



July - August 2019, Issue 87
Contact: rto173@att.net

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~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

"To me, nothing compares to the responsibility of the medic under fire".

Louis Richard Rocco, Warrant Officer, Advisory Team 162, Medal of Honor Recipient



"Trying to avoid intense sniper fire, two American medics of the 2/503d carry a wounded paratrooper to an evacuation helicopter during the Vietnam War on June 24, 1965. A company of paratroopers dropped directly into a Viet Cong staging area in the jungle near Thoung Lang, Vietnam." L-R are, Doc Gerald (Gerry) Levy of New York (KIA 2 January 66, Operation Marauder), wounded trooper Tony Legmon, and Doc Andrew G. Brown of Chicago.

(Photo by Horst Faas)

See *Tributes to Our Medics* on Pages 75-89.



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We Dedicate this Issue of Our Newsletter in Memory and Honor of the Young Men of the 173d Airborne Brigade & Attached Units We Lost 50 Years Ago In the Months of July & August 1969



"The proud young valor that rose above the mortal and then, at last, was mortal after all.

You are not forgotten nor shall you ever be."

Unknown

Richard John Abraham, 22

PTE, 9RAR, 7/6/69

(Wall of Faces states LCPL)

"From Whyalla SA. Abraham was killed in action in Phuoc Tuy Province July 6 1969. The second eldest of three brothers, Richard and Brian served in Vietnam. He is buried in Whyalla."



Bruno Adam Josef Adamczyk, 22

CPL, 9RAR, 7/12/69

"From Schwerte Germany. He was killed in action in a bunker system in Phuoc Tuy Province on 12th July 1969. Buried Centennial Park Crematorium Adelaide."



Steve Anderson, 22

CPL, C/4/503, 7/10/69

7/5/18: "The likes of a brave man.

To my favorite Brother, you will all be remembered. Rest in peace.

Roland Anderson



Carl Bracy Ayers, Jr., 20

CPL, C/2/503, 8/29/69

11/20/10: We Remember. Carl is buried at St Mary's Cemetery, Evergreen Park, IL. BSM ARCOM PH."

Robert Sage



David John Banfield, 21

PTE, 5RAR, 8/21/69

"From Ulverstone Tas. Banfield, an assault pioneer was killed during a fire-fight in a bunker system in Bien Hoa Province 21st August 1969. Buried Carr Villa General Cemetery Launceston TAS."



Paul V. "Doc" Barrington, Jr., 24

SP4, B/3/503, 8/13/69

(Virtual Wall states HHC/3/503)

10/7/01: "Service together in

Vietnam, circumstances of death. Paul

was a medic assigned to November Platoon,

Charlie Company, 3/503 Infantry, 173rd

Airborne Brigade (Sep). He was originally attached to

the rifle platoon in June, 1969 when we were based at

Camp Rock, Bao Loc province in the Central Highlands.

He accompanied the platoon when it was sent to the

coast near Phan Thiet, attached to a tank unit. As the

platoon went out on a reconnaissance mission into the

coastal mountains in August, 1969, SP4 Barrington was

sick and stayed at the base for rest/treatment. Before

we even returned from the mission, we learned that he

had contracted severe malaria and died within days of

diagnosis." Michael Switzer



Danny Lance Barron, 24

CPL, A/1/50th, 8/5/69

8/9/05: "Dan was as fine a citizen

soldier as this nation has ever produced. I

can't remember him ever complaining,

although it is every infantryman's right to

do. Most of the 'guys' in 1st Platoon had

cool cars at home, or were planning to when they got

back to the World. We all fancied ourselves as 'hot rod'

mechanics. When Dan Barron arrived, there was no

doubt who the best mechanic in 1st Plt was. He was a

'natural' as 4th squads driver/mechanic. He knew

where to drive, and more importantly, where not to

drive his APC; how to act and react in combat; and how

to maintain the proper tension on the APC's drive

wheels so you didn't throw a track. All in a day's work.

All our drivers were volunteers. It was a serious and

dangerous job. Dan was the best. In May '69 1st Plt

was conducting an amphibious assault up the Song Kim

Son River in Bong Son when one of the other squads

sank their track....



(Tributes continued....)



....We dragged it out of the river and towed it back to our LZ. Dan was the only guy who knew anything about diesel engines and worked on it all day trying to get the water out of the track's engine and getting it started. Our LT was sweating bullets, and wondering if he was going to be sent to Leavenworth for destroying government property. Late that afternoon the engine started, and there was a roar of cheers as 25 guys hooted and applauded. I can still see Lt. Parsley, covered in smiles, hugging Dan, covered in grease. From his Platoon Sergeant." **Jack Noble**



William John Bassignani, 26
1LT, HHC/173d Flt Plt, 8/18/69

1/2/02: "It was a wonderfully clear New England summer day. I remember how blue the sky was that day with small puffs of clouds to punctuate the blue. I had taken my/our oldest boy, Peter, 20 mos., shopping with me while my sisters, Cyn & Cheryl, cared for our youngest, Derek, 8 mos. As I turned the corner of our street, I saw a military vehicle parked across the street and two men in army uniforms standing near it. Pulling up to the curb in front of the house, I thought 'How nice, Pete will see men in uniform, and he won't be so frightened when he sees his Dad come home.' Seconds later it hit me that the men were here to tell me Bill wouldn't be coming home. 32 years later that blue sky and Bill remain in my heart." **Mary Ann Bassignani**

4/27/08: "A Very Special Man. Bill you were loved by all who knew you. Your name and your presence will always remain in the Hearts of the men from Casper. You're among the best and above the rest....a very Special man indeed." **Barbara Anne**



Left Bill Bassignani, Gordy Anderson on the right.

Timothy Wayne Beverford, 19
SP4, C/1/50th, 7/28/69

5/30/02: "How would my life have changed, had you lived and come home? Tim, your early death changed the course of my life. I volunteered for the army, Viet Nam and served in '71 & '72. At that time I chose to extract my pound of flesh for them taking your life. I accomplished what I set out to do by becoming a LRRP/Sniper for the Americal Division. Over thirty years have passed and there are times that I still miss you and long to talk about all the many things that never got said. I never told you how much I admired you and looked up to you. I remember watching you playing football for Hollywood High School, no team seemed to be able to run the ball around your end of the field. Most teams gave up trying, you were just that good. You were the middle brother, I always expected you to do the very best out of the three of us. I know now that you are with Jesus, I believe this with all my heart, as I'm a Christian now. It just took me a little longer than you to come to the truth. Your face is one of the first ones I want to see when I reach there. I love you my brother and I miss you very much. Please tell Bill Taylor, George Floyd, Oscar Pearson & Virginia Rodocker I also will see them when I arrive." **Bill Beverford**

6/24/13: "Tim Beverford was killed when the Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) he was riding hit a mine. Company was under the Operational Control of the 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry. The APC was completely destroyed. In spite of swift evacuation by the Battalion Command Helicopter, Beverford died as a result of the blast, never regaining consciousness. Wounded with him that day were: Cecil Ratliff, John Cole, Albert Butler, Jack Hamby and Mike Reck."



Michael R. Blanchfield, 19
SP4, A/4/503, 7/3/69

"Michael Blanchfield joined the Army from Chicago, Illinois in 1967, and by July 3, 1969 was serving as a Specialist Four in Company A, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. On that day, in Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam, Michael smothered the blast of a hand grenade with his body, sacrificing himself to protect those around him. Michael, aged 19 at his death, was buried in All Saints Cemetery, Des Plaines, Illinois."



[See Mike's Medal of Honor citation on Page 18]

(Tributes continued....)



**Arnim N. Braithwaite, 22****CPL, D/4/503, 7/15/69**

7/9/18: "I found you. Mom had a picture of you in a photo album and I remember looking at it and wondering what kind of man you were. I found your name on the wall and I cried. Because of you, mom made sure we honored Vietnam veterans. May your family and friends take comfort in knowing you were never forgotten by a young woman who never met you. EKW." **Elizabeth Wright**

**Charles David Brasier, 20****SGT, A/3/503, 7/14/69****(Virtual Wall states E/17th Cav)**

6/30/18: "Tribute to Sky Soldier."

On behalf of all the paratroopers who served with you in the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate) and all who followed, we offer our respect and remembrance of your ultimate sacrifice. May you never be forgotten and your family and friends take comfort in your valor in serving. I was also with 3rd Batt then." **Mike Switzer**

**R.H. Brown****SPR, RNZE, 8/12/69***"Killed in action, 12 August 1969 – mine."***Ronald William Cardona, 19****SSG, D/16th Armor, 7/6/69****(Virtual Wall states C/75th Inf)**

2/16/17: "The Uncle I Never Knew."

There are many times I ask my mother about you and about the fascinating things you did or were involved in. We laugh about the crazy and dork things all 9 of you did as children. When I hear of your story it makes me mad and yet it makes me sad. Sad for the fact that I never had the opportunity to meet you, and mad because my family is sad for the loss of their brother. We just want you to know that you were loved and are definitely never forgotten. Sincerely, Your Niece,"



**Mary Lou Figueroa-Yee MSM, BSCJ,
Retired NCO, Army Specialist**

**Thomas Castillo, 25****SGT, B/4/503, 8/1/69**

10/17/09: "1969 Served Together in Vietnam. Thomas was a great brave man. We served together in the Recon Team. He liked to talk to me about his newly born baby girl and was looking forward to coming home to her. He loved her very much. He had a baby picture of her hand drawn. He never got to pick it up, but I did and handed it to command post so they could send it home. I don't know his family or little girl, but I would love to meet them. Tom was a brave man and I know he is home with our Lord Jesus Christ. I would like to meet with his daughter and talk to her about her brave father." **Mike Medina**



Note: "Thomas' older brother, Ismael Castillo, was killed in World War II."

**Bruce Edward Coley, 21****SGT, C/1/503, 7/7/69****(Virtual Wall states B/1/503)**

6/28/15: "Until we meet again. I

can't believe it's almost 46 yrs. since we lost you. Like most Brothers growing up, all we did was fight with each other. We always hated it when Ma made one of us take you along wherever we was going. How different things would have been had we known we would lose you at such a young age. We never got to tell you how much we love you. We never got to Hug you. You learn as you get older what a Brother really means to you. For years now Russ and I talk every Sunday morning for two hours. Years ago he sent me your Vietnam pictures and when Ma died, he passed on your flag to me. We never forgot you. Well Bruce, somewhere down that road, Russ & I are going to tell you how much we missed you and we are going to get that Hug. RIP Brother,"

**Steve & Russ Coley****Alfonso Marquez Duran, 19****SGT, 173d LRRP, 7/26/69****(Virtual Wall states N/75th Inf)**

11/7/10: "We Remember. Alfonso

is buried at Evergreen Cem, Colorado Springs, CO. His military stone says Co N, 75 INF, 173 Abn Bde. BSMOLC AM PH."

**Robert Sage***(Tributes continued....)*

Beresford Paul Edwards, 23**PTE, 9RAR, 7/12/69**

"Wellington NSW. Edwards was killed in a contact in a bunker system in Phuoc Tuy 12th July 1969. Buried St Mary's Cemetery NSW."

**Jerry Lee Fordham, 19****SP4, B/3/503, 8/13/69**

7/15/15: "Ambush Ambush 4690 MedVac, MedVac. Everything went wrong that could possibly go wrong that morning. Jerry & I went out to investigate. Jerry and I walked into an ambush; Jerry and I didn't stand a chance. You were almost ready to go home in a few days. You were a short timer with less than a week. You didn't even have to go out to investigate. You could have stayed in the perimeter. UN-lucky Fate. The gods intervened. Terry came out and got me, or I would have died too." Jim

**William Forssell Ericson, II, 25**
1LT, A/1/503, 7/15/69

"Bill was an enlisted man, a Non-commissioned Officer, a cadet, an officer, a rifleman, a senior paratrooper, a pathfinder, a jungle expert, and a Combat Infantryman. He did not want to be 'known' as any of these - he just wanted to be known as a 'soldier.' On 14 July 1969, the day before his death, Bill wrote, 'Our old AO is pacified. As I left the valley it was memorable to look across those beautiful rice paddies with their quaint unique farmers and characteristic water buffalo and note the development of the area in the few short months that we were operating in it. There is little or no fear that the VC will steal the rice and use the farmers for forced labor or recruitment into the VC force. The Vietnamese Army is now in force and can provide the security we won for them.'" The Virtual Wall



**Bill, with his bride, Clare
at West Point, Summer '67**

[See Bill's Silver Star citation on Page 39]

**Herman Thurston Fields, 20****SP4, B/3/503, 8/14/69**

11/27/16: "Thank you. As morbid as this sounds, without your death, I would not be here. When you died my grandfather escorted your body back and he and my grandmother (your cousin) met at the funeral and soon after got married. You were brave and to hear the stories about you is incredible. I carry jump wings on my lanyard to remember you by and to remind me that life isn't cheap and that without your loss, I would not have been born. I don't take that for granted." Unsigned

**Don C. Frit****PTE, RNZIR, 7/11/69**

"Don Frith grew up in northern Hawkes Bay, attending Marumaru Primary School, north of Wairoa, and then Napier High Boys' High School in Napier. He joined the Army as a National Serviceman and was posted to 1 Battalion Depot Burnham for infantry training. His next posting was to 1RNZIR at Terendak in Malaysia in November 1968. Six months later he was posted to Vietnam with V4 Company. Nine weeks into his Tour of Duty, Don became very sick and died of illness on 11 July 1969."



(Tributes continued....)



**Robert Ernest Gaftunik, 20****SGT, C/4/503, 8/25/69**

9/28/09: "IN REMEMBRANCE OF THIS FINE YOUNG UNITED STATES ARMY SOLDIER WHOSE NAME SHALL LIVE FOREVER MORE. Brothers ROBERT ERNEST GAFTUNIK and STEVEN JOHN GAFTUNIK were both killed in Vietnam. Robert on 25 August 1969 and Steven on 27 March 1968. YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN NOR SHALL YOU EVER BE." **Clay Marston**

(Robert's older brother, PFC Steven John Gaftunik served with C/4/23rd/25th Inf was KIA 3/27/68).

2/9/05: "Steven and Robert Gaftunik were brothers. They lived a short distance from my family in a then rural area of Sacramento. A third brother was drafted, and their mother went to the draft board and begged them not to send her last surviving son to Vietnam. I believe he was sent to Germany for his tour of duty instead. This was a wonderful family torn apart by this war. God bless them all."

Anne Lee Gruzca, Neighbor

**Robert****Steven****Bobby Lee Gentry, 19****PFC, A/1/50th, 7/8/69**

1/12/17: "I remember. Cousin, I remember us rough housing in my grandfather Elias Jett's farm. What great memories I have us together. I love you and miss you so much." **Jennifer (Jett) Alridge**

**Posthumous Medal For Soldier**

A posthumously awarded Bronze Star Medal for outstanding meritorious service in Vietnam, earned by Pfc. Bobby L. Gentry, is received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Gentry, Winchester, from Col. Max Etkin, commander of the Lexington Blue Grass Army Depot. Also awarded were the Purple Heart and Good Conduct medals. Pfc. Gentry was killed in Vietnam July 8 by a booby trap explosion.

**Terrance Neil Gentry, 20****SGT, C/4/503, 8/25/69**

10/27/06: "You and Strazzanti, bad day. Rest easy. From his Platoon Leader," **Fred Stephans**

8/21/14: "Never Forgotten. As a cherry on patrol (at the back of the squad of course) I picked a different (easier) path through a knee high hedge row than the men ahead of me had taken. Terrance saw where I went and chewed my ass out like no one had ever done before or since. The fact that the six of us were a click from the platoon base camp in an area known to be hostile didn't deter him from yelling at the top of his voice up one side of me, taking a dump and then yelling down the other. The lessons I learned (always step where others have stepped and never take the 'easy' path) undoubtable saved my life in the booby trap laden An Do valley." **Stephen G.W. Munro**

**Roy Nathaniel Givens, 20****SGT, C/1/50th, 7/29/69**

10/1/18: "ALWAYS REMEMBERED. MY BROTHER – MY HERO." **Oscar Givens**

**Rigoberto Gomez-Diaz, 20****SGT, HHC/173d Ftl Plt, 8/18/69**

4/27/06: "Always in Our Hearts. We have spent thirty plus years trying to forget what Vietnam had done to us, but it is very difficult when you return there each night. It is very difficult to forget when the memories are still clear and vivid in one's own mind and try to deal with the pain alone. It has taken thirty years, but the Casper Platoon over the past two years has learned that we need to be together as a family and share the pain with others who understand what we hold inside. The healing, we have learned, comes from being together, remembering together, celebrating together and mourning together. Our brothers who died in combat are missed as any family member would be, and at each reunion those of you that were lost to us are remembered in a ceremony dedicated to the memories we all share. You were our brother, you are our brother, and our family is incomplete without you, but your memory lives on within us forever. You are greatly missed at each reunion, but we do feel your spirit among us. God bless America, God bless the Vietnam Combat Veteran." **A Casper Friend**



(Tributes continued....)



**Leonard George Greville, 19****PFC, A/2/503, 7/7/69**

11/2/10: "We Remember. Leonard is buried at Park Hill Cemetery, Vancouver, Clark Co, WA. BSM PH OLC." **Robert Sage**

**Jackie Dwayne Hamby, 22****SGT, 173d Eng., 7/28/69**

"Jackie was not married and was survived in 1969 by his mother, Auddie Tate Hamby, and his father Jack Hamby, Jonesboro, Arkansas. Jackie also had 2 brothers and 4 sisters. The Hamby siblings are Connie, Glenna, Jackie, Chrylene, Gary, Dwight, Connie and Tammy. Gary, a Vietnam Veteran, drowned in 1982 near Tulsa Oklahoma in the Arkansas River, downriver from where he and a friend, Steve Morman, capsized their canoe when it went over a low-water dam at a Sand Springs river park.

Jackie's father Jack, 78, a WWII veteran, passed away in January 2000. His mother, Auddie, 83, passed away in June 2007. She was preceded in death by her husband, her parents, Alva and Minnie Beaty Tate; a brother, two sisters, two sons, one grandson and one great granddaughter.

Jackie, Gary, Jack, and Auddie are buried in the family plot at Trinity Cemetery near Bono Arkansas. The Hamby family has a history of service to America."



This photos shows Jackie with Danny Day, another unit member. Jackie is on the right.

Edward William G. Hards, 21**PTE, COMD LOC, 8/2/69**

"Guildford WA. He died of illness at the Repatriation General Hospital Hollywood, Western Australia, 2nd August 1969 after his return from Vietnam. Buried Karrakatta Cemetery WA."

**Robert Max Hayes****SQN LDR, RAAF, 7/17/69**

"Born Cottesloe WA. He died at Pearce WA on 17th July 1969. Buried Pearce WA."

**Peter Aubyn Hines, 27****LT, 6RAR, 7/21/69**

"Wangi NSW. Hines was killed in Phuoc Tuy by a mine explosion on the morning of 21st July 1969, the day man walked on the moon. Buried Sandgate Cemetery NSW."

**Frederick William Hoare, 29****CPL, 6RAR, 8/4/69**

"Rockhampton NSW. Hoare was assault pioneer and died at 24 US Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh on 4th August 1969 from a mine blast he received the previous day. Buried Mackay Cemetery QLD."

**Ronald Steven Holeman, 18****PFC, 173d LRRP, 7/13/69****(Virtual Wall states N/75 Rgr)**

10/16/03: "Ranger team mate. You and two other Rangers lost their lives that day. I was replaced that day and the Ranger who took my place that day died. He came from another team. The names are burned in my mind forever. Rest easy Ranger." **Sgt. Ron Combs**

**T.N. Hollows****PTE, RNZIR, 7/29/69**

"Wounded in action, 23 July 1969 – mine at Ap Lo Gom on Route 44. Died of wounds, 29 July 1969 – from wounds received at Ap Lo Gom."



(Tributes continued....)



**James Cleveland Jackson, 20****CPL, C/1/503, 7/27/69**

5/18/11: "We Remember. James is buried at Mount Moriam Baptist Church Cemetery, Chester, SC. BSM-OLC PH."

Robert Sage

I never got the chance to tell him how much I loved him, but I do! He was my 'Big Bro', best friend, and most of all, my Hero! I think of you every day. We all miss you! 'Keep Flyin High Bro'!!!! I'LL LOVE YOU FOR FOREVER AND A DAY! Miss you every Min!"
Toni "Dreamweaver"

**James Allen Johnson, 23****CPL, 39th Inf Scout Dog Plt, 7/1/69**

4/30/18: "Your sister Eva Johnson wanted people to know this about you. This photo was submitted by Eva Johnson, she is James Johnson's sister. James had 6 sisters and 5 brothers. Eva remembers James as being able to get along with everybody. She shared that James was very funny, and he had the nickname 'Hanky'." **Unsigned**

**Ervin Jones, 22****SGT, C/4/503, 7/6/69**

10/27/06: "Sergeant Jones: Good Squad Leader, Good Guy. Someone remembers, pal. From his Platoon Leader," **Fred Stephens**



Duane and sister Toni taken just before he went in to the Army.

**Duane Richard Keil, 20****SGT, A/4/503, 7/3/69**

5/6/03: "My Brother, Skysoldier, 173rd Airborne. Duane was tall and thin, like a bean pole! Always laid back, never moved too fast. He liked iced tea, sometimes even carried around his own jar of instant. Loved just hanging out on the couch and watching 'stupid' movies. Loved kids, he would play on the floor for hours with my little brother, playing cards, or building things with blocks.

Mom was into experimental cooking when we were young. Duane was the 'guinea pig'. He would eat anything!

He didn't have much, except for an old 55 Chevy. That car was his pride! He was so tall he had to have his seat all the way back to drive. The back of his seat was broken so he was almost lying down when he drove. You always knew it was his car, it had FU-MAN-CHU written on the back sides of it!

Duane always smiled, had a great sense of humor. Always joking around!

Never liked any boy I liked, thought they were losers (he was usually right!). We would fight a lot, guess that's normal.

I miss him so! What I wouldn't give for one more argument, then a big fat hug!

**Golsby Kimbrough, Jr., 20****SGT, D/16th Armor, 7/6/69**

12/7/08: "Gone but not forgotten. It's hard to believe that so many years have passed. I was just a little girl when you died but I remember it as though it were yesterday. Thank you for your love for our incredible country." **Debbie Collins Jeter**



"Kimbrough enlisted in the Army in July 1967, two weeks after graduating from Benjamin Franklin High School, because he felt that fighting for his country was preferable to the kind of fights he might get into if he stayed in his neighborhood. Kimbrough wanted to be a doctor, and often promised his parents that someday he and his four brothers would support them. The 20-year-old sergeant was a light truck driver in Viet Nam, assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 173rd Support Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. Kimbrough had extended his tour in Viet Nam six months and was temporarily assigned to a South Vietnamese army armored company when he died on July 6, 1969. He was survived by his parents and four brothers."

Philadelphia Daily News*(Tributes continued....)*

**Randolph Louis Larson, 20****SP4, 173d Eng., 8/11/69**

5/28/04: "Our Neighborhood Playmate and Too Young Hero. Randy, As we enter the 2004 Memorial Day holiday weekend, I especially recall those special times of youth so long ago - happily playing with all of our younger brothers and sister. Although your fifteen days in country were all too brief before our heavenly Father lovingly called you home, we will always remember your ultimate sacrifice. All Americans owe you their deepest gratitude for your unselfish bravery and faithful courage. Rest in hallowed peace with James Roger until we all meet again, Your Neighbor, Friend, and Fellow Veteran,"

Richard Scherer, 9th Div, B 2/4 FA, RVN 1967 – 1969

**James Howard Lee, 19****SP4, B/Spt Bn, 7/15/69**

11/15/01: "To live in the hearts we leave behind, is never to have died." (Thomas Campbell, circa 1888)

A memorial from his Mother, sisters, and brothers.

**Matthew Loughman, 21****PTE, HQ 1 ALSG, 7/19/69**

"Finley NSW. He died in 24 US Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh on 19th July 1969, following a brain hemorrhage Buried Finley Cemetery NSW."

**Terrence M. McDermott, 23****1LT, D/1/503, 8/3/69**

8/6/15: "Never forgotten. When I think of Terry I remember how he always made us laugh. We lived around the block and he was friends with my brother. Even though I was seven years younger he always was so friendly, he was that way with everyone. I will always remember how I was walking around the block with my baby nephew and I saw the flag and I knew. I went to the funeral at Saint Augustine's and it was so moving. His Mom and Dad moved a few doors down from us and I would visit with Gert and Michael along with my Mom. Gert gave me an Irish tea cup when I bought my condo and she came to visit. I still have it and I think of her and Terry. He was so full of life and I wanted his family to know that he is remembered. Heaven must be roaring with laughter with Terry there."

Nancy Clemens

**James Clyde McMillan, 20****PTE, 5RAR, 7/31/69**

"Albury NSW. While attached to special services enemy soldiers shot McMillan at 2am 31st July 1969. Buried Horsham Cemetery VIC."

**Theodore Mendez, Sr., 34****SSG, 173d LRRP, 7/14/69****(Virtual Wall states E/17th Cav)**

5/24/15: "DAD. You are never Forgotten Love Miss You Always, your loving daughter," **Sherry**

**Glen Allan Millinger, 20****SGT, D/1/503, 8/3/69**

1/31/12: "FELLOW SOLDIER. Glen and I went through N.C.O.C.S. together at Ft. Benning, GA. (1968). He had the top bunk and I had the bottom bunk. We trained together for four months (+ or -). Glen was a great guy and a good soldier. We were both serving in Vietnam when I learned of his death. A true loss." **Frank (Danny) Morris**

**Robert Stevens Mitchell, 18****PFC, B/3/503, 8/14/69**

8/26/03: "You have my heart always I will never forget my little Boy." **Thelma E. Hartman**

**Raymond John Moore, 23****PTE, 9RAR, 7/24/69**

"Melbourne VIC. With 2 Platoon A Company, VC shot the private in Phuoc Tuy on 24th July 1969. Buried Lilydale Cemetery VIC."

**Larry Murray, 22****SGT, E/2/503, 7/29/69**

7/21/15: "My Brother. To my BROTHER whom I've never forgotten and will always remember."

SSG D. Murrar (Ret)



(Tributes continued....)



Hans Leohard Muller, 22**PTE, 5RAR, 7/5/69**

"Passau West Germany. Muller was killed in action from a enemy mine explosion on 5th July 1969. Buried Rookwood Cemetery NSW."

**John David Needs, 22****CPL, 6RAR, 7/21/69**

"Whitmarsh Flinders Island TAS. On his second tour of duty, Corporal Needs was killed by a mine as he was helping evacuate his mates from an earlier explosion in Phuoc Tuy on 21st July 1969. Buried Woongara Crematorium QLD."

**Robert M. O'Hanlon****F/O, RAAF, 7/3/69**

"Born Gympie QLD. Died at the Repatriation General Hospital Greenslopes QLD on 3rd July 1969. Buried Albany Creek Crematorium NSW."

**Rodney Glenn Oxendine, 21****CPL, D/4/503, 8/12/69**

5/4/99: "Notes from a Friend. Rodney and I were friends when we were growing up in Yorktown. We were in Boy Scouts together, and went to the same school. His older brother Keith and my older brother were also friends. His parents were really nice. We moved away, and it was only many years later that I heard about Rodney. Shortly after that, one night on the TV news, they showed a picture of the wall as a background on a news story, and there centered on the screen was RODNEY OXENDINE, and it just jumped out at me. Of all the names, they chose this panel and this name to broadcast. I too spent time in Binh Dinh province, in 1970, but only now learned that this is where Rodney was." Ed L.

**Leslie James Pettit, 21****PTE, 5RAR, 7/4/69**

"Sydney NSW. He died in action from an enemy mine explosion on 4th July 1969. Buried Liverpool Cemetery NSW."

**J.W. Radford****CPL, RNZIR, 7/23/69**

"Killed in action, 23 July 1969 – mine at Ap Lo Gom on Route 44."

**Joseph Rendon, 21****SGT, D/4/503, 7/31/69**

"Buried in Roselawn Cemetery, Pueblo, Colorado next to his mother Marie O. Rendo who passed away in 1987. In same cemetery is an older brother and sister in-law. Anthony Jesse and Ida May Gonzalez."

**Henry R. Reyes, 22****SGT, B/2/503, 7/15/69**

2/14/01: "We remember your smile. I talked with your mom following the 2000 Memorial Day service at Hillcrest Cemetery in Porterville. I had my ex-wife, Jan, place a flag on your grave at the cemetery. Your mom called to thank me. She said she knew I was the one who made sure it was placed there. I told her you'd have done it for me. See you in class."

**Stephen Brown****Paul Michael Roberts, 19****PFC, D/2/503, 8/15/69**

8/15/13: "Thank you my Nam brother. You gave more than your share." A Vietnam Vet, 1969

**Ronald George Smillie, 19****SPR, 1 FD SQN, 7/23/69**

"Albury NSW. He died when an M16 mine accidentally exploded during an early afternoon road clearing operation in Phuoc Tuy on 23rd July 1969. Buried Albury Cemetery NSW."

**Baron Frederick Smith, 21****PTE, 5RAR, 8/11/69**

"Brisbane QLD. Smith died of his wounds 11th August 1969, 1st Australian Field Hospital Vung Tau after a sentry from another section of his own platoon fired on him during a patrol earlier in the day in Bien Hoa. Buried Canberra Cemetery ACT."

**John Smith, 21****SPR, 1 FD SQN, 7/23/69**

"Grimsby Britain. He died when a mine exploded as he cleared a road in Phuoc Tuy on 23rd July 1969. Buried Springvale Crematorium VIC."

*(Tributes continued....)*

Paul Leslie Smith, 19**L/CPL, 5RAR, 7/5/69**

"Mackay QLD. He suffered wounds from an enemy mine during a land-clearing and night ambush patrol operation on 5th July 1969. He died in 24 US Evacuation Hospital. Buried Mount Bassett Cemetery QLD."



message has been delivered on to his family thanks to this page and the soldier who honored that promise to deliver it. Thank you all for giving his family stories and a deeper knowledge of who he was. God bless."

Michelle Denise Thomas/Parker**Murray John Turnbull****PTE, RNZIR, 8/2/69**

"Killed in action, 2 August 1969 – booby trap at Lang Phuoc Hai. Murray Turnbull was the youngest of three children and attended Bayfield High School in Dunedin. After completing basic training at Waiouru, he was posted to Alpha Company, 1 Battalion Depot at Burnham. Having joined 1RNZIR at Terendak in Malaysia he was sent to Vietnam with V4 Company in May 1969. He was killed in action during Operation Mundingburra as a result of booby trap device."

**Jerry Wayne Spears, 20****CPL, E/2/503, 7/6/69**

"Jerry was my first cousin. We all miss him, and know that he is in the arms of the angels, and is in God's care, along with his dear Mother and Father, Ruby and Howard Spears. God Bless the entire family." Unsigned

**Wayland Dan Stembridge, 22****SGT, D/4/503, 7/19/69**

1/17/02: "Son of Wayland T. and Gertrude, brother of James, Shirley, Pat, Janis, and Connie. Loved and missed by his friends and family. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil: for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Psalms 23:4' A memorial from his mother," Gertrude Kalan

**Frank Daniel Walthers, 20****CPL, 173d LRRP, 8/1/69****(Virtual Wall states C/75th Inf)**

5/30/00: "Frank died of a chest wound from hostile forces in Binh Dinh, South Vietnam. Details of the events from this hostile engagement are embodied in the book 'Blood on the Risers'. Frank will always live in my heart and the hearts of everyone who knew him. Your friend always," Tom Wojcicki

**Alan Peter Strazzanti, 19****SGT, C/4/503, 8/25/69***2/23/15: "My Brother Alan.*

Thanks to Joe Travnik for posting Alan's photo to the Wall of Faces. It's been 45 years since he was killed in Viet Nam and we miss him as if it was yesterday. He was my baby brother and the emptiness in the hearts of all of us who loved him will never heal. Knowing that he's remembered by others besides his family helps. He's buried at All Saints Cemetery in Northfield next to our father and I try to make sure a flag is always flying."

