

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

**WE TRY
HARDER!**

2/503d
VIETNAM
*****newsletter



October-November 2015, Issue 63
Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com

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

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



The late LTC Bob Sigholtz, Col (R), CO 2/503, announcing to men of his battalion plans for the 2/503d combat jump in Vietnam.
(Photo provided by Jerry Hassler, RTO Extraordinaire, Recon 2/503, '66/'67, combat jump experienced)





The Marines and the 173rd Airborne Brigade

By Dick Culver



There are times when two units with equal egos and bragging rights are co-located in time and space. When this happens, the normal expected friction will usually manifest itself with predictable consequences, but every so often the inter-unit competition will get out of hand, and so it was with a regiment of Marines and a Brigade of Airborne Soldiers.

The story takes place a number of years prior to the unpleasantness in Vietnam. About 1961 I was the Executive Officer of Golf Company, of the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Marine Regiment, stationed on Okinawa. At that particular time the 9th Marines were co-located with the 173rd Airborne Brigade at Camp Sukiran (later sometimes spelled Zukiran) on the "Rock" as "Okie" was generally called. Bear in mind, during the timeframe of this story, it had only been 16 years since the actual battle for Okinawa.



Okinawa in the '60s.
(Web photo)

Now the Marines have always been a proud organization, and had a reputation of taking virtually no verbal or physical abuse from anyone short of Allah himself. The 173rd was an Airborne Outfit, and were a bit salty themselves. The Marines often made reference to the Airborne's badge of honor (their jump wings), somewhat irreverently calling them "flying ice cream cones" ...if the truth were known, the Marines were a bit jealous of the Airborne being able to sport such a symbol of macho bravado...Since I was an old Force Reconnaissance Marine, I already had my parachute wings, but I was one of only two such in our entire battalion. The Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and I were the only ones with such elegant symbols of our manly prowess.

The 173rd was a really great outfit, and gave us a run for our money. The Marines of course simply sat around and grumbled a bit over our lack of such an ostentatious symbol (the jump wings) of our ability to impose our will on the enemy. The 173rd of course, sensed this, and took every opportunity to display a sense of quiet arrogance and superiority toward their brothers in arms. The stage was set for disaster.

The Army Airborne troops, during that particular time frame, had a rather maddening tradition of saying "Airborne" (rather loudly) as they passed their Airborne officers, while rendering a snappy salute. The closer to any observing Marines they happened to be, the snappier the salute and the louder the verbal exchange of course! The Airborne Officer was expected to answer "All the Way" as they returned the salute.



"Culver suiting up for a Joint Jump with the 173rd, July 1961, Yomatan Air Strip Okinawa."

(continued....)





Now this gimmick was *MEANT* to be exchanged *only* between Airborne Troops and their Officers as a means of instilling morale and unit pride. The Marines felt that they needed no such artificial morale boost – after all, they *WERE* Marines, right? As long as we maintained our distance during day to day contact, everything went well – after all, we didn't care what these upstart "sky troopers" (or "Garri-troopers" as the Marines sometimes called them) had to do to convince themselves that they were worthy of respect – So far, no sweat, just a little healthy rivalry between two excellent units.

As the competition between the two outfits grew more intense, the 173rd lads, decided to rub in their self-perceived superiority over the Marines! As a result, they started giving the "Airborne" verbal greeting whenever they passed ANY officer (most *especially* Marines). Most of our Lieutenants simply looked at them as if they had two heads, returned the salute and continued on their way. The Airborne symbol of camaraderie seemed somewhat contrived to the conquerors of Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima and the survivors of the march out of the "Frozen Chosin"...The Leathernecks were convinced that there were *Marines*, and then there were "*all others*". The Marines (with their own brand of arrogance), saw the Army, Navy and Air Force serving as "bad examples" against which to gauge the inherent excellence of the Sea Soldiers!

One morning after PT (Physical Training), all this changes! A bunch of young Marine Lieutenants were returning to their quarters following their morning run. By pure chance,

they happened to pass a group of young 173rd Airborne troops also returning from their morning workout.

One of the young paratroopers saluted one of our Marine Lieutenants (rather smartly), giving the Paratrooper verbal greeting of "Airborne". The Marine Lieutenant, happened to be one of the largest most aggressive Marine 2nd Lieutenants on the island. The young (if somewhat oversized) Lieutenant had been chafing a bit under the irreverent Airborne display of arrogance, and snapped back (with a bit of obviously prepared rhetoric) – "*So's Bird \$++t*"... and the fight was on! It took two Regimental Commanders (one Army and one Marine) and all sorts of lesser beings, to get the diplomacy back on track... Since the ensuing melee was in the spirit of unit pride, cooler heads prevailed and things went back to normal. I have always had a warm feeling for the 173rd and will always buy such a man a drink if we are in a local watering hole... There's just *something* about a man who's crazy enough to jump out of a perfectly good airplane.... I have more rather funny stories about the Marines and the 173rd – and with the right incentive, I'll reach back into the recesses of my memory banks...

Good troops, those "*silk supported bird men!*"...

ROC

Source:

http://www.bobrohrer.com/sea_stories/173rd_airborne_brigade.pdf

(Web photos added)



Strac lookin' A/2/503 Troopers on "The Rock"



A Few More Sky Soldier Pics From “The Rock”



Okinawa 1964
3rd Section, "C" Battery
319th Artillery





INCOMING!



~Reflections by a Soldier Home from War~

I'm about halfway through this issue (Issue 62, Aug-Sep). So far it rises above others that I reckon to be outstanding on their own merit. I have just finished Terry Garlock's eloquent essay—it's impossible to not be moved (Pages 10-12 of that issue). I stumbled over the parts where he said: *"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."*

Many of us came home a piece at a time. For decades we went back to Vietnam in our dreams, or even in our waking hours, trying to find something we couldn't describe, thinking perhaps we'd know it if we could find it. We made connections with loved ones with blunted emotional skills, or we went into solitude. Solitude meaning, not necessarily cabins in the hills, but that sort of solitude where you stay covered among your people, lying quietly behind a mask, trying to find words to fit things you don't really want to describe to wives, children, parents, friends. For many of us, decades would pass before we were able to envision the forces that empowered dreams in which both pride and shame held hands.

I reconnected with Terry when he talks about The Wall. My trip to The Wall, in 1987, began for me the long process of untangling all these things I had barely suppressed. Anyhow, shortly after visiting The Wall, I took out my journal and began to read it for the first time since I had written the last entry, in September of 1966. Visiting The Wall was the start of untying those knots, applying a chronology to the visions and dreams, and understanding who the kid was that had done those things, and then tried to write about them. It was around this time that I began to talk with other veterans. I learned that the War had been a living thing that evolved over the passage of time. I realized that for all the similarities combat imposes upon us, we each fought a different war. We each came back to a different America. I was never spit on. I was exposed to the VVAW, who were veterans of the anti-war persuasion.

I have to admit that I never thought what I did could have any political value. In truth, in those days I had little to tell them, because everything was so raw and disordered for me that I truly had no tales to tell. It wasn't until the late 1980's that I was able to get a grip

on my experiences enough to write cohesive anecdotes about them. When I relate my experience, I try to write things that have no conscious political orientation. Even now it's hard to face the political gulf that separates me from many of my brothers in combat.

I guess I'll quit this note before I drift too far. I'll have to get back to the magazine later.

Thanks,

Mark Carter
173d LRRP & E-17th Cav



The thought provoking Mr. Carter (L) with family & friends.

Cover!

Fellow Sky Soldiers,

As some of you know, I have written Michigan State University to ask them to change the announcement before the National Anthem to include that veterans may leave their hats on and salute the flag, as opposed to non-veterans at a venue.



This isn't about my alma mater, MSU, but it's about making people around us to become aware of us and doing something about it. This turned out to be a "Win-Win" for not only us veterans, but to the public as well. Here is (part of) MSU's answer below. I sent this out at 3:45 p.m. yesterday, and received their answer at 9 a.m. this morning.

It doesn't hurt to ask!!! Go Green.

Rich "Whip" Whipple
HHC/2/503

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. AT THIS TIME WE ASK THAT YOU PLEASE RISE FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER. GENTLEMEN, PLEASE REMOVE YOUR CAPS, ACTIVE MILITARY AND VETERANS MAY KEEP YOUR CAPS ON WHILE RENDERING THE MILITARY SALUTE." MSU

Good job Whip! Ed

(Incoming continued....)



Incoming continued....

~ A Small Paratrooper World ~

Don't know if I ever told you but I replaced Lt. Phil Tabb after he was killed (Op Silver City, March '66). And a related story that will blow your mind---

When I returned stateside I was assigned to Ft. Ord, Calif. as a Basic Training Company Commander about two blocks down from where I took Basic in 1961. One day as I was wandering around on the base for some reason I decided to stop at one of the many barbershops on Ft. Ord. I sat down and waited for my number to be called and when it was my turn I took a seat in a female barber's chair.

She noticed my 173d combat patch and stated that her son-in-law was in the 173d and wondered if I knew him. I told her that the 173d was a large unit but maybe I did know him. I asked her for his name and she responded, "Lt. Phil Tabb".

She almost fainted when I told her that I took his job after he was killed. My heart was racing a mile a minute and I almost cried when I told her. She said that her daughter might want to talk to me about his death so I gave her my name and number but never heard from her.

Bob Sweeney, LTC (Ret)
C/2/503, '65-'66



Boxing Champ Archie Moore's visit to the 2/503rd
(Photo from Bob Sweeney, C/2/503)



Lt Sweeney, Co. C Wpns
Platoon Ldr with friend
at Camp Zinn in 1965.
Bob is the tall one.



Capt. Phil Tabb
KIA 3/14/66

~ It Brought Back Memories ~

Thanks for the write up in the 2/503rd newsletter on Operation Hump and the battle on Hill 65 (Issue 62, Pages 17-23).

After almost 50 years it brought back some bad and mostly good memories for me. I can still see those tracers flying through the air as we went to link up with the two platoons that originally made contact.

Thanks again Brother!!!

Craig Ford, A/1/503
1st Bat Guy



Craig Ford
(or Harrison Ford?)

Note: In 2001, a squad of 2/503 troopers returned to Vietnam along with Craig as the only Sky Soldier from the 1/503. He quickly earned the handle, "1st Bat Guy".

~ Wrong Chopper Reference ~

I was Captain Charles P. Nadler (now Major, USAF Retired) and I was flying one of the HH-43F helicopters that helped you (1/503) out on 9 Nov 65. Just for your information, it was an HH-43F Husky, not an HH-53.

General Williamson put me in for a DFC for that mission. That makes me feel extra proud.

All the best and God bless the Sky Soldiers.

Chuck Nadler
USAF



HH-43F Husky during Operation Hump. Maybe Chuck's bird? (Photo by Craig Ford, A/1/503)

~ I am a Paratrooper Man ~

Jerry (Levy, KIA) was a medic with C/2nd on the Rock, that's where I met him. Those who knew him well remember the song he would sing, *I am a Paratrooper Man*. ATW Scarp.

Stephen Scarpulla
2/503d

(Incoming continued....)



Incoming continued....

~ New Sky Soldier Web Site: 173d.com ~



Greetings fellow 173d Airborne personnel. Brick and mortar memorials such as the recently dedicated 173d Airborne memorial at Fort Benning are good, and quite necessary for a number of reasons. But other than a name etched into a piece of granite where can be found a memorial that is dedicated to the exceptional individuals as found in the 173d, that allows access to almost anyone worldwide, and tells distinguished stories of the men of the 173d, both living and KIA?

Introducing the 173d.com web site, a multimedia memorial where the nearly 1,800 killed in action - not only Vietnam KIA's but OIF/OEF including (unfortunately) futures as well - are represented by the sights, sounds and visions of their time, as told by themselves, their friends and their families.

Please note, this site contains powerful proprietary search engine software that identifies the KIA's on any given date. In other words, if you'd like to have the names of those who died on a certain date, perhaps a memorable anniversary of yours or during a certain battle, you can learn that information by doing a search for that date, example: 02/12/1968 to 02/12/1968 or 02/12/1968 to 02/12/1969 or any date you choose. Searches for 173d KIA's can be done according to State, Hometown, Regiment, Brigade, Company and/or Rank. This means you can see everyone who was KIA while serving with the 173d that was from your state or hometown, regardless of conflict or future conflict.

As mentioned earlier, this site is a multimedia site. Postings will include still photos, videos and phone interviews from those desiring to tell their stories and have them preserved for future generations. Should you find errors, they will be corrected ASAP.

Paul Reed
A/1/503

Visit: <http://173d.com/>

Note:

Send in your stories about your time with the 173d in Vietnam, because as the wise Mr. Jim Bethea (HHC/2/503) says, *"If you don't write it down, it never happened"*.

~ Remembering a Good Airborne Brother ~

This is a great Newsletter ... I was in the 101st from 1960 to 1963 and developed a very close friendship with a fellow paratrooper in my platoon. We attended and graduated from the 101 Recondo School together. I left the service for a career in law enforcement and Charles Holland reenlisted. I checked on him some years later and discovered that he was killed in Vietnam on 08/18/67 in Kontum Province, South Vietnam. At that time he was with E TRP, 17th Cav., 173 ABN BDE. I have a great photograph of him and would like to send it to someone who can insure that it will be posted with the 173rd soldiers who were KIA. I would appreciate any assistance. Thank you. Airborne...

Lance Thelen
101st Abn



Charles James Holland

Sergeant First Class
E TRP, 17TH CAVALRY, 173RD ABN BDE, USARV
Army of the United States
Elizabeth, New Jersey
July 27, 1939 to August 18, 1967

See more about SFC Holland on following pages.



***"Show me a man
who will jump out of
an airplane and I will
show you a man
who will fight".***



Gen. James Gavin

I wrote the story below for a website honoring Vietnam K.I.A.'s. SFC Holland was one of our LRRP Platoon casualties from Dak To in 1967. Just sending it and three photos to you if you care to use it in your great 2nd Bat newsletter publication.

Irv "Bugs" Moran
173d LRRP, '67/'68
Green Bay, Virginia

SFC Charles J. Holland A True American Hero

I served with SFC Charles J. Holland in the 173rd Airborne Brigade's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) Platoon prior to his death. I joined the platoon in June of 1967 as it was conducting extremely dangerous missions in the Dak To area of the Central Highlands.

I was a "new guy", but SFC Holland was extremely approachable and answered all the questions I had concerning the current operations. SFC Holland was very knowledgeable and professional, and combined with his appearance could easily have been on an Army recruitment poster for Airborne Rangers. He was a respected Team Leader and well liked in the platoon. Although I did not run a mission with him for the two months prior to his death, I knew from other platoon members that he conducted his missions with courage and aggressiveness.

The Dak To area of Vietnam had thick jungle-covered 3,000 foot mountains with steep ravines and few clearings for choppers to land. This area was located where the borders of Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam all come together, and it provided the trail networks for North Vietnamese troops to infiltrate into Vietnam. The area was extremely active in the summer



Charles James Holland
At Dak To base camp in
summer of 1967.

of 1967, and our missions were conducted to find these NVA units that were operating in these mountains.

On the day SFC Holland was K.I.A., (August 18, 1967), I had just returned from a mission, and SFC Holland's team and other teams were still out. Word went around quickly that SFC Holland's team was in extreme trouble with no radio contact. Eventually that day the team was located and extracted by chopper, but SFC Holland was M.I.A.



"Icabod" Gowen who was on mission of August 18th with Holland's team. He is pointing to the AK-47 bullet hole in the forearm of his M-16 received while escaping the NVA units on the 18th.

The team had been hit hard by a large NVA force which immediately pursued them through the difficult terrain. SFC Holland went back to the surveillance site to retrieve the team's radio. This action allowed the rest of the team to escape and be extracted without serious injuries.

The following day, team members accompanied a reinforced line company (from either the 1st or 2nd Bat) back to the site and located and returned SFC Holland's remains. He had fought valiantly to the end.



SFC Holland's team carrying his remains from the area

At the time, it was believed that SFC Holland was going to be put in for an award of the Medal of Honor for his actions on that day. I learned years later that he received the nation's second highest award for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross. He was a true American hero and everyone should read his DSC medal citation.

General James Gavin of the famed 82nd Airborne Division during WWII once stated, *"Show me a man who will jump out of an airplane and I will show you a man who will fight"*. SFC Charles J. Holland showed them.



HOLLAND, CHARLES JAMES

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army
Troop E, 17th Cavalry Regiment,
173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate)
Date of Action: August 18, 1967

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Charles James Holland, Staff Sergeant, 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 Troop E, 17th Cavalry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) in the Republic of Vietnam.

Staff Sergeant Holland distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 18 August 1967. On this date, in an area 15 miles northeast of Dak To Special Forces Camp, Dak To Province, in support of Operation GREELEY, the Team's mission was to penetrate an area heavily infested by Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army elements, to conduct surveillance of enemy routes and to detect and report all enemy activities. Because heavy enemy activity had been reported in the area, the mission was considered to be very dangerous. Only minutes before the team was to be infiltrated, information was received that six-to-eight Viet Cong had been observed from an aircraft and that they had fired on the aircraft from a location 1,000 meters from the team's primary landing zone. When offered the opportunity to postpone the mission, Sergeant Holland declined, merely changing the location of the infiltration landing zone. During the first few hours after landing, the team located more than 25 foxholes, only 2 to 3 weeks old. The following morning they established an observation point from which they could watch both nearby Highway 14 and a known enemy trail a short distance away. The observation point, located on the side of a hill, was well concealed by the vegetation, but permitted an unobstructed view. A short time later, 21 Viet Cong were observed moving along the trail. After calling for artillery fire, voices and movement were heard to their rear and they were assaulted by intense enemy automatic weapons fire, hand grenades and M-79 grenade launcher fire. Sergeant Holland immediately returned fire but, realizing the extreme danger to his men, ordered the team to withdraw from the area. He remained behind to provide cover

fire for his men, several times overtaking them only long enough to give additional instructions. When all the men had safely reached the bottom of the hill, it was noted that the radio had been left behind. Completely disregarding his own safety, Sergeant Holland charged back up the hill, firing his weapon in order to draw the enemy fire from his men. As a result of his gallant actions, it was possible for the remainder of the team to be safely extracted from their vulnerable position. The following day, Sergeant Holland's lifeless body was found a short distance from the point of initial contact. Because he was wearing part of the equipment which had been left behind, it was determined that he had reached the observation post and was overtaken by the enemy force while attempting to return to his men. From an examination of the area in which his body was found, it was discovered that he had valiantly fought the enemy until he was overcome. Moreover, evidence revealed that he had inflicted serious injury on several enemy soldiers. His courage in the face of a determined enemy force was instrumental in saving the lives of his team members. Sergeant Holland's conspicuous gallantry, his profound courage and his intrepidity at the risk of his own life above and beyond the call of 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.

Department of the Army, General Orders No. 15
(April 8, 1968)

Sergeant First Class
Charles James Holland
hometown Elizabeth, New Jersey
is on the Wall at Panel 25E, Line 13



Mark Carter, of 173d LRRP fame, recently said,
"It's our job to remember."



VC No Match For 'Charlie

TUY HOA, (173rd ABN-IO) – The skies over South Vietnam were filled with helicopters as the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a part of II Field Force Vietnam, were airlifted to the jungles for operation “Yorktown”.

Company “C”, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, nicknamed “Chargin Charlie”, under the command of Capt. John Leide was to conduct search and destroy operations deep in rubber plantation country adjacent to the jungle.

As the helicopters descended to the landing zone, the expressions of the men were tense. They wondered what they could encounter as they landed. Whatever lay ahead, they were ready. After landing the men of “Chargin Charlie” pushed on to their objective through the jungle underbrush, always alert and keeping a sharp watch for snipers and booby traps.

Upon reaching their selected operational base, they immediately set up a perimeter defense and two squad-sized patrols were sent out to reconnoiter the surrounding area. A native from a nearby village appeared and informed the company commander, through his interpreter, that there were some Viet Cong hiding in the village. Two patrols were dispatched to locate the enemy. Later the patrols reported that the enemy had fired. Other patrolling action continued for the remainder of the day.

About midnight a trip-flare went off, apparently activated by a VC sniper. The sniper began firing and the men of Company C returned the fire. After a silence of about 15 minutes, the sniper fire began again. This time “Chargin Charlie” returned the fire with more convincing authority and for the rest of the night the only sounds were those of the U.S. heavy artillery. The VC knew they were outnumbered and didn’t care to stay around to be convinced.



Cap Leide



“THROUGH THE JUNGLES – Paratroopers of “C” Company, 2nd/503rd, 173rd Airborne Brigade, work their way through thick brush as the mountain jungle before them thickens.”

(Photo by PFC Paul Epley, 173rd ABN-IO)



[Sent in by Jack Leide “Cap”, CO C/2/503, MG (Ret)]



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Excerpt...

Report: Jumpmaster cited in training death of paratrooper

By Kyle Jahner, Staff writer

ArmyTimes July 21, 2015

Sgt. Shaina Schmigel was killed on May 30, 2014 in a nighttime parachute jump over Fort Bragg, N.C



A jumpmaster's failure to properly inspect a paratrooper's static lines was determined the "single most definitive failure" that led to the parachuting death of a young female soldier, an Army investigation has found.

Sgt. Shaina Schmigel died during a nighttime static line jump May 30, 2014, over Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

According to the informal AR 15-6 investigation, Schmigel's equipment was misrouted so that, when exiting the plane, she became a "towed jumper." While being towed, the subsequent jumper exited the plane and Schmigel became entangled in his T-11 parachute. Schmigel reportedly died from fatal lacerations to the throat and a broken neck. The entire incident lasted three to four seconds, according to the report.

The findings, obtained by Army Times through a Freedom of Information Act request, are from the investigation conducted within the 82nd Airborne Division; another investigation represents the Army's formal query into the incident. That safety accident report by the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center has been completed and sent to command for review, and will be released in November or December, according to USACRC FOIA officer Vickie Hendrix.

The AR 15-6 report recommended permanently decertifying one of the jumpmasters who served as a safety during the training, conducted by 37th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. It was noted the jumpmaster, who was conducting his first safety duty, was not current in his

training at the time of the jump, and that he failed to attend the briefing prior to the operation. While finding negligence, the investigator found no criminal wrongdoing.

The informal report said Schmigel likely exited the plane properly. She would have been uninjured and fully conscious for the second or so that she was towed before the next jumper hit her, investigators surmised.



Paratroopers with the 82nd Airborne Division exit an aircraft wearing the T-11 parachute system. An investigation into the death of a paratrooper in 2014 recommended the 82nd update its policies to better ensure soldier safety. (Photo: Army)

The report details the sequence of events and includes witness testimony and a detailed overview of the physical evidence.

No one knew something was wrong until the paratroopers landed and Schmigel was found unresponsive, the investigation found. After the mid-air collision, Schmigel was knocked free and her parachute deployed normally, according to the investigation. The jumper whose lines likely killed her did not realize an accident had occurred.

