the jungle night....



The young LT Vose

(continued....)



....All around me were the calls of strange birds and the movements of what I thought were strange animals. About 0100 a short 105 round, supposedly from the 1st Div. Artillery, landed square in the middle of our LZ, killing one man right off, blowing the legs off one and wounding another; and the rest of the night I lay by my shelter wondering if I would see the light of day.”

Bill Vose, A/2/503d

“The next morning (March 16th) we were sent out on a clearing patrol. I don’t know how far out we went, but we went out in a U shape then came back in. We had just gotten our gear off when hell came to breakfast.... just immense gun fire and everything; this was Jack’s (Ribera) and my first big firefight.

After the initial burst we were able to wipe ourselves and get into a prone position. We were just returning fire and doing what a grunt does when we turned around and saw Jim Phillips lying on the ground wounded. He had been shot in the side and the leg. At that time an E-6 yelled for Ribera and me to get over there and to haul Phillips down to the aid station in the LZ. Jack and I put some battle dressing on him, picked him up and started running as if we were in the Olympics, as bullets were whizzing by all around us.

When we came around the corner there were bodies everywhere, guys who had been wounded, our guys. We took Phillips over to where there was an opening and dropped him off. It was then somebody yelled there was ammo dropped about 50 meters outside our perimeter.”

Mike Sturges, A/2/503d

“Due to severe head injuries I received on August 20, 1966, I have difficulty remembering a lot of my time in the Nam, a good thing actually. Reading Mike’s (Sturges) account does stir up quite a bit. The craters left from the bombings and napalm scorched trees, another.

That morning, to the best of my recollection, we were given the order to (I can’t remember what that was called), to search or check the area in front of our position. I was pissed, I just got my heat tablet going to heat up my chocolate drink for breakfast. So, the squad saddled-up and we moved out. I had such a weird feeling; it was so quiet, not even the birds were moving.

No sooner had we got back when all hell broke loose. I was positioned under this fallen tree, so I dove down. I wasn’t about to let my hot cocoa go to waste! Weirdest thing, completely calm, I sipped hot chocolate and ate my cookie! That lasted about 20 seconds when I watched Jim Gettel’s hammock bounce around and get drilled with machine gun fire.”

Jack Ribera, A/2/503d

“I remember that morning like yesterday. There were 5 or 6 of us who went on a screening patrol across the platoon front first thing in the morning. I think it was Carl Boutwell, Sgt. Phillips, John Links, Jack Ribera, Mike Sturges and myself. The area was torn up from all the artillery from the night before and it was super quiet out there....we had to be walking all around the enemy.



Jim at Camp Zinn

When we got back in we were walking back to our positions and somebody said to grab something to eat because “A” Company was going on a day patrol someplace. I had lit a heating tablet in my prone shelter to make a cup of hot cocoa. I heard a chopper coming into the LZ, maybe 150 yards or further down from our position. That’s when all the firing started and the chopper started spinning around and crashed on its side. I leaped into my prone shelter to get myself together a little bit when my right, upper leg became extremely warm. I was lying on my heating tablet....and that was the start of the day.”

Jim Gettel, A/2/503d



A.B. Garcia, left front, with buddies, evacuating WIA or KIA.

(continued....)





The breakfast bird at ZZ.

"On a bright, sunny morning of the 16th of March, I awoke and was greeting the beautiful morning in the jungle while watching a helicopter hovering above the LZ and attempting to land.

As this was occurring, gunfire from one side of the landing zone was directed at the chopper. Then gunfire came from another side, then all around us. The chopper was hit and began swaying in midair from side-to-side. Suddenly, the blades were ripping into the trees, raining branches all over the area. The chopper crashed and the gunfire intensified with our brothers returning fire.

We had no idea of the size of the unit that we were engaging, but it was big."

A.B. Garcia, HHC/4.2/2/503d

"The sharp rays of sunlight broke through the thick triple canopy jungle and the battalion became alive like a colony of ants. I was just finishing shaving in my helmet when through the trees I saw a chopper coming into the LZ carrying hot "A's" for breakfast. As it descended to about tree top level I heard the deep chugging sound of a HMG. At first I thought it was test firing, but when the chopper dropped out of the sky like a rock and crashed into the trees I knew that something other than animals had been crawling around the perimeter that night."

Bill Vose, A/2/503d



**The downed choppers pilots.
L-R: Tony Geishauser & Joe McHenry,
Cowboys.**

"The first thing I recall was starting to receive a briefing at the east end of the LZ to go back with a patrol to destroy some caches that were left late the previous evening. I didn't notice the helicopter approaching behind me until I heard what I thought at the time was his pulling torque to try to lift up out of the LZ.

Now I'm not sure whether it was the popping of the chopper blades or rounds of the heavy machine gun firing on him that caused me to look up directly over my head just in time to see the Huey's tail buckle and watch it take that slow rollover onto its left side and into the trees. The briefing came to an abrupt halt."

(The late) John Nix, HHC/B/2/503d

(continued....)



"The VC gunner had obviously been trained to lead aircraft to shoot them down. The dumb shit didn't realize we weren't moving forward. We were going straight down.

He finally broke the code and turned his gun on our chopper, hitting the tail rotor and tail section. That made the helicopter start to go in circles and we started to lose control. All both of us pilots were trying to do at this point was to keep the aircraft level as we hit the ground."

Tony Geishauser, Cowboys Pilot



2/503 troopers on Op Silver City.

"Early that morning I remember the LP's coming in and the clearing patrols going out. I had the 2nd Platoon tightening-up to move out. We had dug prone shelters for the night, mine across the trail that ran the length of the platoon, and my RTO's behind me.

My Platoon Sergeant, a Filipino (later wounded and medevac'd), had dug in for the night near our right flank where he tied-in with Weapons Platoon. He had come to my location for a coordination meeting, and seeing trash being thrown into my no-longer-to-be-used prone shelter, decided to shit there rather than dig a cat hole.

When the chopper got shot down and we came under moderate to heavy fire, I dove back in my prone shelter. To my immediate left was a pile of Filipino excrement. My Platoon Sergeant hit the ground to my right, outside the hole, and said 'Move over!' I said, 'Bullshit, jump over me!'

Needless to say, he lay in his own shit for the next 30-40 minutes."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

"I remember being one of the lucky (?) ones to get a hammock to sleep in. Didn't use it for that though. Used it mainly to keep my gear off the ground. Had it strung up that morning with my gear in it when all hell broke loose.

I remember the chopper going down and then grabbing my rifle and steel pot. Looking over at my hammock I saw that it was doing a wild dance and being spun around by machine gun fire. You see, with the gear still in it, it looked to whoever was shooting at it that there was somebody still lying in it.

At that point I went up on line and dove behind a big log that was on the ground. I looked over to my right and asked the trooper lying there where the SOB was. He calmly said,

'Oh, just fire a few rounds out there, he'll find ya.'

So I laid my M16 over the top of the log and squeezed off a couple. Nothing. So I did the same again, and again nothing. I then put it on full auto and fired a burst. Man...what the hell was I thinking! By this time that gunner had me marked. He started firing and I was hunkered down behind that log and saying to myself, 'He's really pissed. I must have gotten pretty close to him.'

I was sweating so bad that when he fired under the log and kicked up a bunch of mud in my eyes I was blinded. Putting my hand up to my face and feeling the sweat and mud, I mistook it for blood and brains, and thinking I'm head shot (I didn't stop to think that if that were the case I wouldn't be feeling anything).

After cleaning my eyes out so I could see and wryly laughing at myself for being such a doof, I looked over to the trooper on my right and saw that the gunner had killed him. I waited for the gunner to stop and then crawled behind a termite mound. Didn't take long before the gunner had my position again and started to whittle away at the mound....

(continued....)



....After what seemed like an eternity of me firing at his position (never really did see him, just where he was firing from), and him firing at me, I felt like somebody had hit me with a brick in both my shoulder and knee. This time I had been shot. Not wanting to tempt fate further I again changed positions. This time he either didn't see me leave the mound, or somebody else had got him.