Roseann Strazzanti Armenio**Harold David Williams, 21****SSG, 173d LRRP, 8/1/69****(Virtual Wall states C/75th Inf)**

8/5/16: "RANGER WILLIAMS. I was glad to find this page (Wall of Faces) on Ranger Williams. I remember him from our time at An Khe. I heard it through the grapevine about his death and the mission and what I heard at Fort Carson where I was stationed after leaving RVN July 1969. The story Rick Grimes tells is what I heard at the time back in the states that they had hit a battalion size base camp and did some damage before being overrun. My memories of Ranger Williams, that's what we all called him, was of a dedicated soldier and Ranger. The area the action took place was familiar to me as it was my first assignment with Echo 20th Inf LRP, 4th Platoon, from July 68 to November 68 with the 3/506th Phan Thiet. You will be remembered...RLTW!"

**Bruce A Rochy, SFC (Ret)****[See Harold's DSC citation on Page 24]****Michael Oliver Thomas, 21****SGT, 173d LRRP, 7/26/69****(Virtual Wall states N/75 Rng Reg)***9/7/13: "My Uncle Mike. I am the*

niece of Mike Thomas and carry his name which I have passed on to my daughter Francis Michelle. My father was Mike's big brother Jack. Though I never had the honor of meeting him my dad would tell me stories about him and how much he loved him. My dad is now with his little brother. This page (Wall of Faces) has touched me because I can share these stories with my children. His





INCOMING!!!



~ Looking For Cowboy License Plate Holder ~

I found this license plate holder about 7 or 8 years ago. It's got just about everything on it except my blood type. Even has the Herd patch. The plate holder got banged up somehow and I'd like to get a replacement, but haven't had any luck. Don't remember where I got it years ago. Wondering if you know where I could get something like this?

Tony Geishauser, Maj (Ret)
335th AHC, "Cowboy 173"



Our Reply: Geez, Cowboy, first you let your Huey get shot down inside our perimeter in March '66 so you could live your lifelong dream of fighting in ground combat with the 2/503d, and now you drive your car into something ruining your license plate holder. I hope this is not becoming a habit. If anyone knows where Tony can order a replacement, please email info to me and I'll pass it on to Mr. Magoo. And here we find Cowboy 173 Eskimo-kissing with his beautiful bride, Pam, in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Ed ☺



Pam: "Honey, tell me again, how did that license plate holder get damaged?" *Damn chopper dudes get all the pretty ones!*

~ "Rock On The Move" ~

I was jumpmaster of this jump. This is from the Clarksville paper. Jim

Jim Matchin
A/2/503, RVN



Caption: "ROCK ON THE MOVE" – Paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) board a C-130 Air Force aircraft Aug. 24 to participate in Operation "Bama Rock" at Ft. McClellan, Ala. The Rock Battalion's mission was to oppose the 42nd Airborne Regiment in a training exercise. The unit is scheduled to return to the Screaming Eagles post today. (Photo by PFC Joseph Long)

~ 2/503 KIA Photo Found ~

Located another 2nd Bat guy – Sgt. **Elec McCoy**, KIA 25 Oct 1967. Brigade wise we are now missing only 39 pictures – unfortunately almost half (17) are 2nd Bn fallen. "One picture at a time."

Ken Smith, Col. (Ret)
CO A/D/2/503



(**INCOMING!!!** continued....)



~ Craig Ford's Grandson, Left-Handed Expert ~

Thank you . Nice write-up on Craig's portrait (Issue 86, Page 17).

Our grandson, Damian, is graduating from Basic and AIT on April 26th. He receives his Blue Cord on the 25th. Not sure when he will enter Airborne School yet, but I will keep you posted.

During one of his exercises, Damian unfortunately fell and broke the pinky on his right hand. And of course he is right-handed. He still had to go through his marksmanship exercise. He tried shooting with his right hand, but the cast got in his way. So he decided to try his left hand. Never having shot with his left hand before, Craig must have been helping him. He earned Expert Marksman. We are so very proud of him.

Thanks again,

Pat Ford

Mrs. 1st Bat Guy

Our Reply: Thanks Pat. Congratulations to Damian, and like you, Craig would be equally proud. Yes, please let us know when Damian will be scheduled to graduate Jump School, and we'll get the word out to Craig's buddies. Best always, Smitty

~ B/1/503 Pic ~



This photo was sent in by **George "Scotty" Colson**, HHC/2/503 '65/'66 and B/2/503 '67, in hopes troopers of B/1/503 might recognize some of their buddies. Scotty says the picture was taken in 1969. Ed

~ From A "Rawhide" Medic ~

The greatest people to the medics were those with the M-16s, mortars, radios, grenade launchers, and the machine guns. They are the ones who kept the medics safe. I have always said that.

Larry "Doc" Speed
1/503



**Doc Speed and his
bride Georgia**

~ Another 1st Bat Photo ~

Here's a picture of the Medical Plt, HHC 1/503rd taken in late May early June 1965 by **Bill Fulton** (the white headed guy on the right of the screen). This picture was on the front cover of the 173rd Association Newsletter several months ago. I am the third person seated on the front row from L to R.



First person is

Lawrence Joel MOH recipient and on the back underneath the banner is **Alfred Rascon**. **John A. Nathan** (KIA Op Hump) is the kid sitting in the middle, second row, underneath the trooper with his arms crossed. This picture includes 6 legs from Kue Hospital who came to augment our platoon initially but they didn't last long. When the 1/503 left Vung Tau to join the 2nd Bat at Bien Hoa, these legs went back to Oki.

Joe Diaz

HHC/1/503

~ A National Treasure ~

Hi: This is a pic yesterday with **Anthony "Tony"**

Lopez, age 93. He was on Noemfoor, made the jump on Corregidor and saw combat on Palawan and Negros islands. He was wounded on day 5 of the Rock adventure. He is a long-standing member of our Rocky Mountain Chapter of the 82d Airborne Division Association, which is actually an All-Airborne group with lots of paratrooper combat vets from Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, Iraq, Afghanistan. Tony is a Three Winds of Death guy, and a 2nd 503rd man. He thinks he is the last living member of F Company, 2nd 503d and has incredible recall of the Rock jump. Really a good man. These guys are a national treasure.



Best Regards, Airborne!

Mike Marsh
C/2/503, '67/'68

(INCOMING!!! continued....)



~ Remembering the Colonel ~

In the latest issue of our 2/503d Newsletter (No. 86, Pages 46-49) someone had written about Colonel Sigholtz. I had the honor of entertaining him at my home several months before he died. He had come to Ohio to join in some of Chapter 17's jumping activities. He wanted to jump but the pilot thought him to be too old and too frail. Regardless, before flying back home and after the other activities he spent the night with me.



As we were speaking he spoke fondly about his son killed in Viet Nam. It was then I came to learn that his son and I were born on the same day, same month and same year. Most unusual to meet a father whose son and I share the exact same birthday.

The Colonel was also instrumental in arranging the Herd's combat jump in Viet Nam. He told me that the 101st was pissed because he and the 173d had gotten the jump on them. A true gentleman and a great guy. I am delighted to this day to have known him and to have entertained him one night in my home.

**Bill Terry
A/3/319**

Our reply:

Hi Bill, thanks. You're right, Bob was a *Soldier's Soldier*.

I had the good fortune of serving as one of his RTOs in his battalion command group in late '66 and humped with him on a number of ops; in fact, the Colonel was directly responsible for my 'best day' in VN, but that's another story.

Decades after the war we became friendly, and he would often call me in my office; unable to take his final phone call to me, he died a week or so later and to this day I regret not being able to take that call.

Bill Vose (A/2/503), his wife Roberta, my wife Reggie and I attended Bob's funeral at Arlington. Following services the late CSM Ed Proffitt presented a special plaque to his wife honoring her husband which a few of us had prepared for her on behalf of all men of our battalion.

The last time I saw Bob he and his wife were leaving one of our 2/503 reunions in Cocoa Beach, FL. Mike Sturges and Jack Ribera (both A/2/503) and I carried their bags to the parking lot, and as they were leaving we came to attention and saluted our former commander, with him honoring us with his own salute.

Colonel Bob is missed to this day by many of us from the 2/503. Glad you shared some personal time with him. Smitty



Lew Smith, one of his battalion staff RTOs in '66, presents a bottle of his favorite rum to Bn Cmdr Col. Bob Sigholtz during 2/503 reception at 173d reunion in Rochester before the Colonel spoke to his 2nd Bn troopers.

Our Brigade Call Sign PARAGON

Paul Whitman, host of the WWII 503rd Heritage Battalion website was with a writer on the Island of Corregidor recently, and asked about the genesis of our 2/503 call sign, *Paragon*. Not knowing how it was originated, I asked a few of our buddies. The following was provided by one of our company commanders. Ed

"I am sure you will get some detailed replies. It's all about the history of the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment, WWII. The 503d does parachute assault on Corridor Island – 'THE ROCK'. Captures a 5-sided Japanese fortification - a PARAGON. PARAGON becomes call sign for 2/503 tele-communications. When 1/503 was activated, they became PARAMOUNT. Not sure what later battalions used, but they may have started with a 'P'. Can't find my paper copy of the 503 history, but I am sure you will hear more."

We didn't receive much more input about the origins of PARAGON. If anyone can add more detail, please send it in to rto173@att.net and we'll include it in the next issue of our newsletter. Paragon 5-Kilo, Out



~ Craig's Grandson Now A Trooper ~

Thank you. Our son Ian and I were just at Fort Benning for his son's graduation from Jump School. We are all so proud of Damian. Unfortunately, he didn't get orders for the 173d, but he is at Bragg with the 82nd.

Here is a picture of both Ian and Damian from that day. I know Craig was on Damian's other side.

Never Forget.

Pat Ford

(Bride of our good buddy the late Craig Ford)



Craig
C/1/503



Ian & Damian Ford....Craig would be so proud.

KIT CARSON SCOUTS WITH THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE, '66-'68



Nguyen Thanh, Kit Carson Scout paratrooper with the 173rd, a former NVA Lieutenant has been cited by his platoon leader, 1st Lt **Ian MacPherson**. MacPherson stated, *"Thanh is greatly respected by the men of his platoon. His knowledge of enemy tactics has gotten us out of a lot of scrapes, and saved several of the men from serious injury"*.

A Kit Carson Scout, serving with 1st Bn, 50th Inf during an operation north of Qui Nhon, led US elements to a Viet Cong Hospital. Finding a tunnel entrance, the Kit Carson Scout talked to those hiding in the tunnel. Four VC came out, one was identified as a Viet Cong doctor and three others as VC political cademen. Large quantities of medical supplies and instruments were taken.

Nguyen Thanh, a former VC officer, now a Kit Carson Scout with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was credited with saving the life of Sp4 **Charles H. Scudder**, Co A, 2nd Bn, 503 Inf, when Scudder became entangled in the wires of a deadly booby trap. The 38 year old Thanh, at a great risk to himself, cut the booby trap wires from the feet of Scudder, and disarmed the butterfly bomb. Shortly after this, Thanh found four more booby traps in the area.

The program also has two excellent if less obvious side effects:

(1) First, the integration of KCS into US units and the experience shared together creates a close and personal understanding of ex-Hoi Chanh by US soldiers, which greatly enhances their understanding of the principles of the Chieu Hoi Program and acceptance of this program.

(2) Second, reports have been received, particularly from the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, underlining the unparalleled advantages of ex-Hoi Chanh as scouts and stating that their ability to make on the spot identifications of VC suspects has prevented many incidents and accidental deaths.

Excerpt from: Chieu Hoi Div. MACCORDS – SAIGON 1/18/68



UNITES STATES – VIETNAM RELATIONS
1945 - 1967
IV. C. 5.
PHASE I IN THE BUILD-UP OF U.S. FORCES
THE DEBATE
MARCH - JULY 1965

D. Westmoreland Tried to Slide the 173rd in for Security

As a kind of postscript to the strategy of security, it was used by General Westmoreland as justification for an attempt to get some Army ground troops on the stage in early April ('65). Westmoreland had recommended in March that a separate Army Brigade (possibly the 173rd) be deployed to the Bien Hoa/Vung Tau areas *"in order to secure vital U.S. installations."* That recommendation accompanied Westmoreland's request for up to two divisions of forces and was contained in his "Commander's Estimate of the Situation," which will be considered later in some detail. On the eleventh of April, Westmoreland cabled CINCPAC that he understood from news of the Taylor meetings in Washington that the requested divisions of forces were not immediately in the offing. Nevertheless, Westmoreland wanted a brigade in the Bien Hoa-Vung Tau area because *"it was as necessary from a purely military standpoint as the deployments in the Da Nang-Phu Bai area which have already won acceptance."* (Security of Bien Hoa/Vung Tau was not all COMUSMACV had in mind, however, for the same message mentioned the need to offset a Viet Cong threat embodied in two regiments and two separate battalions perched on the eastern flank of III Corps. He also wanted a light reserve force which could be airlifted to the Central Highlands in case of emergency.)



Westmoreland, 1965

The 173rd, a two-battalion airborne brigade, was then located in Okinawa. It constituted CINCPAC's airmobile reserve. When an earlier attempt had been made to deploy the 173rd to Da Nang in place of the Marines, CINCPAC had stringently opposed the removal of his only quick-reaction force.



At Naha on Okinawa for movement to South Vietnam,
5 May 1965. (Photo by SFC James K.F. Dung)

What followed General Westmoreland's request of 11 April, a request that Ambassador Taylor "had noted," was a rapid-fire series of cables, proposals, and false starts which, if nothing else, indicated that Washington was well ahead of Saigon in its planning and in its anxiety. The first event in the chain was a planning conference held in Honolulu 8-10 April and attended by representatives of PACOM and the Joint Staff. The conference recommended the deployment of the 173rd and, in deference to CINCPAC's concern for his airmobile reserve, they also recommended that the 173rd be replaced by another brigade from CONUS as soon as practicable. The JCS ordered on 14 April that the 173rd be deployed temporarily to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau for security of air operations and logistical bases and at the same time tasked CINSTRIKE to provide a brigade to replace the 173rd.

(continued....)



The decision to deploy the 173rd apparently caught the Ambassador flatfooted, for he had quite obviously not been privy to it. He cabled the State Department on the 14th and said:

"I have just learned by the reference JCS message to CINCPAC that the immediate deployment of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to Bien Hoa-Vung Tau has apparently been approved. This comes as a complete surprise in view of the understanding reached in Washington that we would experiment with the Marines in a counter-insurgency role before bringing in other U.S. contingents. This decision seemed sound to me at the time and continues to appear so. I recommend that this deployment be held up until we can sort out all matters relating to it."

Whatever was motivating those in Washington who had decided to make this deployment, the Ambassador held the trump card as he had to clear the move with the GVN before the troops could come in. The Prime Minister had not been told at this juncture about the proposed landing of more U.S. troops, and Taylor informed his superiors on 17 April that he did not intend to tell Quat without clearer guidance explaining Washington's intentions.



At Bien Hoa, Ambassador Maxwell Taylor welcomes 2/503 Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter (L) and Bde Cmdr MG Ellis Williams and their Sky Soldiers to Vietnam.
(George Dexter photo collection)

That Washington was determined, with the President's sanction, to go beyond what had been agreed to and formalized in NSAM 328 was manifested unmistakably in a cable sent under joint Defense/State auspices by Mr. McNaughton to the Ambassador on 15 April.

That message, which will be treated in detail in a later section, contained the following preamble:

"Highest authority believes the situation in South Vietnam has been deteriorating and that, in addition to actions against the North, something new must be added in the South to achieve victory. As steps to that end, we believe the following actions should be undertaken." The message goes on to list seven specific actions including the deployment of "a brigade force" to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau "to act as a security force for our installations and also to participate in counter-insurgency combat operations" according to plans to be prepared by General Westmoreland.

The documents do not reveal just exactly when Presidential sanction was obtained for the expanded scope of the above proposals. It is possible that the Ambassador may have caught the Defense Department and the JCS in a little cart-before-the-horsemanship. The day following the order from the JCS to deploy the 173rd and the Ambassador's reclamation thereto, the JCS submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense in which they addressed the Ambassador's objection to the deployment and offered their own position which was that "the U.S. had need of the 173rd in Bien Hoa/Vung Tau to ensure the security of air operations and logistics bases as had been recommended by COMUSMACV and by CINCPAC in CINCPAC to JCS DTG 132235Z April 1965." The 173rd was also needed, they said, for subsequent phasing into counterinsurgency operations. Whether or not the JCS wrote that memorandum with red faces, the Secretary of Defense dates approval for final deployment of the 173rd as of the 30th of April, which is considerably later. Even when the 173rd was finally ordered to deploy, it went on a temporary duty basis. It remained in that anomalous status well into the summer of 1965, expecting any day to be recalled to Okinawa and replaced by another unit. The troops continued to draw TDY pay, and their dependents remained at the permanent base on Okinawa instead of returning to the U.S.

With the 173rd successfully held in abeyance, the principals took that issue, along with the seven points of the 15 April cable, to Honolulu, where a conference convened on 20 April and structured the outlines of the ever popular enclave strategy.

Source:

www.vietnam.ttu.edu/reports/images.php?img=/images/212/2120103009a.pdf
(photos added)



Michael R. Blanchfield

A/4/503, KIA 7/3/69



~ Medal of Honor ~

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Sp4c Blanchfield distinguished himself while serving as a rifleman in Company A on a combat patrol. The patrol surrounded a group of houses to search for suspects. During the search of 1 of the huts, a man suddenly ran out toward a nearby tree line. Sp4c Blanchfield, who was on guard outside the hut, saw the man, shouted for him to halt, and began firing at him as the man ignored the warning and continued to run. The suspect suddenly threw a grenade toward the hut and its occupants. Although the exploding grenade severely wounded Sp4c Blanchfield and several others, he regains his feet to continue the pursuit of the enemy. The fleeing enemy threw a second grenade which landed near Sp4c Blanchfield and several members of his patrol. Instantly realizing the danger, he shouted a warning to his comrades. Sp4c Blanchfield unhesitatingly and with complete disregard for his safety, threw himself on the grenade, absorbing the full and fatal impact of the explosion. By his gallant action and self-sacrifice, he was able to save the lives and prevent injury to 4 members of the patrol and several Vietnamese civilians in the immediate area. Sp4c Blanchfield's extraordinary courage and gallantry at the cost of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.

Blanchfield, aged 19 at his death, was buried in All Saints Cemetery, Des Plaines, Illinois.

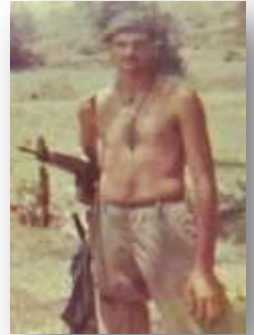


William Warren Flynn, Jr.

B/2/503, RVN

Decorated Veteran Passes

William Warren Flynn, Jr., 72, of Hampton, NH, died peacefully Monday, April 29, at Portsmouth Regional Hospital where the staff was beyond caring. His strength carried him longer than his cancer prognosis predicted through the loving care of his fiancé, Deborah Lane whom he sadly leaves behind.

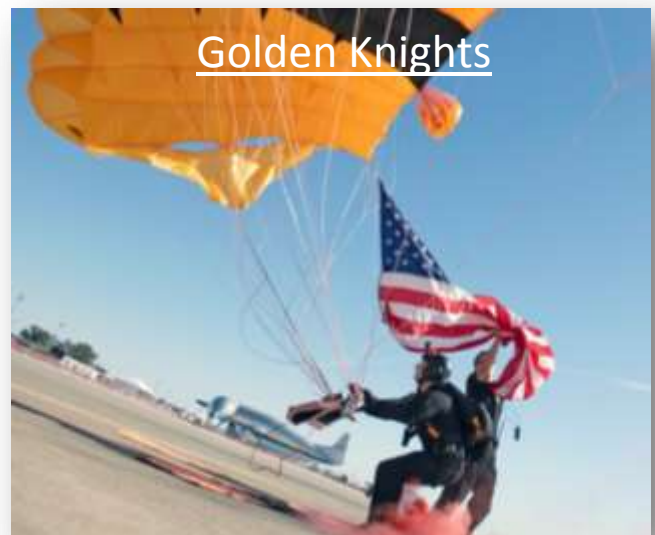


Born on January 28, 1947, the son of the late William Warren and Mary (Rapino) Flynn, he was a graduate of East Boston High School and served in the U.S. Army with distinction, earning a valor medal with Bravo Company of the 173rd Airborne Brigade during the Vietnam War. He lived most his life in New Hampshire between North Conway and Hampton. He loved his morning walks on the beach, playing competitive hockey, softball and his Sunday fantasy football, his Boston sports teams and would end his nights watching old "Cheers" re-runs. He loved his country and was proud of his Irish roots. He will forever be missed.

In addition to his fiancé, he leaves his son, Sean Flynn and his wife, Dayna, his daughter, Tiffany Flynn and her husband, Mikael Mulhall, and an extended family.

Private interment with military honors were held in the Massachusetts National Cemetery, Bourne.

Rest Easy Bravo Bull



The Army Golden Knights parachute team performs during an air show at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., March 31, 2019.



VC Ambush Shows Difficulty Of Avoiding Truce Incidents

SAIGON, Feb. 10 (Friday): A bloody ambush in which a company of American paratroopers suffered moderate losses focused attention today on the difficulty of avoiding cease-fire incident in a guerrilla war.

The battle between entrenched Vietcong and the unit of the 173d Airborne Brigade on the edge of War Zone D on the first day of the cease-fire on Wednesday was the most serious of the incidents reported as the lunar New Year truce went into its third day.

In an unrelated incident, a Navy spokesman promptly admitted that a U.S. Navy plane Thursday flew over Communist China's Hainan Island east of a navigational error. The propeller-driven plane returned undamaged.

But Communist China charged in a Radio Peking broadcast monitored in Tokyo that American aircraft violated its territorial air space five times Tuesday and Wednesday.

Two U.S. planes entered Chinese air space Tuesday in the vicinity of Tung and Yungshing Island off the coast of Kwangtung Province, just north of Hainan, Peking Radio charged. On the following day two more American aircraft allegedly overflew its airspace in the same area.

Radio Hanoi, as monitored in Hong Kong, broadcast charges by the National Liberation Front, the political arm of the Vietcong, which said U.S. troops had violated the truce four times. The NLF claimed the violations included air attacks on villagers and ground skirmishes in Tayninh Province, northwest of Saigon.

As the truce moved into its third day, the U.S. Command said it had recorded 122 incidents of which 35 were termed significant, meaning casualties were involved or there was an important movement of troops.

In the ambush incident the question of whether the cease-fire had been violated remained unclear, according to military observers.

U.S. military spokesmen admitted the troops were making a "positioning movement" 30 miles northeast of Saigon. If the paratroopers were actually moving toward Vietcong positions, military observers have suggested, the enemy commander may have felt justified in opening fire despite the lunar truce. U.S. casualties were described as moderate, meaning the company of some 200 men were hard hit.



C/2/503 troopers on the move circa '66/'67.

[Photo by Capt. Jack Leide, CO, C/2/503, MG (Ret)]

Both sides have said they would cease "offensive" operations and the American company was reportedly patrolling for "defensive purposes only." But an American military source said: *"If two defensive patrols meet, you're got problems."*

Allied commanders were studying the ambush incident as well as the dozens of other preparatory to making a decision on whether to extend the pause beyond the four-day mark – 7 a.m. Sunday (6 p.m. Saturday, Washington time). The Communists have called for a one-week truce.

The extent to which sporadic fighting had flared despite the cease-fire was seen in a report by U.S. military sources that 59 strike mission has been flown over South Vietnam in support of ground troops since the truce began.

In another incident, soldiers of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division were fired on by guerillas on Wednesday night. An Air Force Dragon plane dropped flares to assist the troops and the Communists fled, behind a screen of what was believed to be tear gas.

A unit of the 1st Air Cavalry left intact a Vietcong hospital that was captured 30 miles northwest of its base camp at Ankhe. Military sources said the hospital treated enemy local civilians.

Source: "News Dispatches, 10 Feb 67"

Note: 173d Bde KIA list reports 18 Sky Soldiers were KIA between 2/1/67 and 2/8/67. It is unknown if any of these losses occurred during the ambush cited in this report. Ed



"One For The Boys"

Written by Cathy Saint John

How a Canadian Vietnam Veteran sacrificed all in order to win greater respect for his brothers in arms.



Sgt. John Blake

(photo courtesy of Mike Swisley)

Sgt. John W. Blake volunteered with the United States Army to fight in Vietnam.

He was a young Newfoundlander and a patriotic Canadian who volunteered with the United States Army to fight in Vietnam at a time when thousands of young Americans were fleeing to Canada to avoid the draft.

He served with distinction during his two tours, spending eighteen months as an elite Special Forces soldier. And, like many other Vietnam veterans, he was scorned upon his return from Vietnam by a misinformed, angry public.

Haunted by the memories of the war and by the traumatic reception he received, he realized that many of his fellow soldier-brothers were also struggling after their return from the war. In 1982, he launched a cross-America walk to raise awareness of Vietnam veterans.

His name was Sergeant John W. Blake, US Special N/75th Ranger, of the 173rd Airborne Regiment – and he was my brother.



In 1968, John W. Blake made the decision to enlist in the American Army.

I'll never forget that day in 1968 when my only brothers, John, then nineteen, and David, then seventeen, said they were going to enlist.

Canada was not at war with Vietnam, but it did support the United States and South Vietnam by providing military supplies, material, and so on. Both John and David believed deeply in the need to stop the growing Communist threat in Asia.

Their decision to enlist would change our family forever. Our mother retreated into a depression for three days before finally surfacing from her bedroom.

During that time, we all felt a cloud of sadness hovering over our little home. But it was tempered with pride, because our boys were about to do just as our deceased father, a Great War veteran, had done – journey to a faraway land to fight in a war that was intended to free the oppressed.

David trained and served as a mechanic, working on helicopters in Vietnam, but John – he was a warrior. He spent his time in the war zone, doing extremely dangerous work that brought him in direct contact with the enemy and the many atrocities of war.

John lost far too many good friends in Vietnam. A gifted writer, he used his poetry and journal to memorialize the lives of his fellow soldiers. Thoughts of those brave men followed John every day of his life.

In 1972, John, like many other soldiers, returned home suffering from undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He moved to the United States in 1976 and quickly realized that his fellow veterans were suffering, too. The general public had little sympathy for the Vietnam veterans who struggled with PTSD, until they began to fill American emergency rooms. All of them were suffering from the same symptoms. By 1982 – the year that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall was unveiled in Washington, D.C. – John had had enough.

He headed to Seattle, where he launched a one-man march across America to raise awareness of Vietnam veterans prior to the unveiling of the "Wall".

Sgt. John W. Blake launched the first ever Vietnam veteran national "awareness" walk with the American flag across the United States and he was Canadian.

(continued....)





Sgt. John Blake

(Photo courtesy of Ron Whelan)

Carrying the American flag and dressed in authentic combat gear, he set out on the more than 3200 miles journey to the U.S. east coast. At first, John's appearance along the highway of America seemed to confuse people. Why is he doing this? But with every conversation, and with each visit to a new town, John won over more and more supporters.

Soon, the media was interviewing him. They called him "The Walker" and his path can be traced today by the newspaper coverage that followed his journey. For seven months he walked alone, without an entourage, relying instead on the kindness of strangers, and on his Ranger skills, remembering his unit's famous motto: *"Rangers Lead The Way"*.

John's journey was the first-ever "awareness" walk with the American flag. Following the completion of this mission, he became a veterans' advocate, volunteered tirelessly for the rights of his fellow Vietnam veterans.

Throughout this time, our family knew that John was struggling with his own PTSD. We also knew that John wanted to come home and to grow old on a mountain overlooking the ocean; but he needed to stay in the U.S., where he could access medical intervention for his PTSD.

On February 13, 1996, the call we had all dreaded finally came. A voice over the phone from Hilo, Hawaii, informed me that our brother had died. After years of struggling with his PTSD, he had died by his own hand.

We were devastated, but we were not entirely surprised, because John had prepared us somewhat for the end of his life's journey. But nothing prepared us for the devastation that occurred when we brought his remains home to Newfoundland, Canada for a military burial, which was his final request.

We never dreamt that a simple request of burial would trigger an emotional five-year fight with the Department of Veterans Affairs. It was inconceivable to our family that John, an honorable discharged and decorated Vietnam veteran, a Canadian, and the son of a First World War veteran, would be denied burial in a Canadian military cemetery. But it happened, and it was a cruel injustice.

Fast forward to now, twenty-three years later, and tears still sting my eyes when I think about how much John had given to this world, and how his homeland, Canada, had denied his final request to rest in peace there.

My saddest thought of all is that this horrendous occurrence will happen again to other families in Canada as their Canadian fathers, uncles and brothers who served the United States of America in Vietnam for the freedom of the oppressed then pass-on and a request for burial in a only existing military cemetery in the provinces of Newfoundland and Winnipeg will be denied because they are Vietnam veterans.

My family and I recognize the importance of sharing John's story in the hope that it will help the public to better understand the impacts of PTSD and that it will lead to increased support and treatment for the afflicted and their family. We also hope John's story will help clarify why too many military personnel and civilians choose to die as a result of their struggle with PTSD. Perhaps, his story will help catch them before they fall.

Writing about my late brother and his extraordinary story was not an easy task. It took a tremendous amount of time, sadness, tears, and courage to journey into John W. Blake's struggles and triumphs and then, finally, to share his story with readers. I could have avoided going through this emotional pain, but then I would never have fully known a man that no one should ever forget.

(continued....)