Rest Easy Paratrooper

Source:

<http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/enlisted/2015/07/20/report-jumpmaster-cited-training-death-paratrooper/30374491/>

[Sent in by Col. John Erskine, 1st/5th/6th SF]

The T-11 Parachute

"The Non-Maneuverable Canopy (T-11) Personnel Parachute System is the newest personnel parachute system to be adopted by the United States armed forces and the Canadian Army. The T-11 replaces the T-10, introduced in 1955. The T-11 includes a completely redesigned main and reserve parachute and an integrated harness assembly that is suitable for a wider range of soldier weights than the previous system." (Web description)



Excerpt....

173rd Airborne Brigade and Allies welcome new commander

By Maj. Michael J Weisman (The 173rd Airborne Brigade)

July 9, 2015



VICENZA, Italy -- The 173rd Airborne Brigade conducted a Change of Command ceremony at Caserma Del Din here July 9, 2015 between Col. Michael L. Foster and Col. Gregory K. Anderson.

Hosted by U.S. Army Europe Commanding General Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the ceremony included leaders from....NATO allies:

"As an enabler for our great Alliance, the 173rd is permanently scattered across Europe and beyond," said Hodges during his remarks. "It plays roles in nearly every major exercise and operations with allies, partners and other U.S. forces."

When Col. Foster assumed command in the summer of 2013, the Brigade had just returned from its fifth deployment in ten years to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Army was facing sequestration and reductions in troops and units, Foster said during his remarks, as Iraq and Afghanistan appeared to be winding down.

"The first thing that makes you a hollow force isn't an absence of money, people or equipment," said Foster. "It's a lack of mission. For the past two years, this brigade has had a good one. 10 of our companies and two of our battalions are currently deployed. But quite frankly, that's just another typical day for [the 173rd]."

While participating in exercises, the brigade re-invigorated previous partnerships with NATO units such as the Polish 6th Airborne Brigade and the Italian Folgore Brigade.

Foster also led the brigade through its transformation into the Army Contingency Response Force, a rapid-deployment unit capable of providing forces anywhere in the U.S. Army European, Africa or Central Commands of responsibility in under 18 hours.

"The 173rd is a recognized Army-wide leader in readiness through Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercises and the culture of readiness that Col. Foster brought to the team," said Hodges.

That response was tested first in February 2014, when Slovenia experienced its worst ice storm in a century, cutting electricity to thousands of homes. Having already established an active partnership with the Slovenian 1st Brigade, paratroopers from the brigade responded on no-notice to deliver generators and other life-saving equipment via a ground convoy through snowy conditions.

The 173rd Airborne's readiness was tested again when Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014. On short notice, the "Sky Soldiers" deployed to Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in what is now a large-scale series of continuous exercises known as Operation Atlantic Resolve. The brigade also has a battalion deployed to Ukraine to train the newly-formed Ukrainian national guard under the Congress-approved Fearless Guardian mission.

Additionally, paratroopers from the 173rd are also deployed to Turkey to assure NATO collective defense as part of Operation Active Fence, to mitigate potential spillover from the crisis in Syria.

"There are lots of reasons we could highlight as contributing to the successes of our companies and battalions, the first and foremost are clearly the great men and women who make up their ranks," said Foster. "But the most critical component setting them up for success over the past two years has been the support and understanding of our families."

Col. Anderson arrives from his most recent assignment at the United States Army War College, and previously commanded battalions in the 10th Mountain Division and the 75th Ranger Regiment. In previous experiences in Europe, he also commanded a company in the 1st Armored Div., in Friedberg, Germany, where he deployed multiple times to Bosnia in support of NATO missions.

"When America and NATO needed immediate leadership, courage and Soldiers to stand up lead against aggression," said Anderson, "they called upon the 173rd. Something they have done consistently since the Vietnam War. I am incredibly honored to join this community."





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:

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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.



From the 173d Airborne Brigade Webmaster



I distributed a Survey by email to our active Membership seeking feedback on our new Sky Soldier website that I recently created and have been adding new features and making improvements. I wanted to share with you a summary of the 556 responses to the 8 survey questions.

I want to thank everybody for your participation because it gives me an idea what needs to be improved. I used a survey program called SurveyMonkey and because it was my first attempt, there is certainly room for improvement there.

To view the Survey Results, go to:

<http://www.skysoldier.net/Resources/Surveys/Website%20Survey%20Results-%207-20-2015.pdf>

My **primary** goal is to post the surveys on a new webpage named "Surveys" so that they will be available at any time. My **secondary** goal is to provide instant feedback when you complete the survey.

I envision creating new surveys monthly on various topics to get your feedback on how the Association can better serve our Membership. After all, **communication is our key to the Association's survival**. Some of the future potential survey topics are:

Annual Reunions
Sky Soldier Magazine
Association Website Store
Revenue Generation/Fundraising
Membership Retention/Recruitment
Bridging with the Iraq/Afghanistan Sky Soldiers

I haven't had time to read all of the individual responses, but there are some good recommendations, suggestions, compliments as well as some critical remarks. I hope to respond to as many as possible as time allows.

Again, thanks for your feedback. *Stand in the Door!*

Jerry L. Cooper
Webmaster

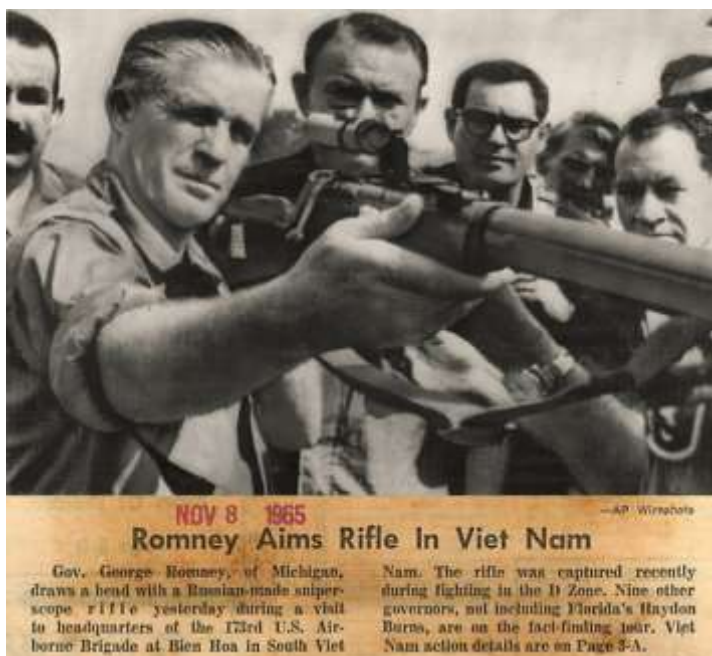
WELDON "DONNIE" LUCK, age 66, passed away on Saturday, July 25, 2015. Visitation was held in East Liberty, with funeral service conducted in the Baptist Temple Church, 7241 Race St., Homewood, Pittsburgh, PA. Donnie served with the 173d Airborne Brigade.



"Donnie Luck the love of my life for over 40yrs, the father of my only son Dante' B. Luck. We have been friends through thick & thin, through ups and downs and nothing could ever keep our family apart--Donnie, Dante and Regina--a threefold cord is not easily broken. Memories are forever and so is our love. How do you say good bye? You don't...I'll see you again.

Love forever Regie"

~ Rest Easy Brother ~



Why I Returned to Visit Vietnam, Plan to (or) Never Will

~ I Wouldn't Go Back There If I Was Paid ~

Just wanted to respond to your post about returning to Viet Nam.

I wouldn't go back there if I was paid. I got there in April 1969, I was in country for 3 months when they changed search and destroy missions to recon in force missions. That means if you take incoming fire you were supposed to call back to battalion headquarters before returning fire; needless to say that call wasn't made till after the fact.

This was the beginning of the pacification program (training the South Vietnamese army to take over). Talk about fighting with one hand tied behind your back. I felt disappointed with the new policy. I still have bad feelings towards the Vietnamese people -- lost a lot of good men and friends over there.

I talk to very few people about my time over there. The people there had nothing to do with that war and I am working with those feelings, very hard to let them go. Thought I would share some thoughts.

Was a squad leader infantry line company A/2/503, '69 thru '70.

Bob Baker
A/2/503

~ Mixed Emotions About Returning ~

With many mixed emotions, I too, have contemplated a return trip to Vietnam. I would like to reconnect with some of the Vietnamese soldiers that I served with. Don't care anything about returning to the Iron Triangle, or any other areas we encountered. However, I realize reconnecting at such a later point in time would be next to impossible.

I served with a man (Vietnamese) that was educated in America. I don't recall at this time where he went to school, only that it was in the U.S. He and I served together on a MATS team. He would often laugh at how I would speak Vietnamese with a southern accent. But, it worked (I attended the 6 month Vietnamese Language course in El Paso, TX in 1969 before my second trip to RVN).

On a similar, but not directly related issue, I would like to remind all our guys that Aug. 7 is "Purple Heart Day." There is no way I can recall all the guys that I served with that received the "purple heart". There were three that were especially close to me; Roger Dale (Tulip) Flowers, Rueben Dimas, and Jack Schimpf. But, what stands out in my mind that it so important to me are the ones that were wounded, yet never received the purple heart.



L-R: Gary Davidson and buddy Roger "Tulip" Flowers outside the hootches along the Bravo Company perimeter at Camp Zinn.

There is one in particular that really comes to the forefront, his name is Gary Davidson. He was wounded on July 7, 1965. I was the line company Senior Aidman of B/2/503. Because of the intense and unpredictable nature of warfare, Gary was unable to get to me on July 7, but I did treat him on July 8, 1965. He was never awarded the Purple Heart for these actions. What a shame! He should be recognized, and receive what is rightly due to him.



Doc

Roy Lombardo, our old commander, did all he could do, but they would not recognize Gary, even after I submitted a letter verifying that I had treated him. Seems like someone could do something. ATW

Ken (Doc) Eastman
B/2/503



Da Lat, in the Central Highlands



~ We Won in the Long Run ~



Les, somewhere sometime in beautiful Southeast Asia, hurrying up to wait.

My name is Leslie Fuller, A/2/503 Feb 67-68. I've been back to Viet Nam twice. Once in 2008 and also 2011. In 2008 I went with my wife Billie, Wambi Cook and Hiram Diaz. We went all over the III Corps area including Núi Bà Đen (the Black Virgin Mountain). There is a cable gondola ride that goes right to the top to several temples that are up there. Bien Hoa area where we were is an Army base.



Saigon is a bustling city that never sleeps. It is not much different than any in the U.S. The hotels are 5 star multi-story buildings that would match any others anywhere. The countryside is pretty much like it has always been, except that all the trees have been logged and replaced with planted pines and other agricultural plants.



A young RTO Wambi Cook, like Les & Hiram, a Dak To survivor, returned to Vietnam with his buddies.

(You can read Wambi's report on their return trip to Vietnam in Issue 26, Pages 2-6 of our April 2011 newsletter)

In 2011 Gene Counselman (A/1/503) went with us instead of Hiram. This time we went to Hanoi first. We went to Ho Chi Minh's mausoleum. He was lying in a glass case and looked like he was put there yesterday.

We went down the coast, across the DMZ and down to China Beach. Then we cut over to Hill 875. I was worried that we would have to walk all the way up to the top, however, all we had to do was drive up there on the logging road. We then made our way to Hill 882 where Gene and A/1/503rd had been in a battle while we were preoccupied with ours on Hill 875. We couldn't go all the way to the top of Hill 882 due to some kind of activity up there. From there we worked our way back to Saigon.



L-R: Hiram Diaz, alongside Les and Wambi, with Núi Bà Đen, the Black Virgin Mountain, in the background.

My main reason for going back was to see if we actually had any influence on that country or it's people. I'm here to tell you that we did. The people of the south can call themselves whatever term they choose but they are pure capitalist at heart. They don't care who you are or where you came from as long as you bring money and spend it.

I have no regrets of going and it answered the long sought after question of if we won or lost the war. We won in the long run.

**Les Fuller
A/2/503**

(continued....)



~ I Returned....No Regrets ~

I returned to Vietnam April-May of 2005. In country for 18 days - no regrets. I would do it again, but I'm too busy exploring our country.

I traveled with a VA counselors' group representing all branches but the Coast Guard. We visited all of the major battlefields in all four Corps and Hanoi. It was interesting to hear stories about places the Marines and Navy had been.

James Allen Jackson
B Co 2/503d



Jim

~ The Russians Are Coming! ~

No interest in going back as a civilian. It seems to me (perhaps incorrectly) that the country is divided into 2 categories; fancy Japanese golf resorts and the Vietnam we knew.

I did fill out the form to request transfer to the 173d from Germany in 1968. I was told my job was to nuke the Ruskies coming through the Fulda gap. No one appreciated me telling them that was BS and that the Russians (or their surrogates) were coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Jim Robinson
B/2/503



LT Jim



Downtown Saigon today. Prospering and vibrant.
(Web photo)



Bien Hoa today.
(Web photo)

~ I Would Go Back To Nam ~

I would go back to Nam in a heartbeat and there is nothing to bother me about what happened to us while there. If you were in Xuan Loc then you know we had one or two good "dances" there but that is all part of the deal I guess. I went to war and I had an idea of what to expect, but I have to admit it was much worse but nothing I could not live with.

I feel bad about the men that cannot go back and I feel bad about the ones with more problems than I have from my time in country, but what can I say?

So yes, I would go back if I can ever get the money, and there are one or two things I want to look at and for as well. So let's see what happens and maybe you and I and Mike Sturges can get on a flight and go see it again.

I hold no malice for the people there as they were simply doing what they had to do or thought they had to do, and we were doing what we thought we had to do. Since I am still kicking I feel I came out ahead of the deal.

Take care and have a good day and maybe there will be a reunion here in the DC area one day before we pass on and I can meet a few of you. My last thing like that was a Delta to DMZ dance in DC back in the late 80's before I ran off to Africa for 15 years.

Take care and have a good day,
Gregg Lyell
A/2/503

(continued....)



~ The Reason We Go Back? ~

It was July 2005, and I found myself returning for a third time to Vietnam. Why? I don't know. Good buddy Bill Vose (A/HHC/2/503) found it important we go back together specifically to visit the battleground at LZ Zulu-Zulu (Op Silver City) where he and I first met on 16 March 66, a fateful morning many of us were lucky to survive. Joining us was A/2/503 Sky Soldier Gus Vendetti, former Alpha Company CO, who had also participated in that little scuffle years ago.



L-R: 2/503 troopers, Bill, Gus & Smitty at 3rd Field Army Hospital near Saigon where they each had spent some R&R.

I had hoped to find VC or NVA soldiers who shared an interest in meeting their former enemy, although they were elusive and difficult to find, and I met only one for a brief moment – thru an interpreter he told me they called American soldiers the “Big Noses”. I can only suspect the Vietnamese warriors have their own physical and emotional scars from that war, as do so many American soldiers, and I sensed that in this man.

I was apprehensive about returning to VN the first time. Hootch buddy Wayne Hoitt (HHC/2/503) had backed out from an earlier return trip, telling me he had sleepless nights and even broke-out in hives just *thinking* about going back to Vietnam, and after receiving a note from Jack Ribera (A/2/503) telling me he was hyperventilating and experiencing chest pains from thinking about a trip back, I became sick to my stomach. The mind is a terrible thing; but the unknown is even worse.

Guys, most guys I know with whom I served during the war, have virtually no interest in returning to

Vietnam. For Bill and me this was our third trek there, two voluntarily, and after two tours it was Gus' first civilian trip back to the land of little people, battle zones, too much traffic and stink and garlic-cooked entrees which curdle the stomach. Back to the jungles and rice paddies. Back, looking for something but not sure where or even what we were looking for.

Upon learning of our plans to hump into the “D” Zone rain forest, my good friend Bob Carmichael (former 2/503 Bn XO/CO), said to me, “*You’re nuts!*” for wanting to go back into that jungle....of course, he was right. Then again, we may have been wiser than we thought. Perhaps what we thought Bill, Gus and I were doing would help us better understand our scars from war, even though one would be hard pressed to get fellas like Vose and Vendetti to even admit to having scars – after all, they’re *Rangers*.

So, back we went again, in search of a special kind of band aid to cover our wounds, physical and otherwise. Not many of us care to admit it, but I believe *that* is the reason veterans go back.

Lew “Smitty” Smith
HHC/2/503, ‘65/’66

~ “What Smitty Said.” ~

Bill Vose
A/HHC/2/503

~ I Will Probably Never Return ~

I will probably never return to Viet Nam as it is a communist controlled country. Also, the fact the places I would like to visit again under nicer or friendly conditions would take a helicopter to get there and also would probably never find them again anyway.

Don't get me wrong, now if it wasn't under communist control that would be the first place I would look at to spend my retirement days.

Bud Sourjohn
A/2/503, 1970

(continued....)



Bud in the Boonies



~ I Would Love to go Back and Show My Wife ~

I have often been in the area, Indonesia, Guam and other countries close by but I have not felt one way or the other about going back.

David Hack of US Wings was an Army Recruiter in Ohio and he started the company a long time ago and he had on his website a map that would show you your location in RVN as it looks today.

When I saw LZ Uplift, the last place we were before leaving on Flying Tigers from Phu Cat AFB, I was astounded at how it looked today!

I would love to go back and show my wife where we had been. I do not have any idea if we could even get to some of the places I would like to see.

I was senior RTO D 2/503d from Jul '70 till we came back to Ft Campbell in Jul '71.

**Mike Vick
D/2/503**



Mike



A slightly younger Mike

~ "TOURIST RETURNS TO VIETNAM" ~



Bravo Company's Bob Warfield checks out an old A1 at the Bien Hoa bone yard, DRVN, Oct. 2000.

Was in the fall of 2000. Call it an extended bike trip, but "off route" with a couple of other stragglers, and there we were in Saigon. For me, it will always be Saigon. We'd come down from Hanoi, Hue, Da Nang, Hoi An, seen the city's mandatory attractions, survived crossing Le Loi and Pasteur, and, "Hey! Let's grab a taxi and check out the VC tunnel place." It wasn't far, and it wasn't my idea. But its lingering peculiar tourist appeal endures. We'd come in to Vietnam from Cambodia and Laos, happily leaving fellow cyclists committed to the seasonal mud of southeast China.

Second Battalion, 503d, arrived at Bien Hoa Wednesday, 5 May 1965. On Saturday, then SSG Willie Boyd (retired CSM) and I (Company B, "Bravo Bulls") found ourselves on stage amid the raucous rip of rockets and clattering roar of Hueys and H-34s, passing through the extremes of auditory sensation into an eerie stillness left behind by the departing industry of our delivery. This strange intermission followed Act 1 of our first air assault, our first whiff of combat. But the entry overture had not been quiet. We'd come in low, over earthworks of unconcealed hostility, uniformed with men, black and khaki clad, firing machineguns with effect.

(continued....)



Phu Cat airport today.



The day was Binh Dong Province bright, surroundings green and close, and my black and white imagination of rural Viet Cong cadre, carving punji stakes and posting polemics along dirt roads at night was suddenly altered. Colored by reality, with two helicopters hit, one down with wounded I was sure. Boyd and I were “strap-hangers,” along to get acquainted with war, guests of the 5th Infantry Division, ARVN. It was a big operation, “Loi Phong 5,” five battalions and a recon company, supported by twelve tubes of artillery, sixteen B-57s and fifteen A1s, flown by USAF and VNAF pilots.



A young Robert Redford? Nah. A young Robert Warfield during a much earlier visit to Vietnam.

The road from Saigon, soon left behind the urban jostle and former memories of a city re-paved with twenty-five years of post-war transformation. We passed briefly into Vietnam’s passive rural aspect and shortly arrived at our destination: location of the infamous “Rat Tunnels,” battle with the “Black Lions” (2/28 Infantry, LTC G. S. Eyster, Jr. commanding; died of wounds, 14 Jan 1966); finally subdued, (“Tropic Lightning” 25th Infantry Division, MG Ellis W. Williamson, commanding, Apr 1966). Could THIS be it?

Cu Chi, overgrown, reclaimed by relentless vegetation, reduced to dusty parking, a few thatched structures, a see-for-yourself underground “room,” hint

of labyrinth, and a modest gift shop, featuring jars of “snake gin,” VC pins, hats and memorabilia. It was a far more interesting place on my former visit, and I almost missed the ten inch centipede that crawled, quite unmolested, over my head the one occasion I had to visit a tunnel when it was serious business. But there was a gem in the gift shop: VC photos assembled variously from “the American War.”

As my companions pondered their souvenir acquisitions, I took this booklet from display, then, thumbing casually and backwards in my customary manner was arrested by the image shown below. Sunday, “Mother’s Day,” 1965, my fourth day “in-country,” was a day to remember. For all that remaining Saturday and the following morning, it seemed to me the 9th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division (ARVN) was making the most of avoiding further contact, having spent the night – characteristically, as it turns out, having annoyed native inhabitants indulging their chickens to fricassee and their accommodations to casual lease. Then by Sunday afternoon, things changed, and as afternoon lazed toward teatime, the battle ensued.

It did not turn out well for the 9th Infantry Regiment, at least not for the headquarters element and 1st Battalion, to whom Boyd and I were attached; I should add, rather *loosely* attached. Without instruction, I had drifted out toward the line of engagement. By the time I thought better of that and returned to the HQ element, the battalion advisor, WIA (evac’ed), and regimental team was gone, along with, as it turned out, SSG Boyd. Left behind, was an ARVN captain, the battalion surgeon, a young officer of considerable promise I imagined, with a ghastly abdominal wound and several seemingly stupefied soldiers, possibly intent on surrender as VC opposition closed in.

At the time, I had no idea as to the classic nature of their resigned behavior, placing in their mouths the small Buddha on a lanyard worn about their necks. My destiny was undefined. I was not sure about the youthful surgeon. A look of rage and threat to shoot two of the ARVN soldiers was required to get their assistance with the wounded officer. A folding stretcher was locked open, and they relented to carry him, joining a desultory cadre of defeat in drifting retreat across a broadly exposed field of dry rice paddy toward the friendly sanctuary of Trung Lap. By then, my options reduced, it was well past time to depart.

(continued....)



With a good deal of zigging and zagging, diving over paddy dikes, and rolling to return fire several times, I came upon faithful Sergeant Boyd, waiting in the middle of the paddy field and utterly alone wondering, "where's Warfield?" By that time, too, the opposition was getting range. For his trouble and concern, Boyd took a round above elbow, fortunately without serious damage, earning the first Purple Heart of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep). We covered each other, continuing our zig-zag dash beyond small arms hazard, finally meeting a cluster of American advisors much relieved to see us both. On occasion, I've wondered just how close I came to becoming an early POW. And wouldn't that have been interesting!

Here's the picture from the VC photo collection. Note the identifying caption, and the youth of those dedicated to a unifying cause that both we and the French badly failed to comprehend.



"Quyet Thang Battalion was displaying the booty seized in the battle wiping out a regiment of enemy at Bau Lach, Nhuan Duc, Cu Chi (9 5 1965)."

