

# 2/503d

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



We try  
harder.

# VIETNAM

newsletter

August-September 2015, Issue 62  
Contact: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

See all issues to date at 503rd Heritage Battalion website:  
[http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue\\_index.htm](http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm)

## ~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



Members of the 173d Airborne Brigade's Memorial Foundation and Association add names of Medal of Honor recipients, C/2/503 troopers Sgt. Kyle White (L) and Staff Sgt. Ryan Pitts to our memorial, Saturday, June 13, 2015, at the National Infantry Museum's Walk of Honor at Fort Benning, GA. See more photos on Page 61.

(Photo provided by Col. Ken Smith, A/D/2/503)



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# Memorial Day Proclamation By the Commander-In-Chief

## *Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2015*

“On Memorial Day, the United States pauses to honor the fallen heroes who died in service to our Nation.

With heavy hearts and a sense of profound gratitude, we mourn these women and men -- parents, children, loved ones, comrades-in-arms, friends, and all those known and unknown -- who believed so deeply in what our country could be they were willing to give their lives to protect its promise. Our hearts ache in their absence, but their spirit gives us strength to continue their work of securing and renewing the liberties that all Americans cherish and for which these heroes gave their last full measure of devotion.

In solemn reflection, we gather -- in small towns and big cities, on battlefields, in cemeteries, and at sacred places where blood has been shed for freedom's cause - - throughout our country and around the world to remember the unbroken chain of patriots who won independence, saved our Union, defeated fascism, and protected the Nation we love from emerging threats in a changing world. Today, their legacy is carried forward by a new generation of servicemen and women and all who strive to shape a more perfect America; and their enormous sacrifices continue to make our opportunity possible.

We owe all those who sacrifice in our name a tremendous debt, including our Nation's mothers and fathers who have given their daughters and sons to America, spouses and partners who shoulder the weight of unthinkable loss, and courageous children in whom the legacies of their parents live on. As a Nation, we must uphold our obligations to these Gold Star families. We have pledged to them that they will never walk alone -- that their country will be there for them always -- and we must work every day to make good on this promise.

Our Nation will never forget the valor and distinction of the women and men who defend freedom, justice, and peace. Today, we rededicate ourselves to commitments equal to the caliber of those who have rendered the highest service: to support our troops with the resources they need to do their jobs; to never stop searching for those who have gone missing or are prisoners of war; to ensure all our veterans have access to the care and benefits they have earned and deserve; and to continue our constant work of building a Nation worthy of the heroes we honor today.

In honor of all of our fallen service members, the Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 11, 1950, as amended (36 U.S.C. 116), has requested the President issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe each Memorial Day as a day of prayer for permanent peace and designating a period on that day when the people of the United States might unite in prayer. The Congress, by Public Law 106-579, has also designated 3:00 p.m. local time on that day as a time for all Americans to observe, in their own way, the National Moment of Remembrance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Memorial Day, May 25, 2015, as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time during which people may unite in prayer.

I also ask all Americans to observe the National Moment of Remembrance beginning at 3:00 p.m. local time on Memorial Day. I request the Governors of the United States and its Territories, and the appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half-staff until noon on this Memorial Day on all buildings, grounds, and naval vessels throughout the United States and in all areas under its jurisdiction and control. I also request the people of the United States to display the flag at half-staff from their homes for the customary forenoon period.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand fifteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-ninth.”

BARACK OBAMA

[Sent in by Central Coast Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 982]



May 24, 2015. President Obama lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington, Va. Photo: Olivier Douliery/EPA



# The Path of the Warrior

*"There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends."*

John 15:13

In every society there are many Callings, Teacher, Caregiver, Statesman...Of these, the Path of the Warrior is one of the more difficult. It is the hardest of the Paths of Service.

*"The greatest glory of a free-born people is to transmit that freedom to their children."*

William Havard

Throughout history, Warriors have been called upon to protect their families, communities and countries. To fight for others' safety and freedom, knowing that this Path of Service may include their life and the suffering of their loved ones.

*"We see peace, knowing that peace is the climate of freedom."*

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The Path of the Warrior requires the qualities of courage, commitment and resilience. Courage to face the horror and brutality of war; Commitment to leave your loved ones behind to make sure they will remain safe; Resilience to keep your humanity in the face of inhumanity.

*"The purpose of all war is ultimately peace."*

Saint Augustine

Politics and public opinions ebb and flow like the ocean's tide; but the Path of the Warrior is steadfast. He understands Duty and Honor.

No one desires Peace more than the Warriors and their families. For they know the true cost of war.

*"The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."*

Douglas MacArthur

They know that Freedom has never been free. That the price of Freedom has always been the blood of the Warrior. These Warriors have never sought war, but never flinched when their country called.

Memorial Day is the day when we pay our respects to those who, in Abraham Lincoln's words, gave the last full measure of devotion. It is through their actions that we enjoy blessings of liberty. It is through the tears of their families that we have the freedoms we often take for granted.

*"We shall find peace. We shall hear the angels, we shall see the sky sparkling with diamonds."*

Anton Chekhov

To the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families, we send you our sincere gratitude. May God Bless you and keep you safe until you are once more in the arms of your loved ones.

Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families whose sacrifices have enabled us to enjoy the Blessings of Freedom, and with gratitude to my father, whose living example taught me the understanding of the words: *"Duty, Honor, Country."*

Written and Produced by:  
Humanity Healing Network  
View the entire video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/JKqT0-3JV5E>

[Sent in by Patrick Feely, Col. (Ret), Medic C/2/503]

## A Few Of Our 2/503 Warriors We Knew Who Gave Their Tomorrows....



R. Zinn, 7/7/65



G. Levy, 1/2/66



C. Caires, 3/3/67



L. Aldrich, 5/6/68



A. Valencia, 5/15/69



M. Adams, 9/10/70



L. Ferguson, 4/24/71

*"When you go home,  
tell them of us  
and say;  
We gave our  
tomorrow,  
for your  
today."*

Unsigned



**“Memorial Day may come  
but once a year to honor and  
remember our fallen; but for us,  
every day is Memorial Day.”**

(Smittyism)

## How Some of Our Sky Soldiers Spent Their Memorial Day

### A Small Town Dedication

I spent time in the morning at a small town dedication of a memorial to all their war KIAs. Then went to Freedom and Hope Foundation organized by my Air Force brother Terry Cotney, to take wheelchair-bound young man catfishing. He had also been hog hunting and filming for his outdoor TV show. The rest of the day was spent reading many posts of Memorial Day. Also time spent on remembering Chap. Watters, Capt. Rogan, Zan Hess and so many others from B/2/503, '67.

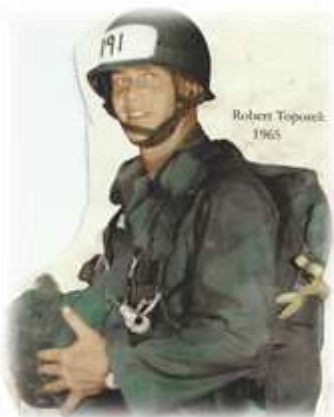


**Wako Cotney  
B/2/503**

### Hooking Up With Old Buddies

I spent the day, Memorial Day working, Roling people because I could.

In the evening organized a phone conference call between Mitchel, Grimes, Short, Yates, Jackson and me. The six of us have not talked together in 50 years, it was just AWESOME!!!!



We are preparing for our reunion of the third platoon and the entire 173rd on October 22, 2015 at Olive Park in Chicago, 10am-1pm.

**Robert Toporek  
B/2/503  
teamchildren@teamchildren.com**

## Memorial Day Here in Fayetteville, NC Freedom's Memorial Day Ceremony held at Freedom Memorial Park



Great day and super weather. A number of "Herd" patches throughout the crowd. Participants that made it go well were Honor Guard from the 82nd Airborne, the Washington Light Infantry Color Guard, the Rolling Thunder and a host of organizations that annually present wreaths at the ceremony (photo above) -- Sergeant Majors Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, 27th Engr Bn and the speaker - Maj Gen Jeff Smith, Deputy Commander of the XVIII Abn Corps. He gave a great speech and in the middle, as he was talking about Vietnam and the lack of recognition the vets from that war had received, he asked all Vietnam Vets to stand and be recognized. Great!!! Great moment to remember. Great friends that have passed over to remember...

***"Your silent tents of green  
We deck with fragrant flowers;  
Yours has the suffering been,  
The memory shall be ours."***

Prayers....

**Jack Kelley  
CO A/2/503**



## 180,000 American Flags

This video (at the web site below) is what we did for Veteran's Day 2014. We did the same thing for Memorial Day 2015. We actually placed approximately 180,000 flags, one for every hero buried at Riverside National Cemetery. There is usually several thousand volunteers that help place the flags.

For Memorial Day we also have a motorcycle ride out to the National Cemetery, check out the link for more info.

<http://abc7.com/society/motorcyclists-pay-tribute-to-military-vets-in-west-coast-thunder-ride/741127/>



Photo of my brother, B. Gore (he was really my squad leader when I first arrived in Vietnam).

**Jim "Doc" Gore**  
A/B/D/E 2/503

## He's Still Marchin' For His Buddies

I marched in the Plymouth, Michigan Memorial Day Parade with my fellow VVA chapter members, as a rifleman, and we were the rifle squad during the National Anthem. This is a picture of me with a friend (wife did not make the ceremony) who had a son in Afghanistan and is now safely home using his G.I. Bill.

**Rich Whipple**  
HHC/2/503, '68/'69



## Hi Bulls (and Bullettes), Here's the story:

When I had ordered two shirts for Annie and me (L+XL) I had hoped to receive them before our departure for Croatia (from Geneva, Switzerland), which was scheduled for May 13. But, to my disappointment, nothing on the horizon! On the morning of departure I took a last peep in the mailbox - and there they were!

I threw the envelope on top of everything else in our already heavily charged vehicle (what with full camping gear and inflatable Zodiac boat along with outboard motor and salt tablets), thank you Roy (Lombardo). After having installed our tent and put the Zodiac afloat and done the first necessary shopping, it was Memorial Day.

I unpacked the shirts and had a big surprise: Jack (Schimpf), ever so generous, had mailed *two* XLs. Annie was enchanted. She said she will wear that shirt as a gala gown at the next Grammy Awards.

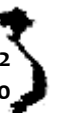
Anyway, thanks to Jack's foresight, we have plenty of room for future developments in those shirts. See for yourself.



Herbert with his beautiful bride, Annie, donning their very yellow Bravo Bulls' shirts.

Picture taken in front of our HQ (read tavern - they sell cold beer there, Jack), the last outpost of civilization before the wilderness.

Sunny greetings from island Cres,  
**Herbert & Annie Murhammer**  
B/2/503, '65/'66



## Last Year They Honored a Young Trooper

Sent you photo (from last year) of Dave Glick and myself at the grave of Derek Hines KIA in the first Afgan deployment.

We toasted him with glasses from 2/503 presented to us in Italy, filled with 173d wine from Italy.

This year I stayed home.

**Jim Robinson**

**B/2/503**



L-R, Bravo Bulls' Dave Glick & Jim Robinson

## On The Phone With A Brother

I spent my Memorial Day watching the documentary on JFK betrayal, recommend all Vietnam Veterans to watch it, you might be surprised to know that in 1953 JFK as a Senator from Massachusetts had said that "entering Vietnam would be a mistake". When he was President, in 1961 he sent military advisers to teach and train the south Vietnam soldiers, and on the day of his assassination (November 22, 1963), President John F. Kennedy had issued an executive order to remove the seventeen thousand troops from Vietnam. We know the rest of the story.



Strac lookin' Top

Then, to make the day more memorable, I received a call from our Platoon Sergeant of the 4'2's platoon on Okinawa and Vietnam, Benjamin Burks, so we had a wonderful conversation. That's how I spent my Memorial Day.

**John W Searcy, Sr., 1Sgt (Ret)**

**HHC/2/503, '65-'66**

## A Salute to the 442<sup>nd</sup> and Their Families

I'm John Taylor with B/2/503 on Okinawa 7/63-2/65, Ranger Roy Lombardo's Bravo Bulls. I later made the trip across the pond with the 1st BGD 2/327.

Unfortunately, I spent Memorial Day in a hospital bed recovering from lower back surgery--not a fun day believe me. I thought I'd experienced my share of pain during my 73 years, but nothing came even remotely close to the hell I spent lying in that bed being virtually unable to move. I'm not seeking sympathy, just telling it like it was.

I managed to watch some TV specials about the holiday when I was in and out of pain medication. The show that captivated my attention most was the story about the WWII American-



An American veteran of the 442<sup>nd</sup>

Japanese unit, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. It's hard to believe those men volunteered to serve in the military while their own families, American citizens, were forcibly detained in "relocation camps." It makes my blood boil just thinking about how the US treated over 100,000 of its own citizens. The 442nd later became one of the most decorated units during the war. I'm aware of why the US perpetrated this injustice--as a security measure to prevent espionage--but it's also a historical fact that not ONE act of espionage by Japanese Americans was ever documented during the entire war.



Kids of some of the 442<sup>nd</sup> vets.

So, to all the members of the 442nd, living and dead, I salute you for the sacrifices you and your families made!

**John Taylor**

**B/2/503**

Just one of the books John has authored.

Check it out on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



See Page 66 for John's latest work.



## Doc Still Doing Good Work For Others

Instead of recognizing and paying respect to those that have given so much, I spent the entire day, Sunday the 24th, and Monday the 25th, locating friends involved in the recent floods of Blanco and Wimberley, Texas. Both of these cities, as well as several other cities in Texas, were hit with heavy rain and tornadoes.



**The Good Doc**

The city of Blanco and surrounding areas received approximately 12 inches of rain in 10 hours. The devastation and destruction is beyond my belief. We lost three main commuting bridges. Thank God, there were no deaths from the Blanco area, however there are still 8 people missing from the Wimberley area, and one from Blanco. **AATW**

**Ken (Doc) Eastman**  
**B/2/503,'65/'66**

## His Buddies Would Have Enjoyed The Cultural Attractions

I did Memorial Day as I always do. Evergreen Cemetery in Tucson at the American Legion service. At least it was cool this year, high 70's, low 80's. We met a SF guy in a wheelchair from just north of town. One of my buds from the 101 (RVN) named Chuck Bishop was there, a guy from the 82nd (just after Korea) and a few other paras were there. Nice ceremony, short speech by the mayor, a poem, a 92 year old ex nurse gave a check to the Legion to support the Veterans Day parade right in front of the Mayor. I thought that was cool because the city hasn't coughed up any money for years for the parade. After the service I told Chuck there was a Bistro nearby where we could raise a cup to the guys. He said he didn't think they opened that early (1000 hrs). But I did a recon and found that they did. By 1015 hrs. we were hoisting a Bloody Mary to the guys agreeing that they would appreciate the surroundings, especially the heavily tattooed blond that was trying to talk us into a private ballet demonstration (I believe it was a variation on Swan Lake). We parted company a few hours later relatively safe in the knowledge that the guys we paid tribute to would have been sitting right next to us having a great time and appreciating the cultural attractions. ATW



**Kraut**

**Gary "Kraut" Kuitert**  
**Recon/2/503**

## Our Commo Boss Spoke On The Day

My remarks were in a short note outline with just key words to get the thought out of my mind and to my voice. Unless one lived in Greenfield some of them may not have made sense.



**Cap at Camp Zinn**

I tried to cover 50 years and recall vets, by name, to make the point "WHO" do you remember (all veterans, of every service, many alive some passed on).

My message was too long, the weather threatened showers, the PA set didn't work right, and the vets' agent kept tugging at my coat whispering "time", so I went from the opening part of the 173d deployment to the time I left Zulu Zulu (Operation Silver City, March '66) in a chopper with 2 body bags in with me. That gave my punchline that on Memorial Day we should remember...

***"Those whose faces you cannot see and  
whose names you do not know."***

**Tom Goodwin, Maj. (Ret)**  
**HHC/2/503**



**Another "Memorial Day", this one at Camp Zinn, 1966.**

(Photo by Tom Goodwin)

## With Honor and Gratitude WE REMEMBER

**Dave Glick**  
**B/2/503**



## Patriots on Bikes



Washington, DC, Memorial Day, 2015

My wife and I gathered with about 400 other bikers for an hour ride into DC to watch Rolling Thunder 2015. We were given a Police escort the entire way and were greeted along the way by adults and kids waving American Flags along the side of the road and on overpasses. It was a very heartwarming experience watching these Americans waving to a group of Bikers as we traveled to the largest gathering of Patriotic bikers I believe in the world.

This is the fourth year I have done this. I don't ride in the parade because it would be over in 90 seconds once you turn onto Constitution Avenue. I enjoy sitting on the grass watching the parade of bikers and the crowd as far as the eye can see, waving American Flags and cheering the parade.

It is estimated that there were a million people this year. Between the bikers in the parade and those that drove down to watch, there had to have been at least a half million Motorcycles.

We were 100 feet away from the Marine that is there every year, saluting each passing motorcycle. What an experience.

**Sgt. Craig W. Murphy**  
E Co (Recon), 2/503 (Wildcats)



Craig, a young Wildcat

## He Remembers School Buddies Lost To War

The Bravo Bulls met at Fort Benning for the 50th Anniversary of our deployment into Viet Nam on 3, 4, and 5 May, 2015. We had a good turnout of 21 Bulls and their Bullettes.

You have probably seen Ed Kearney's pictures of that affair (see Issue 61 of our newsletter. Ed).

What did I do on Memorial Day?

Last year I learned about a Memorial Day Ceremony that was held at a private home in Ocean City, NJ. The ceremony was originally intended to honor the 27 graduates of Father Judge High School (Philadelphia, PA) that were KIA in Viet Nam. It was then extended to include the KIA's in Nam from Cardinal Dougherty High School and those of Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia.

After the ceremony last year, I asked Mike Dufner, the person responsible for this ceremony, if I could participate in 2015 and honor the 29 Graduates of Northeast Catholic High School that had died in Viet Nam. Mike graciously allowed me to participate by reading the names of my High School graduates that were KIA in Nam, and asked me to read the poem "*Bury Me With Soldiers*", which is read every year at Arlington National Cemetery by a Bravo Bull on 10 November.

That was the highlight of my Memorial Day, 2015.

**Jack Schimpf**  
B/2/503



A young Mr. Schimpf  
Silver Star Recipient

**Roger "Tulip" Flowers,**  
B/2/503, spent part of his Memorial Day at the Logan Cemetery in Utah honoring fallen servicemembers while representing his Bravo Bulls.



## A Little Town Remembers Its Vets



Our little town in northern Michigan always has a parade and memorial service at our downtown pier with our high school band playing the National Anthem and the town singing God Bless America. They throw wreaths of flowers in the lake and play Taps along with the 21 gun salute. My 173d husband Don Horger rides every year and belongs to the American Legion group here in town. He maintains the veterans cemetery where after the parade they do a huge memorial service. I am happy to live here because our town is very respectful to our veterans. Our very best,

**Barb and Don Horger**  
A/2/503



Our good buddy Don, presenting his colors.

## *“Our job is to remember their names and tell their stories.”*

My custom is to spend Memorial Day more or less alone, or at least quietly. Some years ago this became for me a time of solemn remembrance, but not a time of agony. I don't see most of the guys I served with, but I do think about those days, and the young men who lived them. The dead merit a moment of reflection, but we should honor them by knowing that we all will die, and we shouldn't let death rule us. We hold their immortality in our hands, each of us with his own piece according to the place they occupied in our hearts, and the place we occupied in theirs. When all our stories fade they finally will die. Our job is to remember their names, and tell their stories.



The thoughtful Mr. Carter

**Mark Carter**  
173d LRRP, E-17th

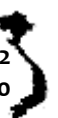
## It's What Terry Would Have Wanted

I spent Memorial Day playing in a two-man scramble golf tournament with an AF Vietnam Vet buddy. We didn't win the tourney but we did win four free rounds of golf plus 53 bucks each, which paid for our drinks at the Cocoa Beach, FL, VFW Post later in the Day -- ours, and that cute blonde at the end of the bar. We did consider attending honor ceremonies at the Post early that morning, which we've done in years past, but chose instead to play golf. My closest buddy who died in our war (we all have at least one closest buddy), was Terry Wilkins, C/2/503, KIA 7/3/66. Terry was a kick, a wild and funny guy, and knowing him, he would have wanted me on the links rather than weeping at the downtown gathering of vets along with their families and friends as a recording of *Taps* played over the outdoor speakers -- that's what Terry would have wanted, because he knows I've wept enough. You see, my Memorial Day for Terry and so many other young men we served with isn't a one-day-a-year thing; like so many of you, like *all* of you, I remember them daily.



The only photo I have of my friend Terry Wilkins, 18

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



# Memories of those who died serving our country

By Terry Garlock

At the Peachtree City Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, Mike King did a nice job of focusing attention on a few of our own who died far too young serving the rest of us.

For families who have felt the personal pain of that loss, I want to tell you something. It won't bring back your son, husband or brother, but it might help just a little to know how those who were there with them in combat think of them, and remember them. Many of us think of them nearly every day, as if we're keeping an unspoken pledge to each other – *I will remember you.*

I never knew anyone who gave his life. I do know some who lost their life doing their duty, doing America's dirty work in unpleasant places. Not a single one of them died willingly. They just wanted to get their job done and go home to live out their lives like you and me.

I was one of the lucky ones. I had plenty of time in hospitals to contemplate my close call. When I was shot down in Vietnam and John Synowsky and Graham Stevens risked their necks to rescue me, my prospects were grim. When they visited me in the hospital and I thanked them, they brushed it off and said any of the other guys would have done the same thing. They were right because that's how we were, struggling mightily to keep one another alive.

But even then, I had no idea how combat changes everyone, and knew nothing of the unexplainable things that would bubble inside me as the years passed. I used to think it was just me.

Between 2005 and 2010 while I was working on a book about Vietnam veterans I spoke to a great many of them, and to veterans of WWII, Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan. Listening carefully helped me see more clearly how all of us were changed by war. It helped me understand myself a little more and clarify some things that are very hard to put into words.

Bear with me while I try.

How does the military prepare the raw material of 18 year olds for combat or a support role? Intense training and drilling helps a lot because every one of them is worried about measuring up, wondering if they are made of the right stuff, and knowing a routine helps.

When the time comes and the shooting starts, new guys are too busy doing their job to notice they are learning lessons that are not taught any other place.

They thought they would be fighting for our flag, but it turned out they were fighting for each other. They thought courage was not being afraid, but they found out courage is doing your job while you are scared to death.



**173d troopers fighting for each other.  
The Battle for Hill 823, Dak To.**

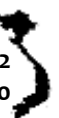
Combat is a cruel teacher, but like a hot forge blending men together instead of the ingredients of steel, somehow it turns a group of men into a sort of family where you may not like or even know a guy but you'll take breathtaking risks to protect each other.

Amidst the chaos and urgency and danger of combat, beyond the mission there is powerful motivation that can be summed up in two words – honor and trust.

You might wonder what a 19 year old soldier in combat knows about honor? Quite a bit, I think. He may not ever put it into words but he knows honor is doing his job well and serving a purpose more important than himself, defending his brothers even at the risk of his life. He knows while looking in the mirror to shave in the morning whether he met the challenge. Passing that test becomes what he likes most about himself.

As he gets good at his job, at some point he suddenly realizes his brothers trust him to deliver, even under fire. He may never say it out loud, but he is enormously proud of earning that trust, and he would do anything not to lose it.

*(continued....)*



It's almost like we proudly wore an invisible jacket of honor and trust that we had to earn, a high achievement that our family at home would never know about or understand. The complete trust we had in each other made a closeness that only Shakespeare has successfully described as he wrote King Henry V's inspiring speech to his men before the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. The bonds formed in battle are not new.

***“From this day to the ending of the world, But we in it shall be remember'd; We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he today that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother;”***

And so, even though everyone in combat fears dying, we feared even more that our courage might fail us, that we might screw up, fail to do our job, and we might lose our brothers trust or even lose their lives. We feared that more than anything.