Spent about 3 weeks in the hospital recovering and then back to A Co. Everybody thought I had been shipped back stateside. All my gear was gone and I had to be re-issued everything.” **Alt Turner, A/2/503d**

“Knowing we were running out of ammo along our line we went out and procured as much of the ammo as we could carry, then headed back toward our lines. On our way back there we came across a wounded GI laying on the trail; we dropped the ammo, picked him up and hauled him back down to the LZ, went back to get the ammo then returned to our position. When we got back to our position there was more wounded, so again we dropped the ammo, picked up another wounded trooper and hauled him to safety (?). It seems like we spent the rest of the time hauling wounded down to the LZ and ammo back to the line.”

Mike Sturges, A/2/503d

“Midway in the battle, some of the wounded along the perimeter started screaming that they were being shot from above, so the word went out for M-79 grenadiers to blast the surrounding trees. As they did so, some snipers started falling out of the tree lofts riddled with 40mm fragments.” **Tom Faley, C/2/503d**

“Here's what I remember--and let me tell you, you guys have a lot better memories than I do!

As I recall it was after first lite which makes 0715 hrs about right. The 'food' chopper was coming in and the Bn CO told me to go bring it in. The LZ was right behind my hole in the ground. I remember popping a smoke grenade and the chopper appeared over the trees, descending and making that terrible racket (like machine gun fire) as it began to nose in towards the LZ. THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE!!!

Firing broke out all over the place, mortars, rockets, whatever. About that time the chopper was hit and just kind of floated off to the side of the DZ into the trees and landed on its side. I dashed over to it and jumped up on the strut which was up in the air and grabbed the door gunner who was shocked but alright. Got him out of the chopper and moved towards the pilot seat when I slipped in all the scrambled eggs that spilled open from the damaged mermite cans--it was like pig wrestling in a deep mud hole!!

Anyway, one pilot had bailed out, the other I remember helping a little, he was injured, but not badly. This all happened in about a 10 to 15 minute period.

I then ran back to my prone shelter in time to get hit in my left arm and left butt! I knew I was hit in the shoulder, but didn't realize I was in the rear end until I reached to get something out of my back pocket and it was all wet. At first I thought my canteen had been hit, but then realized my canteen was sitting on the ground in front of me.

Anyway, back to the LZ. I'm sure that the noise of those chopper blades in that crisp morning air sounded just like gun fire--the opening signal for the VC to begin the attack--which they did! And to think, all those scrambled eggs went to waste!!

That's how I remember the beginning of the battle. I remember looking over at one point to the FAC who was calling in air strikes and his RTO had his back to me. Then *whomp!* a large shard (like a 8 inch dagger) hit him right between the shoulders. Didn't kill him but made him sore for a while I'm sure!

Enough BS for tonight!—Wayne (Hoitt), you started it!

All from Weatherford....OUT.

Dan Buttolph, CO/HHC/2/503d

“From all around me came the sounds of LMG fire, HMG fire, the explosive ‘crump’ of hand grenades with a deafening sound, followed seconds later with the answering, death-giving sound of 600 M-16's and 22 M-60 MG's. There was little time to reflect on why I joined the army, volunteered to become a paratrooper, and later graduating from OCS to become an army officer. This personal introduction to war would require the utmost of me and every man at this surrounded landing zone.”

Bill Vose, A/2/503d

(continued....)



HHC Brass, L-R: Commo Section's Tom Goodwin, and Dan Buttolph, HHC/CO



"The breakfast Bird was supposed to be my trip out to R&R on the ROCK, and then when I got back in-country I would only have 3 days until I was to DEROS home.

I was giving a frag order to the squad for the new squad leader, as the whole Bn was breaking down into small units to move out and find the enemy. Needless to say, they found us around 7:30 in the morning.

Early into the fight myself and most of my squad were wounded. Before being wounded, however, we had started to drop 81mm mortar rounds on the enemy attacking Charlie Company's front as soon as the helicopter crashed about 25 yards from our gun position.

We helped with resupply after we ran out of ammo, and when they would drop some ammo which wasn't all messed up, we would break it down for the line companies 81's and our 81's. We did that until we were all wounded.

Richard Fred, who was my gunner, was hit in the leg and eye. I was hit the first time at that same time."

Chuck Guy, HHC/4.2/2/503d

"It was early morning and I was getting my squad ready to go out on a company sweep. The clearing patrol from our company was out to our front. It was led by Cpl Beauchamp (KIA), a chopper was on its way in with the morning resupply; then all hell broke loose.

From my front there was all sorts of incoming fire. My squad was the connecting squad with Company C. To the front I could hear the NVA giving orders and rushing our line. To my right one trooper was yelling, *'Firers, watch your lanes!'* C.C. Walker (KIA) was shot in the forehead – I suspect by a sniper.

Later, as ammo resupply was being brought forward, William Gossett (KIA) was also shot in the head in the same location. After that we worked with "C" Company to keep personnel out of that area, and fired on the suspected sniper location. Then it seemed the action moved around the battalion perimeter with less pressure on us.

Later in the day word was passed that the 1st Battalion was on its way in. I remember it was late in the afternoon when they did arrive and I had a B-2 unit with cheese and crackers. Even today I think of how nice it is to have cheese and crackers."

Joe Logan, B/2/503d



"There was a lot of shooting on my left front, and a heavy machine gun was firing from out on our right flank. The first time I saw NVA they were moving across our front from left to right. I could see 4-5 moving abreast, like they were on a skirmish line. My guys opened-up on them and one went down, but the rest kept moving across our front, about 20 to 30 feet in front of us.

One of our machine gunners, Richard Renfro, zeroed in on them and it seemed they suddenly figured out the trace of our platoon line. They turned and came at us in a close assault. Renfro was standing up on a termite mound and placing very effective fire on them, dropping them as close as 10 feet from our perimeter. This lasted for what seemed like 10 minutes.

At that point my major concern was ammo, for our machine gunner and riflemen fired up most of what they had. We took MG ammo from our other MG that didn't seem to be in as hot a spot, when some guy shows up from the DZ with 5.56 which we distributed."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

"I was a Machine Gunner on that operation. I had just returned from the Platoon CP to my M-60 position when the firing started. I don't remember that there were any preliminaries; I just remember all hell breaking loose. I was very glad that I was at my position and not off in no man's land when the shooting started.



Jim Healy

There was a very large tree ten to fifteen yards to my front. Throughout the fight some well-intentioned but ineffective grenadier kept bouncing M-79 rounds off the trunk of that tree toward my position. It was more than just irritating. I don't remember how far M-79 rounds have to travel to be 'armed' (couldn't be far), but these hadn't traveled that far; none exploded; no thanks to Joe Moron, Grenadier.

At some point during the firing my newest ammunition bearer crawled up to my rucksack and started fumbling around. When I asked what he was doing, he told me he was hunting for my field dressing because he was wounded. (He did have a slight wound on his arm)....

(continued....)



....I told him that the reason my field dressing was on my rucksack was because it was mine. I explained that his field dressing was probably on his pack and he should go back to his position, find his field dressing and use that one, not mine.

The 3rd Platoon's Weapons Squad Leader (Sgt. Fredericks) was wounded in February. An NCO from Weapons Platoon was moved to the 3rd Platoon as our new Weapons Squad Leader. I don't remember his name but he was a good NCO. The night before the fight we had shifted our positions two or three times before finally settling in. It was dark by the time I scraped out my prone shelter and I did not trouble myself to check the line of the perimeter to my right. I did know the perimeter shape to my left. I was vaguely aware that there was a bulge forward in the perimeter to my right. So during the firefight I limited my field of fire to the right.

After the shooting was over my new Squad Leader came by to check my position. He could see my field of fire from the underbrush my firing had cleared away. I had fired from about 9:00 o'clock on my left to about 2:00 o'clock on my right. He asked why I had limited my field of fire. Very proud of the fact that I was aware of the possibility of firing into my own people, I explained that I did not fire further right because I was not sure where the perimeter was and I did not want to shoot my own guys. He suggested that a good machine gunner probably would have checked the right side perimeter to be sure of his field of fire; and if he was still afraid of firing too far to the right he could have driven in an aiming stake, before curling up with his teddy bear to go night-night. (Those may not have been his exact words). God! What an ASSHOLE! As I said, he was a good NCO.