The greatest compliment I can give to my late brother is to have written his story and gotten it right. It has taken two decades of writing, research, interviews, and editing to succeed. The tremendous support of his Vietnam veteran brothers, the N/75th Airborne Rangers, made this journey less daunting. *"Rangers Really Do Lead The Way"!*

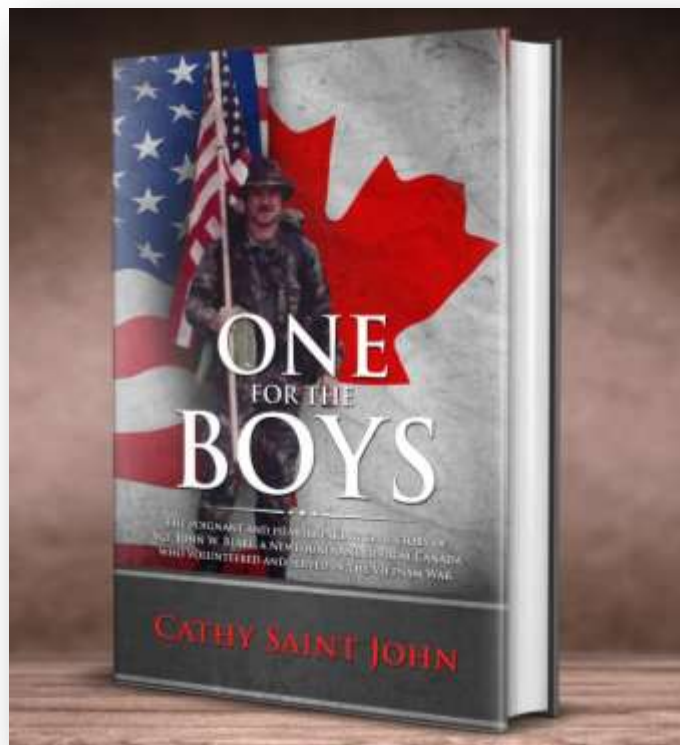


Photo courtesy of Cathy Saint John

In *One For The Boys*, Cathy Saint John writes about the Canadian government's rejections of Sgt. John W. Blake's wish to be buried in the only military cemetery in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. That story - a government's brutal rejection of John Blake's wish to be buried in the only military cemetery in St. John's Newfoundland, the Field of Honor within Mount Pleasant Cemetery - is told in full in my new book, *One For The Boys*. Available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in paperback and eBook.

I would also like to advise you and your readers that I will be attending the Ranger Rendezvous in July 2019 on Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th for a reading accompanied by a book signing at the Best Western Hotel, Columbus, Georgia. Please check with the front desk for location. Cathy Saint John

[Sent in by Robert "twin" Henriksen, N/75 Rangers, RVN]



This Is Your Newsletter

This is your newsletter 2/503 Troopers, please send in your stories, photos, news clips and VN-era documents to rto173@att.net for inclusion in future issues. Thanks, Ed!

Harold David Williams, SSG



Action Date: 1-Aug-69
Co. C (Ranger) Regiment,
75th Infantry (Airborne),
173d Airborne Brigade



Distinguished Service Cross

Awarded posthumously for actions during the Vietnam War

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross (Posthumously) to Staff Sergeant Harold David Williams (ASN: 56574xxxx), United States 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 (Ranger), 75th Infantry (Airborne), 173d Airborne Brigade. Staff Sergeant Williams distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 1 August 1969 while leading a Ranger Team north of Song Moa. Just after perpetrating an ambush on an enemy element, the team was set upon by the main hostile force. Sergeant Williams immediately called in gunships on the communists who quickly surrounded the small team. He initiated a grenade counterassault and repositioned his team to withstand the vicious attack. When a team member fell to enemy fire, Sergeant Williams advanced under a fusillade to render assistance to his comrade. Despite wounds received when an antitank round detonated nearby, he elected to remain with his men, directing their defense. When a brief lull developed in the exchange of fire, Sergeant Williams and one of his men moved outside the perimeter to recover a survival radio dropped by a friendly casualty. In the attempt both were wounded by small arms fire, yet Sergeant Williams again refused evacuation. During the subsequent battle, he succumbed to his wounds. Staff Sergeant Williams' 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.



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**HEADQUARTERS
2D AIRBORNE BATTLE GROUP (REINFORCED)
503D INFANTRY
APO 50, U.S. FORCES**

20 February 1963

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

In the immediate future troopers of this Battle Group will again be privileged to participate in a combined airborne exercise with the Chinese Airborne Regiment on Taiwan. The exercise with the Chinese is the third of its type. It is to be called SKY SOLDIER TIEN BING III.

Highly qualified American and foreign observers will watch the 503d's performance during the airborne assault and the subsequent ground action with envious and critical eyes. You are paratroopers – the cream of the combat potential of the United State Army in the Pacific. Therefore you will be expected to accomplish your missions with the aggressiveness and skill which are traditional for airborne units.

The mission of the 503d will be difficult; it will challenge the resourcefulness of each trooper. In the absence of specific orders, use your initiative, another traditional trademark of the paratrooper. Put your tactical training and know how to use and demonstrate that you are professional soldiers. If each trooper puts out as an individual, he can be sure that he will contribute his share to the success of Battle Group during the next few days.

As always, I am confident of each trooper's ability to further enhance the outstanding reputation of the Rock Battle Group.

I wish you all a good jump and successful conclusion of the exercise.

AIRBORNE – ALL THE WAY

**ROBERT L. ROWAN
Colonel, Infantry, Commanding**



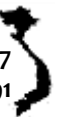
Tien Bing

"The 173d ABN BDE earned several nicknames during their training for their noteworthy service during the Vietnam War. The 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was activated into the regular army on the island of Okinawa on March 26, 1963. The Brigade was to serve as the quick reaction force for the Pacific Command. Since this unique and aggressive unit was to be ready to insert into Southeast Asian countries as a crisis revealed itself, the unit was known as the '*Fire Brigade*,' and later '*Westmoreland's Fire Brigade*.'

Their first commander, Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson established realistic training throughout the region. Nationalist Chinese (Taiwan) paratroopers gave the 173d Airborne their nickname of Tien Bing or 'Sky Soldiers' in recognition of the number of training jumps conducted on their island."



**Ellis W. Williamson, MG
Commander
173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)
1918 - 2007**



A Forward Observer Reflects on The Battle of the Slopes

By Jim Robinson, Cpt. (Ret)
FO B/2/503, '65/'66

Quite a while back I wanted to someday comment on the battles fought in the highlands. The recent recirculation of Issue 29 featuring The Battle of the Slopes has prompted me to respond.

First, I have nothing but the highest regard and respect for the men, NCO's and company grade officers who waded through this and the other battles following in the highlands. The interview with the late Dave Milton was interesting. For some reason he did not agree that the operation, using the grunts' expression, was a "cluster fuck". However, the operations there were so badly managed, that expression pretty well sums it up.

I would disagree with the term "bait" but sometimes, especially to the man in the mud, it looks that way. I understand Milton sending the two cherry LTs straight out to the platoons. That was the way it was done and I would, if in the same position, had done the same thing. In hindsight, I think Milton should have kept the new lieutenants in his command group using them as assistants, gofers, etc. until the company returned to Dak To.

The platoon sergeants had control of the platoons. The sudden arrival of new guys in the midst of an operation could only add confusion. Additionally, the young lieutenants, with no combat experience, would be anxious to prove themselves, and may have sacrificed their lives doing that.

Before I go further, perhaps I need to remind folks that sometime in August 1965, we in Bravo Company 2/503 deployed to Pleiku, then up Route 19 to a few miles east of Dak To where we went camping. While there, we ran a bunch of patrols, mostly west (even over the border) south and north of the Special Forces camp. Eventually we received some maps and discovered the "incursion". We never did catch up with the bad guys, although it was obvious there were plenty of them around. We found numerous bunkers, trenches and trails. I have to assume they were waiting for the 1st Cav.



1LT Jim Robinson
Camp Zinn

Everyone realized the jungled mountainous terrain meant you could not have people spread out. Much of the country could require damn near a day to travel a grid square. It seems General Peers, in spite of being a Leg, was the only commander in the area who recognized the difficulty the terrain presented. Obviously, the attached commanders had no clue. I don't know if it was because they were stupid, incompetent, or indifferent. Perhaps a combination?

Peers was incorrect in thinking the PAVN up North were somehow tougher than the supposed, barefoot peasant fighting for his liberty in the Southern area of the country. The VC/NVA pushed that image but they were controlled by Hanoi just like the troops in the North. The troops in the mountains did have readier access to some of the heavier weapons coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

I understand Peers told the 173d commanders to keep their units not more than 1000 meters apart. Apparently, they thought that meant, keep them 1000 meters apart. These geniuses were unable to determine, from looking at the terrain, that a practical separation for that terrain was more like 400 - 500 meters.

Supposedly, the airborne troops were "too aggressive"; I agree with that, paratroopers have always been too aggressive. But it is the function of people wearing oak leaves and stars to guide, control and CORRECTLY utilize that aggression.



Fighting on The Slopes

Perhaps the most damning evidence is the lifting of the artillery fire for an hour while a jet dropped a bomb outside of the combat area. Those men needed steel 25 - 50 meters from their positions. Calling Artillery fire that close is scary as hell, but I understand that the FO's assigned were capable to do so. I wonder how they learned? I was taught to shoot a mile away and had to scramble to develop a method (that would have had me tossed out of Artillery school to get artillery fire that close). Most grunts do not know that the beloved 105 is the least accurate piece in the artillery tool box.

Maybe that last paragraph is incorrect. Perhaps the most damning evidence is, it looks like these guys did not learn a damn thing and repeated their blunders only a couple of months later.



Army LTC Returning to Vietnam to Site Where Her Brother was Killed in Action with the 2/503d

On 16 March 1966, during Operation Silver City, at LZ Zulu Zulu in the heart of the "D" Zone jungle, the 2/503d found itself surrounded by an enemy force reported to be three times its size. During the over five-hour battle, PFC Max Knudson of Alpha Company was killed in action. Now, 53 years later, his sister, LTC Connie Shultz, with her husband and children are traveling to Vietnam in hopes of visiting the battle site where she lost her brother. In '05, Bill Vose and Gus Vendetti, both A/2/503, along with Lew Smith, HHC/2/503, returned to LZ Zulu Zulu; Mike Thibault of A/2/503 was likely the first since the war to return to Zulu Zulu during an earlier trip. Notes between Connie and these troopers follow.



PFC Kenneth Max Knudson
A/2/503, KIA 3/16/66
Silver Star Recipient

Lew,

Just a quick touch base before I set out for my trip to Vietnam.

My husband and two children are leaving Saturday with Military Historical Tours for two weeks in Vietnam. I have communicated my desire to visit LZ Zulu Zulu since that is where my brother died. I have given them the map coordinates which I was able to get from documents through Coffelt Database. Is this feasible for me to request this visit? Any advice for me would be greatly appreciated.

Also, the uncle of my daughter in-law was also with the 2/503, arriving in country with my brother in February 1966. He was injured in the battle where Max was killed and then on November 16, 1966 he was killed. Do not have much information on where? His name was Douglas Kern.

I want you to know how much I appreciate all the information that I have gotten through my communications with you. I look forward to the newsletter and was hoping to be able to attend the reunion in June but it doesn't look too promising right now.

Anyway, back to my question about LZ Zulu Zulu..... do I continue to pursue a visit to the site?

Connie Knudson Schultz, LTC (Ret)
Army Nurse Corps

Hi Connie:

Good hearing from you. Regarding making arrangements to trek into the "D" Zone jungle to find LZ Zulu Zulu, I'm copying Mike and Bill to your note; both served in A/2/503 during the battle where you lost your brother, Max. On earlier trips they each made such arrangements with local authorities, likely thru the travel agent in Saigon, and should be able to give you some tips on how to go about it, and to confirm coordinates.

Bill would not have known Max, as that battle was his first in-country having arrived in the field the day before, but Mike may well have known your brother.

(messages continued....)



I caution you on being sensitive to creepy crawlies on the ground as well as hanging from trees and bushes in that rainforest and to not stray too far from pathways as there still could be unexploded ordnance out there, and, carry lots of water and bug repellent. You might want to take with you some snacks, plus cash and/or gifts for the park Rangers who will accompany you into the jungle.

A photo of Zulu Zulu is attached (below). Assuming you're staying in Saigon, remember to never back-up while crossing busy streets, drivers are pretty skilled at missing you as long as you continue to move forward. Drink only bottled water and hope for the best. Probably best not to wear jewelry and instead of a purse a belly bag might be best to carry belongings in the city, and keep a good grip on cameras and phones.

Upon return home I hope you'll send me a report and photos about your journey to share in our newsletter.

Wishing you and yours a safe and memorable trip to Zulu Zulu. In memory of Max....

Smitty



2/503 arrive LZ Zulu Zulu on afternoon of March 15, 1966. Anti-chopper poles are seen in the LZ. Max's Alpha Co. positions were to the left of this photo, mostly out of frame. The photo was taken from the HHC line facing the Bravo Co. line across the LZ, with the Charlie Co. line to the right, also out of frame. (Photo by RTO Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503, '65/'66)

Call Ann Tours Co., Ltd in Ho Chi Minh city (Google) Tony is son who runs it, they took us there. You need someone who has contacts to do so as some areas are restricted! **Bill Vose**

Here are the two documents that I got the coordinates from. **Connie**

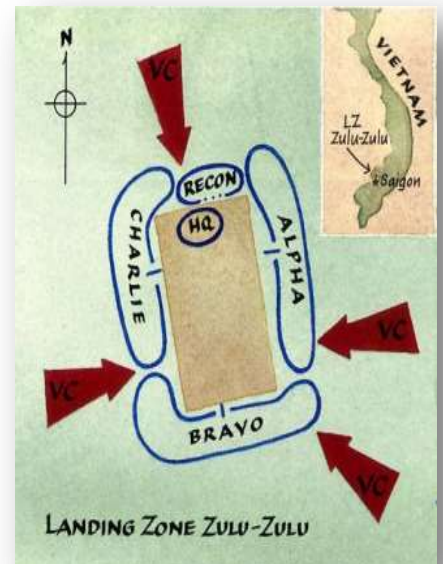
Hi Connie:

According to the After Action Report of Op Silver City, LZ Zulu Zulu was located at YT145439 on 16 Mar 66, making the coordinates you have of 145437 as the location where your brother Max was KIA most likely accurate. If the area is anything like it was in '05 when Bill Vose, Gus Vendetti and I were there, you'll find it to be an open yet overgrown clearing in the jungle (watch out for snakes and their holes...leeches too). Again, be careful entering the jungle outside the perimeter of that clearing.



L-R: Maj. Gus Vendetti & Capt. Bill Vose return to Zulu Zulu.

The path from which you will most likely enter will be about where the HHC and Alpha company lines intersected (near the letter N in Recon shown in the attached image) with the A Company line running to your left along the length of the clearing from where you enter (left side of the photo I sent you).



(messages continued....)



Bill and I fought with Alpha during the battle, including retrieving ammo dropped by choppers between our line and the enemy forces, and running and crawling up and down the line distributing ammo to troopers engaged in the fight. We'll never know if we saw Max during the battle, but there was a good chance we would have.

On a sad note, following the battle I recall standing next to all our KIA who were lined up on the ground covered by ponchos, just staring at them....Max would have been one of them. A slight breeze blew one poncho off the face of a black soldier.

I hope some of this helps. Safe travels.

Smitty

P.S. Information about Douglas Kern follows:



Douglas D. Kern
Date of Birth:
7/31/1946
Date of Casualty:
11/16/66
Home of Record:
Billings, MT
Rank:
SGT
Casualty Province:
PR & MR Unknown

A missing friend but still remembered

9/19/99 - My name is Larry Sword and i served with Doug from basic training all the way through jump school. I was also wounded the day he was killed. I remember writing to his parents after that day and i will never forget what his father said in his return letter. If I ever came to Montana depending on my background we would either go to church or if I was so inclined we would go have some drinks. I wish i could have taken them up on that offer. Doug was a fine man and a good friend. We also lost another friend the first few weeks in country, Ken Knudson. God bless these good men/friends and their families. If for any reason someone from these families would like to contact me online my address is l.sword1732@att.net

Larry Sword, A/2/503

Source: Wall of Faces (Larry's message shared with Connie)

An Easy Path To War

"Naturally, the common people don't want war, neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany.

That is understood. But the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger."

Hermann Goering during the Nuremburg Trials

***The sonofabitch was right!* Ed**



They believed everything their fearless leader told them, but you have to teach them early and often that there is someone or some thing to fear.

Vietnam.... Iraq.... Iran?



Excerpt....

MONTHLY REPORT OF SCOUT DOG OPERATIONS

5 Jan. 69

Month: Dec. 68

From: Commanding Officer To: Commanding General
39th IPSD, 173D Abn Bde HQ USARV
APO 96250 APO 96375

11. Direct result of scout dog team alert:

EN KIA 1; PW 0; WPNS 2; typewriter, 50 lbs. med supplies, ½ Ton rice, 200 lbs. corn, 100 lbs. salt

12. Remarks of Plat Commander:

Our selling program has finally started to pay off. We have been attempting to make the companies more aware of what scout dogs can do. This is the first time since September that we have had more than a hundred days in the field. Also this is the first time since I have been here that we have had only one report of the misuse of scout dog teams.

We have had 4 people home on Special Leave this month. This has seriously reduced the number of deployable teams. As of 1 Jan. 69 we received 4 new handlers and by the 10th of the month we should have enough teams to supply our immediate needs.

Satan 4A16, was transferred to the 936th Vet Det with a blood Disease. This happened after the 1st of the year and was not included in the Dec. report.

Budda 4A82, was WIA'ed by a booby trap. It was a spear type booby trap and he took the spear in the back. Prior to tripping this trap he had alerted on 2 punji pits and one other booby trap. This particular trip wire was set in such a way that one would trip it upon making a sharp turn in the trail. We have no other explanation as to why he didn't alert. He was medevaced and is still on medical hold but is recovering quickly.

Shep 4A96, while working with B/4/503d alerted on 5 Base Camps within a 9 day period. The dog alerted on each of these base camps and the camps were found each time by a small element sent out to check the dogs alert. He also alerted on a well camouflaged hooch which was found as the company went out to check the alert. This hooch turned out to actually be a cache and yielded: 1/2 Ton rice, clothing, a typewriter, medical equipment, a pouch of documents and maps, plus a few chicom grenades. They found many supplies within the base camps he had alerted on but the company would have found them even if the dog wasn't there. Chances are this well-hidden cache would have been over looked if it hadn't been for the dog.

We have had a lot of trouble getting the Gaines pellets and have been using the Hill's dog feed which has proven to be less than adequate. We have not been able to obtain any of the Gaines burgers at all.

(Signed)

Br. IAN J. MCGEE

1LT IN
Commanding



(Photo by Pete Peters, 39th IPSD)



The Enemy We Face

They came to my house and told my mother that I had been chosen to be one of them. They wanted me to become a Chien si (soldier). My mother pleaded that I was too young. The North Vietnamese soldier said. "He is old enough - the draft age is 15 to 40."

This is how 15 year-old Nguyen Van Qui became one of the enemy you faced. His story is typical.

He was taken to a training camp near Com Ninh, in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. There, he and other recruits were given their khaki uniforms and taught to aim and fire a weapon. The complete training cycle for duty as a regular Chien si in the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) lasted six days.

After his training, Qui and 1,200 others were sent on an eight week journey down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They moved in small groups to escape B-52 raids. About 700 of them were armed.

"Many died on the trail," Qui recalled. "Some died of malaria and others died of not enough food. It was very hard. Everybody was sick but they kept pushing us."

Men like Qui from the North Vietnamese Army now compose over half of the total enemy combat forces in the Republic of Vietnam. The percentage of NVA troops is highest in the north and lowest in the Delta. They depend heavily upon infiltration for reinforcements and resupply. Each unit has a political officer who tries to maintain morale with a steady flow of North Vietnamese ideology.

It is probably true to say that these North Vietnamese soldiers pose a more formidable threat on the battlefield than do the South Vietnamese Communists or Viet Cong who compose the rest of the enemy's forces. These Viet Cong are organized into units forming the so-called South Vietnamese Liberation Army. There are three types of units within this army. The elite units are the regiments and battalions of the VC main force. These are the best equipped and trained. They have acquired the name of "Hard Hats" because they often wear metal or fiberboard helmets that distinguish them from other units. These main force units are very mobile and range far afield in their combat operations.

The VC local force units are organized into battalions and companies and, while full-time fighters, are not as well-equipped or trained as the main force. They usually operate within a specific province or district and are controlled by the Communist province or district committees.

A weapon which the enemy has always used, especially in stand-off attacks on the U.S. and Republic of Vietnam military bases, is the mortar. Standard mortars in Charlie's arsenal are the 82mm - backbone of his high-angle fire support -- and the 60mm, normally used in small guerrilla actions.

Ready to fire, the commonly used Chicom 60mm mortar weighs 45 pounds and its 3.2 pound projectile travels up to 1,500 meters. The 82mm in firing position weighs 123 pounds and hurls a 6.72 pound projectile at targets up to 3,040 meters away.

The 82mm round was designed one millimeter larger than the U.S. 81mm round so the Communists can employ captured U.S. mortar rounds in their tubes. During 1967 a 120mm mortar capable of hurling a 33.9 pound warhead 5,700 meters was added to the Communist arsenal. With a total weight of 606 pounds, it is more difficult to transport and is not widely used.



Captured enemy soldiers waiting to see their relatives at the Phu Quoc prison island.

The enemy has also stepped up his use of rockets within the past year. Charlie employs rockets in stand-off attacks of military installations and as general support artillery.

(continued....)



The simple but effective Soviet-made 122mm rocket launcher, first used in Vietnam in March 1967, can hurl with area target accuracy a warhead weighing more than 40 pounds up to ranges of 11,000 meters. The 140mm rocket, with a carrying weight of 88 pounds and a warhead weight of 40 pounds, has a range of 9,500 meters. This rocket was first employed in an attack on Da Nang in February 1967.



A Viet Cong suspect is interrogated by Allied soldiers.

The latest type of rocket introduced by the enemy is the Chinese-made 107mm, which weighs less than half as much as either of the others and has an estimated effective range of 8,300 meters.

In 1965 the enemy added to his grenade capability with the introduction of the Soviet-made RPG2 antitank grenade launcher. Two years later the RPG7 appeared. The RPG2 has a maximum effective range of 150 meters and can penetrate six to seven inches of armor. The RPG7 with an improved sight, is effective up to 500 meters and can penetrate steel 2 to 14 inches thick.

The third type of VC unit are the guerrilla squads and platoons. These squads and platoons are controlled by the committees of the hamlets and villages where they fight. They seldom leave the vicinity of their homes.

The members of these units are often poorly armed and trained and include old men and children. Many are not full-time fighters.

Nevertheless, there are many such units in all areas of the country and they perform significant duties by harassing Allied forces and by assisting the other Communist forces in the attack and defense. The VC often draw upon the guerrillas to replace losses in their other units.

During the early days of the conflict, the Communists fought with older weapons used in previous wars by the French, Japanese and Americans. But today, largely as the result of aid from Red China and the Soviet Union, North Vietnamese Army troops and many main force Viet Cong units are equipped with late-model weapons comparable to those used by the U.S. forces. The most common of these are the SKS carbine, the Soviet AK47 assault rifle, or -- more often -- a Chinese copy of either. These weapons use identical 7.62mm rounds, similar to the round fired by the U.S. M14 rifle, but shorter. Both have a maximum effective range of 400 meters.

The assault rifle most often captured is the Chicom (short for "Chinese Communist") Type 56, although soldiers in the field usually refer to it as the AK47, since it is virtually a copy of that weapon. It can be fired on automatic at a rate of 100 to 190 rounds a minute or on semiautomatic. The SKS carbine - or the Chicom 7.62 copy--is a semiautomatic weapon. It weighs nearly nine pounds when loaded with a 10-round magazine.



A weapons cache uncovered in Cambodia. Note the bicycle at top used by the enemy to transport arms and equipment.

(continued....)



Until six years ago, the only machine guns available to the VC were obsolete French, Chinese and German models. Today, however, each NVA and main force VC battalion is allocated 36 light machine guns, usually of the Soviet 7.62mm Type RPD or the older and heavier RP-46. Chicom copies are designated Type 58 and Type 56. The 56 can accurately fire 150 rounds a minute up to ranges of 800 meters, while the 58 can fire 230 to 250 RPM. These automatic weapons were first supplied to the North Vietnamese in 1965.



Detainees are often able to provide significant Intelligence concerning Communist plans.

Although the enemy's equipment has improved with time, the overall effectiveness of his forces has declined noticeably, and in 1970 he has come off second best in virtually all major contacts with Allied forces. The once-confident Vietnamese Communist forces have clearly met their match in Vietnam.

Source:
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND
VIETNAM
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
Tour 365, Summer of 1971 Issue

Phú Quốc Prison



Prison grounds.



Restored model of Tiger Cages.



Model of a type of torture, a communist POW is boiled.

Phu Quoc Prison (Vietnamese: Nhà tù Phú Quốc) is a prison in Phú Quốc, southern Vietnam (today it is in Kiên Giang Province). The prison was built in 1967-68 by U. S. Army Engineers for detention of captured Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers. Many of the high ranking leaders of Vietnam were detained here. It is ranked a special historical relic of national significance by the government of Vietnam.

The most famous site in this prison are the "tiger cages" (vi: "chuồng cọp"). The prison covers an area of 40,000 square metres (0.015 sq mi). The prison was closed after the country united, and opened for visitors later.

Tortures in Phu Quoc Prison

A Red Cross team visited Phu Quoc Prison in 1969 and 1972. They found that there had been savage and systematic torture of prisoners of war for a long time. They also found traces of corporal punishments used against prisoners of war such as electrical shocks and food deprivation. In August 1971, an inspector from the embassy of the United States in the Republic of Vietnam reported on the continuous tortures at Phu Quoc Prison.

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ph%C3%BA_Qu%E1%BB%91c_Prison

Note: Research we conducted failed to produce official U.S. records allowing us to attest to the validity of this report. Ed





March '67 article, web images & photos added....

Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne Brigade make combat jump in Vietnam on 22 February 1967.

Reds Elude GI Drive in Jungle!

By Jesse W. Lewis, Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

DAUTIENG, South Vietnam, March 4 – Operation Junction City under way in the Vietcong stronghold of War Zone C, 70 miles northwest of Saigon, set forth to catch bear but so far – in the 11th day – the multi-division campaign has only snared a few rabbits.

"It hasn't been a very rapidly paced operation," said an informed military source today. *"It's essentially a search and destroy campaign and we'll look until we find something big."*

Junction City is taking place in Tayninh Province near the Cambodian border, so near that some units are operating within shooting distance of Cambodia.

The operation, which involves about 25,000 American troops and nearly 800 South Vietnamese marines, began by forming a horseshoe around a 150-square mile area.

Entrapment Planned

The strategy was to trap Vietcong, North Vietnamese regulars and elements of the Communist Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) within the horseshoe and move another Allied force through the opening to catch them inside.

But the catch so far has been relatively small. Military spokesman report that 355 Vietcong bodies have been found, while Allied forces have suffered "light" or relatively few casualties.

[American correspondents reported this week that the number of U.S. dead and wounded in Junction City certainly exceeds the confirmed number of enemy dead].

Supplies Captured

Other results of the operation are 338 tons of rice, 185 individual weapons, more than 32,000 rounds of ammunitions, seven prisoners, 700 pencils and 750 erasers.

United States troops also discovered and destroyed 53 base camps consisting of bamboo structures and dirt bunkers connected by tunnels. But still uncovered are the political headquarters of COSVN that intelligence reports indicated were there.

"They couldn't have moved any large size units out," said one military source, *"but they could move small groups anywhere they want to."*

One problem is the terrain. The only thing that breaks the thick jungle are patches of dried lakes and parched rice paddies. It is possible for groups of four or five persons to slip through.

(continued....)





2/503 Bn Cmdr LTC Bob Sigholtz addresses his men during Operation Junction City. (Photo from Wayne Tuttle, C/2/503)

Heavy Casualties

One of the heaviest battles of Junction City took place yesterday and today just 500 yards from the Cambodian border town of Chroung Kraom. There a company of the 2d Battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade suffered "heavy" casualties in a four-hour fight with a Communist force of unknown size. "Heavy" is the military term for casualties large enough to cripple a unit.

The Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Robert H. Sigholtz, who lives at 7302 Chatham St., North Springfield, Va., said his men ran into a complex of base camps connected by tunnels about noon yesterday.

Sigholtz, a former basketball official in the Washington area who taught at Gordon Junior High School last year, said the first indication of the enemy was a recoilless rifle shot fired at C Company as it swept a wooded area.

Unit Pinned Down

The shot was followed by small arms fire that kept the unit pinned to the ground. Sigholtz called in artillery and airstrikes that peppered the area as troops withdrew before dark.

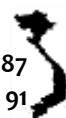


In an aerial inspection of the battle area today, Sigholtz sighted truck tracks leading from Chroung Kraom in Cambodia into the woods where the fighting took place.

He said his orders are to answer fire from across the border but not to take offensive action against border areas. Sigholtz said the truck marks "lead right to where we can't go."

Today 30 Communist bodies were found in the battle scene.

As Junction City continues, some of the unit that originally formed the giant horseshoe have been relocated to look elsewhere for the big game they are determined to bag.



CONFIDENTIAL

(Declassified)

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
Office of the Commanding General
APO San Francisco, 96262

AVDDH-CC

3 January 1968

**SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action
Report -- "Battle for DAK TO"**

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

The "Battle for DAK TO" was not a designated operation in itself, but occurred within the boundaries of the 4th Infantry Division's Operation MAC ARTHUR, (in AO SPAATZ) which continues. Nevertheless, the size of the two opposing forces, the length and violence of the engagement and the overall significance of the battle have made the events that occurred in the vicinity of DAK TO from 2 October to 1 December the most important that have occurred in the Central Highlands since the 1954 Geneva Convention. This special after action report is submitted to record those events as an entity.

During August, September and early October a definite change in NVA tactics became evident in PLEIKU Province where our two brigades were deployed. Our units were having very scattered and light contact with reconnaissance and trail watcher parties, but the enemy's infantry units had not been contacted since late July, an abnormally long time by past experience. But by late October intelligence sources began detecting unusual and large movements in the tri-border area – the junction of LAOTIAN – Cambodian – south Vietnamese Borders – west of the DAK TO Special Forces Camp in KONTUM Province. As the area was watched by the various means of aerial and ground intelligence gathering agencies it became apparent that the NVA was moving large forces into southwest KONTUM Province. These enemy forces were moving northeast from the area adjacent to the CAMBODIAN Border west of PLEIKU, the long existing base area for the B-3 Front and the 1st NVA Division. This then was a logical answer for the absence of NVA units in western PLEIKU Province.

The 1st Brigade, which had been surveilling the border area in western PLEIKU Province, began deploying to New DAK TO airfield on 28 October. On 2 November a NVA reconnaissance sergeant became a CHIEU HOI and divulged what later proved to be the accurate positions and battle plans of the four NVA infantry regiments and one artillery regiment that were preparing to launch the largest enemy attack to date in the Central Highlands against the DAK TO – TAN CANH area. The NVA sergeant revealed that the enemy plan was to launch the primary attack with the two regiments from the south and

southwest of DAK TO supported by mortar and rocket fire. A second attack into the area, also supported by rockets and mortars, was to be launched from the northeast by one regiment. The fourth regiment was to be held in reserve.

This information proved to be correct and was valuable in the initial deployment of our forces. The 1st Brigade sent one battalion on to the ridgeline that runs east to west south of DAK TO airfield, one battalion southwest of DAK TO and an OPCON battalion from the 173d Airborne Brigade moved west and established a fire support base for medium artillery at BEN HET.



Men of the 4th Inf Div descend the side of Hill 742, located five miles northwest of Dak To, 14–17 November 1967.

(Web photo)

The initial contacts were made on the ridgeline south of DAK TO by the 3d Battalion, 12th Infantry; followed in succession by very heavy contacts to the southwest by the 3d Battalion, 8th Infantry, and by the 4th Battalion, 503d Airborne Infantry moving south from BEN HET. This initial phase took place from 1 – 6 November and can be viewed as the brigade's forces attacking into the face of enemy units as they were moving toward pre-selected and in some areas previously prepared positions.

(continued....)