Be well. Stay safe. And by all means, if and when you have the opportunity, return.

**Bob Warfield,
Former 2/503**

Bob: Thanks. The photo above is particularly interesting, as those shown would have most likely been some of the very same bad guys we would have danced with in '65/'66/'67 before the brigade moved north, now old men, if they were lucky. Ed



Hanoi

Reflections of a beautiful trip to Vietnam

(Excerpts)

**By Steven Haber
C/2/503, '65/'66**



Steve, on right, talking with one of his buddies, some time, somewhere in VN, circa '65/'66,

It all started last November, 2000, when I noticed a folder in the computer marked "Vietnam" and after viewing the only two files I had stashed in there, I realized that I had received an email from Smitty two years earlier that I had never answered. I sent an email to Mr. Smith and heard back that same evening. One thing led to another and Joan and I found ourselves heading to Cocoa Beach for lunch on a Sunday afternoon to meet this man that I had an email from two years earlier.

It worked out pretty good since Joan and I were in Orlando for business and Smitty was only an hour away. Joan and I played golf in the morning before heading to our luncheon get together with that RTO.

We were joined at lunch by another Vet, whose name I can't recall, but I do remember the rum and cokes that seemed to never disappear. During this time Mr. Smith mentioned Nam and said there was a whole company of 2/503d troopers heading back to the country and I should consider going. I'm thinking to myself, who is this nut suggesting I go back to Nam with a bunch of Vets I don't even know? Thank God I had Joan with me to drive us back to Sarasota as the rum lunch did me in.

During our drive back to Sarasota Joan asked me how I felt about the afternoon and what I thought about going back with these men. At that time I had no interest and besides, the dates he mentioned for the trip conflicted with my grandson's visit.

(continued....)



A few days went by and the idea of going back with a group of former comrades intrigued me to the point of considering how I could make it up to my grandson if I canceled out his visit. I then confirmed the dates with Lew and found out the dates were before my grandson's arrival. Joan would say that was a sign of some sort that the universe wanted me to go to Vietnam.

I had made up my mind that if I was to go, I wanted to have Joan with me since I enjoy her company immensely and she keeps me out of trouble.

The Countdown Begins

On the 30th of January 2001, with our first stop being Vegas -- I envisioned earning enough to fly first class -- I proceeded to locate the poker room at the hotel and after losing \$200., my dream of flying first class vanished and figured I better get out before I had to fly baggage.

On Saturday, January 3, 2001, we awoke early to catch our flight to LA in order to connect with Thai Airways who would be carrying us to Bangkok. Both Joan and I were totally impressed with this airline and would recommend it to anyone. Our flight seemed to take forever but our arrival in Bangkok was on time and uneventful. I especially enjoyed the hot towels before and after each meal.

After clearing customs we worked our way to the exit and there among thousands of people was a limousine driver with a sign that read "PFC Haber". I knew Sky Soldier George Farris was close at hand and it was not hard to pick him out of the crowd of Thai's surrounding him. We exchanged pleasantries and made our way to the car and drive to the hotel. As it was 1:30 am we were anxious to arrive at the hotel and get some rest since Monday morning was only a few hours away. At 3:30 am though, Joan and I decided it was cocktail hour somewhere in Florida so we had a little party before turning in.



Steve & Joan at the Farris' home in Bangkok

We awoke too early and enjoyed a nice breakfast at the hotel while awaiting George's arrival. George was the perfect host and made sure our days were kept busy and no time wasted. Our days were spent visiting Palaces and Shrines. Buddha's seemed to be everywhere from a lying down position to upright. One day we took a boat trip up the river to a place where we boarded a bus for the remainder of the trip to the old capital that was left in ruins from the war with the Burmese.

On our third day in Bangkok my brother Danny, who resides in Hawaii, had just decided a few weeks earlier to join us, joined us. Now George, bless his heart, had three of us to contend with. But as the trooper he is, he tried to keep everything under his control. We enjoyed the time we were able to spend with George and his family and he should consider himself lucky to have children as mature and well behaved as they were. Would have liked to spend more time with Ginny, George's wife, but some of us still have to work.

Our time in Bangkok went by too quickly and then it was time to head to Vietnam and meet up with this group of men that I didn't even know (except for Smitty). We left Bangkok on the morning of the 10th with a short 1-½ hour flight to Saigon arriving on time.

Going through customs was easy and as we left the airport we found our names on a sign but not a soul in sight from Ann Tours. Without losing a beat I picked up the sign and started heading into the crowd until we were found by Ann Tours who had just 60 seconds earlier put Mr. Mike Thibault (A/2/503) in a cab to the office. We loaded up and off we went to Saigon and the start of our adventure.



The modern Caravelle Hotel in downtown Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). The rooftop to the right is the fun Saigon Saigon Bar.

(continued....)



The first thing we noticed was the wall-to-wall procession of motorbikes sprinkled among the taxis and various other modes of transportation. Some of the drivers even looked familiar! We made our way to the Caravelle Hotel that would be our home for the next 8 days. That evening, at dinner, we were introduced to our mates starting with A.B. Garcia (HHC/2/503) and his son Loness, both from Australia, Mike T, sort of the leader of the pack, Mike Sturges and his dearest friend Jack Ribera (both A/2/503), Craig Ford, our "first bat guy", Dale Olson (A/2/503), and Lew Smith (HHC/2/503), along with Tony Nong, one of the principals of Ann Tours, and his right hand man, Truc, whom over the course of the trip not only was a wonderful guide but became a friend to all. Tony ordered food for all and after toasts, at which time Tony welcomed us and shared a little of his past, we settled in for our first Vietnamese meal. Unfortunately, this was one of the better meals served during our stay.

The evening went well with everyone feeling a little more comfortable with each other. Back to the Caravelle and a nightcap at the Paradise Club. Talking about a trip back in time, it reminded me of some bars I visited back in '65.



The first meal many of these Sky Soldiers shared together since 1966, when canned pound cake may have been on the dessert menu, if one were lucky.

Sunday, February 11, 2001

We had a nice breakfast with everything you'd want, including eggs the way you like them. We didn't realize how important breakfast was until we became aware of the local cuisine, "fried dog shit" as one of our brothers so indelicately named one of the meals served -- and you know he wasn't far off the mark.

All of us went to the War Crimes Museum and were able to sit and meet with a former enemy general. Some of the men were offended and felt it was too political. I myself became somewhat emotional and still cannot understand why but was okay with the whole setup. I know I had some questions but was reluctant to ask so as not to upset anyone. All in all it was a good experience.



Photo of Sky Soldiers with enemy general, his lieutenant, and museum curator at the War Crimes Museum.

From the museum we drove for 1-½ hours to the tunnels of Cu Chi. After a film on the hardships we were accused of causing we were given a tour of the tunnels and shelters built underground. Throughout the tour the ground was marked with craters from the B-52 bombings. Most of us crawled through some of the tunnel network including Dale and A.B. Understand, the tunnels were made for a person under 5' 3" and weighed no more than 120 lbs. Now picture two guys over 6 foot weighing in excess of 225 crawling through the tunnels. Some of us were afraid that we'd have to go back and push them out.



Our (late) friend Dale Olson. The tunnels were not made for big and tall Sky Soldiers such as him...

(continued....)



...but, were just the right size for Sky Soldiers such as Steve.



I was really proud of Jack for going, it wasn't easy for him. Back in '65-'66 I had the occasion to check some tunnels and never ventured too far in. After seeing this massive complex I have a much better understanding of why it would have been next to impossible for us to win.

That evening we were supposed to have a lesson in Vietnamese from a teacher that Mike T knew. Needless to say we didn't arrive back till late so we had to postpone until the following evening.

Monday, February 12, 2001

Following breakfast, we were picked up and driven to the Hung Vuong General Secondary School, which is where a new dorm had been built thanks to fund-raising efforts by Mike T. The purpose of this trip was to teach English to one of the classes. Joan was really excited and had her lesson prepared. I believe Dale, Mike T, A.B. and his son, Loness, and Joan and I were herded into a room where we awaited the principal who eventually sent word down that the students were taking tests and the meeting was not going to happen. We were able to view the dorms that so many of us had donated money to build but were disappointed a morning had been wasted due to bad timing.



A view of the dormitory built by Mike Thibault along with his Sky Soldier buddies and others.

The afternoon was spent shopping and walking around the area outside the hotel and trying our luck at crossing the streets. We were forewarned not to ever step backwards but to just move forward as the motorbikes and cars would pass behind you. I was hesitant at first but I'd grab Joan's arm and off we'd go; and sure enough everyone just passed behind us without losing a beat. Believe me, it took some getting used to. By the end of the trip I was an old pro at it.



While crossing the street in Saigon, never step backwards.

Dinner that evening was at the Lemon Grass restaurant, which must be Mike T's favorite, located two blocks from the hotel. After dinner Mike T, Joan, Loness and I headed off to take a class on the art of speaking Vietnamese.

Our driver was Mr. Minn who also works for Ann Tours. It seems Mr. Minn had led a charmed life. As the story goes, Mr. Minn was a helicopter pilot for the South and had the ability to crash three choppers during the war, and survive. I think he became a hero to all of us. Off to school we went with a short drive somewhere through the city.

We ended the evening with a drink at the Rex Hotel, where Mr. Smith is bivouacked, and a nightcap at the Caravelle.

Tuesday, February 13, 2001

Breakfast at the Caravelle has now become the most important meal of the day. We'd fill ourselves with eggs, potatoes and all sorts of pastries that had to hold us till the next morning.

(continued....)



Today we are going to the American Consulate, and as I headed to the lobby of the hotel there was Danny talking to Craig Ford. Good to see him, the last time I saw my brother was at our Dad's funeral 2 years earlier. Anyway, he elected not to go with us to the Consulate offices but would meet with us later and spend the afternoon with me.

Joan, Dale, Loness, Mike T and myself left for the Consulate minus A.B. who was also going to go but had a run in with some tequila the night before and couldn't quite make it out of bed. Rumor has it, the night before he thought he saw a building falling and put his body in harm's way keeping the building from toppling over.

The visit was short and interesting. We were able to spend some time with Charles Ray who is the Consulate General and reports directly to the Ambassador in Hanoi. It was a very informative visit without any politics playing a role in the conversation.

That afternoon, my brother Danny, Lew, Craig, A. B. and son and myself along with our trusted guide Truc headed to the rice paddies of Operation Marauder where my best friend, Gerry Levy, was killed on 2 January 1966. It's unbelievable that nothing has changed in 35 years. Time has stood still and passed over this part of the world. The same dugout boats and the homes with dirt floors were as I remember back in '65.



Guide Truc and Dale having fun with local kids near LZ Wine, Operation Marauder.

As we walked along the dikes that may very well been the same ones we were on Jan. 2, 1966, when the artillery rounds landed so close to me that I left an imprint of my body on the side of the dike trying to hide from the shells, a couple of children appeared followed by more. The next thing there is a half dozen of them

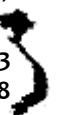
filled with smiles on their faces. Being the kid that I am, I challenged the oldest, about 10-12 years old, to a race down the dike. You should see this trooper go and was leading until he tried to avoid what appeared to be a booby trap and fell on his ass. I thought it was a grenade and threw my body on top to save the children. After dusting myself off I took a walk alone with my thoughts and started thinking about Gerry Levy. That's all it took and I could not control the emotions that came forth. I can only remember shedding tears three times since my service days, with the Wall in Washington being the first and the trip to Nam brought out the other two.

I do remember putting Gerry on the chopper severely wounded and continuing on with the mission that I believe prevented me from saying goodbye. I believe I was finally able to say goodbye and tell him how much I cared for and missed him. Even now it brings tears to my eyes trying to write about it.



Doc Levy, (KIA) on left, with buddy helping buddy, June '65

(continued....)



Other than that the children were great and asked for nothing but to hang with us. I brought some small boxes of raisins and handed them out to the kids. I had to eat one first to show them it was edible and once that was done they all gave it a try.

We all wondered if anyone from this small village, if you could even call it that, remembered the war. A few of the people were older and maybe had some memories of past years. We asked Truc to ask any of the older people if they remembered the war and found out that these people were resettled here from the North after the war ended.

We arrived back at the hotel and planned a quiet dinner with Truc and Danny. Ran into Craig at the hotel and all went to the Orient Restaurant for the best meal of the whole trip. While enjoying the meal and local music I noticed Michael Caine, the actor, having dinner with his wife a few tables from us. I wanted to tell him how much I enjoyed his movies especially the one he made with Sean Connery called *The Man Who Would Be King*. The problem at the time, I couldn't remember the name of the movie so I just didn't bother. I might add that he was in town making a movie called *The Quiet American*, which was being shot outside our hotel.

Finished the evening with a nightcap at the top of the Caravelle with Joan and Craig before retiring to bed.

Wednesday, February 14, 2001

It's Valentine's Day, which I'm happy to remember so I can keep in good with Joan. Off to another war museum at ten and I think all 10 are present. The museum is located on the grounds of the old 3rd Field Army Hospital where I was operated on. I think I spent 2 or 3 days there before being evacuated to the Philippines for recovery before heading back to the states. I remember Smitty telling about a young man that took his own life in a small room at the hospital.



3rd Field Army Hospital in Tan San Nhut near Saigon, now a War Arms Museum.

I found the afternoon both informative and more relaxed during lunch with the former enemy general than the first meeting we had on Monday. I enjoyed listening to the old gentleman who explained in detail

how, with patience comes the victor. I was impressed with this old man and his friends, who all seemed to enjoy the meeting with some old soldiers. You could tell they had a respect for us as we had for them.

We toured the arms museum, which showed the Vietnamese at war going back to the 50s with the French. As usual our interpreter Truc translated their explanations on how primitive their weapons were at the beginning of the revolution and how at the end not too much had changed as to how they used our own weapons against us. Of interest was one Vietnamese vet who spent 6 months walking the Ho Chi Min Trail during the war with the French and stayed on till the end of the war with us.

This afternoon we went to a school for the deaf here in Saigon. Compared to the other school, here was a school that can use all the help it can get. It's in an old building three stories high. There are so many children who attend, that school is split into two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The children range in age from pre-teens to early twenties. Most of our time was spent with four students, three boys and a girl all in their early twenties. Joan and I tried a little sign language on the kids and to our amazement they understood. We came to find out that American Sign is taken from the French, as is the Vietnamese. The smiles on the faces of the students when they found out that they could communicate with us Americans were priceless. I can tell you this was the highlight of the trip for Joan, and I don't think anything can top this. One thing we noticed was how old the hearing aids were the kids were wearing, but I guess we should be grateful that they even had hearing aids. Before leaving we left some supplies that Dale had brought from the states as well as some money we collected.



Steve & Joan, who is hearing impaired, were big hits at the school for the deaf.

(continued....)



On the way back to the Caravelle Danny, Joan and I were dropped off at what was once the Presidential Palace, which is now named the Unification Palace. Not a bad place to live--I thought the helicopter on the roof gave it that special touch. I do remember the rumors on what was going on in the basement of the palace.



The Presidential Palace

A casual walk back to the hotel and dinner planned at the New World Hotel. The way we figure it; if Clinton and his staff can eat there it can't be all bad. Wrong, the presentation was better but the food was much the same. So, spring rolls and fried rice as I usually have for dinner and off to the disco, which was next door.

Now you would think on Valentine's Day that the beautiful people would be out! Well wrong again; with the exception of a few couples and some single women not much was going on. So after one drink and a couple of dances to music that was way too loud we headed back to our hotel with a stop at the Paradise and low and behold there was brother Smitty. A drink with the old solider and off to bed since tomorrow will be a long day down to the Mekong Delta.

Thursday, February 15, 2001



Joan visits with Vietnamese lady on our trip down the river.

Today was an early day since traveling to the Mekong Delta will take a little time. Today we have a new guide whose name I don't recall. But off we went, Danny, Loness, A B, Joan and me along with our driver and guide in our van south to catch a boat for our trip to the Delta. On the way we stopped at a Temple that had an eye staring down at you. As our guide tells it, this temple is a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism,

Catholic and Tao. Throw in a little Judaism and you'd really have something. This religion must be popular since all you see are these one eyed temples as we head down the highway. Finally, we arrive at a spot in the river where a number of boats are awaiting their passengers. I got to tell you, I wasn't sure this boat was going to make it away from the dock. But with the start of the engine the first mate, I assume his wife, untied us and off we went down the river to the Mekong. I must add that before we got on the boat I purchased two loaves of fresh bread just in case.

The trip was enjoyable but the area is very primitive with electricity just being introduced only three years ago. As we made our way south you could see all the commerce taking place on the river. Boats loaded with pineapples, bananas and other native fruit and vegetables were transferred from larger boats to smaller ones that I assume take their wares to the different towns and villages. As everywhere else in Vietnam there were mamasans peddling their noodle soup and other delicacies from their small boats to the people that worked on the larger boats.

Our cruise down the river was slow and peaceful with a stop along the way to visit an old rather large home built by the French. Some local Vietnamese sang us songs while we sat around sipping tea and eating fresh fruit. After a short stay we were back on the river heading to a small village area for lunch. Another authentic lunch with our favorite dish, standing-up fish.



A.B. kicking back during a stop on this boat trip.

As usual, rice and the bread I brought along made for a nice lunch, but Loness ate everything put in front of him to Joan's continued amazement. One of the more interesting stops on this day was to a village where rice cakes and spring roll wrapping was produced. What an amazing thing to watch. I mean, this was so primitive that I'm sure it's being done in the same manner their ancestors did.

(continued....)





A.B.'s son, Loness, helps with the cooking.

I've got to tell you, these people have been recycling long before we knew what the word was. Nothing goes to waste. A good example is the process for making rice cakes. Everything from the husk from the rice, burned to keep the kettle hot, to the ashes from the husks used for fertilizer.

After disembarking from our motor yacht we worked our way back to the hotel where we were to meet Mike T, Loness and our Vietnamese teacher for dinner. We chose the sister restaurant to the Mandarin thinking we'd have another fabulous meal. It was okay, but not as good as the Mandarin.

After a short walk back to the hotel, Joan headed to bed and I went to the now famous watering hole looking for any signs of the troops. To my surprise no one was there and after checking the *Saigon Saigon Bar* at the Hotel it was time to turn in.



The outdoor Saigon Saigon Bar on the rooftop of the Caravelle Hotel, our CP during this reinvasion.

Friday, February 16, 2001

It's off to Bien Hoa today, about an hour drive north of Saigon. This is where our base was located when our unit first arrived in country in May '65. About the only thing I remember about the town was a dirt road outside the base and a large bar right outside the gate. Rumor has it the bar was owned by the women that cuts my hair in Sarasota. Before our arrival we made a

stop at the location where Jack and Mike were wounded. Thirty-five years ago these two men were on patrol on this same road when they were caught in an ambush that took lives and badly wounded most others. Both men had been friends since Basic and were next to each other when they were cut down by claymore mines and machine gun fire. Jack lay severely wounded alongside his best friend, Mike, who was also wounded, I'm sure wondering if they were going to get out alive.



Jack's war is over as he recuperates at Walter Reed.

Although my wounds were not as severe as either Jack or Mike's and I had a full recovery, I do know what it feels like wondering if you were going to get out alive. I cannot feel what they must of felt like that day, but I felt honored to be there with them and in some small way be a part of it.



L-R: Mike Sturges and his blood-brother Jack "Jackattack" Ribera, A/2/503, introducing an old friend at the War Arms Museum, formerly 3rd Field Army Hospital, in Ho Chi Minh City.

Bien Hoa was a drive by and disappointment since we could not get close to the base and the only one runway of the airbase was visible. We drove into town with a stop for lunch at a waterfront restaurant along the Dong Nai river for another delicious meal of rice and spring rolls. Back to Saigon early enough to do some shopping for the kids and ourselves.

(continued....)



One of the things I like to do is bring something back from wherever I travel. An example would be my trip to Ireland -- I brought back Joan.



**Sky Soldiers having lunch in Bien Hoa
along the Dong Nai river.**

The first day we were in Saigon and taking a walkabout we stumbled onto an art gallery that had some paintings that caught our eye. After spending some time looking at the art I got to talking with the owner who shared with me that back in the 60s he was an artillery officer with the south and had to do two terms of five years each at the reeducation camps. I said to him that he must have not been a good communist to go to camp twice. I asked him how he was able to stay in Saigon and he explained that his wife was a well-known artist and her sister was a novelist who has published 50 books and because of them he was allowed to stay. It's only the past couple of years that life has gotten better for him. We thanked him and left knowing that we'd be back at the end of our trip.

Saturday, February 17, 2001

Today was the day of the dedication of Mike T's dormitory and I have to wonder if all will show up in ties. When I checked out the window of our room I noticed they were finally shooting the movie *"The Quiet American"* with Michael Cain leading the way. It will be interesting to see the movie and see if the scenes around our hotel stay or make the cutting room floor?

We weren't leaving till around 8:45 so Joan and I were up early to have our breakfast. Transportation showed up on time and we all piled on the bus, except for Mike T who was nowhere to be found. We arrived at the school and were herded to the back where the dedication was to take place.

All in all it was nicely done and I guess the dorm will help some poor children from out in the country to have a chance of a higher education. I was happy to take part in it and was glad the ceremony was kept short.



**Sky Soldiers, family members and school staff
at dedication of the dormitory.**

After photos we were served lunch which had one coarse after another. We sat at a table with Mike T, Tony and three fathers whose children would be using the dorm. One of the men couldn't thank us enough and had even written a poem that he read to us. It was a good day and I felt in my heart that we were able to help a few poor families get their children an education and a chance to get away from the poor life that they otherwise were headed for.

The evening was to be our last night in town and we were hoping to have dinner with the whole gang. We waited for Dale to return from his trip to a lighthouse in Vung Tau he had been talking about all week, and we were all headed to some western steak house, except Mike T and Dale and had a great time. Toasts all round with a special thanks to Truc, our new friend and guide as well as our interpreter. Dinner was one of the better one's we had while in Nam and there was a country western band to boot. After dinner and a short walk back to the hotel we said our goodbyes since we were heading back home in the morning.



**2/503d's LZ Wine in Mekong Delta, site of beginning of
Operation Marauder. Today, beautiful, peaceful, and quiet.**

(continued....)



Sunday, February 18, 2001

Our bags are packed, breakfast has been consumed and we're awaiting our transportation to the airport to start our journey back home and put an end to one fine adventure. While awaiting our ride we ran into A.B. and the rest of the gang on their way to some mountain and a climb to the top where another Buddha awaits. Interestingly, Loness is nowhere to be found and after inquiring, it seems the great porcelain Gods have finally gotten to him -- probably the *real* food we had last night did him in. Off to the airport for a short hop to Bangkok, for the evening and an early morning flight back to the states.

The adventure is finally over and I must say that it has been one of the most pleasurable vacations I have ever taken. I want to thank all of the men of the 173d whom I was able to share a week of memories with. Thanks also to Tony and his people who made each day a memorable one. Thanks to George Farris and his family for making Bangkok assessable to us in a way most tourists would only dream of and special thanks to Joan who is a real trooper for putting up with all of us.

