



February-March 2015, Issue 59
 Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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

Editor's Choice Edition
~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

The next time civilians ask you what it was like being a 2/503d grunt during the Vietnam War, hand them this photo, and walk away.



The text which accompanied the photo: *“An anonymous photo of typical 2^d Battalion 173d Airborne grunts who had just slugged it out with the enemy in 67/68. This was a rare instance when men had a few moments in the field to sit together in a non-threatening moment in what otherwise could only be called a brutal existence of continuous fear and anxiety.”*

Photo submitted by Roger Dick, C/2/503d

[Newsletter cover photo from Issue 11, February 2010]



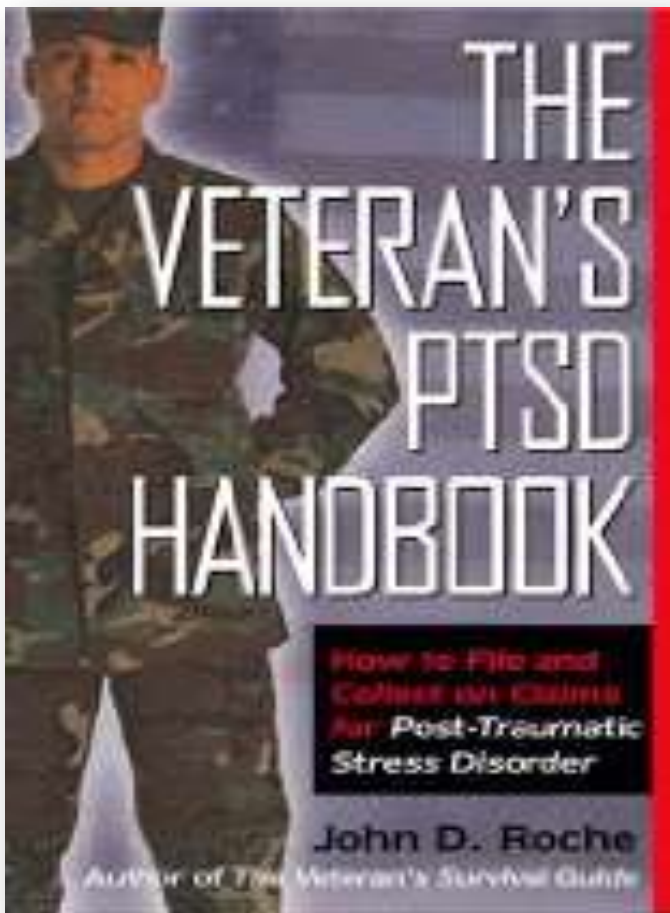
Welcome Home Airborne Brothers:

As individuals from the Vietnam era returned from the combat zone, some turned to drugs, some turned to alcohol or multiple relationships, but a larger number turned to work and keeping busy to avoid the emotion related to their experiences. As they age and slow down or retire, this tsunami wave of emotion eventually catches up with them. It hits you like a huge wave and at times you may feel that it is taking you under.

With all of the service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, you might be surprised to know that the greatest number of disability requests for PTSD are currently coming from Vietnam veterans.

A new and very helpful resource in the process is available at Amazon.com, *The Veteran's PTSD Handbook* authored by John D. Roche.

Scott Fairchild, Ph.D
Doctor of Psychology
LTC 82nd Airborne (Ret)
Veterans Helping Veterans
Baytree Behavioral Health
Melbourne, FL



[Appeared in Issue 1, June 2009]

2/503d COMBAT SERVICE CITATION

Four former commanders of the battalion, Cols. Dexter, Carmichael, Walsh and Sigholtz, have issued the *2/503d Combat Service Citation (CSC)* to all men who served with the battalion during any year of the Vietnam War. The award *"is in recognition of their exemplary performance during combat operations"*. If you have not yet received your personalized Citation, email your name and 2/503 unit as you wish it to appear on the award to rto173d@cfl.rr.com and it will be sent to you.

[Appeared in Issue 1, June 2009]

A POEM FOR THOSE AUSSIES

(2005 173d Reunion in Australia)

You said, *"Come down to OZ and meet your brothers of the war.*

You're getting old you septic tanks, and we want to see you just once more."

So our duffle bags we packed-up tight, and on the big bird we took-off high.

We flew to the bottom of the earth to tell you Diggers one last goodbye.

For it has ere been many years since last we shared a brew.

Since last we fought the Viet Cong, and in Bien Hoa we'd then fight you.

You were young and tough and full of piss in those funny hats you wore.

We really didn't like you much, but, there were times we liked you more.

Such as Marauder in the rice fields, to Crimp's rubber trees with pride, we'd battle those bastards face-to-face with you Aussies right by our side.

And we liked you at Silver City when our Bat was nearly overrun.

We were glad you Cobbers had our flank and could join in on the fun.

So we tip a schooner to you boys, although boys you ain't no more.

We all may be old and slow of foot, but we're brothers of the war.

Lew Smith
HHC/2/503, '65/'66

[Appeared in Issue 1, June 2009]



Helmet Bath

1966 opened for 2/503 with *Operation Marauder*, a brigade operation that was a real change from what we had been used to. Previously we had operated mostly in the jungle. But Marauder was in the northern Mekong Delta – flat rice paddies and sugar cane fields, barren of trees except along the dikes which separated the fields. Irrigation canals crisscrossed the area carrying water to the rice fields, and though no crops had been planted for several years, the rice fields were still muddy from rain which had ceased a few weeks earlier.

On January 2d we had fought a day long battle, ending with our seizure of a dike line where the VC had been holding us up all day. That night the VC withdrew from the area. The next day, January 3d, we were given the mission to push on to the Vam Co Dong River, a few kilometers to the Southwest. We arrived at our objective in late afternoon, after crossing muddy fields and numerous canals up to our waists in muddy water. As we closed in on our objective, the companies were deployed into a perimeter and started to dig in. We set up the Battalion CP on a dike next to an abandoned sugar cane field, and I called for the company commanders to come to the CP for a meeting later in the afternoon.



HHC troops watch air strike from paddy dike, 2 Jan 66.

Photo by George Dexter

Since I had about an hour before the meeting, I decided that this would be a good time to take a bath. I was filthy from having lain in muddy water for several hours during the battle the day before, from struggling through the mucky fields all day and crossing the muddy canals. The cane field beside the CP had not been used for years, but there were still enough dead stalks standing that I felt I could find some privacy there. So I filled my helmet with water, got a bar of soap and a

clean set of jungle fatigues, under shorts and socks from my rucksack, and went out into the cane field. There I stripped, carefully laid my clean and dirty clothes around me, and started to lather up.



Jan 66, near Van Co Dong River, 2/503d troops crossing canal during Operation Marauder. SGM Mish in foreground, RTO Smith, third from left, in water.

Photo by: George Dexter

What I did not know, and should have, was that the battalion helipad had been laid out right beside the cane field. All of a sudden a chopper came right over my head – not ten feet up – blew down all the cane stalks, picked up my clothes – dirty and clean – and threw them all over the place. So here was the battalion commander running around all over the field buck naked trying to gather up his clothes. Not exactly a picture of dignity.

As it turned out, the chopper was full of correspondents. One of them, a reporter from a Los Angeles newspaper, wrote a story about this man running around naked in a field looking for his clothes. Luckily, he didn't use my name!

**Col. George E. Dexter, US Army, Retired
Commander
2d Battalion (Airborne),
503d Infantry Regiment
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
August 1964 to February 1966**



[Appeared in Issue 1, June 2009]



~ The Old Guard ~



Jim Bethea

We are veterans of the Vietnam War.

**Time is counting the cadence now
as the years slowly march us into history.
The battlefields where we screamed and cried
and bled and died
settle like falling leaves onto its pages.**

**We make our daily pilgrimage
to the seductive siren on the rocks –
Our Lady of the Valley of the Shadow – Vietnam.
She has been our companion for so long now
that it would be hard to imagine life without her.
Indeed, we would be like lost children.**

**She is the tapestry against which
all things are compared.
We measure everything and everyone
by the yardstick of our experience with her.**

**Today she may return us to a
mountain top view of a
cloud shrouded emerald green valley.
Tomorrow may bring a visit to the place
with the dark, blood soaked sand and the
bits of sticky, drying flesh clinging to the bushes.**

**We have that secret place that we retreat to
when the outside world gets too close.
It is where we go to deal with hurtful things.
It is the place where we keep the little
locked box with the bad things in it.
There, we are still soldiers...it is our bunker.**

**Jim Bethea
2/503d, 173d Airborne**

[Appeared in Issue 2, July 2009]



~ The Tragedy of War ~



“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” Co., 2/503d
173d Airborne**

[Appeared in Issue 2, July 2009]



2/503d Brothers... Where Are They Now?



**Steve Haber
C/2/503d, Bronze Star w/V and
Purple Heart recipient. Steve
is a former business owner and
and is retired in Sarasota,
Florida with his wife Joan.**

[Appeared in Issue 2, July 2009]



2/503d Brothers... Where Are They Now?

Jack Ribera



Jack, recipient of the Purple Heart, served with A/2/503 in 1966, when he was wounded by a mine. His wounds were so severe he was carried as KIA, and today his name appears on *The Wall* in Washington, DC. This good man and good trooper survived and is doing well in Durham,

CT, where he lives with his loving wife Peg.

L-R: Mike Sturges and Jack Ribera, A/2/503, in 2001 visiting the battle site in Vietnam where they both were severely wounded in August 1966.

[Appeared in Issue 3, August 2009]



Stories of the "Bravo Bulls"

Vietnam Story: Part V.....
A Great Kiss

by Larry Paladino

When *'Playboy'* magazine's 'Playmate of the Year' for 1965, Jo Collins, arrived in Vietnam, the company she came to see was in the boondocks. Back in November '65, Lt. Price sent a letter to Hugh Hefner of *'Playboy'*, along with a \$125. check from eager Bravo Co. G.I.'s. Price reasoned that since a *'Playboy'* bunny was supposed to deliver the first copy of a lifetime subscription, why couldn't she deliver it to Vietnam?

My function, when the unit was not in the field, was that of company clerk. My assistant, PFC Richard Childress of North Carolina, and I argued over who would type the letter. We split the duty, knowing that we would be instrumental in getting a beautiful, round-eyed American female to come to Vietnam. We felt sure *'Playboy'* would not pass up this opportunity for publicity. It didn't. Jo Collins arrived at Tan Son Nhut Airbase,

outside of Saigon, on Jan. 11, and was greeted by Lt. Clarence Johnson and several "B" Co. men who had stayed behind from the last search and destroy mission because of wounds.



Co. "B" was flown by helicopter from the Ho Bo Woods area near War Zone D to our base camp on Jan. 13. 'G.I. Jo' was there to greet us as we came off the choppers. I stuck close to the CO, Capt. Les Brownlee, because I was one of his RTO's (radio telephone operators).



As it turned out, he patted me on the back and said, "*I want you to greet Miss Collins for the company*". I said OK and proceeded to shake her hand. "*No, no,*" said Capt. Brownlee, "*that's not what I mean*".

Then it dawned on me. This sweaty, grubby G.I. straight from trudging through steaming jungles, sitting in polluted rice paddies during heavy Viet Cong attack, and sleeping in dirty foxholes in the same set of fatigues for 13 days, put his arms around Playmate Jo Collins and gave her a mad, passionate kiss.

After both of us recovered, one of the 'Associated Press' photographers said, "*Do it again, I need more pictures*". He then took my name and address and said the pictures would be in every paper across the U.S. (They must have missed Detroit, none of my relatives ever saw them).

(This is one in a series of stories Larry wrote about serving in Vietnam with the 2/503d which appeared in his college newspaper in 1967).