After these initial contacts the 173d Airborne Brigade with two battalions arrived at DAK TO and moved west to BEN HET. During this phase from 7 to 12 November contact was continuous as battalions were combat assaulted behind the lead element's and into the base area of the 32d and 66th NVA Regiments.

Meanwhile the ARVN Forces placed their units in vicinity of TAN CANH to the east of DAK TO. A battalion of the 42d ARVN Regiment later joined by the 2d and 3d ARVN Airborne Battalions oriented to the north and northeast to initially block and then attack the 24th NVA Regiments moving on the DAK TO – TAN CANH area from the northeast down the TUMERONC Valley. The 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry moved into an AO southeast of TAN CANH to react against a possible attack from the southeast against the now large base complex along Route 512 from TAN CANH to DAK TO. The 1st Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division with the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry arrived at KONTUM from the coast and was immediately deployed into the DAK HODRAI Valley south of the main battle area to intercept the withdrawing NVA.

The NVA forces were stopped and formed to withdraw. To the west of the BEN HET the NVA committed their reserves, the 174th NVA Regiment, to cover the withdrawal to the southwest of their two hard hit regiments. This resulted in the violent, four day, struggle for Hill 875 which ultimately involved two battalions of the 173d Airborne Brigade and the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, which was airlifted into the battle area from DARLAC Province. The hill was taken after receiving the heaviest concentration of TAC air and all calibers of artillery bombardment of any single terrain feature in the II Corps area.

Meanwhile northeast of TAN CANH an ARVN infantry battalion fixed a large NVA force on a hill mass while two ARVN airborne battalions swept up the flanks in a fierce two day battle, which inflicted heavy NVA casualties. Later, the same 2d and 3d ARVN Airborne Battalions sprang an attempted enemy ambush with one battalion while getting behind the positioned NVA forces with the other battalion and hitting the headquarters group, completely routing the battalion-size force.

The outstanding success at DAK TO is in itself a tribute to the infantrymen and their leaders who drove the enemy from his entrenched positions and tenaciously pursued him as he frantically withdrew to his sanctuary areas.

The fire support forces deserve a good share of the credit for their around-the-clock support of the infantry units. The large number of enemy in the area presenting targets and the fact that many of the contacts were against elaborately constructed enemy fortifications required that TAC air and artillery be used at the maximum rates possible. The 77 tubes of artillery fired over 151,000 rounds while 2096 sorties of TAC air were flown in support. The responsiveness of both air and artillery and the cooperation between them contributed greatly to the victory and was a real tribute to integrated direct support under difficult circumstances.



“Dak To 1967 – Wounded soldiers on Hill 875 awaiting evacuation.” (Web photo and caption)

The army aviation support was also outstanding. Many tributes have been paid to helicopters and the contribution they make to our efforts in this conflict; however, the enemy could not have been met so swiftly and checked at each threat had it not been for the tremendous support provided by those helicopter units supporting our forces. The terrain was some of the most rugged in VIETNAM and there was only one second class road into the region which stopped at the medium fire support base. All tactical moves of infantry and artillery and all resupply to forward fire bases was by chopper. Without the excellent helicopter support that was common during the battle the NVA would have succeeded in setting into position. Instead, our rapid deployment to block him, and our combat assaults behind his advanced units, preempted his deployment into his planned attack positions.

We would be remiss in not acknowledging the outstanding medical support received in this fierce battle. Unhappily, the casualties were heavy on several occasions as they will be from such violent and continuous contact; however the professionalism and competence of the combat medics, the dustoff crews and the doctors and nurses at the 71st Evacuation Hospital resulted in not one casualty losing his life once he was lifted out of the area of contact. This is surely a record to be proud of and which greatly increases the morale of the troops that had to seek out and engage the enemy.

(continued...)





71st Evacuation Hospital
(Web photo)

The logistics personnel, that worked so tirelessly to keep flowing the tremendous amount of supplies needed by our forces, are not to be forgotten. In spite of the destruction of the ASP as the result of the mortaring of DAK TO on 15 November our units did not want for munitions. Our supply lines reacted quickly and replacement supplies were on the way to DAK TO almost before the last round had fallen. In less than two days after the attacks the EOD teams had cleared the area, the engineers had repaired the airfield runway and resupply aircraft were landing supplies to augment the overland convoys.

The combined US and ARVN enemy body count of 1,644 is by itself proof that the enemy suffered an enormous defeat. However, his real defeat lies in the fact that he was caught while preparing for an attack that he calculated would demonstrate his ability to take and hold an area and give him the victory he so desperately needs in this war. Instead, he was suddenly on the defensive and after more than three weeks of savage fighting was sent limping back to his sanctuaries. From there the enemy is undoubtedly frantically planning for the victory he is so desperately seeking. Nevertheless, until he finally realized the futility of such efforts the FWMAF and ARVN forces stand ready to engage any such future attempts in the Central Highlands.

W.R. PEERS
Major General, USA
Commanding



Note:

There are a number of comments which one could make addressing the General's stated pleasure over this 'grand victory' by men under his command, but such comments are left to the men who survived these battles, and to the family members of the men who didn't.

In November we'll re-circulate the *Special Dak To Edition* of our newsletter to mark the 52nd anniversary of those battles. Ed



Dak To, November 1967. Lest we forget.



VA partners with Microsoft to improve how rural Veterans access VA's online services and benefits

May 22, 2019

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Microsoft Corp., recently formed a partnership that aims to improve how Veterans living in rural areas can access VA's online services and benefits. The agreement, which was formalized in mid-April, allows VA and Microsoft to work together to advance and improve the quality of life for Veterans by identifying opportunities to extend broadband internet connectivity to underserved rural Veteran communities.

"This partnership will serve a particularly vulnerable population of Veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"Millions of people in the U.S., including many of the 4.7 million Veterans living in rural areas, lack the broadband internet connection necessary to access opportunities to learn, work, access information and communicate."*

The Veterans Health Administration's offices of Community Engagement, Connected Care, Telehealth Services, Rural Health, and VA's office of Information and Technology aim to improve access to online VA services and benefits, such as telemedicine.

Telemedicine and access to online services and benefits are forms of digital inclusion that support Veterans, their families and VA staff. Digital inclusion can increase access to continuous health care services — enhance the workflow, reach and efficiency of VA staff — and support Veterans' participation in their own health care.

The partnership with Microsoft is another step toward achieving VA's strategic goals of providing excellent customer service and business transformation.

Source & Contact:

VHA Office of Community Engagement
CommunityEngagement@va.gov



From D-Day to the Battle of the Bulge, this Red Cross member helped wounded Allied soldiers

May 22, 2019

by Ben Szalinski



Graphic created by Kimber Garland for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Alice Jeannette McGrath Albersheim was born in Colorado in 1919. Despite growing up during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl in southeast Colorado, she graduated from the University of Denver in 1939. Later she graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a master's in public administration. From there she began a career with the Department of Health and Human Services and eventually committed to joining the Red Cross at American University.

Following training, Jeannette was deployed to Europe where she worked in hospitals as a recreational coordinator, helping the wounded soldiers entertain themselves and rehabilitate. At first, she spent time in a hospital in Bournemouth on the south shore of England. There she was among the first to treat wounded soldiers coming back from the D-Day invasion in 1944. In September, she was sent into France to follow the soldiers of Gen. George Patton. In Paris, she was a member of the 95th Army Hospital, and dodged occasional gunfire in the field treating injured service members from the Battle of the Bulge. Jeannette's work saved the lives of many young Allied soldiers throughout the war.

After celebrating the end of the war in Europe, Jeannette returned home and left the Red Cross to pursue a career with the Federal Trade Commission. We thank Jeannette for her service to the United States military!

Contributors:

Graphic designer: Kimber Garland

Editor: Jenna Robles

Fact checker: Kat Blanchard

Source:

Vantage Point

Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



From Sky Soldier Newsletter, Summer 1997, Vol. XII, No. 3...

Ann Landers Reprint

I served in the Vietnam War and was a company commander with the 173d Airborne Brigade in March 1967. I was wounded. Seven years later, I married a nurse who had been assigned to the evacuation hospital and took care of me. I often tell people Mary was the only good thing that came out of war. We have been married for 23 years and are very happy.

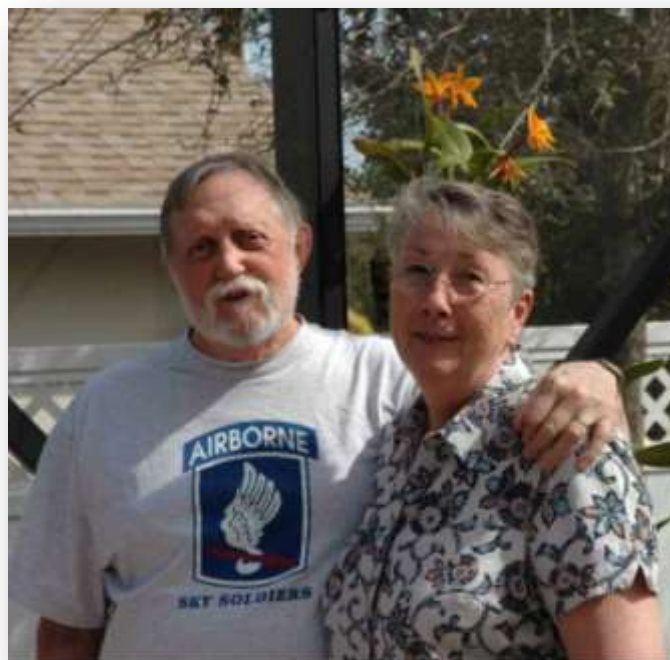
You don't remember me, I'm sure, but I certainly do remember you, Ann. Thirty years ago, in May 1967, I was the last guy you visited in the Long Bien Surgical Hospital in Saigon. Your transportation was delayed, so you were stuck with me for about half an hour. I loved talking to you.

It has taken me until now to thank you for flying halfway around the world, all the way to Vietnam, to cheer up the men who were hospitalized. I'm sure many others who received nasty wounds in the war remember your visit, too.

Ed Privette, Major, U.S. Army (Ret)
Locochee, FL

Dear Maj. Privette: Thanks for the memories. That trip to Vietnam in May was well worth the effort even though it was 113 degrees. I cannot recall anything in my career that was as rewarding.

Ann Landers



And here's our good buddy Major Ed, former HHC/2/503 CO, with his beautiful bride and commanding officer Nurse Mary, also a retired Major, during a visit to Merritt Island, FL a few years ago. *ATW Cap, and a salute to our Nurse Mary!*



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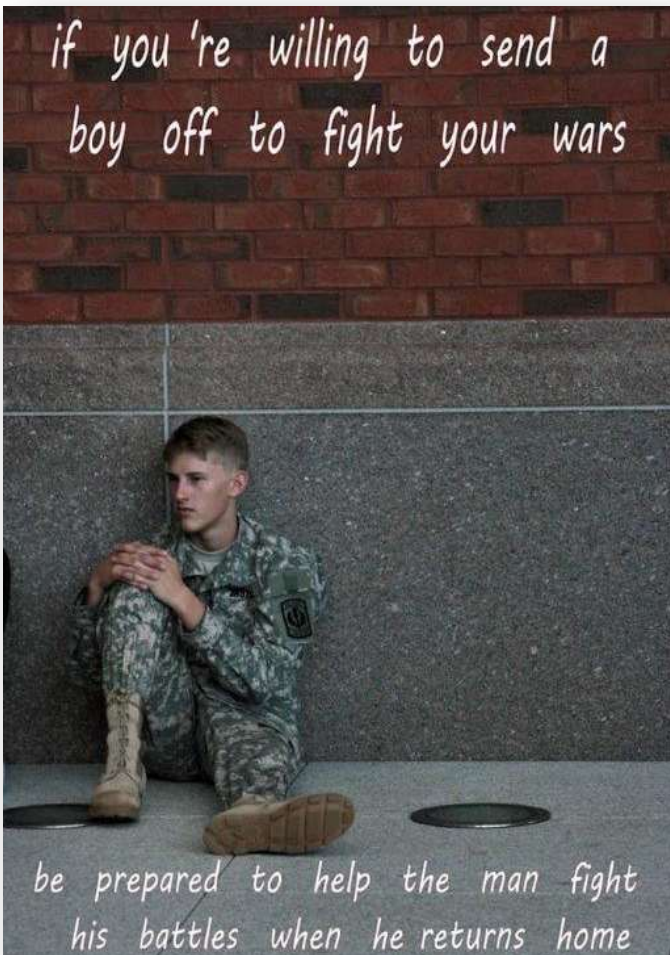


“FLAGS IN”



Soldiers assigned to the Old Guard place American flags at headstones in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., May 23, 2019. The 55-year-old tradition called *Flags In* is held annually prior to Memorial Day.

The Cost Of War Does Not End When The War Ends...And Not Only In Financial Terms



Sent in by Skysoldierette Reggie Smith

Disabled Veterans eligible for free National Park Service Lifetime Access Pass



Good for entry into 400+ National Parks and over 2,000 recreation sites across the country

May 22, 2019

Vets Experience by Steven Clip

Spring flowers are blooming, the summer travel season quickly approaches and Veterans are joining the 330-million yearly visitors enjoying U.S. National Parks.

Many Veterans, with a service connected disability rating, are entering Federal parks for free with the **Lifetime National Parks Access Pass** from the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Good for entry into 400+ National Parks and over 2,000 recreation sites across the country, the Lifetime Access Pass is another way a grateful nation says thank you for the service and sacrifices of Veterans with disabilities.

The **Access Pass** admits disabled Veterans and any passengers in their vehicle (non-commercial) at per-vehicle fee areas; and, the pass owner plus three additional adults where per-person fees are charged. In addition to free entry at participating parks, the Access Pass includes discounts on expanded amenity fees; such as camping, swimming, boat launching and guided tours.

Veterans who have a VA disability rating, (10 percent or higher) are eligible for the Lifetime Access Pass—with two ways to apply.

First, disabled Veterans can apply in person at a participating federal recreation site. Simply present photo identification (Driver's license, State ID, Passport) and documentation proving a permanent disability (VA awards letter, VA ID with service connected annotation, VA summary of benefits, or receipt of Social Security disability income). That's it. The Pass is free and issued at the time of entry.

Second, if applying by mail, send a completed packet and \$10 processing fee to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The packet should include: The Access Pass application form, Proof of residency, VA disability award letter, VA summary of benefits, or proof of SSDI income. https://store.usgs.gov/s3fs-public/access_pass_application.pdf

Pass delivery expected 10-12 weeks after receipt. Make sure to have photo ID available when using your Lifetime Access Pass and enjoy the majestic scenery and abundant recreational opportunities our National Parks provide.



ERICKSON, WILLIAM F. II

FIRST LIEUTENANT INFANTRY



Bill Ericson

USMA 4th Regimental Cadet Commander, 1968

Awarded: Silver Star (Posthumous)

Date Action: 15 July 1969

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: Gallantry in action: First Lieutenant Ericson distinguished himself by gallantry in action while engaged in military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam on 15 July 1969, while serving as platoon leader with the First Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). On that day at approximately 2035 hours, the platoon's night position was attacked by a Viet Cong force of unknown size. Lieutenant Ericson, the first to detect the enemy movement, gave the alarm causing the enemy to prematurely initiate their assault.

His quick thinking and actions saved several members of his platoon from being seriously wounded. Immediately after the assault, Lieutenant Ericson personally led a patrol out to locate the elusive enemy force. After traveling approximately one hundred meters his patrol came under attack. This time Lieutenant Ericson charged the enemy position alone. While performing this courageous act he was fatally wounded. Lieutenant Ericson's extraordinary heroism in close combat against a numerically superior 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.



"POSTHUMOUS AWARDS: Mrs. William Ericson (Clare), left, holds the posthumous award of medals earned by her husband, First Lieutenant William Ericson before he was killed in action in Vietnam on July 15, 1969. His mother, Mrs. Dick Ericson, center, holds the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross presented posthumously to her son while the father looks on."



Tommy Taylor

A/2/503, RVN

Passes

1944 - 2019

Thomas "Tommy" Irving Taylor, Jr. left this life in the morning on May 1st at home in Westerly. He was born at Westerly Hospital on Christmas Day, 1944, the son of Isabelle Caswell.

He started school at the Old Schoolhouse on Wyassup Rd. in North Stonington Village and graduated from Fitch High School in 1963.

Tommy served his country as a Paratrooper with Alpha Company of the 2d Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment of the 173rd Airborne from 1965-1967.



He received numerous commendations including two Purple Hearts; participated in Operation Junction City; was a member of the honor guard that received President Johnson in Vietnam in 1966; and on June 29, 1966 was one of few survivors of a battle for which he received the Commendation Medal for heroism beside Sgt. Charles Morris who received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

While proud of his achievements, the Vietnam War was always a complicated and painful memory for him. He found joy and comfort as an active lifetime member of the VFW in Pawcatuck.

Tommy and his loving wife Marilyn Lowe were married at the Third Baptist Church in North Stonington in 1973. Known as a "Swamp Yankee", he will be remembered for his love of family (especially his grandson, Thomas Brown Taylor), resourcefulness, dry humor, and all living things. His pets were always beloved companions and he had a deep connection to wildlife.

He is survived by his Wife Marilyn, Son Thomas James, Grandson, Sister Sandy Socha and Niece Kathy of Benton Missouri, Brother-in-Laws Gary (Lin) Lowe of Westerly and Douglas (Audrey) Lowe of Beckley, WV and their children.

A Memorial Service was held on May 6th at the cemetery, 793 Pendleton Hill Rd. North Stonington. A celebration of life was held on Saturday May 25th, at the VFW; Memorial donations may be made to the Harley P. Chase Post 1265 VFW, 160 S Broad St, Pawcatuck CT, 06379.

Rest Easy Brother

Dave Marcum

2/503 RVN

Passes

1946 - 2019

David G. Marcum, 73, passed away Tuesday April 9, 2019 following a long illness. The Ashland, Kentucky native moved to the Bell, Florida area in 1983 from Pinellas Park, FL.

He served 12 years in the U. S. Army as a Vietnam combat veteran, where he was awarded several medals including a purple heart and the Combat Infantry Badge. After his military career he worked in the construction industry as a carpenter and loved working with his hands.

Mr. Marcum was a life member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, life member of the DAV, a member of VFW Post 2166 in Elizabethton, TN, American Legion Post 0152 in Tampa, FL, and an attending member of Spring Ridge First Church of God in High Springs, FL.

Survivors include his wife of 47 years: Barbara Marcum of Bell, FL; one daughter: Serina Cher (Adam) Marcum-Holt of Gainesville, FL; one son: Michael S. Bertram of Lexington, KY; brother: Talmadge (Dee) Hanners of Winchester, KY; two sisters-in-law: Susan Hart, Anaheim, CA; Bonita (Crowell) Shane, Columbus, OH; two nephews: Brad (Diana) Hart, Loxahatchee, FL; Nathaniel (Laura) Shane, Columbus, OH; great nephew and niece: Kyle and Maile Hart, Loxahatchee, FL; and three grandchildren who were the joy of his life: Chloe, Gracie and Kailee.

Memorial services were held Saturday April 27, 2019 at 11:00 am in Spring Ridge First Church of God, 5529 NE 52nd Place, High Springs, FL 32643 with Pastor David Brown officiating.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that memorial donations be made to: Haven Hospice, 1060, 311 NE 9 St, Chiefland, FL 32626 or DAV - Disabled American Veterans, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301.

Rest With The Warriors Dave



VA's Home Loan Guaranty program notifies Veterans of potential loan fee waivers

May 13, 2019

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced May 13 that Veterans who qualify for a VA Home Loan funding fee waiver are now being notified in their home loan eligibility certificate and disability compensation award letter.

The recent change to the Home Loan Guaranty program aims to improve benefits delivery to Veteran homebuyers.

“Through an internal quality improvement effort, VA has put a plan in place to better inform Veterans through key communications when the law allows VA to waive the fee for a Veteran,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

VA also modified the “home loan welcome” letter to make sure Veterans know they may qualify for a loan fee waiver, should they later obtain a VA disability compensation award.

Historically, VA tasked lenders with verifying the “exempt” status of Veteran homebuyers and the department would identify waiver cases using its own

internal loan audit process or by relying on Veterans contacting VA directly. Further internal procedural changes will provide a more regular review of program data and VA will soon issue policy and procedural changes to ensure a Veteran’s up-to-date status for the fee waiver is correctly identified.

A major issue under review is how VA credits borrowers who, after loan closing, were awarded disability compensation with retroactive effective dates. The department is working to determine how far VA can go to provide relief, given the current restrictions of applicable laws.

VA’s ongoing quality review looked at millions of loans dating back to 1998 originations. Since the initiative is ongoing, VA has not totaled how many borrowers might be helped by the new efforts. VA notes that it routinely returns funding fees when appropriate. Since 2014, the department has provided an average total of \$75-\$100 million to roughly 5,000 Veterans each year.

More information about the VA funding fees and refunds is available in VA’s Lenders Handbook. Veterans who think they may be eligible for a refund should visit VA’s website at:

www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/purchaseco_loan_fee.asp

AIRBORNE REVIEW



Army paratroopers participate in a formation during the Airborne Review at Sicily drop zone at Fort Bragg, N.C., May 23, 2019. (DoD photo)



HISTORY OF THE 4TH BATTALION, 503D INFANTRY, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE

The history of the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry has been compiled for your benefit to enable you to learn the history of your unit.

The 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 22 August 1941. After the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the 503d Infantry Regiment was activated as the first unit in the United States Army to become a Parachute Regiment.

In October 1942 the Second Battalion was deployed to England and redesignated as the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The remainder of the 503d went to the Pacific Theater. The 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment, after extensive training and with the aid of the Australian Army, broke the enemy resistance and closed the New Guinea Campaign.



"Men of the 503rd Parachute Infantry (Regimental Combat Team) landing as reinforcements at Noemfoor Island in the Pacific." (Web photo & caption)

On July 3-4, 1944, the First and Third Battalions made a combat jump on to the island of Noemfoor. The two Battalions of the 503d were withdrawn from there to perform their most notable feat – the combat jump on

to the island of Corregidor -- military historians have called it the most successful drop in the history of the Airborne.

After the famous jump and battle, the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment became known as the "Rock Regiment". Today the 503d is still known as the "Rock Regiment" because of its determination and drive shown on the island of Corregidor. Shortly after the battle the 503d was deactivated, on 25 December 1945.

The 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment was reactivated in 1951 as the 503d Infantry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division, at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In January 1956 the 503d left Fort Campbell and went to Munich, Germany. In March 1957 the 503d Parachute Infantry Regiment became known as the 1st Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry, 11th Airborne Division. On 1 July 1958 the 11th Airborne Division was redesignated as the 24th Infantry Division. On 8 January 1959 the 1st Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry left the 24th Infantry Division, and was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. With the 82nd Airborne Division the second Airborne Battle Group was formed.

In June 1963 the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry Combat Team was transformed into the First and Second Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. The 173d Airborne Brigade continued its extensive training in guerrilla and jungle warfare on Iriomote Island, in the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. Due to the parachute exercises in Taiwan, the 173d became known as "Sky Soldiers".

In May 1965 the 173d Airborne Brigade was the first Army Infantry unit to arrive in Vietnam. It was the first unit to penetrate the Iron Triangle, War Zone "C", and War Zone "D". The Sky Soldiers were the first to conduct combined operations of Americans and Vietnamese, and they made the first combat jump in Vietnam to initiate operation Junction City.



Geronimo

(continued....)





4/503 Sky Soldiers in Vietnam
(173d website)

The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade was activated on 1 April 1966 from the 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. The 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry was previously known as Geronimo Battalion. The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry retained the name Geronimo. Under the command of Michael D. Healy, the 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry arrived in Vietnam on 24 June 1966, and started operations in the Bien Hoa area.



MG Michael Daniel "Iron Mike" Healy
1926 - 2018

On 7 October 1966, the 4th Battalion moved by C-130 to Da Nang to secure that Marine base. Several awards, and numerous letters of commendation were presented to the men of the 4th Battalion by the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, while the Battalion was "Opcon" to the Marines.

On 1 June 1967, the 173d Airborne Brigade moved its operations north to Pleiku from Bien Hoa. At the end of June the 173d set up its forward base camp at Dak To, north of Pleiku. In action in November 1967, the 4th Battalion defeated the N.V.A. in the battles for hills 823 and 875, near Dak To.

On 15 December the 173d moved its operations to Tuy Hoa. Engaging in search and destroy operations in the Tuy Noa area, the 4th Battalion annihilated the 5th Battalion of the 95th N.V.A. Regiment, at Tuy Hoa North Airfield on 30 January 1968 during the "Tet" offensive. Subsequent fighting has resulted in the further decimation of the 95th N.V.A. Regiment.

On 1 February 1968 LTC David L. Buckner assumed the command of the 4th Battalion from LTC James Johnson.



BG David Buckner
(web photo)

The 4th Battalion, 503d Infantry, the only American infantry unit currently in the Tuy Hoa area, continues to uphold its pride and traditions by defeating the Viet Cong, and the North Vietnamese at every encounter.

MARTIN J. GRIBBIN
SP/5 **PIO**
4th Bn, 503d Inf

Note: This report contained no date but is assumed to have been prepared some time in 1968-69. Photos added.



From the archives (photos added)....

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
MESSAGE CENTER
SECRET
(Declassified)



FM CINCPAC
TO RUEADX/CINCSTRIKE/RUMSMA/COMUSMACV
INFO RUEKDA/JCS/RUMJIR/AMEMB SAIGON

DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. ARMY BRIGADE TO RVN TO REPLACE 173D ABN BDE

1. Ref A directs CINCPAC to deploy 173d ABN BDE and necessary support elements to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area, directs CINCSTRIKE to provide CONUS replacement brigade and authorizes direct coordination. Ref B furnishes CINCSTRIKE proposed support elements, specify desired transport mode and comment on proposed organization. Refs C and D provided recommendations for use in discussions during conduct of Ref E. This message responds to Ref B.
2. Current plan for movement of CONUS Army brigade follows:
 - A. Deployment of brigade is contingent upon country clearance for and deployment of 173d Airborne Brigade to Bien Hoa/Vung Tau area.
 - B. Deployment by surface means should commence so as to close CONUS brigade in RVN within 60 days of execute order for movement of 173 Abn Bde.
 - D. An advance party of CONUS brigade should move by air to RVN after closure of 173d Abn Bde to coordinate relief of 173d. COMUSMACV will advise CINCSTRIKE info CINCPAC, desired date for arrival of advance party.



Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d march down runway at Bien Hoa AFB upon arrival in Vietnam, May '65.
(Photo by 2/503 Bn Cmdr George Dexter)

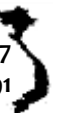


A/2/503 positions in the rubber trees outside Bien Hoa AFB, May '65.
(Photo by George Dexter)

- E. With CINCSTRIKE concurrence, CINCASTRIKE and CINCUSARPAC will effect direct coordination to determine feasibility, extent and details of exchange of compatible equipment between CONUS brigade and 173d Abn Bde upon relief of 173d. Anticipate CONUS brigade will deploy items such as vehicles, howitzers and engineer equipment if CONUS brigade units fell in on 173d equipment during relief, and CONUS brigade surface transport was loaded to accommodate expeditious exchange.

(continued....)

- C. An airborne brigade organization, shown in Para 3 below, is preferred because of its added parachute-assault capability. A non-airborne infantry brigade organized as proposed in Ref B is acceptable. Support elements are identified in Para 4, this msg.



- F. Early designation of CONUS brigade can provide time for orientation, area and situation study by selected unit personnel without compromise of information. This preparation is considered to be essential to a continuity of U.S. effectiveness in counter-insurgency operations in the III Corps area in RVN.
- G. CONUS Bde accompanying supplies should include 5 days of CL I&V.



B/2/503 positions in the rubber trees, May '65.
(Photo by George Dexter)

- 3. The preferred airborne brigade organization is shown below. In event an infantry brigade, which is acceptable, is deployed its organization should parallel that shown for the airborne brigade:

UNIT	TOE	APRXSTGTH
A. BDE, HQ, & HQ CO, ABN	57-042E	167
B. 3 INF BNS, ABN	7-035E	2,454
C. 1=FA BN, ABN (105 TWD)	6-215E	450
D. 1 CAV TRP, ABN	17-077E	142
E. 1 ENGR CO, CBT, ABN	5-027E	143
F. 1 MP PLT, ABN	19-067E	40
G. SIGNAL PLT, FWD AREA SIG CEN	11-218E	26
H. AVN DET (ABN BN)	1-055E	55
I. CHEM DET, CBR ABN TM JA	3-500E	5
J. MIL INTEL DET, ABN BDE	30-014E	32
K. ASA DET, ABN BDE	32-057F	48
L. PROV SPT BN (NOTE 1)	29-105E	630

NOTE 1: Org to include necessary elements of Div Spt Comd (I.E., Prov Admin Det, Med Co, Sup-Trans Co, and Maint Co) to be capable of providing field maintenance support for all bde organic equip.

- 4. Support elements are divided into divisional and non-divisional units:
 - A. Divisional Support: A brigade slice of the normal division support command organized in a provisional support battalion as shown in Note 1 to Para 3 above is appropriate.
 - B. Non Divisional Support: Logistic support units for Bien Hoa/Vung Tau included in package A and B developed during Honolulu Conference 9-11 Apr and furnished CINCSRIKE by CINCPAC LTR 000137 OF 14 Apr are adequate. Arrival of these units in Vietnam is currently expected to precede CONUS brigade arrival by several weeks.



C/2/503 positions in the rubber trees, May '65.
(Photo by George Dexter)

- 5. Summary:
 - A. A three battalion CONUS army brigade should move by surface so as to close in RVN 60 days following the execute order for deployment of 173d Airborne Brigade.
 - B. Advance party arrive in RVN to coordinate relief. COMUSMACV will advise CINCSRIKE of desired arrival date for advance party.
 - C. Airborne brigade is preferred: Infantry brigade is acceptable. Strength will approximate 4000.
 - D. Divisional and non-divisional support elements are required. Units are identified in Para 4.
 - E. Preparation of unit personnel for mission to the extent possible without compromise is considered essential.

TOP SECRET
(Declassified)



Brigade Enters Sixth Year In Vietnam

This month the brigade celebrates the fifth anniversary of its dramatic introduction to Vietnam. During that time it has established the name of the 173rd Airborne Brigade as the oldest and proudest in the history of the Vietnam War.

In May 1965, the not quite two-year-old unit winged its way from Okinawa to the Republic of Vietnam, becoming the first U.S. Army combat unit to deploy to the Southeast Asian hotbed. On the heels of the 1st and 2nd battalion of the 503rd Infantry, Troop E, 17th Cavalry, and Company D, 16th Armor of the 173rd, units of the 1st Infantry Division began arriving in July of 1965.



Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d ready to move out after arrival at Bien Hoa Air Force Base in May '65.

(Photo from George Dexter, 2/503 Bn Cmdr)

Although the brigade's initial mission was to secure and defend Bien Hoa Air Base, it immediately began to prove its worth in combat by patrolling into the northern Mekong Delta and War Zone D, an infamous VC stronghold.

The paratroopers saw their first big action in July when they trapped a main force VC regiment against the Dong Nai River and killed 400. For the next two years the 173rd continued to conduct operations throughout III Corps, steadily building a reputation as the reaction force that deployed whenever the fighting was the heaviest.