I don't think we moved after that fight. If we did it was not far. But we did shift positions. When we dug in that night, our prone shelters were substantially deeper than those we had scraped out the night before. Gary Wake was one of my ammunition bearers. He was dug in two or three yards to my right. I think that night was the only time I can remember coming under artillery fire. Or, was it mortar fire? Whatever it was, it was very unpleasant. During an incoming barrage a round landed so close that I was sure it landed in Wake's hole. I lifted my head up and hollered over to Wake, asking if he was hurt. No answer. I called several times over to Wake but he did not say a word. Very reluctantly, I crawled out of my hole over to Wake's. I started running my hands over him to see if he was hit. 'Are you OK,' I asked? 'Yes' he said. 'Why didn't you answer me?' I asked. 'I didn't feel like it.' He said."

Jim Healy, A/2/503d

"I am so thankful that attending the Special Forces Medic Course prior to my initial assignment to RVN prepared me for what I would encounter in the over 32 months spent in country. All hell broke loose and I went forward toward the perimeter, sounded like hail on a tin roof to me. Came onto a trooper that had the lower part of his face blown off, no mouth or nose, just eyes staring at me. Drowning in his own blood I set him up against a tree between him and the line. Put one of those plastic airways that we carried in his throat and secured it with an ace wrap. When I tried to leave he grabbed my arm and put it to his head. I put my steel pot on his head and he let go of my arm.

Next was a gunshot wound to the thigh; we had been taught how to take care of that type of wound but there was no time so I helped him to the collection point then went back for the man with the face wound. When I got him to the collection point I took back my pot. A Chaplain asked if there was anything else I could do? I told him I thought it was the Chaplain's turn. It went on for what seemed hours, and I guess it did."

Pat Feely, Medic, C/2/503d

"Don't know if you know the story about Wayne Hoitt from that morning, a scary time for the trooper. Most all of us Bn RTO's fought with different line companies during the battle, Wayne ending up in a hole with a few "C" Co. grunts, where he got wounded and knocked



Hoitt's fighting hole at ZZ with Wayne English & buddy

out. As the story goes, and as told by one of the Chargin' Charlies who was there; Wayne came to as he was being dragged by his feet out of the hole and into the jungle by Won Hung Lo, a VC whom, it seems, wanted to make him his love child! Wayne dispatched the fellow with a .45 cal. pistol. A lot of heroes weren't formally recognized that day, some of us who weren't, were. Mr. Hoitt and his two Chargin' Charlie buddies are three of those heroes."

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

(continued....)



"About 15-20 minutes later, after the first NVA assault, they hit us with a second wave coming right at Renfro's position. That one was repelled in what seemed like 5 minutes. Thereafter, the enemy's heavy MG that was on our right flank started laying down very accurate fire which caused most of our casualties. Sometime during all this, one of my men reported to me that the German Shepherd dog handler was laying down the trail and was hit real bad. I sent my medic to care for him. It was about this same time I gave a fire team to Bill Vose who formed a provisional rifle platoon to re-establish a section of our company's right flank which had been knocked out." **Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d**

"During Silver City I was with the LRP. We were running our patrols out of the Cav. The night of the 15th I was on patrol to the flank of the 2nd Bn. The morning of the 16th it sounded like the sky was full of artillery rounds. We were given a new location to move to -- I have always thought it was behind the enemy, to observe them leaving the battlefield. I think by the time we got into place it was over. There was not much to report. One other thing, we had just lost two guys back to the Bn. Silver City was their first operation back, they both died that day. Took me a while to get over it."

Ron Thomas, 173d LRP

"Early in the battle Bill Vose and I, and maybe hooch buddy Lee Braggs, were bellies to the ground looking for ammo crates kicked out of the doors by one of the resupply choppers. As the fight worn on, more and more choppers would arrive with ammo sling-loaded beneath them, but were often driven off by enemy fire. It was reported 11 choppers took hits that morning. At one point some grunt along the "A" Company line whispers to us, 'Hey! What are you guys doing out there?' We found the crates and dragged them back to 'our side' of the line."

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

(Bill Vose's first day in combat) "After 32 minutes the calls started coming back from the Line Companies for more ammo. We started gathering ammo and grenades from the Headquarters personnel, and then started forward for "A" Company. After 5 minutes of running and dodging through the jungle, we distributed the critically needed ammo to troopers engaged in the battle along the line."

Bill Vose, A/2/503d



HHC RTO Lee Braggs

"At one point in time, when we were down around the aid station where all the bodies were, there was machine gun fire coming from up in one of the trees, raking the wounded and wounding people hauling more wounded in. It was at that point Jack looked down at me and said, 'Shit! You're wounded! You're wounded!' I looked down and my left shoulder was laid open about 5 inches. I was bleeding pretty good, but never felt it and didn't even realize I had been shot. At that point in time I really didn't give a shit cause there was more ammo and wounded to tend to."

Mike Sturges, A/2/503

"Mike's (Sturges) recollections are my own. The noise, smells, and sounds will and are still me. The longest day of my life flashed by in what seemed like minutes.

The sticky blood I still feel. How strong we must have been. I remember Mike and I carrying body after

body. At one time, after an explosion, things were beginning to slow down. I looked over and behind a tree this trooper was looking around to see what had happened, when he was hit with shrapnel; it hit him in the jaw. A medic tended to him immediately, I helped. The medic left to work on others, instructing me to hold him down until the morphine took over. I laid on him, soaked in his blood. When things calmed down, I talked to him, keeping him calm. We would communicate by writing on my cammo cover on my steel pot. When he was medevac'd I walked back up to the hill looking for Mike. Wouldn't you know it, some officer chewed me out for not wearing a helmet! So much for being a hero! I slept good that night."

Jack Ribera, A/2/503d

(continued....)



L-R: Mike & Jack in VN in '01 gazing on battle site where they nearly lost their lives in Aug. '66.



Jack Ribera hunkering down. "Where's your helmet trooper?!"



"The scene that is most etched in my memory is of the tree directly behind our 2nd Squad lighting up like a giant Christmas tree with bright white lights surrounded in puffs of white smoke. I have my own thoughts as to the source of the lights, but probably best not to speculate too much. The end result was that all of our 2nd Squad and FDC were wounded. Thankfully, none of them were KIA, but as best I can determine, everyone with our platoon's guns, except my squad, was out of action."



The late John Nix

John Nix, HHC/B/2/503d

"On one of my dances around the perimeter I came across a young soldier with a gut wound, his head propped against a tree, his German Shepard scout dog obediently and calmly lying at his feet even though incoming rounds continued to zing right over our heads. I crawled over to him and held his hand for a moment, telling him he would be alright and we would get him out of there, but not believing it. He couldn't speak, but looked at me through helpless eyes. Someone had already placed a makeshift bandage on his wound. There was no way he could be moved at that time in the battle – I squeezed his hand before leaving him, thinking he would die for sure."

Thanks for the news on Johnson, Tom, I've thought of him off and on for over 36 years wondering if he survived, you made my day."

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

"His name was Arron or Orin Johnson and he was medevac'd, insisted his dog must go with him on the chopper but the CO standing there said the dog would take up too much space—needed it for the other wounded.....I know for a fact tho that Johnson's dog kept us from walking into an ambush a couple days before the shit hit the fan. " **Tom Wallace, A/2/503d**

"I remember the wounded black brother on the front line, I don't remember the dog though. I for all these years wondered if he'd survived. I don't remember even trying to mend him or to get someone to patch him up. My main concern was to get the ammo back to our brothers in between getting shot at. Fuck, that was scary!

The battle raged on for hours with ammunition becoming quickly depleted. Our mortars were called into action several times and we fired until we had no mortar rounds left.

We had prone shelters, holes gouged out of the ground dug wide and long enough for our bodies, and big enough to protect us from incoming artillery bursts.