[Appeared in Issue 3, August 2009]





Charles J. Watters Major, U.S. Army

Citation:

Chaplain (Major) Charles J. Watters, Company A, 173d Support Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade, distinguished himself by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life during an assault in the vicinity of Dak To, Republic of Vietnam, on 10 November 1967. Chaplain Watters was moving with one of the companies when it engaged a heavily armed enemy battalion. As the battle raged and the casualties mounted, Chaplain Watters, with complete disregard for his own safety, rushed forward to the line of contact. Unarmed and completely exposed, he moved among, as well as in front of, the advancing troops, giving aid to the wounded, assisting in their evacuation, giving words of encouragement, and administering the last rites to the dying. When a wounded paratrooper was standing in shock in front of the assaulting forces, Chaplain Watters ran forward, picked the man up on his shoulders and carried him to safety. As the troopers battled to the first enemy entrenchment, Chaplain Watters ran through the intense enemy fire between the two forces in order to recover two wounded soldiers. Later, when the battalion was forced to pull back into a perimeter, Chaplain Watters noticed that several

wounded soldiers were lying outside the newly formed perimeter. Without hesitation and ignoring attempts to restrain him, Chaplain Watters left the perimeter three times in the face of small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire to carry and assist the injured troops to safety. Satisfied that all of the wounded were inside the perimeter, he began aiding the medics applying field bandages to open wounds, obtaining and serving food and water, and giving spiritual and mental strength and comfort. During his ministering he moved out to the perimeter from position to position, redistributing food and water and tending to the needs of his men. Chaplain Watters was giving aid to the wounded when he himself was mortally wounded. Chaplain Watters' unyielding perseverance and selfless devotion to his comrades were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army.

[Appeared in Issue 3, August 2009]



Return to Zulu-Zulu

In 2005, three paratroopers of the 2/503d who survived this battle, Bill Vose, Gus Vendetti and Lew Smith, returned to Vietnam and humped into the “D” Zone jungle to find LZ Zulu-Zulu.

Mike Thibault, 2/503, who, during an earlier visit to Vietnam, had made that treacherous journey to the LZ, is likely the first of us to ever return there.

The following was written about the three troopers’ visit to the jungle and that hallowed ground at LZ Zulu-Zulu.

The Jungle Speaks....

Welcome back Sky Soldiers. Do you remember me? I remember you. As you walk on my jungle floor today, please note I still bear the scars from your last visit here. I long ago forgave you for the ruin you brought me and my people. I took the blood spilled here, your blood and the blood of my brethren, mixed it with my rich soil and watered it yearly with my monsoons to replace the trees you fell, the greenery you trampled and cut away. You see, it has all returned, new and fresh and green and alive. You’ll see other scars remain; the wide and deep holes from your bombs. It is taking me longer to repair these holes, so in the meantime I use them to collect water for my monkeys and tigers and boars and the countless other animals and insect life which returned here upon your leave. Walk in peace here today you paratroopers of the 173d Airborne, enjoy the beauty and serenity of my jungle, but, I will not make it an easy walk for you. You are old now, and although you carry no ammunition and guns seeking to destroy humanity, my jungle, while forgiving you, cannot forget. Be cautious of my vines; you called them “wait-a-minute” vines in your youth. My vines would grab you, stopping your forward progress – they really were doing my bidding, telling you to turn and go, but you would not. And, be cautious of my insects, a million times a million strong, who will sting you and burn your skin. And, Gus, be wary of my bees, for one sting from them could kill you. When you were last here you will recall I ordered my bees to attack your men, and eight of your soldiers were removed from this

place. Had I known then you were coming, I would have enlisted all my jungle’s bees to welcome you. My failure to do that contributed to so many of our two armies leaving their life’s last breath here in the bosom of my jungle. And, as you walk my paths do not stray too far from their safety, as the growth of my vines and the rains from above have not disarmed the weapons of war left here by you and my people – my jungle is a peaceful yet very dangerous place. I welcome you back to this place where so many good Vietnamese and American men died or were maimed and scarred for life. I know you have good souls, as each of you are compelled to return here for one final farewell to your brothers, and I noticed and respect you for recognizing the losses sustained by my people here, as you now call them “brothers and sisters of war”. You have come for peaceful reasons, and you are welcome into my jungle. The ghosts of your time here are watching you – unlike you, they are forever young. They mingle together in the darkness of night in my jungle, and they now are friends. They understand your visit here and appreciate you coming to remember them. Go in peace into my jungle you gentle souls, you old soldiers.

The Ghosts of Zulu-Zulu?



LZ Zulu-Zulu. Photo by Wayne Hoitt

[Excerpt from *The Battle at Bau San*, appeared in Issue 4, August 2009]



He Ain't Gonna Jump No More!

A cherry paratrooper and his dad were sitting on the porch talking about his first jump. "I was all excited about my first jump. Jumping out of a plane and all made me pretty excited but when the green light came on I couldn't jump," said the cherry.



His dad said, "Well, what happened?" The paratrooper continued, "Well, the Jump Master came up behind me and whipped out his manhood and said if I didn't jump he'd ram it up my butt." His dad asked, "Did you jump?" The paratrooper said, "Only a little, at first."

Feet and knees together.
Yeah, right.

[Appeared in Issue 6, September 2009]

St. Michael Pendant on Another 'Tour of Duty'

I kept the St. Michael pendant on a dog tag chain at Fort Benning in jump school, figured it couldn't hurt. I wore it around my neck during jump school; stateside with the 101st (including a night jump and jet blast). It got me through Nam, 4 months with the Herd, 7 months with the 51st Inf. LRP (formed mostly from 173^d); I did contract malaria and received a Purple Heart. I continued to wear the pendant until the Gulf War started then gave it to a co-worker for her husband who was in the military. It turns out he was never deployed. She returned the pendant and I gave it to another co-worker who was in the Ohio National Guard who did an extended tour in Iraq. He was stop-loss a couple of times. He made it home ok. I most recently gave the pendant to another co-worker for her son who had been deployed to Iraq.....so far, so good.



I will be the first to admit I am not real religious and when I got the pendant at Benning I didn't notice the St. Michael at first. Being a Hunkey I live by the credo, kat vicuska (pure life), The Gypsy Way. But it's clear to me this little pendant has got some serious Mojo going for it; so much so, it continues to protect 'legs' and not just Sky Soldiers. The pendant continues its tour of duty.

Steve Vargo, C/2/503d

[Appeared in Issue 6, September 2009]

PARATROOPER CREED

I volunteered as a parachutist, fully realizing the hazards of my chosen service and by my actions will always uphold the prestige, honor and high esprit-de-corps of the only volunteer branch of the Army.

I realize that a parachutist is not merely a soldier who arrives by parachute to fight, but is an elite shock trooper and that his country expects him to march farther and faster, to fight harder, to be more self-reliant, and to soldier better than any other soldier. Parachutists of all allied armies belong to this great brotherhood.

I shall never fail my fellow comrades by shirking any duty or training, but will always keep myself mentally and physically fit and shoulder my full share of the task, whatever it may be.

I shall always accord my superiors fullest loyalty, and I will always bear in mind the sacred trust I have in the lives of the men I will lead into battle.

I shall show other soldiers by my military courtesy to my superior officers and noncommissioned officers, by my neatness of dress, by my care of my weapons and equipment, that I am a picked and well-trained soldier.

I shall endeavor always by my soldierly appearance, military bearing and behavior, to reflect the high standards of training and morale of parachute troops.

I shall respect the abilities of my enemies, I will fight fairly and with all my might. Surrender is not in my creed.

I shall display a higher degree of initiative than is required of the other troops and will fight on to my objective and mission, though I be the lone survivor.

I shall prove my ability as a fighting man against the enemy on the field of battle not by quarreling with my comrades in arms or by bragging about my deeds, thus needlessly arousing jealousy and resentment against parachute troops.

I shall always realize that battles are won by an Army fighting as a team, that I fight and blaze the path into battle for others to follow and to carry the battle on.

I belong to the finest fighting unit in the Army. By my appearance, actions, and battlefield deeds alone, I speak for my fighting ability. I will strive to uphold the honor and prestige of my outfit, making my country proud of me and the unit to which I belong.

[Appeared in Issue 7, October 2009]



TO MY VIETNAM VET... YOU, ME AND PTSD

(A wife's letter)

I wish there was some magic cure for the disease called Vietnam. I wish the past could be buried and forgotten. But I know that it can't be. I know that I will fight this war until death claims one of us. Sometimes it actually occurs to me that death will be our only release from this nightly hell we both go through....separately yet together.

Days are just as bad, the nightmares become the flashbacks. There's nothing I can say or do to make you forget. All I can hope for is that you will someday be able to cope with all of the memories. But it scares me that you sometimes see our world through younger eyes. Those eyes don't see the same world as I do. The world seen through them is far away...through time and distance. The people in that world are trying to kill you and I know you will try to kill them first. But what if it is one of the children that you are seeing as the enemy? Would I have the power to stop you?

I always know I am in for a particularly bad time when you start drinking. If you would only stop after a few beers, it might not be so bad. But you never do. It seems that when the alcohol hits you, the ghosts all come out of their hiding places to haunt you even if it isn't night. I cannot even begin to count the holes in the walls and doors that have been patched over the years. I've probably gone through a dozen sets of glassware, not to mention the good crystal china set that were left to me by my mother. Every pane of glass in the house has been replaced at least once after you have either punched it or thrown something through it. It's a joke having a waterbed, really. I must have been crazy buying it. It has more patches on it than a patchwork quilt. But the broken things can be repaired. It's the shredding of my soul that cannot be fixed. And every experience tears it up just a little bit more.

Why do I stay with you? Because I know that you are a good man inside. I know that the man I fell in love with is in that body and most of the time that's the one I see. I know that you cannot help what this terrible affliction called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder does to you. I know it isn't me that you're mad at, it's just that I'm available for you to vent your anger and frustrations on. And I pray that someday the effects of Vietnam will fade away, although I know it just won't happen. I must have hope or I couldn't bear it. I love you and would want you to stay by me if some horrible affliction affected me. I married you for better or for worse. Even if it seems that there are more worse

times, I get through it by remembering the good times. I am lucky enough to have friends who are going through the same thing with their Vietnam vets and are always there to give me the strength and support I need during the periods of crisis that come. God helps me too.

I know that it hurts you when you face all the things that are out of control in your life, especially those times when you lash out at me, those times when you lash out at me both physically as well as verbally. I know that you wish you could be different. Just know, sweetheart, that I will stand by you through everything, good or bad, and we can never give up. We are still fighting wars....yours was in Vietnam and mine is the Vietnam left in you. We will not surrender. We will fight for the rest of our lives, if necessary, but we will survive this TOGETHER.

I will be your rock when things are shaky. I will be your listening ear when you need to talk. I will be your strength when you are weak. I will hold you close when you need comfort. I will be your friend when you have no one to turn to. I will be your DMZ when the pressure is too great. I will be your commander when you need direction. I will be your pointman when we face life's highways.

I will be your medic when your pain is too great to bear.

But remember, my unsung hero, I will be your wife throughout it all.

Written by Tina Thomas, wife of a
Vietnam combat vet.

This poignant letter was sent in by Iva Tuttle, wife of 2/503 Sky Soldier Wayne Tuttle. This letter also speaks of me and my wife, as I know it does many of us. Thank you Iva. And thank you to all our wives. Ed



[Appeared in Issue 8, November 2009]



FREEZING THE BALLS OFF A BRASS MONKEY?

From **Walter "Bills" Bills (C/2/503d)**, here is more useless information to fog the mind. Thanks Wild Bill!

It was necessary to keep a good supply of cannon balls near the cannon on old war ships. But how to prevent them from rolling about the deck was the problem.



No. Not these monkey balls.

The storage method devised was to stack them as a square-based pyramid, with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon.

There was only one problem -- how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate with 16 round indentations, called, for reasons unknown, a *Monkey*. But if this plate were made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make them out of brass - hence, **Brass Monkeys**.

Few landlubbers realize that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey. Thus, it was quite literally, *cold enough to freeze the balls off of a Brass Monkey*. And all this time, you thought it was just a vulgar expression. (Far be it from us to be vulgar. Ed)

The only thing I can add to that is, "Balls!" cried the Queen. The King laughed, because he had to.

[Appeared in Issue 9, December 2009]



Nope, not these. Blue balls is another story.



Now you're talking!

LET THEM EAT CAKE

The 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment was attached to the 173d Abn Bde in late May 1965, to give the Bde a 3d maneuver battalion (2 up and 1 back). Company C, or as they called themselves "C" Coy, was adjacent to B/2/503 in the perimeter. To improve our relationship, I learned that the Queen's B'day was celebrated on 25 June and had the **Mess Sergeant (Diamond Jim Kimbrel)** bake a cake and decorate it.