Both the 1st and 2nd Battalions earned Presidential Unit Citations (PUC) for their efforts during that period in the hard-fought battles. The first occurred in November 1965, when paratroopers of the 1st Bn, 503rd Inf caught and virtually destroyed a VC regiment killing 403 enemy in a six-hour period.

The 2nd Bn, 503rd Inf earned its PUC in March 1966, when it killed 343 Viet Cong near their headquarters in War Zone D. The Sky Soldiers also captured 38 crew served weapons, small arms and 11,500 documents.

The first and only American combat jump of the unit occurred in February, 1967. The 2nd Bn, 503rd Inf, made their spectacular jump deep in War Zone C in

spearheading Operation Junction City. Operation Washington Green, the pacification program the brigade is currently engaged in, began in April 1969 and has passed through several successful phases.

President Nixon recently presented the nations' highest award for bravery to the family of a 173d Airborne Brigade trooper.

Staff Sgt. Laszlo Rabel received the Medal of Honor for actions on Nov. 13, 1968 when he and a six man team from the 74th Infantry (Long Range Patrol) made contact with an enemy element in the Tiger Mountains east of Bong

Son. The team was in extremely close contact when an enemy soldier snuck up and lobbed a hand grenade in on them. Rabel shouted a warning to his fellow "Lurps" and with complete disregard for his own safety threw himself on the hand grenade absorbing the whole blast, thus saving his team. (See Laszlo's MOH citation on Page 51).

Rabel, 29, a native of Hungary, who called Hollywood, Calif. His home had been with the brigade 14 months. He joined the 74th Infantry because he felt he could contribute more to the war.

(continued....)



Rabel is the seventh recipient of the medal from the 173d Airborne Brigade.

In spring 1969, President Nixon announced redeployment from the Republic of Vietnam would begin, thus reversing the trend of five years. First to go were elements of the 9th Infantry Division, and the third brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 4th Infantry Division. But the 173d remains, and as the Southeast Asian reaction force, speculation is that the airborne unit will bear the distinction of being *"the first in and the last out."*

Source:

Fire Base 173, Vol. III No. 9, April 27, 1970

(Photos added)



Medal of Honor



Laszlo Rabel

Staff Sergeant

U.S. Army

74th Infantry Detachment

(Long Range Patrol)

173d Airborne Brigade (Sep)

Republic of Vietnam, 13 November 1968



Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. S/Sgt. Rabel distinguished himself while serving as leader of Team Delta, 74th Infantry Detachment.

At 1000 hours on this date, Team Delta was in a defensive perimeter conducting reconnaissance of enemy trail networks when a member of the team detected enemy movement to the front. As S/Sgt. Rabel and a comrade prepared to clear the area, he heard an incoming grenade as it landed in the midst of the team's perimeter. With complete disregard for his life, S/Sgt. Rabel threw himself on the grenade and, covering it with his body, received the complete impact of the immediate explosion.

Through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his safety and profound concern for his fellow soldiers, S/Sgt. Rabel averted the loss of life and injury to the other members of Team Delta.

By his gallantry at the cost of his life in the highest traditions of the military service, S/Sgt. Rabel has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit and the U.S. Army.



Centennial Commission welcomes the National Football League as Newest Donor for the National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C.

By Chris Isleib

Director of Public Affairs, United States World War
One Centennial Commission



The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission announced today that the National Football League (NFL) has contributed \$1 million to the construction of the first-ever National World War I Memorial in Washington D.C.

The U.S. World War 1 Centennial Commission which was enacted by Congress in 2013, has spent the last five years working towards the goal of building an eternal tribute to our veterans who served overseas over 100 years ago. The Memorial goal of \$40 million has been funded primarily by private fundraising efforts, and is anticipated to be completed by Veteran's Day 2021.

The NFL is now one of the lead donors to the Memorial, joining the Commission's founding sponsor the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as the Starr Foundation, General Motors, FedEx, Walmart, the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, the Lounsbery Foundation, and several other corporations and foundations.

"This donation is a major boost to the memorial's fundraising efforts," said Dan Dayton, Executive Director, U.S. World War 1 Centennial Commission. "Words cannot express how touched we are by this pledge and the support the NFL has shown to the Commission. Veterans of all wars deserve the best we

have to give. This commitment will ensure that we can provide a site that will tell the world of the sacrifices these men and women made for our liberty a century ago."

The National Football League has shown great support for remembering America's World War I veterans. During last season alone, the Chicago Bears hosted a special pregame ceremony to honor the team's original founder and owner, George Halas, who served in the United States Navy during World War I.

On Veterans Day, the Kansas City Chiefs wore special poppy uniform patches as part of their Salute to Service game day. In addition, the Green Bay Packers, Washington Redskins, New York Giants, Carolina Panthers, Jacksonville Jaguars, and the Philadelphia Eagles, all helped to tell the World War I story via their jumbotrons, gameday programs, and social media venues. These efforts were in direct partnership with the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.



NFL founder George Halas

"The NFL is proud to help support the building of the first-of-its-kind National World War I Memorial in Washington D.C.," said Anna Isaacson, Senior Vice President of Social Responsibility, NFL. "The League's connection to the military is longstanding and deep. It is critical that we play our part to commemorate and recognize those heroes who served during World War I."

The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress in 2013 to provide public outreach, education programs, and commemorative events that recognize America's 4.7 million World War I veterans. In 2014, Congress also authorized the Commission to create the overdue National World War I Memorial to honor America's forgotten veterans, in the Nation's Capital.

To learn more about the WW1 Memorial and/or to make a donation visit: www.worldwar1centennial.org/index.php



Death On A Routine Mission

Sandusky Register, May 20, 1966

By TOM TIEDE

TAN UYEN, Viet Nam (NEA) – It should have been a routine mission . . . a one-day sweep through the jungle, possibly light contact, probably nothing more. In and out and then back to base.

It was far from that, however.

It was the day A Company was blown to hell.

The men had been moving for five fruitless hours. Theirs was the usual method of march in thicket, several snakelines of probers; each tripping on giant vines, punching through webs of branches, and slapping at the armada of flying and crawling insects.

IT WAS HOT, of course, and the ageless dust of decomposition muddled the sweat on the parched and puffing soldiers.

"What I wouldn't give for a beer," somebody sighed.

"Knock it off!"

By midday they were deep into the woods. And there it all began.

Rifle fire crackled suddenly from the front, heavy and about knee high. The men instantly fell prone, but for some it did no good. The level of enemy shot was too low for them to escape.

It was a perfect trap. The Viet Cong had hollowed out firing tunnels through the wall of underbrush, each almost impossible to detect. Thus the enemy stood—many meters away and shoulder high in protective trenches—and gleefully blasted lifeless pockets into tangle of helpless human beings.

Alpha Company returned fire, of course.

But at what? And where?

AND THEN the mortars began to fall. The enemy was zeroed in. Movement was useless. Squads shifted and platoons maneuvered, but the explosions of 60mm bombs always followed.

Casualties began to mount. Survivors were split into two groups—those rescuing and those being rescued. Some, like Lt. Ralph Southard of Red Oak, Okla., qualified for both. He was wounded in the back but stayed on to help organize evacuations.

The lieutenant spent hours limping back and forth between the helicopters and hell. He would move, hit the ground when a shell exploded, get up, count his legs and move again.

Once while down he heard a thud to his right.

It was a mortar, a dud, buried 12 inches from his head.

SUCH ROUNDS were uncommon, of course. Most of them worked and transformed the area into a chaotic composite of craters and corpses. A dozen men had died and scores more were wounded and calling for help.

One trooper couldn't call, however. He was hit in the side and choking on lungs filled with blood. He would have died in moments but was saved by a medic's impossible trick.

The aidman rigged a needle and tubing to a pliable plastic bottle, entered the apparatus into the dying man, and, squeezing the bottle furiously, sucked the victim's lungs completely clear.

OTHERS WERE NOT as fortunate. There are no remedies for a bullet in the brain.

And still the shells fell. And still the air was fouled by automatic weapons. And still men were dragged away by their lifeless legs.

It continued for an hour, until finally jet aircraft roared into the action and dropped cluster bombs on the entrenched enemy. The air detonations showered the Cong with millions of harsh fragmentations and reduced their defenses to rubble.

AT LENGTH the other side withdrew. And a short while later the battle was over.

Thus ended the day. The day they strangled in the sand, the day men forfeited futures for a few miles of rotting vegetation.

The day A Company was blown to hell.



GRIM REMINDER – The battle gear of those killed in "A" Company is stacked after being trucked back to their base.

**A/2/503 Sky Soldier Ralph C. Southard, 75, LTC (Ret)
of Linn Creek, MO died July 24, 2011.**



VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION UPDATE: Military Exposures



Veterans and Servicemembers who join VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry can document their exposures and health in an online questionnaire, and then contact VA to schedule a free medical exam. Also, participation contributes to research on airborne hazards and health. Watch this new video for more details on the benefits to participation www.bit.ly/2GABsvq

[Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs]

Secretary Wilkie testifies that VA will accelerate disability benefits claims processing for Purple Heart Medal recipients

February 26, 2019

WASHINGTON — Today at a congressional hearing VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced that effective in April, it will provide priority disability benefits claims processing for the initial claims from discharged combat Veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

Secretary Wilkie announced his decision at a hearing before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies. *"Those who hold the Purple Heart, the recognition of wounds taken in battle, will now receive priority consideration when it comes to claims before the Department of Veterans Affairs,"* said Secretary Wilkie.

The Veterans Benefits Administration will amend its priority processing categories to include initial claims received from Purple Heart recipients on or after April 1, 2019.

Purple Heart recipients are already treated on a priority basis at VA hospitals and are exempt from co-payments for their medical care.

The Purple Heart award is the oldest U.S. military decoration and is awarded to U.S. service members for wounds suffered at the hands of the enemy. General George Washington awarded the first purple-colored heart-shaped badges to soldiers who fought in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. In 1932, it was revived to commemorate Washington's 200th birthday. ###

Honored Tuskegee Airman

March 22, 2019



Soldiers place an American flag over the casket of Army Air Forces Capt. Lawrence Dickson at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., March 22, 2019. Dickson was a Tuskegee Airman who went missing in December 1944; his remains were officially accounted for in July 2018. (Photo/caption, DoD)



The renowned Tuskegee Airmen





"THE PHILIPPINE AIRBORNE"

Les Hughes

Lt. C. E. Walter, with the assistance of four enlisted men from the 503d PIR, proceeded to establish a jump school, known simply as Camp X, near Brisbane, Australia.



It was a homecoming of sorts when C. E. Walter arrived in the Philippines as a member of the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. At age five, he had accompanied his mother to the Philippines to join his father, who was working there in the lumber business. Walter remained in the Philippines for nine years, before returning to the States to finish his schooling.

The war put Walter, and most American men his age, in a uniform. After receiving his commission at Fort Benning in March 1943, Walter volunteered for the airborne, and after the completion of jump and rigger schools, he was sent to Alabama as part of the original cadre of the 515 PIR.

In December 1943, Lt. Walter was notified, by the Resident Commissioner for the Philippines, that his father was fighting as a guerilla in the mountains of Mindanao. Using the offices of the Resident Commissioner, Lt. Walter volunteered for special intelligence duty. Shortly before he was to embark for the ETO, he was handed orders sending him to the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA).

The 5217th Reconnaissance Battalion (Provisional) was formed at Camp Tabragalba in Queensland, Australia, in October of 1943. Comprising Filipinos and Filipino-Americans, the mission of the 5217th was intelligence and commando operations on the Philippine Islands. The brass decided that airborne training would augment the ability of the 5217th to conduct its intelligence work, and to Walter was given the job of seeing that such training was provided.

With that mandate in hand, Walter, with the assistance of four enlisted men from the 503d PIR, proceeded to establish a jump school, known simply as Camp X, near Brisbane, Australia. The school's 3-week program included all aspects of Ft. Benning's Parachute School program except the 250-foot towers.

"We found out very quickly that the average Filipino was too light for a 28-foot main chute," Walter recalls. "Luckily, we didn't lose anyone, but some of them stayed up an awfully long time. I can recall hearing them call out, 'Lt. Walter, will I come down?'"

Camp X graduated two classes, jump qualifying a total of 66 men. The Filipinos - who had volunteered to serve in the Reconnaissance Battalion and then volunteered for jump school - greatly impressed Walter. Not a single trainee who passed through Walter's jump school refused to jump.

The Japanese retreat in the Philippines was faster than anticipated, and the paratroopers of the 5217th were never employed in an airborne role in forward combat areas. But an opportunity to put their jump training to use arose in May 1945 when an American aircraft crash-landed in the mountainous jungle of central New Guinea, a region much of which bore the disquieting notation *Unknown* on the maps that were then available.

A few weeks before the crash, Walter, now a captain, had lunched with his former biology teacher from Black Foxe Military Institute, who was now the Chemical Warfare Officer of the Far East Air Service Command (FEASC). Later, this officer informed the Commander of FEASC that Walter had trained paratroopers under his command. With all other airborne units in SWPA then committed to combat, FEASC knew to whom to turn when the plane went down.

When Walter asked for volunteers to effect a rescue of the crash survivors, to a man the paratroopers stepped forward. On the following day, Walter and eight enlisted men parachuted into a large valley some 10-15 miles from the crash site to set up a base camp to begin hacking out a landing strip for the gliders, in which they were to be picked up and evacuated....



(continued....)



....The survivors of the crash were brought to the base camp to recuperate from their injuries and regain their strength, while the paratroopers put the finishing touches to the landing strip. Then, they all sat back to await the gliders.



Lt. Frank Smith, Airborne Section, 5217th Recon Bn.

The natives the party encountered proved to be primitive but friendly. As friendly as the natives were, however, their practice of never bathing and coating their bodies with a mixture of pig grease and charcoal necessitated barring them from the paratroopers' camp. Even so, upon the paratroopers' return to base camp after completion of the mission, their first act was to burn their web gear, the odor of which was all too reminiscent of the hosts they had left behind.



Crash Survivor Cpl. Margaret Hastings at "Shangri-La" Base Camp.

On July 2, 1945, after having spent 42 days in the valley, the party was extracted in three glider pick-ups. One cannot help wondering how the natives – who probably never before had encountered anyone from the outside world – viewed the strange arrival and departure of their visitors. Religions have been founded on events less mystical than those must have seemed.

The mission did not go unnoticed by the press, which dubbed it *"Rescue from Shangri-La"*. Indeed, when the press covering the rescue insisted on one of their number parachuting into the valley to cover the mission 'up close and personal', the brass acquiesced. Alex McCann, then a journalist with the Netherlands Indies Government Information Service, drew the assignment. His confidence buoyed by a crash course in parachuting and by a fifth of Boodles gin, McCann parachuted into the valley to document the rescue.



Airborne Section, 5217th Reconnaissance Bn.

Shortly after the mission, the 5217th, now the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, was sent to Manila, where Walter and his cadre were returned to the 503d PRCT.

Shortly thereafter, in August of 1945, the 1st Reconnaissance Battalion was disbanded and the men reassigned.

Few friendships are as enduring as those that derive from acts of bravery or shared hardships. And so it was that in April of 1995, Walter and one of the medics who parachuted with him into "Shangri-La" gathered with the two remaining survivors of the plane crash on the 50th anniversary of the rescue.

The Insignia

Besides providing the information and the photographs used in this article, LTC Walter provided the patch (top). Of the patch, Walter wrote:

(continued....)



"...I am enclosing the chest patch, which we designed in Hollandia for wear by members of the 1st Rcn. Bn. who were qualified jumpers. We petitioned GHQ [for approval] and our request was denied, due to the fact only a small segment of the Battalion was airborne. I am particularly proud of the chest patch, as it brings back some very fond memories of many officers and men who not only were excellent soldiers and fighting men, but who became outstanding jumpers.

It might be of interest to note that there was never one refusal to jump out of the total of close to 90 people who started training and the 66 who ultimately qualified.

I have always been very proud to have been associated with the 5217th/1st Recon. I will always remember the very fine officers and men whom I trained and worked with. It was a most memorable time of my life."

Walter's "chest patch" depicts a parachute as well as elements symbolizing the 5217th/1st Reconnaissance Battalion: the stars of the Southern Cross, the head of a carabou, and the unit's motto, *Bahala Na*, meaning "come what will." Authentic examples of the sleeve patch of the 5217th are very rare. (A close-but-no-cigar effort to reproduce this patch occurred in the '50s. The copies feature an olive drab border, a rounded-shield shape, and, erroneously, the Big Dipper rather than the Southern Cross.) The "chest patch" is even rarer - the author is unaware of any in collections other than his own.

[Reprinted courtesy of Paul Whitman and his
503rd Heritage Battalion website]



"Out of The Clouds"

written by Ester B. (Campbell) Gates
173d Gold Star Mother

Out of the clouds I tumble survey the earth below.
With a snap of my billowing canopy / I glide like a bird,
and slow. / The wind kisses my face / like a welcoming
friend-- / Takes my hand to lead the way. / The other
hand grasps St. Michael's wings, / In the exhilarating
game we play. / The thunder of the silence / soothes
my soul / As I drift in laughter's wake, / And I dance on
the air / With the earth my soul / All for my country's
sake.

[Posted by Toni Weaver, sister of Duane Richard Keil,
SGT, A/4/503, KIA 7/3/69]

VA and Virta Health partner in innovative approach to diabetes care

May 13, 2019

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a partnership on May 13 with Virta Health to explore an innovative program focused on improving the health of persons with type 2 diabetes.

In effect since March 22, the agreement will give 400 Veterans the opportunity to participate in the Virta Treatment, which can help individuals safely and sustainably achieve glycemic control while reducing use of medications.

This diabetes care will be provided for up to one year at no cost to VA or Veteran participants. *"Partnering with community providers facilitates a more comprehensive approach to care,"* said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"Many Veterans have type 2 diabetes, and it is strongly linked to obesity, so we are excited to explore Virta Health's approach to tackling this debilitating and costly condition."*

Currently, VA offers medical care, education, counseling, weight loss programs and blood glucose monitoring for more than 1.5 million Veterans with type 2 diabetes. This partnership provides a small group of Veterans access to Virta's proprietary, individualized, low-carbohydrate nutrition protocols on a 24/7 continuous remote care platform from medical providers and health coaches, an approach currently not widely in use at VA.

Virta Health, a licensed medical provider in all 50 states, focuses on treating type 2 diabetes through noninvasive means. Their services, available 24/7, include personalized nutrition, peer support, health coaching and physician monitoring, all delivered remotely.

This partnership exemplifies the work of the VHA Office of Community Engagement (OCE), which supports and develops community and corporate partnerships to benefit Veterans. For information regarding developing a nonmonetary partnership with VHA, contact OCE at www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/

Veterans interested in the program should visit www.virtahealth.com/veterans For more information about VA health care, visit www.va.gov/health



Steven Paul Hokanson, 72

A/2/503, RVN

Passes

Steven Paul Hokanson, son of Walter and Lily (Anderson) Hokanson was born on December 28, 1946 in Morris, Minnesota. He was baptized and confirmed at the First Lutheran Church in Morris. Steve grew up and attended Morris Public Schools, graduating in 1965. He entered the United States Army, serving his country during the Vietnam War in the United States Army Special Forces (Green Berets) with the 173d Airborne Brigade. Steve was honorably discharged in 1968 and returned to Morris.



In 1970, Steve began working for UPS, as a route driver. He was united in marriage to the love of his life, Randee Wagner on July 20, 1974, at the First Lutheran Church. Through this union, three children were born. Steve retired from UPS in 2000; later that same year, Steve began working for Pedersen Funeral Home as a part-time funeral assistant, a position he held until the time of his death.

He was a lifelong member of First Lutheran Church and was a member of the Pomme de Terre Flying Club and Parent Organizations of the USS Tiger Sharks and MAHS Swimming Teams. Steve enjoyed spending time scuba diving, skiing, hiking, camping, backpacking, woodworking, and baking. He was known for dropping off his caramel rolls for many throughout the community. He also had a passion for flying, travel, photography, and building projects.

Steve's most cherished times were spent with his family, especially at the family cabin on Lake Minnewaska. He will be remembered for his kind heart, his sense of humor, and his selfless passion for serving and supporting others; all characteristics that Steve wanted to go unnoticed.

Steve died on Saturday, April 20, 2019, with his loving family at his side, at the Knute Nelson Care Center in Alexandria, Minnesota. He was 72 years old. It was a joy and gift to be a part of Steve's life – to be the family, the friends, and the communities that enjoyed the light he brought to this world.

He is survived by: his wife of 44 years: Randee Hokanson, Morris, MN, and an extended family.

Francisco "Frank" Garza, Jr., 69

B/2/503, RVN

Passes

Francisco "Frank" Garza, Jr., 69, passed away Sunday, February 10, 2019 at Paxvilla Hospice in McAllen, TX. He was born March 23, 1949 to Francisco Garza, Sr. and Annie Doty in Elsa, TX. Frank graduated from Edcouch-Elsa High School and obtained his Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, leading to his teaching profession. Frank was a Vietnam Veteran serving in the Army's 82nd and 173d Airborne. Aside from enjoying teaching, Frank loved to fish, watch movies, and he truly loved his family.



Frank is survived by his wife, Maria Alicia Garza, and an extended family.

Military Honors were held February 14, 2019 at his residence in Elsa, TX.

Richard A. Orr, 72

B/2/503, RVN

Passes

Richard A. Orr, 72, of Willow Grove, PA passed peacefully surrounded by his family on Thursday, May 9, 2019. Beloved husband of Betty J. (nee Moffa) and loving father and grandfather to an extended family.

Richard worked for Verizon Communication's for 30 years before retiring in 2005. Richard was a CYO Crusaders football coach for St. John of the Cross, a member of the Roslyn Boys Club and coached many different sports in Abington. He enjoyed bowling and all professional sports.

Richard was proud of serving in the U.S. Army as a Sgt. during the Vietnam War with the 173d Airborne Brigade.



Rest Easy You "Try Harder" Sky Soldiers



THE SCREAMING EAGLES IN VIETNAM:

Many of us of the 2/503d and other 173d units served with the 101st Airborne Division before and/or after our tours in Vietnam. As fate might have it, a number of the young officers who led us in combat and on whom we relied, did not have the benefit and direct experience of past conflicts they could call on during life and death situations as they were cast in leadership rolls during combat – only so much can be learned on training maneuvers and in the classrooms of ROTC, OCS and The Point. Often, it was the critical advice and guidance of our senior NCO's from WWII, Korea and other conflicts which aided

these young new leaders of other young men as they undertook their missions of defeating the enemy in battle while striving to keep alive as many of their soldiers as possible. To these once young leaders, we salute you all. To our Sky Soldiers of Charlie Company, 2/503, and most likely unbeknownst to most of them at the time, their future company commander, Tom Faley, brought with him to our battalion and his company the very combat experience we, as young soldiers new to war, could only hope for in the officers who took us into harms' way. Ed



MUTUAL SURPRISE AT AN NINH Paratroopers vs. Viet Cong

By Colonel Thomas E. Faley, Jr., US. Army (Ret)



Thomas E. Faley, Jr., a retired US. Army Colonel, served in Vietnam as a 101st Airborne reconnaissance platoon leader, a 173rd Airborne company commander and a Vietnamese airborne battalion senior adviser.

Out manned and outgunned, their commanders either killed or wounded, the paratroopers were fighting for their very lives.

On September 18, 1965, during Operation Gibraltar near the Central Highland village of An Ninh, units of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, unknowingly landed in the middle of an occupied enemy base camp. That camp was defended by the 95th Battalion and elements of the 94th Battalion of the 2nd Main Force Viet Cong Regiment. As the October 4, 1965, issue of *Newsweek* magazine reported,

"The Paratroopers within minutes found themselves fighting for their lives against a superior force of Viet Cong regulars."

I was present during this, one of the U.S. Army's first major battles in Vietnam, serving as the Reconnaissance platoon leader. At the end of the fiercely fought two-day battle, the courageous and tenacious paratroopers finally prevailed, but the casualty cost was high for this early stage of the war.

Most of the battalion's leadership, including the operations officer and all rifle company commanders, were killed or wounded. Major operational lessons were learned from the battle. One lesson was that the need for sustained artillery and Air Force tactical air support is critical during the early stages of a ground battle, particularly so for an air insertion.

Those same lessons had been learned earlier in World War II and Korea, but were seemingly forgotten or ignored at An Ninh. Some of the 101st Airborne's senior officers may have been over-confident in dealing with the Viet Cong, having been involved in earlier light skirmishes in which the enemy quickly fled. But it was a different situation at An Ninh.

(continued....)



Gibraltar veteran **Michael Clodfelter**, in his book *Mad Minutes and Vietnam Months*, said it best when he wrote, ***"After September 18th no man among us doubted that we were opposed by a strong and formidable foe who know how to wage war as well as any soldier on earth."***

The 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, with its parent 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne, debarked from the troopship General Leroy Eltinge on July 29, 1965, at Cam Ranh Bay after a 21-day voyage from the United States. As one of the initial Army units to be deployed in-country, the men of the 101st Airborne spent the next several weeks acclimating themselves to Vietnam and conducting local security operations in the Cam Ranh area with minimal enemy contact.

"After September 18th no man among us doubted that we were opposed by a strong and formidable foe who know how to wage war as well as any soldier on earth."

Michael Clodfelter

In late August, the 101st Airborne moved to the An Khe-Quy Nhon area of the Central Highlands, assigned to secure a base area around An Khe for the 1st Cavalry Division as it arrived in-country. Route 19, a paved-surface highway, ran east-west through the area. That was the same Route 19 on which the famous French Group Mobile 100 had been wiped out west of An Khe by the Viet Minh 11 years earlier (See *"The Death of Group Mobile 100*, by Robert Barr Smith, in the April 1991 *Vietnam*).

For the next several weeks, the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne, conducted road security operations along Route 19 and local sweeps north and south of the highway. Only small groups of enemy soldiers were encountered, and they tended to flee within the opening minutes of engagement. One of the enemy dead, discovered after one of those small forfeits, was found to be carrying documents that indicated he was a member of the 95th Battalion, 2nd Viet Cong Regiment. Shortly afterward, another member of the 95th Battalion was captured, who said that the 95th was located on the mountain ridge overlooking the Vinh

Thanh Valley and its river, the Song Con. This suspected position of the 95th, 14 kilometers north on Route 19, threatened the security of the American supply route running from Quy Nhon to An Khe. The commander of the 1st Brigade, **Colonel James Timothy**, decided to take action to eliminate this threat.

The 1st Brigade's plan, code-named Operation Gibraltar, envisioned a task force commanded by **Major Mark Hanson** (Task force Mark) sweeping northward from Route 19 in the Vinh Thanh Valley to a point west of the suspected 95th Battalion position. Upon reaching that point, the task force would move east into the mountains to strike the Viet Cong position. In the meantime, a blocking force composed of units of the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, would air land in the vicinity of the village of An Ninh, which was in the valley east of the reported Viet Cong position. After landing, this force, commanded by **Lt. Col W.K.G. Smith**, would move east into the mountains and set up blocking positions. Hopefully, Task Force Mark would be able to drive the 95th Viet Cong Battalion into Smith's blocking positions on the eastern slope.

Planning time was minimal because of the concern that the 95th Battalion would move before U.S. forces could strike. As a result, battalion orders were issued the afternoon of September 17. The 1st Brigade's S-3 (operations officer), **Major David Hackworth**, noted in his book *About Face* that had there been more time to review in detail the aerial photographs of the An Ninh area received late in the evening of the 17th, those photos would have shown the area around the 502nd's landing zone at An Ninh to be *"nothing less than an armed camp."* In addition, detailed reconnaissance for Task Force Mark's valley route had not been conducted. If it had been, it would have shown that progress along that boggy, muddy route would be very slow. Exacerbating the problem the initial rains of the autumn monsoon season had started turning the mud into molasses.



Col. David Hackworth
1930 - 2006

(web photo added)

(continued....)



The short planning time did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the leaders and troops of the 502nd Infantry. You readily sensed the surge of excitement at the leaders' meeting early in the evening of the 17th, when final instructions were passed out and final coordinations were made. Everyone was itching to test his mettle against the main force Viet Cong. As the officers were leaving the battalion command post, located on a small plateau in the An Khe Pass, **Captain Bob Rawls**, C Company commander, made a prophetic statement to me: *"This looks like it could turn into something really big."*



"The Battle at An Ninh."
(web photo & caption)

Task Force Mark consisted of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry; Troop A, 1st Battalion, 17th Cavalry; C and B Batteries, 2nd Battalion, 320th Artillery; and a platoon of tanks from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. Shortly after daylight on September 18, the task force began moving over rough, muddy trails up the Vinh Thanh Valley; it quickly bogged down in the mud. The vehicles towing the 105mm howitzers kept sinking into the mud and often had to be individually winched out. Operation Gibraltar was only minutes underway and already the plan was breaking down. C Battery, which normally would have provided fire support for the 502nd Infantry, was badly bogged down and out of range of the regiment.

Shortly after 0700 hours on September 18, two Douglas A1E prop-driven Skyraiders made several bombing passes in the vicinity of the landing zone (LZ) at An Ninh and then left the area. At 0715 the 502nd initial helicopter lift carrying 138 men from Captain Rawl's C Company landed in the LZ northwest of An Ninh. The company was assigned the mission of securing the 110-by-400-meter landing zone. Upon landing, they encountered scattered small-arms fire.

Unknowingly, C Company had landed literally in the middle of the 95th Battalion's base camp. Both sides were initially shocked, and the Viet Cong's first reaction was to flee.

The battalion's after-action report described in detail the initial minutes of the fight. The 1st Platoon, led by **Lieutenant Jim Neilson**, moved quickly to its designated position northeast of the LZ and observed Viet Cong fleeing to the north. The 2nd Platoon, led by **Lieutenant Dean Anderson**, moved to its designated position on the northwest corner of the LZ and discovered several large camp sites with cookfires still burning. After a short engagement, Viet Cong were observed scattering to the west, but they left behind four bodies and seven weapons. The 3rd Platoon, led by **Lieutenant George Carter**, moved to the southeastern side of the LZ and came under sporadic fire. The Weapons Platoon, led by **Lieutenant Jerry Nakashima**, moved to the southwestern corner of the LZ and also received light fire. Things were soon to change. After about 10 minutes, the hidden and scattered Viet Cong began to realize that they had C Company outnumbered and outgunned.

Consequently, they quickly returned to their earlier fighting positions and unleashed a torrent of fire. The LZ turned into a hornet's nest, and C Company found itself pinned down. The intensity and effectiveness of the Viet Cong gunfire was reported in the October 4, 1965, *Newsweek*. In the article, **Pfc Steve Van Meter** described the situation in which he found himself:

"The Viet Cong began pouring deadly fire into us. I jumped into a hole with two of our troops who were firing up a storm. Next thing I knew the guy beside me had been hit right above the left eye. It almost tore his head off and killed him instantly. Before I recovered from that, the guy on my left yelled that he had been hit in the arm."

One of the Viet Cong captured in the battle said that the 95th had used the LZ as a training area to practice combating helicopter assaults. Thus the Viet Cong were well rehearsed for the action -- a circumstance that may have greatly increased their effectiveness.

(continued....)



At 0730 the second lift of the 502nd attempted to land on the LZ under intense small-arms and automatic weapons fire. Two B Company platoons and the battalion tactical command group were able to get to the ground. Captain Rawls waved off the other helicopters because the ground fire was so intense. The B Company Commander, **Captain Wilford Roe**, was wounded while still in the helicopter and was evacuated immediately. **Lieutenant Howard Reeves** assumed command of the B Company elements and placed them in gaps in the C Company perimeter. Two helicopters were lost during the second lift.