We are now looking forward to the reunion in Ft. Worth and a mini union of sorts. Until then my brothers, I will be thinking of you often and look forward to emails that may find their way to me.

With thanks to all,

Steven



Saigon today. A beautiful city, at night.



Sign Up to be Part of the Spartan Club to Support the Perpetual Care for & Maintenance of our 173d Memorial at Fort Benning, GA



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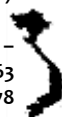
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Lest we forget.





James Howard "Jimmy" Sink 503rd PIR, WWII

James Howard "Jimmy" Sink, 90, of Roanoke passed away Friday January 2, 2015. His parents, Marvin and Ella Sink and four brothers, Edgar, Ralph, Cleveland, and J. B. Sink preceded him. Mr. Sink served proudly in the United States Army during World War II in the South Pacific Theater in the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, where he received the Purple Heart Medal. He retired from the Rainbow Bread Company after 26 years of service before starting M & J Electrical Contractors where he retired after 30 plus years. He was also a member of the Williamson Road Church of the Brethren where he was the Head Usher for many years. During his free time, he played guitar in a band, The Joyful Noise and was an avid bowler. Left to cherish his memory are his loving and devoted wife of 68 years, Dot Sink; two daughters, Sandra Williams and husband, Phil, Melody Sink and Steve Dawkins, all of Virginia Beach; two grandsons, Brandon Williams and wife Tara, Kris Williams and wife Angie; five great grandchildren; sister, Violet Wray of Rocky Mount, along with a host of nieces, nephews and other relatives; and his two business partners, Bob Layman and Mike Wilbourn.



Job well done, Jimmy, rest easy trooper.



Landing on Corregidor...The Rock
They were young once....and paratroopers

For the Men of the 503rd, WWII

With apologies to Bob Hope, Leo Robin & Ralph Rainger
-- sung to the tune of *Thanks for the Memories*:

~ Thanks for the 503rd Memories ~

Thanks for the memories,
of tower jumping boys,
chutes instead of toys,
running 'round the Benning's ground
it must have been a joy.
We thank you, so much.

And thanks for that ocean trip,
across to distant land,
with Brothers of a Band,
with kits on back and ammo packed,
ready to make a stand.
We thank you, so much.

Markham Valley was no picnic,
combat jump one for you,
but you just hoped to kick nips,
and you did just that,
and thanks to you.

And thanks for the memories,
of the landing at Ley-te,
better you than me.
The Jap attacks you threw them back,
you brought them to their knees.
We thank you, so much.

Your time on Negros was fearful,
you'd had your share of that.
To fallen buddies a tear-ful,
but what the heck,
you went right back.

And thanks for the memories,
of low flying in a plane,
at Corregidor 'neath your Main,
of coming down to that Rock's ground
and never once complain.
WE THANK YOU, SO MUCH.

The original song was sung by Bob Hope with words and music by Leo Robin & Ralph Rainger, and arranged by Gordon Jenkins. Originally from *The Big Broadcast of 1938*. If I get sued for writing lyrics to their music, I'm sending them to you 503 guys, and *All the Way!* Ed





503rd Regimental Combat Team in South Pacific

Vintage photos by Retired Road Dog, Sat Aug 27, 2011

"I wanted to start a string about the 503rd Parachute Infantry & 503rd Regimental Combat Team in the PTO. I acquired a box of negatives from a paratrooper, now deceased. He was formerly an instructor at Fort Benning and a friend of my uncle, who went to the 501st in the ETO. (I have another box of photos from Benning in 1943 that I will share later). These are all personal photos and not seen in the National Archives or in any publications. They are also not professional quality, just more like snap shots but still interesting."



Sgt. Maj.

If anyone is interested, the whole collection is available at <http://www.TheVeteransMuseum.com>



These and other 503rd photos can be seen at:
<http://g503.com/forums/viewtopic.php?f=108&t=189764>

Note: We visited [TheVeteransMuseum.com](http://www.TheVeteransMuseum.com) web site listed but it doesn't appear to contain photos or is beyond our computer skill level. Ed



INCIDENTS AT SAN CARLOS PRISONER COMPOUND

Being memories of Louis B. Aiken of the Japanese Prisoner Compound at San Carlos, Negros, Philippine Islands during August and early September 1945

Louis B. Aiken



The following incidents took place at San Carlos, Negros Island, Philippines in August 1945, at which time the Japanese had either surrendered or were in the process of surrendering to the 1st Bn 503 Prcht Inf RCT.

To the best of my knowledge and memory there were two surrendering groups of Japanese to the Bn CO (Maj. Richmond) at or near San Carlos. The first surrendering group were somewhat of an advance party and were to be used in preparing the Prison Compound in which the main body of prisoners would be held. Tents were erected, mess facilities were prepared, latrines and sanitation areas, ground rules, etc.



One of the prisoner compounds on San Carlos
(web photo)

Assigned as the officer in charge of the compound was Lt. Chuck "Bull" Foster of the 1st Plt. "B" Co. He immediately requested an NCO as his assistant and me having been Plt. Sgt. of the 1st Plt. during the Negros Operation was the logical choice, whether I liked it or not. Actually he requested Sgt. Aiken and the CO, Lt. Goetz, was delighted to comply so as to cut down on my drinking time in celebration of the fact that we had saved the world.

Immediately made a similar request for an assistant to help me conduct whatever duties and services I was required to perform in my new assignment as NCOIC of the Japanese Prisoner Compound. Lt. Goetz was delighted to honor my request and asked who it was that I wanted and I replied that I needed the services of one "Ross J. McClelland" from Andrews, N.C. and one of the several Scouts that I had entrusted with the 1st Plt interest under combat conditions and otherwise. I have somewhat strayed from my initial intent for writing this little story but I had to kind of set this thing up and explain how I came about being involved with the Japanese Prisoner Compound at San Carlos, Negros, PI, August 1945.

McClelland could smell alcohol buried two (2) ft deep wrapped in two (2) GI blankets and was well versed in the art of bartering or confiscation, whichever came first, when locating and obtaining strong drink. These qualifications were the deciding factors in my request for his services as my assistant, thus allowing me more time to attend to my duties as Lt. Foster's assistant and at the same time keep a ready supply of the local beverages on hand.

As stated previously there were two (2) Japanese surrenders to our Bn CO, one took place so as to provide an advance party group or work group to prepare the final compound for the Main Body of Japanese under Command of a Japanese Col. This 2nd surrendering was to be semi-formal and was to be timed as near as possible to the actual Surrender Time which I believe was to be in Tokyo Bay (?) aboard a Battleship and supervised by Gen MacArthur.



Photo # USA C-1189 Signing Japanese surrender on USS Missouri, 2 Sept. 1945

(continued....)



The Advance party arrived, erected tents, cleaned the area and set up the Old Jap Col's tent or Qtrs etc. Then as the actual date of final Surrender the Old Jap Col and a group of Jap officers, his staff no doubt, assembled on one side of the road running parallel to the Compound and the Bn CO and his small contingent of Officers took their designated positions with their backs to the Compound and facing the Jap group of officers.



503rd troopers Joe Conway (back to camera) – Jim Mullaney, nearest camera with sword.
(Web photo)

In the meantime there was one "B" Co soldier in the town of San Carlos celebrating the victory and the impending surrender of the Japanese troops to our Bn CO. Evidently it suddenly occurred to this soldier that he was about to miss a very historic event which was scheduled to take place at any minute, unless he could somehow get to the place of surrender at a very fast pace. He rushed outside of the drinking establishment and commandeered a Calishe (a one horse rubber tired buggy) and grabbing the reins hollared *git-up!*

My location or position during this expected historical event was to the rear of the Bn CO and his group. I was just inside the compound giving me an excellent view of the situation. I could also see both ways up and down the semi-hard surfaced road. Everything looked in order, the Jap C.O. and his group were making final preparations for presentation of swords etc. to the Bn CO and so forth.

I heard a commotion to my left which sounded as if there was a horse running at a very fast pace, *clipity, clipity, clipity* and someone shouting very loudly urging the little horse on to an even faster pace. When the

little Horse rounded a curve approx. 125' up the road from the surrender formation, it was obvious that in that buggy stood an "American Patriot", who was a member of "B" Co 503 RCT. There stood Pfc "Pig Shit" Coltier, (pronounced Col-cher), from Indiana. USA. His claim to fame was that he was raised on a pig farm, thus he was quickly named by his fellow "B" Co buddies "Pig Shit" Coltier).

All of a sudden Coltier realizes he was fast approaching a group of people, one group on one side of the road and another group on the opposite side facing each other. Being quick of mind and alert as all "B" Co troops were he quickly sized up the situation and realized he had to stop the little horse. He began to pull back on the reins and at the same time commanding the little horse to *whoa, whoa, damn it whoa!* The little horse tried but he had been running at such a fast pace and the weight of the buggy behind him and this weight pushing him as well was making it quite an ordeal to follow Pig Shit's commands. Finally the little fella just kinda set down on his hind haunch or butt.

The rig finally came to a stop approx 20 ft from the formation. The "Bn CO" stood there looking at "Pig Shit" Coltier standing up in the buggy as if he were an Egyptian Pharaoh surveying the spoils of war. The CO kinda smiled, the Old Jap Col never flinched or looked either to the left and right, just straight ahead. However some of the Jap officers to his rear appeared to be figgity and even trying to suppress a laugh and you could see some of them smiling and at the same time trying to catch a quick look at this "Great American" who had arrived in his chariot to observe the very soon to be historical moment. Me, and a few others were about to bust wide open with laughter, suppressed somewhat but nevertheless very much amused. (Movies of this incident would have made me rich).

The Bn CO looked at Coltier in his chariot, then at the Jap surrender group as if judging the distance or space between his group and the Jap group; then he raised his hand as did "Gen Patton" and motioned for the Brave American to continue his forward direction of movement, thus allowing him to review the surrender formation. Coltier obliged. He grasped the reins firmly and still standing erect and dignified, commanded the little horse to *git up*, and very slowly he passed between the two groups at a very slow pace, looking neither to the left or right until he reached the "B" Co C.P., at which time he dismounted and tied his little horse to a small tree.

(continued....)



Commands were given and the Jap surrender party presented their Samurai Swords to the accepting party. Our Bn CO, who I believe was Maj Richmond, had to have a great understanding complimented by a large sense of humor. To my knowledge nothing was ever acknowledged to Pig Shit Coltier for his gallant attempt and accomplishment of having observed the Japanese formal surrender at San Carlos, Negros, PI, Aug 1945; an event he had looked forward to for a number of years.

This may be somewhat hard to believe, and I admit I had a bottle hid in the grass and I admit I was taking an occasional shot from the bottle - anticipating and in celebration of this great Historical event, however it did occur and was not a hallucination.

"B" Co troops did not practice or know the art of lying, however we did on occasion exaggerate. Truly, this event did occur approx as I have attempted to present it, and is intended as a tribute to one "Pig Shit" Coltier from Indiana, U.S.A., combat soldier, "B" Co, 503 RCT WWII, San Carlos, Negros PT, Aug 1945.



Filipino villagers on Los Negros Island, WWII (Web photo)

The following event is presented in an effort to give the reader an idea how the Japanese chain of command functioned especially as related to discipline of the troops.

I was standing in the compound one day observing nothing in particular, just looking around when all of a sudden there appeared a Jap officer and he stopped in front of one of the enlisted men's tents. He shouted a command and out stepped what appeared to be a Jap NCO. The officer appeared to be chewing him out good in a loud voice, and when he had finished he slapped him pretty hard and then dismissed him.

The NCO went back into the tent and then came back outside with a soldier who was evidently a subordinate. They stepped around beside the tent and the senior NCO chewed this subordinate out to a fare you well. Evidently this subordinate knew what was

coming because he appeared to brace himself and good he did. The senior NCO hit him upside the head so hard that the man went down on one knee. Never made a sound, stood back up at attention and was dismissed.

Very shortly thereafter I saw this subordinate come out of an adjacent tent pushing ahead of him, very hard pushing, and an occasional kick in the butt to what was evidently a poor ole private. He took the private to almost the identical spot beside the tent where he had been knocked down and continued to chew him out and, I assume, some Japanese cussing was used. This poor private had on glasses. I saw him remove them and lay them gently aside, as if he did not want to take any chances of them being broken, he straightened up at attention and the NCO hit this poor fella so hard that the poor devil fell back and was evidently knocked out momentarily. The NCO did not wait to see if the private would or could get up. Finally the private rolled over, retrieved his glasses, stood up and walked slowly back to the tent and a wiser man I'm sure wishing to hell he had not done whatever it was that caused the wrath of the Japanese disciplinary chain of command to fall upon him in such a wrathful manner on this particular day.

Friends, they believe in discipline.

The following event took place very shortly after the formal surrender. There were a number of women who came with the several groups that surrendered and these were kept in a separate small compound prepared especially for them.

It seems that the advance group had prepared a sort of latrine for the women's compound but not suitable, as the women complained.

An interpreter approached with this complaint and I suggested that a detail be formed for the purpose of constructing a better latrine for these fine women.

I obtained a fairly large latrine or mess fly (canvas), had McClelland locate a hammer or two, shovels, etc., nails, necessary boards, 2x4 etc. to make suitable sitting arrangements for the ladies in their soon to be latrine. McClelland, being the good scout that he was, very quickly came up with the necessary supplies to complete the project. I requested a detail of one (1) Jap NCO and 5 or 6 privates to dig and build the women's latrine. They were quickly obtained and I placed Ross J. McClelland in charge of this project. This of course gave him ready access to the women's compound and I figured he would get a kick out of observing these ladies first hand.

(continued....)



After a fashion, approx one (1) hr or so, I decided to go over to the compound and see how things were going. When I got there the Jap detail with McClelland had just finished the project - were heading out the gate. They all sat down under the shade of a very large tree just outside the compound. The NCO shouted something to the women, evidently telling them that the latrine was finished and ready for action. I forgot to mention I also had an interpreter go along with the group so Mac could communicate. The interpreters which I keep mentioning were not American Japanese but several that were Japanese and were prisoners just as the others.

Anyway, the latrine was finished and ready for service. I did not go inside the compound to look at the finished product and had no idea as to just what kind of trench and sitting arrangements had been prepared.

Shortly what appeared to be one of the older women, probably Korean or Formosan, came from the tent and went into the new latrine facility. All of a sudden all hell broke loose with this woman hollering very loudly in Japanese or whatever. The Jap detail looked at each other and fell out in uncontrollable loud laughter. The woman came out of the latrine, walked fairly close to the fence and continued to raise hell swinging her arms etc.

I finally got the interpreter calmed down enough to explain to me what the trouble was and why so much laughter, even some of the other women had come out of the tent and joined in the laughter.

It seemed that the slit trench had been dug and at each end of the trench there were two posts about 4 or 5 inches apart and on top of these posts were nailed boards lengthwise the trench. Thus, when the women attempted to sit down on the seating arrangement one or the other parts of her bottom anatomy used in a latrine would always be covered up causing considerable concern, not to mention being very messy.

Her description of what the problem was and explanation as to what could or did happen created a very hilarious situation and McClelland and I had to join in the fun once we were sure what had happened.

The matter was rectified by eliminating one set of posts at each end of the trench and by lowering the remaining posts a bit, and using only one board so the ladies could sit on the thing or squat as a chicken on a roost balanced on their feet. Anyway they liked the arrangement better and all seemed happy, and the Jap detail laughed all the way back to their compound, and I'm sure related their experiences to their buddies for

another round of laughter. I still ain't figured out how they could use only one board better?

Oh yes, Ross J. McClelland, if you remember previously I had explained that he was very adept in the art of bartering and of course in obtaining items of barter. I didn't know it, but as time wore on he became quite familiar with the ladies in the compound, not romantically or anything of that nature. I noticed one day he was looking at a small ladies watch and inquired as to where he obtained it. He finally told me was obtaining the women's personal jewelry - trading it for rice, other veg. chicken etc. for the women and at the same time picking up a few bottles of hooch in the trade off. I never asked any more questions because I had probably had a few shots of his strong drink obtained in some of his trade or bartering escapades.

I have often wondered if those poor women had any jewelry left or if McClelland got it all before he rotated. He was still at San Carlos when I rotated in Sept 1945.

He had joined "B" Co in 1943 after the Markham Valley Operation. I think he was originally a 507 man sent as a replacement to the Regt.



The 503rd's Nazdab combat jump. (Web photo)

"At the time of their first combat operation, one could argue that they were the most well-trained airborne unit in the American army. The first entry into combat was a jump on Nazdab airfield, in the Markham Valley of New Guinea, on September 5, 1943."

I will wrap these memories up with one last shot or incident.

In the compound there was one tent, or maybe more, used for sick bay, aid station etc. Some of these poor souls were very sick and a number died. The first and only death that I was involved with was that of a Japanese officer, Maj. I think....

(continued....)



....His good friend, another Jap officer, approached me with a request that I allow him to give his very close friend a decent burial. I asked him as to just where he wanted to bury his friend and thru the interpreter he explained that he wanted to bury him under one of the large shade trees near the old cane mill and adjacent to the women's compound. I thought for a minute, pondered the fact that he knew exactly where he wanted this burial to take place and then it dawned on me, he was probably familiar with the area and had probably stayed in one of the several houses located on the approach to the women's compound.

I thought about the situation for a couple of minutes and said to myself, why not. I told the interpreter to make the arrangements, burial detail etc., and meet me with the body at the compound gate in about 30 minutes. He, the officer, and about 6 or 8 EM, met me there and we proceeded with the body to the burial site. I always wore a side arm and probably didn't need that, because these folks never gave me any trouble after they surrendered. Anyway at the burial site under the large tree the Jap officer took a shovel and dug the first spade full, then the interpreter took his turn at a spade full and then the enlisted men finished the job. The body was lowered into the grave wrapped in a shroud of some sort. The Jap officer went through a burial recital, bowed a few times to his departed friend and placed one large flower (wild type) he had obtained on the body, and then put one spade full of dirt in the grave, then the interpreter and then the enlisted men finished the burial and smoothed over the grave.

The old Jap officer stood there a few minutes looking down at the grave and then turned to the interpreter, said a few words and the interpreter in turn repeated to me what the officer had said. He was thanking me for allowing him to bury his friend in this shady spot. I nodded that I understood and he bowed and saluted me and I returned his salute. He said a few more words to the interpreter and the interpreter relayed the message. The old officer wanted me to allow the enlisted Jap prisoners to fall out in the area around the sugar cane mill and pick wild flowers to put on his friends grave.

I pondered this request a little while and decided, yes I would allow the EM to go out and search for suitable wild flowers provided the officer fully understood my terms, and agreed to them. I explained to the interpreter that I would allow the officer's request with the understanding that the Jap officer was to stand by my left side until the last of the EM had returned from the flower picking detail. Should any of the EM fail to return we would prepare for another funeral. It would be the Jap officer's funeral. The

interpreter looked at me in astonishment and seemed to hesitate and I repeated to him again exactly what to tell the Jap officer.

Evidently he gave him a reasonable facsimile of my terms because the Jap officer moved immediately to my left side, barked orders to his men and away the four went and came back in short order bearing arm loads of wild flowers for the grave. The old officer was grinning from ear to ear and giving orders as to just how he wanted his men to arrange the flowers. He finally turned to me bowed very low and then snapped to attention, saluting as he did, so I returned his salute and we marched back to the main compound where he again asked the interpreter to thank me, he then bowed and saluted once more.

I don't think I offended the Jap officer one bit, because I believe he realized the predicament he could place me in should one or more of the prisoners not return.

I'm sure under similar circumstances I or other American prisoners were not and would not be granted permission to even give our dead a decent burial much less fan out and pick flowers without, or with a guard, had we been prisoners of the Japanese.

"D" Company on patrol, May '45.



"D Co. on Negros, Philippine Islands in May 1945.

From left: Roberts, Fishman, St. Germain, Hall & unknown."
(John Reynolds "D" Co. collection, 503d PRCT Heritage Bn web site)

THE AUTHOR, LOU AIKEN, WAS A MEMBER OF "B" COMPANY, 503D PIR AND PRCT BETWEEN MAY 1942 AND OCTOBER 1945. HE PASSED AWAY 27 FEB 2007.

Lou's story reproduced here courtesy of Paul Whitman of the 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website
http://corregidor.org/heritage_battalion/index.htm



From the archives....

October 1965 In The Iron Triangle



(The late) Colonel John Tyler, Bn CO 1/503d

It was during Operation OPORD 25-65 (Iron Triangle) from the 8th through the 14th of October 1965 in the Ben Cat area. We were notified that we were to enter the dreaded Iron Triangle and sweep it clean so the 1st Infantry Division could headquarter their unit there without complications. During preparations we were hyped to say the least hearing that we were the first allied unit to enter this area in years and that the area had prior notification of our arrival due to massive leaflet drops.

As soon as we off loaded the Hueys I immediately disliked the area because it has some of the most dense foliage in all of Nam. For example we started with about forty reporters but only three Japanese from one of their magazines were with us in the end. The rest had succumbed to the intense heat and unforgiving terrain.

During this operation we came to a huge rice paddy with a village skirting most of one side. The village seemed to be vacated and beings it was late in the evening we were ordered to sit in for the night. Shortly after nightfall the perimeter was breeched by a tunnel complex within the village area and our line NCO'S were patrolling the positions to let each of us know of the situation. As though this wasn't enough to make us tense, mortar rounds were falling into our perimeter and someone was igniting flares over us while we prayed for our ally the dark. The mortar rounds were all duds yet with each one you sucked wind.

Then around midnight a fifty caliber machine gun started firing around our area and when it broke off for a moment someone yelled, "Tell that trooper to get off that fifty", shortly a reply came back, "Sarge, we didn't bring any fifties!" Even with all the action going on and the tenseness of the troopers, you could hear some chuckles from nearby and the order was never repeated that night.

As for the flares, I found out from Colonel John Tyler years later that the Aussies were firing them some distance from us and their arc was breaking right over our position.

That was a tough piece of territory and as with most operations of that size death was there but the Skysoldiers still found a way of realizing humor in the most difficult of situations.



A strac lookin' Dutch

John 'Dutch' Holland
Bravo Company, 1/503rd Infantry
173rd ABN Brig (Sep) 1965-66

Source:
Sky Soldier Newsletter
Spring 1999, Vo. XIV, No. 2
(Photos added)



Ben Cat, north of Saigon, 28 September 1965.
(Web photo)

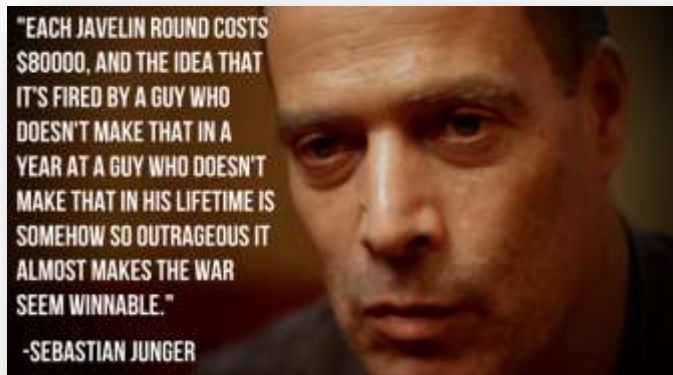


“Civilians don’t miss war. But soldiers often do. Journalist Sebastian Junger shares his experience embedded with American soldiers at Restrepo, an outpost in Afghanistan’s Korengal Valley that saw heavy combat. Giving a look at the “altered state of mind” that comes with war, he shows how combat gives soldiers an intense experience of connection. In the end, could it actually be ‘the opposite of war’ that soldiers miss?”