If you asked us back then if we loved each other, we would have thought you were out of your mind. But when one of us was killed the cut ran very deep, and we crammed our anguish way down inside us into our own secret box and we closed the lid tight so we could carry on to do our job . . . and the ghosts of our dead brothers were never far away.

My roommate Pete was also a Cobra helicopter gunship pilot. In mid-Dec 1969 Pete was on top of the world when he received a telegram announcing the birth of his first child, a son; he wanted more than anything to be a Dad. Four days later he was on a mission helping the 3rd Mobile Strike Force, US Special Forces, stop an enemy force invading South Vietnam from the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia. Pete was in the front seat when his aircraft went into the high, thick jungle trees after tangling with an enemy anti-aircraft gun and he died as it stuck about 200 feet up and burned.



Team members of 3<sup>rd</sup> Mobile Strike Force near Duc Phong

While protesters were hurling insults, as well as packets of urine and feces, at our troops coming home from that war every day at California airports, Pete's family got word of his death on Christmas Eve. Pete is just one of those buried in my own secret box deep in my gut, and the memories never fade.



We learned to welcome each other home.

No matter what war it was, the calendar days passed, some days boring, some days exciting and some dark with anguish, and we all fantasized about going home, getting away from the nastiness of war and back to those we loved.

We may have left home as boys but we would return home serious men who had learned to quickly separate the fluff from important things that might get our brothers killed or keep them alive.

When we finally arrived home the reunion might not have been as smooth as we expected since we had changed more than we realized. We may have seemed remote to some people since our dead brothers, tucked away out of sight in our secret box, meant far more to us than the dumbasses we met who would never sacrifice a thing for their country and wouldn't know honor if it bit them on the backside.

It didn't seem right that life went on as if there was no war, as if Americans were not still fighting and dying, and we found ourselves missing our brothers, both dead and alive, the people we respected now, the people who understood us now, the people we trusted completely now to watch our back.

How crazy is it that many of us secretly wished to be back where all but the new guys understood our most prized possession was our invisible jacket of honor and trust? Maybe we hated the war but felt the urge to be there again with the ones we were part of now.

(continued....)



We were cautious about opening our secret box to tell others about our dead brothers because the memories are wrapped in the same feelings we had when they died, just as fresh as yesterday, and we didn't like losing our composure.

That is part of the power of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC. The names etched on the polished black granite wall make it personal. As family members and brothers in arms approach The Wall, the air becomes electric as memories wrapped in anguish fly out of secret boxes, finally set loose to run free.

We can almost see our dead brothers in the reflection of that polished wall, proudly wearing their jacket of honor and trust.

The Wall in Washington is our place to ease the pressure, to let loose those feelings we suppressed for so long, where we can talk to our dead brothers to tell them they are not forgotten, that we are teaching our children and grandchildren about them. It's a place where we can confess a tinge of guilt that we lived through it and they did not, that we got to live out our life and grow old while their faces are frozen forever young. The Wall is our place, where we can go together with our brothers and sisters who lived, a bit like church, a place of healing.

This is the reason America should build memorials for Iraq and Afghanistan. Not to glorify the war, but to provide the men and women of those wars a place of their own to gather and grieve and cleanse their soul. We should build those memorials.

I think all these things I am telling you are part of why veterans are drawn to each other. It's more than remembering the past and swapping old worn out tales. It's the comfort of being with men and women who proved themselves worthy of honor and trust, people who did hard things well when they were young, people who understand when we say we can almost see the ghosts of our dead brothers among us, laughing and joking, sipping with us when we drink a toast to them and say

our prayers in silence for them, the ones we miss, the ones we remember.

They died too young while doing America's hardest work, and we know for every one of them there is a family of broken hearts. We can't bring them back but they do live on in our memory, for many of us until our last day alive.

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**Terry Garlock occasionally contributes a column to *The Citizen*.**

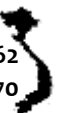
[Sent in by Jack Kelly, CO/A/2/503, photos & quotes added]

Our hat is off to Terry for sharing his reflective thoughts of what all of us know and feel but are unable or unwilling to put into words ourselves. It might be good if those who so readily beat the drums of war when no war is necessary, were to read Terry's words; it might cause them pause? Ed



Sometimes no words are needed.

***"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."* — Nelson Mandela**



**Art Martinez, Maj.  
HHC/B/2/503**

My name is Andrea Martinez, I am Arthur's daughter. I wanted to email you to inform you that my father passed away on Sunday morning May 31. I know that my father enjoyed being involved with the Bravo Bulls and so I wanted to try and reach out to someone from that organization. I was hoping that you could forward this information along about my father to other members. We will be having services for him next week and I will include that information below.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Andrea Martinez

Memorial Services for Art were held June 8, in Pomona, CA, with funeral services the following day in Riverside, CA.



Art with his wife Bonnie at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL in '06.



Art pulling KP with Kate Cloonan on left (173d Doctor, Col. Tim Cloonan's wife), and Reggie Smith (newsletter editor's wife) at our home on Merritt Island, FL in '06. Ed



Presentation of American flag to Bonnie

Art in the "D" Zone jungle during Operation Silver City in March 1966, while attached to Bravo Company when he was seriously wounded in combat.



**In Art's Own Words....**

"I was there on 13 March as part of Operation Silver City. I was part of the small party that walked into the base camp and was surrounded by the VC. We were part of a security party after getting resupplied. Somehow, we got ahead of the main element of the Battalion and walked right into the middle of the VC camp. We were able to hold off until C Company was able to get to us. Lt. Tabb had been killed and I was wounded when we began to pull back into our lines. I spent some time in the Saigon hospital until I was able to be shipped back to Letterman Hospital in San Francisco for another 6 months."

**Art Martinez  
HHC/B/2/503d**

***We'll miss you Art. Rest easy brother.***



**The action our good buddy Art Martinez spoke about. Excerpt from Vietnam Magazine about Operation Silver City, written by Col. Tom Faley, CO C/2/503.**

“On March 13 (1966)...around noon a unique twist of fate occurred when (Lt. Phil) Tabb and his small element unknowingly overshot the 800-meter gap between the battalion’s companies and unexpectedly became the initial assault element in a southern portion of George. A savage firefight broke out with a well-entrenched Viet Cong force.

Associated Press reporter Horst Faas was moving with the battalion and, in a March 18, 1966, article, captured the first moments of the firefight: *‘I walked ahead of the file,’* said Sergeant Albert Guarusco, the little group’s point man. *‘I’d just passed through a ravine and a big bomb crater when about 40 yards away I saw a VC. He was heading my way and looked surprised. I fired a burst from my rifle and dived to the ground. Then I raised my head and saw two more VC. One had a steel helmet. I fired another burst and they disappeared into a trench.’*

Then, as Sergeant Marvin Chapman added, *‘All hell broke loose. Bullets flew in all directions. Grenades headed for us and exploded in the trees.’* Lieutenant Tabb immediately reported the contact to the battalion command group, but there was some initial confusion as to where Tabb really was because he believed he was still behind the battalion. This was quickly sorted out, and Lt. Col. Walsh ordered the closest leading company, Bravo Company, under Captain Les Brownlee, to reinforce Tabb. Contact between the two paratrooper units was made within 1 ½ hours, and now a savage battle ensued, with casualties being taken on both sides.

Horst Faas reported that PFC Jerry Rippee of Bravo Company shot a Viet Cong in the side just as the VC was preparing to throw a grenade. In one shower of grenades, Tabb was mortally wounded by a fragment behind the ear, and shortly afterward Captain Brownlee suffered numerous fragment wounds in the left arm as he tried to slap away an incoming grenade.



**PHIL TABB**  
Sept. 21, 1934 – Mar. 14, 1966  
Colquitt, GA

Now both sides fed more reinforcements into the fight. Charlie Company, under Captain Tom Faley, closed in on the left flank of Bravo Company, doubling the amount of direct fire on the enemy. The Viet Cong commander also deployed more troops and several heavy machine guns into his entrenchments. Lieutenant Clancy Johnson became acting commander of Bravo Company, while Sergeant Chapman took over support platoon’s survivors.

The battle continued to rage, with each side trying to outflank the other. At the same time paratroop casualties were being taken to a bomb crater several hundred meters to the rear and evacuated by using either stretcher-basket or a penetrator dropped by an Air Force ‘Husky’ helicopter hovering 150 or more feet above the crater.”



**Col. Tom Faley, former CO C/2/503, speaking at a POW/MIA Membrance at the Pennsylvania State Capitol.**

**Note:** Any Sky Soldier may receive by email a complimentary written and pictorial copy of *“The Battle at Bau San”*, a detailed 177 page report of Operation Silver City and the fight at LZ Zulu Zulu when the 2/503 was at serious risk of being overrun by enemy forces reported to be three times their size. Our battalion would later receive the Presidential Unit Citation for their valiant performance in combat during this operation. Email request to: [rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)



**“Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die.”**  
~ Herbert Hoover



# Fort Bragg Special Forces memorial: *"We are forever grateful for your sacrifice."*

By Drew Brooks, Military editor, May 2015



Col. Robert Wilson, 3rd Special Forces Group commander, addresses soldiers and family members Wednesday during a memorial ceremony for three fallen Green Berets at the Army Special Operations Memorial Plaza on Fort Bragg.

The Army's special operators have never been in higher demand.

They're deployed around the globe, supporting friendly forces and fighting terrorism.

And they're a constantly changing force, leaders said. Always looking to adapt and advance against new threats with new tactics.

On Wednesday, the special operations soldiers on Fort Bragg took a rare pause from what Maj. Gen. Darsie Rogers called their typical "steadfast forward view." Instead, the soldiers looked back on the past year while paying homage to those lost.

More than 20 soldiers and 120 veterans of special operations were honored in two ceremonies on Fort Bragg.

Rogers, commanding general of the 1st Special Forces Command, presided over the first ceremony at the Army Special Operations Memorial Plaza.

The two-star commander oversees Special Forces, psychological operations, civil affairs and a sustainment brigade.

### 3rd Group ceremony

Hours later, soldiers of the 3rd Special Forces Group honored three of their own in a ceremony along the group's memorial walk. Three memorial stones - one each for Green Berets killed in Afghanistan in the past year - were unveiled to their families, friends and teammates.

Rogers, along with retired Col. Jack Tobin, laid a wreath for fallen soldiers at the Special Warfare Soldier Statue and celebrated the contributions they made to the force.

*"We are forever grateful for your sacrifice, your strength and your perseverance,"* Rogers said.

The names of 21 soldiers and 120 veterans were read during the ceremony, each accompanied by the toll of a bell.

Tobin, the president of the Special Forces Association, said with each toll the special operations community was diminished.

*"Each one of us, when we look at that wall, see not the names, but the men we knew,"* he said.

On Fort Bragg at least, the men would never be forgotten, Tobin said.

At the 3rd Special Forces Group Memorial, commander Col. Robert Wilson oversaw the ceremony unveiling the latest memorials leading to the group headquarters. There are now 48 memorial stones leading to the building.

Each slab of granite carries the story of an extraordinary soldier whose life was taken too soon, he said.

Wilson said the 3rd Group has been at the tip of the spear for 14 years and remains there to this day, with soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

*"The Bearded Ones,"* as they are known to enemy fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan, are often the deciding factor between victory and defeat in those countries, Wilson said.

*"I take heart that men like this still exist,"* he said. *"They go to the sound of the guns, where they are needed the most."*

Capt. Jason B. Jones, Staff Sgt. Girard D. Gass Jr. and Sgt. 1st Class Michael A. Cathcart were honored with the added memorials.

After the ceremony, their families placed roses, took photographs and rubbed the lettering on each stone. Wilson said memorials like these were challenging for the unit, but also a time to celebrate the sacrifices of those lost.

He said the families would spend time with those who served with their sons, and the memorials would be frequently visited by Green Berets, including himself. Wilson said he makes a point of visiting the walkway every day he is at Fort Bragg.

*"I strive every single day to be worthy of their sacrifice,"* he said.

Military editor Drew Brooks can be reached at [brooksd@fayobserver.com](mailto:brooksd@fayobserver.com)



# Viet Cong Cut Down While Bugles Blare

By **Joi Ray Mahon**  
S&S Staff Correspondent

**SAIGON** – *“I figure the Viet Cong would have been able to hold roll call the next morning in a telephone booth,”* said Sgt. Sylvester Bryant of Columbus, Ga.

Bryant was one of four members of the 173d Airborne Brigade who described their part in the bloody battle against a Viet Cong force of superior strength Sunday, 30 miles northeast of Saigon in war zone D. Also relating their accounts of the battle were Capt. Henry B. Tucker, Capt. Lowell D. Bittrich, and SSgt. Billy Wear.

The men were members of three companies from the 173d who faced an estimated VC regiment and won.

Brig. Gen. Ellis Williamson, commander of the 173d was present at the briefing. He said the latest body count stood at 403 Viet Cong killed. The 173d suffered moderate casualties.

Tucker, 28, took command of one of the 173d companies engaged in the fight after the lieutenant was hit. *“They began charging in human waves with bugles blaring. This is when the VC made their mistake,”* he said. *“We were in position and began knocking them down, 30 at a time.”*

Bittrich, 27, of Fort Dodge, Iowa, led a company which was surrounded by the Viet Cong on three separate occasions, but was able to fight its way out.

*“We kill about 90 Viet Cong as we busted through one of their encirclements,”* he said. *“When we finally fought our way to the top of a hill, we counted 111 Viet Cong bodies lying there.”*

Wear, 32, of Colby, Kan., was with a platoon that knocked out two machine gun positions. *“I don’t know what VC unit was there, but I know the other side knows we were there and won’t want to tangle with the 173d again for a long time,”* Wear said.

Williamson, providing background on the battle, corrected earlier reports that the companies had fallen into a Viet Cong trap. *“This was no ambush,”* he said. *“We were conducting a joint operation in the area with Australian and Vietnamese troops. We knew they were in there and we sent a unit into the area to find their flanks. We found them, and in my opinion the enemy was soundly defeated and knew enough to leave under the cover of darkness,”* Williamson said.

He said intelligence reports indicated that the members of his brigade were probably fighting an entire regiment. *“We know one battalion was dug in and we later learned that two others were in motion in the area,”* he said.

Williamson said he believes the positions were prepared to protect them against air and artillery attacks rather than defense against ground forces. He said that 117 sorties and 150 tons of artillery shells lent support for his troops, but because the fighting was taking place at such close quarters the support could only be directed on the enemy’s rear.

*“I personally inspected the area the next day and found that most of the bodies had been killed by small arms fire,”* he said.

Source:  
***Pacific Stars & Stripes***  
Friday, November 12, 1965



**“After the battle of Hill 65 (8 Nov 65), this photo was taken by Sam Scrimager inside the battalion perimeter, probably on the morning of the 9th of Nov.”**

(Photo provided by Craig Ford, C/1/503)

(See Craig Ford’s account of the battle on following pages)



# Operation Hump

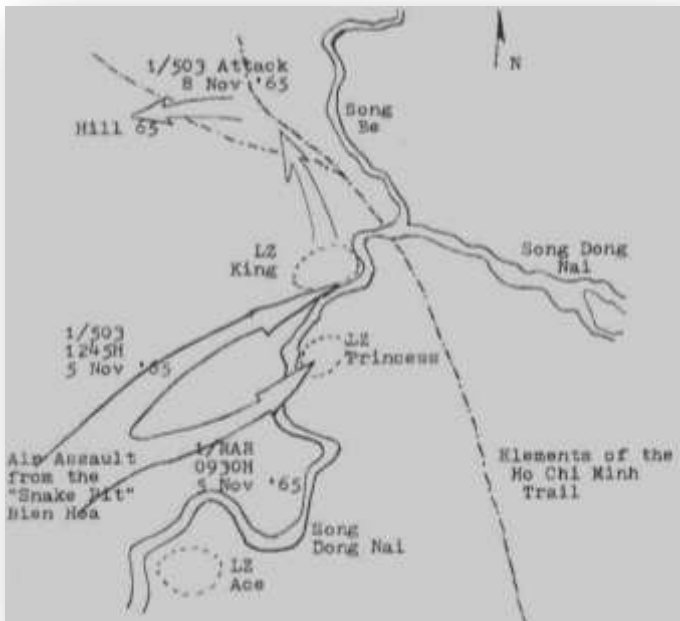
## 5 - 9 November, 1965

*The Operation that changed our lives forever*

By Craig Ford, Sgt. E-5  
C Company RTO on Hill 65

“On November 8, 1965, while moving through War Zone D in the Republic of Vietnam, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, of the 173d Airborne Brigade, ran squarely into a main line regiment of Viet Cong infantry. Although not well known, the ensuing battle was the first major battle and the first major American victory of the Vietnam War. This eight-hour engagement later became known by two names -- the *Battle on Hill 65* and “*The Hump.*” Through successful application of Economy of Force and Mass, Lieutenant Colonel John Tyler, the Battalion Commander of 1/503d, and his men were able to inflict well over 400 enemy casualties and, thereby, soundly defeat a numerically superior enemy.”

Captain Joel L. Dillon  
The Hump, A Battle Analysis  
Infantry Captain’s Career Course



“Prior to the air assault, the brigade’s field artillery battalion would move by armed convoy to LZ ACE, a position a few kilometers southwest of the operational area, where it could support both maneuver battalions with indirect fire. (Department of the Army 1965).”

Operation Hump started on 5 November 1965, with 1st RAR air assaulting into LZ Princess at 0930 hrs. south of the Song Dong Nai River. At 1245 hrs. 1/503rd air assaulted into LZ King which was north and west of the conflux of the Song Don Nai and Song Be Rivers.



Photo taken of Craig on his final combat mission in Vietnam during Operation Silver City, back in the “D” Zone jungle.

November 5 and 6 and the early part of 7 November 1965, were like most of our previous missions with very little contact with the enemy. On the morning of 7 November we were re-supplied by helicopters as we had a small LZ where supplies could be brought into. The two journalists, (Haus Faust and Henri Huet) who were accompanying us, decided to leave and as things seemed to be heating up in the Central Highlands. Most of the day of November 7th went by with no contact with the enemy. Late in the afternoon C Company came upon a large road through the triple canopy jungle. Although it was a dirt road it was wide enough to drive two tractor-trailer trucks down side by side. It had been used, as the center part of it was free of vegetation. After crossing the road and getting back into the jungle we starting coming across freshly-cut trails. The tips of the underbrush had not even turned brown yet.



(Web photo)

(continued...)



C Company set-up base camp west of the road late in the day of 7 November. Battalion HQ, A and B Companies set-up to the east of the road. Our mortar platoon set-up their mortars at the edge of the road where there was a break in the jungle.

Late on November 7th, Capt. Tucker sent patrols out to the west towards Hill 65 to investigate the area. A and B Companies also sent patrols east and north of their positions.

As our patrols were moving from C Company's position they started radioing back information on finding fish traps in a creek at the base of Hill 65 and also of hearing chickens. As it was getting late in the day all patrols were pulled back to the Company and Battalion perimeter for the night. C Company's findings were relayed on to Battalion HQ that day.

The night of November 7th went by without any incidents.



**"US paratroopers under heavy fire during Operation Hump."**  
(Web photo)

Early on the morning of 8 November, Capt Tucker sent 1st Platoon, Lt. Rush, and 2nd Lt. Waller to patrol west toward Hill 65. Both platoons had engineers and artillery FO's assigned to them that day. 3rd Platoon, the Weapons Platoon and Company headquarters stayed in our previous night's positions. As with the day

before both platoons reported finding fish traps in the small creek they crossed, hearing chickens, and running into numerous freshly cuts trails leading up Hill 65. As they started up Hill 65 they ran into newly-constructed bunkers but they were unmanned.

The first sign I had of a battle was hearing .50 caliber machine guns and .30 caliber machine guns going off. The next thing I knew the company net I was monitoring was full of traffic from 1st and 2nd platoons. Both platoons were in heavy contact with the enemy and had suffered substantial casualties. The exact number of dead and wounded was unknown to both platoon leaders at this time.

Immediately, Capt. Tucker ordered 3rd Platoon, Company Headquarters and a reinforced rifle squad, made up from our weapons platoon, to mount up and advance west towards Hill 65. As we wanted to travel light and fast we took our rifles, web belts, all the ammunition we could carry, grenades, radios, and water and headed out to help our brothers who were in a desperate battle. The traffic on the PRC-25 I was carrying never stopped as we advanced up the hill.

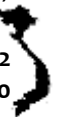
The situation seemed desperate at best and there was a tremendous amount of confusion. I can remember to this day seeing a constant stream of green tracers coming my way as we went up the hill. I never thought about it at the time but remembered much later that I was only seeing one in four or five bullets being shot at us. Luckily there were big teak trees that we could duck behind for cover until Charlie stopped firing, and then we would advance again.

Our lead elements finally linked-up with elements of both 1st and 2nd Platoons. The whole company by this time was in heavy contact with the enemy and had taken some additional casualties. Nobody at this time really knew where everyone was or who was dead or alive.

Unknown to C Company at this time was that Capt. Bittrich had turned B Company around and was heading to help us. Col. Tyler radioed Capt. Bittrich to see how long it would take him to move B Company in our direction. Capt. Bittrich said that B Company was already on its way to help C Company in their battle.

Col. Tyler did inform Capt. Tucker that B Company was on its way to help us and they would be coming in on our right flank. I put out to 2nd platoon to look for B Company advancing towards them on their right flank. As the platoons did not have contact with everyone the word got out the best it could.

*(continued....)*





**“(The Late) LTC John Tyler, Commanding Officer of the 1/503rd Airborne Battalion, standing on the veranda of his quarters that were built for him by his men. He was an aggressive commander who epitomized the motto ‘Airborne—All the Way.’”**

By this time C Company had consolidated its position somewhat. Confusion was still the order of the day and I was trying to find out what the two lead platoons needed and how many of their people they could account for. The situation did not sound good as both 1st and 2nd Platoons could only account for 20+ men left fighting from both platoons. They were not sure how many were dead and wounded as they could not get to them and several men were missing and presumed dead or wounded. Both the 4.2 FO and the 319th FO and one of their radio operators had been killed so this left us without any direct link to our artillery support. We did get support from our 81mm mortars until they ran out of ammunition.



**“Photo is of Sgt. Lloyd Greene. He and his RTO, PFC Steve Orris III, were KIA on the 8th of November. Sgt Greene was C Company’s FO from the 319th Artillery. Picture was taken back in base Camp in Bien Hoa. From what I understand he called artillery in on his own position before he was killed.”**  
Craig Ford

At some point in time during the battle elements of B Company started filtering into our positions. Capt Bittrich found Capt. Tucker and they discussed the positions of both companies. B Company had taken several casualties coming to our aid. As more information was coming in and we starting getting support from Huey gunships and artillery, the tide of battle started to swing.

The 173d had a Huey with racks that held 81mm mortars. They would drop them as they flew over the jungle. In triple canopy jungle it was the one thing that would penetrate to the floor of the jungle. They flew one mission in support of us.

At some point after B Company linked up with C Company, A Company tried to link-up with both of us. On their march to us they ran into a large force of the enemy who were trying to encircle B and C Companies. They engaged the enemy but were unable to link-up with the two companies on Hill 65, and withdrew to the Battalion CP.

A Forward Air Controller came up on the C Company net and wanted to know if we could use some help. He had a flight of F-100’s out of Bien Hoa Airbase. I informed Capt. Tucker of the Air Force wanting to help and he gave me the coordinates that we were at. The FAC fired a marker rocket for us but no one was able to see where it landed in the jungle we were in. Then the F-100’s came in and started dropping their ordinance.



**An F-100 sending its message to the bad guys below.**

(Web photo)

About this time or shortly after the bombing started, the VC/NVA started to blow whistles and bugles and charged our positions. From the radio traffic I received from the lead platoons it was like a Banzi charge the Japanese used in WWII. We were able to hold our lines and beat back several attacks.

(continued....)