On one occasion during the firefight a flicker of light gleamed from the skies above that appeared to be an aircraft. We had called in air support and marked the area with smoke grenades for the plane to help assist with, hopefully, disengaging the enemy's attack. As I lay in my prone shelter looking at the aircraft, I heard explosions and saw dust coming towards me. I quickly ducked, when the 20mm canon shells intended to help us actually hit us. There were wounded people all around, but I can't recall there being any panic. We tended to the wounded, then kept doing what we had to do to keep alive."

A.B. HHC/4.2/2/503d

Note: Both Rick Fred of 4-Deuce Platoon and I were among the many wounded by that friendly fire. Sadly, Rick lost an eye. Ed

"I saw the dirt of the LZ being kicked-up, coming from the direction of the "B" Co. line heading right at me as if in slow-motion – just like in some old war movie. I dove, seeking cover behind a fallen log landing on my left side and taking the fetal position while covering my head and pot with my hands and arms, pressing my back against the log, trying to get small. Then I felt a stinging, burning sensation in my right leg. A number of us were hit by that not-so-friendly fire."



F-4C Phantom on strafing run

Later, a Dustoff was called in for HHC CO Capt. Dan Buttolph and others hit by that same fly boy. For years I had thought it was one of our choppers who shot us up, but was later told it was an Air Force F-4. Damn, dodging bad guy bullets all morning and I get hit by the fucking USAF! But, we were happy they were on the scene.

A Vietnam vet buddy of mine is Rick Elder, the former director of Miami International Airport and an AF fighter pilot out of Bien Hoa around that same time. Hmmm, I need to ask him what he was doing on 16 Mar '66 -- there might be some beers involved."

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

(continued....)



"Our LRRP platoon was running missions along the Song Be during this operation. We were pulled in out of the field, to Bien Hoa and told to stand by for a patrol order. It went something like this: I believe two or three teams were up for this mission. It was our practice to combine teams if our primary mission was to ambush or raid. When we were assembled, we were told that all the members were to go into the operations tent for a mission briefing. Our SOP was for only TLs and ATLs to attend mission briefings, so we began to realize something heavy was going to happen. This was not going to be a recon mission.



LRRP, Mark Carter

We already were aware, of course, that the battalions had made contact with a large Main Force unit. The operations tent was next to the chopper pads near the 17th Cav compound. Once inside, we saw a map on an easel, festooned with red pins that surrounded a smaller group of blue pins. Things began to get a little surreal.

An officer from brigade gave us the briefing. He told us that one of the battalions was pinned down. The other battalion was trying to reach them, but they were stalled in the jungle by enemy forces. Air cover was hard to come by (I don't remember why), and the artillery fan wasn't working out very well because the enemy units were engaged in hand to hand with the battalions. Both battalions were making contact.

Our mission, they explained, was for (two or three) teams to go in at night, and rappel in behind the eastern perimeter of the Main Force VC unit that had engaged the battalion that was pinned. We were to make our way as closely as we could get to them while it was dark, then in the morning, we would assault the VC perimeter in coordination with a similar assault by our boonie rats. The idea was to disorganize the VC enough for the battalion to break out and do what they did best: kill them. Then our mission was to join the assault, or if pursued, to make our way back to the river and dump our gear, then swim a few kilometers downstream to a Special Forces camp. You could have heard a rat fart in the tent while this was being explained to us.

After the briefing, the TLs and ATLs stayed in the tent -- listening on the brigade net for developments -- while the rest of us went out to where the birds were parked to check the rigging on the rappelling ropes and stand

by. We dumped our gear in lines near our respective birds, and sat down to wait for the go order. This is where we break out the cammo sticks and talk about the patrol order.

At first we engaged in the usual banter, like pre-addressing the boxes containing the medals we were all going to get posthumously, and stuff like that, but this didn't last long, and we just sat quietly, thinking about what we were about to do. I remember that the chopper crews sort of shied away from us, not wanting to engage in the usual small talk. Right after dark one of the TLs came out of the hut, and in a very quiet voice, said,

"2nd Bat broke out.

Mission's scrubbed."

(Maybe he said "1st Bat broke through"). I guess there was a collective sigh, but mostly we just picked up our stuff and walked back to our hooches to stand down, and wait for the next patrol order.

I know you have been on that end of a radio conversation where you listened to sit reps from brothers engaged in a fight. It's a helpless feeling, and you'd give a lot to be able to help, but I have to confess that I'm glad you guys busted out before we went down the ropes.

I'm pretty sure I've not got some of the details of that briefing right, CRS strikes. But I bet Sid Smith would remember it. I know Dave Liebersbach remembers this, because he mentioned it in an email to me a few weeks ago. Drive on!"

Mark Carter, 173d LRRP '65/'66



LT Art Martinez (Ret Maj), HHC/B/2/503 on Silver City before being wounded.

(continued....)



“What was particularly impressive throughout the battle was the willingness of many of the wounded to remain in position, treat themselves or their buddies with individual first-aid packs, and continue firing rather than calling for medics or crawling back to the clearing for assistance.”

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

(In a note to Tony Geishauser, one of the Cowboy pilots of the downed chopper).

“I vividly recall your chopper taking fire and going down near my platoon’s location. Truman Thomas was on my platoon – we had two squads set up along the edge of the clearing manning a pair of 81mm mortars or ‘piss



Mortarman Don Rice

tubes’ as we preferred to call them. Fairly early on in the battle Ray Thomas and a bunch of other guys in our platoon were wounded in that strafing pass. By the end of the battle, between getting strafed and taking other incoming, nearly half of the guys in our platoon were wounded. Fortunately, no one in our platoon was killed that day. A.B. Garcia and I (we were gunners on the other piss tube), had the fun job of firing all the 81mm mortar ammo that they had been humping through the bush for several days. Two other troopers from my platoon pulled one of the M60’s off your chopper and took it out to the perimeter and put it to very good use. One of them was a trooper named Larry Albecker and he received the Bronze Star for his actions that day. The most courageous act I recall seeing that day was the actions of the crew of the first ammo resupply chopper. We could see resupply choppers hovering in the distance with loads of ammo sling-loaded beneath them but the ground fire was so heavy that whenever they tried to approach the LZ they would be driven off. We were all getting pretty low on ammunition – I had one 20 round mag left for my M16 and a grenade or two, as did most of the rest of the guys. The ordnance situation was getting a bit on the desperate side throughout the battalion. Finally, that brave chopper crew made a run at our LZ and I can recall keeping my fingers crossed as they approached as I could actually see them taking ground fire as they drew near. We were all amazed that they made it over that hot LZ without being knocked out of the sky. I’m sure they (chopper pilots) were concentrating on keeping that chopper in the air and they cut the load of ammo loose

a bit late and it dropped into the jungle between us and the VC. A.B. Garcia, John Nix and I decided to retrieve it – we were all so low on ammo that we figured we didn’t have much to lose. I have often thought of that brave crew aboard the Huey and wondered who they were and if they were ever turning point in the course of the battle – without it our portion of the perimeter might have been overrun.

I have often thought many times over the years about your Huey going down practically on top of us and was always amazed that your entire crew survived the event. A friend of mine was also a Huey pilot in Vietnam and we always tell each other that we had the easiest job. I wouldn’t have wanted to be up there flying in those choppers and he tells me the last place on earth he would have wanted to be was in the places he dropped off infantry troops. I guess that would tend to make a good case for there not being any really good place to be in Vietnam!”

Don Rice, HHC/4.2/2/503d

“Shortly after that we received another re-supply (of 81mm ammo). So there we were with a Battalion’s load of 81 ammo and no FDC or any way to contact our FO’s, when action picks up on the perimeter and either AB (Garcia) or Don (Rice) asked me, ‘What do we do?’ We cut all the rounds to charge 0 and every time the firing would intensify AB would aim on the sound, set the elevation for 300 yards and traverse for 4-6 rounds.”