This, in itself, was a minor miracle because we were eating 9 in 1 rations, which were units of canned food for 9 soldiers in one box.

He baked that cake in a garbage can cover, lined with tin foil. He combined the ingredients and had us eating better than anyone in the Bde. I led a small contingent to the HQ C Coy to present the cake. It was a surprise and well received and improved the relationship immediately. We had some ice tea and a Foster's or two with the cake and all was well.

Along on 4 July, here comes a small contingent from C Coy, bearing a hand-carved boomerang. **Stan Hanuszewicz**, the carver, was a world-class boomerang thrower, although unknown to us at that time. He wanted to demonstrate his throwing skill but I declined because the boomerang had a 1-RAR crest mounted on it and carvings to Bravo Bull Coy, 2/503 from C Coy, RAR and the date 4 July 1965 (Independence Day). I have it in my Hall of Honors and will before long present it to Battle Company, 2/503.



I've been in contact for 40+ years with the Australians of RAR and recently got an email from the carver, **Stan Hanuszewicz**. He had another piece of the boomerang story which he called the Buzzsaw. Seems that he demonstrated it before presentation and it clipped his best buddy, **Billy Carrel**, in the head as he tried to catch it, sending him to the dispensary. When the surgeon came to examine the injury, Carrel was asked, "What happened to you?" He answered "I was hit in the head with a boomerang." The doctor replied, "Don't be a fucking smart ass with me, soldier..." then it went downhill from there. Sadly Carrel became a KIA later in 1965.

When Stan wrote me on 4 July, we remembered **Billy Carrel** and all those Sky Soldiers from B/2/503 and C Coy RAR that are no longer with us, BUT it all started with a cake for the Queen.

Fondest Airborne regards, BDQ Roy

[Appeared in Issue 9, December 2009]



The Passing Of More Than Just A Friend

I was recently notified of **Kipling Johnson's** untimely death. I met Kip on-line in 2002. While visiting the Herd's official website for the first time I came across the name of Kip's father, **Richard Johnson**. I contacted Kip and learned she was on a quest to obtain medals she'd discovered her father earned yet hadn't been officially awarded. She was seeking members of Alpha 2nd Battalion that served with her dad. Richard was KIA June 22, 1967 during the **Battle of The Slopes**. As one of the few who made it off that hill, I was all too happy to assist in her pursuit to make her and her family's life whole.



Wambi Cook

We started off via cyberspace which evolved into telephonic exchanges. Kip and her two brothers were adolescents at the time of their dad's demise, and Kip being the youngest recalled very little of him. I was able to share with her some scant memories of Sgt. Johnson.

He'd been in country before I had arrived that February. He was platoon Sgt, but we had little interaction. I wondered if she'd made other contacts from A Company. Kip had been on this, her journey, for several years and indeed had made contact with over a half-dozen Alpha Bros. She gladly shared the names and contact info with me. Through her data base I was able to reconnect with several Bros. that I had not even thought about in years; **Rick Patterson**, medic, who survived six gunshot wounds on 6/22/67. Hill 875 machine gunners **Les Fuller**, **Joe Gray**, **FO's Bill Nicholls** and **Bill Reynolds** who were members along me and several others in a newly formed "Recon Squad" following the *Slopes*.

For years I resisted any and all entreaties to involve myself with any Vet and especially 173d sponsored events for reasons many of you will readily understand. However, through Kip's charming insistence, I finally reunited with my comrades in October 2002 at my first 2nd Battalion mini-reunion in Cocoa Beach, Florida.

Without equivocation, those couple days commiserating with my brethren did more for my emotional well being than any psychiatrist could ever accomplish.

With some trepidation, I attended the Reno reunion that following year where I had an opportunity to meet and share with Kip's mom, Marjorie, some remembrances of her husband. According to Kip, Marjorie chose to say little about her dad's Viet Nam experiences. Our meeting was the first time she heard a personal account surrounding her husband's final hours. We took several photos that weekend that I'll forever cherish. I saw Marjorie and Kip's brother Rodney at the 2004 Daytona Reunion; Kip couldn't make it. Regrettably, I was to never again see Kip.

Over the year's Kip and I kept in contact via phone calls and the internet. I knew of her darling only child, daughter Sydney's school matriculations as well as her social avocations. I was apprised of her own academic prowess while she trained as a medical lab technician, and upon graduation securing her first permanent job with a local noted Birmingham, Alabama hospital. It wasn't unusual to not hear from one another for months. I was pleased when she accepted my invitation to Facebook in early August of this year. I now could keep timely accounts of her successes. I was not prepared when her mother notified me via Kip's Facebook that she'd died in late August. I called Marjorie and we exchanged fond memories of her only daughter. Soon after, I contacted Sydney to extend my condolences. She was quick to tell me how her mother had nothing but warm memories of me. I was one her dearest friends.

Thanks to Kipling Johnson, I have maintained close relationships with A Company's *Band of Brothers*. Her efforts made it possible in my reconnecting with a past I thought I spent years trying to repress. Moreover, were it not for her browbeating me about seeking VA benefits, I probably would still be working, and not been retired with a 100% rating for these past three years.

What her spirit did for me, and I'm certain for many others is immeasurable. I began missing Kip moments after her Mother's notification. She and her family will remain in my daily thoughts and in my heart and mind forever. Your soulfulness will never be forgotten, Kipling Johnson.

Wambi Cook
A/2/503d

[Appeared in Issue 10, January 2010]



SOLDIER

I was that which others did not want to be.

I went where others failed to go and did what others failed to do.

I asked nothing from those who gave nothing and reluctantly accepted the thought of eternal loneliness.... should I fail.

I have seen the face of terror, felt the stinging cold of fear, and enjoyed the sweet taste of a moment's love.

I have cried, pained, and hoped...but most of all, I have lived times others would say were best forgotten.

At least someday I will be able to say that I was proud of what I was... a soldier.

George L. Skypeck

[Appeared in Issue 10, January 2010]

MORE INCOMING!!

Yesterday, the UPS guy made a delivery to my home. The numbers 2-22-1967 was printed on the outside of the box. I knew immediately what the date signified but had no idea what was in the box. It was the date, almost 43 years ago that the 2nd Bn made the jump in Op Junction City. Well, one of my RTO's, **SP4 Harry Cleland** who lives in Cary, NC sent me a bottle of 12 year old Chivas, and on the bottle he wrote "for years to come". I will admit that



Capt. Kaplan & RTO Cleland

I was moved by this gesture. I called him and promised that on February 22nd, I would crack the seal, measure out two fingers, and drink a toast to him and to all the Bravo Bulls out there...especially to those who I had the honor to serve with from Oct 66 to Apr 67.

LTC Ken Kaplan, B/2/503d

"We Try Harder"

[Appeared in Issue 11, February 2010]

A YOUNGER BROTHER REMEMBERS

Dave Zsigo's brother Alex was killed 6/22/67. I knew his brother, and Dave and I have been in contact for the past couple years. I became convinced he should really get to know what type of men his older brother served with and told Dave he should attend a reunion. He did this past summer, and according to him he's a better person for having done so.



Alex Zsigo, KIA

Dave constructed this flagpole outside his farm in Michigan which was dedicated a year or so ago to his brother and the military.

Wambi Cook

A/2/503d



[Appeared in Issue 13, March 2010]



Operation Junction City
2/503d make combat jump in Vietnam.
AIRBORNE!



ALL THE WAY!!

[Appeared in Issue 12, February 2010, Junction City special edition]



A QUIET CUP OF TEA

Wayne Hoitt remembers this so much better than I. This was in '65 or '66 and Wayne and I had been detailed to take a vehicle into Bien Hoa and get it washed. We wound up in one of those bar/cathouses on the main drag in Bien Hoa intending to get a beer +.



Jim Bethea

We weren't in there for very long before some little girl at the front door starts yelling "MPs! MPs!" Wayne and I booked out the side door and down an alley, running for all we were worth we turned left into another alley and left again and wound up in front of some sort of religious temple...Buddhist I think.

It was rather small, gray and made of stone or concrete with wide steps leading up to columns that framed tall, carved, wooden double-doors. The doors were open so we ducked inside to get out of sight and waited for a while. The floors of the temple were made of polished yellow wood and there was little or no furniture it was a beautiful, simple building and relatively cool inside.

Pretty soon, from somewhere in the back of the room (there was only the light coming in from outside), came a little old monk in a black robe carrying a tray with cups of tea on it. He offered us the tea and then took one for himself. There was no other communication...we just stood there having a quiet cup of tea together.



A Vietnamese Monk

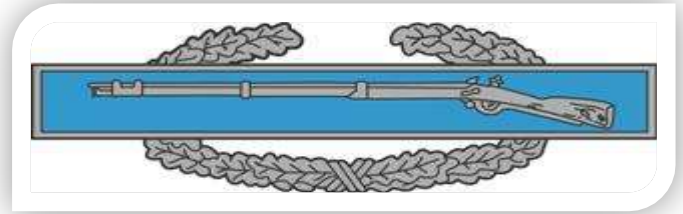
When we finished we made signs of thanks and left, then made our way back to our vehicle.

I know it doesn't seem like much of an event but I was a stump-jumper born and raised in the panhandle of Florida. It's important to me in that it was the first of many incidents that eventually helped me to view life from a broader perspective than my Bible-Belt upbringing.

The old monk could've done a lot of things. God knows what he was thinking! But he chose to have tea with us.

Jim Bethea
HHC/2/503d, '65-'66

[Appeared in Issue 13, March 2010]



CIB

The rifleman fights without promise of either reward or relief. Behind every river there's another hill -- and behind that hill, another river.

After weeks or months in the line only a wound can offer him the comfort of safety, shelter, and a bed.

Those who are left to fight on, evading death but knowing that with each day of evasion they have exhausted one more chance for survival. Sooner or later, unless victory comes, this chase must end on the litter or in the grave.

Omar N. Bradley
General of the Army
"A Soldier's Story"

[Appeared in Issue 11, February 2010]

A/2/503d machine gunner, Jim Healy, about the February 1966 battle during Operation Phoenix

For years after the battle, Jim Healy of A Company asked himself,

"Why was I spared injury when so many brave and better men around me were killed or wounded?"

The only answer Healy has been able to come up with is: *"Just pure luck. Neither bullets nor shrapnel swerve to avoid hitting the 'good' nor do they change direction to seek out the 'bad.' They just simply fly in their trajectory and hit whatever may be in their path. While being good at your job may give you the slight edge, the determining factor is luck. That's what makes combat death seem so arbitrary, random and unfair."*



Jim

[Appeared in Issue 13, March 2010]



SKY SOLDIER EXTRAORDINAIRE

~ Spencer Alexander ~

The following tribute is from Col. Roy Lombardo, "B" Company CO 2/503, announcing the passing of his friend and our brother Spencer Alexander in 2002.



Spencer

BULLS:

It is my sad duty to pass on Ed's news below. I have called all of the Bulls that knew Spencer, who are not on Email.

I spoke with John Foster, Al Ealey, and George Bingham (will be operated on Wednesday for minor problem). I left messages for Demetrius Brown and asked him to spread the word in the Fayetteville area to George Hull, etc. I also left a message for Mike Farrell. Donald Moses was also informed.

DORIS/ED:

I will be attending with Jim Robinson (arrive on Friday afternoon and depart on Saturday afternoon). We are grateful to Ed for his offer of a place to stay. At this time it appears that Jodie, Al Ealey and Lew Wingfield would be better candidates for that hospitality. Jim and I will bunk downtown (Marriott) but we may need transport because we don't know our way around.

Our first consideration is to do what we can to help the family and to mesh with Doris' wishes. I think that there are enough members of the company/ brigade to carry the coffin and to act as an Honor Guard, IF THAT WOULD BE OK WITH DORIS. Additionally, I'd like to say a few words at an appropriate time, again with the family's permission.

I knew Spencer as well as any soldier in the company and better than most. We have been comrades in arms since 1964 and became closer friends beginning in 1985. Rarely would a month go by when we didn't speak. He first came to my attention because of his soldierly appearance and his bugling skills. 1SG Hastings had Spencer play the bugle calls, which were an integral part of the Army that was disappearing in the early 60's. Spencer's one-man act was something that no other company did and was one of the many unique aspects of the Bravo Bulls. Not once do I recall a sour note.