Sometime in the afternoon as the battle was still going on, an Air Force HH-53 Husky Rescue Helicopter from Bien Hoa came to our aid to medivac our most severely wounded. One of the PJ's, George Schipper, came down into the jungle and during the battle to help our medics treat our wounded. They not only evacuated the wounded, they lowered to us much needed ammunition and other supplies.



**AF Husky over Hill 65 coming to the aid of the 1/503**  
(Photo by Craig Ford)

Sometime late in the afternoon the battle subsided and we started trying to account for our wounded and dead. We still had intermittent contact but it seemed Charlie had had enough for that day.



**1/503 troopers tending to one of their wounded during Operation Hump.** (Web photo)

Between C and B Company we had over 40 KIA and roughly 100+ wounded. It was too far and we had too many casualties for the surviving members of both companies to carry the dead and wounded to the battalion area and the LZ that was being made on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was decided by Capt. Tucker and Capt. Bittrich to blow an LZ in the triple canopy jungle to evacuate them. The engineers started blowing down the teak trees the afternoon of 8 November. The Air Force HH-53 and their crews brought out more explosives and chain saws so we could cutout an LZ.



**Another wounded 1/503 buddy on or near Hill 65, waiting for dust off.**  
(Photo provided by Craig Ford)

Darkness started to fall and the evacuation of our wounded by the Air Force had to end. C and B Companies made a close perimeter for the night. We treated our wounded and gathered our dead around us. It started to rain that night and we stayed warm as best we could. We gave what ponchos we had to our wounded to keep them warm. Our medics, although several of them were wounded themselves treated their comrades. We kept alert during the night, as we did not know if Charlie would return to attack again. We could hear them in the dark retrieving their wounded on the battlefield and gathering what weapons they could find. Dawn finally broke and the rain stopped.

*(continued....)*



Patrols were sent out to retrieve our dead and any wounded who were still unaccounted for. By this time we had accounted for all but about 17 "Sky Soldiers". One patrol found one of our own still alive. He had been shot in the back and was paralyzed. All night he had tried to crawl back to our lines, but decided to play dead until daylight as Charlie was all around him during the night. I do not remember who this individual was or which company he was from but when the patrol radioed in that they found him it was like a breath of fresh air to everyone. It lifted our spirits and helped us to move forward with the grim tasks ahead.

We continued with the expansion of our LZ in the jungle and the Air Force rescue helicopter came out and retrieved more of our wounded. PJ Harry O'Beirne came down into the jungle and helped with our wounded.

Brig. Gen. Williamson flew over our position and his pilot gave instructions on how much bigger the LZ had to be for a Huey to land in it. We finally had an LZ that Huey's could land in. The Air Force HH-53 landed and picked-up their PJ who was on the ground with us and flew back to Bien Hoa. Over two days the Air Force Rescue unit lifted 33 wounded Sky Soldiers out of the jungle. Without them many more of our brothers would not have made it.



**"The LZ we blew out of the jungle on Hill 65, taken on 9 Nov. by Don Bliss, the Pilot of General Williamson's helicopter which landed in this LZ that day. By this time all our wounded had been taken out and as you can see there remain our KIA in ponchos on the floor of the jungle."**

(Photo provided by Craig Ford)

Brig. Gen. Williamson's helicopter was the first Huey to land in our LZ in the jungle. It was a tight fit and it took one hell of a pilot to make that first descent into the jungle. One mistake by the pilot and many more of us along with the General would have been toast.



At last, all our critically wounded and dead had been evacuated from the field of battle. The remainder of C and B Companies, along with General Williamson, and some walking-wounded made our way out to the rest of the battalion and the LZ that awaited us. We all felt General Williamson should have gone out by helicopter. If we had gotten into a firefight on our way to the LZ with the VC/NVA he would have been more of a liability than help. The last thing we needed was our commanding general wounded or killed.

C Company was the first to be airlifted back to Bien Hoa Base Camp. Many reporters were waiting for us upon our return. We were not in the mood for talking and just brushed them off. We had lost too many of our comrades whom we had been with for so long. The remainder of the battalion would follow C Company.

The final elements of 1/503rd returned to Bien Hoa just after dark on 9 November 1965.

The Battle of Hill 65 was over.

### **Total Casualties 1/503rd**

48 KIA on 8 November, 1965

3 "Sky Soldiers" died in the following days.

100+ wounded on Hill 65 alone.

### **VC/NVA body count on Hill 65**

400+ who were left and counted on the field of battle by the enemy. 1st Division units found records several months later that reported over 700 enemy soldiers had been killed on Hill 65.

The 272 VC Regiment was decimated that day and would take several months to be back to fighting strength. Reported by those who fought on Hill 65 of NVA in uniforms along with VC.

This is what I remember and have recalled from conversations with others who were on Hill 65 on 8 and 9 November 1965.

*(continued....)*



### Epilogue:

SP-6 Lawrence Joel, Medic, with C Company, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on 8 November 1965.

### Medal of Honor Citation

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. SP6 Joel demonstrated indomitable courage, determination, and professional skill when a numerically superior and well-concealed Viet Cong element launched a vicious attack which wounded or killed nearly every man in the lead squad of the company. After treating the men wounded by the initial burst of gunfire, he bravely moved forward to assist others who were wounded while proceeding to their objective. While moving from man to man, he was struck in the right leg by machine gun fire. Although painfully wounded his desire to aid his fellow soldiers transcended all personal feeling. He bandaged his own wound and self-administered morphine to deaden the pain enabling him to continue his dangerous undertaking. Through this period of time, he constantly shouted words of encouragement to all around him. Then, completely ignoring the warnings of others, and his pain, he continued his search for wounded, exposing himself to hostile fire; and, as bullets dug up the dirt around him, he held plasma bottles high while kneeling completely engrossed in his life saving mission. Then, after being struck a second time and with a bullet lodged in his thigh, he dragged himself over the battlefield and succeeded in treating 13 more men before his medical supplies ran out. Displaying resourcefulness, he saved the life of one man by placing a plastic bag over a severe chest wound to congeal the blood. As 1 of the platoons pursued the Viet Cong, an insurgent force in concealed positions opened fire on the platoon and wounded many more soldiers. With a new stock of medical supplies, Spc6 Joel again shouted words of encouragement as he crawled through an intense hail of gunfire to the wounded men. After the 24-hour battle subsided and the Viet Cong dead numbered 410, snipers continued to harass the company. Throughout the long battle, Spc6 Joel never lost sight of his mission as a medical aidman and continued to comfort and treat the wounded until his own evacuation was ordered. His meticulous attention to duty saved a large number of lives and his unselfish, daring example under most adverse conditions was an



inspiration to all. Spc6 Joel's profound concern for his fellow soldiers, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country. ##

1st Battalion Airborne, 503rd Infantry Regiment earned the Distinguished Unit Citation for its action on 8 November, 1965. Later elevated to the Presidential Unit Citation.

1st RAR also made contact with VC/NVA on 8 November 1965. They lost 2 of their mates that day. Their bodies were recovered in Vietnam 40+ years later.

Without the many individual acts of heroism on 8 November 1965 many more of us would not have made it off Hill 65. Most were never recorded or acknowledged by the army and only live in the minds of those who survived. How a unit can receive the Distinguished Unit Citation and the soldiers who fought that battle, never receive even a bronze star escapes me to this day.

Thank God for the training we received on Okinawa and in Vietnam or we would never have survived that day. We all were true "Sky Soldiers".

Many paid the ultimate sacrifice for those of us who survived. God Bless you Brothers, may you rest in Peace!

### The Price Paid for Hill 65 ~ Our KIA

#### **A Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry**

PFC John E. Hannigan, Antioch, CA  
PSGT Leroy Hill, Washington, DC  
PFC Samuel S. Tolliver, Richmond, VA  
2LT David L. Ugland, Minneapolis, MN

#### **B Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry**

SFC Bryant Brayboy, Philadelphia, PA  
PFC Herman Brown, Richlands, VA  
SSG Magno Campos, Lahaina, HI  
SFC Henry T. Cannon, Jacksonville, FL  
PFC Lavelle E. Carlton, Cleveland, OH  
PFC Gary L. Elmore, Garden City, MI  
SP4 Everett W. Goias, San Francisco, CA  
PFC Kenneth E. Graham, Defiance, OH  
SGT Rebel L. Holcomb, Wichita, KS  
SGT Lawrence P. Howard, Philadelphia, PA  
SP4 Wayne W. Humphries, Shawnee, OK

*(sadly continued....)*



SGT David L. Keel, Houston, TX  
PFC Michael M. Medley, Jackson, MI  
PVT Charles L. Mitchell, New York, NY  
PFC Jerry L. Potter, Englewood, CO  
PFC Michael P. Russo, New York, NY  
SSG Theodore Shamblin, Fayetteville, WV  
(DoW 11/11/1965)

2LT Clair H. Thurston, Thorndike, ME  
PFC Danny R. Ward, Beauty, KY  
PFC Kelly E. Whitaker, Memphis, TN

**C Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry**

PFC Rudolph R. Aguilar, Los Angeles, CA  
SP4 James Belton, State Park, SC  
PFC Byron J. Foster, Detroit, MI  
PFC Joseph T. Hamilton, Philadelphia, PA  
SP4 Robert W. Harden, Waycross, GA  
SSG Clifton W. Harrington, Aberdeen, NC  
SGT John A. Hughlett, Brighton, TN  
SGT Theodore R. Jones, Auburn, NE  
CPL Cleo Lockett, Birmingham, AL  
PFC Valentine Marquez, Wiley, CO  
PFC Michael K. Mathison, East St Louis, IL  
PFC Harold M. Smith, Sumter, SC  
PFC Daniel J. Sobota, Peoria, IL  
SP4 Cordell Spencer, Bessemer, AL  
SP4 Scip Tate, Newark, NJ

SP4 Thomas A. Turnage, Texarkana, AR  
SP4 George Vincent, Los Angeles, CA  
SGT Troy B. Williams, Mount Hope, WV

**Headquarters Company, 1st Bn, 503rd Infantry**

PFC Harold Goldman, Ocala, FL  
SP4 John A. Nathan, San Francisco, CA  
PFC Dennis D. Rutowski, Waterford, WI

**A Company, 2nd Bn, 503rd Infantry**

SSG Samuel A. Eidson, North Birmingham, AL

**173d Engineer Company**

PFC Davis Uptain, Fayette, AL

**C Battery, 3rd Bn, 319th Artillery**

SGT Lloyd V. Greene, Paterson, NJ

PFC Steve I. Orris, Wayne, MI

**"The scene of the battle for Hill 65 is best captured by  
SP4 Joseph M. Kenny, the B Company, 1st Battalion 503d  
Infantry artillery team radio operator (RTO) from Battery  
C, 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, 173d Airborne Brigade in  
his poem 'D Zone':"**

**D ZONE**

Beneath the canopy of green,  
Flitting shadows make their way,  
In silent files they furtively steal,  
Looking, searching for their prey,  
Muffled footfalls barely heard above  
other muted sounds,

Of an armed band moving, through the  
heart of "Cong's" home grounds.  
Back again in the D Zone and it's been  
said and heard,  
"Charlie" shares exclusive rights with  
the One-Seventy-Third.

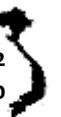
Of course it's hotly contested,  
And real estate's on a rising cost,  
With payment made on either side,  
In blood and sweat long lost.  
But now it's push on and on,  
Through swamp and tough terrain,  
With salty sweat searing your eyes,  
And a roaring in your brain,  
A burning feeling in your chest,  
And each breath a gasp of air.  
But it's move and push and drive,  
Until you've found "Charlie's" lair.

Maybe soon they'll call a halt,  
And you'll slip to the mucky ground,  
Grateful to pick the leeches off,  
And pass the smokes around.  
But now it's bamboo thicket,  
And lurking, snagging vine,  
While up ahead the point man,  
Searching for some sign  
Of elusive, wily "Charlie,"  
The guy we're looking for.  
And back in line some joker quips,  
"Hell of a way to fight a war."

A rifle shot cracks out.  
Like the rap of a conductor's baton  
That start's an overture,  
And willing or not it's on.  
Fire is answered with fire,  
A crescendo quickly reached,  
And "Charlie" breaks and runs,  
As his line of defense is breached.

The ensuing silence is unearthly,  
Still there's ringing in your ears,  
And guys are tending the wounded,  
Soothing their unspoken fears.  
Here and there's a still, still shape,  
Who'll never walk D Zone again.  
Their names to be struck from the rolls,  
With one stroke of a shaking pen.

*(continued....)*



The call comes down to saddle up,  
 We'll soon be on our way,  
 For we've a goodly stretch to cover,  
 Before the end of day.  
 The guys no longer look tired,  
 They've a determined look of eye  
 As they scan the shrouded flanks  
 And treetops that hide the sky.  
 Now as I write I feel pride,  
 Proud that I have served  
 With the "Sky Soldiers" of Company B,  
 First of the Five-O-Third.

(Source: Web site of the Virtual Wall)

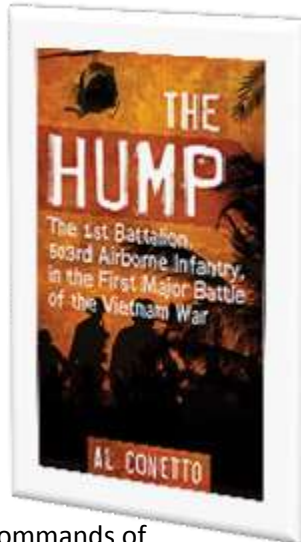
## THE HUMP

The 1st Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, in the  
 First Major Battle of the Vietnam War

By Al Conetto, 1/503

### About the Book

Operation Hump, the first major battle between the U.S. Army and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, took place November 5–9, 1965, in South Vietnam's War Zone D. Known as "The Hump," it would change the nature of the war, escalating it from a hit-and-run guerrilla conflict to a bloody contest between Communist main force units and American commands of battalion size or larger.



This memoir of an Operation Hump survivor begins with sequence of events leading up to the battle, from the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Drawing on official Army documents and the recollections of fellow combatants, the author not only describes the battle in detail but explains the war's basis in fabrications at the highest levels of the U.S. government. His experiences with post-traumatic stress disorder after the war and his eventual return to Vietnam in the 1990s are included.

### About the Author

**Al Conetto** spent more than five years on active duty including 17 months in Vietnam. He left the Army as a Captain and is now retired and lives in Walla Walla, Washington.

Not Yet Published, Available Fall/Winter 2015 on  
[Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

## Many Thanks!

Sending along my sincere thanks to the officers and men of our battalion for selecting me as the *2/503 Sky Soldier of the Year 2015 – Vietnam Era*. What a surprise it was to be acknowledged with this special recognition by Bravo Bulls Jim Stanford and Ed Kearney at our home here in Austin. And what a special honor it was to have served with the men of the 2/503rd on Okinawa and in Vietnam. You were good men and great warriors in combat, second to none. Thank you, and Exie and I send our sincere best wishes to all of you and your families. Airborne, all the way!



**Bob Carmichael, LTC (Ret)**  
 Bn CO/XO, '65/'66

## ~ Such Good Men ~

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 together, who 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.

By an unnamed Soldier



L-R at Myrtle Beach reunion, Mike McMillan, A/4/503; Chuck Breit, 503rd PRCT WWII; Mike Sturges, A/2/503; and Jerry Wiles, B/2/503. *Such good men.*



## Search and Destroy Mission. 0610 Hours.

An ocean breeze pushed through the palm trees as the company approached the beach and a fishing village filled with silent people. Hootch by hootch they searched north into a small valley and dug in on a terraced rice paddy encased in spindly grass and vine foliage.

At twilight Hardin was negotiating with Reynolds over a can of pound cake when a bell in the village rang once, and then again. The echoes lingered in the valley.

*"Sleigh bells ring, are ya lis'nin'?"* Ski's words sounded like they were being forced through a sausage skin.

Music was made smaller by Ski's voice, but he sang anyway. He had started singing after Bucks was killed: Christmas songs and James Brown mostly, and then only snippets. He had a square-wheel sense of rhythm. His voice would boom whenever the square side of the wheel hit the ground. Fish said Ski was a natural entertainer, as if Fish would know.



Capt. Gary Prisk, CO C/2/503, somewhere in the boonies with his men he called *"The Hill People"*. It is those very men he writes about in *Digger Dogface*.

*"Shut up, Ski."* The perimeter went silent. The bell rang a third time and a stranger fired an AK in four short bursts, tearing at the tree above Rap's head.

Tennessee keyed the hook, and said, *"Just 79's, no sixteens."* Five M-79 rounds crashed into the jungle. The stranger was gone.

Ski continued to sing as if there had been no interruption. Fish grabbed his shirt and Ski shut up. Then, as if struck by a thought, he jumped into Hardin's foxhole, nudged his shoulder, and held out his hand.

*"Every night, Captain. From here on, with Bucks dead, I gotta hold his dog tag so him and me can talk. We kept each other alive in the mountains. I figure he's still lis'nin'."*

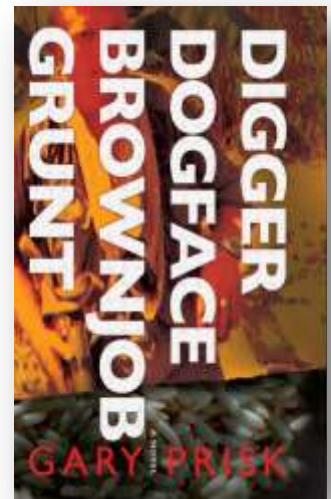
Hardin slipped the chain over his head, handed it to Ski, and said, *"The old tag is my dad's. He landed in Normandy on D-Day."*

Ski gave Bucks' tag a kiss, handed the necklace to Hardin, gave his captain a pat on the back, and sprang from the foxhole. Acting like a revelation had surprised him, as if one of his annoying murmurs had produced an idea, Ski turned and straightened his shirt.

*"Big Bucks was a good man, Captain."*

Excerpt from *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt* about *"the hellhole of 1960's Vietnam"* with the 173d Airborne Brigade.

By Gary Prisk  
CO/C/2/503

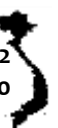


### About this award-winning book:

"Based on his own experiences in Vietnam, 'Digger...' takes the reader on a vicarious journey through the heart, mind, and soul of a soldier struggling to come to grips with the unfamiliarity of his surroundings, as well as the uncertainty surrounding his future. Deep, raw, and real, Prisk's riveting narrative will serve as an eye-opening introduction to the gritty truths of war and conflict for readers heretofore influenced by pop culture's more glamorous depiction of its true nature. Furthermore, the not-so-subtle commentary that Prisk proffers on the Vietnam War - and such conflicts in general - ultimately proves to be quite difficult to rebut. Equally tinged with humor and gravitas, 'Digger Dogface...' is an intelligent, insightful take on a pivotal time in world history that will never be forgotten. A highly recommended, enlightening read."

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

**Note:** Write a book about your time with the 173d in Vietnam, the Middle East, or the 503<sup>rd</sup> during WWII? Send in details and a picture of the cover and we may include it in a future issue of our newsletter. Ed



# ~ They Were Young & Brave & Paratroopers ~



If you are the recipient of the Bronze Star w/V, the Silver Star, the DSC or other valor award for combat actions in Vietnam with the 2/503rd, send a copy of your original written citation and a photo to [rt0173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rt0173d@cfl.rr.com) We will continue to include the text of awards to our men -- something your grandkids can one day read, about when their granddad was young and brave and a paratrooper.

## *Posthumous Award of the Distinguished Service Cross to James P. Rogan*

### **ROGAN, JAMES PAUL**

**Captain (Infantry), U.S. Army**

**Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)**

**Date of birth:** 23 November 1939

**Home of record:** Salt Lake City, Utah

**Date of Action:** 13 November 1967, KIA

### *Citation:*

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to James Paul Rogan, Captain (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). Captain Rogan distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 13 November 1967 while serving as commanding officer of an airborne infantry company during combat operations near Dak To. His company was pinned down by withering rocket and automatic weapons fire from a large enemy force, and Captain Rogan immediately called for reinforcements and moved through a murderous hail of bullets to direct their deployment in support of his troops. When his two radio operators were killed, he personally took over communications and coordinated the actions of his platoon while maintaining contact with his higher headquarters. Completely disregarding his personal welfare, Captain Rogan repeatedly exposed himself to the enemy weapons and moved among his men to encourage them and treat the wounded.



He called for medical evacuation helicopters and personally supervised the clearing of a landing zone despite continuous sniper fire which was being directed at his movements. When the helicopters arrived, he moved into the center of the open landing zone to guide them in. Savage fire forced the aircraft to discontinue their rescue mission, and Captain Rogan deployed his men in a defensive perimeter for the night. Throughout the night, he continued to expose himself to the ravaging enemy barrage to command his men in repelling repeated assaults within twenty meters of his positions. His fearless leadership inspired his troops to fight furiously and inflict a decisive defeat upon the determined enemy. Captain Rogan's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**HQ US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 1079  
(March 11, 1968)**



## Vietnam War, a look back at the beginning...

Sent in by Tony Bolivar, Caspers. Web photos added.

**"THINK YOU KNOW LBJ? ----- MAYBE NOT. THE VIETNAM WAR BEGINS BEHIND THE SCENES."**

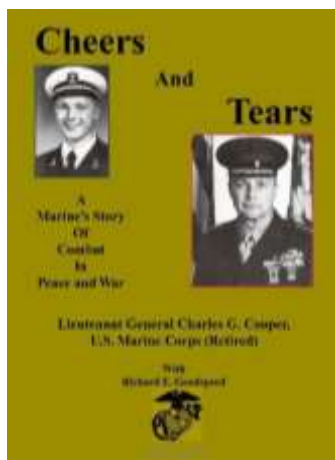
# The Day It Became the Longest War

By Lt. Gen. Charles Cooper, USMC (Ret.) 1-20-07



This is one of those rare insights to a critical turning point for America. This was the briefing to Lyndon Johnson that sealed the fate of more than 55,000 lives of American soldiers and wasted the vast treasure of the USA. The story is short and so compelling, you will not forget it.

Lt. Gen. Charles Cooper, USMC (Ret.) is the author of **"Cheers and Tears: A Marine's Story of Combat in Peace and War"** (2002), from which this article is excerpted. The article recently drew national attention after it was posted on MILINET.



*"The President will see you at two o'clock."*

It was a beautiful fall day in November of 1965; early in the Vietnam War--too beautiful a day to be what many of us, anticipating it, had been calling *"the day of reckoning."* We didn't know how accurate that label would be.

The Pentagon is a busy place. Its workday starts early-especially if, as the expression goes, *"there's a war on."* By seven o'clock, the staff of Admiral David L. McDonald, the Navy's senior admiral and Chief of Naval Operations, had started to work. Shortly after seven, Admiral McDonald arrived and began making final preparations for a meeting with President Lyndon Baines Johnson.



Adm. McDonald

The Vietnam War was in its first year, and its uncertain direction troubled Admiral McDonald and the other service chiefs. They'd had a number of disagreements with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara about strategy, and had finally requested a private meeting with the Commander in Chief--a perfectly legitimate procedure. Now, after many delays, the Joint Chiefs were finally to have that meeting. They hoped it would determine whether the US military would continue its seemingly directionless buildup to fight a protracted ground war, or take bold measures that would bring the war to an early and victorious end. The bold measures they would propose were to apply massive air power to the head of the enemy, Hanoi, and to close North Vietnam's harbors by mining them.

The situation was not a simple one, and for several reasons. The most important reason was that North Vietnam's neighbor to the north was communist China. Only 12 years had passed since the Korean War had ended in stalemate. The aggressors in that war had been the North Koreans. When the North Koreans' defeat had appeared to be inevitable, communist China had sent hundreds of thousands of its Peoples' Liberation Army "volunteers" to the rescue.

Now, in this new war, the North Vietnamese aggressor had the logistic support of the Soviet Union and, more to the point, of neighboring communist China. Although we had the air and naval forces with which to paralyze North Vietnam, we had to consider the possible reactions of the Chinese and the Russians.