John Nix, HHC/B/2/503d

“At times it was almost like An aerial parking lot (above Zulu-Zulu) as fighter-bombers and helicopter gunships jockeyed in the sky, awaiting orders to attack. The real key was the amount of firepower we put on the targets that day.”



Don Bliss, CO, Bde Aviation

**Ret. Col. Don Bliss
Caspers**

“The one thing that still sticks in my mind after all these years is the amount of airpower that was available to the 2/503d that day. There was sortie upon sortie of jets stacked up over the field of battle, and when the Air Force and Navy planes were not present, there was a multitude of Army helicopter gunships available. Boy, how the war had progressed since 8 November 1965 when the 1/503d got hit.”

Craig Ford, C/1/503d

(continued....)



“Approximately 5 minutes later I received a call on the radio to police up all items of VC equipment and weapons and send them back to the Company CP. I sent my PS and 2 men about doing that and then received another call with orders to take a small patrol to engage and destroy a 12.7mm HMG that was wreaking havoc on the right flank of the company.

I set out with the two men, making our way through the bodies of 45 to 50 VC that lay in front of my position. On the other side of the clearing I saw a BAR lying on the ground with no body or anything around it. Now, I had not had that much experience but I knew that the VC did not usually leave weapons behind without some sort of reason. I told my men to hold it, and as I did, one of them took one more step and detonated a booby trap that flipped him completely over, and OUT. A second later from our right front the HMG opened-up casting death and destruction all about. Small trees, 3 or 4 inches in diameter, began falling from the impact of the projectiles.

I looked to my left at Parks, the second man; he had hit the ground so fast that he landed on his back, and as I watched, he got hit NINE times by the MG and then just lay there. I started returning fire with my M-16 and pistol, but it seems all that did was anger the gunner and attract his attention to me; I heard the rounds whoosh over my head and then they started to get lower, beginning to kick-up dirt in front of me. While turning to my left side to reload, I saw rounds coming, taking shovelfuls of dirt with them. Then I felt something warm in my right leg, then in my right side, then my right arm, and then I felt sick!”

Bill Vose, A/2/503d

SOMETHING WAS OUT THERE

“Late in the evening on March 15, 1966, we came upon 6 or 7 bamboo huts; the rice was still cooking but no one was around. I was told later in the hospital that the Viet Cong had gone underground. We continued on until about dusk, dark. The Weapons Platoon was linked between the 2nd and 3rd Platoons.



**A Sky Soldier. A war hero.
Freddie Parks**

We didn't have time to dig-in before dark. We set-up that night and we also had new troops who came in earlier that day to join the Platoon. I remember teasing

one guy that I was going to take care of him because he was my replacement. We shared some C-rations together; and I don't even remember his name.

Sometime late that morning I woke him up to replace me on guard duty. He was there about one hour when he fired four or five rounds. I went over to his position and he told me that he heard something. I reminded him not to fire until he was sure that something was out there, because I didn't want him to give his position away. However, he was right..... something was out there.

We got up that morning heating-up some C-rations when the VC shot the breakfast helicopter down. We didn't pay too much attention to it, until the firing began to work its way around to right in front of us. My position was taking heavy fire when we pulled back about ten meters. All of us made it except Chester McCloud, he was shot in the hip. I went back to drag him to safety and called the medics. By that time the 50 caliber machine gun was cutting down small trees. I placed accurate fire on the machine gun's position, and played chicken with him for two or three hours.

When the young trooper, the one I called my replacement, came over to my position to see what I was doing, the 50 caliber machine gun spotted me and shot my helmet off sending a round through my helmet, picking me up from the prone position and throwing me on my back about 8 meters to the rear.

I don't know how long I was out, but after gathering myself I went to a pile of wounded soldier's weapons and secured me another helmet. I gathered up some grenades, ammo, another weapon and returned to my position.

In my previous position from where we had withdrawn, we had left our 81mm mortars and a whole bunch of mortar rounds. At the position were two VC's and there were four young Vietnamese with shackles around their necks and tied together with a rope. There was one VC in the front who had the mortar tripod, and the four kids in the middle had the mortar rounds....



**Freddie & buddy on perimeter
at Camp Zinn**

(continued....)



....During that time Sergeant Pitts, a new sergeant, got wounded; I don't recall his first name. It was the first time I had ever seen him. He called me over and asked me my name and told me to take care of them. The VCs in the rear had the barrel and they were on their way out when I shot them. The one in the rear was trying to crawl off, and I threw a couple more grenades.

Later on in the morning during a lull in the firing, the enemy 50 caliber machine gun was still there, firing at random. Lieutenant Bill Vose asked for volunteers to go out and try to take it out. I volunteered because I felt I had a score to settle with the VC machine gunner. On my way out I came across a friend named Willie Monroe who had been shot across the forehead, but he wasn't dead. I took time to call the medics and talked to him for a few minutes. The medics took him to the Medivac.

We then continued out about 25 meters, when I, another trooper and Lt. Vose came up on a BAR sitting beside a tree. I remember getting ready to tell the young trooper that we needed to spread out a little. Before I could stop him from picking up the BAR, he did; it was booby trapped. The explosion knocked a chunk of flesh out of the back of his neck and three fragments hit me about an inch above my knee.

I fell down behind a six to eight inch wide tree, and that is when I was hit in my left elbow. I moved to my right and was hit in the right side of my neck. I moved back to my left and was hit again, this time in the left side of my neck. Lt. Vose was telling me to lie still, which was hard to do when you are getting shot. I got hit three times across the back and twice across my buttocks.

The VC then directed his fire on Lt. Vose, and the way the bullets were hitting the ground I could see that he was firing from a tree. I rolled over to the wounded trooper who was behind a big tree. He was conscious and scared to death. I told him that I would be back to get him. I



Freddie at the ready.

I continued out to the other side of the tree and spotted the sniper. He was positioned in a tree about 10 meters from the 50 caliber machine gun. I think they were both out of ammo. After shooting the sniper I continued to the 50 caliber machine gun. They must have been the last two out there. He too



was a young man, about 16 or 17 years old with a shackle around his neck which was tied to the tree.

I returned to the position where my brother trooper was, but he had crawled off. I later saw him in the hospital; he made it. I made it back to the line and refused to be carried on a litter, and walked off the battle field shouting encouragement to my comrades.

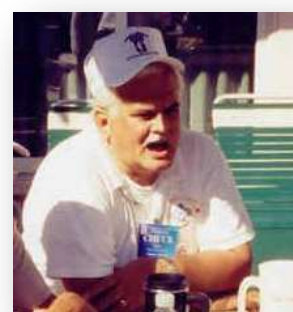
Freddie Parks, A/2/503d

Note: Freddie would be awarded the Silver Star for his heroic actions that day at Zulu Zulu.

"Sergeant Quidera spoke for the entire 2nd Battalion when he told Don Deder of the Arizona Republic,

'Once we got resupplied, I knew we could hold out forever.'"

"I'll never forget when a Major came over to the tree where all the wounded were being assembled and told me to get all the walking wounded to fix bayonets and to be prepared to react to any breach in the lines with a bayonet counter attack. Lucky for us, the lines all held. We finally got evacuated around 1 or 2 in the afternoon."



Chuck

Chuck Guy, HHC/4.2/2/503d



Strategic reserve. Wounded troopers at ZZ.

(continued....)



"Individual acts of heroism were commonplace in the 2nd Battalion that morning. For example, even though the paratroopers carried a heavy load of 400 to 600 rounds per M-16, 2,000 to 3,000 rounds per machine gun, 30 to 40 rounds per M-79 grenade launcher, plus a smoke grenade and two or more fragmentation grenades per individual, troopers started running short of ammunition within the first hour of the battle and began calling back for more ammo. Some troopers were down to 40 rounds at that point in the battle."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

"For what seemed like several hours the heavy machine gun on the flank caused us to hug terra firma. He obviously knew exactly where our positions were because his fire was so accurate.