Shortly after the troops in the second lift landed, heavy 60mm and 82mm mortar fire poured into the U.S. perimeter. Supporting friendly artillery and heavy mortars were still out of range, and no Air Force tactical air support was available. Major Hackworth, the brigade staff officer responsible for operations and training, reported in *About Face* that Colonel Smith had earlier realized there was a possibility of landing outside supporting artillery range but disregarded it, saying, "I don't need artillery, I got my tacair (tactical air support)." However, his air support consisted of only the two earlier sorties; the AIEs were then grounded by contaminated fuel. Now Colonel Smith, with 224 men, found himself outnumbered and outgunned by an entrenched enemy force. Post-battle analysis revealed that, along with the 95th Battalion, elements of the 94th Battalion were also opposing Smith. For the next hour and a half the surrounded paratroopers received no outside support. It was now up to the individual paratroopers with their personal weapons to repel a determined enemy. For years, paratroop officers and non-commissioned officers had been trained to land in distant airheads deep in enemy country with little outside support for a limited amount of time. Individual initiative and making every bullet count had been emphasized. Now that training gave Smith's force a chance to survive.

Shortly before 0800 the C Company Commander, Captain Rawls, attempted to expand his perimeter in the southeastern sector toward the village of An Ninh. Rawls and his command group were moving with the elements of Carter's 3rd Platoon when a VC machine gun to the south opened up. Rawls was knocked backward to the ground with several rounds in his chest, and **Lieutenant Ed Fox**, a forward observer, was also killed by a round to his head. Rawl's radio operator, **Private Kenneth Moore**, was one of the few in the command groups who survived, even though machine-gun bullets passed within inches of his face and knocked pieces off the radio on his back.

Rawls was a very intelligent, highly energetic West Point graduate who led by example. His death stunned all who were aware of it, and perimeter expansion in the sector near him abruptly halted. Carter took the survivors of the command group to Lieutenant Nakashima, who assumed command of C Company. Carter, trying to return to his platoon, discovered that two-thirds of the men were isolated by enemy fire.

The isolated element was in good hands, however, because one of the strongest senior NCO's in the battalion, **Sgt. 1st Class Michael Rivera**, was in charge of the group.

While the struggle in the south was going on, Neilson's 1st Platoon in the northeastern sector of the LZ was in a fierce fight with a strong enemy force for control of a small hill near the LZ. Neilson's platoon was forced to take cover behind a rice paddy dike at the foot of the hill.

Things were looking bad for Smith's force on the LZ, but not as bad as he might have believed. Major Hackworth and the brigade commander flew high over the fire-fight and radioed Smith what his situation was. Hackworth remembers Smith reporting, "We got 113 dead," which would have been half his force. Such a report may have been an honest misperception by Smith of his situation, but it led Hackworth to question Smith's control of the situation. One of the "what ifs" of the initial stage of the battle dealt with the 502nd Recon Platoon - 16 men armed with four M-60 machine guns. They would have been able to provide an immense amount of firepower if they had been included on the first lift. Additionally, I had been C Company's executive officer until September 4. As a result, Rawls and I were used to working closely together. I had been moved to the recon platoon to replace **Lieutenant George Burkhart**, who had been killed by a sniper on September 3. Six months after this battle, it became standard practice for the 101st to utilize its recon platoons as initial assault elements on the LZs and as a battalion's fourth maneuver element.

On September 18, my recon platoon, reinforced by the antitank platoon, was still charged with providing Route 19 security until five hours into the battle.



Robert Rawls
1935 - 1965

(continued....)



Shortly after 0900, Air Force aircraft arrived overhead and commenced bombing runs that tended to confine the Viet Cong to their dug-in positions and discouraged them from moving into the open to attack.

At 0920, a third lift, consisting of elements of B and A companies, was attempted. This time, a landing zone 800 meters south of the original LZ was selected. Even at that distance from the initial LZ, the third lift was swept by intense fire as the choppers tried to land. Only two groups of paratroopers made it to the ground. Eight men of A Company, led by **Platoon Sergeant Robert Jack**, and 28 men of B Company, led by **Platoon Sergeant Robert Wrightman**, landed. However, those two groups found themselves cut off from the original LZ and each other until the next day. The A company commander, **Captain Jerry Landry**, was wounded in the leg as he tried to exit his helicopter and had to be immediately evacuated. Wrightman's group recovered a machine gun and ammunition from a downed helicopter on the LZ, which helped them to survive the ensuing fire fight.

The remaining helicopters of the third lift elected not to attempt another landing and returned to the base with their troops aboard. The 502nd's after-action report indicated that all of the 101st Airborne's Aviation Battalion's 26 remaining lift helicopters were damaged by enemy gunfire and out of action.

In the meantime, conditions continued to deteriorate at An Ninh. Particularly troubling was a Viet Cong force on a small hill covering the northeastern sector of the LZ. As a result, **Major Herbert Dexter**, the battalion operations officer, moved to Neilson's platoon at the base of the hill. Dexter told the platoon to follow him as he started running up the hill with his .45-caliber pistol in his hand. Private first class **George Imes** described Dexter's charge to *Stars and Stripes* reporter **Ray Mahon**: "The major was leading the way with just a .45 in his hand. Heavy machine-gun fire from the hill hit him and he fell, but he got up and continued on until he was hit again." Dexter's last words before he died were, "Don't pull back!" according to **Sergeant Mike Borland**. Major Dexter was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on the hill.



Maj. Herbert J. Dexter
HHC/2/502
DSC Recipient

A September 20 *Washington Post* article describes what happened next, as told by **Platoon Sergeant Ezra Vaughn**: "They were waiting for us on the hill and dug in. They were wearing a kind of camouflage poncho liner and hard to see. When we got near the top of the hill, a whistle signal blew and they really opened up. I also could see at least 20 of them throwing grenades. We had to pull back." A short time later, the hill was retaken by the paratroopers.

Another tragic casualty during this period was **Staff Sgt. Burchett**, the C Company mess sergeant, who, along with several of his cooks, volunteered to serve as a rifleman on this operation. Burchett was wounded seriously and bled to death on the LZ. His loss was deeply felt by all those who knew him. He was one of the most popular, caring individuals in C Company.

Smith now had to depend on lieutenants and sergeants to lead the fight; all his company commanders were dead or wounded, and his operations officer was dead. The paratroopers at An Ninh continued to fight with only air support because the artillery units were still bogged down in the Vinh Thanh Valley. The Air Force flew 47 sorties the first day and dropped the bombs within 100 meters of friendly elements--so close to the American troops that B Company paratroopers were killed by friendly air strikes.

A strange situation developed in the late morning when the 101st requested helicopters from the 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) at An Khe, and the request initially was turned down. The real reasons for the refusal may never be known. Some have speculated that it was because the air crews did not have flak jackets; others believed that the 1st Air Cavalry did not really understand the urgency of the need. Whatever the problem was, it was quickly resolved after the midday arrival of **Lt Gen John Throckmorton**, deputy commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, at the 101st's forward tactical operations center in the Vinh Thanh Valley. He wanted an update of the situation. The brigade operations officer, Hackworth, recalled that when Throckmorton heard of the problem he personally intervened, and the 1st Air Cav immediately reversed its position.

(continued....)



Early in the afternoon, the 502nd recon platoon, my platoon, was ordered to move up the Vinh Thanh Valley to a position opposite An Ninh on the western side of the mountain. Our mission was to secure the position for an insertion of an artillery battery in the late afternoon. The battery would provide fire support for Smith's beleaguered force. In the meantime, the paratroopers at An Ninh continued to beat off numerous enemy probes with small arms and air support.

While the surrounded paratroopers struggled to survive, at brigade headquarters major efforts were underway to send additional forces into the vicinity to relieve the pressure on Smith. It was clear that Task Force Mark was stuck in the mud of **Vinh Thanh**. A new task force was formed under **Lt. Col Edward Collins**, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry. Collins' hastily assembled force included the remaining elements of the 502nd, C Company from Collins' battalion and two 23rd Army of the Republic of Vietnam Ranger companies.

Early in the evening, the 502nd recon platoon arrived just as the air-landed artillery battery was inserted opposite An Ninh on the other side of the mountain. Within minutes the artillery had rounds popping out of their tubes in support of Smith. Now the tide of the battle had changed. Smith's force had artillery and air support whenever they needed it. As darkness fell, Collins' force was still two kilometers west of An Ninh, so brigade headquarters ordered Collins' force to halt for the night and wait for daylight to make the linkup. Throughout the evening, flare ships provided illumination over An Ninh, and artillery pounded the Viet Cong; Smith's men could hear the Viet Cong collecting bodies and equipment. They seemed to be pulling out of the area.

The supplies the Viet Cong left behind confirmed that the enemy force was indeed the 95th Battalion, assisted by elements of the 94th Battalion, 2nd Viet Cong Main Force Regiment. The 502nd's after-action report listed the large amount of material collected, including: Thompson submachine guns, Garand M-1 rifles, Browning Automatic rifles, Russian PPSH submachine guns, a German MG34 machine gun, propaganda leaflets, medical kits and a large quantity of ammunition. Total Viet Cong dead were estimated to be 257, with an unknown number of wounded.

Five Viet Cong were captured during the fighting. Initially after the linkup, Collins started to pursue the enemy, but he soon received instructions to return to the An Ninh area and secure the downed helicopters, which were taken out the next morning....

My dear family,

The Officer of the Second to None Battalion, our
unit wishes for a Merry Christmas,

Yr. Son
Dec. 1945



....Collins' force received machine gun fire from the northeastern sector of An Ninh, along with 60mm and 82mm mortar fire. However, artillery and airstrikes seemed to eliminate the enemy emplacements.

Around 1600 on September 20, Task Force Mark and Collins' force linked up on the mountains west of An Ninh. Casualties suffered by Smith's force totaled 13 dead and 28 wounded. However, that figure did not include casualties among outside forces, such as the helicopter crews and relief forces. Even so, everyone in the 101st Airborne fully realized that it could have been much worse.

The paratroopers who had fought at An Ninh knew that they had stood up to the best the Viet Cong had to offer and prevailed. At the same time, they had gained increased respect for the fighting ability of the Viet Cong, and they seemed to sense that this could be a long, hard war. Smith told a *New York Times* reporter: *"The Viet Cong fought well and were exceptionally well led."* Hackworth wrote: *"Gibraltar bloodied us and taught us respect for our foe."*

On April 26, 1961, **President Lyndon B. Johnson** awarded the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, the Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism during Operation Gibraltar. The citation reads, *"Despite the loss of key leaders, the Battalion's personnel manifested initiative, determination, and the will to survive during the entire action."* An Ninh added another exciting chapter to the airborne story.

Source:

The Screaming Eagle, January-February 1998

Reprinted courtesy of Col. Tom Faley,
photos added where indicated.

PARATROOPER PAINT



An Army paratrooper paints her face in camouflage in preparation for airborne operations onto Juliet drop zone in Pordenone, Italy, May 21, 2019.

DOD Identifies Army Casualty

April 21, 2019

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Inherent Resolve.

Spc. **Ryan Dennis Orin Riley**, 22, from Richmond, Kentucky, died April 20, 2019 in Ninawa Province, Iraq, from a non-combat related incident. The incident is under investigation.

Riley was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 32nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, KY.

For more information regarding Spc. Ryan Dennis Orin Riley, members of the media may contact Lt. Col. Martin L. O'Donnell, Public Affairs Officer, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at 931-217-5074 or by email at martin.l.odonnell.mil@mail.mil



Honor One...Honor All

They were all colors of the rainbow, all beliefs and non-beliefs, they came from every state and territory, they came from countries near and far, they were Americans.
Ed



World War II veteran Charles Shay attends a ceremony at a memorial bearing his name at Omaha Beach, France, June 5, 2019, as part of a series of events commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day. The memorial honors Native American service members who fought in World War II and earlier.



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REUNIONS OF THE AIRBORNE KIND



2019 SFA International Convention, Charleston, WV, August 13-18, 2019, Charleston Convention Center and Colosseum. **Contact:** Eml: SFAChapter68@gmail.com



101st Airborne Division Association Reunion, Hotel Elegante, Colorado Springs, CO, August 21-25, 2019. **Contact web:** www.rmeagles.org/reunion/



73rd Joint Reunion 11ABN & 187 ARCT, Clarion Hotel Conference Center, Lexington, KY, September 24-29, 2019. **Contact Phn:** 856-233-0515



The International Paratrooper and Skydiving Reunion, Hotel El Tropicano, San Antonio, TX, October 13-15, 2019. **Contact:** Joe Rodriguez, Phn: 210-995-7727. Phillip Gonzales, Phn: 210-685-9904, Eml: phillgonz49@aswaa.org



B/2/501st, 101st Airborne Reunion, Evansville Double Tree by Hilton, Evansville, IN, October 16-19, 2019. **Contact web:** <http://b2501airborne.com/reunion.htm>

~ 2020 ~



Casper Aviation Platoon Reunion 2020, Las Vegas Tropicana Hotel & Resort, Las Vegas, NV, March 30 – April 2, 2020. **Contact:** Ned Costa, Phn: 562-682-3100, Eml: NCHuey721@aol.com **Web:** <http://www.casperplatoon.com/Reunion2020.htm>



173d Airborne OEF X Reunion 2020, Denver, CO. As details become available we'll include them here in future issues. Ed

Note: If you are aware of any upcoming "Airborne" or attached unit reunions, please email complete details to rto173@att.net for inclusion in our newsletter.



173d Abn Bde

Elements of the 173rd Airborne Bde killed 10 enemy in scattered actions during the week.

An armored element of the 173d Airborne Brigade killed seven VC during a pitched 2 1/2 hour battle shortly after midnight near Tuy Hoa.

The action began when an RF/PF platoon came under fire from an estimated enemy company hidden in an abandoned village.

Five armored personnel carriers from the 6th Armor reinforced the local force troops and counter-attacked into the village.

Helicopter and Air Force "Spooky" gunships supported from the air.

[Excerpt: *The Army Reporter*, Page 2]

The Scorpion and the Frog Cross a Raging Swamp



As the swamp water continued to rise, the scorpion begged the frog for a ride on his back to the other side. The frog at first refused, telling the scorpion he was afraid to be stung and die. The scorpion promised not to sting him.

Upon their safely reaching the other side, the scorpion stung the frog. While dying the frog croaked, "Now why did you do that?" The scorpion said, "I'm a scorpion."

The moral to this rendition is, the scorpion should be banned from the swamp because he's a lying sonofabitch! Ed



The Link Between PTSD and Substance Use



The link between PTSD and substance use may be more common than you think. PTSD and substance use often go together. Many people turn to drugs, alcohol, or nicotine to try to cope with symptoms of PTSD. However, these substances could make existing PTSD symptoms worse or even lead to Substance Use Disorder (SUD).

PTSD and Substance Misuse Can Make Symptoms Worse

Misusing alcohol and drugs can affect your health, your relationships, and your job or schooling, whether you have PTSD or not. But people with PTSD who turn to alcohol and drugs can make their symptoms worse. Using drugs and alcohol to help you fall asleep can backfire. Instead of helping, drugs and alcohol change the quality of your sleep. You are likely to have a restless night and wake up feeling less refreshed.

Drugs and alcohol continue the cycle of avoidance found in PTSD. Avoiding bad memories and dreams or certain people and places can make PTSD last longer. People with PTSD cannot make as much progress in treatment if they continue to avoid what bothers them.

If you're living with PTSD and SUD, you're not alone. More than one in five Veterans with PTSD also have a substance use disorder, and almost one out of every three Veterans seeking treatment for SUD also have PTSD. The good news is, you can treat both PTSD and SUD at the same time.

How to Get Help for PTSD and SUD

Dr. Sonya Norman, Director of the PTSD Consultation Program at the National Center for PTSD and an expert on treating SUD in Veterans with PTSD says, *"There are two effective ways to do this.*

One way is to get both problems treated at the same time, but in separate sessions. For example, you could work with a therapist trained in one of the evidence-based trauma-focused psychotherapies for PTSD in one session, and also attend an alcohol and drug treatment program for addiction.



Another option is to get both treated at the same time, in the same appointment, with a therapy like COPE, or Concurrent Treatment of Substance Use Disorders Using Prolonged Exposure."

What is COPE?

COPE combines two effective treatments---Prolonged Exposure for PTSD and relapse prevention for addiction-- in one package. Every session of the 12-week COPE program will address both problems.

"Veterans have options for how to treat their PTSD and substance use disorder," notes Dr. Norman. "The important thing is to get evidence-based treatment for both."

Good treatments are available, so don't wait.

Here are some options:

- Every VA medical center has a SUD-PTSD Specialist who is trained to treat both conditions.
- You can locate specialized PTSD programs and SUD programs near you with one of the VA's treatment locators.
- The National Center for PTSD's free mobile app VetChange and self-help courses can also help you and your family cope with PTSD, SUD, and alcohol use.

Source:

National Center for PTSD

veteranshealth@public.govdelivery.com



Remembering an American war hero.....

SGT. WILLIAM HARVEY CARNEY

William Harvey Carney (February 29, 1840 – December 9, 1908) was an African American soldier during the American Civil War. Born as a slave, he was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1900 for his gallantry in saving the regimental colors (American Flag) during the Battle of Fort Wagner in 1863. Because his actions preceded those of other medal honorees, he is considered to be the first African American to be awarded the Medal of Honor.



Biography

William Harvey Carney was born as a slave in Norfolk, Virginia, on February 29, 1840. How he made his way to freedom is not certain. According to most accounts, he escaped through the Underground Railroad, and joined his father in Massachusetts. Other members of their family were freed by purchase or by the death of their master.

Carney joined the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in March 1863 as a sergeant. He took part in the July 18, 1863, assault on Fort Wagner in Charleston, South Carolina. His actions there ultimately earned him the Medal of Honor. When the color guard was killed, Carney retrieved the U.S. flag and marched forward with it, despite multiple serious wounds. When the Union troops were forced to retreat under fire, he struggled back across the battlefield, eventually returning to his own lines and turning over the colors to another survivor of the 54th, saying, *"Boys, I only did my duty; the old flag never touched the ground!"* He received an honorable discharge due to disability from his wounds in June 1864.

After his discharge, Carney returned to New Bedford, Massachusetts, and took a job maintaining the city's streetlights. He then delivered mail for thirty-two years. He was a founding vice president of the New Bedford Branch 18 of the National Association of Letter Carriers in 1890.

He married Susannah Williams, and they had a daughter, Clara Heronia. He spent a few years in California, then returned again in 1869.

Carney received his Medal of Honor on May 23, 1900, nearly 37 years after the events at Fort Wagner (more than half such awards from the Civil War were presented 20 or more years after the fact). Twenty African American men had received the medal before him, but because his battle actions happened earlier than the others, he is generally considered the first.

His citation reads,

"When the color sergeant was shot down, this soldier grasped the flag, led the way to the parapet, and planted the colors thereon. When the troops fell back he brought off the flag, under a fierce fire in which he was twice severely wounded."

Carney died at the Boston City Hospital on December 9, 1908, of complications from an elevator accident at the Massachusetts State House where he worked for the Department of State. His body lay in state for one day at the undertaking rooms of Walden Banks 142 Lenox Street at the wish of his wife and daughter. He was buried in the family plot at Oak Grove Cemetery in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Engraved on his tombstone is an image of the Medal of Honor.

Other honors

Carney's face is shown on the monument to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th on the Boston Common designed by Augustus Saint Gaudens. A New Bedford, Massachusetts, elementary school was named in his honor, and his New Bedford home at 128 Mill Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2015, Carney was honored as one of the Library of Virginia's "Strong Men & Women in Virginia History" because of his actions during the Civil War.



**Carney after the war,
wearing his
Medal of Honor**

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Harvey_Carney



VA ensures Veterans have same-day access to emergency mental health care

April 16, 2019

WASHINGTON — As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to provide the best mental health care access possible, VA is reminding Veterans that it offers all Veterans same-day access to emergency mental health care at any VA health care facility across the country.

"Providing same-day 24/7 access to mental health crisis intervention and support for Veterans, service members and their families is our top clinical priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"It's important that all Veterans, their family and friends know that help is easily available."*

VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention is the national leader in making high-quality mental health care and suicide prevention resources available to Veterans through a full spectrum of outpatient, inpatient and telemental health services.

Additionally, VA has developed the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide, which reflects the department's vision for a coordinated effort to prevent suicide among all service members and Veterans. This strategy maintains VA's focus on high-risk individuals in health care settings, while also adopting a broad public health approach to suicide prevention.

VA has supported numerous Veterans and has the capacity to assist more. In fiscal year (FY) 2018, 1.7 million Veterans received Veterans Health Administration (VHA) mental health services. These patients received more than 84,000 psychiatric hospital stays, about 41,700 residential stays and more than 21 million outpatient encounters.

Nationally, in the first quarter of FY 2019, 90% of new patients completed an appointment in a mental health clinic within 30 days of scheduling an appointment, and 96.8% of established patients completed a mental health appointment within 30 days of the day they requested. For FY 2018, 48% of initial, in-person Primary Care — Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) encounters were on the same day as the patient's PC encounter. During the first quarter of FY 2019, 51% of initial, in-person PC-MHI encounters were on the same day as the patient's PC encounter. Veterans in crisis — or those concerned about one — should call the Veterans Crisis Line.

Free, confidential support is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, send a text message to 838255.

White House VA Hotline surpasses 250,000 calls from Veteran community

May 21, 2019

Pledged by President Donald J. Trump as part of his administration's commitment to reforming the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as of May 14, the **White House VA Hotline** has answered more than 250,195 calls since it went live June 1, 2017.



The hotline, **855-948-2311**, serves Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors by giving them a direct, nonemergency, contact line available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with agents — the majority of whom are Veterans or from a Veteran family — who are trained to address general and common VA inquiries.

"The White House VA Hotline is quickly becoming VA's front door for questions or concerns about VA and community resources," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"This milestone is a testament to VA's commitment to improving the Veteran experience."*

While Veterans are encouraged to use existing VA contact centers, the hotline offers an alternative *"always the right number"* approach, transferring calls when needed to VA subject matter experts, such as the Veterans Crisis Line. The hotline serves as VA's front door to listen to Veterans' experiences, identify trends in Veteran feedback and resolve Veterans health, benefits and services concerns anywhere in the department.

More than half the calls to the hotline are general inquiries about VA's care, benefits and memorial services. Concerns that cannot be resolved immediately are entered as cases, accessible to VA Offices of Client Relations. To date, 94% of the total 157,346 cases created have been resolved.

According to recent data from April, the average wait time to speak to a live agent was nine seconds, with calls typically lasting about 15 minutes. About 1% of all calls were compliments.

For more information about the hotline, visit <https://www.va.gov/ve/whvahotline.asp> Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors can call the White House VA Hotline at **855-948-2311**.



Gulf of Tonkin incident

The Gulf of Tonkin incident (Vietnamese: Sự kiện Vịnh Bắc Bộ), also known as the USS Maddox incident, was an international confrontation that led to the United States engaging more directly in the Vietnam War. It involved either one or two separate confrontations involving North Vietnam and the United States in the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin.

The original American report blamed North Vietnam for both incidents, but eventually became very controversial with widespread belief that at least one, and possibly both incidents were false, and possibly deliberately so.

On August 2, 1964, the destroyer USS Maddox, while performing a signals intelligence patrol as part of DESOTO operations, was pursued by three North Vietnamese Navy torpedo boats of the 135th Torpedo Squadron. Maddox fired three warning shots and the North Vietnamese boats then attacked with torpedoes and machine gun fire. Maddox expended over 280 3-inch (76.2 mm) and 5-inch (127 mm) shells in a sea battle. One U.S. aircraft was damaged, three North Vietnamese torpedo boats were damaged, and four North Vietnamese sailors were killed, with six more wounded. There were no U.S. casualties. Maddox *"was unscathed except for a single bullet hole from a Vietnamese machine gun round."*

It was originally claimed by the National Security Agency that a Second Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred on August 4, 1964, as another sea battle, but instead evidence was found of "Tonkin ghosts" (false radar images) and not actual North Vietnamese torpedo boats.

In the 2003 documentary *The Fog of War*, the former United States Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara admitted that the August 2 USS Maddox attack happened with no Defense Department response, but the August 4 Gulf of Tonkin attack never happened.

In 1995, McNamara met with former Vietnam People's Army General Võ Nguyên Giáp to ask what happened on August 4, 1964, in the second Gulf of Tonkin Incident. *"Absolutely nothing"*, Giáp replied. Giáp claimed that the attack had been imaginary.

The outcome of these two incidents was the passage by Congress of the *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution*, which granted President Lyndon B. Johnson the authority to assist any Southeast Asian country whose government was considered to be jeopardized by "communist aggression".

The resolution served as Johnson's legal justification for deploying U.S. conventional forces and the commencement of open warfare against North Vietnam.

In 2005, an internal National Security Agency historical study was declassified; it concluded that Maddox had engaged the North Vietnamese Navy on August 2, but that there were no North Vietnamese naval vessels present during the incident of August 4. The report stated, regarding the first incident on Aug. 2: ***At 1500G, Captain Herrick ordered Ogier's gun crews to open fire if the boats approached within ten thousand yards (9,150 m). At about 1505G, Maddox fired three rounds to warn off the communist [North Vietnamese] boats. This initial action was never reported by the Johnson administration, which insisted that the Vietnamese boats fired first. ###***

US sends Patriot missile system to Middle East amid Iran tensions



A warship, USS Arlington, with amphibious vehicles and aircraft on board, will also join the USS Abraham Lincoln strike group in the Gulf.

And US B-52 bombers have arrived at a base in Qatar, the Pentagon said. The US said the moves were a response to a possible threat to US forces in the region by Iran, without specifying. Iran dismissed the claim as nonsense.

[Source: BBC news report]



Memorial Day 2019



War is an evil and sometimes necessary practice. It dehumanizes the people involved in it, those of our military forces as well as the enemy and the innocent. It steals all that is good about humanity, and replaces that good with fear, horror, savageness and, ultimately for some of us, shame.

It generally pits young men and women against other young men and women in duels to the death; oft times fighting one another for reasons they don't fully understand.

It is only when these same young people, the fortunate youth who survive war, when having come to an older age can look back at their time at war through different, clearer and wiser eyes. It is then they finally realize they were often scant more than tools of power, of the powerful.

If they could answer, our fallen might say war speaks of the excitement, yes, the thrill and exhilaration of fighting alongside one's fellow soldiers in combat, striving to cheat death of her reward, while hoping to emerge victorious in battles where the odds for triumph were often heavily stacked against them; where they sacrificed their lives so their fellow soldiers might live, yet also too often where hundreds of the opposition died so one side may emerge triumphant.

And now we pay solemn tribute to those young lost souls who faced their fears, overcame those fears yet didn't survive the death duel. And we, the survivors of war are left with a single binding purpose....it is our job to remember them.

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



Memorial Day With An American Family

Monday, May 27, 2019, Merritt Island, FL

There were ceremonies this day of remembrance held at the local VFW Post in Cocoa Beach, as well as up the street a ways at the National Veteran's Memorial Cemetery in Mims, Florida; I chose to attend neither, instead, choosing to spend most of this day alone, reminiscing ... you know what I mean.

Yesterday, Sunday, however, and like many of you and your families, my bride Reggie and I spent the day at our son's home, Don and his wife Sandra's, with their kids Sofia and Aidan, including our other son Dan and his wife Ericka, along with some friends, including a gaggle of little people. There was grilling going on, drinks being sipped, and food being eaten. There was pool splashing to enjoy, movies to watch, along with loud laughter and louder talking to engage in.

The day before I had emailed to you some thoughts about Memorial Day (preceding page), thoughts about remembering our buddies who died at war; yet few if any of these grillers and splashers paid much attention to the reason for this gathering of young and old, all good people. Not one spoke of war and the toll it demands.

Our family is a conglomerate of nationalities and ethnicities, including German, Cuban, Colombian, Japanese, Jewish, Mexican, Danish, African-American and Native-American, and includes all colors of the rainbow; a typical American family with all its perfections and imperfections. I had taken with me the piece I wrote and sent you about Memorial Day, lest an opportune moment might arise when it could be shared with the talkers and laughers and good people, but especially the splashers. Such a moment arose.

The kids, no doubt reluctantly, were beckoned from the pool covering themselves in beach towels, and sat together; the parents and their parents gathered round to listen with their friends. The best friend of Sandra is Maria, a soon to be judge in South Florida; her mother, also Maria, agreed to translate into Spanish the words I spoke and from the written piece I wrote about this day – coincidentally, mother Maria owns her own translation business in Miami.

"This question is for everyone here 15 years old or younger," I began with Maria's translation, knowing our granddaughter "Smitty" is 15. *"Why are we all here today?"* I asked. *"¿Por qué estamos todos aquí hoy?"* offered Maria. Likely out of shyness and/or indifference, the teenagers did not respond, but, there was one tiny tyke, hardly 2 feet tall, who said, *"The veterans"*. *"You're right!"* I thanked the little girl.



Mother Maria & Smitty holding court on
Memorial Day Weekend in Florida



Young and old kids learning about Memorial Day

(continued....)



This gathering of family and friends was then treated to a brief descriptive, along with Maria's Spanish version, of what Memorial Day represents....then a recitation, with Maria's continued help, of the piece I had written which spoke to the evils of war, combat, its associated death of other young people, and remembrance.

The faces of the teenagers literally became pale, their movement stilled. But, it was not our intent to shock kids with this bi-lingual presentation about war and death -- you know the purpose behind our brief talk to these youth on this day of remembrance.



Following the ordeal these old and young people had to endure, our youngest son, Dan, pointed out Reggie's and my two grandkids Sofia 15, and Aidan 13, were but a few years away from possibly being soldiers in combat...from possibly being names on a wall somewhere. It was a thought I chose not to dwell on.

There were sincere thank yous to the English and Spanish speakers, with warm handshakes and even a couple pats on the back and cheek kisses exchanged, and a few tears in the crowd were evident.

Then, after returning to my designated solo place on the couch away from the normal people and where old soldiers are relegated to sit during such gatherings lest they embarrass grandkids and small furry animals with their inappropriate words and involuntarily bodily noises, I could again hear the splashing, loud laughter and louder talking -- that was good.

And it was good the young people especially, and some of the older people there may have learned something about the price which so many paid and continue to pay for the freedom they enjoy. I hope so.

Lest we forget....

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



Another Day of Remembrance

To all:

Read at the large 2009 Arlington interment ceremony with full military honors of 2LT Pete Madden, Platoon Leader, 81mm Mortar Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne who jumped over Brevand, France on D-Day, 6 June 1944. SWA (seriously wounded in action) and evacuated.

A good friend and modest, courageous man.

Don C Pearson, MD, JD

~ Pete Madden ~

His name is Pete.
Not Peter the IV.
Not Peter the Third.
Not Peter, "Upon this rock..."
Just Pete.
America produced him.
America brought him forth from her bounty and her love.
And he repaid the debt.
And the love.



Pete

He was so very young.
They all were young.
His comrades were young.
His enemies were young.
All sent forth by older men with orders and burdens.
And so, one night, Pete jumped into blackness and mystery,
Into confusion and fear and violence and death.
Some came home no longer young.
Many remained with no further future.
Many returned to an infinite home, here.