Spencer was also an athlete of significant ability. He was good at all sports but he excelled and won Championships as a wrestler on Okinawa. I recall that my focus was primarily on training and I didn't associate much importance with athletics. Despite that Spencer went out, somewhat on his own, trained when he could, practiced rarely and won, time and again, in his weight class until the Championship was his. Only then did he receive the credit and support that was his alone.

It was impossible to find him without a smile on his rugged face and without the willingness to do a tough job. He, like

many Bulls, led by example. When it was work time: digging in, moving ammo, carrying supplies.... Spencer was always there doing more than most and talking and laughing in that gravelly, booming voice.

One time (May 65) in a Vietnamese village, a single shot rang out. I dropped to my knee but Spencer, who was already in the prone position, shouted, "Commander, get your ass down. Do you think, you're John Wayne?" That well-intended counsel/concern was the beginning of a friendship that would stretch over 38 years. It also was wise advice that kept me unscathed during all my time in Vietnam.

Spencer returned to his native Chicago, found a lovely wife, and sired a beautiful daughter. He asked for no special treatment and played the cards that were dealt as expertly as any man could. Slowly he and Doris worked to get the house that they presently own. I followed his progress and was always aware of his love for his family and the pride in his daughter's many successes in school. His conversations always included both. We also talked about his being a paratrooper in the civilian world and his running into the bureaucracy of local government. He listened but generally managed to overcome all of those challenges, DOING IT HIS WAY.

He was proud of all that he did and worked hard to find other Bulls and bring them into our activities. He was at his zenith in July, when he and Doris, helped by Ed and Fay and family, hosted the Bulls Barbecue. The years fell away in his backyard and we were young men again, around a jungle fire, relaxing and making plans for our future.

God, however, intervened, with different plans. All the love of Doris, family and friends; all the medical care; all the efforts couldn't reverse the process. At 0230 hours yesterday, Spencer lost his last wrestling match but gained eternal life in the process. Although tears stream down my face, I cannot be sad because I know as surely as I still breathe that Spencer is with God. I cannot believe that a man who so loved his family and who helped so many people throughout his life could have any other fate.

So yesterday "an Airborne soldier has died." What he did and who he was will always be with us. May Saint Michael, the patron of paratroopers, escort Spencer to eternal rest. May his memory be a source of strength to us who remain. If he could, he would say:

**"Do not stand by my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die."**

I'm certain he never will, as long as we remember.

**Roy Lombardo, LTC. (Ret)
Commanding Officer, B/2/503**

[Appeared in Issue 13, March 2010]



It's All About The Patch

Hello folks,

Here's a new poem, one that is pretty special to me. About two or three months ago, **Britt Small** told me that he was proud to see me wearing the patch for all the vets. Kinda had a ring in the way he expressed it. I have heard that the Viet Cong and NVA, our foe in Vietnam, dedicated a memorial to the men of the Herd, the only unit so designated by the Vietnamese. This memorial was placed in the hills of Dak To.

Feel free to place your patch of honor to this poem and use as you see fit, if yours is not the Herd. When asked recently about the pride I place in this patch, I was admonished about pride being a sin. I replied, "*Not when honor is involved.*" I honor each of you and take pride in the honor to call myself a fellow veteran. Working in education, each day at work I see the fruits of our labor. Let all veterans be free to express the same pride and honor with their unit patch.

With honor and pride,
Adoth, 173d
3/18/2010

THE PATCH

**A special camaraderie,
Is forged in fires of war.
Where strangers from diversity
Tell all just who they are.**

**They wear a special unit patch
Earned with their sweat and blood.
The foe respects no greater match
From this brave brotherhood.**

**With each who earns the right to wear,
They know not greater cause.
This brotherhood counts lives they share
As all that gives them pause.**

**The patch displays the many trials
The battles and the pain,
The pride and all the many miles,
And losses they call gain.**

**The battles books may well describe,
As students study facts.
For those who fight they say with pride,
It's all about the patch!**

[Appeared in Issue 14, April 2010]

CHAPLAIN CONNIE WALKER

[Upon learning Connie Walker was hospitalized, a G.I. sends his Chaplain a letter]. Ed.

Dear Chaplain Walker,

Believe I first met you with the 2/503 sometime in '66, March or April while in the field. Two of our elements opened up on each other briefly and when the gun fire went off, I dove to the ground landing in a nest of large black ants.



Jerry

While scrounging around in a medic's bag for anything that would relieve the bites, you came up to me and asked if you could help. I immediately recounted the incident with the ants using every four-letter word I had learned in the army to describe it. It was then that you introduced yourself as a chaplain.

Needless to say, after my expletive-filled explanation, I was sorta shocked. You took it in stride. If it wasn't you it was Chaplain Watters. You guys looked so much alike as I recall, but I believe it was you.

Whatever life we have left we carry the memories of all that we have been and seen and most often, the kindnesses we have received. Bad memories fade to the distant past as well they should and good memories stay in the forefront. We appreciate your humping the boonies with us and wish the best for you and your family. God Bless.

Jerry Hassler
RTO S-2/Recon HHC, 2/503d, '66-'67

[Appeared in Issue 14, April 2010]

Airborne Farewell to the Leapin' Deacon

Chaplain (COL, Ret.) Conrad "Connie" Walker (the Leapin' Deacon) went to be with his Lord on Sunday, May 25, 2014, in San Antonio at age 82. He was born on March 2, 1932, in Herrick, Illinois to Don and Bebe Walker. He is survived by his beloved wife of sixty years, Joan "Ann" Walker; daughters, Beverly Bartlett (Ron), Miriam Walker, and Gracia Marshall (John); and sons, Randall Walker (Candy) and Timothy Walker (Heather); brothers, Don Walker (Ann) and Bill Walker (Jackie), twenty-two grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren.



**Connie, in the boonies,
but of course.**



~ EARLY DAYS AT CAMP ZINN ~

The Mess Hall was outdoors under the trees and the tables we ate from were long pieces of PSP (Perforated Steel Plating used for building temporary landing strips), supported between two trees. We ate while standing with our mess-kits resting on the PSP. Next to the mess area stood a large General Purpose tent used to house the kitchen. The chow line ran past the rolled up side of the tent where the KP's served the meals. After eating, we cleaned our mess kits and utensils in three large, shiny metal garbage cans. One was filled with boiling soapy water and the other two were filled with boiling rinse water. All were heated by diesel-fired portable heaters each complete with its own smoke stack. Occasionally the heater would take in too much fuel and a little internal explosion would occur which would cause the smokestack to emit a puff of black smoke.

I was leaning against one of the PSP "tables" eating my noon meal when I heard a Huey helicopter in the distance heading in our direction. I thought *"This is great; it's going to fly right over us!"* I would get a good view of it!

As the chopper passed directly overhead and I'm standing there admiring it and looking the door gunner right in the face, the field stove belched out a big, black puff of smoke. The door gunner in the helicopter must have had a healthy sense of self-preservation because he immediately swung his M-60 machine gun around and opened fire on the smoke – and us.

Suddenly, neat little shafts of sunlight shot through the walls of the G.P. tent as bullets passed through the canvas and small geysers of dirt and leaves fluffed up around our feet.

Maybe twenty rounds were fired before the gunner realized that we were friendly troops. It was over in an instant and miraculously only our feelings were hurt.

This I copied from the movie The Four Feathers:

"... those who have traveled far, to fight in foreign lands, know that the soldier's greatest comfort is to have his friends close at hand. In the heat of battle it ceases to be an idea for which we fight, or a flag. Rather we fight for the man on our left, and we fight for the man on our right. And when armies are scattered and the empires fall away, all that remains is the memory of those precious moments that we spent side by side."

Jim Bethea
HHC, 2/503d, '65/'66

[Appeared in Issue 15, May 2010]

R.H.I.P.

Bn XO/CO LTC Bob Carmichael at 2/503d reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL in 2006.



**Damn ossifiers get all the good Red Cross packages.
*"Hey! RTO! Bring me a drink!"***

His wife, Exie, would remark after seeing this photo,
"He looks like a deer caught in the headlights."

[Appeared in Issue 15, May 2010]

~ DUSTOFF ~

Over the years, I have collected many tidbits, some of which may be useful to fill gaps in the newsletter. This is one.

The Army's radio call sign for medical evacuation choppers was "Dustoff." In 1962, the Navy Support Activity in Saigon controlled all radio call signs in South Vietnam. That year, the first Army helicopter evacuation unit to arrive in Vietnam was the 57th Medical Attachment. The 57th's call sign was "Dustoff." From then on all medical evacuation choppers used the call sign followed by a numerical designation. The only exception was the 1st Cavalry Division who used the call sign, "Medevac."

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

[Appeared in Issue 16, June 2010]



BLESS 'EM ALL

~ No Smoking ~

Francis X. O'Neill, Jr.

That first night on Corregidor I spent in the vicinity of the water towers . Stan Crawford, later killed at the graveyard on the end of island, and I shared a foxhole.



Lt. Leathers, the 3rd platoon leader, passed the word **"NO SMOKING."** About 11:00 p.m. Stan asked me if I wanted a cigarette. Together we got down as far as we could in the hole, cupped our hands and lit up.

Other fellows followed our lead. There was a metal pole about 5 ft in back of us. All of a sudden all hell broke loose. Bullets kept hitting the pole with a ringing effect. No one was sure where the firing was coming from, so we just fired in front of us as the rest of the fellows in our platoon did.

We suffered no casualties although we heard some calls in Japanese.

After about ten minutes the firing stopped.

Lt. Leathers came down to each hole and wanted to know who started the firing and who was smoking.

Stan, in his dry humour voice, said immediately that we did since he smelled cigarette smoke in front of us.

"Those damn Japs were smoking, so I opened up and so did the rest of the line. Those bastards could smoke and we couldn't. That made me mad."

Leathers, a tall, well-built man from California, and a capable officer, had all to do to keep his temper.

Of course I supported Stan's story. We both lost a stripe.

When he asked Leathers why, he was told his story, although good, was not good enough; Leathers had smelled American cigarette smoke. Stan did not question the Lt's sense of smell.

Later Leathers put Stan in for the Silver Star, which Stan was awarded posthumously. Crawford was a courageous man with a dry sense of humor and a good friend. I still pray for him. I'm sure many strange things happened that first night. This was only one of them.

[From the 503rd Heritage Battalion web site.]

[Appeared in Issue 17, July 2010]

A LITTLE COMBAT JUMP DITTY

I find the 173d jump an interesting mystery – there is an old retired Colonel (like me) named Wayne Dill; he 'planned' the Junction City jump for the Sep Bde, 101st. The planners were 'limited' to a one over-flight recon of the area/DZ and probably the only thing my old ass remembers is I went on that flight with Wayne – two old farts (then young Capt.'s) at an unbelievable altitude (another restriction). The brigade also had to 'requalify' its personnel on jump status – and then for some damn reason, the operation was transferred to the 173d.

We all had this sophisticated radio (big damn thing that had all sorts of capability); we had two – one was always down. I remember Ray Largen the Bde Signal Officer begging the General to exempt the radio from these re-qualification jumps, but Gen. Mattheson (a Capt. at Bastogne) cut him no slack. Guess what – ha! I'm full of BS today – another tale/jump story.

During the recertification jumps, done in the vicinity of the Kontum valley with interesting little winds and heat vectors throwing the C-130's all around/up and down. I ended up sitting next to the Deputy Bde Cdr (Col. Chester B. McCoid), a WWII vet, an old airborne head who looked like John Wayne and was immensely admired by everyone. I had been out drinking the night before and anyway, I was starting to get sick. I told the Colonel this and in a loud voice (to overcome the noise of the C-130 and more importantly, to entertain the troops), he says *"God-damn-it Lawton, I'm not going to have an officer get sick in front of these fuckin' swine!"* [and he waves his hand in a sweeping motion to indicate to the troops who are watching all this drama] and tells me to standup/hookup and stand in the door to which my sick ass responds – *"Sir, the red light hasn't even come on,"* and he responds *"Get in the fuckin' door!"* He put me out (w/full eqpt), just as the red light that had come on, changed to green. I'm chuckling as I write this – great officer. **John P. Lawton, Col. (Ret), 4/503d**

LTC Bob Sigholtz addresses his 2/503d troopers prior to Junction City jump.