Sebastian Junger

Why veterans miss war

TEDSalon NY2014 – Filmed Jan 2014



I'm going to ask and try to answer, in some ways, kind of an uncomfortable question. Both civilians, obviously, and soldiers suffer in war; I don't think any civilian has ever missed the war that they were subjected to. I've been covering wars for almost 20 years, and one of the remarkable things for me is how many soldiers find themselves missing it. How is it someone can go through the worst experience imaginable, and come home, back to their home, and their family, their country, and miss the war? How does that work? What does it mean? We have to answer that question, because if we don't, it'll be impossible to bring soldiers back to a place in society where they belong, and I think it'll also be impossible to stop war, if we don't understand how that mechanism works.

The problem is that war does not have a simple, neat truth, one simple, neat truth.

Any sane person hates war, hates the idea of war, wouldn't want to have anything to do with it, doesn't want to be near it, doesn't want to know about it. That's a sane response to war. But if I asked all of you in this room, who here has paid money to go to a cinema and be entertained by a Hollywood war movie, most of you would probably raise your hands. That's what's so complicated about war. And trust me, if a room full of peace-loving people finds something compelling about war, so do 20-year-old soldiers who have been trained in it, I promise you. That's the thing that has to be understood.



Juan 'Doc' Restrepo was born on October 7, 1986 in Neiva, Huila, Colombia as Juan Sebastian Restrepo. He died on July 22, 2007 in Korangal Valley, Kunar, Afghanistan while serving with Battle Company, 2/503, 173d Abn Bde Combat Team. [Photo provided by Doc Scott Fairchild, LTC, 82nd Abn (Ret)]

I've covered war for about 20 years, as I said, but my most intense experiences in combat were with American soldiers in Afghanistan. I've been in Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan in the '90s, but it was with American soldiers in 2007, 2008, that I was confronted with very intense combat. I was in a small valley called the Korengal Valley in eastern Afghanistan. It was six miles long. There were 150 men of Battle Company in that valley, and for a while, while I was there, almost 20 percent of all the combat in all of Afghanistan was happening in those six miles. A hundred and fifty men were absorbing almost a fifth of the combat for all of NATO forces in the country, for a couple months. It was very intense. I spent most of my time at a small outpost called Restrepo. It was named after the platoon medic that had been killed about two months into the deployment. It was a few plywood B-huts clinging to a side of a ridge, and sandbags, bunkers, gun positions, and there were 20 men up there of Second Platoon, Battle Company. I spent most of my time up there....

(continued....)



....There was no running water. There was no way to bathe. The guys were up there for a month at a time. They never even got out of their clothes. They fought. They worked. They slept in the same clothes. They never took them off, and at the end of the month, they went back down to the company headquarters, and by then, their clothes were unwearable. They burned them and got a new set. There was no Internet. There was no phone. There was no communication with the outside world up there. There was no cooked food. There was nothing up there that young men typically like: no cars, no girls, no television, nothing except combat. Combat they did learn to like.



B/2/503's Outpost Restrepo in the Korengal Valley
(Web photo)

I remember one day, it was a very hot day in the spring, and we hadn't been in a fight in a couple of weeks, maybe. Usually, the outpost was attacked, and we hadn't seen any combat in a couple of weeks, and everyone was just stunned with boredom and heat. And I remember the lieutenant walking past me sort of stripped to the waist. It was incredibly hot. Stripped to the waist, walked past me muttering, *"Oh God, please someone attack us today."* That's how bored they were. That's war too, is a lieutenant saying, *"Please make something happen because we're going crazy."*

To understand that, you have to, for a moment, think about combat not morally -- that's an important job to do -- but for a moment, don't think about it morally, think about it neurologically. Let's think about what happens in your brain when you're in combat. First of all, the experience is very bizarre; it's a very bizarre one. It's not what I had expected. Usually, you're not scared. I've been very scared in combat, but most of the time when I was out there, I wasn't scared. I was very scared beforehand and incredibly scared afterwards, and that fear that comes afterwards can last years. I haven't been shot at in six years, and I was woken up very abruptly this morning by a nightmare that I was being strafed by aircraft, six years later. I've never even been strafed by aircraft, and I was having nightmares about it. Time slows down. You get this weird tunnel vision. You notice some details very, very, very accurately and

other things drop out. It's almost a slightly altered state of mind. What's happening in your brain is you're getting an enormous amount of adrenaline pumped through your system. Young men will go to great lengths to have that experience. It's wired into us. It's hormonally supported. The mortality rate for young men in society is six times what it is for young women from violence and from accidents, just the stupid stuff that young men do: jumping off of things they shouldn't jump off of, lighting things on fire they shouldn't light on fire, I mean, you know what I'm talking about. They die at six times the rate that young women do.

Statistically, you are safer as a teenage boy, you would be safer in the fire department or the police department in most American cities than just walking around the streets of your hometown looking for something to do, statistically.

You can imagine how that plays out in combat. At Restrepo, every guy up there was almost killed, including me, including my good friend Tim Hetherington, who was later killed in Libya. There were guys walking around with bullet holes in their uniforms, rounds that had cut through the fabric and didn't touch their bodies.



Sebastian Junger (L) with his friend Tim Hetherington. "Tim was in Libya to continue his ongoing multimedia project to highlight humanitarian issues during time of war and conflict. He will be forever missed." The Hetherington's family. (Web photo)

I was leaning against some sandbags one morning, not much going on, sort of spacing out, and some sand was kicked into the side of, sort of hit the side of my face. Something hit the side of my face, and I didn't know what it was. You have to understand about bullets that they go a lot faster than sound, so if someone shoots at you from a few hundred meters, the bullet goes by you, or hits you obviously, half a second or so before the sound catches up to it....

(continued....)



....So I had some sand sprayed in the side of my face. Half a second later, I heard dut-dut-dut-dut-duh. It was machine gun fire. It was the first round, the first burst of an hour-long firefight. What had happened was the bullet hit, a bullet hit three or four inches from the side of my head. Imagine, just think about it, because I certainly did, think about the angle of deviation that saved my life. At 400 meters, it missed me by three inches. Just think about the math on that. Every guy up there had some experience like that, at least once, if not many times.

The boys are up there for a year. They got back. Some of them got out of the Army and had tremendous psychological problems when they got home. Some of them stayed in the Army and were more or less okay, psychologically. I was particularly close to a guy named Brendan O'Byrne. I'm still very good friends with him. He came back to the States. He got out of the Army. I had a dinner party one night. I invited him, and he started talking with a woman, one of my friends, and she knew how bad it had been out there, and she said,

"Brendan, is there anything at all that you miss about being out in Afghanistan, about the war?"

And he thought about it quite a long time, and finally he said,

"Ma'am, I miss almost all of it."

And he's one of the most traumatized people I've seen from that war. *"Ma'am, I miss almost all of it."*

What is he talking about? He's not a psychopath. He doesn't miss killing people. He's not crazy. He doesn't miss getting shot at and seeing his friends get killed. What is it that he misses? We have to answer that. If we're going to stop war, we have to answer that question.

I think what he missed is brotherhood. He missed, in some ways, the opposite of killing. What he missed was connection to the other men he was with. Now, brotherhood is different from friendship. Friendship happens in society, obviously. The more you like someone, the more you'd be willing to do for them. Brotherhood has nothing to do with how you feel about the other person. It's a mutual agreement in a group that you will put the welfare of the group, you will put the safety of everyone in the group above your own. In effect, you're saying, *"I love these other people more than I love myself."*

Brendan was a team leader in command of three men, and the worst day in Afghanistan — he was almost killed so many times. It didn't bother him. The worst thing that happened to him in Afghanistan was one of his men was hit in the head with a bullet in the helmet,

knocked him over. They thought he was dead. It was in the middle of a huge firefight. No one could deal with it, and a minute later, Kyle Steiner sat back up from the dead, as it were, because he'd come back to consciousness. The bullet had just knocked him out. It glanced off the helmet. He remembers people saying, as he was sort of half-conscious, he remembers people saying, *"Steiner's been hit in the head. Steiner's dead."* And he was thinking, *"I'm not dead."* And he sat up. And Brendan realized after that that he could not protect his men, and that was the only time he cried in Afghanistan, was realizing that. That's brotherhood.



This wasn't invented recently. Many of you have probably read *"The Iliad."* Achilles surely would have risked his life or given his life to save his friend Patroclus. In World War II, there were many stories of soldiers who were wounded, were brought to a rear base hospital, who went AWOL, crawled out of windows, slipped out doors, went AWOL, wounded, to make their way back to the front lines to rejoin their brothers out there. So you think about Brendan, you think about all these soldiers having an experience like that, a bond like that, in a small group, where they loved 20 other people in some ways more than they loved themselves, you think about how good that would feel, imagine it, and they are blessed with that experience for a year, and then they come home, and they are just back in society like the rest of us are, not knowing who they can count on, not knowing who loves them, who they can love, not knowing exactly what anyone they know would do for them if it came down to it. That is terrifying. Compared to that, war, psychologically, in some ways, is easy, compared to that kind of alienation. That's why they miss it, and that's what we have to understand and in some ways fix in our society.

Thank you very much.

Source:

https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_junger_why_veterans_miss_war/transcript?language=en

(Web photos added. Reprinted here with permission of Sebastian Junger and [Ted.com](https://www.ted.com))

[Sent in by Dr. Scott Fairchild, LTC (Ret), 82nd ABN, friend and brother to countless Sky Soldiers]



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~ Remembering a Buddy ~

If this would be possible I would love to share some pics of my best friend Tracy Murrey, KIA on Hill 875. He received a DSC for his actions but it would be great if someone could recognize him and really tell me his story on that fateful day. Please let me know if I can send you some pics of him that you might share with your Herd members. Thank you if you can help.

Ted Olzack

Mobile Riverine Assault Force, RVN

MURREY, TRACY HENRY



**First Lieutenant (Infantry), U.S. Army
Company C, 4th Battalion (Airborne),
503d Infantry Regiment,
173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate),
Date of Action: November 20, 1967**



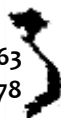
Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Tracy Henry Murrey, 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 C, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). First Lieutenant Murrey distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 20 November 1967 while serving as platoon leader of an airborne infantry unit during a search and destroy mission on Hill 875 at Dak To. A sister company had been pinned down by fierce enemy rocket, mortar and automatic weapons fire while assaulting the heavily fortified hill and Lieutenant Murrey fearlessly led his platoon through a curtain of fire to strengthen the right flank of the beleaguered force. Repeatedly exposing himself to the withering barrage, he positioned his men and directed a deadly fusillade against the enemy bunkers. He quickly determined the location of the heaviest fire and led his men in an aggressive assault on the hill. Inspiring his men by his calmness and determination in the face of the murderous enemy fire, he succeeded in leading his force across seventy-five meters of open ground toward the Viet Cong trenches before he was forced to momentarily withdraw under overwhelming hostile firepower. Quickly regrouping his forces, he led another fierce assault which swept to within fifteen feet of the enemy positions. He then hurled two hand grenades inside the nearest bunker. Other North Vietnamese soldiers, in nearby fortifications, saw his devastating attack and concentrated their fire on him. He was mortally wounded while gallantly leading his men in the heat of battle. First Lieutenant Murrey'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.

HQ US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 400 (January 27, 1968)

**30 October 1942 - 20 November 1967
Miles City, MT
On Virtual Wall: Panel 30E Line 046**

Note: Troopers who knew LT Murrey who would care to make contact with his friend, Ted, may email him at tolzack0515@gmail.com



The Paratrooper Prayer

(circa 1943, author unknown)

OUR ALMIGHTY FATHER, who dwelleth in Washington, immersed in Service Records, Requisitions, T.S. Slips, Red Tape and other impedimenta which surroundeth the Army both in times of Peace and in times of War, Hallowed be thy name.

Give us this day our partial pay, and forgive us of our Company Bills. Guide us on the Path of Righteousness by thy Allknowing Articles of War, and Rules and Regulations. Approve our Passes and Furloughs, for Thou knowest ours is not an easy lot to bear without leisure time.

Deliver us from the hands of Non-jumping Military Police, for thou knowest our burdens are manifold. Yea, even though by Divers devices art these yellow-livered Sons of Satan Concubines, these Gutless Washouts from thy Parachute School, after having been thrice beaten about the head with a shot-bag, allowed to don the hated White Cap and belt of the Ersatz Gestapo, they falsely cry that they are thy Chosen Children. We cannot contain ourselves in their presence and Assault and Mayhem shall abound.



Maurice "Sleepy" Linton
503rd PRCT, WWII

Guide our pleasure bent footsteps from the lower regions of Sin and Inequity, known locally as Phenix City, lest we should go astray and Contract certain social uncleanness which thou so forcefully describeth in thy Sex Hygiene Training Film.

Unhook not our static lines, nor yet blow panels in our canopies. Cut not our break cords, and drift us clear of cactus hill. Strike with relentlessly swift and horrible death the Company Clerk who Red-lineth our payroll, and the Mess Sergeant who robbeth our empty bellies.

By the ghosts of those who have preceded us to the Frying Pan, and the Alabama Area, We Pray Thee...Amen.

[Sent in by Steve Konek, Sr., 173d Bde HQ]

(Photo of Sleepy added. I wouldn't want to tangle with him. Ed)

Belated Congratulations to Our Aussie Brother of the 1RAR Ray Payne



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Oct.-Nov. 2015 – Issue 63

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From the other side....

Interviews with a Top North Vietnam Army General and Two Former Soldiers

HistoryNet Staff
6/12/2006

The following three interviews were conducted during the author's visit to Vietnam in December 2003 and January 2004.



General Huy with his wife at their home in Hanoi.

General Nguyen Duc Huy

Nguyen Duc Huy was born in Hung-Yen province in 1931. After joining the Viet Minh in 1948, at age 17, he went on to serve with distinction in Vietnam's Communist army — through its various name changes — for the next 50 years. He retired in 1998. During his long service, General Huy participated in some of his nation's most important military engagements, from Dien Bien Phu to Khe Sanh (where he commanded the NVA's vaunted 351st Division) to the final General Offensive that concluded the war in 1975. Huy is a man of considerable fame in Vietnam, and not unused to interviews. With the aid of my interpreter, Nguyen Viet Bac, I interviewed the general in his lovely five-story home in an exclusive residential area of Hanoi. As we sat sipping tea in his living room — decorated with fine Oriental artwork and framed photographs of him with such legendary figures as General Vo Nguyen Giap, Ho Chi Minh and Fidel Castro — he graciously answered my questions.

Vietnam: General, what were you doing when you first joined the army in 1948 — fighting the French?

General Huy: Yes, fighting with the French people. I was only 17 then, so I was just a common soldier. You know, just in a trench shooting a rifle at the French, with them in a trench shooting rifles back at us.

VN: Did you fight at Dien Bien Phu?

Huy: Yes, and by then I was an officer.

VN: What did you do after 1954 and the Geneva Agreements that divided Vietnam into North and South?

Huy: I still was in the army and now I was going to the South. At that time I was commanding 2,000 soldiers, uniformed soldiers. There was only low-intensity combat until 1968. From 1954 to 1960 I also took various military courses. Then there was really big fighting from 1968 on. I was at Khe Sanh.

VN: At Khe Sanh you were up against U.S. Marines. Did you consider them to be good fighters?

Huy: Yes. My division was fighting mainly with the 3rd Marine Division and they were very good, experienced soldiers. You know that 3rd Marine Division has a very long history of combat. They were very good, very well trained. And that division was very large; it had about 20,000 men, and they had much more firepower than we did.

VN: Many American history books about Vietnam estimate the Communist forces at Khe Sanh at about 50,000. Is that your recollection?

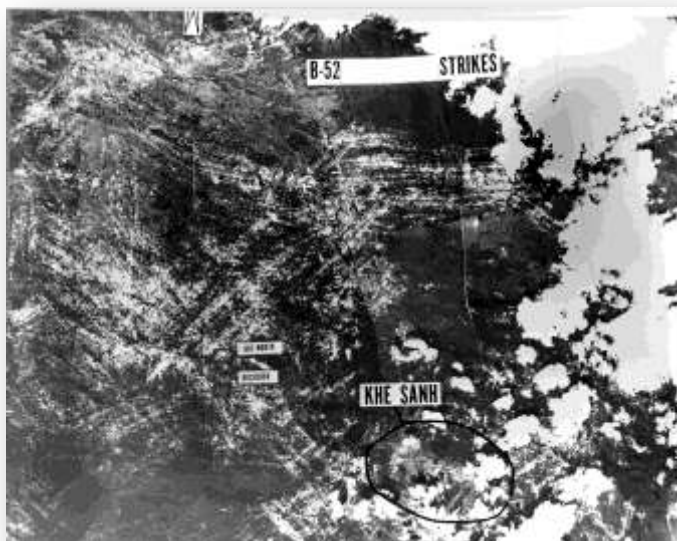
Huy: No, that figure is wrong. We had nearly 100,000 at Khe Sanh when your air force arrived with more than 1,000 aircraft and also helicopters bringing in more men.



Photo purported to be enemy soldiers at Khe Sanh

(continued....)





VN: The United States used Boeing B-52 bombers at Khe Sanh, and also used napalm extensively. Were any of those strikes made against your division?

Huy: Yes. Those bombs killed many of my men, more than 1,000 men in my own division. My division was the 351st Division, one of the strongest and most famous divisions in the North Vietnamese Army. We had on average about 12,000 soldiers, sometimes more, sometimes less. After those bombings we had some 1,000 fewer. It took some time to build the division up again. Both sides lost quite a lot at Khe Sanh.

VN: It has long been speculated in the United States that the Communist siege at Khe Sanh was just intended as a diversion to cause the Americans to draw more forces northward and thus weaken themselves in the South, thereby giving your own forces a better chance in the South when you launched the Tet Offensive. Is that speculation correct?

Huy: I refuse to answer that question. Many people have asked me that question before and to this day I refuse to answer.

VN: You might refuse to answer this next one, too. There has always been a question whether or not General Giap was personally present at Khe Sanh and directing operations. Some speculate that he was there for part of the battle, but once the heavy bombing started he was pressured into leaving for fear that he would become a casualty. Is that true?

Huy: Yes, all of what you have said is true. He was there, but he left — not only because we feared for his safety but also because he had urgent duties elsewhere. You know he was directing the fighting everywhere.

VN: Some military historians consider Giap a military genius, perhaps not quite on the level of Napoleon, but still a genius. Would you agree with that assessment?

Huy: Yes. He was very clever, the cleverest of generals. And he was very experienced, having fought from the time he was young until he was old.

VN: After the war, Giap told a group of Western reporters that Communist losses in the Tet Offensive were so devastating that if the Americans had kept up that level of military pressure much longer North Vietnam would have been forced to negotiate a peace on American terms. Do you agree?

Huy: If the American army had fought some more, had continued, I don't know. Maybe. I can't say what would have happened.



General Giap seated on left.

VN: What did you do with your dead?

Huy: The dead soldiers were evacuated to the rear of the division. Other men would then bury them. Letters would be sent to the soldiers' families notifying them. Our wounded would go to a hospital, but not a hospital in a city. Sometimes our hospitals were in among the trees, but usually they were in caves.

VN: What did you do with dead Americans?

Huy: Usually American planes would circle a battlefield and keep us back until they could send in helicopters and recover the dead bodies themselves. But whenever we did find American bodies, we did bury them. We didn't remove their dogtags. We knew what those were for, and we buried the bodies in places where they would be easily found. We buried them in shallow graves, and we grouped the graves together like steps. We knew eventually American or South Vietnamese forces would come along and find those bodies, get the tags and notify [the] families.

VN: That was considerate.

(continued....)





377th Security Police view the bodies of Communist forces killed in the attack on Tan Son Nhut Air Base during Tet Offensive.

Huy: Let me tell you something else. Six years ago, your General Raymond Davis, a four-star general, brought a military delegation here to Vietnam to meet with a military delegation of ours. I was on that delegation. We did all we could to help them locate more American bodies. While General Davis was here he asked me my opinion on why America lost the war when they had so many more weapons and much better weapons than we had.

VN: That was going to be one of the next questions. How did you answer him?

Huy: I gave him three reasons. First, and most important, I told him that the North Vietnamese soldiers were fighting from their hearts for our freedom. Second, we knew the battlefield....We knew the mountains; we knew the rivers; we knew so well the terrain. And, third, we watched the Americans very closely. *[Here General Huy does a little pantomime pretending he is crouching through the trees and jungle, observing the Americans with binoculars, which he pans left and right.]* We tried to guess everything the Americans would do in advance. We attacked them very carefully. When we could, we would attack them from the rear. We also used our tunnels to approach them undetected. One thing General Davis told me...was that for 30 years he had been wondering how North Vietnamese tanks could so suddenly appear on a battlefield and catch the Americans by surprise. He said it seemed like magic, that they came out of nowhere. He asked me how we managed to do that. I told him that is a secret we still keep in case we ever have to use it again. Would you like me to tell you now?

VN: Yes!

Huy: No! I still refuse to answer *[laughs]*. But I will tell you this. We had more than one way of doing that. There was more than one trick to doing that. *[This*

leaves one to speculate on what those tricks might have been: an especially effective camouflage system? Burying prepositioned tanks? An ingenious system of disassembling and reassembling the tanks? Heretofore undisclosed use of Soviet heavy-lift helicopters? The possibilities would seem quite limited.]

VN: Did you hate the Americans at the time of the war? And what about now?

Huy: During the war — of course! Our deaths were very, very many. Of course I hated them. But about six years ago when I met with the American military delegation I decided we could become friends. We talked together so that we could forget the past and look to the future.



NVA tanks moving south.

VN: Have you ever heard of a plan an American think tank proposed for winning the war? Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute proposed a buildup of American troop strength in Vietnam to a total of one million. That would be enough American soldiers to link arms and stretch the entire length of South Vietnam's land borders. They could simply prevent any more NVA from entering the country. They would be supported by tens of thousands of specially trained dogs that could detect any tunneling activity beneath the borders. While the Americans and the dogs secured the borders, the ARVN would concentrate on tracking down and destroying the VC and Communist sympathizers within South Vietnam. Does that plan sound crazy to you, or could it have worked?

Huy: I think that's quite funny. The South Vietnamese army could never have tracked down all of our Viet Cong and Communist sympathizers within the country. There were just too many of them — men, women, the farmers. They could never have been stopped.

