



September-October 2019, Issue 88
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See all issues to date at the 503rd Heritage Battalion website:
http://corregidor.org/VN2-503/newsletter/issue_index.htm

~ 173d Photo of the Month ~



Incoming 173d Airborne Brigade commander Col. Kenneth Burgess, left, inspects the formation along with deputy commander Lt. Col. Kurt Cyr, center, and Col. James Bartholomees, outgoing commander, at Thursday's change of command in Vicenza, Italy, on June 27, 2019. New commander Burgess commenting on a *"deficiency during The Army Song singalong at the ceremony,"* said, *"They can't hold a tune, but I assume they can fight."* (Army photo)





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 September & October 1969



*"One day you will ask me which is more important? My life or yours?
I will say mine and you will walk away not knowing that you are my life."*

Khalil Gibran



Danny Elbert Appleton, 19
SGT, C/3/503, 10/21/69

5/16/11: *FELLOW SKYSOLDIER. I met Danny at Ft. Dix, we were both on our way to Vietnam, we ended up in the same company but different platoons with the 173rd Abn. The day Danny was killed he was part of a patrol that was escorting some engineers who were conducting a mine sweep in the village of An Hoa. The patrol was hit by a claymore mine and there were several serious casualties as well as Danny who was killed. I helped load Danny and the other wounded on the Medevac chopper that took them out."*

Gregg Corbin, C/3/503



training (airborne) to Ft. Benning, Georgia and I went to Fort Gordon, Georgia. Randy was an honest, loving, reliable and compassionate man.

Randy came to visit me at Ft. Gordon. In the little time that we spent together Randy gave me a ring and asked me to be his fiancé. Time was our enemy and I left the service and went home. We continued writing, and Randy expressed in a letter he wrote that he wanted to visit me in Puerto Rico. In another letter he sent right before he was sent to Vietnam, Randy enclosed a 4 leaf clover that he found in a field behind his home. The 4 leaf clover is still with me to this day.

I received a telegram notifying me of his tragic passing. Randy will always live in my heart and mind. Years have passed and Randy came to visit me in a dream in April of 2019. He was in a field behind my house walking towards the gate. Randy was surrounded by the most beautiful light which had in it an aura of peace and love. I called his name and I awoke calling his name. I'm guessing that was Randy's way of letting me know that he is ok, at least that is the way I will look at the dream. God bless Randy and his loved ones. Randy I forever will treasure the moments that we spent together. I LOVE YOU FOR EVER."

Ana M. Lohr

Bernd George Fritz Binder, 21
PTE, 9RAR, 10/27/69

"Born in Germany. Binder was killed accidentally when lightning exploded a Claymore mine he was setting up in Bien Hoa Province 27th October 1969. Buried Wangaratta Cemetery VIC."



William Buel Bishop, II, 22
SGT, E/4/503, 10/22/69

5/19/14: *"TO MY COUSIN BILLY. Dear Billy, We only met a few times when we were small children and you were nine years older than me. We lived in different states but I vaguely remember your daddy, my Uncle Buel, when he'd come to Texas. It is my hope that one day we meet again and share times with our family in heaven! Thanks for your sacrifice. You are not forgotten!" Brenda Bishop Morrow*



Richard Bruce Canning, 24
SSG, HHC/173d Bde, 10/4/69
(Virtual Wall states 173d Flt Plt)

10/4/69: *"39 years ago today you left this place called Earth. You Rick, were an ICON and the memories of you go on and on. Charlie knows a ton of Rick stories and he tells them always with a tear in his eye. Rest in Peace Rick..." Barbara Anne*



Randy Graham Cagle, 18
CPL, A/1/503, 9/11/69
(Virtual Wall states A/1/50th)

4/28/19: *"IN MEMORY OF CPL RANDY GRAHAM CAGLE, REMEMBERING MY RANDY. We met at fort McClellan, Alabama in 1968 at the NCO Club. Randy was introduced to me by his friend. We became fond of each other, (he was so handsome) our moments were so short lived. From Ft. McClellan, Randy went for more*



LOH Crew Chiefs who flew scout missions at Casper. Left is (Richard Canning, KIA 10-4-69 & (Right) Robert Gomez, KIA 8-18-69.



(Tributes continued....)



Ronald Lamar Cannon, 18**SP4, A/1/503, 10/11/69****(Incident date 9/1/69)**

7/11/11: "A PICTURE OF MY UNCLE LAMAR. Wish I could have known you longer...." Lisa

**Albert Leslie Casey, 20****TPR, BSGN 3CAV, 10/22/69**

"Albert Lesley Casey, 20, Batlow NSW. Casey was killed when the APC he was driving was hit with a Anti-Tank Rocket in an ambush in the jungle in Phuoc Tuy Province on 22nd October 1969. Buried Batlow Cemetery NSW."

**Alan Leslie Duncuff, 21****SPR, 1FD SQN, 10/25/69**

"Alan Leslie Duncuff, 21 Subiaco WA. Duncuff was killed by a mine in Phuoc Tuy Province 25th October 1969. Buried Allambie Park cemetery Albany WA."

**Martin Barry Dyer, Jr., 20****SGT, C/1/503, 9/19/69**

9/19/16: "THANK YOU. Even though we were six years apart we did a lot of things together. I miss my brother very deeply. There is not a day that he is not with me in spirit and in thought. He was the best brother you can ever have. I love you Bro. I just want to say thank you to all those who have served to protect this country. May the Heavenly Father continue to watch over you and your families." **Unsigned**

**David John E. Fisher, 23****PTE, 3 SAS SQN, 9/27/69**

"David John. E. Fisher, 23. On September 27 1969, Fisher was with a patrol that engaged a group of Viet Cong in Long Khanh Province. Five VC were shot and killed and the patrol withdrew, but encountered a group of about 30 enemy. A helicopter was called and ropes were lowered to the men, but during this 'hot extraction' Fisher fell from about 30m into the trees on 27th September 1969. His body was recovered in 2008. Buried Garden of Remembrance NSW."