Photo by Wayne Tuttle



[Appeared in Issue 18, August 2010]



THE PRICK and that it was

The AN/PRC-25 (fondly or not so fondly referred to as the 'Prick' by the RTO's who carried it) was first introduced into Vietnam in 1965 when BG Ellis



Williamson, 173d brigade commander, told Gen. Westmoreland better portable radios were vitally needed.

Its development began as an experiment in FM (frequency modulation) based vehicular-mounted communications at Ft. Monmouth, NJ, in 1948. The previously used AM (amplitude modulation) sets were bulky and susceptible to engine interference. In 1955 the Signal Corps decided to pursue both vehicle and manpack radios utilizing solid-state technology. The original 20 pound developmental model was completed in 1958 with the testing model a year later. In May, 1961, the "Prick-25" officially became part of Army inventory, but the AN/PRC-10 still was the primary radio in combat units.

At Williamson's request, Westmoreland requested 2,000 of the new radios for immediate dispatch to Vietnam. They were originally slated to go to Europe but the U.S. Army Electronics Command released its entire stock of 1,000 radios to Nam. The new radio was first used in a large-scale operation during the 1965 Pleiku campaign in the Ia Drang Valley.

[Report sent in by Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503d, '66/'67]



Jerry Hassler, a young, good lookin' RTO with his, well, you know.

[Appeared in Issue 18, August 2010]

Results of Study

[The following report was uncovered by an astute Chargin' Charlie of Dak To fame who prefers to remain anonymous lest his wife see his name printed here. Ed]

A study conducted by the university's Department of Psychiatry has revealed that the kind of face a woman finds attractive on a paratrooper can differ depending on where she is in her menstrual cycle. For example: if she is ovulating, she is attracted to men with rugged and masculine features. However, if she is menstruating or menopausal, she tends to be more attracted to a man with duct tape over his mouth and a spear lodged in his chest with a bat up his ass while he is on fire.

No further studies are expected on this subject.



Rugged and masculine looking C/2/503d trooper of Dak To fame Roger Dick with his lovely but potentially dangerous wife Kathy.

[Appeared in Issue 19, September 2010]



The Man With the Rifle Knows

(Author Unknown)

This poem was hanging on the wall at the jump school in Ft. Benning. I remember reading it when I was there in the summer of 1963. It says the author is unknown but I'll bet he was a Sky Soldier.

Rick Jerman
HHC/2/503d

Men may argue forever on what wins their wars
and welter on cons and pros.

And seek their answers at history's doors,
but the Man With the Rifle Knows.

He must stand on the ground
on his own two feet,
and he's never in doubt when it's won.
If it's won he is there, if he's not it's defeat.
That's his test when the fighting is done.

When he carries the fight it's not with a roar
of armoured wings spitting death.
It's creep and crawl on the earthen floor,
butt down and holding his breath.

Saving his strength for the last low rush,
grenade throw and bayonet thrust;
And the whispered prayer before he goes in,
of a man who does what he must.

And when he's attacked, he can't zoom away,
when the shells fill the world with their sound.
He stays where he is, loosens his spade,
and digs his defense in the ground.

That ground isn't ours till he's there in the flesh,
not a gadget, or a bomb, but a man.
He's the answer to theories which start afresh
with each peace since war began.

So let the wild circle of argument rage
on what wins as war comes and goes.
Many new theories may hold the stage,
BUT THE MAN WITH THE RIFLE KNOWS.

[Appeared in Issue 20, October 2010]

*Some people try to turn back their
odometers. Not me; I want people to
know 'why' I look this way.
I've traveled a long way, and some
of the roads weren't paved.*

Will Rogers

[Appeared in Issue 24, February 2011]

Cpt. Picard and the Venusian Slave Girl

or;

It's amazing what cheap liquor
makes people do.



A/HHC/2/503d Capt. William C. Vose, Esq. with friend at Star Wars convention in Atlanta....no shit (photo sent in by Bill). I can't believe I followed this guy into battle. Ed

[Appeared in Issue 20, October 2010]



~ Every Soldier's Nightmare ~

On one of our daily humps of search and destroy we crossed this river which was about waist deep. After crossing we sat down for a little rest. Timothy Johnson decides he's gone long enough between baths and drops his ammo belt, M-16 and all his clothes and back in he went.



Vietnamese leeches

Ole Timothy was in that river buck naked when he lets out a scream that would curdle your blood, and high steps it for dry land. We all scramble for our 16s thinking Timothy has spotted the whole North Vietnamese Army. Not seeing any enemy we figure Timothy has other distress. Up on the bank he's yelling, "Get 'em off! Get 'em off!"

We had to get close to see the big fat gray leeches spread all over his glistening body. They were big suckers and scattered from chest to ankles. Now we all know that leeches don't hurt, but boy can they give you the willies. We all gathered around Timothy and showered him down with bug juice till the leeches all fell off. We all then looked at our empty bug juice bottles and wondered what the hell we were going to do when the mosquitoes would come at us later that night.



**Good buddy Ed Swauger.
He's on the left.**

**Ed Swauger
B/2/503d, '68/'69**

[Appeared in Issue 21, November 2010]

~ At The Ready On Full Auto ~

One of my favorite experiences happened on ambush one night. It had been a terrible night; slipping in the paddies, lit up by the moon, reports of a lot of enemy activity, etc.

At any rate, I took my ambush out that night, and we planned to set up on the edge of a ville facing the trail that went up into the high ground. As we approached the hootch we intended to use on the side of the trail, we started to fan out and set up. I wasn't watching where I was headed and tramped in a bucket which stuck on my foot. After a whole lot of clanging and banging, we had

to call in for new ambush coordinates. I think even Uncle Ho heard us that night.

On another night, we went to basically the same area and set up around the back of the village waiting for them to come out of the high ground after firing up Charlie Company. We hunkered down tight and had drifted into to our 1-on 1-off routine when I heard something move to the side of the hootch.



I nudged my RTO and motioned for him to pull the pin on a frag. I went to the corner of the hootch and was stumped....I can't yell "Dung lai" or pop around the corner without getting a few rounds center mass. But I couldn't bring myself to fire around the corner on the off chance it might be a kid that got out of his hootch or something.

I stood there for what seemed like an eternity when I decided to whisper Dung lai, and if there was any movement, I would let go on full auto. I did, and I heard a rustling sound that stopped as quickly as it started. Still uneasy about firing, I said it a little louder and lunged around the corner with my '16 pointed out in front and on full auto. I immediately hit something that was moving...I then said Dung lai in an excited street voice. I immediately got a reply this time; it was a calf tied to the side of the hootch, and I hit him in the head with my flash suppressor. He let out a little "MOO-O-O" and my RTO and I fell against the side of the hootch with our hearts beating like a blown engine and we started laughing. Couldn't hold back the laugh, and we each were trying to stifle the laughter. Bolt, the RTO, was trying to put the pin back in the frag while laughing and tears rolling down his cheeks.

Someday I'll have to tell you about the ambush where I turned to find a suspected VC stopped dead at my right rear. Freaked me out!

**Jerry Sopko
D/4/503**

[Appeared in Issue 21, November 2010]



~ A Football Game ~

It was in the fall of 1964 the 2nd Bat HQC was stationed at Camp Kue, Okinawa. If we were not in the field training we would have A&R (Athletic Recreation) on Wednesday afternoons. Most generally this meant we were off so it came to be known as Alcohol and Romance.

blood, bruises, a few loose teeth, along with several fist fights that erupted during the game. The West Pointer had to buy the beer which eased some of the pain resulting from the game. There were some pretty good injuries and I don't know if the two LTs got their asses chewed or not but orders came down that there would be no more football games of that nature.

Rick Jerman
HHC/2/503d

[Appeared in Issue 22, December 2010]



Rick and buddies.

We would head for the EM Club at Kadena AFB, Sukuran EM Club, or up Jagaru Hill to some off limits bars. This is where the romance came in.

One Wednesday afternoon two Lieutenant platoon leaders, both football players, one from West Point and the other from the University of Alabama, decided their platoons needed to play a football game. There was beer, lots of beer, bet on this game. Since we were paratroopers and not legs that sissy touch or flag football was out of the question, we played full contact tackle football. Needless to say the only football equipment we had was a football.

The two LTs were the quarterbacks and as the afternoon progressed it became the goal to smash the other side's smartass LT into the rocky turf of Kue. This mission was accomplished more than once and the LTs were good sports about it. The two platoon Sgts were referees and pretty much forgot about the rules. There was

"I love the infantry because they are the underdogs. They are the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they even learn to live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can't be won without."

Ernie Pyle

[Sent in by Jim Jackson, B/2/503d]

[Appeared in Issue 24, February 2011]



Chargin' Charlies' Guidon

Charlie Company guidon listing names of NCOs and officers of C/2/503d who presented it to their CO, then Capt. John "Jack" Leide, MG (Ret), in 1967.



[Appeared in Issue 23, January 2011]



Thanks Ladies, Wherever You Are

Years ago Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503d, '66-'67, and I were traveling to the Tampa area early one morning to attend the funeral of 2/503d Command Sergeant Major, Ed Proffitt. We had time available so we decided to stop for breakfast at a Denny's. We were both wearing our 173d ball caps.

Sitting a few tables away were two ladies in our age group dressed in military nurse's attire. We all exchanged smiles, and they soon finished their meal and left.

Shortly thereafter Bill and I called the waitress over and asked for our check. The young girl told us, "Those two ladies paid for your meals."

Thanks ladies, wherever you are, and, Welcome Home sisters.

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

[Appeared in Issue 23, January 2011]



Korean War. "I'm here for you buddy."

[Appeared in Issue 23, January 2011]

Mortarmen and Their Piss Tubes

Good buddy A.B. Garcia (the *Aussino*) of 4.2 Platoon, 2/503d, '65-'66, found himself in Australia after the war and discovered, "Hey! They have a lot of beer here!!" That was enough for him to take his lovely bride Ursula to Oz where they've made their home all these years. On our trip together back to Vietnam in '01, I gave A.B. the nickname "*Aussino*", a cross between an American Chicano and an Aussie....it seemed to fit.

Here's our cammo'd hero below doing his best impersonation of an Aborigine Tribesman. It's amazing what beer makes people do at times. Ed



A.B. (the *Aussino*) down under blowing his big didgeridoo

[Appeared in Issue 24, February 2011]



~ Sky Soldiers March ~

Bend your head, and shed a tear,
for your sons, who serve so dear.
Faith and Guts and Rifle Butts,
left a trail, of blood stained dust.

Chorus:

So here we are, where we belong,
173d, so proud and strong.
Lift your head, and hold it high,
173d is passing by.

Aussie Diggers, fight with us too,
"Duty First" they say, their words are true.
In jungles deep, they showed us how,
we say "VC come fight us now".

Chorus

Sweat upon, their sun-burned brows,
173d has shown them how.
War zone "D" we met our test,
Mekong Delta, we are the best.

Chorus

To Nui Dat, the "Tigers" came,
with the "HERD" they won great fame.
Dak To and Tet, we won and died,
"Jungle of screaming souls" the NVA cried.

Chorus

My wife who waits, at home so true,
I sing this song, my dear for you.
Tell our son that I fight brave,
for Freedom Land which we must save.

Written in Vietnam by a Sky Soldier

[Appeared in Issue 24, February 2011]

**"Surrender? Don't be
bloody silly.
We're Australian."**

- Anonymous



Cong Scatter Like Scared Turkeys

Original source: home.att.net/~gkozdroz/fb173q.htm

LZ English -- Thanksgiving Day, while walking slack for a three-man 'reaction team', a 173d Abn Bde Reconnaissance Sergeant saw some turkeys, namely 10 Viet Cong. But the hunted saw the Sarge first, spraying Sgt. Charles G. Rolon with a burst of M-16 fire that slammed five rounds into his rifle but none into Rolon.