(continued....)



VN: Do you have anything else you would like to tell the readers of *Vietnam Magazine*?

Huy: One thing: The war is over and I look to the future. But the poisons Americans dropped on the land continue to harm many of our people — not just this generation, but the next and the next, with diseases and birth defects. You should tell this to the American government. They should be doing something to help us with this problem. I hope relations between America and Vietnam improve rapidly. It would be good for the economies and the lives of both of our peoples.

Nguyen Van Khien

On December 19, 2003, I traveled south of Hanoi to Ha Nam province with interpreter Nguyen Viet Bac, his employee Nguyen Duc Hanh, and a hired driver. There in the village of Thanh Ha we interviewed Nguyen Van Khien in his humble home. We sat on low stools sipping tea in the living room of the three-room dwelling. His granddaughter played in the corner on a plastic mat laid on the bare concrete floor. Dogs, cats and chickens scurried about and occasionally poked their noses through the open door. His wife looked on.

Mr. Khien showed me a framed certificate on the wall and a wallet card, both of which identified him as a 'First Class War Invalid' — a veteran who had suffered the most grievous wounds. There is no doubt of that. His entire left leg had been removed, and his right leg — as he rolled up his trouser leg to show me — had most of the flesh missing, right down to the bone, in portions of the shin and thigh. He has a bright, cheerful demeanor and seems eager to please.

VN: When and why did you join the North Vietnamese Army?

Khien: I joined when I was 17 years old. I served from 1974 to 1979, but much of that time I was in hospitals. Why did I join? Because I loved my country and I wanted to fight for its freedom.

VN: What happened once you volunteered?

Khien: We were trained in the North for six months and then sent to the South. We went south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was a very hard journey. We had to sleep under the trees in the forest. We had very little to eat. When we reached rivers we swam across them. We were bombed often. We were on the trail three months. My unit was R-856. We moved in stages and traveled only at night. I was in a group of 400. There were many groups of 400 before us and following us, but we were spread out. If the groups were larger than that they were easier to be spotted and bombed by airplanes, so we stayed spread out.



Soldiers moving south along one of the many routes of the Ho Chi Minh trail.

VN: You entered South Vietnam after most Americans had already left. What was the most important action you participated in?

Khien: The liberation of Saigon. We got into Saigon. We were fighting and got into the city. A lot of my friends were killed inside Ho Chi Minh City. That was in 1975.



NVA forces celebrating the fall of Saigon

(continued....)



VN: What was the fighting like in Saigon?

Khien: We were fighting house-to-house in Saigon's streets. We were fighting everywhere: in the houses and out of windows, in the trees, in the streets, lying under cars. I had a large Russian rifle, an AK-47. I hit several people. I don't know whether I killed or wounded them or what, but I did hit them.

VN: What were you thinking about during the fighting?

Khien: I thought just about the nation and serving it. [A pause.] But really in combat I thought nothing — only fighting.

VN: When and how did you get wounded?

Khien: In 1976. The war was over and I was going back home to North Vietnam. It was in the forest near the Cambodian border. I stepped on a mine. When I stepped on it I heard a loud noise and I felt my leg get very cold, and then I went unconscious. The leg halfway down was blown off immediately. It was blown clear off. My comrades took me to a small army hospital in the forest. I lost much blood and they cut off more of my leg — above the knee. My other leg was also in bad shape.

VN: How long did you stay there?

Khien: One day. Then they transferred me to a large hospital in Hue City where they removed more of my leg.

VN: What were your emotions after that?

Khien: [Very animated.] I felt very, very sad and I cried. I didn't want to think about anything. I told the army doctors to do anything — cut anything they wanted off of me — I didn't care. But they worked hard to save my other leg. I had a very bad feeling of both the spirit and the body for a very long time, but I didn't want to kill myself. Today I'm still happy to be alive. Life is still good.

VN: Has your government taken good care of you?

Khien: Yes. I get some money every month, enough for living. Later I got married and now I raise some chickens and pigs.

VN: Whom do you blame for your injuries?

Khien: The Americans.

VN: Are you still angry?

Khien: I forgive now, and I try to forget. Now I blame no one, and I'm okay.

Dang Thi Phuong

Dang Thi Phuong is the wife of Nguyen Van Khien. I interviewed her on the same day. A shy woman, and a little reluctant to be interviewed, Phuong smiled and was cheerful, but spent much of the interview hiding her face behind her hands. As a woman of the old school, she was hesitant to speak before the men present. Moreover, Bac, my interpreter, informed me

that I was the first foreigner she had ever seen, let alone met and spoken with. Phuong may have been shy and demure, but there is no mistaking the fact that physically she was very tough. Although in her 50s, she was fit, and had the deep tan of a Vietnamese farm woman.



A Viet Cong armed with American M-16

VN: When did you serve in the army?

Phuong: From 1970 to 1979.

VN: Did you wear a uniform?

Phuong: Yes. A North Vietnamese Army uniform.

VN: What did you do?

Phuong: At first I worked in the rear area, cooking rice for the army. Then I worked on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. There were many young girls like me who worked on the trail. We were cutting down trees and widening the trail for trucks. This was near Laos.

VN: Were you ever bombed?

Phuong: No. Never.

(continued....)





Where they slept, we slept.

VN: What was your life like while you worked on the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Where did you sleep?

Phuong: We slept under trees, or in caves, or in the mountains. We had a blanket, but it was never enough to keep me warm.

VN: I don't ask this to embarrass you, but were the female soldiers bothered by the male soldiers?

Phuong: No. We had very strict army rules about that, so I was very safe in the group.

VN: Where did you meet your husband?

Phuong: We met at the hospital in Hue. I had become an army nurse, and because he was a first-level injury, my husband was assigned a personal nurse to be with him 24 hours a day — that was me. That was in 1978, and after two years we got married.

VN: What qualities attracted you to him?

Phuong: It was a very special love. *[At that point Phuong spoke to my interpreter directly, and Bac informed me that Phuong wanted to end the interview soon.]*

VN: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Phuong: Only that we love each other and have sympathy for each other.

As we prepared to depart, Bac suggested to me that since this was such a very poor household, I might like to make them a small money gift beyond the sack of fruit we brought them. To avoid humbling the man and his wife, he advised me to hand the money (the Vietnamese equivalent of \$20) directly to their four-year-old granddaughter and indicate it was for her.

William L. Adams, Ph.D., is a member of the social sciences department of the University of Texas at Brownsville. He is the author of the book *Valley Vets II: Korean and Vietnam Veterans of the Rio Grande Valley*. For additional reading, see Eric Hammel's *Khe Sanh: Siege in the Clouds* and Phillip B. Davidson's *Vietnam at War*.

This article was originally published in the October 2005 issue of *Vietnam Magazine*.

Source:

<http://www.historynet.com/interviews-with-a-top-north-vietnam-army-general-and-two-former-soldiers.htm>

(Web photos added)



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTER 522

www.vva522.org

9th Annual



Dwight Harrah Memorial Golf Tournament

Sunday, October 18th

1:00 PM Shotgun Start



1501 Indian Rocks Road, Belleair, Florida

Entry Fees

Foursomes: \$300.00

Individual Golfer: \$80.00

Entry form is available on our website.

Payments can be made using PayPal on our website.

Make checks payable to:

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P.O. Box 551

Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785-0551

For additional information visit our web site:

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TOURNAMENT PRIZES & RAFFLE

Team Awards, Closest to the pin hole

Longest drive hole, Putting skills contest

Raffle, Silent Auction

Dinner Following Tournament



Rocky's Team Sky Soldiers from Cocoa Beach, FL
will be participating.



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~ 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 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.

EUGENE R. DAVIS...A BRAVO BULL EXTRAORDINAIRE

DAVIS, EUGENE R.
Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army
Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne)
503d Infantry Regiment
173rd Airborne Brigade
Date of Action: July 7, 1965

Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Eugene R. Davis, Sergeant First Class, 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 as 3d Platoon Sergeant, Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. On 7 July 1965, Company B was engaged in a search and destroy operation in an area approximately fifteen miles northeast of Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. Moving in a company wedge formation, the 3d platoon led the point. At about 1000 hours, the forward element of the platoon encountered heavy hostile fire from an automatic weapon and small arms which emanated from a concealed insurgent position. In the initial burst, the 3d Platoon Leader and another platoon member were killed. Due to the heavy concentration of fire that followed, the point squad of the platoon was pinned down. Realizing the importance of locating and destroying the insurgent position, Sergeant Davis, with complete disregard for his own personal safety, exposed himself to the hostile fire and charged forward, firing his weapon and



lobbing grenades, in a desperate attempt to pinpoint and destroy the hostile gun position. His weapon jammed and grenades expended, Sergeant Davis was forced to halt the assault. Rearmed with a weapon and more grenades, he charged twice again through the murderous hail of insurgent fire, falling back only after expending his ammunition and grenades. However, as a result of his efforts during the third assault, he was able to pinpoint the exact location of the hostile machine gun. Notwithstanding the fact that he was completely exhausted and dazed from a projectile which damaged his helmet and web equipment, Sergeant Davis mustered fantastic courage and fanatic determination and assisted by two others, assaulted the Viet Cong position for the fourth time, inflicting heavy casualties and silencing the deadly automatic weapon. His heroic actions and courage served to inspire the men of Company B to gain the initiative and successfully complete their assigned mission. Sergeant Davis' 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, Pacific, General Orders No. 302
October 15, 1965)



Jump over Sicily Drop Zone marks anniversary of first airborne operation

By Drew Brooks, Military Editor, Mon Aug 17, 2015



(Staff photo by Andrew Craft)

A soldier with the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate walks across Sicily Drop Zone on Sunday after making a jump in honor of the 75th anniversary of the airborne. For a photo slide show, go to fayobserver.com.



There's only one unit in the U.S. Army that has seen all of the nation's airborne history.

Seventy-five years after the original Airborne Test Platoon jumped from a B-18 Bolo over Fort Benning, Georgia, the same unit - now known as the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate and based at Fort Bragg - conducted their own jump over Sicily Drop Zone.

The jump, involving 22 paratroopers in MC-6 parachutes, marked the anniversary of the first airborne operation almost exactly, said Col. Andy Ulrich, directorate commander. The MC-6 is a steerable parachute.

It also coincided with National Airborne Day, which was created in 2001 by President George W. Bush by a presidential proclamation.

In a short ceremony with friends and families watching, officials paid homage to those who led the way on Aug. 16, 1940.

Lt. William Ryder and Pvt. William "Red" King were the first officer and enlisted men to officially jump as U.S. Army paratroopers.

King did so by chance. Before the jump, soldiers held a lottery to determine who would be the first out the doors of the aircraft. King was second in line, but took the lead when the original soldier refused to jump.

Sunday's jumpers leapt from a 440th Airlift Wing C-130H during two passes over the drop zone.

Ulrich said the jump was important for the unit, which has a strong sense of history. *"We look at how hard it was back then. Everything they did was a first,"* Ulrich said. *"That's a lot harder than what we do now."*

After being organized at Fort Benning in 1940, the unit later became the Testing and Developing Section of Airborne Command at Camp Mackall, just outside Fort Bragg, in 1942 and took on its current name in 1944.

Today, the Airborne and Special Operations Test Directorate tests all of the Army's parachutes and airborne equipment and is part of the Operational Test Command. It also certifies every piece of Army equipment before it can be air dropped, airlifted, sling-loaded or in any other way transported by Army or Air Force aircraft.

Sunday's ceremony was the latest in a string of celebrations involving paratroopers from Fort Bragg, which bills itself as the Home of the Airborne.

Last Thursday, soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division jumped over Avon Park, Florida to coincide with the anniversary and the annual 82nd Airborne Division Association Convention in Orlando.

That jump, dubbed Operation Crimson Gator, featured 82 paratroopers from the division.

On Saturday, city and military officials hosted an official National Airborne Day ceremony at the U.S. Army Airborne & Special Operations Museum in downtown Fayetteville.

The museum traces the history of airborne and special operations forces and the ceremony featured static displays of Army equipment and demonstrations by the U.S. Army Parachute Team, the Golden Knights, and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command Parachute Team, the Black Daggers.

By Drew Brooks, Military Editor,
Fayetteville Observer



Pics from the Past

These boys and their best friends saved a lot of troopers...



(Web photo)

A little typical Digger humor...



(Web photo)

Hers??? Damn Diggers got all the good Red Cross packages!

More on the Mapping of The Battle of the Slopes

Gentlemen:

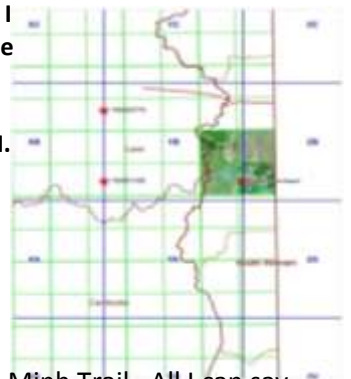
So far I have found a couple of grid coordinate errors in the After Action Report for the "Battle of the Slopes". I see this type error periodically as I work through after action reports and daily logs.

Two grid coordinates are listed in the report on June 22, 1967 as YB00007705 and YB001168. YB0007750 would take you to a 10 meter square which is too close for any ordinance unless you want it on top of you. Besides the 1:50K topos are only supposed to be 95% accurate to the 100m grid. The use of this grid really tells me how bad the situation was.

The biggest problem with the grid is it falls way to the Northwest in Laos and I'm sure it was not used in the battle. If you look at appendix A you find it on the map as ZB00001715 which puts it in the right area. YB001168 also falls along the line and should be ZB001168. Just to keep everyone confused the battle took place right along the dividing line between "Military Grid Reference System" (MGRS) 100,000m grid square YB and ZB. This can easily lead to errors plus the Dak To topo map is on the edge of UTM Zones 48 and 49 so it includes the MGRS markings for both zones.

In this report if the first grid digit starts with a 9 it should be in YB, if it starts with a 0 it should be in ZB. Remember, we read from the bottom left corner of a grid square east and north (easting/northing). If I find more I will let you know.

A map of how it looked before I corrected the grids. The red line extending through Vietnam (UTM Zone 48) into Laos is the dividing line for MR I and MR II.



Looking at the map I got to thinking maybe I should write down the story of the flight I didn't make into Laos one night in Nov 67 looking for head lights on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. All I can say was it was so dark not even the stars could shine.

Jim McLaughlin

Cowboys



The Battle of CORAL, 1968

Initially on the night of 12/13 May, sporadic contacts with the NVA occurred as the infantry companies deployed to night positions, culminating in a heavy attack on D Company, D Coy, 1 RAR, killing two soldiers and wounding 11. 102 Fd Bty fired in support of D Company.

At 2:15 AM, a mortar and rocket barrage hit CORAL, followed by an NVA regimental assault from the north. The enemy overran part of the 102 Fd Bty gun position and the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon. Heavy close-quarter fighting ensued, including artillery firing anti-personnel rounds over open sights into the enemy mass, and surged confusedly around the mortar platoon and the forward guns. No. 4 gun fired 84 rounds of direct fire, No. 6 gun was in enemy hands and No. 5 was laid on it ready to destroy it if it was moved. The other guns were hit by RPG or had ammunition set on fire. The NVA also penetrated up to the 12 Fd Regt Command Post and two gunners of HQ Bty were killed.



"While patrolling Coral's perimeter after a North Vietnamese attack."

US and Australian artillery, helicopter gunship, 'Spooky', and close air support all provided support. At dawn, enemy fire slackened and two patrols of gunners recaptured No. 6 gun, cleared the front of the position and assisted the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon, which had suffered five killed and eight wounded out of eighteen soldiers. The NVA left fifty-two bodies around the mortars and guns although hundreds of drag marks pointed to much higher enemy casualties.



"Battery's Number 6 gun on the day after the first attack on Coral."

Following the first attack on CORAL, the rifle companies of 1 RAR were ordered back to the FSB where they established strong defence positions, bolstered by the arrival of armour, a US medium battery, engineer and other elements of the 1 ATF during 13 and 14 May 68.



"Divisional locating Battery on 12 May 1968 waiting to fly into Coral."

On 16 May at 2:45 AM, an NVA regimental sized group again attacked CORAL, supported by heavy mortar and rocket fire, and losses were 34 confirmed killed; however it is estimated that several hundred bodies were removed. Australian losses were five killed and nineteen wounded, and the US Bty suffered two wounded.

After the second attack, CORAL was not seriously threatened again but was regularly subject to rocket and mortar attack. Aggressive patrols by the 1 RAR resulted in daily contact with large enemy groups. 1 ATF was bolstered by the call forward of C Squadron, 1 Armoured Regiment (C Sqn. 1 Armd Regt).



In 2003, survivors return to the site of the Battle of Coral.

Source: http://12fieldregiment.com/history_hqbtty.htm
(Web photos added)



Honoring men from Brigade....

MILTON B. (MILT) CARR Patriot, Chapter 1919

(ARMY, Vietnam) Web Article March 2005



Milton Carr was born in Clarksville, Texas in 1938. He grew up on a farm in North Texas in Archer County and graduated from Megargel High School in 1956. He then enrolled in Midwestern (State) University in Wichita Falls, and upon graduation there in 1960, was commissioned through the Army ROTC as a Second Lieutenant and ordered to active duty in the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

During the next twenty-nine years, he served in the various positions of command and staff that are normal for a career Army Officer and attended the appropriate service schools. He held command assignments from platoon through battalion; served in staff officer positions from battalion headquarters level up to Headquarters, Department of the Army in the Pentagon; and graduated schools from the Basic Officer Course up through the Army's Command and General Staff College.

He served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam, 1966-1967, participated with the brigade in the only combat parachute jump during that conflict, and was later wounded on an operation in War Zone "C." During 1968-1970 he was at the University of Texas where he graduated with a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering, and that experience led him to choose to return to Austin to retire.

He retired from an assignment in XVIII Airborne Corps in Fort Bragg, North Carolina in December 1988 to return here, where he is a member of several

nationwide veterans organizations. He helped to start up, and serves as Adjutant of, the local Austin chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which, in less than 10 years, grew to become the largest in the nation.

Milt Carr is married to the former Barbara Youngblood of Bowie, Texas. They have three children and four grandchildren, currently all living in Texas or Missouri.

MILTON CARR

173rd Airborne Brigade, Vietnam

In April 1966, I was a Captain with five years Army service, in 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In those days Army policy called for Airborne replacements to Vietnam to come exclusively from stateside Airborne units (no replacements directly out of school). My orders were to report to Headquarters 173rd Airborne Brigade and I arrived sometime about April 13th as I recall.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade, officially nicknamed "the skysoldiers", unofficially "the herd"; occupied a Base Camp that doubled as part of the perimeter defense of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) Base at Bien Hoa, about 25 miles North of Saigon. The practice at that time was to make airmobile lifts into Viet Cong controlled areas, conduct sweep operations through the zone for two to three weeks, then return to Bien Hoa Base Camp for a week or ten days of maintenance, refitting and training. During my year in Vietnam, the 173rd conducted 19 such operations and even when there were no big fights, there were always a few casualties on every operation.

The Brigade only had two battalions of paratroopers, 1/503 and 2/503, so General Williamson had attached a battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) with a battery of Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA) to make the 173rd a more robust force. Many close personal associations between Americans, "Aussies" and New Zealanders were formed there that endure today.

Although we were 100% parachute qualified, almost every combat operation would begin with an airmobile assault. Standard ten-ship companies of "Huey" helicopters lifted in as many six-man loads of Infantrymen as possible between dawn and dusk of the first day to start the operation. During the entire ten year experience of the Vietnam War, only one operation included a Combat Parachute Jump, and as luck would have it, I was there....

(continued....)



....One battalion Task Force composed of Lieutenant Colonel Bob Sigholtz' 2/503 Infantry, a battery of Artillery, Signal and Engineer detachments, with a Brigade "Jump Command Post", were allotted 780 parachutes. There were six Captains in the Brigade Operations Section at that time, and we drew straws to see which two of us would make the jump. Mine was one of the two "lucky" short straws.

The Drop Zone, "AO Red", near Katum in War Zone "C", was a large patch of rice paddies surrounded by forest and only about two miles from the Cambodian border. Operation JUNCTION CITY started with the parachute assault at 9:00 A.M. on February 22, 1967 and you can read all about it in the March 10th issue of *LIFE* magazine.

Six weeks later, the 173rd Brigade was operating elsewhere in War Zone "C" and as usual, I was with the headquarters' Tactical Operations Center (TOC) which at that time was at the Minh Thahn rubber plantation. We had flown into the tiny dirt airstrip that was originally built to serve the luxurious villa of the French plantation manager, and we had set up our command post inside the forest of rubber trees. Before midnight on April 5th the TOC area was mortared and I was one of six men from brigade headquarters that were wounded. All of us were flown out later in the night by Medevac helicopter "dustoff" to the MASH hospital at the base of Nui Ba Dinh (the black virgin) mountain. We were all operated on before daylight. Sergeant Bunij in the Fire Support Element was the most seriously wounded, having multiple shell fragments in the stomach, but the surgeons did a marvelous job and he survived.

The Brigade Commander, "Uncle Jack" Deane, came to the hospital next day and pinned a Purple Heart on each of us six of his men. After brief stays in the hospitals at Vung Tau, Saigon, and Japan, I was Medevac'd home to Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio. Barbara drove down from Wichita Falls and picked me up from Beach Pavilion one week exactly after I would have come home on normal rotation.

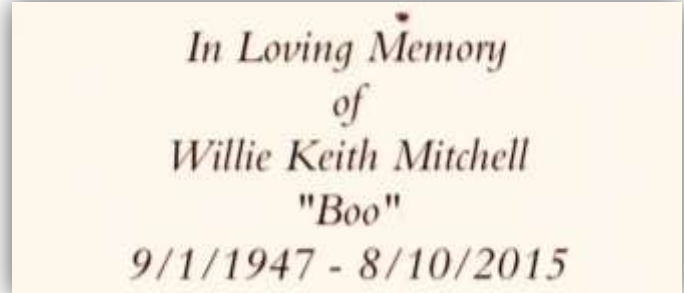
It was my only tour in Vietnam, but, one year was enough.



Source:

<http://www.purpleheartaustin.org/carr.htm>

***Farewell C/4/503d Sky Soldier....
Rest Easy Willie***



Life Reflection

Willie Keith "Boo" Mitchell was born September 1, 1947 to the late Treva Mitchell and Isaiah Jones in Tullahoma, TN. He peacefully passed away Monday, August 10, 2015 at the VA Medical Center in Nashville, TN.



Willie "Boo" Mitchell

Mr. Mitchell was a Christian man who loved his family and friends very much. At age 18, Willie volunteered to join the United States Army during the Vietnam War. He deployed with the 173rd Airborne Brigade and was awarded a Purple Heart Medal for wounds suffered in combat. He received an Honorable Discharge for his service.