I remember getting a message to watch for the 1st Battalion that was coming in to reinforce us, also to watch out for Vose and his patrol that had gone out to take-out the 12.7 MG. We heard small arms and grenades, and then the 12.7 fell silent. Almost simultaneously, the Mad Bomber came right over my position and I thought he was going to drop his load right on my position. He dropped 50 81MM mortar rounds about 30 to 40 meters to my right flank."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

"Running short of ammo we radioed for immediate resupply. Fresh ammo arrived on a pallet suspended below a helicopter approaching us from the same direction where the other chopper had been shot down. Gun fire came from all around us, and as I was watching the Huey make its approach over Zulu-Zulu I saw fluid leaking from the chopper. As it went overhead, somehow, someone pulled the release lever and the pallet full of desperately needed ammunition plummeted to earth and fell in front of our lines....we mustered our troops and we immediately went in the direction of where the pallet had been dropped.

Arriving the front line one of our wounded troopers warned us of a 50 Cal machine gun bringing fire on his position. Without hesitating, we forgot about the machine gun, and moved forward towards the pallet. We jumped on top and dismantled the strapping and made a bee-line back to our line. For some reason the machine gun didn't fire, thank God, as there were quite a few of us retrieving the ammo.

We distributed the fresh ammo along our lines as fast as we could to ensure our survival. Had we not been successful in finding the resupply of ammunition and getting it to our troopers holding back the attacking enemy, I dare not think of what could have occurred."

A.B. Garcia, HHC/4.2/2/503d

"One of the incoming supply choppers decided he needed to drop his pallet of ammo and depart the area as fast as he could, except he was faster on departing the area than he was on releasing the load. I remember thinking as I saw the pallet disappear over the tops of the trees headed in a generally eastward direction, that we'd never see that load again. Wrong!

Down comes an order for the squad to retrieve the aforementioned pallet. I already had the feeling we, the Battalion, were in a precarious situation just from the intensity of the incoming fire and the steady flow of casualties to the aid station. I was still really surprised when we reached the perimeter at the gaps we found in the line.

You have to hand it to the grunts for the fight they put up. We brought the ammo back to the Bn HQ where it was grabbed and moved forward before we could set it down....it was truly an honor and a privilege to have been there and to have known and served with such men."

John Nix, HHC/2/503d



Wayne Hoitt's foxhole buddies along "C" Company line.

"Firing was so intense it was beyond description. The VC was coming from all directions. We very quickly called in our artillery as close as 10 meters in front of our lines. In the battle air sorties were flown by the Air Force in support, and our artillery fired 4,000 rounds, that was 78 tons of ordnance around our perimeter."

Bn XO, Major Willard Christensen

(continued....)



"Coolly and methodically, these well dug in paratroopers cut them down. Artillery laid a lethal ring of steel around Zulu-Zulu; bombers plastered the attackers on an average of every six minutes for five hours running. 'Mad Bomber' Huey helicopters rigged with plywood tubes pointing downward dropped 81mm mortar shells right on the Reds....Soon there were considerable numbers of troopers (ammo bearers) crawling to and from the LZ, and most of the battalion casualties occurred among those courageous individuals."

Time Magazine

"On the ground, things were so hot that supply helicopters couldn't land. The crews had to swoop over and throw out pallets of ammunition. Many casualties occurred as men crawled into the open to retrieve those crates. One out of every four of my men were wounded. That shows the intensity of this battle.

One soldier carried on even after his jaw was shot away by a bullet. He looked at me and gave me the 'thumbs-up' sign. I'll never forget that."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

"Women and children were seen pulling bodies and wounded away".

Clay Mobley, A/2/503d

"We found other young boys killed by our fire when we counter-attacked. The VC had tied them to trees, leaving their arms free to fire a rifle but tying their bodies upright with the knots on the other side of the tree so they couldn't reach them before we came upon them."



Hammer

Desmond "Hammer" Jackson, C/2/503d

"That single battle in LZ Zulu-Zulu seems to have been a major event in many people's lives. After all we saw and did in Vietnam, you wouldn't think this single event would be as etched in our brains as it is...but it is for almost everyone I've ever talked to who was there.

I expected us to have the normal 15-20 minute fire fight that usually took place. When supplying you guys, we often had to orbit somewhere while you had a small fire fight that didn't last very long. After it was over, you gave us the green light, dropped smoke and we came in and dropped off and/or picked up whatever we

needed to. But, after the first hour and then two hours, I was getting more than a little worried. This was anything but normal.

Going into the second hour, I start making bargains with God. Some of us make them sooner than that. I was trying to find some bargaining chip I could use to bargain with God to spare me in this particular fierce fire fight. After all, I was only 22 and my father (Anthony Geishauser) was killed at the same age on Iwo Jima in 1945. I thought one 22-year-old was enough for one family. Give me at least another year. At any rate, the only thing I came up with was telling God I would stop smoking if he would get me through this thing?



After making the bargain, I really needed a cigarette 30-45 minutes later. Without really thinking about it all that much, I tried to sneak a cigarette out of my pocket and into my mouth without "Anybody" seeing me. Just as I was about to light the butt, a bullet ricocheted around my head as if "The Man" shot the round Himself. I took the butt out of my mouth, tossed it as far as I could and said, 'OK, I got the message!'

While it seemed like we were all looking over the edge of Hell that day, just about everything worked in our favor at the end...any place in the perimeter that would have been breached would have caused havoc with the whole battalion."

Tony Geishauser, Cowboys

"The LT's RTO took an RPG thru the radio on his back. His lungs and heart were plastered all over Southerd's front and the radio didn't quite work after that (wonder why?). Once we were eventually lifted out of the action and back to Bien Hoa, the LT was transferred to HQ Co. and he took over the Recon Platoon. It wasn't much longer after his reassignment and he took a 50 cal thru his chest on another mission."

Tom Wallace, A/2/503d

"Yes, Tom, I had heard about Southerd. As an RTO, one of the images I've been unable to erase from my mind is that of another RTO's head being blown apart. His PRC25, the same radio I humped during my tour, covered in gory remains, his helmet in the dirt, the back of it blown-away. It's difficult to try and forget."

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

(continued....)



"It took but a few minutes before I saw them coming through the bushes, heading straight towards us. Talk about my heart running a race! These weren't VC, they were North Vietnamese Regulars, recognizable by their light green uniforms and the characteristic helmets. Fortunately, they hadn't seen us yet and were walking upright. As they were drawing closer and closer, I waited desperately for someone to open fire on them; nobody did. Damn it! – does nobody see them but me? – What is everybody waiting for? – I don't want to be the first one to shoot and give away my machine gun position!



Herbert

Thoughts like this were racing crisscross through my mind. Please, God, don't let me get killed today, I made it so far, help me get through this! When they were as close as say, 30 or 40 feet, I couldn't take the responsibility to wait any longer, I had to make the decision: I picked out the easiest target, aimed, pulled the trigger and let go, releasing burst after burst after burst...everyone joining in now."

Herbert Murhammer, B/2/503d



A Viet Cong soldier in 1966, some would call her a "freedom fighter".

"I crawled over to Parks, and seeing that he was still alive, I grabbed him by the shirt and dragged him and myself by leaps and bounds to the 'safety' of my 5 man line. After about 20 minutes of trying to stop the bleeding and to patch up the 17cm hole in my leg, my PS decided that I had to be evacuated.

After a 30 minute nightmare of crawling and being dragged through the still incoming fire and the thick jungle, I made it to the LZ. Approximately 10 minutes later I rose speedily out of the jungle in a lifesaving MEDIVAC chopper. While watching 'Zulu-Zulu' fade into the distance, I said to myself,

'Kid, if every day's going to be like this, I don't think you're going to make it'."

Bill Vose, A/2/503d

No DEROS Alpha Returns to Zulu Zulu



In '05, Maj. Gus Vendetti (L), and Capt. Bill Vose display Alpha Company guidon at LZ Zulu Zulu following their demanding hump into the "D" Zone.

"The Vietnamese kept coming even when it was obvious they were losing – they didn't have radios and couldn't call off the assault. Afterward, one dead VC soldier was found chained to his machine-gun. They played into our hands. They gave all the cards to us. I felt that I was totally in control of the situation, and that with resupply (of ammo) we could hold them off forever.