"We were walking up a mountain stream, cluttered with gigantic rocks that cut visibility down to about six feet," said the 25 year old Co. E, 2nd Bn, 503d Inf. Trooper. *"Just as we made a turn up the winding stream, we met the VC Regulars, but as I raised my M-16 to fire, I saw the Red take aim and next my weapon was kicked out of my hands by his fire. I just happened to be carrying my .45 caliber pistol that day and I shot the surprised communist before he had time to reload."* The contact occurred at extremely close range, the boulders and the twists in the stream concealing friendly and enemy movement.



At LZ English 1970, Charlie Rolon on left holding sniper rifle next to his buddy Dennis Wayne Baxley (KIA 8/9/70).

Rolon, from Jersey City, NJ and his team gave the enemy a goodbye burst of lead and feet, back to their parent unit, known as a six-man Cat team. The entire team, augmented with additional reinforcements, returned to the scene later in the day, but the Reds had dragged their dead and wounded away. Rolon and his reach-out team were credited with two enemy kills. He himself is mighty grateful to his weapon – it took two rounds through the magazine, one in the barrel and two that penetrated the rifle barrel.

[Sent in by Charlie Rolon, Sr., E/2/503d]

[Appeared in Issue 25, March 2011]





Our Dog Handlers and Their Wonderful Partners

From the beaches of Vung Tau, to the jungles of the Iron Triangle, through the rubber plantations surrounding Da Lat and Tay Ninh, sweeping the Ia Drang Valley west of Pleiku, then north, taking the NVA held mountains above Dak To, protecting the highly vital highway 19 corridor, and finally, securing the An Lao valley and the Bon Song coastal plains. For five years the Scout Teams of the 39th always were out in front. *"We're moving out! Dogman, take the point!"*



Ran Him Ragged...

We had a scout dog with us one day. Tired that poor old boy out in the high ground -- he worked very hard. The handler (a guy named Jim from the Pittsburgh area) had to carry the dog back across his shoulders.

Jerry Sopko
D/4/503d

We Came to Love and Trust Those Dogs...

I was part of a 5 man point squad who pulled this duty everyday for our company in Dak To for five straight months leading to 875. We came to love and trust those dogs. I believe we abandoned everyone of them when we left Vietnam. The only dog I ever owned was a German Shepherd many years later. She lived for 13 years and was an incredible dog.



Roger Dick
C/2/503d

[Appeared in Issue 26, April 2011]

"A HANDFUL OF SILK AND GOD"

Anonymous 462d Trooper, 503rd PRCT WWII



**Sobbing low, bucking high,
Motors thunder through the sky:
Prop blasts over strut and wing,
Maddened demons, howl and sing:
And out of this we are going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**Small red light gleams at the door
Throwing blood-red pools on metal floor.
Beyond is space, vast and deep:
Awoke you screaming, once, from sleep.
And out of this you're going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**A match is struck to a cigarette:
Grim young faces in silhouette:
No figment of a fear-struck brain--
These, the shadows that line the plane--
They too into void are going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**They too hold fear, bridled tight,
Fighting fear with fear of fright:
Facing the job, the task at hand,
Grimly determined, indomitable band.
Soon into space we're going to fall
With a handful of silk and God,
That's all.**

**But our hearts beat high for the land we love,
And our courage comes from the sky above.
When down from the clouds with our Weapons
of hell**

**We'll avenge the comrades we loved so well.
What more shall we need when we get the call
BUT A HANDFUL OF SILK AND GOD--
that's all?**

Source: 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion Web Site

[Appeared in Issue 27, May 2011]



~ The Airborne Life Is Not For Me ~

Fifty-one years ago, Herman, a young lad from the Carolina mountains, was drafted by the Army and volunteered for jump school.

On his first day at Benning the Army issued him a comb. That afternoon the Army barber sheared off all his hair.

On his second day at jump school, the Army issued Herman a toothbrush. That afternoon the Army dentist yanked seven of his teeth.

On the third day at Benning, the Army issued him a jockstrap...

The Army has been looking for Herman for 51 years.



Appeared in Issue 27, May 2011)



“From now until the end of the world, we, and it shall be remembered, we few, we Band of Brothers. For he who sheds his blood with me shall be my brother.”

- William Shakespeare (“King Henry V”)

~ The Brotherhood ~

“I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep.



Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who suffered and were stripped of their humanity.

I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades. Such good men.”

~ Author unknown



At N. Myrtle Beach reunion in 2010, from left: Mike McMillan A/4/503, Chuck Breit 503d PRCT WWII, Mike Sturges A/2/503 & Jerry Wiles B/2/503.

Such good men.

(photo by Barb Dresser)

Appeared in Issue 27, May 2011)



Tango, Multi-Tour Ranger Vet



Aug. 17, 1970: This Ranger has been in Vietnam for a long time. He's seen the jungles of War Zone C, the Central Highlands and the Bong Son Plains. He's been with the 173d Airborne Brigade's Ranger company since 1967. You might say he was a "Ho Chanh." He's a dog, and the men of November Rangers call him Tango.

Tango has been the mascot of the Rangers since Staff Sgt. Patrick Tadina picked him up in a Viet Cong base camp that had just been overrun in 1967 near Bien Hoa. Tadina took the pooch back with him, and the men adopted Tango as their mascot.

"Tango is one of us. He spends as much time observing in the CO's chopper as any other man in the company. If he were human, he would have the Air Medal with 10 Oak Leaf Clusters," said SSG Nat Turner after he assumed the duty after Tadina's DEROS.

"Tango moped around for a few days after Tadina left, but he soon perked up and began yapping away as usual," said Capt. Richard Green, the old CO of the Ranger unit.



Pat Tadina, Tango's buddy.

Tango is just one of those mascots who has no DEROS. He will be around until he's old and gray – much to the delight of the Rangers. He may only be a dog, but like the man says, "he's one of us."

[Sent in by Robt. 'twin' Hendricksen, N/Co. Rangers]

RLTW

(Appeared in Issue 28, June 2011)

~ The RTO ~

(Radio/Telephone Operator)

(From the Net): He was usually carefully chosen. He had to be someone with experience who wouldn't get rattled under fire. He had to be able to read maps, too. If something happened to the officer, the RTO would often effectively command the unit, calling in fires, calling in medevacs, etc. It was also a dangerous job, since the radio antenna said to the enemy "Shoot ME first!"

But an experienced RTO became like a "private secretary" to the officer, anticipating what might be wanted and preparing it in advance. At night, he and the officer, the platoon sergeant, and platoon medic slept close together, alternating radio watch, the "PRC" within reach of all.

RTOs within a unit got to know each other too, and formed a kind of bond, since they performed most of the telecommunications. There was a "status" to being the RTO. Most RTOs administratively reported to the communications section back at battalion. The commo section also maintained your radio for you, out on the field.



L-R: David Farraro (KIA), Leo "Frenchy" Pellerin and RTO Dominick Cacciatore A/2/503d ready to go on mission.

(Appeared in Issue 28, June 2011)

"The God of War hates those who hesitate."

- Euripides 480-406 bc



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Feb.-Mar. 2015 – Issue 59

Page 27 of 49

Two Recon RTOs Meet Again



RTO Jerry Hassler, right, takes a look at the plaque recognizing his friend, RTO Olaf Hurd, left, as *Outstanding Military Veteran*. Hassler surprised Hurd with his visit. It was the first time they had seen each other in 43 years.

(Appeared in Issue 28, June 2011)

The Brave Paratrooper

A cowboy, a former army paratrooper, appeared before St. Peter at the Pearly Gates.

"Have you ever done anything of particular merit?" St. Peter asked.

"Well, I can think of one thing," the cowboy offered.

"On a trip to the Black Hills out in South Dakota, I came upon a gang of bikers who were threatening a young woman. I directed them to leave her alone, but they wouldn't listen. So, I approached the largest, meanest looking and most tattooed biker of the bunch and smacked him in the face, kicked his bike over, ripped out his nose ring, and threw it on the ground. I yelled, 'Now, back off or I'll kick the shit out of all of you!'"

St. Peter was impressed, *"When did this happen?"*

"Just a couple of minutes ago."

[Sent in by Capt. Gary Prisk, C/2/503d, and reproduced here with minor modification]

(Appeared in Issue 28, June 2011)



In an exchange of notes with trooper Bill Calhoun, president of the WWII 503rd PRCT Association, he shared this interesting bit of paratrooper history which, I suspect, most of us were never aware of. Thanks Bill.

Some Airborne Trivia "The *Big San Antone!*"

I will end with a *Big San Antone* (not San Antonio). San Antone was used early before the brass in Washington instigated Airborne. This came about after the 82nd ABD followed by the 101st ABD were made special troops. As I remember from old 501st Parachute Battalion, (the horses' mouth so to speak), there was an airborne battalion in Panama with them caught wearing civilian attire. I guess they were not parachutists.



(Then) LT Calhoun on LST returning from Corregidor to Mindoro.

(Bill Bailey photo)

They were transported in C-39 transports which landed. I say 'so to speak' because I was in F Company which was the old C Co., 501st Parachute Battalion. We hated the name Airborne. As Lt Col Raft said in speaking to his men (509 PI) just before they loaded to go jump in Africa,

"Come on men! Give me one more Big San Antone!"

You know originally the 503rd had two battalions. One was in the 503d in the Pacific and the other sent to Europe. Back in the early days the exiting cry was "*San Antone!*" The reason was those who refused to jump were sent to Ft. Sam Houston.

William T. Calhoun
President
503rd PRCT Association

(Appeared in Issue 28, June 2011)



Remembering their buddies from The Battle of the Slopes



COL Ken Smith (L) and LTC Dave Milton at *The Wall* in Washington, DC touching their buddies from 6/22/67.

(Appeared in Issue 29, June 2011)

Sp4 Saves Medic From VC; Hip Pocket Bible Saves Sp4

Stars & Stripes

Vol. 3, No. 28

Ton Son Nhut, Vietnam

July 22, 1967

BIEN HOA, (173RD ABN-IO)

-- "My Bible deflected the bullet and saved my life," said the young paratrooper after the battle.

Specialist Four William L. Reynolds, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade, was at the top of the hill when fighting broke out with an estimated North Vietnamese Army (NVA) battalion near Dak To.

Reynolds, a forward observer, went down and back up the hill several times to rescue the wounded and lay claymore mines with three other paratroopers.

A wounded medic sent Reynolds and the others for the last rescue attempt. The young Sky Soldier tucked his Bible in his hip pocket and moved down the bullet-

riddled hill to the aid of a wounded buddy. When they reached the out-stretched medic, they were pinned down by bursts of enemy automatic fire.

"One medic was hit bad," said Reynolds. *"Since I was the closest to him, I lay down between him and the oncoming bullets and told him he would be okay."* Just then, the specialist was struck by a bullet precisely where he had tucked his Bible.

A lull in the automatic fire enabled the paratroopers to wrap a rope around the medic and begin to inch their way up the hill while Reynolds provided rear security.

"A strange thing happened next," said Reynolds. *"A North Vietnamese appeared 15 feet from me in the brush and just stood there watching me. He turned around and seemed to say something to his buddies when I blasted him with my M-16."*

While Sgt. Ronald C. Palmer put down a murderous stream of lead, Reynolds made his way up the hill to the others. *"Those bullets were the sweetest sound I ever heard,"* said Reynolds.

(Appeared in Issue 29, June 2011)

"War is at best barbarism...Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell."

General William Tecumseh Sherman
His statement in 1879, a decade after he led Union forces to victory in our Civil War.



Randy Tenney, FO/A/2/503d

Re: 22 June 1967, Battle of the Slopes. What I was going to tell you concerned some heroic 2/503 Alpha Company survivors. First, Bill Nichols. Bill was part of the group I was in temporary command of who went back up the slope to check on enemy troops to our rear. He witnessed me being wounded by the NVA soldier who was wearing a Tiger uniform and black beret. Bill saw my shoulder blade before we returned to Platoon Sergeant Hostack, and said "You will be O.K."

Second, I believe the soldier in the hospital (106th General) on Yokohama was a trooper named Maris (sp), a Mexican-American who, along with Lavart (sp) the other survivor which Charlie Company found – both spent that terrible night on 22 June with the enemy, and GOD only knows what they went through.