**Willie being awarded
Purple Heart**



He remained in contact with a devoted Vietnam 'brother' Anthony P. Albarello. In addition to family, Willie Mitchell loved music. He played a host of instruments, but his favorite instrument was bass guitar. He played with a number of Rhythm and Blues bands and Gospel groups in Chattanooga, TN, Acworth, GA, Los Angeles, CA, and Nashville, TN. Members of these groups would prove to be life-long friends to him and a very important part of his life.

He leaves to cherish his life and memories; son, Carlos Harris, daughter Khadija (Michael) Payne, son Deon Brown and a host of relatives and devoted friends.

He will be missed greatly by all those who love him.



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Medic Looking to Hookup With Dak To Troopers of the 2/503

Louis Painter was a medic with the 4/503d and was wounded at Hill 875. As he says below, his unit was the first to reach the 2d Batt and he was later evacuated with them. He wants to reconnect with anyone who was there and especially the medics and guys he was in the hospital with. Maybe someone in the 2d Batt remembers and could ID the company that Louis helped.

If Louis knew the 4th Bn Company he was with during the relief, it would help to find those that were there. Could you pass on his request in your next outstanding 2d Batt newsletter? Also, if there are any gatherings of the 2d Batt, he would like to be included. I'm sure that Louis would like to get your 2d Batt newsletter.

By separate message, I asked Peyton Ligon, POC for the 4th Batt of 6/67 - 6/68, to ask around and see if anyone knows the Company that was on the perimeter when the 4th Batt relieved them.

I'm also copying Bill Connelly, who was CO of Charlie that reached the 2d Bn. He might know which Company those medics were in. Maybe CSM Ted Arthurs would know.

Arthurs, Ted, CSM (ret) & Marlene; HHC; Bn CSM 5/67-8/68; Destin, FL; wrote *Land With No Sun* about the 4/503d in '67 - '68.

Maybe the book, *Dak To* identifies the company that got to the 2d Batt first and which Company was on the perimeter. I thought it was C/4/503 which got there first.

Thanks,

Jack Tar

C Co, 4th Bn & Jungle School, 6/66 - 6/67

To: Jack Tarr

Subject: Hill 875 & Hospital

Mr. Tarr,

I request you ask the 2nd Batt guys if they recall a 4th Batt medic caring for them.

The platoon I served with was the first platoon to enter the 2nd Batt's perimeter. I encountered the odorous smell of death and the sight of dead troopers carpeting the interior of that perimeter. Loud voices from the surviving 2, wounded medics of the whole of your 2nd Batt that day, called out to me after seeing the aid kit on my back, telling me I'd be more targeted because that kit showed a medic.

I crawled to my assigned area and began to treat my wounded, the 2nd Batt men.

I'm finally coming out of my self-imposed, defensive shell and would like to know these men again, and possibly be invited to your 2nd Batt reunions. Respectfully,

Louis "Doc" Painter, 4/503

painterteacher@yahoo.com



Medics helping wounded on Hill 875 (Web photo)



Another pic of G.I. Jo with the Bravo Bulls, January 13, 1966



Above photo sent in by Sam Grimes, B/2/503

G.I. JO

Jo Collins (birthname Janet Canoy, born August 5, 1945 in Lebanon, Oregon) was *Playboy* magazine's Playmate of the Month for December 1964 and Playmate of the Year for 1965. Her original pictorial was photographed by Mario Casilli.

She was discovered by *Playboy* while working as a page for the Queen for a Day TV game show. She went on to work at the Playboy Clubs as a Bunny and, later on, as a Bunny Mother.

Jo, who is of Norwegian and Spanish descent, was married to the baseball player Bo Belinsky for five years (1970 to 1975).

She was nicknamed "G.I. Jo" for her United Service Organizations tours to Vietnam to entertain the troops during the Vietnam War.

In December 1979 Jo posed nude for the "*Playmates Forever!*" pictorial.

Now, to the *real* reason the Bulls invited her to Vietnam...



Bulls ain't no dummies. (Web photo)





Of Sadness and Loss

The other memorials in Washington – the Lincoln, the Jefferson, the Washington Monument – are postcards transformed to stone; familiar, grand, above all safe – from emotion, tears or controversy. No one contests Washington's claim to heroic stature, no one questions the quality of Jefferson's mind, no one disputes the genius of Lincoln or the unfathomable depths of his heart.

But here along an angular gash in the soil, the wounds, the blood, the fury, the shouts, the heartbreak, all those things – plus, of course, the tears, the many, many tears – are fresh, even now, even a quarter-century later, even in a new millennium.



David
Shribman

You can tell from the first instant that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is not an ordinary Washington memorial.

South Vietnam fell a quarter-century ago this month. But the Vietnam War is still with us, and that is not a baby boomers' conceit. The other day Jeanann Howard, who had come to the capital from St. Louis and was but 4 when the war ended, knelt at the black wall of the Vietnam memorial and traced a name onto a piece of paper with a crayon: Lee C. James Jr. She never even met him. He was her uncle, and his name, precisely 0.853 of an inch tall and grist-blasted into the granite wall along with 58,201 others, moved her in ways she never anticipated. *"I never knew him,"* she said, and something in the air told her she should whisper, *"I wanted some contact."*

The same is true for Lauren Simon. She's only 14, a freshman at Newton (Mass.) North High School. She was there with her classmates and her teachers, they placed a wreath at the wall and read, aloud, the names and year of death of all 22 of the Newton men who died in the long-ago war that seemed to happen only yesterday. There was a moment of silence, spontaneous and deep. And she was swept away by it all. She felt, like so many others, a wave of guilt: *"I wasn't even born then, and all these people died for a reason, and they can't tell us anything now about the war."*

They cannot tell us anything, and yet the wall speaks. It whispers, as so many of its visitors do. It shouts, as hardly anyone does. It breathes with the guilt that Lauren Simon felt and the despair that Jeanann Howard felt and the terrible ambiguity that we all feel about the nation's longest, most controversial, most unsuccessful and most misunderstood conflict.

Just this month, the Belknap Press of Harvard is bringing out a new book by David Kaiser, a professor in the strategy and policy department of the Naval War College. The second paragraph of the volume includes this sentence:

"Although the international consequences of the most unequivocal military defeat in the history of the United States turned out to be considerably less than policy-makers had predicted, the lost war nonetheless remains the greatest policy miscalculation in the history of American foreign relations."

The book's title: *"American Tragedy."*

(continued....)



This is a memorial to the dead, and yet the truth that the wall that Maya Lin designed is itself alive. Watch the people press their fingers onto the letters – and then touch their fingers to their lips – and you will believe it. Arms here are used to hug, and mostly they do.

Half a world away there is another wall. It is the Ben Duoc War Memorial, and it is about 40 miles northwest of what the Vietnam War generation used to call Saigon. It stands next to the famed Cu Chi caves, the network of tunnels that the North Vietnamese used as a hiding place and a staging ground, against the French and, later, the Americans.

The Vietnam wall was dedicated five years ago, at the 20th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, and though it was probably a response to the success of the Washington wall, it is different: It recognizes only a fraction of the more than 3 million people that Hanoi says were killed in the Vietnam conflict. On top of the shrine appear these words:

“Because of the Country, they forgot themselves. Always, always remember.”

Washington’s memorial is a special place, a place of contemplation and, above all, reconciliation – consecrated, as Lincoln (whose monument is only steps away and who knew something about war and remembrance) would say, on hallowed ground. No one smokes. No children shout. No couples bicker. No wise guys snicker. And the miraculous thing: No cell-phone calls are placed here. None. It is a memorial to a war and to the warriors who died in that war, and to an idea that knows no boundaries. *Always, always remember.*

At the time of the release of this article, April 2000, Shribman was Washington bureau chief for the *Boston Globe*.



In February 2001, 2/503 Sky Soldiers Steve Haber, Jack Ribera, Mike Sturges, A.B. Garcia, Lew Smith, (the late) Dale Olson, and 1/503 Craig Ford, plus family members, visited the tunnels at Cu Chi and the memorial there. Just before this picture was taken on the steps of the memorial, a high school class of Vietnamese kids jumped in for the photo.

Lee Christopher James, Jr

Private First Class
H&S CO, 1ST MOTOR TRANS BN, 1ST
MARDIV, III MAF
United States Marine Corps
St Clair, Missouri
November 08, 1946 to May 15, 1967
On the Wall at Panel 19E, Line 127



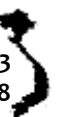
We didn’t know Lee, but Jeanann now does, and he’s there with men we did know.

In Flanders Field - Poem by John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



MY STORY

13 Jun 1968 — Vietnam

Jerry and I got engaged in the fall of 1964. He was in the US Navy, he got out in Oct. 1964 and we were married Nov. 14, 1964. We were so young and in love and now he was home. We were childhood sweethearts, but in our high school years, he left for the Navy.



My mother made my wedding dress and I made the veil. Since the wedding was in November and fall (which I love) we used fall colors. Jerry and I went over to my Grandparents in Sweetwater, TN and got lots of Grandma's fall mums. We used them along with ivy and ferns. It was a small country church wedding. How happy I was coming down the aisle on my daddy's arm and seeing my sweetheart waiting on me. Finally after all these years we were going to be together forever and ever. I was 19 and Jerry 20, so young and in love.

We got a small apartment in Harriman, TN and Jerry worked in the mill in our hometown. I stayed home, I was learning to cook and oh my, sometimes things turned out good and other times you had to drink plenty of liquid. Oh! They were such days and full of love.

In 1966 I got pregnant with our first child, I lost her, stillborn at seven months. Our little girl, Tonya Suzette Ferguson was born on June 11, 1966 and went to live with our sweet Lord the same day. We cried our eyes out. I carried her for seven months.

Jerry didn't like his job and wanted to go into the Army and he did after we talked about it. He wanted to make it a career and he already had the years he served in the Navy. We thought this would be a good thing. After basic training, jump school and all the other schools, we were stationed at Ft Bragg, NC. He was with the 82nd Airborne. My Sky Soldier. This was in 1967 and I lost another baby at three months. Was God ever going to give us a baby to love, a part of each of us and our love?

Jerry came home one evening and told me he had his orders for Vietnam. My heart fell, we knew this would happen, but when? This was late in 1967. We packed up our few things and headed for Tennessee. I stayed with my folks and Jerry went to Ft. Campbell for more training. He was with the 101st Airborne. Didn't get to see him much at this time.

The end of Jan. 1968 he came home on leave. He left for Vietnam a few weeks later. We took him to the bus

station. It was a sad day and I tried not to cry. I wanted to be brave for my soldier, but the tears came anyway. He called me from Ft Dix, NJ to wish me a happy birthday, this was on Feb. 5th, I turned 23 and Jerry was 24 on Jan. 1st. I was so surprised to hear his voice say "Happy Birthday Kitten".

Jerry got to Vietnam on Feb. 10, 1968. I received letters telling me he was ok and all about being over there and he was already counting the days off. He missed me so much and I did him also.

Jerry had a buddy, David Lee Edney "Toby" from Erwin, TN that he had went through some schools with and Toby had already gone over with the 101st Airborne in Dec. 1967.

I got a phone call from Toby's folks and they said Toby had gotten killed and that Jerry would be his escort. I was sad and happy, I was going to see my sweetheart. Toby got KIA on March 13, 1968. I felt so sorry for his family and his sweetheart. It all was so sad. That's when it hit me, this was real and I could be standing in their shoes. A cold shiver went up my spine.

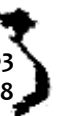
I was waiting on their big front porch for Jerry to come in. When he got out of the car, I ran down the steps into his arms. He was so upset with the loss of Toby, but happy to see me and be back in Tennessee. I would not let myself think about the bad stuff, Jerry was coming back in Feb. 1969, he would make it and so would I.

I took Jerry to the airport in Knoxville, TN on April 13, 1968 and I wanted to scream and not let him go. I was so afraid! He had told me some things like bury me by our baby girl, Kitten. I've always loved you and will till the day I die. I won't be back home alive. Stay strong for me. I didn't want to hear these words. My soldier was coming back home to me in Feb. 1969.



"April 13, 1968 at the Knoxville, TN airport, the last time I saw Jerry alive."

(continued....)





D Company, 2nd Squad, 2nd Platoon, 2/503d Parachute Infantry

In Vietnam Jerry was with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Co D 2/503. I was so proud of my Sky Soldier. He looked so handsome in his uniform with his spit shined boots. Why I even learned how to shine them boots. Jerry would just laugh at me, it took me so long.

On May 13, 1968, I found out that I was pregnant once again. Oh how happy I was and just maybe this time I could carry this baby. I had a part of Jerry with me. I wrote a letter and sent him a picture of me with a big smile. That smile soon changed!!

I received the sweetest letter (last) from Jerry on June 13th, but did not get to read it till June 14 since I was in Erwin, TN at Toby's mother and dad's house for his brother's wedding. In the letter all he talked about was coming home to me and the baby and for me to be careful and maybe I would be able to carry this one. He couldn't wait to see me and the "baby" when he got off the plane in Feb. He talked about August being the half way point. He drew a picture of a woman and a soldier like a clock saying he thought about me all the time and again those words -- he would love me till the day he died. Oh to read his letter and what he was saying and knowing he was gone, it was the worst time ever in my life until I saw his body.

For a few weeks I had had an awful feeling, just scared that something bad was going to happen. I would try to shake it off, but it would just come back. I could see two men in uniform coming up long steps on a big front porch, but my folks only had a small porch and few steps.

Toby's brother, Charles was getting married June 14, 1968 and asked me to come. I took a bus to Erwin, TN to the Edney's house. The morning of the wedding, we were up and getting things ready along with getting us ready also. I had my hair in rollers and shorts and

maternity top on, I was so skinny and my little tummy was already out there!! Boy was I proud of that.

All of a sudden the phone rang and it was my daddy, I could hear his voice talking to Mrs. Edney, but at the same time two men in uniform was coming up the long set of steps to the large front porch. The same set of steps that I ran down to run into Jerry's arms only a few months ago. They knocked on the screen door and asked for Judy Ferguson, my daddy could hear me scream over the phone. They took their hats off and came in, I sat down in a chair for my legs could not hold me up. As they said I regret to inform you, all I could think and say NO NO NO this is not real, not Jerry, I'm carrying our baby and it will not have a daddy to help raise it. No this cannot happen to me, not now, not when I'm going to have our baby, and now I won't have a husband! I was in a fog, a daze. This was not real, this is a bad dream, not my Jerry.

What was supposed to be only a few days of a search and destroy mission turned out to be an extended mission. They were tired and looking forward to a hot meal when they got word their mission was extended. They had spent the night on top of a mountain overlooking the South China Sea in Binh Dinh, South Vietnam. In the morning of June 13, 1968, Sgt. Sam Solano and the Lieutenant whose nickname was Dennis the Minis took a squad of six which included Jerry to patrol the area before the others headed out. It was a beautiful day, the sky was blue and the weather was great. When they got to the bottom of the hill, they spotted several of the enemy. As they fired upon the enemy, the enemy took off running down a trail and the squad ran in pursuit of them. The trail eventually led to a fork. The Lt. directed Sgt. Sam Solano to go on one trail with two others, which was Jerry and Leonard White, and the Lt. took the other trail with the other two. Sgt. Solano's team continued down the trail. They were led into an ambush. As the enemy waited for them, they hand detonated a claymore mine as they came up the trail. It was a planned ambush. That's when Jerry was Killed. My sweetheart from grade school, we would have been married four years in Nov. of 1969.

As the Lt. and his team heard the blast, they went to their rescue. As they rushed to their rescue, the Lt. radioed back to the rest of the men on top of the hill and alerted them what happened and requested reinforcements....

(continued....)



....They heard the initial blast that killed Jerry and several others. They got the squad ready and were rushing down the hill to their rescue when they heard another blast that killed the RTO and the medic. The Lt. was wounded. The Lt. and his team were also led into a second ambush. It was believed to be another hand detonated claymore mine. Another planned ambush.

When they finally reached the scene, it was total chaos. The Lt. was wounded and the RTO and the medic eventually died of their wounds as they were loaded into the helicopter. As they loaded the KIA's and wounded into the helicopters many were crying and cursing for what had happened. It was a sad day. They were angry at the Lt. for directing Sgt. Solano with only two others down the trail that led to their ambush. As I see it now, the Lt. was young and only doing what he thought was right, I'm sure he was scared just like the rest of the guys.

Now what? I had to stay strong in order to keep my baby. In my 7th month I had to be rushed to the hospital, I was bleeding bad. Had to stay a week, but I still had our baby!!

On Dec. 24, 1968 our son, Jerry Lee Ferguson came into this world. He was 6 lbs. 8 oz. 19 in. long and looked just like his daddy. I finally had our baby, but no husband, what a sad and happy time in my life.



Judy and Jerry Lee

Jerry Lee was named after his daddy and Toby, (David Lee). He's so proud of his name and his daddy and Toby. We have been to the traveling wall a couple of times and want to go to D.C., but oh! how it hurts even after all these years.

I remember when we were on leave and took Toby home and stayed a few days with the Edney's. All of us would be out in the front yard playing football. Who would have thought that within the year both Jerry and Toby would not be with us.

I took Lee up to the Edney's a couple months after he was born and it was so bitter sweet. All the memories that flooded back into my head and heart. I could just see Jerry running to me when he got out of the car when he escorted Toby's body home. I could see all of us playing in the front yard.

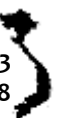
Our son will be 40 on Dec. 24, 2008 and I'm now 63. He still looks like his daddy, so much that it is scary. He has some of his ways and at times it will make a shiver run up my spine and tears to my eyes. I'm so proud of him. He is married to a sweet girl, Lisa and they have two girls, Lexi and Lani. He had been a fireman for nineteen years. I think he is handsome!! Mothers Pride. Jerry still lives on in my son and in my heart.



Jerry Lee Ferguson Scofield

It still hurts and finally after 40 years, I'm letting it all out. I put it so far back in my mind and didn't want to think or talk about it. It hurt too bad. It's time to heal, I can talk more about it to our son and now able to look at pictures and read his last letter over and over. It was dated 6-6-68. Our son married on 6-6-99 and my folks were married on 6-6-42.

(continued....)



I've since remarried to a wonderful man who was in Vietnam the same year, 1968. He was in the Navy with the Riveron Forces. One of the boats he was on hit a mine and it killed two and blew the rest in the water. He was one that went into the water. They were on boat #13.

Lee and I have been able to talk to some guys that knew Jerry in Vietnam and one was only about 30 to 40 ft. away when Jerry got killed. He was the one that told me Jerry was killed as soon as he got hit. Praise God, I didn't want him to hurt and be in pain.

God has blessed me in so many ways, a husband that lets me cry and talk to him about Jerry when I need to, wonderful memories of Jerry and Toby, our son, and another child, a daughter, Mary Grace. She has four boys, Kurt, Cole Ty and Eli.

God gave me a part of Jerry by letting me carry his child and then gave him to me on Christmas Eve. What a Christman present!!

Jerry, my love, I now laid you to rest and will try to go on with my life. One day we will see each other again and won't have to be apart ever again!!

I go to the little graveyard to put a new flag on your grave and flowers on our baby girl, Tonya Suzette. In the mornings when the light is just right, it hits both your graves since your side by side and it's so peaceful with the gentle breeze and the birds singing. I know you two are together now and all is well and you are at peace. NO MORE WARS MY SKY SOLDIER.



"Lani Grace, our grand-daughter, your blood still brings life."



Judy Ferguson Scofield

Source:

http://www.fold3.com/page/3483_vietnam_widow/stories/#8627/

*They say it was a soldiers death...
 They say time heals all things
 They say the good memories
 will keep you sane
 But they must not know anything
 They must not have ever felt
 this kind of pain
 Dressed up in funeral suits
 With a well prepared 21 gun salute
 They tell me they understand
 But through their tears they lie
 How could they know how I feel
 With their companion still by their side
 "He died a soldier
 He died in honor
 He died for the red, white, and blue
 Keep in mind my dear,
 he died protecting you."
 He didn't die protecting me
 He died for someone I've never met
 He died in another land
 I've never even seen.
 They say it will all turn out okay
 But they don't have to pretend to be brave
 For a confused blue eyed child
 Just under the age of two.
 They can fire their weapons in honor
 They can send a folded flag
 Mounted in a wooden box
 with a metal and one silver tag
 But they will never be able to bring home
 The warm embrace of my only lover
 All of this for a freedom
 we've always had
 They said it was a true soldiers death
 I guess that makes me
 a true soldiers wife.*

~ Author unknown



Eagles Over Oshkosh Set A New Wisconsin Skydive Record Over EAA Oshkosh



July 25, 2015. "The Eagles Over Oshkosh skydiving team set a new Wisconsin State large formation skydiving formation with 108 skydivers from 15 nations and 23 states represented. It wasn't a world record, but a record is a record."

(Thanks to Dan Poynter, Skydiving Museum)



Congratulations to the skydivers, but....

"I don't care how many Sky Dives you've got. Until you've jumped from 650 feet into absolute darkness, carrying 125 pounds of equipment, using a 42 pound parachute.....*You're Still A Leg To Me.*"



American paratrooper boards a C-47 on June 6, 1944 with jump gear for the invasion of Normandy.

(Web photos)





**Vietnam Veterans
of America
Chapter 522
www.vva522.org
9th Annual
Dwight Harrah Memorial
Golf Tournament**



**Sunday, October 18th
1:00 PM Shotgun Start
Bellevue Biltmore Golf Club
1501 Indian Rocks Road
Belleair, Florida**

TOURNAMENT PRIZES & RAFFLE

**Team Awards
Closest to the pin hole
Longest drive hole
Putting skills contest
Raffle
Silent Auction
Dinner Following Tournament**

Entry Fees

Foursomes: \$300.00 Individual Golfer: \$80.00

Entry form is available on our website.
Payments can be made using PayPal on our website.

Make checks payable to:
Vietnam Veterans of America
Pinellas County Chapter 522
PO Box 551
Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785-0551

For additional information visit www.vva522.org or call 813-917-2688.



**Two paratrooper buddies meet
on the street...**

Para 1: *Hey Airborne!*

Para 2: *All the way!*

Para 1: *You still with that pretty lady, Airborne?*

Para 2: *All the way.*

Para 1: *Airborne!*

Para 2: *I see you're still driving that Vette, Airborne.*

Para 1: *All the way.*

Para 2: *Airborne!*

Para 1: *How you getting to Phoenix, Airborne?*

Para 2: *Airborne.*

Para 1: *All the way?*

Para 2: *All the way.*

Paratroopers are folks of a few words.



Why Old Sky Soldiers Don't Get Hired....



At job interview....

Human Resources Manager: *"What is your biggest weakness?"*

Old Sky Soldier: *"Honesty."*

Human Resources Manager: *"I don't think honesty is a weakness."*

Old Sky Soldier: *"I don't give a shit what you think."*



Peter J. Arnold, Age 75

May 9, 1940 ~ August 14, 2015

A Lifetime Member of the 173d Airborne Association



Peter J. Arnold of Overland Park, KS, passed away August 14, 2015. Mass of Christian Burial was held on August 24, at Church of the Ascension, in Overland Park. Interment was at Arlington National Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be given to Wounded Warrior Project.