The courage of my soldiers is what I recall most about that fight. I don't think I'll ever be in such fine company again."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

(continued....)



"After the shit calmed down and we could get back to our rucksacks, we found the Gun and the Gook chained to it (heard Freddie Parks got him with an M-79). That damned gook was still smoking, like a BBQ'd pig! I got the collar off the gook but some Lt. took it and said he'd take care of it."

James Bailey, A/2/503d

"My personal recollection of Zulu-Zulu began with me at base camp at Camp Zinn because of a lot of paper-work I was supposed to do as company clerk (I traded off every other operation with Richard Childress). But, word came down of the trouble "B" Company was in, and the rest of the battalion, so someone from head-quarters asked me to round-up any bodies back in camp capable of going out as reinforcements.



Mr. Paladino with his little buddies in Vietnam.

We flew to a staging airstrip to transfer to helicopters....I said we need to get to the company, but the officer in charge said the LZ was too hot and we'd have to wait.

That night we came under a grenade attack and I was running ammo to the perimeter. I remember feeling my way in the dark looking for PSG Quick, then stepping on someone's stomach. I said I was looking for Sgt. Quick, and he said, 'You found him!'... That night I remember laying in a hammock when the grenades started being lobbed in, and getting hit on the back of the neck with shrapnel. That's when we started scrambling.

That all happened about six weeks before I rotated out." **Larry Paladino, B/2/503d**

"We pushed out as far into the brush as our numbers permitted. It was thick. It made it a close-range fight at hand grenade distance in some places."

**John Walsh,
Bn CO/2/503d**



Col. Walsh

"That was my Recon squad that was ambushed on our mad dash to try to bail you guys out. Al Rascon was Recon Platoon's medic. I was one of the only ones in the ambush who was not wounded or killed.

In 1994, surviving members of Recon were requested by the Department of the Army to submit verifying accounts of Al's heroic actions to qualify him for the Medal of Honor. So, in 2000, I had the distinct honor of participating in Al's MOH ceremony at the White House."

John Kirk, 1/503d



1/503's Al Rascon presented with Medal of Honor at White House by President Clinton.

"I never considered it a rescue but brothers joining together to beat the hell out of a bully. We watched the days before the big battle as the AF Helos picked up KIA's and WIA's as you guys moved to Zulu Zulu. We just wondered why we were sitting there patrolling and when the major contact started we were up and moving as fast as we could go being briefed along the way. I was Point for B Company.

We ran out of water fast and while trying to get through the tangled trees the artillery and airstrikes had knocked down made the movement miserable. The Bn Commander in a helicopter overhead was telling us to move faster -- I wanted to shoot it down. I fell backwards over a downed tree -- the Lord was looking after me. Someone had just shot at me as I fell and the bullet hit my buddy Floyd in the ass and Pappy Landis, a WWII vet, was hit in the leg. The other point from C Company killed the guy who shot at me.

The Chopper that was shot down had reconstituted milk on it and I passed it out to the other guys and then we replaced B/2/503 on the line as the line readjusted. That was one hell of a big base camp."

Bill Acebes, B/1/503d

(continued....)



After Action Report

"...At 160910H the Bde CG instructed CO, 1/503d to move to reinforce TF 2/503d. B & C Companies reached the battle area at approximately 161200H and linked up with TF 2/503d at 161335H. The approach of reinforcements could have been the cause for the withdrawal by the VC forces. By 161635H the remainder of TF 1/503d had linked up with TF 2/503d. Enroute, A/1/503d engaged a reinforced VC squad vicinity YT 142437 at 161515H. Ten (10) VC were killed and three (3) weapons were captured. During the remainder of the day after link-up, TF 1/503d assisted in the search of the battle area. Effective 161700H TF 1/503d and TF 2/503d were combined under the command of the Bde Deputy Commander to form TF DUDDY. The TF Base was located vicinity YT 141438 for the night (Position ZZ). During the afternoon two battalions from the 1st Inf Div landed on LZ 94 (YT 163382) and began moving toward LZ 47 (YT 159431) to seal off one possible escape route of the VC and to reinforce TF DUDDY if necessary."



LZ Zulu Zulu, 'Pop smoke for Dust Off!'

(Photo by Wayne Hoitt)

"For the rest of the action, I have a complete blank. Were we shooting the whole while without stopping, or were there alternate lulls and pickups? Frankly, I don't have a clue. All I remember is that I said to myself: *'Keep up the fire. Don't let up. Nail them down. Don't give them the slightest chance to fire back.'* Once more, I don't know how, but miraculously ammunition supply kept on coming from behind until finally, finally the enemy broke off and there was no more response out front.

After the shooting had definitely ceased, there was a moment of absolute silence. No sound out front, no sound within, silence! Just as though nobody could believe that it was over, afraid of stirring up everything anew by making the slightest rustle. It was only after at least two or three minutes of this complete silence that

I dared to take a breather, to cautiously raise my head by no more than an inch and, eyes squinted, look around, totally scared of what I might see.

Boy, was I relieved to see that, at least in my immediate vicinity, everybody seemed to be alright. 'Stevie P' Steets gave me a 'thumbs up' sign, and David 'Jody' Canady flashed the gap between his two front teeth out of his black face."

Herbert Murhammer, B/2/503d



We called them "CMH" – Caskets with Metal Handles

"The bravest things I saw that day were the guys bringing us ammo under fire from the DZ, Renfro standing on a termite mound to place MG fire while we were under close attack, and Bill Vose going outside the perimeter with 3 guys under fire to take out the enemy MG which was tearing up 'A' Company."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

"The scene of the battle was awesome. From the edges of the LZ into the brush the vegetation was brutalized. Trees were nibbled, split and shredded by bullets and shrapnel. The litter of the battle was everywhere: empty shell casings, cardboard ammo and C Ration cartons, commo wire, used battle dressings, dark blood-soaked sand and bits of dried flesh.

The next morning we marched out of Zulu-Zulu. We passed through a graveyard where the enemy had been hastily buried. Hands, feet and an occasional tuft of dusty, straight black hair from the dirt to be visited by large blue flies. A make-shift sign had been erected among the graves reading something like, *'Compliments of the 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep).'*'"

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d

(continued....)



"Second Platoon had one KIA on Silver City. A tall blond young man named Knudson, a farm boy from the heartland, as I recall.

Several days earlier he had found an ancient wooden plow and asked if he could have it – he wanted to display it at the Country Fair when he got home. I told him it was fine with me, but I didn't know how he would get it to an LZ and then back to Camp Zinn. He said he would carry it until we got to our next LZ, and that he did.



Ken Knudson

Through 8 clicks of jungle he carried that 80 pound wooden plow, in addition to all his other gear, and then convinced a chopper pilot to drop it off at Camp Zinn. Ken Knudson never got to send the plow home."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

"The next day as we headed out we came across one of our guys (with no head). We carried him to the next LZ (still do not know who he was). This really didn't sit well with the guys and I do believe that because of that trooper everyone changed that day. I didn't learn till long after just what the hell happened that day – all I can say is, those brave men stood the test, looked the devil in the eye and spit in his face! Although it's hard now to remember names."

James Bailey, A/2/503d

"The firefight finally came to a halt and we proceeded to medevac our wounded brothers from Zulu-Zulu; chopper after chopper, until all were extracted to hospitals for treatment. The night following the battle was calm, and we remained on guard for another attack which never came. The smell that night was a terrible, indescribable stench, and in the morning we broke camp and trekked out of Zulu-Zulu.



A.B.

We walked all day, and I don't remember stopping as we had the enemy at our tails. I was completely exhausted and pleaded with God to not let me fall, as I knew at that point I would not have been able to get up; I just kept praying.

I'm truly grateful for the mighty Sky Soldiers and for their courage, which was next to none!! For not for their courage and determination, I wouldn't be here today. For the ones who never made it back, we will never forget. As we Australians say here, 'LEST WE FORGET.'