*(continued....)*



Both China and the Soviet Union had pledged to support North Vietnam in the "war of national liberation" it was fighting to reunite the divided country, and both had the wherewithal to cause major problems. An important unknown was what the Russians would do if prevented from delivering goods to their communist protégé in Hanoi. A more important question concerned communist China, next-door neighbor to North Vietnam. How would the Chinese react to a massive pummeling of their ally? More specifically, would they enter the war as they had done in North Korea? Or would they let the Vietnamese, for centuries a traditional enemy, fend for themselves? The service chiefs had considered these and similar questions, and had also asked the Central Intelligence Agency for answers and estimates.

The CIA was of little help, though it produced reams of text, executive summaries of the texts, and briefs of the executive summaries--all top secret, all extremely sensitive, and all of little use. The principal conclusion was that it was impossible to predict with any accuracy what the Chinese or Russians might do.



Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara in 1965

Despite the lack of a clear-cut intelligence estimate, Admiral McDonald and the other Joint Chiefs did what they were paid to do and reached a conclusion. They decided unanimously that the risk of the Chinese or Soviets reacting to massive US measures taken in North Vietnam was acceptably low, but only if we acted without delay. Unfortunately, the Secretary of Defense and his coterie of civilian "whiz kids" did not agree with the Joint Chiefs, and McNamara and his people were the ones who were actually steering military strategy. In the view of the Joint Chiefs, the United States was piling on forces in Vietnam without understanding the consequences. In the view of McNamara and his civilian

team, we were doing the right thing. This was the fundamental dispute that had caused the Chiefs to request the seldom-used private audience with the Commander in Chief in order to present their military recommendations directly to him. McNamara had finally granted their request.

The 1965 Joint Chiefs of Staff had ample combat experience. Each was serving in his third war. The Chairman was General Earle Wheeler, US Army, highly regarded by the other members.

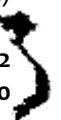


Gen. Wheeler meets with president

General Harold Johnson was the Army Chief of Staff. A World War II prisoner of the Japanese, he was a soft-spoken, even-tempered, deeply religious man. General John P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, was a native of Arkansas and a 1932 graduate of West Point. The Commandant of the Marine Corps was General Wallace M. Greene, Jr., a slim, short, all-business Marine. General Greene was a Naval Academy graduate and zealous protector of the Marine Corps concept of controlling its own air resources as part of an integrated air-ground team. Last and by no means least was Admiral McDonald, a Georgia minister's son, also a Naval Academy graduate, and a naval aviator. While Admiral McDonald was a most capable leader, he was also a reluctant warrior. He did not like what he saw emerging as a national commitment. He did not really want the US to get involved with land warfare, believing as he did that the Navy could apply sea power against North Vietnam very effectively by mining, blockading, and assisting in a bombing campaign, and in this way help to bring the war to a swift and satisfactory conclusion.

The Joint Chiefs intended that the prime topics of the meeting with the President would be naval matters--the mining and blockading of the port of Haiphong and naval support of a bombing campaign aimed at Hanoi. For that reason, the Navy was to furnish a briefing map, and that became my responsibility. We mounted a suitable map on a large piece of plywood, then coated it with clear acetate so that the chiefs could mark on it with grease pencils during the discussion. The whole thing weighed about 30 pounds.

(continued....)





**Bombing of Haiphong Harbor, 17 May 1972.** (Web photo)

The Military Office at the White House agreed to set up an easel in the Oval Office to hold the map. I would accompany Admiral McDonald to the White House with the map, put the map in place when the meeting started, then get out. There would be no strap-hangers at the military summit meeting with Lyndon Johnson. The map and I joined Admiral McDonald in his staff car for the short drive to the White House, a drive that was memorable only because of the silence. My admiral was totally preoccupied.

The chiefs' appointment with the President was for two o'clock, and Admiral McDonald and I arrived about 20 minutes early. The chiefs were ushered into a fairly large room across the hall from the Oval Office. I propped the map board on the arms of a fancy chair where all could view it, left two of the grease pencils in the tray attached to the bottom of the board, and stepped out into the corridor. One of the chiefs shut the door, and they conferred in private until someone on the White House staff interrupted them about fifteen minutes later. As they came out, I retrieved the map, and then joined them in the corridor outside the President's office.

Precisely at two o'clock President Johnson emerged from the Oval Office and greeted the chiefs. He was all charm. He was also big: at three or more inches over six feet tall and something on the order of 250 pounds, he was bigger than any of the chiefs. He personally ushered them into his office, all the while delivering gracious and solicitous comments with a Texas accent far more pronounced than the one that came through when he spoke on television. Holding the map board as the chiefs entered, I peered between them, trying to find the easel. There was none. The President looked at me, grasped the situation at once, and invited me in, adding, "You can stand right over here." I had become an easel--one with eyes and ears.

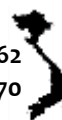
To the right of the door, not far inside the office, large windows framed evergreen bushes growing in a nearby garden. The President's desk and several chairs were farther in, diagonally across the room from the windows. The President positioned me near the windows, then arranged the chiefs in a semicircle in front of the map and its human easel. He did not offer them seats: they stood, with those who were to speak--Wheeler, McDonald, and McConnell--standing nearest the President. Paradoxically, the two whose services were most affected by a continuation of the ground buildup in Vietnam--Generals Johnson and Greene--stood farthest from the President. President Johnson stood nearest the door, about five feet from the map.

In retrospect, the setup--the failure to have an easel in place, the positioning of the chiefs on the outer fringe of the office, the lack of seating--did not augur well. The chiefs had expected the meeting to be a short one, and it met that expectation. They also expected it to be of momentous import, and it met that expectation, too. Unfortunately, it also proved to be a meeting that was critical to the proper pursuit of what was to become the longest, most divisive, and least conclusive war in our nation's history--a war that almost tore the nation apart.

As General Wheeler started talking, President Johnson peered at the map. In five minutes or so, the general summarized our entry into Vietnam, the current status of forces, and the purpose of the meeting. Then he thanked the President for having given his senior military advisers the opportunity to present their opinions and recommendations. Finally, he noted that although Secretary McNamara did not subscribe to their views, he did agree that a presidential-level decision was required. President Johnson, arms crossed, seemed to be listening carefully.

The essence of General Wheeler's presentation was that we had come to an early moment of truth in our ever-increasing Vietnam involvement. We had to start using our principal strengths--air and naval power--to punish the North Vietnamese, or we would risk becoming involved in another protracted Asian ground war with no prospects of a satisfactory solution. Speaking for the chiefs, General Wheeler offered a bold course of action that would avoid protracted land warfare. He proposed that we isolate the major port of Haiphong through naval mining, blockade the rest of the North Vietnamese coastline, and simultaneously start bombing Hanoi with B-52's.

*(continued....)*



General Wheeler then asked Admiral McDonald to describe how the Navy and Air Force would combine forces to mine the waters off Haiphong and establish a naval blockade. When Admiral McDonald finished, General McConnell added that speed of execution would be essential, and that we would have to make the North Vietnamese believe that we would increase the level of punishment if they did not sue for peace.

Normally, time dims our memories-but it hasn't dimmed this one. My memory of Lyndon Johnson on that day remains crystal clear. While General Wheeler, Admiral McDonald, and General McConnell spoke, he seemed to be listening closely, communicating only with an occasional nod. When General McConnell finished, General Wheeler asked the President if he had any questions. Johnson waited a moment or so, then turned to Generals Johnson and Greene, who had remained silent during the briefing, and asked, "*Do you fully support these ideas?*" He followed with the thought that it was they who were providing the ground troops, in effect acknowledging that the Army and the Marines were the services that had most to gain or lose as a result of this discussion. Both generals indicated their agreement with the proposal. Seemingly deep in thought, President Johnson turned his back on them for a minute or so, then suddenly discarding the calm, patient demeanor he had maintained throughout the meeting, whirled to face them and exploded.



I almost dropped the map. He screamed obscenities, he cursed them personally, he ridiculed them for coming to his office with their "military advice." Noting that it was he who was carrying the weight of the free world on his shoulders, he called them filthy names-shitheads, dumb shits, pompous assholes-and used "the F-word" as an adjective more freely than a Marine in boot camp would use it. He then accused them of trying to pass the buck for World War III to him. It was unnerving, degrading.

After the tantrum, he resumed the calm, relaxed manner he had displayed earlier and again folded his arms. It was as though he had punished them, cowed them, and would now control them. Using soft-spoken profanities, he said something to the effect that they all knew now that he did not care about their military advice. After disparaging their abilities, he added that he did expect their help.

He suggested that each one of them change places with him and assume that five incompetents had just made these "military recommendations." He told them that he was going to let them go through what he had to go through when idiots gave him stupid advice, adding that he had the whole damn world to worry about, and it was time to "*see what kind of guts you have.*" He paused, as if to let it sink in. The silence was like a palpable solid, the tension like that in a drumhead. After thirty or forty seconds of this, he turned to General Wheeler and demanded that Wheeler say what he would do if he were the President of the United States.

General Wheeler took a deep breath before answering. He was not an easy man to shake: his calm response set the tone for the others. He had known coming in, as had the others that Lyndon Johnson was an exceptionally strong personality and a venal and vindictive man as well. He had known that the stakes were high, and now realized that McNamara had prepared Johnson carefully for this meeting, which had been a charade.



McNamara & President meet in Oval Office.

(continued....)



Looking President Johnson squarely in the eye, General Wheeler told him that he understood the tremendous pressure and sense of responsibility Johnson felt. He added that probably no other President in history had had to make a decision of this importance, and further cushioned his remarks by saying that no matter how much about the presidency he did understand, there were many things about it that only one human being could ever understand. General Wheeler closed his remarks by saying something very close to this:

***"You, Mr. President, are that one human being. I cannot take your place, think your thoughts, know all you know, and tell you what I would do if I were you. I can't do it, Mr. President. No man can honestly do it. Respectfully, sir, it is your decision and yours alone."***

Apparently unmoved, Johnson asked each of the other Chiefs the same question. One at a time, they supported General Wheeler and his rationale. By now, my arms felt as though they were about to break. The map seemed to weigh a ton, but the end appeared to be near. General Greene was the last to speak.

When General Greene finished, President Johnson, who was nothing if not a skilled actor, looked sad for a moment, then suddenly erupted again, yelling and cursing, again using language that even a Marine seldom hears. He told them he was disgusted with their naive approach, and that he was not going to let some military idiots talk him into World War III. He ended the conference by shouting *"Get the hell out of my office!"*

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had done their duty. They knew that the nation was making a strategic military error, and despite the rebuffs of their civilian masters in the Pentagon, they had insisted on presenting the problem as they saw it to the highest authority and recommending solutions. They had done so, and they had been rebuffed. That authority had not only rejected their solutions, but had also insulted and demeaned them. As Admiral McDonald and I drove back to the Pentagon, he turned to me and said that he had known tough days in his life, and sad ones as well, but *"... this has got to have been the worst experience I could ever imagine."*

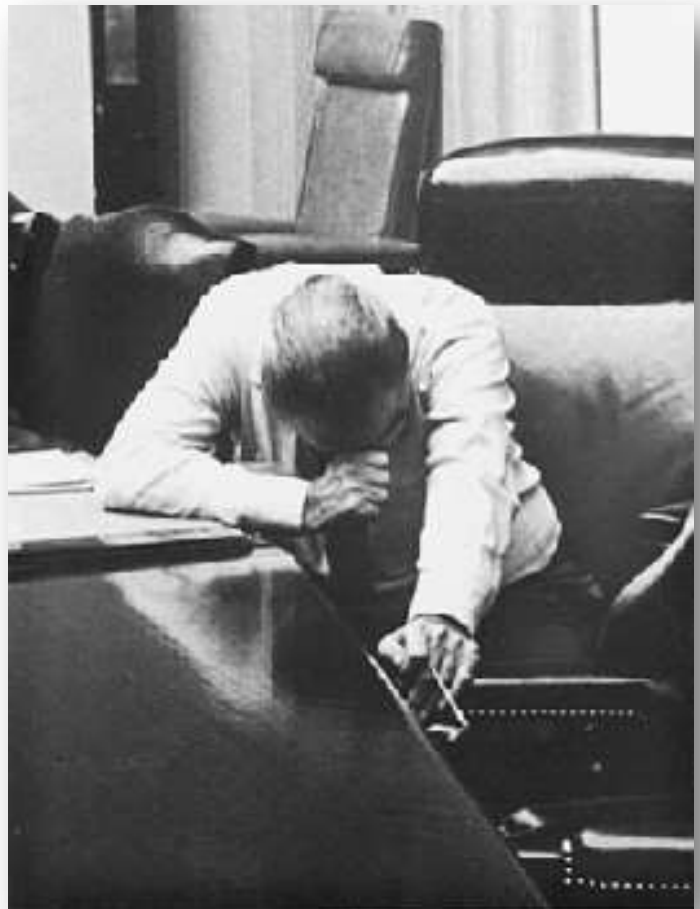
The US involvement in Vietnam lasted another ten years. The irony is that it began to end only when President Richard Nixon, after some backstage maneuvering on the international scene, did precisely what the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended to President Johnson in 1965.

Why had Johnson not only dismissed their recommendations, but also ridiculed them? It must have been that Johnson had lacked something. Maybe it was foresight or boldness. Maybe it was the sophistication and understanding it took to deal with complex international issues. Or, since he was clearly a bully, maybe what he lacked was courage. We will never know.

But had General Wheeler and the others received a fair hearing, and had their recommendations received serious study, the United States may well have saved the lives of most of its more than 55,000 sons who died in a war that its major architect, Robert Strange McNamara, now considers to have been a tragic mistake.

Source:

<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/34024#sthash.zmosoMBk.dpuf>



***"We were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why."***

McNamara, writing in his 1995 memoir, *In Retrospect*, on the management of the Vietnam War.





# INCOMING!



## ~ Football With The Screaming Eagles ~

Back in Ft. Campbell I was on this football team. We competed with the entire base and these are the players and coaches.



Photo was taken in late 64? I'm in there somewhere??  
Front Row: Sgt. Nickell, PFC Kelly, PFC Boyer, Sgt. Wyatt, PFC Serna, me. Second Row: Lt. Davis (OIC and Coach), Capt. Ducheane, Sgt. Claypool, PFC Fitzmier, CPL. Jackson, PFC Rogers, Lt. Gaithar, CPL DuBose, Sgt. Burnay, Lt. Rolf, PFC Tiehm, Lt. Sarakaitis (Coach)

We then went off to play in Georgia for the championship and lost. I dropped a sitter!

A.B. Garcia  
HHC/4.2/2/503, '65/'66

## ~ How Do We Do It? ~

WOW - You guys are terrific! I wish the 4th Batt could compete with you on your newsletter. How do you do it? I was Operations Officer of the Support Bn. (Feb.- Apr. 1967); LRRP Commander, Tp. E/17th Cav. (Apr.-Sept. 1967) and Co. Cmdr. of Dog Co., 4/503rd (Sept.- Nov 7th, 1967). Thanks for including me on your E-mail. I love you guys. For God & Country, Tom.



Tom, far right, on his 3<sup>rd</sup> tour as Advisor to PF Training Camp at Dinh Tuong, VN (MACV).

Tom Baird  
E/17th & D/4/503

How do we do it, Tom? Cut and paste my man, cut and paste. Thanks for your kind words, Cap. Ed

## ~ Golf Outing ~

The 173d Airborne Brigade Association Foundation is hosting a golf event to raise money to fund programs for its Gold Star family members and Wounded Veterans. All sponsorships and donations are tax deductible. Appropriate documentation will be provided for tax filing.



**Where:** Manchester Country Club  
180 South River Road, Bedford, NH 03110  
**When:** Monday August 3, 2015

For more information and to register for the events, go to [www.skysoldier.net/event-1947110](http://www.skysoldier.net/event-1947110)  
For anyone interested in Sponsorship Opportunities, go to [www.skysoldier.net/Golf-Outing-Sponsorships](http://www.skysoldier.net/Golf-Outing-Sponsorships)

Best regards,

173d Airborne Brigade Association

## ~ From An All American ~

Thanks for the mention of the 75th Anniversary (Issue 60, Page 9). I want you to know that we have Paratroopers from every Airborne unit on our board of directors.

Carl H. Bludau  
Founder 82nd Airborne Division  
Wounded Warrior Project  
Executive Chairman 75th Anniversary US Army  
Airborne & Special Operations-Orlando 2015  
Vietnam 1968-69



## ~ He Didn't Write The Poem ~

Would you please put an explanation in the next newsletter that I did not write the poem "Bury Me With Soldiers" (see Issue 61, Page 65). I read the poem at most Bravo Bulls' ceremonies. BUT, I did NOT write it. I found it on the internet several years ago where the author was listed as unknown. Never was able to find out who wrote it. Don't want people to get the wrong impression. Many Airborne Thanks!

Jack Schimpf  
B/2/503

Sorry Jack. We should have made that clear when we ran it. Thanks. Ed



# News: 173rd, German army remembers the fallen of D-Day

Story by Staff Sgt. Opal Vaughn

U.S. Army paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade along with more than 380 service members from Europe and affiliated D-Day historical units are participating in the 71st anniversary as part of Joint Task Force D-Day 71. The task force, based in Sainte Mere Eglise, France, is supporting local events across Normandy, June 2-8, 2015, to commemorate the selfless actions by all the Allies on D-Day that continue to resonate 71 years later.



**German army soldiers render honors during the playing of the U.S. national anthem while at the La Cambe German War Cemetery in the Normandy region of France, June 5, 2015.**

(U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Opal Vaughn)

BAYEUX, France - U.S. Army paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade, based out of Vicenza, Italy and Grafenwohr, Germany, alongside their French and German army allies and Veterans, paid homage to those lost during Operation Overlord during a ceremony at the La Cambe German war cemetery in the Normandy region of France, June 5, 2015, here marking the 71st anniversary of the D-Day landings.

As the U.S Army's contingency response force in Europe, the 173rd provides ready troops to deploy within 18 hours, anywhere in the U.S., European, Africa, and Central Command areas of responsibility. But none of this would be possible without those who paved the way said Sgt. 1st Class Josh Geery, a platoon sergeant assigned to the brigades 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment.

*"We're here to remember the past so that we don't repeat it in the future,"* said Geery. *"It's also to not let anyone forget what happened on these grounds back in 1944."*

La Cambe was originally the site of a battlefield cemetery, where American and German service members from World War II were buried in two adjacent fields. In total, there are the remains of 21,222 German service members buried at La Cambe. Two hundred and seven are unknown and 89 identified are buried in a mass grave beneath the central tumulus.

For most people, the legacy of La Cambe shows great stride that Germany is now an ally. Geery said he believes that what happened then has shaped how the military operates now.

*"We shouldn't forget events like this because it's something that happened in the world and has shaped how we will be in the future and are today,"* he said.

It's been 71 years and with a new generation of German army soldiers, many are taking the necessary steps to bridge the gap of their negative past.

*"This ceremony is part of our education and awareness,"* said German Lt. Col. Michael Crackau, commander Helmut-Schmidt-University. *"Coming to ceremonies like this is important so that we do not forget what happened here years ago. We have been welcomed to the ceremonies in Normandy for five years now. I would hope that we can continue this for the years to come."*

More than 380 service members from Europe and affiliated D-Day historical units are participating in the 71st anniversary as part of Joint Task Force D-Day 71. The task force, based in Sainte Mere Eglise, France, is supporting local events across Normandy, June 2-8, 2015, to commemorate the selfless actions by all the Allies on D-Day that continue to resonate 71 years later.

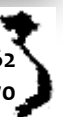
Source:

[https://www.dvidshub.net/news/165744/173rd-german-army-remembers-fallen-d-day#.VXR\\_R43bKUK](https://www.dvidshub.net/news/165744/173rd-german-army-remembers-fallen-d-day#.VXR_R43bKUK)

[Sent in by Bill Vose, A/HHC/2/503, '66/'67]



American paratroopers on D-Day. (Web photo)



## ~ Vietnam War Map Project ~

I'm always looking for after action reports, daily logs, and personal accounts if they can be referenced to a point on the map. I also appreciate when individuals can show me routes of march. I can provide topo's for or portions thereof if individuals need them or where to go to download them. I have scanned 1,50K maps for all of South Vietnam, North Vietnam, most of Laos, and Cambodia. I have four maps in the National Archives, one is of KIA locations for all of Southeast Asia to the 100 meter grid for about half of those on the "Wall". Those I have on the map were all I could find grid coordinates for, the rest are all to the Country and Province. I also have thousands of FSB's, LZ's and other points of military interest. I will make custom maps for Gold Star Families, members of the "Herd" and other Vietnam Vet's at no charge.

Below is a picture of the KIA / Helicopter Incident locations map that hangs in my work room. This is done using Geographic Information System (GIS) software which when printed looks like a map but on the computer it provides you a visual link to many data bases. Google Earth uses this type of software. Everything on the map has a row in an underlying data base; the KIA points have all of the information associated with them you will find in the book at the "Wall" plus more and all searchable.

**Jim McLaughlin**  
**335<sup>th</sup> AHC, 1967-68**  
[jomclaughlin@comcast.net](mailto:jomclaughlin@comcast.net)



## Billy Gene Duncan, CSM

1934 - 2015

"CSM Billy Gene Duncan 81 of Athens passed away on June 1, 2015. Billy G. Duncan was a soldier's soldier. He enlisted in the Army in 1950, one day before he turned 17 and retired 27 years later as Command Sergeant Major, the highest non-commissioned rank in service. He was a member of the all Volunteer 'Sky Soldiers' of the famed 173rd Airborne Brigade and served three tours in Vietnam.



Seventeen hundred and ninety names of the 173rd Airborne are chiseled in a black granite wall in Washington, DC. They never surrendered, and they never left anyone behind. Fourteen men received the Medal of Honor, three recipients were from Duncan's Company. He was in the battle of Dak To, one of the bloodiest fights during the war. *'We had so many dead, we couldn't find a pair of boots for each dead man'* said Duncan. *'So we put one boot to a man.'* Duncan, who made 2,300 jumps, holds Parachute Wings from U.S., England, France, Norway & Germany. He is the recipient of nine Bronze Stars for heroism and meritorious achievement in a combat zone. He was a founding member of the Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives and sat on the Board of Directors on two occasions.

Billy Gene Duncan was born on March 21, 1934 to the late Jesse James and Grace Haney Duncan in Limestone County.

Billy is survived by his wife Helen Duncan, Sister; Betty Ann Smith of Athens, Daughters; Carma Barksdale and husband Tim, of Springhill, Tennessee, Debra Porter and husband Kenny, Jo Clem and husband Dennis, Julie Moudy, Candace Perry and husband Russ and one son Victor Duncan and his wife Lorraine all of Athens, 12 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Services were held at Spry Funeral Home on Wednesday, June 3, 2015. Bro. Pat Lawrence of Berea Baptist Church officiated, burial was in Roselawn Cemetery with full military honors."



## GRUNTS

It was a job. Most of the work was boring menial labor. GIs were ditch diggers, pack animals and file clerks, slogging through a swamp of their own cold sweat. What little enthusiasm they brought to the task quickly oozed away, with nothing to replace it but the instinct to survive. The only diversion was the possibility of getting killed.

***“I’d pray for a fire fight, just so we could stop walking for a little while.”***

Adrenaline junkies, zombied out on fear, working the assembly line on the nod, they shuffled about the business of the war factory. Anxiety, even death, gets to be routine. They made a life of trying to endure.

*“War is not killing. Killing is the easiest part of the whole thing. Sweating twenty-four hours a day, seeing guys drop all around you of heatstroke, not having food, not having water, sleeping only three hours a night for weeks at a time, that’s what war is. Survival.”*

Home was very far away, even farther in mind than in miles. The longer they labored for the American Dream, the more they resented the management. Broken ideals, unattended, began to knit together in a hard cynicism.