Now, after a time, Pete has come home.
With his quiet smile
And regular willingness to help.
Holding within him,
Taking with him, a special memory
Of shared sacrifice and duty.

America produced him
And America now takes him back
To lie among these fellow souls
Who served.

America can wrap him and them
In the embrace of thankful remembrance,
Within this place of lost dreams and found courage
And stories too vast to understand.

Welcome home, Pete.
And thanks.

Don C. Pearson
27 May 2009



A day to remember

Originally written in 1988 for her college paper, Colette Sauvageot has offered a reprint of her essay in honor of her father, uncle, and good friends.

We were among the first on the beach, with scattered runners and shell collectors. We watched them – clothes-pin silhouettes against the dawn. And as we watched, as the sun grew higher and whiter, their numbers grew, and their shining bodies laid strewn on the sand. By mid-morning they were turning out in droves, like us, to celebrate the holiday.

They brought coolers, umbrellas, anxious children, beach balls and inflatable sharks. They brought paba cream, coconut oil, and aloe vera in sixteen different factors, and Solarcain. They brought hotdogs and ribs, macaroni salads and marshmallow desserts. They brought radios to listen to instead of the surf, and they brought cameras to record the holiday.

We watched them. And one of us wondered aloud if any of them knew anything about the holiday they were celebrating. The question was followed by an uncomfortable lull in conversation, indeed, we wondered if we even knew exactly what Memorial Day was all about. Curious, and rather embarrassed, we left our carefully selected spot on the sand to find out.

A retired looking couple walked briskly on the edge of the surf. *"Excuse me Sir, Ma'am, may I talk to you for a moment?"* The woman pretended not to hear, and the man kept walking as he waved his hand, *"No, no,"* he said, *"We are not interested in time-sharing."* And they were gone.

The next couple was planted on a blanket – an easier target. The young man wore a cap with the Confederate flag on it, and the woman was adjusting straps on her bikini.

"Excuse me, do you know why we celebrate Memorial Day?"

The man took a swig of beer and grinned, *"It's some kind of Yankee holiday ain't it?"* The woman smiled.

Further down the beach a pink family of 5 was eating ham sandwiches, and the naked baby dropped his in the sand.

"Excuse me, I was wondering, do you know exactly what Memorial Day is a celebration of?"

The family looked up from the cluster of coolers, rafts, and drying towels, and one by one they shrugged, offering white-bread grins and excuses, until the pink mother discovered her baby eating ham with mustard and sand.

A young black couple, three teenage girls applying cherry flavored lip protection, and two kite flyers later, still no one had been able to tell us what we were all celebrating.

Hickory was smoking, skin was sizzling, music was blaring, children were squealing with the gulls, families and friends were reuniting, drinks were foaming – and all in the name of Memorial Day.

We didn't feel any less embarrassed by everyone else's ignorance – we began to feel ashamed. We wanted desperately to find someone who knew, or at least had a vague idea like we did, or someone who cared.

Then we found the old guy with the tattoos, sitting alone. He squinted up at us with green eyes from brown folds, and took off his cap.

"What can I do you?" he asked.

"You can tell us why we celebrate Memorial Day."

When he ran his hand across the top of his grey head and looked away from us to the waves, we knew he had the answer.

"Sit down," he said.

Later, on the way home as we dodged the holiday traffic, we thought about the day – our quest – the old man who had told us about Memorial Day.

He had been among the first on the beach, with scattered runners and shell collectors. He had watched them – clothes-pin silhouettes against the dawn. And as he watched, as the sun grew higher and whiter, their numbers grew, and their shining bodies laid strewn on the sand. By mid-morning they were turning out in droves, like his buddies, to make a holiday.

"Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Normandy....no, I don't know why we celebrate," the old man sighed, *"but I know why we remember."*

[Thanks to Ms. Sauvageot for sharing with us her wonderful and poignant story, and to Bob Warfield, B/2/503, for obtaining her kind permission to include it here. Ed]



Sky Soldier Reflections On This Memorial Day 2019

"Memorial Day weekend 2019. Originally established to honor those lost while fighting the Civil War but after WWI it evolved to honor all American military lost in all wars while serving their country. For many decades it was celebrated on May 30, the original date designated by Union General John A Logan. In 1968 Congress passed the Uniform Holiday Act, and Memorial Day became the last Monday in May in order to create a three-day weekend for federal employees. This became effective in 1971.



LT Tom

Thus, to many Americans Memorial Day has become a weekend for grilling, for boating, to open pools, and for beach fun. Far too few take time to honor the fallen warriors of our country. That may be because so few are personally touched by America's wars. So be it. Many, many Americans realize that the United States of America is free because of its warriors. We were born free, we will live free, and we will die free because of our military warriors. So help us God.

On this day for me, I think of the many that I know who have fallen. Many not older than 25 and some barely 17 who lied about their age just to serve their country. Most of my former Infantry platoon were killed in an ambush after I left for another position in the battalion. I didn't lose a man while I was in charge, not because I was so good, but because I was lucky. But I think also of those who returned from the war but died slowly over the rest of their lives. No one who goes to war is untouched and comes back whole. Men are breathing now whose lives were lost in combat. We should think of them too as we honor the dead, for many are still lost.

One final thought. If you know a war veteran or are related to one, you understand that they don't want to talk about their experiences. And you respect that. But in 20 or 30 years, before your loved ones die, know that that want to talk. They want somebody to be interested enough to ask, to care. Do that for them and for yourselves. It's a closure for all.

And rest assured. You can always count on our military to keep you safe. We offer our lives to do that. GOD BLESS AMERICA."

Tom Abraham, C/2/503

"Thinking of all my brothers and sisters in arms, past and present."

Bob Beemer, B/2/503



Brother Bob

"Those who are killed in battle never know whether the battle or the war was won or lost. They never know if their life, their 'Pearl of great price' was spent in vain. It may be a blessing."

Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503



Jim

"While for many Memorial Day is not a 'Happy' day, I do want to wish all my Veteran and non-Veteran friends have a safe and very pleasant Memorial Day and weekend."

Buzz Cox, C/D/2/503



Buzz

"We will never forget the fallen."

**Gary "Cooch" Cucinitti
173d Abn Bde**



Cooch

"May you all have an easy Day of Remembrance."

Dave Glick, B/2/503



Glick

"We cannot ever forget those who have paid that price for our freedom."

Dennis Hill, E/1/503, E/3/503

(continued....)



*"We love them all. All the way
brothers, Cap."*

Jack Leide, MG, CO C/2/503



Cap

*"Take care and best wishes...
Lest We Forget."*

Jack Panossian, 1RAR



The Cobber

*"Lest We Forget...
Airborne All The Way!"*

Leo "Frenchy" Pellerin, A/2/503



Frenchy

*"I'll be marching in the Plymouth
Memorial Parade with my fellow
Vets, and as chaplain of both the
local VFW and VVA Chapter 528
(307 strong) my duties at the
ceremony are the opening and
closing prayers."*

Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503



Whip

Casper Platoon Trooper On Memorial Day

As a Casper Platoon Veteran I spent Memorial Day honoring the fallen soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the United States Military, especially the 11 Casper Platoon Crew Members who were Killed in Action.

Later that day, I learned that a nearby auto dealership was collecting clothing donations for the Homeless Veterans. I wasted no time in donating a bag of clothing for this worthy cause.

This clothing drive served as a good reminder that all of us probably have clothes which no longer fit us and could be donated to someone who would appreciate having them. Helping our homeless veterans is an excellent cause.

Thank you! **Ned Costa**



Here's good buddy Ned on Memorial Day

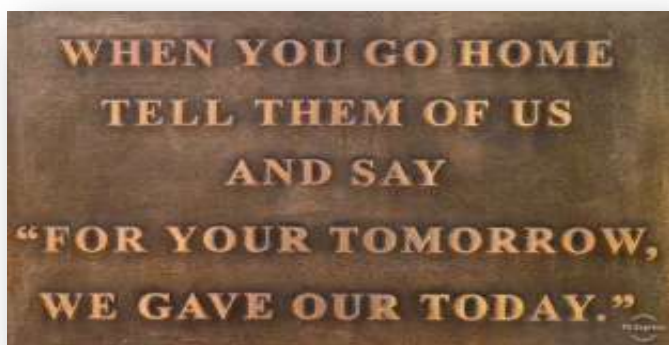
Good on you, Ned! Ed



<http://www.casperplatoon.com/Reunion2020.htm>

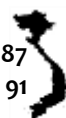
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*"We owe this freedom of choice and action to
those men and women in uniform who have
served this nation and its interest in time of need.
In particular, we are forever indebted to those
who have given their lives that we might be free."*

**Ronald Reagan
Commander In Chief**



June 1, 2019

The Battle of the Slopes

June 1967 ~ Dak To

Readout of Meeting Between Vietnam Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich and Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan

Secretary of Defense Spokesperson LTC Dave Eastburn provided the following readout:

Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan met today with Vietnam Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich on the margins of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.



Ngo Xuan Lich

Patrick Shanahan

The two leaders reaffirmed the comprehensive partnership between the United States and Vietnam and highlighted historic progress in the bilateral defense relationship. They agreed to continue building practical defense cooperation, particularly in the area of maritime security, and underscored the importance of close cooperation on addressing legacy of war issues and accounting for U.S. personnel missing from the Vietnam War.

Acting Secretary Shanahan underscored the U.S. commitment to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region based on a stable, rules-based order, and welcomed Vietnam's chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2020.

Both leaders agreed that a strong and comprehensive partnership based on mutual respect and shared principles promotes regional peace and stability.

(Photos added)



In June we re-circulated Issue 29 of our newsletter, a special edition dedicated in honor and memory of the men who fought, survived and died during the battles at Dak To during Operation Greeley. The issue mostly featured our battalion, including photos and names of our KIA, but did not include the fallen of our sister units.

It was brought to our attention two men attached to the 2/503 also sacrificed their lives on those Slopes with the men of our battalion but were not acknowledged in the special edition. They should have been included:

In memory of....

Erling Alton Anderson, 22
PFC, 39th Scout Dog Platoon
Attached to 2/503, Dak To
KIA 6/22/67



Willie Craig Warren, 20
SP4, 173d Engineers
Attached to 2/503, Dak To
KIA 6/22/67



Rest Easy Brothers



Disabled Veterans Can Fly Space Available Flights for Free

Service-connected disabled Veterans and Space-A Travel

May 28, 2019



By Steven **Clip**
#VetResouces Vets Experience

Jet set disabled Vets on Space-A flights

When congress signed the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act last year, 100% service connected disabled Veterans became eligible for Space Available Travel. Better known as 'Space-A' or military hops, Air Mobility Command (AMC) maintains an extensive network of flights throughout the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa.

Supplementing this network, several Air National Guard and Naval Aviation Units have flights available. To be eligible for Space-A flights, Veterans must have a permanent and total service-connected disability rating.

These Vets must also obtain a DD Form 2765, "Department of Defense/Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (TAN)."

The Space-A Program fills surplus capacity and seating on DOD aircraft. A popular perk among retirees, now eligible Veterans can take advantage of the program and fly for free. So, whether the Veteran is looking for a getaway to Hawaii or a trip to catch-up with their Veteran brothers and sisters on the other side of the country, the Space-A travel program can fly you there.



Capt. Ferricher prepares for flight.
(Air Force photo/Senior Airman Jonathan Stefanko)

Some things to know before flying Space-A

Disabled Veterans, along with retirees, are in priority group 6. This means active service members on emergency leave; post deployment respite and other important transportation needs will have priority.

A contingency plan and resources, including commercial airfare, need to be available in case of a scheduling change or sudden unavailability.

Dependents of disabled Veterans are not eligible for Space-A travel.

Eligible Veterans looking for flights should review schedules at AMC passenger terminals. Most AMC terminals, on military bases or at commercial airports, have a Facebook page that posts flight schedules and seat availability. Once a flight and destination are selected the Veteran can register in person at the terminal, or by email/fax.

Disabled Veterans, with a little flexibility and patience, are taking to the sky for free with Space-A travel and seeing more of the country thankful for their service and sacrifice.



We Called Him "Doc"

For this issue of our newsletter we asked our 2/503 buddies to send in their memories of and tributes to our field Medics, dustoff crews, MASH and hospital nurses, doctors and medical attendants with whom many if not most of us have personal experience. Time is long past due

They Were Our Only Hope

After 50+ years my recollections have probably diminished a little but this is what I recall of being wounded twice and those who treated me and saved my life.

I was assigned to HHC Recon platoon 2/503. On 02-02-67 we assaulted a VC base camp - all hell broke loose. All I recall is two grenades went off near me and I received shrapnel wounds to my flank, right arm, and chest. I was carrying an M-79 grenade launcher and shrapnel struck the breech which disabled my weapon. All I remember was our medic, I believe his name was Warbalow, took care of my bleeding and was able to use his M16 and continue in the fight.

We had others wounded during this encounter. The medics reacted without hesitation, risking their lives to save others -- what would we do without them? I was medivac'd after the firefight to the hospital where doctors and nurses took great care of me.

While in hospital there was a special person who visited me by the name of Martha Raye...most of you know who she is.



*Colonel Maggie, songstress, actor, comedian and loved by G.I.'s everywhere, Martha Raye visits Pat in hospital.**

to give them our thanks and appreciation for a job few of us would have cared to hold, jobs they performed often under the most dire of situations. Here are some of our thanks to the hospital professionals, crew members, and those brave young men in the field we called "Doc". Ed

I thought I was good to go home due to my injuries, but it was not to be. After 6 weeks in hospital recuperating the powers to be deemed me fit for duty and sent me back to the field.

On October of 1967, Recon was on patrol and we were ambushed near Tuy Hoa - I was in the lead squad when I was shot in the stomach. The first thing going through your mind is that you are going to die. I don't recall the medic's name but I recall him saying that I would be ok - this gave me confidence that I would survive. He stayed with me for a while then went to treat others. My internal injuries were significant; the round hit my lung, liver, took out a large portion of my large intestine and blew out a rib in my back. This time, however, the powers to be told me the war was over for me. I spent the next few months in Madigan Hospital near Ft. Lewis, WA.

How can any of us who were wounded ever thank the medics enough for treating us? They were our only hope initially of survival. Without their help a lot of us would not be here today.

God Bless each of you medics, you know who you are.

And a special thanks to all the Huey pilots and their crews who risked their lives to get us out of harms' way.

Pat Bowe

HHC/2/503, Recon Platoon, '66/'67

***Martha Raye was the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award recipient for her volunteer efforts and services to the troops. In appreciation of her work with the USO during World War II and subsequent wars, special consideration was given to bury her in Arlington National Cemetery on her death. However, based upon her request, she was buried with full military honors in the Fort Bragg, North Carolina, post cemetery as an honorary colonel, ergo *Colonel Maggie*. She is the only civilian buried at this location who receives military honors each Veterans Day.**

(Tributes continued....)



The Most Important People We Served With...Our Medics

The one thing I do remember is our great Combat Medics. We had three in Bravo Company from '66-'67, they are Doc Dillion, Doc Wear and Doc James Shirley.

I had contracted Malaria and was having reactions from it in the field, (walking around while being sniped at), some of the other guys thought I was doing drugs. When coming back to replenish and rest for a day or so I came down with a serious attack of Malaria. I had woken up in a pool of sweat, got up and crawled to the base infirmary but no one was there. I knew some of the guys were in the mess so I pulled myself to that location.



Doc Wear

As luck would have it all of these medics were there playing cards. They hauled me back to the infirmary; the last thing I remember was Doc Dillion saying I had a temp of 108 *"put him on alcohol and ice."* I remember them putting me on a poncho and dropping ice all over me - but nothing after that. The next thing I remember was waking up in a hospital bed and puking my guts out every time a different smell came by.

After a period of time they transferred me to Cam Ranh Bay for a couple of weeks, then back to the bush.

I'm grateful for their ability to have identified my sickness and quickness to lower my temperature. If they hadn't I'd be somewhere else.

I will never forget some of the most important people we served with, our Medics.

**Harry Cleland
B/2/503**

A 45 Year Old Thanks To Our Medics

Thanks for dedicating this issue to the 173d MEDICS. For 45 years I have wanted to say THANK YOU!!!!!! to Doc Brown.

On 14 March 66 he and 1st SGT Desmond (Hammer) Jackson were the first ones to me while I lay behind an ant hill watching ants by the thousands drown in my blood.

A few years ago I was able to contact 1st SGT Jackson and we discussed the events of that day and I thanked him for what he did for me. He insisted that he didn't



Doc Brown

do anything special and that he was only doing his job. I am sure that Doc Brown would say the same thing but those of us who were there know that they both routinely and unhesitantly went way above and beyond *"just doing their job"*. They were special and everyone in the unit owes them so much!!

Details of that tragic day are as vivid in my memory as the moment they occurred.

The Bde had received intel that the NVA and VC were constructing a large underground headquarters which was to be used as a supply and staging area. Operation Silver City (March '66) was launched with the mission of locating and destroying the project. We had been on this mission for several days and as I recall some of the other companies had sporadic contact with the enemy but C Co. 2nd BN had not.

On 14 Mar 3rd Plt stopped for lunch and while eating our C-Rations we clearly heard roosters crowing. This was significant in that we were in a very wooded area with no villages nearby. Sgt Butler reported this back to Capt. Faley who instructed him to send a Squad forward to investigate the source of the roosters. Sgt. Butler chose to come with us and Steve Haber was on point. We had only advanced about 300 meters when all hell broke loose.

Several mines were detonated and we received brief automatic fire. (It was later determined that the enemy had left a *"stay behind force"* who command-activated the mines and then fled). Our Squad had found the NVA Headquarters and in so doing we walked directly into the kill zone of their ambush.

I was initially thrown to the ground by a tremendous explosion. Marven Harper was laying nearby. He was moving and obviously still alive although one of his boots was blown off exposing the bones and flesh of his foot. I was behind a large ant hill which provided some protection. I called for him to come over but he didn't respond. He was then hit again and his body jumped. I crawled over to get him but when I got to him he was clearly dead.



Hammer Jackson

(Tributes continued....)



I then crawled back to the ant hill and that is when I was hit. I then laid behind the ant hill watching the ants drown in my blood and looking at Marvin's dead body. For several weeks he and I had been arguing over \$5 that I had loaned him in a Tonk game. I would do anything if I could retract that. Several years ago while visiting the wall I stood in front of his name and apologized for being so petty. I left \$5 on the ground in front of his name. I know that didn't help Marvin any and it did not really help me either but it was something I needed to do. Civilians or REMF's would not understand that but combat vets do.

I stayed behind the ant hill until 1st SGT Jackson and Doc Brown arrived. After Doc Brown patched me up SGT Jackson took my pack, weapon and a role of commo wire that I had been carrying and effortlessly picked me up like a rag doll. As he did this the commo wire, which was carried with a strap that he had placed over his shoulder, fell down to his side. He then placed the roll of wire on my stomach and told me to hold it. As he was carrying me away from the ambush site he pointed to a strand of wire that was leading away from an ant hill. He said let's get out of here and he began to run and jump over obstacles like an Olympic champion. He was carrying me with one arm under my shoulder and the other under my legs.

At some point I lost control of the roll of commo wire that he had placed on my stomach and it fell between my legs. This caused him to trip and we fell to the ground with him and both weapons and packs on top of me. I said, "1st SGT, I think I can walk," and he responded, "Let's try it". He then put his arm around me and we walked back to the secure area that Capt. Faley had established.

As I lay there on the ground I watched as my 3rd Platoon Brothers brought in the bodies of Sgt Butler, Marvin Harper and a young E5 who had only been in the company a few weeks. Within minutes a chopper hovered overhead and winched me up, and as I looked down I saw Capt. Faley and SGT Jackson standing directly below and the three bodies laying there covered by a poncho liner.



Earlie James Butler, Jr.
KIA 3/14/66

We were all young, most of us were barely out of high school. Sgt. Butler was a wonderful person and as I recall he had a wife and two daughters. I treasure the memories of all of you and of the time that we shared. Everything

that I have done since Viet Nam pales in significance to what we were doing as young men fighting our Nation's war.

PFC Larry Cox
C/2/503
5 May 65---14 Mar 66
Airborne All the Way!!!!

Our Medics Who So Valiantly Served

Thank you for recognizing the Medics who so valiantly served the 2/503rd and the Brigade.

The Battalion Surgeon was Capt. Donald Klivestiver. The Med Plt Sgt was Sgt Roundtree, Spec 6 Tess and, my favorite, Sgt Matt Dillion. The other names escape me.

If you know of any of their whereabouts I'd love to connect with them.

Best wishes and Airborne!

Sam Evans, Captain MSC
Med Opns Officer
2/503 9/66-7/67

Recollections By A Vietnam Era Medic

My arrival in South Vietnam 21 February 1966 as a PFC 91B2P and subsequent assignment to Ambulance Platoon Company B(MED), 173rd Support Battalion provided no indication of what experiences were in my future. Less than a month later I was attached to HHC 2/503d and assigned as the C/2/503d Weapons



Platoon medic, not sure that I knew then the name of the operation, but I now know and will never forget...it was Operation Silver City.

Doc Pat Feely

Weapons Platoon was usually third or fourth in company order of march and the medic was near the platoon sergeant. Most contact was made at or near the point so when sent forward to help with any wounded I had to move past many fellow soldiers as they laid on both sides of the trail. No one said anything but I can remember the look in their eyes, the unknown of what had happened up ahead.

(Tributes continued....)



The first casualty that I treated as a Combat Medic was a "Sky Soldier" of "Charlie Company" 2/503d, 173d ABN. If I ever knew his name or remembered his wounds I have long ago forgot them.

Afternoon of 15 March 1966 we moved into a place called Zulu Zulu; forty plus years later I learned that it would also be known as the site of "*The Battle of Bau San*". Somehow, call it fate or luck I was not wounded, not a scratch other than skinned knees and elbows from crawling and diving around.

There were so many wounded starting with a weapons platoon buddy (he was in *my* platoon) so he was my buddy although I may never know his name. Friendly short or enemy round? Does it matter? Both his feet were blown off, it was dark, I was scared but somehow I kept it together long enough to (with help) get the task done.

The next morning a chopper with breakfast was shot down on approach and all hell broke loose. With so many rounds, ours and theirs hitting the trees it sounded like hail hitting a tin roof. I have no idea of how many trips I made to the perimeter or how many casualties I brought to the collection point. There was a trooper with most of his lower face gone, one with a gunshot wound to his thigh, another with shrapnel wounds over most of his side, one with a wound to his chest and others. They were low on ammo and I was low on bandages.

We received ammo resupply and I took some forward where there were more wounded. At the collection point prior to the first dust-off the battalion chaplain asked me if there was anything else I could do for the trooper that had the face wound. My answer was, "*Chaplain, I think it is your turn*".

As suddenly as it had started it ended, seemed like forever but I guess it was just a few hours. I was recommended for the Silver Star and was awarded the Combat Medical Badge (my most honored award during 35 years of service) for action 16 March 1966 as a member of C/2/503 (**SKY SOLDIERS**).

As a SP4 I was attached to HHC 4/503d 8 October 1966 - 4 December 1966 as a medic with C/4/503d; we relieved a 2nd Battalion 26th Marine Division unit overlooking a river near Da Nang. On a night ambush patrol 18 October 66 the point man tripped a booby trap. We had several wounded, one real bad, and I was the only medic.

Then it started to rain so hard the Marine Med Evac was unable to complete a mission so we carried the wounded several miles back to the base camp and cared for them until the next morning. The Battalion Surgeon chewed my ass for giving morphine to a back wound trooper. I was wrong but it turned out OK, the

guy was hurting and I was the one that could hear his screams.

The 4/503 received the Navy Presidential Unit Citation for Operation Winchester (kind of neat). Guess the Surgeon did not write me up because I returned to HHC 4/503 as the Medical Platoon Sergeant 24 August 1968 – 2 August 1969.

Most Medics that saw action were young, many were very young and inexperienced. They had been through the Medical Training Center AIT course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas and then sent to Vietnam as replacements. They learned quickly from fellow medics, Doctors and NCOs of their units. Then they were given the responsibility of caring for and saving the lives of soldiers.

Were we perfect? Did we always do the right thing? Was the training as good as it could have been? **Hell No**, but most of us tried and I like to think we gave everything we had. **Some Gave All**, others were severely wounded and carry those physical and mental scars forever.

My good and very close friend now deceased Medal of Honor recipient Richard Rocco once told me in response to my question "*How difficult is it to live up to the expectations that come with the MOH*". He said, "*To me nothing compares to the responsibility of the medic under fire*". The greatest honor any Vietnam Vet can give me is to call me "**Doc**".

Patrick D. Feely, LTC (Ret)
HHC/C/2/503

**U.S. ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT CENTER
AND SCHOOL,
U.S. ARMY HEALTH READINESS CENTER
OF EXCELLENCE
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO FORT SAM HOUSTON**



Mission:

We envision, design, train, educate, and inspire the world's premier military medical force to enable readiness and strengthen America's Army.

Vision:

To be the foundation on which Army Medicine is built, sustained, and transformed.

(Tributes continued....)



Tip Of The Beret To All Medics!!

Medical personnel always impressed me by their single focus on helping the patient. Despite small arms, grenades, or whatever enemy had to throw, the medics functioned as though they were bulletproof, while treating a casualty.

My first significant experience with medical treatment occurred in early June 1965. Bravo Bulls (B/2-503) medics handled everything competently until SGT John Sahm and Sp5 Cherry became heat casualties in southern WAR ZONE D. The unit medics admitted that they had no way to adequately treat either and medevac was the only option.

I reported this problem and I can recall CPT Sam Gillette's response to select and move to the closest LZ and "Dustoff" would be sent.

We were in primary jungle and the closest LZ was not obvious. I selected the only cleared spot on the map, which was about the size of a pencil point, 1500 meters away. I led the carrying party to that location, arriving just about dusk (EENT). Status of the medevac was unknown and we did not have radio contact.

The LZ was not clear but covered with saplings about 20 feet in height. After waiting well after two hours and complete darkness and praying, the medevac arrived, along with spotty commo (PRC 10!!). I marked the LZ with an illuminating grenade (the only one we accidentally had - never did night medevac before).

Flying amidst the saplings, the MSC pilot flew to our location with his landing spotlight on, dodging everything. As soon as the two casualties were loaded, the helicopter medics hooked them up with saline IV's, which saved both.

Tip of the beret to all medics!!!

Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret)
CO, B/2/503

Never Had A Chance To Say Thank You Doc

I was in Company B 2/503 from March 68-April 69. I woke up early in the morning of May 5th 1968 to the sound of VC hand grenades exploding and incoming small arms fire. I was wounded from shrapnel from one of the grenades.

Other guys at my foxhole were also wounded. I called for a medic and thru grenades and incoming fire came Doc Bob Evalt. He patched us up and off he went to help someone else.



Doc Evalt

A short time later one of the guys was seriously wounded at our position so Doc was called again and back he came. This time the incoming fire was even heavier than the first time. Doc Evalt did a great job.

Over the next year we became good friends. He was always there when needed.

Thanks Doc, never had a chance to say thank you.

Dick Nason
B/2/503

To Us, He Will Always be "Doc", To Us, He Will Always be Our Friend



Michael J. Cosmo, "Doc"
1949 ~ 2017

Does it matter where they came from? Medics, I mean. They were an odd lot, seemingly detached from the realities of infantry combat in Vietnam. In 1968, in the Central Highlands, and coastal rice paddies. Some professed to be non-combatants, claiming the weapon they carried was just a prop, foisted upon them by the Headquarters Company First Sergeant... "The bastard even made me carry ammunition!"

Once on the ground, these Medics would grudgingly agree to help us stalk our prey, so they could patch the ones we didn't quite kill, all the while guarding their medical bags to keep us from stealing their drugs. These graduates of Fort Sam Houston were some of the bravest men I ever knew, kneeling in an open rice paddy, holding up a drip bag, ignoring the grazing fire that snapped past their heads.

(Tributes continued....)



Doc Michael Cosmo was one of the two dozen medics that I worked with in Charlie Company and Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry, the 173d Airborne Brigade, a light infantry parachute regiment that was never stationed on American soil.

Doc Cosmo died at his home in New Jersey this past year. Linus, Zulu, Water Buffalo, Wolfman, Ski and I traveled to his home to help his family and friends wish him God Speed. Actually, we went to Doc's home because we had to – he was one of us – a medic who helped us cope with the brutality...helped us cope with the deeply personal nature of combat. Our bonds cannot be severed.

Doc carried a .45; it was loaded. With the manliness of sentiment, he vowed to return fire, to help any Grunt he was next to when the AK's started their music. He saved Linus from an early grave, using his weapon and then Linus' M-16 during a fire-fight on the flank of the An Lao Valley, west of Bong Son and Landing Zone English.

Doc Cosmo was my friend. Specialist Bobby Waddell sang it best. In fact, Bobby wouldn't stop singing. Somewhere around the bend after surviving the Battle for Dak To's Hill 875, Bobby's voice played a raspy rendition – *"The Shadow of Your Smile."* And that is what I miss most. Doc Cosmo...his smile was spontaneous, as was the humorous larceny he found in any minor misfortune a Grunt might encounter. His laugh had a New Jersey twang, and was always followed by a smart-assed remark, further drawing the target-Grunt into a mental tangle.

If a Grunt asked Doc for non-combat medical help, that Grunt was in for one comical dig after another. No straight answers. Doc's caustic remarks focused on the man's upbringing, followed by any fearful malady that Doc could forecast for the man's near-term prognosis. And yet, every Grunt in Charlie Company was his friend. Doc could be trusted with any confidence.



Cap with his "Hill People" during the celebration of life for "Doc" Cosmo. L-R: Russell "Wolfman" Walters, Art "Linus" Marquess, Jim "Ski" Bednarski, Andy "Zulu" Zarazua, Bud "Water Buffalo" Mattingly, Gary "Cap" Prisk....brothers all.

The few who knew Michael Cosmo have lost a part of themselves with his passing. We were and are devoted to keeping each other safe, alive, humping a rucksack. As time pushes us to keep steppin', we will lose one another, and the heroism of our souls.

God Speed, Doc. If there is a heaven, I hope they don't make you sing all day. With luck they'll greet you with a shot of "Jack."

Gary Prisk, Col. (Ret)
CO C&D/2/503, RVN
(His buddies call him "Cap". Ed)

The Medics, The Nurse and The Doctor

Regrettably, and after more than 50 years, names of our medics long ago escaped me, although I remember Gerry Levy (KIA 1/2/66, Op Marauder), but there are a few of our guys who are more than deserving of special recognition by this old RTO, plus a young nurse new to war, and a doctor of distinction.

One of these combat healers of ours was a young lad bandaging a shrapnel wound to the leg I received during the battle at LZ Zulu Zulu in March '66 after the F-4 shot up our LZ, wounding many of us, including taking an eye from good buddy Rick Fred of our 4.2 Platoon. In recalling the brief time I spent with the Doc, what stands out more than ever now is the professionalism and dedication he demonstrated patching up, consoling and saving lives of many of the over 130 wounded troopers we endured that morning, while doing his work under heavy enemy fire and doing it with an uncanny calmness.



Rick Fred
Mortarman Extraordinaire

And there was another Doc along the A Company line that day sent by Company CO Gus Vendetti, risking his own life under immense enemy fire to bandage a gut wound to our dog handler. During the battle I had spent a brief moment holding the hand of the wounded man who would not or could not speak, telling him he would be alright, that we would get him out of there, but not believing it. It was well over 30 years later I learned that Doc had indeed saved the handler's life.