A.B. Garcia, HHC/4/2/2/503d



After the battle. (Photo by Wayne Hoitt)

"By the time we took account of the situation, it was way past midday and the Vietnamese sun accelerated the decaying process of the dead bodies all around. The air was filled with the sickeningly-sweetish stench of death, a stench that is as vivid to me today as it was then.

Without delay, nature had started to go about its task of making disappear the traces of this most unnatural of happenings; practically all of the fallen Vietnamese soldiers were already prey to zillions of flies and ants.

In popular and also in totalitarian imagery, the enemy is usually portrayed as a fierce-looking, unshaven, foul-smelling, fanaticized evil being with blood-shot eyes. Were it so, one could feel almost good about coming out as the victor in a battle like the one we had just lived through. Alas, the tragedy of war is that both sides look alike. The soldiers we just killed – had to kill! – were young, good-looking, athletic youths just like us. In other circumstances we might have met in a sports competition, a students' program, played in the same band, become friends!

That is why, even though I am sincerely glad to have survived, I cannot rejoice; the price for my being alive today will forever be posted on my mind's eye."

Herbert Murhammer, B/2/503d

"There was no validity to the mission for starters, and most any unit but the 2/503d would have been decimated."

Bob Carmichael, Bn CO/XO/2/503d

(continued....)





War exacts a very demanding price be paid to it.

(Photo provided by Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d)

"That's pretty much what we did during the entire fire fight; with all the damn bodies layin' around. I don't remember much after that but when it was over I went down to the aid station and one of the medics patched up my shoulder. We then returned to our lines and secured the perimeter and started lookin' for clean underwear. Except for Phillips, I honest to god don't remember the name of another G.I. that day who Jack and I carried, between running ammo and helping other wounded. *'Holy fuck!'* is all Jack and I said to each other, too exhausted to say anything else."

Mike Sturges, A/2/503d

"I know that some of my former comrades will consider these reflections as sentimental babble; good for them if they succeeded in getting this period out of their system in any other way by staying sane. Many did not!

That was, from my vantage point, March 16, 1966, in Landing Zone Zulu-Zulu, to the best of my recollection. Bear in mind that this event took place some 38 years ago; therefore, some of the details pertaining to timeframes, to places or to persons might not be 100% accurate anymore.

Shortly after 'LZ Zulu-Zulu', I did go on R&R to Taipei where, spending without regrets all the money I had 'saved' out there, I did not 'Rest' much, but 'Recuperated' a lot. On my return to Bien Hoa, I was so 'short' that my only concern was to survive safely until my 'rotating out', which, as these lines prove, I managed to do successfully."

Herbert Murhammer, B/2/503d

(The morning after the battle). "That morning in the chow line, the company medic was standing behind me and noticed my left pant leg was all wet (I thought I had pissed myself), but anyway, I pulled up my pant leg and there was a small hole clean thru the leg (didn't touch anything important), just above the knee. He put some powder in it then bandaged it up, pulled the pant leg down and we both went back to eat chow. No one in line by then, and me and Wellington really put some away that morning! We didn't need seconds...(that was my 2nd Purple Heart and my BS w/v)."

Tom Wallace, A/2/503d

"Years later I used the experiences from the morning of the 16th as examples to get major changes to the Army Medic Training Course at Fort Sam Houston. Today's Medic may not know how to change bed linen with a patient in the hospital bed but they damn well know how to stop the bleeding and dress a traumatic amputation. "

Pat Feely, Medic, C/2/503d

After Action Report

D+13 (22 March 1966): On D+13 the 173d Abn Bde (Sep) terminated Operation "SILVER CITY" in War Zone "D" and redeployed the remaining units back to the Bde Base at Bien Hoa.



"I later wrote up Vose and Renfro for the Distinguished Service Cross for their heroic actions that morning. Renfro eventually received a Silver Star. Sometime later he went AWOL to Europe for two months to be with his wife. When he came back he got busted, made the rank of Sergeant again, and was later killed.

Following the battle a dead VC was found shackled by his neck and chained to the heavy machine gun Vose and his men took out. Bill and his men were awarded Bronze Stars for their heroic actions. Someone in the chain-of-command above me nixed Vose's DSC, allegedly because he felt he *'Did not need any Lieutenant playing 'John Wayne'*. If anyone ever deserved an award for bravery for letting it all hang out in battle, it was Vose on that day."

Gus Vendetti, A/2/503d

(continued....)



"In May of 1968, after I received a direct commission, I was attending the Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning. In the class on the 'Battalion in Defense,' they were using the battle of Zulu-Zulu as the example."

Joe Logan, B/2/503d

"...President Lyndon Johnson awarded the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (and attached units), the Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism at LZ Zulu-Zulu. This citation is the highest unit award made to any army organization. The paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion can be forever proud that they never yielded a meter of their perimeter throughout the five-hour battle at Zulu-Zulu."

Tom Faley, C/2/503d

"I remember walking by the S-4 tent and seeing damaged equipment piled up beside it. Some of it was bloody and had bullet holes in it. This was after ZZ and I thought, 'Fuck me! There's a good chance I'm not going to make it out of this.' It seemed like each new operation was bloodier than the last."

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d

[I'm pleased to report hooch buddy and good friend Jim did survive his tour of duty in Vietnam. Ed]

"My memories of Silver City? First, let me tell you that because I had less than 30 days left on my ETS, THANK MY GOD, I was held back in battalion and didn't participate in that action. However, my memories are as follows:

Directly after the battle, I had to walk over to battalion supply for some radio parts or something that were needed for Commo Platoon. The men in supply were inventorying all of the equipment from our men who were KIA or WIA. They had it all, at least all that could be found, spread out on the ground around the supply tent. The sight that I saw that day changed my life forever.

When I walked up on that bullet-riddled, blood-stained, shredded equipment, and so much of it, I couldn't go any further, I just froze in my tracks. My mind for a few moments couldn't comprehend what I was looking at. I don't know how long I stood there and stared at that awful sight. Wondering, that if I had been there, would my equipment also be laying on that same ground, in the same bloody condition? I never did make it inside the supply tent.

I have been in battles, and know the damages that are caused, but this was the first time that I had seen what represented the entire battle damage inflicted on

our beloved 2/503rd, in just equipment. It was most heart wrenching.

I have thanked GOD many, many times for sparing me from that battle. And, I have spoken many prayers for those who had to participate in it. God bless them all, and they will always remain in my prayers.

Your brother, always," **Ted Mobley, HHC/2/503d**

In '05, Gus Vendetti, Bill Vose, their sons and I returned to Vietnam and humped into the "D" Zone jungle to find LZ Zulu Zulu. These mementos were collected from that battle site. Ed



"Some years ago my wife and I visited the WWII concentration camp at Dachau near Munich, Germany; it was a cold winter morning. The prisoner barracks had decades ago been demolished yet certain buildings remain standing to this day, including the 'showers' and the building housing the ovens, and one where horrifying medical experiments were performed on the innocent, and the wall where those same innocent were executed by firing squads during that war. It was abundantly clear to us we were walking in the midst of a killing field.

We toured the area, mostly in silence, stepping on those grounds now covered by gravel.

Approaching our time to leave and nearing the 'Arbeit Macht Frei' front gates, I leaned down and picked-up a single, small stone, a 'souvenir' of our time there. Reaching the front gate I stopped, looked at the stone in my hand, then dropped it to the ground. That stone belonged there; I had no right to take it.

Except for the Chinese medicine vial I sent Doc Beaton, the rusted lug nut now in a glass jar in Texas mingling with Cowboy Geishauser's dirt from two wars, and the spent cartridge I gave Jim Healy, I remain in possession of these small, rusted pieces of metal from 16 March 1966. I wish I would have left them there, at Zulu-Zulu, where they belong." **Lew Smith, HHC/2/503**

(continued....)



The preceding recollections by some of our men who fought and survived that particular day are taken from *The Battle at Bau San* (Zulu Zulu). Anyone wishing to receive the entire report on Operation Silver City please send a note to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and it will be emailed to you piecemeal. Ed



Upon return to Camp Zinn, Sky Soldiers of the 2d Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), gather together to honor their fallen.

(Photo by: Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503d)

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