I so wish Sgt. Hostack had been put in for the Medal of Honor. I witnessed many acts of heroism during my two tours in-country, but he was true to his men and made several trips back down the hill to recover wounded. On almost every trip he was wounded. Sgt. Hostack was also a survivor of Korea (and WWII?). He was a soldier's soldier. He has passed on but I will always remember him, a native of Worchester, Mass.

(Appeared in Issue 29, June 2011)



***"I have never killed a man,
but I have read many
obituaries with great
pleasure."***

~ Clarence Darrow



Sky Soldier buddies, all survivors of The Battle of the Slopes, at mini-reunion in Oklahoma. L-R: Sam Stewart, Roger Dick, Walter (Bills) Bills all C/2/503d, and Clarence Johnson A/2/503d.

(Appeared in Issue 29, June 2011)



Ranger Tab is received after completion of Ranger School.

It was not until World War II when the modern Rangers were born, authorized by General George C. Marshall in 1942. The six battalions of the modern Rangers have been deployed in wars in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and saw action in several conflicts, such as those in Panama and Grenada. Of the current active Ranger battalions, two -- the 1st and the 2nd -- have been in service since reactivation in 1974. The 3rd Ranger Battalion and the headquarters of the 75th Ranger Regiment were reactivated in 1984. **RLTW**

(Appeared in Issue 30, July 2011)





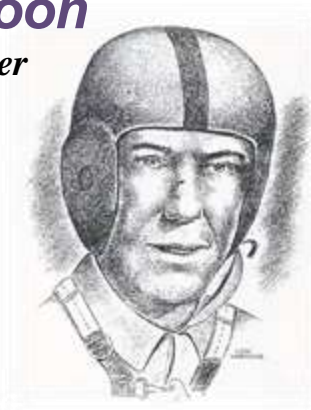
Sign at 2/503d base camp at LZ English, 1970. Photo sent in by Lynn Lail, A/2/503d.

(Appeared in Issue 31, August 2011)

The Test Platoon

Every man a volunteer

Two hundred men volunteered for the Test Platoon, and 39 were selected. Lt. William T. Ryder, who had graduated from West Point four years earlier, was appointed platoon leader, with Lt. James A. Bassett as his second-in-command. Thus was established the paratroop concept “*every man a volunteer.*” “Airborne No. 1”



LT Bill Ryder
“Airborne No. 1”

(Appeared in Issue 31, August 2011)

Them Diggers



A Man of a Blue Words

Platoon Sergeant Leon Hostack returned to A/2/503 prior to "The Jump". He made *LIFE MAGAZINE* with a great photo. He was a great trooper and a really great Platoon Sergeant. He was profane, even more so than the rest of us and that is saying a lot. Sergeant Major Ed Proffitt rotated home, and was replaced by Sergeant Major Rogiers (later to be the Brigade Sergeant Major), who in no way was profane, not at all. After he was there a short time Sergeant Major Rogiers called a meeting of all the NCO's up in the battalion movie theater. The Sergeant Major made the statement that way too much obscene language was being used and he wanted it stopped, especially the use of M.F. "Am I understood? Any questions?" Up stands Leon Hostack, "Sergeant Major. What the mother-fuck do you mean by M.F.?" End of meeting.

Jack Owens, Paragon Alpha 36, A/B/2/503d



The outdoor movie theatre at Camp Zinn where all English language and other lessons were taught.

More on the Theatre

Shortly after arrival at Camp Zinn as an FNG in December '65, a handful of other Cherries and I were ordered one night to report to the movie theatre. We must have thought, "Hey, this is great, movies!!" Some Sergeant or Medical Officer, can't recall which or who he was, then began to explain to us the evils we should avoid in the nearby city of Bien Hoa, including such things as razor blades hidden in hidden places, which never quite made much sense. A black and white movie then began which graphically showed 10 ft. tall people suffering in ungodly ways from gonorrhea, syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases with strange sounding names – clearly, they had been to Bien Hoa. Had we had popcorn with us I'm sure we would have put it down. These Army scare tactics may have worked for some, but not all and perhaps not many. Gotta go. It's time for my shots.

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

(Appeared in Issue 33, October 2011)

PRE-DEPLOYMENT

At a Commanders' and Staff meeting at Camp Kui, LTC George Dexter announced, in early April 1965,

"Gentleman, we'll be deploying to Vietnam thirty days from now. This information is classified but initiate preparations for deployment....etc. You will not be able to tell your men until I release the info 24 hours before actual deployment on 5 May 1965. We will be deploying TDY for 90 days."

(Appeared in Issue 33, October 2011)

Willie Pitts Jr. Parkway



Jack Owens, A/B/2/503d, standing on the Willie Pitts Jr. Parkway in Albany, GA, Willie's hometown.

Jack says, "Willie Pitts was my platoon sergeant in Sept. 1966. He was Paragon Alpha 35. He retired a Major, died in 2005. Best NCO and best soldier I ever knew."

(Appeared in Issue 35, December 2011)



~ Missing Man Table ~



Capt. Bill Vose, A/2/503d, with his beautiful CO, Roberta, driving his cammo'd jeep in the Orlando, FL Veteran's Day parade. As we watched the parade march by, my wife, Reggie, remarked, "Bill looks cute in his little French beret." Ed

(Appeared in Issue 35, December 2011)

The table is round – to show our everlasting concern. The cloth is white – symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty.

The single red rose reminds us of the lives of these men....and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith, while seeking answers.

A slice of lemon reminds us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land.

A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears of our missing and their families who long for answers after decades of uncertainty.

The glass is inverted – to symbolize their inability to share this evening's toast.

The chairs are empty – they are missing.....

(Appeared in Issue 35, December 2011)

“To be a good soldier, you must love the army. To be a good commander, you must be willing to order the death of the thing you love.”

- Robert E. Lee



From Bill Wyatt, HHC/2/503d



Bravo CO and his Radar Hook-up Over 4 Decades Later

I left "Nam" on my first tour in April 1967. One of my RTOs was Harry Cleland. Harry and I have been exchanging emails for the past year or two but not until a few days ago (December 1) have we gotten together. Harry and his lovely wife, Marilyn, were on their way to Williamsburg, VA to celebrate their 41st wedding anniversary. They stopped off to spend a few hours with Bunny and I. This photo is of the two of us. That's Harry with all the hair and it's me who is bald.



Hawkeye & Radar

It was really good seeing him after nearly half a century.

Ken Kaplan
CO B/2/503d

(Appeared in Issue 36, January 2012)

So, you wanna be an Army combat helicopter pilot?



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

~ Fighter Pilot's Prayer ~

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

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

(Appeared in Issue 37, February 2012)

Pacific
STARS AND STRIPES

Paratrooper Caught in Tree Sweats Snipers for 7 Hours

S&S Vietnam Bureau
Saturday, February 25, 1967



(AP Photo)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Airborne!!!

(Appeared in Issue 36, January 2012)



2/503 Nicknames

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

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



Sleepy Linton, 1919-2007
Husband of Margee

(Appeared in Issue 38, March 2012)



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

Colonel Vance Forepaugh
173d Airborne Brigade

Brothers at The Wall



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

Richard "Airborne" Martinez
B/2/503d

(Appeared in Issue 38, March 2012)



The most interesting man in the world



Leg →



(Appeared in Issue 41, June 2012)

"I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower



PICS FROM REUNION IN LEXINGTON 2012



Ed Carns, CO A/2/503 & Recon, & Wambi Cook, A/2/503.



L-R: Pam Geishauer & Reggie Smith, chowing down on popcorn. They were heard to say, *"Cheap husbands, this is dinner? Where are the young paratroopers?"*



"Okay. I'm gonna say this once. Which one of you took my glasses?"

(Appeared in Issue 42, June 2012)





~ *BLOOD ON THE RISERS* ~



Our song which wasn't sung (at the Lexington reunion banquet). So, sing it.

He was just a rookie trooper and he surely
shook with fright.
He checked off his equipment
and made sure his pack was tight;
He had to sit and listen to those awful
engines roar,
"You ain't gonna jump no more!"

**Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die.
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die.
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die.
He ain't gonna jump no more!**

"Is everybody happy?" cried the Sergeant
looking up.
Our Hero feebly answered "Yes," and then
they stood him up;
He jumped into the icy blast, his static line
unhooked.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

He counted long, he counted loud,
he waited for the shock.
He felt the wind, he felt the cold,
he felt the awful drop.
The silk from his reserve spilled out
and wrapped around his legs.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

The risers swung around his neck,
connectors cracked his dome.
Suspension lines were tied in knots
around his skinny bones.
The canopy became his shroud;
he hurtled to the ground.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

The days he'd lived and loved and
laughed kept running through his mind.
He thought about the girl back home,
the one he'd left behind.
He thought about the medic corps
and wondered what they'd find.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

The ambulance was on the spot,
the jeeps were running wild.
The medics jumped and screamed with glee,
rolled up their sleeves and smiled.
For it had been a week or more
since last a 'chute had failed.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

He hit the ground, the sound was "Splat,"
his blood went spurting high.
His comrades they were heard to say:
"A hell of a way to die!"
He lay there rolling round
in the welter of his gore.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

(CHORUS)

There was blood upon the risers,
there were brains upon the chute.
Intestines were a'dangling from
his Paratrooper suit.
He was a mess; they picked him up,
and poured him from his boots.
And he ain't gonna jump no more.

**Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die,
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die,
Gory, gory, what a hell of a way to die,
He ain't gonna jump no more!**

Airborne....All The Way!



G.I. JO

I Know You

You may not know me, but I saw you.
Your arms reached out.
Your mouth gasping for one last breath.
You carried wounds not seen with scars.
You carried memories that burn deep,
and burn like fire.

The blood dripping from
your hands does not wash off
and the screams within never leave.
You choke up when a flag passes by.

You fall to your knees not from faith, but from
weakness when you hear "TAPS".
The faded army clothes, worn badges,
but proud medals that you wear say so much.

You may not know me, but I know you.
You are a veteran from a war no one liked.
You gave when no one wanted.
You suffered when no one cared.
You saluted a flag that you felt turned its back on you.

You are Vietnam Veteran.
I breathe Freedom, because you cared.
My children know Freedom,
because you fought for it.
You may not know me,
but I know you and I just want to say,
"THANK YOU..".



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

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

(Appeared in Issue 48, December)





5 January 1966, Chargin' Charlies. On far right Captain Tom Faley (Colonel Ret.) with his C/2/503 troopers during Operation Marauder in the Mekong Delta displaying captured enemy flag. They were young once, and paratroopers.

(Appeared in Issue 49, January 2013)

Terry

"Get the hell out!" were the last words I spoke to you as you came into the commo bunker drunk that late night at Zinn. Little did I know my friend, I'd never see your face again.

Nigh on 50 years its' been, and those words still pierce my soul. You didn't tell me you were leaving us, but of course, you didn't know.

For decades since on a little band I talk to you and take you everywhere; "Hey, Terry, we're going to play some golf today" I say, as if you are standing there.

I'm so sorry for those final words to you, I would much have rather said, "Hi brother, come on in, I'm glad you're here..."

To Sky Soldier Buddy
Terry Wilkins, C/2/503d
Killed in Action, July 3, 1966

(Appeared in Issue 49, January 2013)



Lifelong Buds



L-R: Terry Fugate and Tannor Dupard, Chargin' Charlies, doing their thang in 1967, somewhere in VN.

I thought this would be very interesting to all. The local TV station did a story about us on their news several years ago.

I am Tannor, on the right in the above photo, and Terry on the left digging. Terry Fugate is from and lives in Vanceburg, KY, I live in Baton Rouge, LA. We met in 1966, at Fort Gordon (AIT), went to jump school together and were assigned to 46th Company...received orders together for 'Nam and were assigned together to the same platoon and squad with Charlie Company 2/503. When you saw one of us, you saw the other.

We both were blessed to come back, and until this day we are family. I visit him and he visits me. We are family and vacation together.

The more current picture was taken in New Orleans. Ironically, we are positioned exactly the same in both pics, and this wasn't planned. Destiny called for our bond; this was done when it wasn't too acceptable for a white guy from a little small Kentucky town to befriend a black guy.

Airborne!

Tannor Dupard
C/2/503d



Terry & Tannor, Sky Soldier brothers then, now and forever.