(Tributes continued....)



Then there was another of our Docs who tended to this commo boy throughout the night in the "D" Zone jungle when falciparum malaria reduced me to a freezing, useless monstrous sack of diarrhea with a 102+ degree temp until a Dust Off could be called in at first light.

All our Docs were truly amazing troopers often risking and forfeiting their own lives for their buddies (see tributes to our fallen Medics on Pages 83-89). Without them many of us would be a name on a wall.

And then, there was nurse Winnie Smith and a doctor and their attendants at 3rd Field Hospital in Tan Son Nhut who worked thru the night to keep that same malaria from claiming yet another permanent victim of that war.

How do we thank such people? Words never seem to work...perhaps our *remembering them throughout our lives* is the best form of thanks we have for them?

And to our Medics and the Nurses and Doctors and dustoff crews we can say, *"It is our children and their children and their children who are the ultimate beneficiaries of your good and heroic deeds during time of war."*

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

~ A Price Often Paid By The War Healers ~
"For us the subject is not history; it's a condition of our lives. In a country where youth is adored, we lost ours before we were out of our twenties. We learned to accept death there, and it erased our sense of immortality. We met our human frailties, the dark side of ourselves, face-to-face, and learned that brutality, mutilation, and hatred all are forgivable. At the same time we learned guilt for all those things. The war destroyed our faith, betrayed our trust, and dropped us outside the mainstream of society. We still don't fully belong. I wonder if we ever will."



Capt. Winnie Smith, Army Nurse
Vietnam Veteran, 1966/1967
Excerpt from:
American Daughter Gone to War

Doc Warbalow

Doc Pat (Elmer) Warbalow was a medic who was often assigned to the platoon. I vividly remember a day we took several casualties and how Doc responded without regard for his own safety.

Early on a day after we ambushed and killed two VC the previous night, our position was probed by some VC. Pat Bowe opened up on them with the machine gun and they dove from the trail into the brush. We thought they had been hit, so hard charging squad leader Ranger James Voyles yelled "Let's go!" and started up the trail to where they had been.

Bill Detten and I started after him. We hadn't gotten far when an AK opened up and I saw RV get blown off the trail into the bushes. We hit the ground and returned fire.

A minute later Doc Warbalow was next to me. I told him what happened and he started to go up the trail. I told him not to go, that the VC had the trail covered. He disappeared for a second and when I looked up again, Doc was running toward Ranger Voyles – holding a can of M60 ammo in front of his face while AK fire ripped all around. Mike Donohue threw some grenades, the VC broke contact and Doc patched up Ranger Voyles and got him back to the CP.

Later in the day Jim Skidmore and I were hunkered down behind a termite hill taking some very accurate AK fire. We were returning fire from the "modified" position, but somehow, Jim still got hit. Again Doc Warbalow appeared and still under AK fire patched Jim up and got him back to the CP.



Our good buddy, the late
Jim "Skid" Skidmore

Two other troopers from the platoon were wounded that day while a couple of companies of VC tried to surround us. Doc Warbalow patched them up too and kept all the wounded stable until we got relieved by A Company, and Medivacs could get in and take out the wounded.

Chuck Spagnola
Recon/2/503d, '66-'67

(Tributes continued....)



This Medic Replaced Doc Eastman



I took my fire team in on a rescue mission for a downed plane. I was sitting on the deck with my feet on the struts, and one of the members of my team was in the other door doing the same thing. This medic was sitting on the deck between us.

We were on approach to the site of the downed A1E when the chopper shook like crazy. I felt the Doc grab the back of my ruck and the chopper began auto rotating in. We had been hit and the entire tail of the chopper was gone. If this medic had not grabbed my ruck and that of the trooper in the other door we would have been thrown out of the craft.

If it had not been for his quick thinking, I would have learned a new definition for "airborne." Once we crashed, we were really in a hot spot, and again Doc did what he did best to render aid and save lives. If anyone knows what happened to him, please contact me.

We crashed so hard it broke the 60's off their mounts and buried them in the mud. Anyhow, I do not remember the name of this heroic guy, but I would really like to find him for obvious reasons.

Thanks

Joel Trenkle

B/2/503

Email: joelandoni@msn.com

Medic Gerry Levy in 1965

(KIA 1/2/66, Op Marauder)



Medics on Hill 875



Medics on Hill 875 during the battles at Dak To work to save the life of a wounded Sky Soldier buddy.

Just Some Of Our Medics To Whom We Owe So Much

Kevin "Doc" Austin, C/2/503
Dennis "Doc" Barbato, A/2/503
Ray "Doc" Camarena, HHC/2/503
Abel "Doc" Candia, A/2/503
Ken "Doc" Eastman, B/2/503
Charles "Doc" Emerson, C/2/503
Bob "Doc" Evalt, B/2/503
Rick "Doc" Fassett, B/2/503
Pat "Doc" Feely, C/2/503
Bill "Doc" Harlan, C/2/503
George "Doc" Manning, C/2/503
Rick "Doc" Navarrete, A/2/503
Rick "Doc" Patterson, A/2/503
And so many others

(Tributes continued....)



Our 173d Airborne Brigade Medics Who Gave Their Last Full Measure of Devotion in Vietnam



The Combat Medic Memorial Statue stands in front of the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum, Fort Sam Houston, TX, as a permanent reminder of the bravery and skill that saved many lives on battlefields across the globe.



The Combat Medical Badge (CMB), or Medical Badge as it was initially called, was established by The War Department in March 1945. It was created as a means to recognize the important role performed by medical personnel assigned or attached to infantry units, and who on a daily basis shared the same hazards and hardships of combat in World War II. The need to establish a badge for medical personnel was a result of the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) being established on 27 October 1943 for the infantryman, who was subjected to the worst

conditions in combat, sustained the most casualties and receiving very little, if any, recognition for their sacrifice and heroic actions. The CIB could only be awarded to infantrymen. While it was recognized that other personnel, like the medics, served alongside these gallant soldiers, suffered the same hardships of combat, and often died on the battlefield treating their comrades, no exceptions were made for this prestigious award.

(Tributes continued....)



Ruben Cleveland "Doc" Alston, 19**SP5, HHC/2/503, 1/2/66**

8/28/17: "Jacksonville Army Paratrooper Ruben C. Alston was killed in Viet Nam about two weeks before he was to leave that country. The 19-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Abe Alston Sr. of 2720 White Ave. had just notified his family not to send any Christmas packages since he was due to leave his post at Bien Hoa on Jan. 15, after his last patrol. Alston was killed Jan. 2 'as a result of gunshot wounds sustained from hostile small arms fire while on combat operation,' the Department of the Army informed the family. Alston's older sister, Mrs. Corine Waters, said he had just been promoted to Specialist 5. She said he had been fighting in Viet Nam for about six months, and the sergeant had told him of his advancement shortly before he was killed. The family received Alston's last letter, written on Dec. 18, yesterday. The telegram from Army came the day before." **The Florida-Times-Union**

**Paul V. "Doc" Barrington, Jr., 24****SP4, B/3/503, 8/13/69**

5/13/14: "DOC! This is MY BROTHER that I served with in Vietnam. On July 23rd Doc gave me some beads his wife had sent him and every bead meant something. He gave them to me going up a river. I was pulling point and he came up to me because him and I got into a fight earlier that day over some BS and he told me 'DeWit your my Bud and we are not gonna stay mad at each other and HEY ain't today yer Birth-day?' I do NOT know how Doc knew that. The next month he was gone and David Carter, Tim Netherly and me LOST IT! Avritt saved us from going to LBJ (Long Bein Jail), LOVE YOU DOC and I HAVE MISSED YOU ALL THESE TEARS! David has joined you now GD I AM SO SAD RIGHT NOW DOC! LOVE your Brother, Kenny." **Kenneth Dewit**

**David Joe "Doc" Berry, 21****SP4, HHC/3/503, 4/28/68**

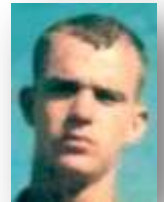
12/29/17: "David Berry and his Iowa and Minnesota beginnings. David Berry was born on March 28, 1947 in Mason City, Iowa. His parents were Paul Richard and Wilma Berry. The family moved to Winona, Minnesota, where David attended St Stanislaus Grade School for 7 years. At the time of David's death in Vietnam on April 28, 1968, he left behind his parents, a brother and two sisters. The newspaper photo and information came from a May 7, 1968 issue of the Winona Daily News".

**John Austin "Doc" Bossom, 20****CPL, E/2/503, 11/30/69**

5/25/15: "OUR BROTHER, JOHN. Dear John, Our family was so split on whether you should go to war or not, however, once you were deployed you were devoted to protecting your buddies. We all loved you so much and were shocked but resigned when we received your final letter saying that you had re-upped for another term. You didn't get that chance but we understood then the level of your compassion. We continue to love and miss you." **Joyce Bossom Parmeter**

**Thomas Dean "Doc" Brock, 20****SGT, D/1/503, 9/23/68**

5/17/15: "I WAS THERE. I was in Greg Carter's squad in D company 1/503 that day and 3 months prior. Both he and Doc Brock were instrumental with educating this fng what I needed to know to protect our lives. I carried Greg down that hill to the medics that September 23, 1968, I then went back up the same hill as there were solders still engaged. I didn't know until sometime that Thomas was killed, after I helped transfer Greg and Doc Brock onto the dust-off chopper. I sat down and cried. They are my brothers."

Gil Conradis**David Dana "Doc" Campbell, 19****SGT, HHC/173d Bde, 5/10/71**

3/14/09: "DAVID IS RENEMBERED. I grew up two doors away from the Campbell's. I played with David's sister, Betsy, and have wonderful memories of those years. I was 13 when David was killed, and though I did not know him well, have thought of him and his family over the years. Such a tremendous loss, a void never filled. Please know he is remembered. Betsy - I would love to hear from you Leslie Harris (now Harmon)." **Leslie Harmon**

**Ernesto Soliz "Doc" Cantu, 20****SP4, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67**

10/24/06: "TU PRIMO. I have never forgotten you primo, and never will. As a former marine i also served, and was in combat in Viet-nam. I was there, I Know. I'm proud of you primo."

Juan Antonio Solis

(Tributes continued....)



William Bert "Doc" Cleverley, 19

PFC, HHC/4/503, 7/28/70

3/9/02: "OLD FRIEND. I knew Bill and his family from Holcomb Elem. through Redford High. I lived two blocks from him. We played a lot of baseball at Stout Park and in Little League. His sister Ann was a friend of my wife Sandra for many years. It's a shame his life was cut short at a early age. He is sorely missed and will never be forgotten. Someday we will meet again in a better place." **Gary W. Miller**



He was unaffected by popular fashion and as a boy he chose to wear granny glasses.

He was an individual. When he was 16 he bought his little sisters dresses to wear to kindergarten. He bought his mother a winter coat and a floor polisher. He was generous and aware of others needs. In high school he became so popular. His hair got thick and curly and he hit hard as a football half-back, making almost all his tackles. He had a girlfriend Ora, and many good friends. He always had a job caddying and working for his father at the REA (Railway Express Agency). Bill joined the Army while attending Wentworth institution Boston, continuing to work at Man Power (Show up and work for the day)." **Jean Francis**



William Elice "Doc" Collins, Jr., 19

SP4, 173d LRRP, 1/23/67

5/27/13: "BILL MY BROTHER. When I was a young child my brother Bill was and still is my hero. He is larger than life to me. He taught me all about being a good soldier. We had a very large box full of toy soldiers trucks tanks artillery guns mortars bazookas . We had it all, daddy was a soldier. Bill was eleven years older than me. He joined the army as soon as he could at age seventeen. We lost him just a few years later. He gave all to save his buddies. We memorialize his memory with honor knowing he will never be forgotten. I Love And Miss My Brother Bill."

Bob Collins



Final Mission of SP4 William T. Hagerty

The Battle of Dak To was a series of major engagements of the Vietnam War that took place between November 3 to 22, 1967, in Kon Tum Province, in the Central Highlands of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Dak To lies on a flat valley floor, surrounded by waves of ridgelines that rise into peaks (some as high as 4,000 feet) that stretch westward and southwestward towards the tri-border region where South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia meet. One of those peaks was Hill 875. On November 19, 1967, the 2/503d Infantry had been alerted to assault Hill 875 after the 26th MIKE Special Forces Company (OPCON to the 2/503d Infantry) had made contact with a large NVA force on its slopes the previous day. The assault was made with two Companies abreast, D Company on the left and C Company on the right, with the trail running up the mountain acting as a boundary between the attacking companies. The Companies were to assault with two Platoons forward and one Platoon held in reserve. C and D Companies started out in two columns each. As they reached the base of the hill they deployed into two Platoons abreast with two Squad files in each Platoon. They advanced slowly through the tangled and gnarled vegetation which had been mashed down by the bomb strikes. Enemy positions were well-concealed. On the right flank as C Company's 2nd Platoon closed up and moved forward, one of their point men, SP4 Quinn, was hit by small arms fire. As the medic, SP4 William T. Hagerty moved up to assist when he was killed by small arms fire."

[Taken from patriotfiles.com]



Floyd Andrew "Doc" Deal, 18

SGT, B/3/503, 4/7/69

11/22/14: "BROTHERS IN ARMS. I was there that day. I lost many brothers. We knew we were going to be hit in the morning. I had walked point the past few days. What we didn't know was that there were more than we saw. Everyone fought hard till we started to run out of ammo. Thanks Deal for being there for all of us. I have never forgotten you. God Bless you Brother."

Paul Dalton



Pedro Incarnacion "Doc" Garcia, 19

SGT, HHC/2/503, 3/25/67

8/2/16: "UNCLE PETE. Pete Garcia is my uncle, my mom's youngest brother. As a family we are very proud of you and I always tell your story and the legend that you are. Rest easy Tio!" **Roel Rene Gutierrez**



[See Doc Garcia's Silver Star citation on Page 89]



William T. "Doc" Hagerty, 21

SP4, A/2/503, 11/20/67

7/13/12: "OUR BROTHER WILLIAM. Our brother had a very dry sense of humor."



(Tributes continued....)



**William Donald "Doc" Herst, Jr., 24
SP4, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67**

12/9/08: "UNCLE. To the uncle I never knew, gone but never forgotten. Rest in peace." **H.W.**



**Vanester Lamar "Doc" Hester, 22
SP5, B/2/503, 11/13/67**

4/28/10: "I MISS YOU MY FRIEND. I served with Doc -- that's what we called him. He was our Medic. We were good friends, both of us were from Fla. I will always remember Doc. Rest in peace Doc, you served well. You put your life above others. God Bless." **Waldren Cook**



 **Edward Alan "Doc" Lamb, 20
SP4, C/4/503, 1/31/69**

7/3/99: "DOC LAMB. Doc Lamb was the medic for C/4/503d. He gave his life to save other Sky Soldiers. A good friend, a courageous trooper, a hero, never to be forgotten. Rest in Peace Doc." **Sgt Richard Oxsen**



**Stephen Douglas "Doc" Langler, 19
SP5, HHC/4/503, 12/11/68**

6/4/99: "SO YOUNG. A fallen Medic – May you rest in peace. You gave the ultimate sacrifice – never to be forgotten." **Nick Martinez, III**



 **James Howard "Doc" Lee, 19
SP4, B Spt Bn, 7/15/69**

6/20/01: "I STILL REMEMBER YOU. Hey Jim. Well, after over 30 years I finally went to visit you. I'm sorry it took me so long. I couldn't go when I got back, I guess I just didn't have the guts. Then I spent too many years trying to forget. That was wrong. I'll never forget you. There were fresh flowers at your site. It's good to know that your family still remembers too. I left something for you. Rest in peace man."

William Wagner



**Gerald (Gerry) "Doc" Levy, 20
SP5, B/2/503, 1/2/66**

6/19/16: "I THINK OF YOU OFTEN. Gerry and I arrived on Okinawa about the same time following completion of jump school and were assigned to the same company and became friends as a result.



Gerry lost his life on 01/02/66 in the Plain of Reeds portion of the Mekong Delta during Operation Marauder. There are few days that pass when I do not think of the great sacrifice he made and all that he has missed out on during these past 50 years. I still recall with great sadness hearing of his loss on that day so long ago. He was a fine medic and soldier and even finer human being." **Don Rice**

Doc Levy's Final Mission

"The rounds were passing over the heads of members of C Company, and (Jerry) Morton, apparently sensing trouble, yelled into his radio handset, "Cease fire, cease fire!" Morton, medic Jerry Levy, Pfc George Geoghagen and Sergeant Johnny Graham were crouched near each other behind a paddy dike. Levy, Geoghagen and Graham were making small talk, and Graham had just tossed Geoghagen a pack of cigarettes. Suddenly, Graham heard a loud "Woomp!" and was thrown into the rice paddy. Two short artillery rounds had landed in the midst of C Company. When Graham looked up, he saw Morton apparently dead from the concussion, and Geoghagen dead from head wounds. Geoghagen had just joined the unit the day before as a new replacement. Graham remembered that Geoghagen had said that he was married and was from Georgia. Levy was bleeding profusely in the groin area and had part of one leg blown off. Seven other troopers in the company were also wounded, including the company commander, Captain Fred Henschell, Graham himself and Specialist Reid. Vester Reid recalled that the impact of the rounds sent him flying through the air, and he landed 20 feet away with stomach wounds. Tom Tiede, a special correspondent, reported in a subsequent press release: 'After the initial explosion Levy crawled to the aid of a wounded soldier. Even though ripped open by the blast, Levy continued to administer to the soldier. Then Jerry looked down at his own body and fell over mortally wounded.'"

Col. Thomas E. Faley, U.S. Army (Ret)

2/503, 173d Airborne Brigade

**"Operation Marauder: Allied Offensive in the
Mekong Delta"**

Vietnam Magazine, February 1999

(Tributes continued....)



**Martin T. "Doc" McDonald, 20****SGT, HHC/2/503, 4/10/71**

9/29/02: "MEDICAL AIDMAN

AWARDED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS. 'Terry' McDonald had attended

the University of Pennsylvania for a

semester before he joined the Army in

December 1968. He planned to return to Penn when he

completed his military obligation. The 20-year-old

sergeant, a medical aidman, was sent to Vietnam and

assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company

of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne

Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. McDonald died in the

Phu My District of Vietnam on April 10, 1971. He was

posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

McDonald had been a volunteer fireman in suburban

Bucks County. He was survived by his parents, a brother

and two sisters." **The Philadelphia Daily News****[See Doc McDonald's DSC citation on Page 89]****Edward M. "Doc" McIlvain, III, 21****SP4, 1/503, 10/18/66**

5/8/05: "Wynnewood Soldier Killed by

Reds During Vietnam Jeep Patrol. Acting

Sgt. Edward Morton McIlvain Jr., 21, of

301 Cherry Lane, Wynnewood, was killed

in action in Vietnam on Tuesday. Sgt.

McIlvain, who was with the 173d Airborne Division, was

on patrol in a jeep when it was struck by enemy fire.

His mother, Mrs. George M. Cheston, was notified of his

death on Thursday. Sgt. McIlvain attended Episcopal

Academy, and was a graduate of Darrow School. He

enlisted in the Army in October, 1964, and volunteered

for the Special Forces 18 months ago. He had been in

Vietnam since March. Besides his mother and

stepfather, he is survived by two brothers, John M., of

Villanova; Lt. David D., serving with the U.S. Army; a

stepbrother, Miguel de Braganca, and a stepsister,

Sydney Cheston." **The Philadelphia Inquirer****Raymond Patrick "Doc" Meehan, 23****PFC, B/2/503, 7/7/65**

7/13/17: "SORRY WE NEVER MET.

Dear Uncle Raymond, I am sorry that we

never met. I really would have liked to

get to know you. Thank you for your

sacrifice. Your Nephew," **David Meehan****Robert Hal "Doc" Mundy, 22****SP4, HHC/173d Bde, 5/6/68**

6/23/08: "WE REMEMBER. Robert is

buried at Rock Springs Cemetery,

Lafayette, AL." **Robert Sage****John William "Doc" Pyle, 20****SSG, HHC/1/503, 2/14/68**

5/11/11: WE REMEMBER. John is

buried at Elmwood Cemetery, River Grove,

IL. ARCOM PH." **Robert Sage****Olis Ray "Doc" Rigby, 19****SP4, C/2/503, 11/21/67**

8/30/13: "MISS YOU RAY. A high

school friend forever in my memory.

Thank you for your sacrifice. I made it

home." **Bob Wonnell****Encarnasion "Doc" Rodriguez, 21****SGT, C/1/503, 9/17/69**

5/25/15: "NEVER FORGOTTEN.

Chinito, I knew you in high school.

One of the nicest guys and a smile for

everyone. Rest in peace and thank you."

Unsigned**Calvin Russell "Doc" Segar, 18****PFC, 173d LRRP, 9/22/70**

9/22/15: THINKING ABOUT YOU

TODAY AND MISSING YOU MY BROTHER.

45 years ago today. I still miss you. I think

about what if sometimes. Then of course I

remember that you no longer hurt, there

are no more struggles for you, there are no more fears

and no more challenges. There is only peace. I

remember now only the good times we shared. To this

day I look back at our time together and still you make

me laugh. I know things weren't ever easy for you. You

never let me see your pain. I love my brother, my friend.

I cherish the time we had and I hurt because there

wasn't more." **Julie****Ernest Ray "Doc" Taylor, Jr., 21****SP5, HHC/2/503, 11/20/67**

6/28/10: "WE REMEMBER. Ernest is

buried at Arms Cemetery in Shelbourne

Falls, MA. PH." **Robert Sage**

(Tributes continued....)



**Earl Kennon "Doc" Webb, 27****SP4, B/4/503, 11/20/67**

4/12/07: "YOU ARE STILL HERE

TODAY!! Even though I never met you I love you. I feel as if I know you. You are still seen today in your brothers, your nephews & great nephews. The artist in you still lives. The love in your heart still lives. We play as you played. Even though I never met you, I miss you."

Cherise Lockett



[See Doc Webb's Silver Star citation on this page]

**Merrel P. "Doc" Whittington, 31****SP4, B/2/503, 11/20/67**

11/20/1: "MERREL P. WHITTINGTON

WAS MY FATHER'S BROTHER. To family and friends he was known as 'Moe.' Uncle Moe was a medic with the Army Rangers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade or 'Sky Soldiers' as they were known. Uncle Moe was 31 years old, only recently married and 3 months into his 3rd Tour of Duty when he was killed by a mortar on Hill 875 during of the infamous battle of Dak To while rendering aid under fire to a wounded soldier by the name of Eldon Mecham. Merrel was just one of 73 members of the Sky Soldiers that died that same horrific November day in 1967 – 50 years ago today. Thank God for Uncle Moe and all of the brave soldiers, sailors and airmen that have 'given their last full measure of devotion' for this nation. RIP Uncle Moe." **James W. Whittington**

**Charles Thomas "Doc" Wilcox, 22****SP4, HHC/2/503, 5/8/71**

8/21/12: "It's been a long time since marching band, late-night Goulardi TV with pizza and sledding at Virginia Kendal park. I have never forgotten you, Charley. In my mind, you will always be 18."

Cornelia Miller Rutherford**Steven Andrew "Doc" Winters, 20****CPL, A/4/503, 9/7/68**

2/27/05: "WE REMEMBER. Steven is buried at Ft Gibson Nat Cem."

Robert Sage**Sources:**

173d Abn Bde List of KIA
Virtual Wall Website
Wall of Faces Website

Note: It's possible other Medics of ours whom we lost during the war are not listed here as the Brigade KIA list does not in all cases reflect MOS' of our fallen.

Earl Kennon "Doc" Webb

~ Silver Star ~

AWARDED FOR ACTIONS DURING Vietnam War
Service: Army

Rank: Specialist Fourth Class**Battalion: 4th Battalion****GENERAL ORDERS: Headquarters, I Field Force****Vietnam, General Orders No. 33 (January 16, 1968)****CITATION:**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to Specialist Fourth Class Earl Kennon Webb (ASN: RA-1853xxxx), United States Army, for gallantry in action.

Specialist Fourth Class Webb distinguished himself by heroism in close and heavy combat with an armed hostile force on 20 November 1967 during the battle on Hill 875, Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company D, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate).

Specialist Webb was attached to the company as a Platoon Aidman when it came under heavy mortar, rocket and automatic weapons fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, he moved about the battlefield giving aid and comfort to his wounded comrades. Specialist Webb kept many of the severely wounded from dying by sitting by their side and administering aid until they could be extracted.

He was fatally wounded during an enemy mortar attack after having refused to leave the side of his seriously wounded comrades. Specialist Webb's professional skills and untiring efforts saved numerous lives and assisted greatly in the accomplishment of the mission.

Specialist Webb's unselfish and valorous actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, the Medical Corps and the United States Army.

(Tributes continued...)



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~ They Were Young And Brave And Paratrooper Medics ~

Martin Terrance McDonald HHC/2/503

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS AWARDED

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Martin Terrance McDonald, Specialist Fourth Class, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade.



Specialist Four McDonald distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 10 April 1971. On that date Specialist McDonald was serving as a medical aidman for a six man reconnaissance team on an offensive mission in Phu My District, when the team was taken under fire by an estimated platoon-sized enemy force. The enemy-initiated contact included rockets, machinegun and automatic small arms fire. In the initial hail of fire, the team leader was severely wounded, and the remainder of the team was halted a short distance away, leaving him in an open, vulnerable position.

Specialist McDonald, although wounded himself during the initial contact, realized the extreme danger his team leader was in and, with total disregard for his personal safety, exposed himself to the intense enemy fire and ran to the aid of his fallen team leader. He then placed himself between the team leader and the enemy and began returning fire. An incoming rocket landed nearby, wounding him for the second time as the force of the explosion knocked him to the ground. He immediately recovered and rolled over on his team leader to protect him from the enemy fire.

Realizing that further movement was impossible, Specialist McDonald stood up between the enemy and the severely wounded man and began placing accurate semi-automatic fire upon the enemy positions, until he was mortally wounded by an enemy rocket.

Specialist Four McDonald'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.

Pedro Incarnation Garcia C/2/503

SILVER STAR AWARDED

Pedro Incarnation Garcia Silver Star
AWARDED FOR ACTIONS DURING
Vietnam War
Service: Army
Rank: Private First Class
Battalion: 2d Battalion (Airborne)
GENERAL ORDERS: Headquarters, II Field Force
Vietnam, General Orders No. 264 (December 17, 1966)



CITATION:

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Private First Class Pedro Incarnation Garcia (ASN: RA-1874xxxx), United States Army, for gallantry in action on 5 October 1966, while serving as a Platoon Medic in Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), in the Republic of Vietnam.

The company encountered a dug-in enemy force while conducting a search and destroy operation and engaged the enemy at very close range. With complete disregard for his own life and safety, Private First Class Garcia advanced through a hail of enemy small arms fire and hand grenades to treat the wounded. He dragged wounded men back to safer positions to treat them.

He continued to move throughout the area exposing himself to the enemy fire on numerous occasions, completely disregarding his own wounds in order to insure that all the wounded men were cared for and prepared for evacuation. Private First Class Garcia was wounded a second time but again refused medical aid for himself and continued to treat the other wounded men until the fight ended.

Private First Class Garcia's outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Our Medics...where do we find such men?



Farewell to Troopers of the 173d Abn Bde & 503rd PRCT and Attached Units Who Made Their Final Jump

Thomas Dean Able, 72
Port Clinton, OH, March 22, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

William Russell "Bill" Bennett
November 28, 2018
1RAR, RVN

Ken Bladen, LTC
February 22, 2019
1RAR, RVN

Steven "Steve" P. Blaser, 71
Marion, IN, March 24, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Kyle Roland Boozer, 25
Moore County, NC, May 17, 2019
173d ABCT, Italy

Peter Sebastian Cimino, 19
Vincenza, Italy, March 3, 2019
173d Abn Bde, Italy

Brian Thomas Claudia, "Doc", 72
Pomona, CA, April 10, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

R. Barry Cline, 75
Fredericksburg, OH, April 27, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Robin "Ragnar" Cochran, 70
Hood River, OR, May 7, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John E. Davis, 67
Duck River, TN, June 3, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John H. Fisher, III, 72
Greenville, MS, May 31, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

William Warren Flynn, Jr., 72
Hampton, NJ, April 29, 2019
B/2/503, RVN

Paul E. Fox, III, 68
Asheville, NC, April 12, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Francisco "Frank" Garza, 69
McAllen, TX, February 10, 2019
B/2/503, RVN

Richard M. Guest, 93
Twinsburg, OH, May 1, 2019
503rd PIR, WWII

Gary R. Hagarman, 69
Seven Valleys, PA, February 23, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Emmericus "Ricky" Hamstra, 99
Brownsburg, IN, March 3, 2019
503rd PIR, WWII

Tristan Hardy
May 10, 2019
1RAR, RVN

Steven Hokanson, 72
Morris, MN, April 30, 2019
A/2/503, RVN

Daniel Herman Honore', 75
Racine, WI, May 5, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Jamerson, 74
Magnolia, AR, April 4, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Marko Alexander Jefravi, Sr., 75
March 17, 2019, Blythe, CA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Michael Kiriazis, 94
St. Clair Shores, MI, March 7, 2019
503rd PIR, WWII

Leroy Lenoir, 77
Terrell, TX, May 17, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

David F. Lochelt, 71
Portland, OR, April 24, 2019
E-Troop, 173d Abn, RVN

Richard L. Lollar, 66
Las Vegas, NV, March 5, 2019
3/319 Arty, RVN

David G. Marcum, 73
Ashland, KY, April 9, 2019
2/503, RVN

(Sadly continued....)



Clement Matheny, 77
Ripley, WV, December 31, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Glenn Vernon McDaniel, 74
Chatom, AL, January 24, 2019
C/4/503, RVN

Ronald "Ronnie" Morton, 73
White Lake, NC, June 2, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John Alfred Mott, 72
Norfolk, VA, May 20, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Kirk Michael Mowry, 74
Olathe, KS, March 21, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Donald "Don" Leonard Moyer, 75
Orangeburg, SC, March 1, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Patrick Mulherin, 78
Defiance, MO, May 15, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Richard A. Orr, 72
Willow Grove, PA, May 9, 2019
B/2/503, RVN

Ronald E. "Ropes" Rice, SFC, 78
Martinburg, WV, January 1, 2019
173d LRRP, RVN, RLTW

John Daniele Riner, 37
Pensacola, FL, March 31, 2019
508th/173d ABCT, Iraq

Joseph Samuel Robertson, Jr., 81
Belton, TX, March 31, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Charles "Chuck" J. Siercks, 72
Austin, TX, March 9, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Peter "Pete" Paul Sukaloski, 68
Lake, PA, May 16, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John J. "Sully" Sullivan
Carver, MA, March 7, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Paul Wayne Tibbs, 71
Rome, GA, February 11, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Alvin "Willis" Tucker, 73
Moultrie, GA, February 16, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Thomas "Tom" Turner, 68
Prescott, AZ, February 21, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Dale A. Uecker, 74
Appleton, WI, February 25, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

George Maxwell Ward, 67
Daphne, AL, March 16, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Lawrence Edward "Larry/Dutch" Welsh, 79
Xenia, OH, February 6, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Barker Woodard, 94
West Columbia, TX, December 30, 2018
503rd PIR, WWII

Rest Easy Boys With Your Fellow Warriors