*“I remember July 20, 1969. I sat in my hooch and watched satellite relay after-the-fact footage of the astronauts landing on the moon and Neil Armstrong’s first step on the surface. ‘One small step for man, a giant leap for mankind,’ I was so angry. I thought to myself, ‘Come here and step with me for a day, motherfucker.’”*

**Excerpt from NAM**

**By Mark Baker**

***The Vietnam War in the Words of the Soldiers Who Fought There***



**“1/503 trooper humping during Operation Newark, April 18-30, 1967, ‘D’ Zone in Binh Duong Province.”**

(Web photo)

## 2/503 Trooper Visits Vincenza

The wife and I have been in Italy almost two weeks, and today I was able to hook up with Frank Marcantonio, president of the Association's Chapter 173.

Frank took me around both bases here, and being a 2nd Batt. guy, he introduced me to the Colonel in charge of the 2nd Batt.

This is a picture in front of the Sigholtz Building. Proud to be a Sky Soldier!!

**Rich “Whip” Whipple  
HHC/2/503**



**Whip....One proud Sky Soldier**

***“We have good corporals and good sergeants and some good lieutenants and captains, and those are far more important than good generals.”***



**William Tecumseh Sherman**



# ~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind 2015 ~



**82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association 69<sup>th</sup> Convention**, August 12-15, 2015, Orlando, FL.  
**Web:** [www.82ndairborneassociation.org](http://www.82ndairborneassociation.org)



**2015 FSB Ripcord Association Reunion** October 7-10, 2015, in Springfield, MO.  
**Contact:**  
**Lee Widjeskog**  
**Phn: 856-451-1108**  
**Web:** [www.ripcordassociation.com](http://www.ripcordassociation.com)



**11<sup>th</sup> Airborne 72th Reunion**, September 14-18, 2015, Lodge of the Ozarks, Branson, MO 65616  
**Contact:**  
**Phone: 877-327-9894 Local: 417-334-7535**

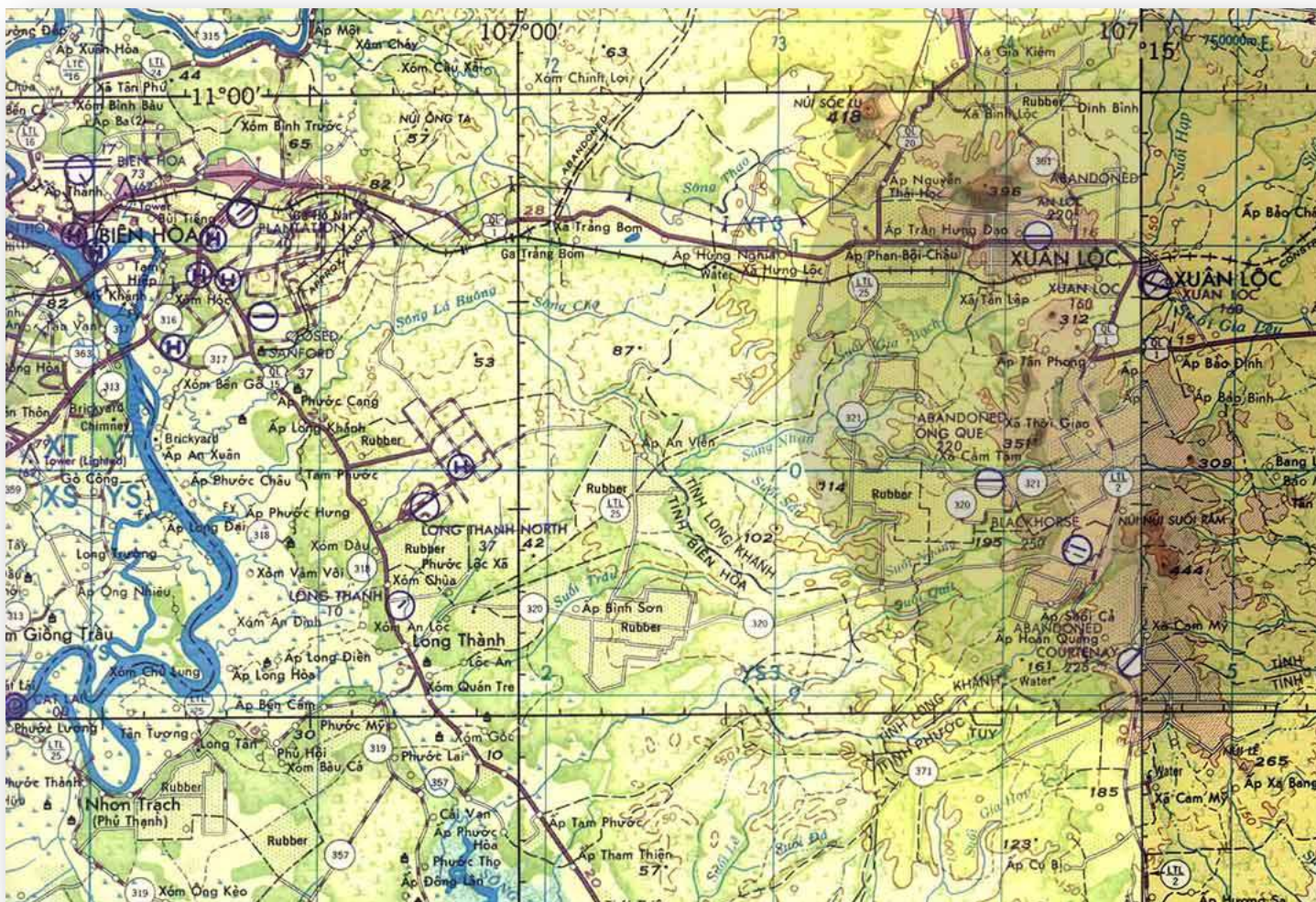


**Combat Infantrymen's Association Reunion**, October 1-4, 2015, in San Antonio, TX.  
**Contact:**  
**Larry Eckard**  
**Phn: 828-256-6008**  
**Eml: [combatinfantrymensassoc@yahoo.com](mailto:combatinfantrymensassoc@yahoo.com)**  
**Web: [www.mlrsinc.com/cia](http://www.mlrsinc.com/cia)**

## NOTE

If you are aware of any upcoming 'Airborne' or attached unit reunions, please send complete details to:  
[rto173d@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rto173d@cfl.rr.com)

**AIRBORNE...ALL THE WAY!**



The road from Bien Hoa to Xuan Loc

(Web map)



*A view from the other side...*

## Tran Van Van and his wife, Pham Thi Sang



**Tran Van Van and his wife, Pham Thi Sang, are pictured at their home in Binh Giang.** (Photograph by John DeSanto)

Van served in the North Vietnamese Army from 1965 to 1972 and was stationed on the border of Cambodia on the Ho Chi Minh trail, tasked with protecting the road from bombers.

*"We were bombed so often, and so many people died on the battlefield,"* he said.

*"The badly injured were taken to the aid station, but I buried my dead friends on the battlefield. I miss them greatly."*

He was eventually discharged after being injured in a bombing. He often relives that event in his nightmares. While Van was fighting, his wife worked as a rice farmer in order for the family to survive.

*"We were very poor and always hungry because there wasn't enough rice for me and my babies,"* she said.

*"One of the hardest moments of my life was when I had to go into the fields after my baby was born, but I had no choice. I didn't want to tell Van so I wrote him letters of encouragement to stay and fight in the war. Our country was more important."*

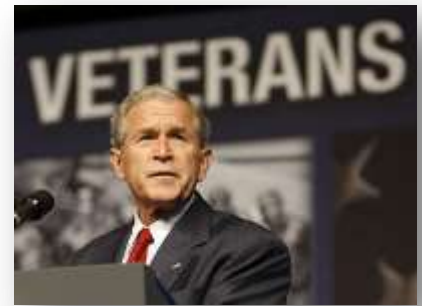
During the seven years in the army, Van only saw his family once, for a 10-day span in 1968.

During that time he and his wife conceived a child, Tran Van Tin, now 46, who was born with severe health problems which is believed to be due to Van's exposure to Agent Orange.

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-33408096>

## To Help US Veterans Charity, George W. Bush Charged \$100,000

Former President George W. Bush charged \$100,000 to speak at a charity fundraiser for U.S. military veterans severely wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, and former First Lady Laura Bush collected \$50,000 to appear a year earlier, officials of the Texas-based Helping a Hero charity confirmed to ABC News.



**Former Commander-in-Chief speaks at Veteran's event**

The former President was also provided with a private jet to travel to Houston at a cost of \$20,000, the officials said.

The charity, which helps to provide specially-adapted homes for veterans who lost limbs and suffered other severe injuries in "the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan," said the total \$170,000 expenditure was justified because the former President and First Lady offered discounted fees and helped raise record amounts in contributions at galas held in 2011 and 2012.

*"It was great because he reduced his normal fee of \$250,000 down to \$100,000,"* said Meredith Iler, the former chairman of the charity.

However, a recent report by Politico said the former President's fees typically ranged between \$100,000 and \$175,000 during those years.

One of the wounded vets who served on the charity's board told ABC News he was outraged that his former commander in chief would charge any fee to speak on behalf of men and women he ordered into harm's way. *"For him to be paid to raise money for veterans that were wounded in combat under his orders, I don't think that's right,"* said former Marine Eddie Wright, who lost both hands in a rocket attack in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004.

*"You sent me to war,"* added Wright speaking of the former President. *"I was doing what you told me to do, gladly for you and our country and I have no regrets. But it's kind of a slap in the face."*

Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-veterans-charity-george-bush-charged-100000/story?id=32251253>



## An Airborne Family

Annette and I returned yesterday from a wonderful trip to Fort Benning. 1/507th PIR Battalion Chaplain, CPT John Smith, and CPT Remington Adams, Commander of B/1/507 rolled out the red carpet to welcome us to Airborne Walk for the graduation of Class 21-15 Basic Airborne Course, including our son, SPC Blake Sandri.

As requested, here are 3 photos:



Annette pins Blake's wings as I look on.



Matt graduated D/1/507 on 10 May 02. Blake graduated B/1/507 thirteen years later on 29 May 15. At graduation, both were 22 years old and had earned the rank of E-4.



Graham Easterwood (left) and Josh McLamb, who served in Charlie Medical Company/82<sup>nd</sup> FSB/3BCT/ 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN DIV, Both were wounded in the 122mm rocket attack that killed Matt, came to Fort Benning to join us at Blake's graduation.

Be well, ATW,

**Bob Sandri**  
A Proud Father of Airborne Troopers

Of interest to California vets....

## Central Coast Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 982

*"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another"*



### About us

Welcome to the Central Coast Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 982 webpage. We hope that you find our organization as a way to re-join the

ranks you once left. We also hope that you appreciate all the local events and community programs that we sponsor in the area. Founded in 1978, Vietnam Veterans of America is the only national Vietnam veterans' organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families.



Chapter 982, Santa Maria, CA

Web Site: <http://www.vva982.org/#!>

Email: [ccvvachapter982@gmail.com](mailto:ccvvachapter982@gmail.com)

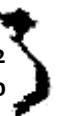
### A Pic From The Past

Pvt. Mitchell, PFC Shave in background and me sitting on a bunker we were building at Camp Zinn, Bien Hoa Airbase, VN. Covered 6 seat open air shitter in far background. It's now 50 years later and I'm 100 lbs heavier.

**James "JJ" Jackson**  
B/2/503



JJ: You are in good company. Ed



# 'Sky Soldiers' recall Vietnam War at weekend reunion

By BEN WRIGHT

[benw@ledger-enquirer.com](mailto:benw@ledger-enquirer.com)

May 6, 2015



Samuel Grimes, left, and Robert Toporek were assigned 50 years ago to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the first major ground unit of the U.S. Army to serve in Vietnam.

Fifty years ago, Robert Toporek and Samuel Grimes were assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the first major unit of the U.S. Army to serve in Vietnam.

Toporek and Grimes joined nearly two dozen members of the brigade over the weekend at the National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center for a reunion of the "Sky Soldiers."

During six straight years of continuous combat, the brigade was the first major ground formation deployed to Vietnam and lost almost 1,800 soldiers from 1965-1971.

Toporek, who lives near Philadelphia and served two tours in Vietnam, said he finally learned more about his time during the war.

"I got to find out the truth of what happened to me in Vietnam," said the 68-year-old.

Grimes of Enterprise, Ala., served one tour in Vietnam with Toporek in the 2nd Battalion, Company B, of the brigade. He recalled a battle near Phu Cuong when his M-16 rifle was shot out of his hand during an ambush. "I got a bullet through my canteen and my mess kit on my back, but they missed me," said Grimes, 68. "Pieces of my rifle went in my arm, but other than that I wasn't hurt. But I was unable to fight because I

didn't have anything to fight with. I just got on the ground as close as I could get on the ground. They were throwing grenades close to me and I was throwing them back."

Milton Lee Olive III, one of 13 recipients of the Medal of Honor to members of the brigade, was in the jungle with Grimes before his gun jammed. He went to the command post, fixed it and returned during the fire fight.

The citation for the first African-American Medal of Honor recipient states that Olive was part of 3rd Platoon, Company B when soldiers moved through the jungle under heavy enemy fire and assaulted the Viet Cong positions.

Olive and four other soldiers were pursuing the insurgents when a grenade was thrown in their midst. Without regard for his own safety, Olive, 18, fell on the grenade and his body absorbed the blast.

His actions prevented the loss of life and injury to fellow members of his platoon.

"I remember how pale he was," Grimes said. "It was very traumatic. I would have been with him if his gun hadn't jammed. He pulled one under him to save everybody around him."

Grimes and Toporek said they helped carry Olive's remains out of the jungle. Olive's death is a part of the war that Grimes said he would never forget.

"I'll never forget any of my experiences," Grimes said. "That probably is the most dramatic because I knew him well. The other guys I didn't know them well enough."



Milton, B/2/503

To remember all Vietnam veterans and pay tribute to Olive, Toporek said he's planning an event Oct. 22 in Olive's hometown of Chicago where a park is named Milton L. Olive III Park.

"I'm on a mission," Toporek said. "I want to tell the story."

[Web source: **Ledger-Enquirer**]



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Aug-Sep 2015 – Issue 62

Page 39 of 70

# NEGROS WAS NO PLAYGROUND

## "B" Co. in Negros

Louis G. Aiken

### INTRODUCTION

When I completed the "Partial History of the 503d Negros Mission" I did not have the benefit of any comments from "B" Co., and did not presume to account for all the fighting by all units of the 503rd involved in that mission. The "Partial History" was based on the assistance I received from 1st Lts. Bill Calhoun ("F" Company) and John Lindgren ("D" Company). Fortunately, in August 1991, Louis Aiken, a platoon sergeant of "B" Co. responded to my open invitation for more information. In his correspondence, Louis recalls some of the events on Negros and I have summarized them, and provided my own comments.

Much of Louis' recounting is associated with the activity which took place northeast and east from MURCIA. This activity began in a steamy, hot and humid rain forest terrain and ended on top of a cold, clammy, fog enshrouded and wet mountain. As suggested by Bill Calhoun of "F" Co. in his writings, the MURCIA area activities were part of the second phase of the fighting which took place on Negros and occurred approximately from 13 May 1945 until 9 June 1945. The 2nd and 3rd Bns and units of the 462nd PFA and 161st Parachute Engineers had landed on Negros on 6-7 April 1945 and had been engaged in hard fighting along TOKAIDO ROAD east of SILAY from approximately 8 April 1945 until 12 May 1945. The 1st Bn joined the other two battalions of the regiment already on Negros on 25 April 1945.

One of the major objectives of this second phase of the fighting was to secure a feature designated as Hill 3355. I'll let Louis Aiken take up the recollection from here.

**John D. Reynolds**



Aerial view of the Japanese Hayne Airfield (later Momote Airfield and Momote Airport), Los Negros Island, Admiralty Islands, February 1944. (Source: U.S. Army)



Hill 3355 was the mountaintop area where a so-called "water-hole" was located. It was also an escape route for the Japanese moving east from the lowland areas into the mountains. There were roving contingents of Japanese who had heavily engaged the 503rd further north in the TOKAIDO ROAD phase of the fighting.

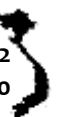
Hill 3355 was a bit of terrain which consisted of a number of offshoots or razor back ridges. These ridges were thin but sufficiently wide for trails and provided damn good defensive positions for a dug-in enemy. Prior to a company move a "B" Co. patrol was sent part way up the trails leading to the higher ground. The patrol was hit by enemy fire and in at least one instance by either Japanese mountain mortars or by Japanese artillery fire.



Hill 3355, Negros Island, Philippines. US Army 40<sup>th</sup> Division photograph.

Several days later "B" Co. moved up into the higher ground followed by "A" Co. Approximately 3/4 of the way up to what they thought was their destination the company encountered a few rounds of enemy fire. The company moved further up to what they thought was the top, settled in, put up a perimeter defense and awaited further orders. The following day the company perimeter received some enemy fire from small arms. Several days later there was word of the location of a "watering hole" to the company's left flank and down one of the ridges. There were definite signs that where "B" Co. was sitting on Hill 3355 (if it really was Hill 3355) they were on a well-used trail and that the trail could either split and go down to the lowlands or turn left and go higher up into the mountains....

(continued....)



....A patrol of perhaps 15 men were assigned the task of finding and bringing back some water from the watering hole. (1)

The patrol was moving into an area from which enemy fire had been coming the previous day so the patrol moved with extreme caution. No problems were encountered as the patrol moved along the trail. Then a small shack was spotted just off the trail. While the shack was being "checked out," voices were heard coming from the trail below, and the voices were speaking Japanese. The lead Jap was walking head down, weapon on his shoulder, and using a walking stick to help him with his climb. The patrol took an ambush position, and the first two Japanese never knew what hit them, and the rest fell off the trail on both sides as they desperately sought cover as they rolled and tumbled down the hill scattering supplies and leaving a few trails of blood.

The hill was steep, and there was plenty of cover once they got further down the side of the ridge. For the patrol to have gone down after them would have been stupid because the size of the enemy group was not known.

The "B" Co. patrol found the water hole on the opposite side of the ridge below the small shack, checked it out, filled their canteens and the extra canteens, made a radio report to "B" Co., and received orders to return to the CP. That may have been a mistake. The Japs knew about the water hole also, and they had been bloodied at or near it, which also let them know that the trail wasn't open up ahead; the Americans were there.

When another "B" Co. patrol went back to the same water hole on a canteen filling mission several days later, they found that the Japanese had returned to the water hole, had dug-in bunkers and controlled the water hole in force. This time they controlled the razor back ridge, water and all. "B" Co. had it once but pulled back. "C" Co. moved up and their CO was briefed and told the situation as well as could be told. No one knew just how well the Japs were dug in or what weapons they had or how many men they had.

However, it was quite apparent that a frontal assault was suicide, and you couldn't flank them due to the steep sides of the ridge. If you did succeed in bypassing them and hitting them from the rear, the ridge



**Robert Konishi, one of only a handful of Japanese-American's who fought in the 503<sup>rd</sup> on Negros.**

was narrow and such a move would only amount to the same as a rear frontal assault when the Japs turned around on the narrow ridge. The Japs controlled that portion of the ridge -- as "C" found out.

After a couple of days of incurring casualties, the obvious thing to do was to throw white smoke grenades to mark the location, move to a safer position and call in the artillery. And that was what was done.

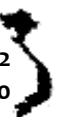
A narrow ridge was hard to hit effectively with artillery fire and the artillery was not very successful in displacing the well dug-in Japanese. The Japs held on. Then 4.2 mortars were called in, and the high angle boys did a superb job on the Japanese positions. "C" Co. walked in after it was all over. They counted 33 dead enemy scattered among the 8 or 9 machine gun positions. (2)

No one would have predicted that almost 6,000 Japanese (well fed and well-armed) would come out onto the surrender fields. Opinions have been forthcoming that had the Japanese commander known how thinly the 503rd forces were stretched that he could have retaken Negros. I don't agree with that because their strength and their survival depended on not providing us with targets. He knew that he had to wait for Japanese reinforcements in strength. The Japanese, in my opinion, fought a brilliant defensive campaign on Negros.



**"Japanese POW. Under the care and custody of the 503<sup>rd</sup>".**

"B" Co. continued with the rest of the 1st Bn to advance further up Hill 3355. Some attacks on ridges were supported by artillery fire. The fighting on these razor-backs was repetitive. Patrols went out and if contact was made with the enemy then fire fights resulted. Some of the movement was by company supporting another company. And then, finally, the second phase of the fighting was over. It seems that the Japs had just melted away. The 1st Bn was moved into locations, as was the rest of the regiment, which guarded bridges, ammo dumps, supply dumps, and communities from Pulupandan on the southwest coast of Negros to Fabrica on the northern coast.





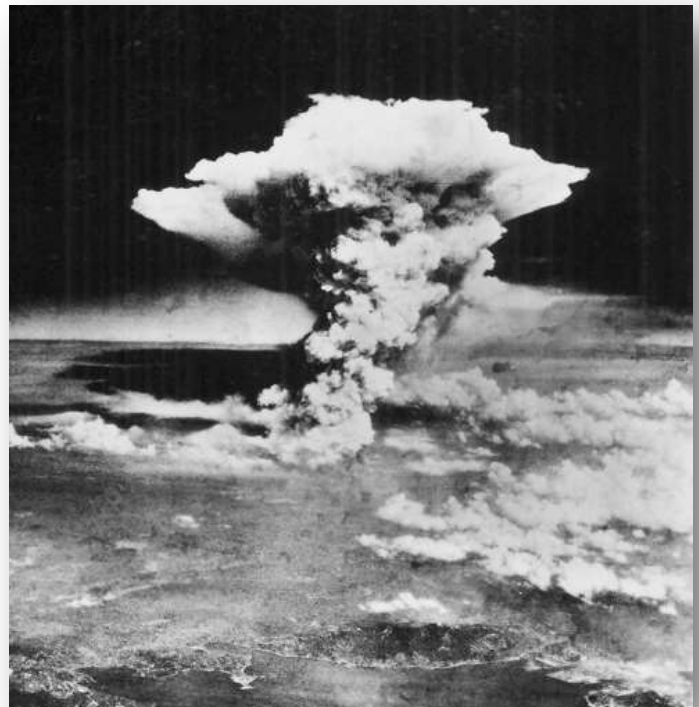
One day "B" Co. was called on to take a motorized patrol from Bacolod City on the western coast of Negros to San Carlos, located about 90 miles directly across the island on the eastern coast of Negros. The patrol consisted of three or four 2½ ton trucks, a reinforced platoon and heavy radio equipment. The trip was quite scenic, mountain gardens, valleys, etc. All went well until the convoy encountered a very large wooden bridge, no railings, just planking for vehicle wheel movement and a few holes. The bridge was built on pilings and was very well bridged from the center to the bottom of the gully over which it passed. The bridge was about 100 feet in length, and the gully was about 75-100 feet in depth. After a test run of the first vehicle the other vehicles were moved across without incident. The bridge proved to be quite sturdy and was later reinforced, and used regularly by the ration and mail trucks arriving regularly in San Carlos. The patrol arrived in San Carlos late in the day, set up a CP in a school building, set-up a radio and put out security patrols to determine if there were any Japs in the area.



90-mm antiaircraft gun firing ground support, northern Negros. (National Archives)

The Filipinos assured us that the Japanese had all vanished to the mountains, and it appeared that this was indeed the case. Louis believes that this happened early in June 1945. The primary patrol sent out smaller patrols in several different directions and encountered no Japanese, just found areas where they had been. The detail returned to Bacolod area approximately a week later, and then the entire company moved to the San Carlos area and evidently the entire 1st Bn moved into or around the area. "B" Co. moved out past the town on a river from which a number of patrols were later conducted. Contact with the enemy was only on a "now and then" basis.

Then came the dropping of the atomic bombs. As far as Louis was concerned, the bomb drops were rumors and didn't have a damn thing to do with any war on Negros. So patrolling continued, but then everything stopped, and it was all over.