More on Les Brownlee, Secretary of the Army.... Trust, Respect, Leadership

Captain Les Brownlee was the commanding officer for B Company 2nd Bn 503rd Infantry while I was there. I need to give you some background so you can understand my unique position so you can better appreciate my remarks.

First, it is rare for a buck Sgt to be in a position to make judgments and how that came about. Captain Brownlee decided he needed an operations NCO and I happened to have a strong background for the job.

Before RVN I was Ranger, and Pathfinder qualified and had graduated from the Instructor training school at Ft Benning. I worked at the Basic Airborne, Advance Airborne and the Pathfinder schools as an instructor.

Captain Brownlee was the best Company commander that anyone would want. He made sound tactical decisions that accomplished the missions without taking unnecessary casualties.

All of the men of B Company admired and respected him. But most of all we all trusted him and had great faith in his technical and tactical as well as leadership abilities.

John J. Strunks
Master Sergeant (Ret), B/2/503d



Future Secretary of the Army, Les, center, being Dusted Off from "D" Zone jungle after being wounded in firefight in March '66 during Operation Silver City. (Web photo)

(This page appeared in Issue 49, January 2013)



Proud Member of the Elite... When Duty Calls

Not in Basic or AIT nor even at jump school did they warn us of a particularly dangerous mission we might be called on to perform in Vietnam on a moment's notice and without warning. Nor were we sufficiently trained to take on this potentially perilous operation. But, because we were 'Can Do' paratroopers of the 'We Try Harder' and 'Second to None' kind, we were not afraid. "Bring it on, you bastards!" we thought.

Huh? What's this stick for? To stir what?! And how come only Cherries are doing this? What's that you say? It's likely we'll only have to do this once as new FNG's will be afforded the honor? *Shit!*

So, sometime in late December '65, off we go, RTO Lee Braggs and I to earn our patch at the Officer's Latrine; which we thought a privileged assignment having been told by many of them 'ours doesn't stink'. To our surprise, we had been lied to. *Gentlemen my ass!*

Having completed this dangerous and slippery task, we were not awarded medals, which I thought a great oversight on someone's part, and not one person thanked us for our good work and bravery above and beyond the call of duty.

Now, I don't know about Lee as I haven't seen him in nearly 50 years, but some 30+ years later I was awarded my very own patch which, if enough rum is available, will proudly wear on my sports coat. It's good to be one of the elite, when duty calls.

Lew "Smitty" Smith

HHC/2/503d

Shit Burner Extraordinaire



***If you haven't burned shit,
you don't know shit.***

One of Delta's Best

Wayne Bowers was born in January 1948 in the small upstate town of Travelers Rest, South Carolina. He was the first of four sons. When he was 10 years old, his dad moved the family to Sierra Vista (Fort Huachuca), Arizona, where he took a job in the base commissary. After graduating from Buena High School in Arizona, Wayne joined the Army on September 13, 1966 and was assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas for basic training.



Mr. Bowers

After basic training, he was sent to Fort Gordon, Georgia for infantry training. He graduated in the middle of January and was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for Jump School. After finishing jump school, he went back to Sierra Vista for 30 days leave before being assigned to the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), Vietnam as a PFC.

Wayne arrived in Vietnam at 4 am on March 28, 1967 and was assigned to Charlie Company of the 2nd Battalion, where he served as a rifleman, RTO and machine gunner and was promoted to SP/4. In October, he was assigned to newly-formed Delta Company where he served as rifleman/point man. He was point man for Delta Company as they ascended Hill 875 in November 1967.

Wayne was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for actions on Hill 875. He spent some time in a hospital in Pleiku and returned to Delta Company in late December where he served his remaining time. He left Vietnam on March 27, 1968.

After returning to the United States, Wayne was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina as a Sgt. E5. He was sent to NCO Academy at Fort McClellan, Alabama in June 1968, then returned to Fort Bragg for approximately 5 months.

He then went to Drill Sergeant School in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. After graduating 3rd in his class, he was assigned to the 3rd Army Training Center at Fort Bragg.

Wayne served as a Drill Sgt. and was promoted to SSG E6. After honorably serving his beloved country for 2 years, 11 months and 28 days, he was discharged from the Army on September 11, 1969 and went to Greenville, South Carolina, where his family had moved while he was in Vietnam. Wayne presently resides in Columbia, South Carolina with his wife, they have 1 daughter.

[Wayne is unaware we captured this info on him. Ed]

(This page appeared in Issue 50, February 2013)



Cowboy Helicopter Pilots Are Truly Honorable



One day, while a Cowboy Helicopter Pilot was cutting a branch of a tree above a river, his ax 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 ax to make his living. The Lord went down into the water and reappeared with a golden ax. "Is this your ax?" the Lord asked.

The Cowboy replied, "No."

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

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

The Lord went down again and came up with an iron ax. "Is this your ax?" 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]

(Appeared in Issue 51, March 2013)

"There are some who've forgotten why we have a military. It's not to promote war, it's to be prepared for peace."

President Ronald Reagan





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)

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



(Appeared in Issue 51, March 2013)

Sadly, we lost Rocky on this, his final mission. Ed



More on Senator Jim Webb's "Heroes of the Vietnam Generation"

(See Webb's article in Issue 18, Pages 16-19. Ed)

This is a very good article by Jim Webb, currently U.S. Senator from Virginia. I haven't always agreed with Jim Webb, but he is right about the "Vietnam Generation".



Les in Phu Loi, 1966

The real heroes of this generation are those young patriots who volunteered to serve their country in uniform or received a draft notice, answered the call of their country and put their lives at risk to go to Vietnam and fight in a very brutal war. On the other hand, there were those who burned their draft cards and crossed the border into Canada to avoid the draft and the war.

And then, of course, there were those who sought educational deferments to go to school. Instead of marching to the "colors" and "the sound of the guns", they marched to the campus. And, for some of these students, when they couldn't justify why they were not in the war, they declared the war as "bad and unjust" to rationalize their own unwillingness to serve. Then they demonstrated against the war and even heaped insults on those who chose to fight for their country when they returned. It certainly appears that many of those who applied for draft deferments in order to pursue graduate degrees in those days may have been primarily interested in seeking shelter from the draft and the war.

Many of our Soldiers volunteered to serve their country because their country was at war. They emulated their fathers, brothers, uncles and others who had fought in WWII and Korea and had always been their heroes. Others served because they loved their country and when she called, they were not going to run from the fight. They answered the call of their country and did their duty. Unfortunately, too often, the picture portrayed of the Vietnam Veteran is one of a drafted dope-head who committed atrocities during the war. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's about time the real truth was told.

The Marines Webb describes are like the Soldiers I knew and was privileged to serve with and command. I certainly owe them my life and my eternal gratitude and total respect as well.

Warmest regards, Les Brownlee, COL (Ret)

Les is the former company commander of B/2/503d and Acting Secretary of the Army.

(Appeared in Issue 52, April 2013)



Proudly on display at home of N75 LRRP
Extraordinaire, Hugh "Hubie" Imhof.

(Appeared in Issue 54, June 2013)

A POEM FOR YOU, BROTHER!

OUT OF THE CLOUDS

written by Esther B. (Campbell) Gates

*Out of the clouds I tumble
to survey the earth below.*

*With a snap of my billowing canopy
I glide like a bird, and slow.*

*The wind kisses my face
Like a friend –*

*Takes my hand to lead the way.
The other hand grasps St. Michael's wings
in the exhilarating game we play.*

*The thunder of the silence
Soothes my soul*

*As I drift in laughter's wake,
And I dance on the air
With the earth my goal
All for my country's sake.*

(Appeared in Issue 55, July 2013)



More About Maggie

I spent 30 minutes alone with this great Lady and Soldier in a tent in BIEN HOA, RVN in July 1965, when she visited the 2 Bn, 503d Para Inf Regt, of the Famed 173 ABN BDE (Sep).



Her only complaint was *"that the Troopers had to settle for an old over the hill entertainer rather than be entertained by younger ladies closer to their age"*.

She had been an Army Nurse in the Pacific Theater during WWII and held the rank of Lt Col in the Reserves when I met her.

She was truly a great LADY and SOLDIER whom I felt very privileged to have met and spent time with.

MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON HER SOUL.

WILLIAM E. WHITE

LT COL, INF

XO, 2d Bn, 503d Para Inf Regt, 1964-1965



"You must never break faith with those who died."

Maj. Eddie Prisk
Field Marshall Montgomery's U.S. liaison officer
WWII-Europe

My father's pledge from the beaches of Normandy.

Cpt. Gary Prisk
C/D/2/503d



Rest easy, Colonel, you did your job.

(Appeared in Issue 56, August 2013)

Why? You Ask.



AIRBORNE

**It's not because I'm elite,
and it's not because I'm
crazy. It's because my balls
are bigger than yours.**

[Sent in by a big-balled Sky Soldier of the 4th Batt kind]

(Appeared in Issue 56, August 2013)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Feb.-Mar. 2015 – Issue 59

Page 46 of 49



This photo is of the 173d LRRP/Rangers at the ranger reunion this past July (2013).
"We had the largest turnout of the units in Vietnam."

curse like no other, but is the perfect gentleman. He has a thousand yard stare, but when you look into his eyes, it's the most comforting thing you've ever felt. The U.S. government trained him as a weapon but raised him as a lover. He knows every part of his rifle, and every curve of his woman. There is no other man like him. Whether you love or hate him, both is a privilege. He could be your worst nightmare or your best friend.



[Sent in by Claudia Tobin, sister of
**B/2/503d RTO Extraordinaire
 Larry Paladino]**

(Appeared in Issue 57, September 2013)

INCOMING!

~ Almost Poetic, Almost ~

I've been sitting here reading our roster of 173d KIAs in the month of September (Issue 57). Of course there are tears. Andy Anderson's account of *Operation Silver City* is fascinating and sooo well written.



Jim Bethea
 HHC/2/503d, '65/'66

Jim

Reply: Hi Jimbo: Agree with your take, hooch buddy, on what Andy Anderson (A/2/503) wrote about Silver City (Issue 57 Pages 10-18). I had earlier told him what he wrote was almost poetic, almost...

"The chopper blades slapped the moist morning air lulling us to sleep, so sorely needed, since our early rise hours past and our future of physical trial. I eyed the emerald terrain beneath, knowing we'd go from bird to bug at the end of our joy ride into the bosom of this dark damsel named Vietnam. It was the second week of March 1966."

If that ain't poetic, I don't know poetic. A fine piece of writing and shared sad history indeed. Best to you and Miss Gayle my brother. Ed

(Appeared in Issue 58, October 2013)

A 'No Shit' Story

I have to share this no shit story with you.

The LRRP's had a stand down for rest. Slicks were coming and going. Tom Zaruba asked this chopper dude where he was going. He said, *"Bien Hoa and back."*

Tom told AP Valkie to jump on and bring back beer.

Upon arriving Bien Hoa the chopper landed right in front of Carl Vencill. Carl said, *"What in the hell are you doing here?"* Valkie didn't know what to say, he just stood there. Carl said, *"You are getting short, want to go home?"* And Carl sent him home.

Fast forward 47 years; last month Tom is sitting and drinking beer with the boys. Tom looks up and there stands Valkie with 2 beers in his hands. Hold on to your seat.... Valkie said, *"I'M BACK!"*

Can't make this shit up!

Ron Thomas
 173d LRRP, '65/'66

(Appeared in Issue 57, September 2013)

The Infantryman

His emotions are impenetrable, yet his shoulders are soft for someone to lean on. His hands are firm yet know exactly where to be. If he has his arms wrapped around you, you're either in the last moments of your life or the safest place you could ever be. He's stubborn but will let you have your way just to see you smile. He's deadly with a rifle and gentle with a child. He plays poker with the devil, but guards the gates of heaven. He



As part of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), the first major ground combat army unit committed to the Vietnam War, the 2/503d entered the country in May 1965, under the command of (then) LTC George Dexter.



Col. George E. Dexter (Ret), saluting his 2/503d troops at 173d reunion at Rochester, MN, in 2000.

[Appeared in Issue 11, February 2010]



173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
~ National Memorial ~
Fort Benning, Georgia