Peter was born May 9, 1940, the son of Romas and Genevieve (Wysocki) Arnold, in Joliet, IL. He joined the United States Army in 1957. While serving as a paratrooper with the 173rd Airborne Division, he received the Silver Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal for his valiant efforts during combat in the Republic of Vietnam.

This passage was quoted from the general orders for his Silver Star Award, *"His extraordinary heroism in close combat against a hostile force was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army."*

He also earned his Master Parachutist Badge and Combat Infantry Badge. He retired from the Army with the rank of Captain. Even after his retirement, Peter was a constant contributor to other service veterans in need.

He is preceded in death by his two brothers, Paul and Eugene "Sonny" Arnold and his mother-in-law, Frances Mead. He is survived by his wife of 21 years, Tracy; two children, Peter "Petey" and Alexandra "Princess Baby" Arnold; and his three dog companions CoCo, Lily and BeBe.

"You have my deepest sympathy. Pete is still leading the way (as always) for the rest of us to follow. He was a man of honor and made many friends over his lifetime. He has left the world a better place by his many achievements and a family that can be proud to have been a part of his life. AIRBORNE CAPTAIN ARNOLD....."

Kenneth Rypka, August 22, 2015
Fellow 173rd Sky Soldier, A/1/503, '66-'67
Savage, Minnesota

Rest Easy Cap...ATW

Of Importance to Disabled Vets in Illinois

Here are some details on a new law passed by both Houses of the Illinois State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor on August 17, 2015.

Provides that the term **"accessibility improvement"** means a home modification listed under the Home Services Program administered by the Department of Human Services, (in the engrossed bill), "accessibility improvement" is defined as a modification or addition to residential property that is designed to make the property more accessible to a disabled person, including, but not limited to, the installation of ramps, lifts, or fixtures, or the removal of architectural barriers on the property). Limits the period of time during which accessibility improvements will not increase the assessed valuation of property to 7 years after the improvements are completed.

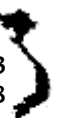


Further amends the **Property Tax Code**. In a Section concerning the disabled veterans standard homestead exemption, provides that, for taxable years 2015 and thereafter: (i) if the veteran has a service connected disability of 30% or more but less than 50%, the annual exemption is \$2,500.; (ii) if the veteran has a service connected disability of 50% or more but less than 70% or more, then the property is exempt from taxation. Effective immediately.

"Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that accessibility improvements made to residential property shall not increase the assessed valuation of the property."

Please pass this information on to all Veterans you know in Illinois who have VA Disabilities of 30% or more. We all might also consider noting those Representatives from our Districts who placed their names as supporters on this Bill. A note of thanks to them and the Governor for their support might be a positive thing for future actions.

Robert A. Getz, RAGMAN
Task Force CO, 2/503d
President
Practical Solutions & Applications
Serving Our Veterans



Where Bde HQ and the 1st & 2nd Battalions First Hung Their Caps in Beautiful Southeast Asia in 1965



"A Chosen Few, The Herd"

by PFC A.M. Eyster, Co B 1/503rd, 173rd Abn

Only a chosen few of my generation could understand why the skeleton in my closet rattles in my deepest sleep....

Who are you to judge us, for you have not followed our trail, walked the point at night or heard the fire, Hell and screams of a single night.

For we are the chosen few of "The Herd" who have touched the gates of Hell, seen the shadow of death and at times, are damned for surviving...

Source: The Virtual Wall, virtualwall.org

HEAL THE WARRIOR.....HEAL THE COUNTRY

"The severity and extent to which veterans suffer with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is in direct proportion to our culture's willingness to Welcome Home and Care for its' Warriors."

Scott Fairchild, Psy.D.

Doctor of Psychology

LTC (Ret), 82nd Abn Div

Baytree Behavioral Health, Melbourne, FL
(Known to many Sky Soldiers as the PTSD Guru)

August 25, 1971 This Day In History

173rd Airborne Brigade departs Vietnam

U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade, among the first U.S. ground units sent to Vietnam, ceases combat operations and prepares to redeploy to the United States as part of Nixon's troop withdrawal plan.

As the redeployment commenced, the communists launched a new offensive to disrupt the upcoming General Assembly elections in South Vietnam. The height of the new offensive occurred from August 28 to August 30, when the Communists executed 96 attacks in the northern part of South Vietnam. U.S. bases also came under attack at Lai Khe, Cam Ranh Bay, and other areas. Nixon's troop reduction plans were supposedly tied to the level of enemy activity on the battlefield, but once they began, very little attention was paid to what the enemy was doing and the withdrawals continued unabated. Source: History.com

[Sent in by Capt. Bill Metheny, HHC/4/503]



Sky Soldier Ball Players

The Lugnuts



Back row, third from left is our very own B/2/503 RTO & baseball player extraordinaire Mr. Larry Paladino. Lugnuts? No doubt. With that walking machine Larry's holding the opposing team can go out to lunch, take a smoke break, come back, and still throw him out at first! *Nah!* I played catch with Larry, he's a good ballplayer, even at his young age. Ed



Another Bravo Bull, John Taylor, would play professional baseball in both the Yankees' and Phillies' systems. Lucky dog!



Lew "Smitty" Smith, HHC/2/503, safe at third with the 509th Airborne ball team in Mainz, Germany in '67. *The infield dirt was like cement.* Smitty would play a summer for the California Angels' instructional team in L.A. and would also play college & semi-pro ball in Los Angeles and Miami.



Jerry Sopko, D/4/503. Look closely and you'll see a 173d pin on his hat.



Like Larry, still playing between the lines. Here's Jerry belting out a double on the McCabe's ball team in Latrobe, PA.

"Don't look back, something might be gaining on you."

Satchel Paige

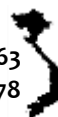
"Baseball is 90% mental and the other half is physical."

Yogi Berra



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On Sick Call...

Wishes for a speedy recovery go out to **Craig Ford**, C/1/503 and Sky Soldier extraordinaire, also known as "1st Bat Guy" to some of his 2/503 buddies. His lovely wife, Pat, reports Craig was in hospital and deathly ill, but the good news is he's home now although facing a slow recovery. Craig, who takes pride in being first in everything he undertakes, is a survivor of Operations Hump, Marauder, and Silver City among numerous other actions with the 1st Battalion, and quite simply put, he's too mean to die.

Hey G.I., get well, Craig, we're all pulling for you!



The debonair Mr. Ford.



A younger version



Craig & Pat at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL



Craig at Rex Hotel in '01 in Saigon entertaining local talent. "Misser Craig. You mean the parachutes come from the sky like this?" Jack Ribera A/2/503 flashing a 2nd Bat sign over the head of 1st Bat Guy.

(Photo by Smitty)



TRICARE Fees Go Up in October

August 28, 2015

TRICARE beneficiaries will see an increase in health care fees starting in October.

Beginning Oct 1, TRICARE Prime enrollment fees will be \$565 for a family and \$282 for a single person. The increases will affect military families and retirees under age 65. Increases to TRICARE enrollment fees are based on the annual cost of living adjustment for retired military pay.

Annual TRICARE Prime Enrollment Fees	
Through Sept 30	Beginning Oct 1
Single: \$277	Single: \$282
Family: \$555	Family: \$565

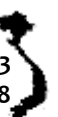
Surviving family members of sponsors who died on active duty, and medically retired servicemembers and their family members, are exempt from the fee increases.

Since 2011, beneficiaries have seen TRICARE Prime enrollment fees increase by 23 percent, double the rate of inflation over the same period. Pharmacy copays vary by class, but over the same time span, beneficiaries have seen a 60 percent increase in medication costs. After freezing annual TRICARE fees for 13 consecutive years, defense planners tried for several years to play catch up by proposing rate increases up to 300 and 400 percent over a five year period. MOAA argued that such a dramatic spike in fees could financially devastate retired military families.

In an attempt to prevent disproportionate increases, MOAA successfully convinced Congress to index TRICARE Prime enrollment fees to COLA versus health care inflation in the FY12 defense bill. In the FY14 defense bill, MOAA secured another legislative win by getting Congress to tie pharmacy fee increases to COLA as well. However, when it comes to pharmacy fees, Congress hasn't been able to follow its own law. In addition to last year's disproportionate pharmacy fee increase above inflation, Congress is now considering increasing pharmacy fees by 66 to 75 percent over the next decade.

"Beneficiaries are paying enough," said Capt. Kathy Beasley, USN (Ret), MOAA's Deputy Director for Government Relations. "Congress needs to look at other ways to control health care costs before trying to pass the buck to military families."

[Sent in by CCVVA Chapter 982]



ANOTHER TRUE STORY

June 17, 2014

By A. B. Garcia

4.2 Platoon, HHC/2/503, '65/'66



Amador Bolado Garcia, Jr., on a mission somewhere, sometime in Vietnam. His buddies call him A.B., or affectionately, the "Aussino", a nickname given him after the war in recognition of him being an Aussie-American-Chicano.

The nights in Nam were cold, damp and extremely wet. All day, nearly every day, we slogged through the jungle, with the heat almost unbearable and humid -- uncomfortable, dangerous and hard. The rain would pelt down starting about around 3 pm most days in the wet season. We'd be saturated but continued to plod along to our next night's position.

We'd make our hootches and there were three of us under one. We'd put up stakes on either side of our position to avoid firing on our brothers who had their positions next to ours. I remember it was mostly my assistant gunner, Melvin Mansker, in the hoochie with me, but I can't recall the other brother's name in with us.



L-R: Ray Thomas, Rick Fred & A.B. with their mascots at Camp Zinn near Bien Hoa, Vietnam, between operations.

The nights were extremely dark and cold. We didn't have a change of clothes, but had brought extra socks to change into. The mosquitoes were always bad and it was hard to sleep. The mosquito repellant stank and would melt plastic. We would have to squeeze some on our hands, rub them together and smear it on our clothes to keep the mosquitos from penetrating our fatigues. If you had to go for a number two, you'd have to smear your ass with it to keep them off and from them biting your behind.

We had to post guard duty all night, each one of us would do 2 hours on and 4 hours off. After our two hours we'd wake who was next on duty and he would start his time as guard -- every night was the same old thing. It was so difficult to stay awake after humping all day up and down hills, through and around different streams carrying about 90 or so pounds on your back and around your waist with grenades and extra ammo. And every so often getting sniped at. That was the norm.

The nights as I said were very cold and I shivered most of the night. We'd use our poncho liners as blankets and the material was like a rubber substance. At times it would rain all night which was even worse. We'd sweat under the poncho and it became so uncomfortable making it almost impossible to sleep. When it was my turn to keep guard, I struggled to keep awake. I would bite my tongue and pinch my cheeks and basically cause pain to stay awake. I would inflict pain on myself. That was the only way to keep awake then.

(continued....)



The next morning, open a can of whatever, eat it cold, saddle up with our gear as the command came down the line to move out and continue on our mission. Some operations would last weeks, and other missions only days -- it never seemed to alter. So many missions, and on every one we would be briefed on what to expect, and I would say to myself, *I'll never make it this time.*

We were told to expect to face tanks, anti-aircraft guns, thousands of North Vietnamese regulars (NVA). Scared, you bet. But, I had to go and try to look after my brothers whose lives were more important than mine -- that was my main objective....my brothers' safety.



A.B., on left of photo in t-shirt, along with buddies carrying a wounded buddy to Dust Off during Operation Silver City on 16 Mar 66 in the "D" Zone jungle.

The chopper rides to and from were always a highlight for me, I loved it. I enjoyed having dangling my feet from the floor outside the Huey almost touching the skids. At times I would hear thuds on the belly of the chopper, immediately knowing they were enemy bullets. I would then bring my legs inside and just smile at my brothers inside the chopper. This happened often.

On one occasion we were in some rice paddy and were attacked by rifle fire from a small Viet Cong force. Bullets whizzed past our positions. All mortars (4.2 inches) were out on this paddy. There were no troops guarding our positions and we just held our own. At the end of this particular mission Chinooks come to extract us and our mortars loaded onto our small mules. They were like a small Ute, completely open with no roof but with all terrain wheels. These mules, as they were called, could carry all our guns, equipment and ammo. The four mules were loaded onto the rear of the chopper while the rotors churned, heat coming from them, and once onboard, the door closed.



A Chinook extracting 4.2 Platoon from the boonies.

(Photo by A.B.)

As we were preparing to lift off, I stood up and glanced out a portal. I could see small men holding what appeared to be a stick, but that stick had smoke coming out of the barrel. The bullets pierced the belly of the Chinook and whizzed past me, but a lot of my brothers were wounded by flying shrapnel as they sat on the floor of the chopper. I prayed for the chopper to keep lifting, beckoning it to keep going. Smoke filled the cabin and somehow by God's grace, it kept flying.

On another operation I thought I was going to bite the bullet.



Sgt John Searcy, SFC (Ret), 4.2 Plt resting on a mule, taking 5

I often sit and wonder why I was so bloody lucky to have come out of the war alive, like many of us having come so close to dying so many times; but for some reason, I'm still here, I survived.

Sometimes our war seems like a dream to me, as if it never happened, but it did, almost 50 years ago, half a century now. And for all my brothers who didn't make it, I am here for them. I am here to celebrate their lives, their memories, and to never forget them. I never have. I talk to them a lot. I play my flute for them a lot. I sit and pray with them a lot. I live in their memory. ##





CASPER AVIATION PLATOON

Headquarters & Headquarters Company - 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP)

Origin & Brief History

Casper Aviation Platoon was the only separate aviation platoon in the United States Army during the Vietnam War. Casper was organized with the 173d Airborne Brigade on Okinawa in 1963 and arrived in country with the Brigade on May 5, 1965 becoming the first United States Army ground unit committed to the Vietnam War. Casper Platoon supported the Brigade until they all left Vietnam in August 1971.

Casper flew almost every type of heliborne mission there was including resupply, visual reconnaissance, Snoopy, Nighthawk, dust off, command & control and combat assault missions. Besides loyalty and dedication to their job, Caspers had the highest "extension" rate in the Brigade.

Casper Platoon Veterans served the 173d Airborne Brigade proudly during their "Tour of Duty", and continue to be honored today for their service in Vietnam.



Casper Pilot Cpt Tom Roy standing on the Casper flight line at LZ English 1971. (Casper web site)

LZ ENGLISH - "As long as there is a chance, we'll go in and get 'em, we can put our ships just about anywhere," said Captain Bill Thomas, Casper Aviation Platoon CO.

"Where there is a will there is a way," and Casper helicopter pilots usually have the will to find the way when it comes to rescuing the "Herd" out of tight spots.

During the heavy monsoon rains of last October, Casper pilots were rescuing Sky Soldiers from rooftops, rafts, tops of vehicles, mountain peaks and even trees. Despite lack of visibility and poor communications, the Casper crews never hesitated to pull members of the "Herd" out of trouble.

"Hot LZs" are no novelty to Casper pilots either. "If we can get some gun cover," said Thomas, "we won't hesitate to go down and get someone. All we need is enough room to land the craft and maneuver."

Primarily, missions carried out by Casper in support of the 173d include CAs (Combat Assaults), log missions (resupply), troop movements (insertions and extractions), Charley-Charleys (Command and Control) and visual reconnaissance.

[From *Firebase 173 Newspaper*, April 12, 1971]

Read about the Caspers at their web site:
www.casperplatoon.com



We love these guys!



VFW Against Candidate's Call to Eliminate the VA



'It provides an irreplaceable service to the nation's wounded, ill and injured veterans'

August 27, 2015

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is 100 percent against suggestions made by Dr. Ben Carson to eliminate the Department of Veterans Affairs by moving it under the Department of Defense. The presidential candidate's remark was made while appearing on the nationally syndicated Dave Ramsey radio program yesterday.



Dr. Carson

While discussing how to reduce the size of government, Carson questioned why there is a VA, that what it does *"should be folded in under the Department of Defense,"* that veterans should be given health savings accounts and sent out into the economy, and that VA facilities should be used just for specialized care for traumatic brain injury, limb replacements and research.

"I could not disagree with Dr. Carson more," said John A. Biedrzycki, Jr., the national commander of the 1.7 million-member VFW and its Auxiliaries.

"The Defense Department's focus in the personnel realm is on recruiting and retention. Taking care of veterans is a mission they gladly cede to the VA, which provides a continuum and continuity of care that is unmatched anywhere," he explained. *"To suggest that disabled veterans could be sent out into the economy with a health savings account card overlooks the fact that civilian health care has waiting lists of their own, that private practices often limit the number of government plan patients they accept due to low reimbursement rates, and presupposes that civilian doctors have the same skillsets as VA doctors, who see veterans of every age and malady every day. And to suggest that VA medical facilities should only be used for traumatic brain injuries, limb replacements and research ignores the entire mission and purpose of the VA,"* he said.

"The VFW is 100 percent against any effort to privatize or diminish the effectiveness of the VA," said Biedrzycki. *"It provides an irreplaceable service to the nation's wounded, ill and injured veterans, and my organization will not let any candidate for any office suggest anything otherwise."*

Source: VFW.org

FROM THE FLORIDA CHAPTER



Dear Fellow Florida Sky Soldiers:

We are on track for the dedication ceremony of our Sky Soldier Memorial marker at the National Cemetery in Sarasota, Florida. All Sky Soldiers, Family members and Friends are invited to this event.

Dedication is scheduled for 9 October 2015 at Noon. Please make plans to attend and be sure to arrive at the cemetery's *Memorial Walk* area PRIOR to 12 Noon. The cemetery is located at; 9810 State Road 72, Sarasota, FL 34241.

FYI: All honorably discharged veterans are entitled burial at any National/VA Cemetery, if space allows. Currently we have 8 VA cemeteries in Florida, 2 are closed to new burials and one is accepting cremations only. That realistically leaves us with 5 Cemeteries open to us. There are plans to open a new National/VA Cemetery in Cape Canaveral about 2016.

With the dedication of the Sky Soldier Memorial marker in Sarasota, we will have 173d Memorial markers in 2 of the 9 National/VA cemeteries in Florida. Ideally we like to have a 173d Marker in each cemetery, but that takes time, money and effort by local Sky Soldiers in that area.

If you would like to be our guy to help bring a 173d memorial marker to the local National/VA cemetery near you, please contact me 727-243-0380 or email Vet@BFPOB.com

I look forward to meeting with you all on 9 October. After a brief ceremony we will gather at a local establishment for food, etc., and enjoy comradely.

On another note. Don't Forget our **Veterans Parade in Orlando** on 14 November. Gather for the Parade prior to 0900 at 384 South Eola Dr., Orlando, FL 32801. We depart for the Parade route at 0900 hours. See map link www.mapquest.com/?le=t&hk=7-vyB1ofBx&vs=h If you plan to attend, please contact Bill Vose at wcvose@cfl.rr.com

If you live in Orlando and would like to plan a Christmas gathering for 12 December for all Sky Soldiers, please contact me at; 727-243-0380 or Vet@BFPOB.com

JAMES R. BRADLEY
CW3, USA, MC (Retired)
173d Abn Bde



~ Reunions of the Airborne Kind 2015 ~



53rd All Ohio Airborne Days, October 1-3, 2015, in Cleveland, OH.

Contact:

Sean Jennings

Phn: 1-440-915-8223

Em: jennsea3@yahoo.com

Web: 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



Combat Infantrymen's Association Reunion, October 1-4, 2015, in San Antonio, TX.

Contact:

Larry Eckard

Phn: 828-256-6008

Eml: combatinfantrymensassoc@yahoo.com

Web: www.mlrsinc.com/cia



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, "Back to the Beginning", hosted by South Carolina Chapter 30, June 7-10, 2016, Ft. Benning, GA.

Contact:

Phn: 803-237-3169

Eml: bowway@aol.com

Web: 173dreunion2016.com

NOTE

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

The 173d & 503d Make Combat Jump Into....



The Philippines, 1945



Vietnam, 1967



Iraq, 2003



AIRBORNE....ALL THE WAY!



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Excerpt:



Soldier Missing From Vietnam War Accounted For (Richardson)

August 21, 2015

The Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Vietnam War, have been identified and will be buried with full military honors.

Army Maj. Dale W. Richardson, 28, of Mount Sterling, Ill., will be buried Aug. 29, in Mountain View, Ark.

Richardson was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, and was the passenger aboard an UH-1H Iroquois (Huey) helicopter that was enroute to Fire Support Base Katum, South Vietnam, when it was diverted due to bad weather. After flying into Cambodian airspace, the aircraft came under heavy enemy ground fire, causing the pilot to make an emergency landing in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia. The Huey's four crewmen and its four passengers survived the landing. One crewman was able to evade being captured by enemy forces and later returned to friendly lines. The other three crewmen and one passenger were captured. Two of the captured crewmen were released by the Vietnamese in 1973, and the remains of the other two captured men were returned to U.S. control in the 1980s and identified. Richardson died at the site of the crash during a fire fight with enemy forces. His remains were not recovered after the fire fight.

In the identification of Richardson, scientists from DPAA and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) analyzed circumstantial evidence and used forensic identification tools, to include mitochondrial DNA, which matched his sister.

Today there are 1,627 American service members that are still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War. For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans who went missing while serving our country, visit the DPAA website at www.dpaa.mil or call (703) 699-1420.



Maj. Richardson

Old Newspaper Articles About the 173d In Vietnam

Sky Soldiers:

Before they turn to dust or go missing for all time, please dig through your trunks and attics and duffle bags and send in old newspaper articles, stories and clippings about our brigade in Vietnam for inclusion in future issues of our newsletter.

You can email them to rto173d@cfl.rr.com Should you wish to snail mail material, please drop me a note and I'll send you an address. You may include a self-addressed envelope, no postage needed, to have material returned. ATW! Ed

For example (excerpt from **Fire Base 173**):

Tracker Team Seeks Scents for Troopers

LZ ENGLISH – A bloodtrail, footprints, discarded clothing, a scent ...these are signs that put the 75th Combat Tracker Team on the trail of the enemy. On a round the clock readiness, the 75th Combat Tracker Team is called upon by elements of the 173rd Abn Bde to reestablish lost contact with the enemy. Operating in five-man teams, a Tracker Squad consists of a Team Leader, Visual Tracker, two Cover Men, a Dog and a Dog Handler.

The Dog, a Labrador Retriever, is trained only to follow a scent on the ground. The Labrador can scent up to an 18 hour old trail as long as wind and rain, his chief adversaries, stay away. A heavily populated area such as a village will also render the dog's senses useless.

SSgt William E. Eaton, Team Leader for the 75th Combat Trackers distinguished between the Tracker Team and the 39th Infantry Platoon Squad Dogs also attached to the 173d.

"Our primary function," said Eaton, "is to re-establish contact and evaluate enemy movement. The unit we work with provides the security. Once we have re-established contact for the unit or determined that the enemy has eluded us, our job is completed," said Eaton.....

(Web photo added)



Bob Baker & Bryn
75th CTT

Welcome Home Major, Rest Easy Sir

[Sent in by Jack Schimpf, B/2/503]



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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

Make checks payable to:
173d Airborne Brigade Assn

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

**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