A mushroom cloud forms following the dropping of the atomic bomb over the city of Hiroshima, Japan on 6 August 1945. The war would soon end. (Web photo)

The Japanese began to surrender all over the island of Negros, and "B" Co. had approximately 500-600 located in a pasture area with 2 or 3 strands of barbed wire around the area. And it was over and they were as glad as we were.

*(continued....)*



## Surrender on Negros



This surrender is taking place at Murcia on 30 August, 1945. Photos courtesy of Melinda Janzen, daughter of George Leland Taylor, who was there on the day.

"B" Co. had 4 different CO's on Negros and one of them, Lt. Fred Goetz, was CO three times. The CO position changed hands six times for "B" Co. from April through early July 1945. The CO's were:

Wirt Cates, KIA; Fred Goetz; McCall, KIA; Fred Goetz; Magnus Smith, Rotated; Fred Goetz

"I've thought about the situation and believe that people, old officers, etc., were being replaced, young and inexperienced officers assumed command, the units were scattered from hell to breakfast, everybody was understrength, reports were not properly maintained, and generally nobody, so it seems, actually knew what the hell was going on on Negros. You ask me where the 1st Bn was - hell, we didn't know ourselves. Just put one foot in front of the other, day-by-day and if a Jap jumped up - shoot him! Only answer I can give you."

### Louis Aiken



## FOOTNOTES (by John D. Reynolds)

**Footnote #1:** I want to inject some of my own personal recollections at this point. Water was a precious commodity. I recall that one of the many things I was not made aware of in basic training was the possible need for carrying two canteens. For those infantry soldiers fighting in the 503<sup>rd</sup>, two canteens were standard equipment. It didn't take you long to learn that you emptied one first and at that point in time you became extremely conscious of the need to get it refilled before you found yourself with two empty canteens. As I look back on it, I can't believe some of the water I drank. Thank God for Halazone tablets! So, I can easily understand what the "watering hole patrol" was all about.

**Footnote #2:** This related episode at the water hole typifies the direction in which future fighting on Negros would take place. The 503<sup>rd</sup> forces had been depleted to the point where they could not afford to engage the Japs in assaults on dug-in positions, especially strong-points containing multiple pill boxes with interlocking covering fire. Once contacts of strong points were made those contacts were broken and artillery and mortar fire were called in on the Jap strong points.

However, the Japanese learned also. They learned not to establish these kinds of defensive positions because they knew only too well what would happen and what the results would be because of the tactics now being applied against them.

The fighting in this second phase on Negros, in my opinion, probably had a lot to do with the type of campaign that was waged in the fourth and final phase of the Negros mission, beginning about 9 July 1945 and lasting until hostilities ceased. In this phase the Japanese were hard to find. They kept clear of most American patrols and seemed to melt away into the vast reaches of the high mountainous terrain which dominated the north central part of the island. There were a lot of places they could conceal themselves.

**Footnote #3:** This time period has been called "Phase III" of the Negros mission. It lasted for approximately 28 days, starting on 10 June 1945 and ending on 8 July 1945. The regiment was stretched for some ~0 miles along the coast. Sometime during the latter part of this phase the action which Louis Aiken speaks of takes place.

Reprinted here courtesy of Paul Whitman, 503<sup>rd</sup> P.R.C.T. Heritage Battalion web site. Photos from that same site unless otherwise indicated.



Negros today. (Web photo)



# Japs Quit Corregidor Cave To Surrender, Praise U.S.

**MANILA (AP)** – Twenty Japanese soldiers and sailors who have been hiding in caverns of Corregidor since the American recapture came out Thursday and surrendered to the American soldiers working on the island.

Waving surrender flags and carrying surrender documents, the Japanese marched into the American company area and made the startled Yanks think that they were having New Year's heebie jeebies.



Japanese soldiers surrendering, WWII.

The Japanese said that they were forced underground last February by the American bombardment. They did not know of the surrender until a couple of weeks ago, when they saw an old newspaper describing Japan's defeat.

The Japanese surrender document said that they had read surrender leaflets dropped by the Americans months ago "but for the first time, we could not believe it because we were taught that our country never surrendered before." It continued, "Although our father country surrendered to the United States of America, our feelings and minds are very happy because we have done our best during wartime and now the United States of America is the victor of the war and the hero of the world. We are glad to see peace again between the United States of America and Japan."

"By the surrender of our country, the war ended and we are not your enemy anymore. We promise you our sincerity and express our highest respects of good friendship hereafter."

Fourteen soldiers and six sailors were freshly shaven and had pressed uniforms. Doctors said that they were in excellent health. Americans who examined the cave said that the group had a snug nest hundreds of feet in the rock.

[Source: Stars and Stripes, 4 January 1946]

## SOME SCARRED SLOPE OF BATTERED HILL

*"...war has it's horrors but has this of good:  
That its sure processes sort out and bind  
Brave hearts in one intrepid brotherhood ...*

- Alan Seeger

Alan Seeger was an American who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion to fight for France prior to America's entry into the World War I. He graduated from Harvard in 1910. He was the uncle of Pete Seeger the folk singer. He was killed while participating in a frontal assault in the battle of the Somme in July of 1916.

The above portion of his poem **ON RETURNING TO THE FRONT AFTER LEAVE, SONNET XI**, was written after he returned from leave in Paris and possibly reflects a disdain for those not engaged in the fighting.

He also wrote a poem called **RENDEZVOUS** which is the piece he is most noted for. I've read that it was John F. Kennedy's favorite poem. When I first read it I thought it was a little heavy on the melodrama as the first line is "*I have a rendezvous with Death...*" After reading it several times I realized that it really does apply to anyone who exposes him or herself to the lethal intent of an enemy. Each patrol, each operation into a war zone was a rendezvous with death, though death may or may not have shown up to take us.

In RENDEZVOUS he writes:

*"It may be he shall take my hand  
And lead me into his dark land  
And close my eyes and quench my breath-  
It may be I shall pass him still."*



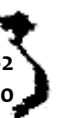
Alan Seeger

He continued with:

*"I have a rendezvous with Death  
On some scarred slope of battered hill,"...*

*"Some scarred slope of battered hill".* Those six words hold so much misery, frustration and sorrow.... so many hills.

Jim Bethea  
HHC/2/503





# Farewell Sky Soldiers ~ 2015

*They were young and paratroopers*



**Sgt. Brett Aaron Aycock**, U.S. Army (Ret), 33, left this worldly life on Tuesday, February 24, 2015. Brett's greatest pride was his military service and being a member of the Reconnaissance/Scout Platoon, HHC, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment "The Rock." While serving in Ramadi, Iraq, Brett was wounded in combat as a result of an enemy hand grenade on January 13, 2005. Subsequently, he was medically retired from the Army and forced to end his plans for a military career in Special Forces.



**Danny Ray Gilbert** went to be with his Lord and Savior on Monday, January 5, 2015, surrounded by his loving friends and family at his home on Cripple Creek Ranch in Groveton, Texas. He was a Purple Heart recipient, serving proudly as a Sergeant in the 173rd Airborne Brigade of the United States Army.



**Justin James Crivello**, 36, died unexpectedly in Marysville, Washington on January 22, 2015. Justin was born September 8, 1978 in Kirkland, WA. Justin enlisted in the U.S. Army and became a Sergeant with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team based in Vicenza, Italy.



**Carlee Lincoln "Jack" Harjo**, age 88, born January 18, 1927, and a resident of Konawa, Oklahoma, passed away on Tuesday, January 20, 2015 at OU Medical Center in Oklahoma City. He proudly served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade and in the Korean War.



**"Bernard Ray Hawke**, 68, of Honolulu, director of the Pacific Regional Planetary Data Center and an Army veteran who served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade, died January, 24, 2015, in Honolulu. He was born in Louisville, Ky.

**Frederick R. Fitzmeyer** of Winthrop, MA passed away peacefully on May 27, 2015, at the age of 70. Fred grew up in Winthrop and after his service in Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, he worked in Boston Harbor as a Shipyard Rigger and Boat Captain for the Boston Harbor Pilot Association, where his love of the sea began.



**Larry Melvin Hickman**, 63, of Houston, Texas, passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 16, 2015. He proudly served his country in the United States Army as a member of the 173rd Airborne from 1970-1972.



**Alfred "Ray" Flores** passed away peacefully at his Madera, CA home on Sunday, April 19, 2015 surrounded by those he loved. Following his education Ray served in the United States Army 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam where he was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in action.



**James B. "Jack" Johnson**, 70, of De Soto died April 27, 2015, at Mercy Hospital Jefferson in Crystal City, MO. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army who served two tours of duty in Vietnam in the 173rd Airborne Brigade as a paratrooper.



**Garland "Judd" Claude Fuller**, age 70, of Doroles, CO, passed away January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 at home following an extended illness. A US Army veteran, he served from 1966 to 1971 ending with a tour of duty in Vietnam. He served as a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Division as well as an armored tank commander. He achieved the rank of sergeant with numerous awards and medal.



**Donald E. "Donnie" Kinkade**, 67, passed away on Saturday, April 25, 2015, in Pine Grove, WV. Donnie was a U.S. army veteran of the Vietnam War where he was a member of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne.

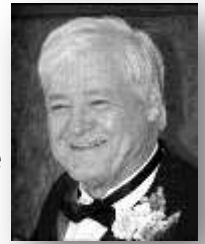
*(sadly continued....)*



**Clayton "Clay" Merle Kopp** of St. Augustine, FL left this world and a legion of friends on May 3, 2015, with his wife and soul mate Colleen by his side. An Army Airborne Ranger, recipient of the William O. Darby award and Vietnam veteran, Clay served with the 3rd of the 503rd, 173rd Airborne Brigade. He loved his country, fellow veterans, family and friends and will be remembered for his generosity, love and big smile.



With unbearable sorrow, the Roseman family acknowledges the death of **James Spencer Roseman**, Saturday, April 11, 2015. Jim passionately loved his country and so volunteered to serve as a Sky Soldier with the 173rd Airborne during Vietnam and fought in several instances of active combat.



**Johny "John" I. Mason**, of Jarratt, VA, entered into eternal rest on Saturday, March 14, 2015. He served in the Army under the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat team for 3 years, until being honorably discharged.



**Gerhard William Schulz**, of Chesterfield, VA, went to be with the Lord May 28, 2015. He served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade, for 20 years in the U.S. Army and 24 years as a dedicated VDOT employee.



**Samuel R. Perrott, Sr.**, 68, of Elyria, OH, died Friday, January 30, 2015, at University Hospitals Elyria Medical Center with his family by his side. Sam was a decorated Vietnam War veteran and a proud member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He received 2 purple Hearts, a bronze star medal and C.I.B.



**LeVon Lee Thomas** passed away in Kayenta, Arizona, Saturday, March 14th, 2015 at the age of 67. In 1966 he was drafted into the Vietnam War, in which he served in the U.S. Army, 173rd Airborne, and returned home in 1969.

**William (Wild Bill) Ramsdell**, 83, of Gillette, RI died April 12, 2015. He entered the military in 1952 during the Korean Conflict. He served in the U.S. Army for 22 years and retired in 1974 at Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was a member of the elite Special Forces, 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 75th Ranger Infantry. He furthered his education through the attendance at many military schools. In 1994, he was transferred to Fort Bragg for a short tenure with the Army Education Center.



**Michael Tiutczenko**, 66, a resident of Oak Creek, WI, was born into Eternal Life on Tuesday, April 28, 2015. He was born in Bayruth, Germany on May 27, 1948. Michael served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War as part of the 173rd Airborne Brigadfe. During his time in Vietnam, he was injured for which he received the Purple Heart and also achieved other medals of honor. Michael was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam which led to his courageous battle with Leukemia. He was a motorcycle enthusiast and a part of the Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Rally that travels every Memorial Day to the Vietnam Wall in Washington D.C.



**Sammy Lee Robinson, Jr.**, 67, of Dublin, GA, passed away on May 15, 2015. Immediately following graduation from high school in 1966, he enlisted in the United States Army where he became an accomplished paratrooper and parachute rigger in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. He was a veteran of the Vietnam conflict with service dates encompassing October 19, 1966 through May 1, 1969, after which he was granted an honorable discharge and returned to the United States.



*(sadly continued....)*



**James Ebert Vaughn Jr.**, 69, entered into eternal rest surrounded by his family at his side at the early morning of Saturday, the 31st of January 2015, in Laredo, TX. James E. Vaughn Jr. joined the United States Army in December 1966 at the age of 21. He went through basic training and earned his wings as a Para-Trooper. At that point he joined the 173rd Airborne Brigade "Sky Soldiers" although James would call them "The Herd". He was then deployed to Vietnam War where he fought for three consecutive years. His family will forever remember the deep voice in which he proudly sang - US Army Ranger Cadence: If I Die in the Drop Zone, Rangers, Rangers, All the way, All the way, Here we go, here we go, C130 rolling down the strip, Airborne daddy gonna take a little trip, Mission unspoken, destination unknown, Don't even know if we were ever coming home, Stand up, hook up, shuffle to the door, Jump right out and count to four, If my main don't open wide, I've got a reserve by my side, And if through, And if I die on the ole drop zone, Box me up and ship me home, Pin my wings upon my chest, Tell my girl I did my best, Bury me in the lean and rest, When I get to heaven, St. Peters gonna say, How'd you earn your livin', Boy, how'd you earn your pay, I will reply with a whole lot of anger, Earned my pay as an Airborne Ranger



**John W. Wayne**, 63 of Alexis, Illinois, passed away Monday February 1, 2015, in Peoria, Illinois. He served his country in the US Army 173rd Airborne serving three tours from 1969-1971 in Vietnam.



**Edward Weitmann**, 65, of Willowemoc, New York passed away peacefully at home on February 14, 2015. Ed was born March 19, 1949 in Suffern, New York. He served his country honorably in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970 as a Sergeant E5 with the 173rd Airborne Division. He is the recipient of the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Army Commendation Medal and Parachute Badge.

**Ronald E. Wooley**, a resident of Madisonville, LA, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, February 10, 2015. Ronie was a veteran of the Vietnam War having honorably served the Army of the United States' 5th Special Forces Recondo Group/173rd Airborne Brigade.



## ~ Farewell Sky Soldier ~

**You are gone now, and we all will soon follow. It seems as if it were only yesterday when you were just a young boy, a young soldier, a young paratrooper. Tell me, where did that time go?**

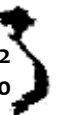
**You came from Virginia, and Texas, and California, you came from everywhere in our country, and some of you from foreign lands. Whether you enlisted or were drafted, you were a volunteer in the Airborne. I wonder sometimes if your family and friends know that about you? Do they know what an accomplishment that was for you? Do they know of the pride you felt in having served your country and your fellow paratroopers? I hope they know that about you. We know.**

**And you went to war, performed your duty, saw and did things no young man should ever see or be asked to do, and where you may have sacrificed part of your mind and body, only to return home to a land unwilling to recognize your sacrifices and commitment to service; yet in spite of that, and throughout your life, the love you had for that land and the 173d Airborne Brigade never wavered. We know that about you too.**

**You were our neighbor, our auto mechanic, our banker, our teacher, and our friend. Many only knew you in such capacities. But to us, you are one of us as we are one with you. You, old friend, are a Sky Soldier and will always be, something only few can claim. And that too we also know about you.**

**Rest easy trooper, you did your job well. We bid you a smooth journey, a safe landing, and all the way.**

~ A Fellow Sky Soldier



## Gaetani serves families of the fallen

May 28, 2015

John Gaetani, in accepting the first Veterans Service Award to be given during the Memorial Day ceremony, said his greatest regret is that he never served in the military.

But Director of Veterans Services for Foxboro, Mike Johns, who honored the Foxboro painting contractor for his years of volunteering to repaint and maintain the 29 markers memorializing fallen soldiers at "squares" around town, sees it a different way.

"Although John did not serve, he does now," Johns said.

"Look at those 29 square markers and look at what he did," Johns continued. "John's life work has been to care for those and remember the fallen."

The cast metal markers, exposed to the weather over the years, were all repainted six years ago by Gaetani, who moved from his native Dedham to Foxboro in 1980. Now, he has volunteered for another round of reconditioning.

Gaetani's inspiration comes from his boyhood. In 1967, at age 11, he recalled being in the back yard with his father when a big black car pulled up to his neighbor's house and two officers went to the door. "I heard my father just say, 'Oh my God'."

The officers had come to inform the Dutton family that their oldest son, Bernard, a Marine like Gaetani's father, had been killed in action.

"I saw what it did to the family," Gaetani recalled.

A second casualty from Vietnam also rocked Gaetani's father, a Dedham contractor. He got to know the son of a family whose house he was working on, and the old veteran and young serviceman corresponded through boot camp and a tour with an engineering battalion.

But on his second deployment, as a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne, John Andrew Barnes III did not return. He was killed at age 21.

The younger Gaetani still honors Barnes at a vigil held at his memorial in Dedham. And since moving to Foxboro, he has honored this town's war dead by maintaining the 29 markers.

"I do this in honor of those two service members," he said in accepting his award. "I'll never forget it - the time I heard they would never come home."

Gaetani had special thanks for late Veterans Service Agent Carl Kusch, as well as Town Historian Jack Authalet, as both got him started with his volunteer service and have worked with him.

Johns said he had asked the Veterans Service

Committee if he could give the award at the Memorial Day ceremony and received a resounding 'yes.' But he is not sure if this will be done on an annual basis.

Source:

<http://www.foxbororeporter.com/articles/2015/05/30/news/17169546.txt>

*The President of the United States  
in the name of The Congress  
takes pleasure in presenting the  
Medal of Honor  
to  
BARNES, JOHN ANDREW III*

**Rank and organization:** Private First Class, U.S. Army, Company C, 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry 173d Airborne Brigade.

**Place and date:** Dak To, Republic of Vietnam, 12 November 1967.

**Entered service at:** Boston, Mass.

**Born:** 16 April 1945, Boston, Mass.

### Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Pfc. Barnes distinguished himself by exceptional heroism while engaged in combat against hostile forces. Pfc. Barnes was serving as a grenadier when his unit was attacked by a North Vietnamese force, estimated to be a battalion. Upon seeing the crew of a machinegun team killed, Pfc. Barnes, without hesitation, dashed through the bullet swept area, manned the machinegun, and killed 9 enemy soldiers as they assaulted his position. While pausing just long enough to retrieve more ammunition, Pfc. Barnes observed an enemy grenade thrown into the midst of some severely wounded personnel close to his position. Realizing that the grenade could further injure or kill the majority of the wounded personnel, he sacrificed his life by throwing himself directly onto the hand grenade as it exploded. Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his own safety, and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, he averted a probable loss of life and injury to the wounded members of his unit. Pfc. Barnes' extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity at the cost of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



## Those Funny Paratroopers

Some of the humor Sky Soldiers share with one another on the internet...



*Ouch!* As a former Screaming Eagle, I'm still running it. Ed

### Internet exchanges between a band of brothers about the inequities of military pay:

"Yeah, but we got jump pay of \$55.00 a month plus a whopping \$65.00 per month hostile fire pay in RVN, so we were livin' good, especially since we were in the boonies with no place to spend it. But then, I wouldn't recommend it as an investment strategy, with its high risk and relatively low return outlook." **2/503 Trooper**

"Yep...\$110.00 jump pay cause us ossifers were better jumpers." **2/503 Company CO**

"Good point Cap!!" **2/503 Platoon Leader**

"I heard all ossifers jumped sport chutes, lest they damage their dainty ankles. All Hollywood jumps too, mostly from the tower, the 34' one. Just something I heard. *Here we go. All the way!*" **2/503 RTO**

"No sport chutes, but they did jump side-saddle." **2/503 Grunt**

"And they pushed their RTO's out first." **4/503 Sniper**

"Don't all the ossifers lead the stick? Just sayin'....." **1/503 Sniper**

"Officers always hit the silk as their panties were silk as well as their pajamas! Even their turds had silk linings." **2/503 Recon Trooper**

"They are good cushions! GDES!" **Same Platoon Leader**

(GDES = Goddamn enlisted swine)

## And more offerings from Sky Soldiers with senses of humor:

The young lady was sitting on the porch with her pup, when she noticed a soldier coming down the street.

"Hey, mom, here comes a paratrooper!"

"Come in the house, girl, he's got a 173d patch. Bring the dog." **173d LRRP**

-----  
"Do you know why we have only one wing? It's because we can fight with one wing tied behind our backs." **2/503 RTO, with credit to a 1/503 buddy**

"I thought the 173d patch was the flying butter knife. Special Forces patch is the electric butter knife - always remind SF folks of this, they will greatly appreciate your wit and consideration." **173d LRRP**

"The flying butter knife?! What? Them is fightin' words! Don't hold me back! Let me at 'em...let me at 'em!  
PS - the flying butter sword, I can live with." **4/503 Grunt**

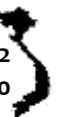
**Note:** The only reason we're not including names, is to avoid an ass-kicking.

### The wannabe



[Sent in by Bill Bills, C/2/503]

**IF WE DIDN'T LAUGH SO MUCH, WE'D CRY.**



# 3 Operation Toll at 2000

VOL. II, NO.5 1 March 1969

**BONG SON** - The 173d Airborne Brigade recently terminated three combat operations which accounted for nearly 2,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Soldiers killed during the past year.



heavy contact by the 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 50th Infantry, during May, accounting for 329 KIA, a joint sweep and clear operation, titled 226, with the 40th ARVN Regiment during September which ended with over 300 confirmed Viet Cong killed or apprehended and the largest money cache of the war, \$150,000 in 50-dollar greenbacks found in July.

During the operation, the Brigade expelled the 3d NVA Regiment from the province, totally secured coastal highway QL 1, and from Qui Nhon to the southern border of I Corps and conducted extensive pacification programs. In Operation Bolling, which began in October 1967, elements of the Brigade killed 705 enemy, apprehended 2488 suspects and captured 237 individual weapons.

Two major battles occurred during the Operation, the first in January 1968 when the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry decimated a Battalion from the 95th NVA Regiment at Tuy Hoa North Airfield, killing 189, and the second in March, when Delta Company, 16th Armor killed over 200 NVA and VC in a four hour battle.

Operation Walker, with the purpose of providing security for highway QL 19 between the port of Qui Nhon and the central highlands, resulted in 272 enemy killed since January 1968.

Replacing the three terminated operations are Operation Dung Cam/Lee (Cochise), Li Do/Wainwright (Bolling), and Suc Manh/Marshall (Walker).

Source:

Firebase 173

[www.ichiban1.org/html/news\\_pages/news\\_02.htm](http://www.ichiban1.org/html/news_pages/news_02.htm)

## A Pic From The Past



4/503rd (Geronimo Bn), LZ North English, August 1970

(Sent in by Jerry Sopko, D/4/503)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Aug-Sep 2015 – Issue 62

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**T**he Sky Soldiers conducted Reconnaissance in Force, Search and Clear type operations in three primary areas; around An Khe (Operation Walker), the coastal mountains west of Tuy Hoa, (Operation Bolling/Dan Hoa) and heavily populated Binh Dinh Province (Operation Cochise/Dan Sinh). Operation Cochise, which commenced 31 March 1968, featured Reconnaissance-in-Force operations against the 3d NVA Division, the 22d NVA Regiment and several Viet Cong local force Battalions.

In 10 months, the Brigade accounted for 929 enemy dead, 1,987 detainees, 122.1 tons of rice and 247 pounds of documents, 233 individual and 22 crew served weapons. The operation was highlighted by





# HILL 830

July 1967

## 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)



~ Sky Soldiers ~

**D**uring the summer of 1967, heavy contact with the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the area prompted the launching of Operation Greeley, a combined search and destroy effort by elements of the United States 4th Infantry Division, the U.S. 173d Airborne Brigade, and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) 42nd Infantry Regiment and Airborne units. The fighting was intense and lasted into the fall, when the North Vietnamese seemingly withdrew.

Hill 830 is located 12 kilometers South of the Village of Ben Het. It derives its name from the height of its highest point above sea level in METERS. Therefore Hill 830 is approximately 2,724 feet above sea level. Hill 830 is also approximately 14 kilometers from the Cambodian border and sat astride a major exit of the Ho Chi Minh Trail system.

On July 10, 1967, the 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne) of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) engaged a large, well dug-in NVA force in a fierce two-day battle. Following is a detailed narrative of events taken from the 173d Airborne Brigade Operational Report, Lessons Learned (ORLL), for the period ending 31 July 1967:

### 10 July 1967

At 0710 hours, the Tactical Command Post (TAC CP) received orders to move to Objective #49 at grid location YB 863147. With Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (B/4/503d) leading, the Battalion initiated movement at 0900 hours. The order of march for the initial phase was as follows: B/4/503d Infantry leading, Delta Company, 4/503d next, then TAC CP, and Alpha Company, 4/503d following. At 1320 hours (1:30 p.m.), the Battalion Commander issued instructions to the Forward Command Post (CP) to disregard Objective #49 and move to Objective #40, located at grid YB 859138. The Battalion S3 (Operations) Officer informed A/4/503d Infantry to secure the objective at coordinates YB 855146, B/4/503d to secure at YB 855138, and D/4/503rd Infantry to secure at YB 855143. The battalion began moving in column with A/4/503d Infantry leading, then D/4/503d, TAC CP, and B/4/503d. The companies were

to 'harbor' at their respective objectives on the evening of 10 July 1967.

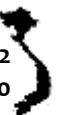
At 1545 hours (3:45 p.m), while conducting search and destroy operations in the vicinity of grid coordinates YB 860140, lead elements of Alpha Company, 4/503d Infantry received heavy small arms fire and automatic weapons fire from two bunkered light machine guns. The enemy force, initially estimated to be one North Vietnamese Army (NVA) rifle company, was entrenched in well prepared, fortified positions approximately thirty-five (35) meters to "A" Company's front (northwest).



(Web photo purported to be Hill 830)

Artillery support was directed on to the NVA positions as the first platoon maneuvered to the right to relieve pressure on the point platoon which had been pinned down. At this time, the Battalion S3 Officer requested that a light fire team be made available to support the action. The second platoon maneuvered to the right and immediately came under fire from two light machine guns.

(continued....)



The Commanding Officer, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, had lost contact by radio with his third platoon but previous instructions to the platoon was to maneuver to the right of the second platoon, which the third platoon did. Radio contact was not established again until later in the evening.

Artillery, small arms and grenades silenced the light machine gun on the left of the first platoon. At this time, all three platoons of the 4th Battalion/503rd Infantry were in contact and were receiving heavy fire on the right flank.



**Artillery support at Dak To** (Web photo)

Delta Company, 4/503d Infantry, who were following A/4/503d Infantry reported incoming mortar rounds. The Battalion S3 Officer instructed Delta Company to maneuver to the left of Alpha Company to relieve the pressure directed in that direction. As the lead platoon of Delta Company began moving, it came under heavy fire from its right, at which time Bravo Company, echeloned right in the vicinity of YB 862141. Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, maneuvering to attack the enemy position from the north-east with two platoons and the Tactical Command Post (TAC CP), came under fire from two additional bunkered light machine guns, small arms fire, automatic weapons fire and 60 mm and 82mm mortar fire.

The first platoon of Bravo Company remained in a reserve position on high ground to the rear of the contact point. The enemy force in this sector of the fight was estimated to be an additional NVA rifle company with supporting mortars and was positioned so that it was mutually supporting the unit engaged by Alpha Company.



**Arthur Retzlaff**  
KIA



**Kenneth Brown**  
KIA



**Michael Mitchell**  
KIA

The battalion Commanding Officer ordered Delta Company to maneuver to the right of Bravo Company to relieve the pressure now placed on that unit. All elements continued to receive mortar and automatic fire from the NVA force now believed to be a battalion. Bravo Company reported that they had begun to receive heavy fire from both flanks and to the front. At 1620 hours, the Operations Office (S3), the Artillery Forward Observer (FO) Team, and the B Company Commander were killed or wounded by incoming mortar fire.

Artillery supported the battalion elements with fires into NVA positions and with blocking fires on likely routes of NVA withdrawal or reinforcement to the west and southwest of the enemy positions.

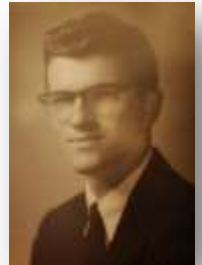
At this time, Delta Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment was moving elements to reinforce Bravo Company now. Two platoons had begun to move toward B Company's location. Another was still in contact and receiving light fire where it had maneuvered to aid Alpha Company.

"A" Company had broken contact and was moving towards Company B when the CO of D Company informed the CO of A Company that the terrain and distance would not permit the two companies to link up prior to darkness. Contact was broken with all elements at 1800 hours. The 4th battalion CO ordered "A" Company with one platoon from "D" Company to move back and harbor with the one reserve platoon from "B" Company at YB 861140. "D" Company had linked up with "B" Company and prepared to spend the night at grid YB 858140.

Perimeters were formed at this location and at YB 861140, where attempts were made to return the dead and wounded. MEDEVAC was attempted throughout the night....



**Daniel Jordan**  
KIA



**Roger Clark**  
KIA



**Arthur Erwin**  
KIA



**Walter Samans**  
KIA



**Frank Shepherd**  
KIA

*(continued....)*



...However, due to adverse weather conditions in the area, only three wounded in action were extracted. Companies harbored until daylight on 11 July 1967.

**11 - 12 July 1967**

The 4th Battalion continued Operation GREELEY in Area of Operations (AO) JANE. The Battalion reconsolidated and harbored into Objective #40 (Hill 830) and prepared for the extraction of the wounded. Extraction of the wounded and dead was delayed during the early morning from midnight until 0700 hours due to severe weather conditions in the AO. The first extraction was completed starting at 0710 hours and the last lift was 1918 hours (7:19 pm). The Battalion continued search and destroy operations throughout the daylight hours of the 11th of July.

Evidence of a well-disciplined, trained and armed NVA force was found. Trench networks and emplacements were found to be quite extensive, running north-south and west along the ridgeline where the contact was made. Delta Company, on a sweep of the area on 11 July, found an oval-shaped base camp at YB 859141 consisting of 60 to 80 bunkers and foxholes on the outer perimeter. Fortifications had an estimated two feet of overhead cover consisting of logs and dirt. A small perimeter of command bunkers was found within the camp. Cooking areas were also found within the perimeter.

At 1115 hours at coordinates YB 855136, Alpha and Delta Companies found another base camp of 20 bunkers. At 1430 hours, a 3rd base camp complex was found by Delta Company near grid YB 857138. Thirty (30) bunkers with two-foot overhead log and dirt covers and two kitchen areas were found. A thorough search of the battlefield produced a considerable amount of NVA equipment and sources of intelligence value. Most U.S. equipment was recovered.



**John Borowski**  
KIA



**David Johnson**  
KIA



**William Scott**  
KIA



**David Crozier**  
KIA



**Jesus Torres**  
KIA

At 1430 hours, a wounded NVA (was captured) and taken prisoner who was immediately extracted to Dak To for interrogation.

North Vietnam Army losses were 9 killed in action; 1 prisoner of war; assorted weapons, ammunition, living materials, and utensils.

United States losses included 62 wounded in action and twenty-five US soldiers died in the fighting on the 10th of July 1967.



**Larry Doring**  
KIA



**Frazier Huggins**  
KIA



**Harry Spier**  
KIA



**Walter Williams**  
KIA



**Siegfried Kofler**  
KIA



**Joel Sabel**  
KIA



**Rest Easy**  
Sky Soldiers

**Killed in Action**

**B Btry, 3rd Bn, 319th Artillery  
(Three man F/O team with 4/503rd)**

1LT Arthur C. Retzlaff, Westfield, NJ  
SGT Kenneth L. Brown, Sheridan, WY  
PFC Michael S. Mitchell, Richmond, CA

**A Co, 4th Bn, 503rd Infantry (10 KIA)**

1LT Daniel W. Jordan, Griffith, IN  
SFC Myron S. Beach, Elmira, NY  
SGT William J. Deuerling, New Smyrna Beach, FL  
SP4 Roger W. Clark, Pittsfield, VT  
SP4 Arthur A. Erwin, Eugene, OR  
SP4 Oris L. Poole, Screven, GA  
SP4 Walter A. Samans, Richmond, VA  
SP4 Franklin S. Shepherd, North Wilkesboro, NC  
PFC John C. Borowski, Chicago, IL  
PFC David H. Johnson, Jonesboro, AR

*(continued...)*



### **B Co, 4th Bn, 503rd Infantry (9 KIA)**

SFC William A. Scott, Magnolia, NJ  
SGT David P. Crozier, Baltimore, MD  
SGT Jesus M. Torres, New York, NY  
SP4 Larry A. Doring, Mankato, MN  
CPL Frazier D. Huggins, Seffner, FL  
PFC Jimmy E. Darby, Opp, AL  
PFC James Fabrizio, Norwalk, CT  
PFC Malton G. Shores, Clarksville, AR  
PFC Harry D. Spier, Tyler, TX

### **HHC, 4th Bn, 503rd Infantry (3 KIA)**

MAJ Walter D. Williams, Glyndon, MD  
SGT Siegfried Kofler, Ventura, CA  
CPL Joel M. Sabel, West Covina, CA

Many others were wounded in the engagement. On 15 Feb 1973, almost five years later, SP4 Peter G. Lechnir of Milwaukee, Wisconsin died from wounds he received on Hill 830 while serving with Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry. He was overlooked when the Wall was constructed, and his name was not added to the Wall until November 1991.

#### **Source:**

<http://www.virtualwall.org/units/hill830.htm>  
(photos added)

**HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM  
APO San Francisco 96375  
14 September 1967  
GENERAL ORDERS NUMBER 4665**



### **AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**

TC 320. The following AWARD is announced posthumously:

**BOROWSKI, JOHN C** RA16838078  
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS E3

United States Army  
Company A, 4th Battalion, 503rd  
Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade

**Awarded:** Distinguished Service Cross

**Date Action:** 10 July 1967 **Theater:** Republic of Vietnam

**Reason:** For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Private First Class Borowski distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 10 July 1967 while serving as platoon machine gunner during a large scale search and destroy mission near Dak To. As Private Borowski's platoon investigated a recently traveled trail, it received intense fire from a well-entrenched Viet Cong battalion. Firing rifles, automatic weapons and mortars from concealed bunkers, the insurgents were able to inflict numerous casualties on the friendly force. Private Borowski disregarded his own



safety in this storm of fire and maneuvered to within 20 meters of the enemy's right flank machine gun position. When his own machine gun was damaged by an insurgent's fire, he continued to engage the hostile gunners using only his pistol. He received a shrapnel wound but never eased his force of attack. Later, despite enemy fire sweeping the area, Private Borowski crawled to a nearby friendly position. He refused medical treatment, grabbed a rifle and grenade launcher, and once again advanced on the Viet Cong. He was mortally wounded while firing with devastating effect into the enemy's bunkers. Private First Class Borowski's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

### ***By Direction of the President of the United States The Distinguished Service Cross Is Awarded to***

**Joel M. Sabel  
(Posthumously)**



**Rank and Organization:** Specialist Four,  
Headquarters and Headquarters Company,  
4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry,  
173d Airborne Brigade

**Date and Place:** 10 July 1967, Republic of  
Vietnam

**Reason:** For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Specialist Four Sabel distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 10 July 1967 while serving as a medic of an Airborne infantry company on a combat mission deep in hostile territory. When his company came under heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire from a well-entrenched enemy force, Specialist Sabel repeatedly ignored his own safety to move among his wounded comrades to treat them. Seriously wounded himself, he refused medical aid and instructed others in treating the injured while he bandaged his own wounds. He continued to expose himself to the withering hostile fire while rendering constant aid to others despite his own injuries. With mortar and automatic weapons falling around him, he never stopped to consider his own welfare. He was mortally wounded while bravely caring for the needs of his comrades in the face of grave danger. Specialist Four Sabel's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

*(continued....)*



## AWARD OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

TC 320. The following AWARD is announced posthumously.

**DANIEL WALTER JORDAN**, 1st Lieutenant, Infantry

Company A, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment

**Awarded:** Distinguished Service Cross

**Date action:** 10 July 1967

**Theater:** Republic of Vietnam

**Reason:** The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Daniel Walter Jordan, First Lieutenant (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company A, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). First Lieutenant Jordan distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 10 July 1967 while serving as platoon leader of an airborne infantry platoon on a combat mission near Dak To. Late in the afternoon, the lead platoon of Lieutenant Jordan's company was attacked and pinned down by heavy automatic weapons fire from a well-entrenched Viet Cong force. He received an order to maneuver his men in a flank attack on the insurgents to relieve the attack pressure on the engaged element. Because of poor radio contact, he was forced to run through areas exposed to hostile fire to coordinate with his commander. He then returned to his men and braved constant hostile fire to organize his men and lead them forward. For a half hour, Lieutenant Jordan made repeated trips to the command post to report his element's progress and receive instructions. He moved among his men, calming and encouraging them, although this forced him to expose himself many times to the enemy's weapons. Under his leadership, the platoon was able to advance to a position from which to assault the Viet Cong machine gun positions. While courageously leading his men against the numerically superior insurgent force, he was mortally wounded. First Lieutenant Jordan's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



4/503<sup>rd</sup>

"Geronimo Battalion"

**Note:** For a more detailed report on Operation Greeley, see June 2011, Issue 29 of our newsletter. Ed

## Distinctive Unit Insignia



The distinctive unit insignia was originally approved for the 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment on April 28, 1952. It was amended to change the motto on May 28, 1952. On June 29, 1958, the insignia was redesignated to the 503rd Infantry.

## LRRP Rally in Branson, MO, 2015



Pic from Ron Thomas, 173d LRRP. These guys look scary.



# Heroes of the Vietnam Generation

July/August 2000

by James Webb, *American Enterprise Institute*

The rapidly disappearing cohort of Americans that endured the Great Depression and then fought World War II is receiving quite a send-off from the leading lights of the so-called '60s generation. Tom Brokaw has published two oral histories of *"The Greatest Generation"* that feature ordinary people doing their duty and suggest that such conduct was historically unique.



Chris Matthews of "Hardball" is fond of writing columns praising the Navy service of his father while castigating his own baby boomer generation for its alleged softness and lack of struggle. William Bennett gave a startlingly condescending speech at the Naval Academy a few years ago comparing the heroism of the "D-Day Generation" to the drugs-and-sex nihilism of the "Woodstock Generation." And Steven Spielberg, in promoting his film *Saving Private Ryan*, was careful to justify his portrayals of soldiers in action based on the supposedly unique nature of World War II.

An irony is at work here. Lest we forget, the World War II generation now being lionized also brought us the Vietnam War, a conflict which today's most conspicuous voices by and large opposed, and in which few of them served. The "best and brightest" of the Vietnam age group once made headlines by castigating their parents for bringing about the war in which they would not fight, which has become the war they refuse to remember.

Pundits back then invented a term for this animus: the "generation gap." Long, plaintive articles and even books were written examining its manifestations. Campus leaders, who claimed precocious wisdom through the magical process of reading a few controversial books, urged fellow baby boomers not to trust anyone over 30. Their elders who had survived the Depression and fought the largest war in history were looked down upon as shallow, materialistic, and out of touch.

Those of us who grew up on the other side of the picket line from that era's counter-culture can't help but feel a little leery of this sudden gush of appreciation for our elders from the leading lights of the old counter-culture. Then and now, the national conversation has proceeded from the dubious assumption that those who came of age during Vietnam are a unified generation in the same sense as their parents were, and thus are capable of being spoken for through these fickle elites.

In truth, the "Vietnam generation" is a misnomer. Those who came of age during that war are permanently divided by different reactions to a whole range of counter-cultural agendas, and nothing divides them more deeply than the personal ramifications of the war itself. The sizeable portion of the Vietnam age group who declined to support the counter-cultural agenda, and especially the men and women who opted to serve in the military during the Vietnam War, are quite different from their peers who for decades have claimed to speak for them. In fact, they are much like the World War II generation itself. For them, Woodstock was a side show, college protestors were spoiled brats who would have benefited from having to work a few jobs in order to pay their tuition, and Vietnam represented not an intellectual exercise in draft avoidance or protest marches but a battlefield that was just as brutal as those their fathers faced in World War II and Korea.



**"The 13-month tour was an important element of trooper morale as evidenced by the humorous inscription on the helmet of the Marine. 'Stop!!! Don't Shoot, I'm Short.' The Marines are from Company M, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines."**  
(Web photo)

(continued...)



Few who served during Vietnam ever complained of a generation gap. The men who fought World War II were their heroes and role models. They honored their fathers' service by emulating it, and largely agreed with their fathers' wisdom in attempting to stop Communism's reach in Southeast Asia. The most accurate poll of their attitudes (Harris, 1980) showed that 91 percent were glad they'd served their country, 74 percent enjoyed their time in the service, and 89 percent agreed with the statement that "our troops were asked to fight in a war which our political leaders in Washington would not let them win." And most importantly, the castigation they received upon returning home was not from the World War II generation, but from the very elites in their age group who supposedly spoke for them.

Nine million men served in the military during the Vietnam war, three million of whom went to the Vietnam theater. Contrary to popular mythology, two-thirds of these were volunteers, and 73 percent of those who died were volunteers. While some attention has been paid recently to the plight of our prisoners of war, most of whom were pilots, there has been little recognition of how brutal the war was for those who fought it on the ground. Dropped onto the enemy's terrain 12,000 miles away from home, America's citizen-soldiers performed with a tenacity and quality that may never be truly understood. Those who believe the war was fought incompetently on a tactical level should consider Hanoi's recent admission that 1.4 million of its soldiers died on the battlefield, compared to 58,000 total U.S. dead. Those who believe that it was a "dirty little war" where the bombs did all the work might contemplate that it was the most costly war the U.S. Marine Corps has ever fought—five times as many dead as World War I, three times as many dead as in Korea, and more total killed and wounded than in all of World War II.

Significantly, these sacrifices were being made at a time the United States was deeply divided over our effort in Vietnam. The baby-boom generation had cracked apart along class lines as America's young men were making difficult, life-or-death choices about serving. The better academic institutions became focal points for vitriolic protest against the war, with few of their graduates going into the military. Harvard College, which had lost 691 alumni in World War II, lost a total of 12 men in Vietnam from the classes of 1962 through 1972 combined. Those classes at Princeton lost six, at MIT two. The media turned ever-more hostile. And frequently the reward for a young man's having gone through the trauma of combat was to be greeted

by his peers with studied indifference or outright hostility.

What is a hero? My heroes are the young men who faced the issues of war and possible death, and then weighed those concerns against obligations to their country. Citizen-soldiers who interrupted their personal and professional lives at their most formative stage, in the timeless phrase of the Confederate Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, "not for fame or reward, not for place or for rank, but in simple obedience to duty, as they understood it." Who suffered loneliness, disease, and wounds with an often contagious élan. And who deserve a far better place in history than that now offered them by the so-called spokesmen of our so-called generation.

Mr. Brokaw, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Bennett, Mr. Spielberg, meet my Marines.

1969 was an odd year to be in Vietnam. Second only to 1968 in terms of American casualties, it was the year made famous by *Hamburger Hill*, as well as the gut-wrenching *Life* cover story showing the pictures of 242 Americans who had been killed in one average week of fighting. Back home, it was the year of Woodstock, and of numerous anti-war rallies that culminated in the Moratorium march on Washington. The My Lai massacre hit the papers and was seized upon by the anti-war movement as the emblematic moment of the war. Lyndon Johnson left Washington in utter humiliation. Richard Nixon entered the scene, destined for an even worse fate.



Moratorium march on Washington (Web photo)

(continued...)



In the An Hoa Basin southwest of Da Nang, the Fifth Marine Regiment was in its third year of continuous combat operations. Combat is an unpredictable and inexact environment, but we were well-led. As a rifle platoon and company commander, I served under a succession of three regimental commanders who had cut their teeth in World War II, and four different battalion commanders, three of whom had seen combat in Korea. The company commanders were typically captains on their second combat tour in Vietnam, or young first lieutenants like myself who were given companies after many months of “bush time” as platoon commanders in the Basin’s tough and unforgiving environs.

The Basin was one of the most heavily-contested areas in Vietnam, its torn, cratered earth offering every sort of wartime possibility. In the mountains just to the west, not far from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the North Vietnamese Army operated an infantry division from an area called Base Area 112. In the valleys of the Basin, main-force Viet Cong battalions whose ranks were 80 percent North Vietnamese Army regulars moved against the Americans every day. Local Viet Cong units sniped and harassed. Ridge lines and paddy dikes were laced with sophisticated booby traps of every size, from a hand grenade to a 250-pound bomb. The villages sat in the rice paddies and tree lines like individual fortresses, criss-crossed with trenches and spider holes, their homes sporting bunkers capable of surviving direct hits from large-caliber artillery shells. The Viet Cong infrastructure was intricate and permeating. Except for the old and the very young, villagers who did not side with the Communists had either been killed or driven out to the government-controlled enclaves near Da Nang.

In the rifle companies we spent the endless months patrolling ridge lines and villages and mountains, far away from any notion of tents, barbed wire, hot food, or electricity. Luxuries were limited to what would fit inside one’s pack, which after a few “humps” usually boiled down to letter-writing material, towel, soap, toothbrush, poncho liner, and a small transistor radio.

We moved through the boiling heat with 60 pounds of weapons and gear, causing a typical Marine to drop 20 percent of his body weight while in the bush. When we stopped we dug chest-deep fighting holes and slit trenches for toilets. We slept on the ground under makeshift poncho hootches, and when it rained we usually took our hootches down because wet ponchos shined under illumination flares, making great targets. Sleep itself was fitful, never more than an hour or two at a stretch for months at a time as

we mixed daytime patrolling with night-time ambushes, listening posts, foxhole duty, and radio watches. Ringworm, hookworm, malaria, and dysentery were common, as was trench foot when the monsoons came. Respite was rotating back to the mud-filled regimental combat base at An Hoa for four or five days, where rocket and mortar attacks were frequent and our troops manned defensive bunkers at night.

Which makes it kind of hard to get excited about tales of Woodstock, or camping at the Vineyard during summer break.

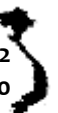
We had been told while in training that Marine officers in the rifle companies had an 85 percent probability of being killed or wounded, and the experience of “Dying Delta,” as our company was known, bore that out. Of the officers in the bush when I arrived, our company commander was wounded, the weapons platoon commander was wounded, the first platoon commander was killed, the second platoon commander was wounded twice, and I, commanding the third platoon, was wounded twice. The enlisted troops in the rifle platoons fared no better. Two of my original three squad leaders were killed, the third shot in the stomach. My platoon sergeant was severely wounded, as was my right guide. By the time I left my platoon I had gone through six radio operators, five of them casualties.

These figures were hardly unique; in fact, they were typical. Many other units—for instance, those who fought the hill battles around Khe Sanh, or were with the famed Walking Dead of the Ninth Marine Regiment, or were in the battle for Hue City or at Dai Do—had it far worse.



**Wounded Marine being helped by buddy during Battle at Hue** (Web photo)

*(continued....)*





**The siege at Khe Sanh.** (Web photo)

When I remember those days and the very young men who spent them with me, I am continually amazed, for these were mostly recent civilians barely out of high school, called up from the cities and the farms to do their year in Hell and then return. Visions haunt me every day, not of the nightmares of war but of the steady consistency with which my Marines faced their responsibilities, and of how uncomplaining most of them were in the face of constant danger. The salty, battle-hardened 20-year-olds teaching green 19-year-olds the intricate lessons of that hostile battlefield. The unerring skill of the young squad leaders as we moved through unfamiliar villages and weed-choked trails in the black of night. The quick certainty with which they moved when coming under enemy fire. Their sudden tenderness when a fellow Marine was wounded and needed help. Their willingness to risk their lives to save other Marines in peril. To this day it stuns me that their own countrymen have so completely missed the story of their service, lost in the bitter confusion of the war itself.

Like every military unit throughout history we had occasional laggards, cowards, and complainers. But in the aggregate these Marines were the finest people I have ever been around. It has been my privilege to keep up with many of them over the years since we all came home. One finds in them very little bitterness

about the war in which they fought. The most common regret, almost to a man, is that they were not able to do more—for each other and for the people they came to help.

It would be redundant to say that I would trust my life to these men. Because I already have, in more ways than I can ever recount. I am alive today because of their quiet, unaffected heroism. Such valor epitomizes the conduct of Americans at war from the first days of our existence. That the boomer elites can canonize this sort of conduct in our fathers' generation while ignoring it in our own is more than simple oversight. It is a conscious, continuing travesty.

-----  
And to that, Mr. Webb, we say, *Semper Fi!*

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



**Jim Webb (C), with his Vietnam Vet buddies.** (Web photo)



# BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Ft. Benning, Georgia | June 2016



**From the rice paddies and central highlands of Vietnam; from the sands of Iraq; from the mountains of Afghanistan; from Italy, Australia and New Zealand; from the fifty states and all points between – back to the beginning we go.**

*South Carolina Chapter 30* invites you to join us in Columbus, Georgia, home of Ft. Benning, for five days of R&R – back to where the Airborne experience began for the majority of Sky Soldiers – this time with less running, yelling, and push-ups.

We have planned trips to local historic sites and a day at Ft. Benning to revisit our airborne roots. We will visit the 250 and 34 foot towers and eat a meal in an Army dining facility. If the Army's schedule matches ours, we will view a training jump and pin wings on a graduating class. *And of course a trip to our 173d monument* is a must.

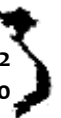
All reunion activities will be conducted at the Columbus Convention & Trade Center located directly across the street from the Marriott hotel.

As the calendar counts down to 7 June 2016, our reunion committee will be busy planning and organizing a reunion we hope you will not soon forget. We have arranged for the hotels in our 'stay' list to provide a hot breakfast daily. We contracted buses to transport us to and from daily activities. For the golfers among us, we have planned a day of golf at the Ft. Benning golf course.

Please check our website periodically for updates and our continuing events planning.  
<http://www.173dreunion2016.com/>

**SC Chapter 30  
(2016 Reunion Committee)**

**Contact:**  
**Phone: 803-237-3169**  
**Email: [bowway@aol.com](mailto:bowway@aol.com)**





# Medal of Honor recipients, C/2/503 troopers Sgt. Kyle White and Staff Sgt. Ryan Pitts names are added to the 173d Memorial on June 13, 2015, at the National Infantry Museum's Walk of Honor



Photos sent in by Col. Ken Smith, A/D/2/503. See Issue 60, Pages 27-29 of our newsletter for text of Medal of Honor citations.





173d Airborne Brigade (Sep), Memorial at Ft. Benning, GA

## A Letter From A Trooper About Our Memorial...

23 June 2015

173<sup>rd</sup> Abn Bde Memorial Foundation  
 c/o COL (Ret) Kenneth V. Smith  
 Summerville, SC

Dear Colonel Smith:

Please find enclosed my annual Spartan Club (Centurion) contribution of \$173.00. Yesterday was a day of sad reflection. It was the forty-eighth anniversary of Hill 1338 or as it has become known as "The Battle of the Slopes". The sacrifice of that day was a life changing event for many. Because they were "taken" we, who came home, were given the duty to do our utmost for our country at home in whatever fashion presented. In some way we had to earn the legacy of those who sacrificed for our country.

The honor and pride that is still felt to this day for having served with "The Brigade" in Vietnam will not allow "The Memorial" to go wanting even though a financial obligation has been satisfied. If there is a need, and if I am still alive, I will respond to the call. *The Brigade, The Brigade, The Brigade.*

Airborne Sir,

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**Note:** To become one of the select members of the *Spartan Club* as a trooper or friend of the 173d Airborne to make contributions to the perpetual maintenance of our Brigade's Memorial at Ft. Benning, contact Col. Ken Smith at [kvsmith173@gmail.com](mailto:kvsmith173@gmail.com)

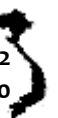
## 1/503 Troopers



"Left to right: Bob Jones, Keith Allen Campbell and Ken Rypka. Photograph was taken in January 1967. Less than one month later on February 8, 1967, Spec 4 Campbell would save Rypka's life during Operation Big Spring. Spec 4 Campbell would lose his life later that day by using his own body to shield another wounded soldier Eddie Torres from enemy fire. This photo came from an undeveloped roll of film returned to the Campbell family after his death."

*Courtesy of Esther B. (Campbell) Gates*

[Source: From the web]



# Some Random 173d Photographs & Images We Came Across On The Web



Commander In-Chief, Barack Obama, accompanied by First Lady Michelle, salutes troopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade.



Larry "Big Dawg" Hampton, A/1/503 *best of the best* sniper. As great a sniper as he was, he was even a better arm wrestler at the Cocoa Beach, FL VFW. ☺



Young studs, standing tall and lookin' strac.



Sky Soldiers, proud of their unit colors.



Our friend Vic Marciano, Recon D/1/503, Dak To survivor.



A Sky Soldier, doing what he likes to do.

So. You wanna be a paratrooper?



# SGT KARL SCHMIDT

## *A Survivor's Story*

Hill 1338  
Hill 875



I joined the Army six months out of high school (Sept. 1966). I was from the Philadelphia, PA area (about 30 miles north of the city) and was sent to Fort Ord, CA for basic. After the eight weeks of basic I was sent to Fort Gordon, GA for eight weeks of AIT. After that I completed the three weeks of jump school at Fort Benning, GA. I received a 14-day leave to come home and after that left from Fort Dix, NJ for the adventure of a lifetime (and one I hope not to repeat again).

For the first couple of months all the operations we conducted were pretty easy as they were in the general area of our base camp at Bien Hoa. All we really ran into were small groups of Viet Cong that posed no real problem. Then around the beginning of June of 1967 the whole brigade was shipped north about 300 miles to the Dak To area. This is when the shit really hit the fan. The battle for Hill 1338 was the first time we had run into NVA regulars and they were tough.

I was with the Weapons Plt./Co. A/2nd Bat./173rd on June 22, 1967. I had been with the 173rd since about March 1, 1967 and was an 11B (rifleman). At the time of the battle I had just turned 19 years old and was very scared to say the least (as you might guess). The official name of the operation was "Greeley" but we called it "The Battle of the Slopes" or just plain "Hill 1338".

Co. A started what was supposed to be a routine patrol on June 18 and on June 21 we received orders to return back to our base camp at the Dak To airstrip. On the morning of June 22 we started down a slope, my guess is there was anywhere from 130 to 150 guys in our company when we walked into an ambush. We were pretty much alone although Co. C was nearby and Co. B was in reserve. The battle started at about 0630 hours and was over by about 1400 hours. Our company had 76 dead and 23 wounded.

The only reason our platoon wasn't cut to pieces was because we were the last in line that morning and heard the ambush before we walked into it like the 2nd and 3rd platoons had. We, and the 1st platoon were able to form a defensive perimeter to hold off what turned out to be a human wave charge by the NVA.

After 1338 we were really beat up so we were shipped to the coast to guard a USAF base (was pretty good duty). I believe it was sometime in September, 1967 that we were told we were going back to Dak To because of heavy enemy activity in the area. As you can guess none of us were very happy. Most of the company consisted of new guys or men pulled from other companies and battalions.

On November 19, 1967 we were caught in another ambush on a hill named 875.

I was hit in the right leg about an hour after the fight started but the bullet wound was not that bad and I was able to continue to fight. Don't get me wrong, I was no hero but the bottom line was that we were getting our ass kicked and were in real danger of getting overrun so I had no real choice. Later after the fighting slowed up, I went to the aid station to get my leg taken care of. When I started to go back to the line the lead medic told me to stay there, as he could not get the bleeding stopped.

Sometime that night an air strike was called in and a USAF F-100 dropped a 500-pound bomb right on our command post, which is where all the wounded were. The bomb killed 40 guys from Co. A, including all the medics. I was hit again in the right leg and when I woke up (about 40 feet from where I had been lying) my leg was split open from my knee to my ankle. The fire was so heavy that no helo could get in and at least eight were shot down trying.

Finally, on the 22nd of November they started getting the medevac in, I was one of the first ones they were attempting to load. This all sounds pretty good, however, we were drawing sniper fire and on the way to be loaded into a chopper, one of those SOBs nailed me in the back, which went into my stomach. It was then I decided the Army was not for me. I spent several days at a field hospital in Vietnam to be stabilized and then to Clark AFB for a week and then to some place in Japan for a week. I got back to the USA right before Christmas 1967. I was sent to Walter Reed in Washington, DC and was there until July 1968, at that time I was put on retired status. I spent 1 year and 10 months on active duty and left at the rank of Sgt. (E-5). By the way, the final count of that battle from the 2nd Bat. was 107 KIA, 282 WIA and 10 MIA. I never really heard what the breakdown for Co. A was but I know of the 20 of us that were in the weapons platoon only five of us were left alive.

I was surprised to find that anyone was still interested in an event that happened so long ago.

*Karl Schmidt*

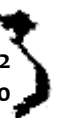
Source: <http://charliesnow.com/KarlSchmidt.htm>

For detailed reports of these operations, see Issue 29 (Op Greeley) and Issue 47 (Op MacArthur) of our newsletter.

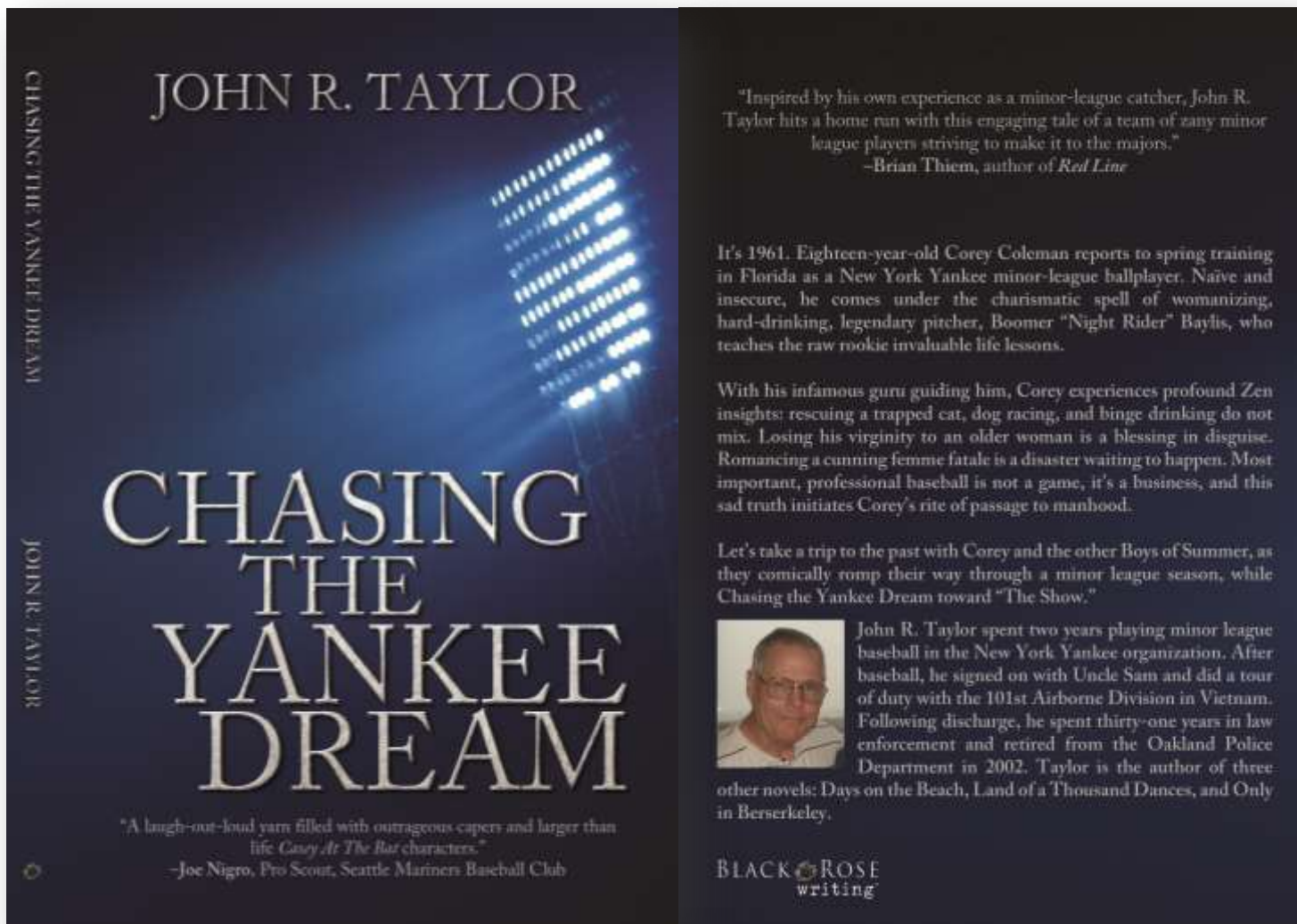


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# A Book by a Sky Soldier...



A friend of mine and fellow paratrooper and Vietnam veteran who I served with in the 173d Airborne Brigade, John R. Taylor, spent two years in the minor leagues in the New York Yankees' system. His latest of several books has been published, "Chasing the Yankee Dream".

He is a retired Oakland, Calif., cop. Anyway, he's a fine writer and deserving of some attention so I thought if there are any of you on this list who may be interested I'd appreciate anything you can do -- publicity, buy a copy, whatever. The book costs \$17.95 and is available from [Creator@BlackRoseWriting.com](mailto:Creator@BlackRoseWriting.com)

Perhaps you can pass it on to others who may be interested. Thanks.

**Larry Paladino**  
B/2/503  
Associated Press/retired

### Note:

It's been our policy over the years to only promote in our newsletter books of fiction and non-fiction which are war related and written by Sky Soldiers, 503rd troopers of all wars, and troopers who served or are serving with attached units. Our including this report about John's baseball book is an exception; why? Because we can. Ed



## Memories of Catherine Leroy

I met Kathy (think she spelled it with a K for a while) at the staging area before the jump on Junction City. She also made the jump with us, she was a certified French and European Sky Diver, and at that time she was only 21 (So I was told).



Ready for combat jump

I was just given a copy of a book from one of my men and I was looking at it (The Dirty Dozen) when she walked by. She told me I should read something better. And I told her in French to (*Ferme la bouche!*) to Shut up! Or Shut your mouth! Which in French is an insult, I didn't know that at the time. I learned it from the Gendarmes I was working with.

Well, she got angry and cursed me in several different languages, and I did the same and in French and German, which really got her hotter. We both settled down and she asked me where I learned French, I told her France, Orleans. And we had a nice chat about France, in French.

At the reunion in California, I met her again, she did not recognize me, but I said to her *Ne pas Ferme votre bouche!* (Do not close/shut your mouth). She remembered the earlier conversation, and we both had a great laugh, and again chatted not about France, but the USA, since she was then living here.

A fond memory, and I never did read her articles about the jump.

**Tim Stout**  
173d Abn Bde

### Looking for Association Member

We at National are trying to send a membership card to **Terrance Farrell, 3/503**. His address is bad, and has no email. Can you help us out with either?

**Peter Klausner**  
Co-Membership  
[logpc@comcast.net](mailto:logpc@comcast.net)

**Note:** If you know Terrance, please put him in touch with Peter at the email address above. Thanks. Ed



## VA Urges Congress to Act And Transfer Funds for Veterans' Care

July 13, 2015

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today urged Congress to act expeditiously and approve its pending request for fiscal year 2015 budget flexibility. The request, formally transmitted on June 23, seeks the transfer of funds from the Choice Program to continue VA's efforts to increase Veterans' access to care and life-saving pharmaceuticals.

*"It is essential that Congress pass legislation to provide the requested budget flexibility by the end of July 2015,"* Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson wrote. *"This is necessary to replenish critical operations funding that VA had to reallocate from other medical services programs to sustain Care in the Community, after those funds were depleted. If these program funds are not restored, VA will face shutting down hospital operations during August 2015."*

The letter and full text of the documents submitted to Congress today are available for download (at [VA.org](http://VA.org)):

**Signed letter to Congress**  
**Putting Veterans First: Legislative Request**  
**Draft Legislation**  
**Choice Act Obligations**  
**Care in Community Overview**  
**Hepatitis C Treatment Summary**

Nationally, VA completed more than 56.2 million appointments between June 1, 2014, and May 31, 2015 – 2.6 million more appointments than were completed during the same time period in 2013-2014. VA also made more than three million authorizations for outside care.

People wishing to receive e-mail from VA with the latest news releases and updated fact sheets can subscribe to the VA Office of Public Affairs Distribution List.

Source: [VA.org](http://VA.org)



## “The Sunflower Seed”

As told by John “JD” Scheller

Mother-in-Laws, you either love’m or hate’m, right, well I happen to love mine. She always had a smile on her face, always glad to see you and would never say a disparaging word about anyone. She loved animals, especially her dogs and cats pets. She once told me that animals were put here to be loved, and to give love. With that said, I will begin my little tale...

I grew up in So. California near Huntington “Surf City” Beach. I loved the beach and I became an avid surfer. Spending untold hours in the water waiting for the perfect wave can be quite boring. To pass the time in between sets I would pack my cheeks, like a chipmunk would with nuts, only mine were filled with sunflower seeds. I became well adapted at cracking and eating them without the use of my hands. They actually became my favorite food group. It seemed that I always had a mouthful. Spitting the empty shells everywhere. In school from home room, to gym class, to watching TV and going to the movies. They were always with me. As you can tell, I do enjoy the little morsels.



Surf City U.S.A., Huntington Beach, CA 1966

Now to the heart of the subject.....Like some of you, I spent some time in “The Pearl of South East Asia” (Vietnam) with the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne. And like anyone, being so far away from home, missing grandmothers’ apple pie and my own bed, I had a craving, naturally, for sunflower seeds!!!! You all remember the “Goodie Box”!!! That package arriving from “The World” with all the little treats. No matter who received one, we all shared. It was a little piece of home in a box.

So one day I sat down and wrote my wife, Margie, and told her of my wishes. Please send me some packages of Kool-Aid, a couple bottles of Tabasco Sauce, candy bars, and of course, a few bags of “David and

Sons” sunflower seeds. Can you see where this is going???

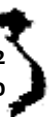
Margie, being the good woman she is, responded to my request without hesitation. With the help of her mother, they went to work putting together all the little goodies that I asked for. They threw in everything but the kitchen sink; Milk-Duds, Snickers, Kool-Aid, home-made cookies, etc. As Margie was adding the main addition to my “Goodie Box”, “David and Sons” Sunflower Seeds, my Mother-in-Law stopped her and said “*What are you doing!!!!? You can’t send those things to Johnny,*” (she always called me Johnny). Margie replied, “*Why, he loves eating them.*” My Mother-in-Law promptly answered with a straight face and said, “*He will leave a trail and those bad guys will follow the empty shells to his camp!!!*” You just got to love her, and I do.

[Source: <http://173rd.com/news/sunflower/>]

**Note:** While never a surfer dude, as a California boy I spent many summer days at Huntington Beach as a youth, mostly on the lookout for sea creatures. Ed



The very elusive sea creatures of Huntington Beach, CA, circa 1960s. It wasn’t *apple* pie we were fighting for.



## Sent to President Obama's Desk for Signature

**WASHINGTON –** U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan's bill allowing all veterans in America to receive an official identification card has been unanimously approved by Congress and now goes to



President Obama's desk for his signature. The U.S. House put the final seal of approval on Buchanan's "Veterans ID Card Act" (H.R. 91) this evening by a vote of 411-0.

"Today is a good day for our nation's veterans," said Buchanan, who served four years on the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "This bill is a prime example of what we can accomplish when we put partisanship aside and the needs of the country first."

Buchanan represents more than 70,000 veterans in his Southwest Florida congressional district. Buchanan's district has the second highest number of veterans over the age of 65 in the state.

Buchanan noted that millions of veterans are unable to document their service to our country without carrying around their official military service records. These records, referred to as DD-214 forms, contain sensitive personal information including social security numbers and service history that leave veterans at a higher, unnecessary risk for identity theft.

Donald DiNunzio, a Vietnam-era veteran from Bradenton, Florida hailed passage of Buchanan's bill saying, "I have been asked many times to prove that I am a Vet but carrying around my DD-214 form is difficult and impractical. My DD-214 form is a large 8.5 x 11 carbon copy, delicate, old and quite brittle and thin. Having a permanent Veteran ID card would be a much simpler way of proudly proving my Veteran status."

Throughout his tenure in Congress, Buchanan has passed a number of measures aimed at helping veterans in Florida and across the nation:

**Soldier Patient Tracking System:** Congressman Buchanan wrote the bill to create a standard soldier patient tracking system to make available important information regarding the status of a patient's care and help cut through the red tape to ensure that wounded soldiers get first-class care in a timely manner. (Included in the 2008 NDAA which was signed into law PL 110-181 §1611e(10))

**Job-training for Veterans:** Congressman Vern Buchanan introduced the "SBA Veterans' Programs Act of 2007" (H.R. 2366), bipartisan legislation to provide greater resources and training for veterans hoping to become business entrepreneurs. Passed by voice vote in the U.S. House on June 18, 2007. Later rolled into a larger veterans bill (H.R. 4253) that passed the House on December 6, 2007. Finally signed into law on February, 14 2008 (No: 110-186).

**Sarasota Veterans Cemetery:** Congressman Buchanan fought successfully for **\$27 million in funding** for the new national veterans cemetery in Sarasota, allowing more than 150,000 area veterans to be buried close to home with the honor and dignity they deserve.

**Co-Chair of Florida Delegation:** As co-chairman of the 29-member Florida congressional delegation, Buchanan held an emergency meeting on June 12, 2014 to address the VA health care system in Florida. Buchanan later sent a letter to the VA expressing deep concerns over the massive backlog at St. Petersburg Regional Benefits Office.

[Sent in by Aaron Newman, USN, VVA/FL]



**"The problem with the world is that everyone is a few drinks behind."** Humphrey Bogart



# 173d Airborne Association Membership Application Form

PLEASE PRINT AND FILL-OUT THIS APPLICATION

Mail Application and Payments to;

Please **circle** the appropriate boxes below

Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill  
97 Earle Street  
Norwood, MA 02062-1504

New	Renewal	Change of Address, <i>Change of Chapter</i>	
<b>Annual Membership</b>			
<b>Ends on 31 December of each year - \$ 24.00</b>			
<b>Regular *</b>		<b>Associate</b>	
Sky Soldier	Veteran	Gold Star	Spouse of deceased Sky Soldier
<b>Life Membership \$ 173.00</b>			
<b>Regular *</b>		<b>Gold Star (Parent or Spouse)</b>	

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Make checks payable to:  
173d Airborne Brigade Assn

*\*Regular Membership open to those assigned or attached to the 173d Airborne Brigade*

Please print current or updated information below:

Service Number (B446349): \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Use first Letter of last name and last 6 of service number)*

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State or AE: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

173d Service Dates (02/2003-02/2005): \_\_\_\_\_

Unit while with the 173d: (A-1-503rd or Co A/Support BN): \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Affiliated to: (4, 18, At Large): \_\_\_\_\_ Send Magazine: [ ]U.S Mail or [ ]Via Email

Gold Star Relationship (Wife, Mother)(PFC Mike Smith 11-08-67): \_\_\_\_\_

My Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

After we receive your payment (\$ 24.00 or \$ 173.00), please allow two weeks for processing.



Please make check payable to:  
173d Airborne Brigade Assn.

Mail Application & Check to:  
Membership Secretary, Dennis Hill  
97 Earle Street  
Norwood, MA 02062-1504