**Henry Wayne Garrett, 21****SSG, A/1/503, 10/1/69**

7/11/12: "REMEMBRANCE. Henry, who was called (Reb) was our pointman and Seargent of the 3rd platoon A-Co 1/503 Inf. 173rd ABN. Bde. One of the nicest guys I met while in country and well liked by everyone. Learned a lot from him. Always had a smile no matter how far we humped - or how many mountains we climbed - was sadly missed by all who served with him." **Edward J. Scott, III**

**Larry Ray Glover, 21****SSG, D/4/503, 10/7/69**

5/29/17: "PROUD TO HAVE KNOWN YOU. Hi Larry. I was going through our class yearbooks of school and saw your photo. I immediately remembered the summers of playing baseball and all the fun summers had for us kids. As I am here planning to attend our 50th class reunion and knowing yours would have been last year, I want to express my gratitude for your service. Although many in our town served, you were the only one to make The Ultimate Sacrifice that has allowed all of us to stay free and pursue our dreams." **Rex Hankins**

**James Henry Graham, 21****SGT, E/1/503, 10/9/69**

5/26/19: "THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING. To the first boy that went to my dad and asked to take me on a my first car date, to Big Bear Lake, Calif. I think of you every day. Sending you my love. Whiskey." **Virginia M. Hardy**

**Robert Lee Hager, Jr., 20****CPL, A/1/503, 9/22/69**

5/30/16: "REMEMBERING. Grew up knowing him and his family. Still missed today." **Deb Bostian**

**Bryant Victor Hansen, 20****LCPL, 1 FD SQN, 10/21/69**

"Bryant Victor Hansen 20, Camden NSW. He was killed in an explosion while clearing a booby trapped area of Phuoc Tuy on 21st October 1969. Buried Garden of Remembrance NSW."



(Tributes continued....)



Peter Roy Hansen, 23**PTE, 6RAR, 10/25/69**

"Peter Roy Hansen, 23, Subiaco WA. Hansen was killed by an enemy mine in Phuoc Tuy on 25th October 1969. Buried Karrakatta Cemetery WA."

**Robert Lee Henneghan, 22****SGT, C/4/503, 9/27/69**

7/29/18: "THANKING YOU, UNCLE ROBERT LEE. Although a lot of us never had the opportunity to meet you, the younger members of our Henneghan Family still honor & appreciate the ultimate sacrifice you've made. So many things have occurred in the family since you left in 1969, but we all will always remember you as our personal hero!! Continue to Sleep in Peace, Uncle Robert Lee!" Ashley H. (Great Niece)

**John Wallace Holloway, 22****PTE, 9RAR, 10/26/69**

"John Wallace Holloway, 22, Surrey Hills VIC. He was killed in action during a contact in Bien Hoa Province on 26th October 1969. Buried Springvale Crematorium Melbourne VIC."

**Ian William Kingston, 20****PTE, 6RAR, 9/3/69**

"Ian William Kingston, 20, Mambour QLD. Kingston was killed in action in Bien Hoa Province 3rd September 1969. Buried Mt Thompson Crematorium QLD."



3/2/16: "An unforgotten beautiful school mate. Ian was our beautiful happy young classmate @ St. George GLD. Fond memories of our friendship will always take special place on our hearts. We were young kids but all had a great respect for one another and an unspoken kinship that is still with us today. So young to die. Such a good young man. Always loved and remembered by his classmates Ray Sneddon, Johnny Staines, Marilyn Prince, Donna McKay. Alive forever in our hearts and minds. I remember the day Ian fainted in class when we had to stand. It is a memory embedded in my mind. I liked him then I love him Now." Donna McKay

**Roger Joseph Kopke, 21****SSG, D/3/503, 10/30/69****3/5/04: "YOU WEREN'T ALONE.**

Roger, You weren't alone the evening you were wounded. Since then You have always been in my thoughts. I meet your folks every year at the reunion. No one has forgotten." David "Doc" Kanter

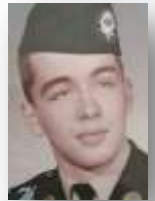
**Robert William LaBrecque, 18****CPL, C/4/503, 9/18/69**

5/30/11: "WE REMEMBER. Robert is buried at St Jean Baptiste Cemetery, Bellingham, MA. BSM-OLC PH" Robert Sage

**Second R.I. Brother Killed In Vietnam**

NORTH SMITHFIELD, R.I. (AP) – Pfc. Robert W. LaBrecque, whose brother, Paul, was killed in Vietnam in 1965, has been killed 19 days after arriving in Vietnam. The two LaBrecques, both paratroopers, both 18 at the time of their deaths, and both from North Smithfield.

Robert was killed last Thursday, was "obsessed with following in Paul's footsteps," Mrs. Gerard Champagne, of North Smithfield, an aunt, said "but he thought he wouldn't get killed like that."



**Paul
101st Abn**

The LaBrecques, both privates first class, were the sons of Paul R. LaBrecque of Central Falls and Mrs. Shirley LaBrecque of North Smithfield. Paul was killed two weeks after arriving in Vietnam in March, 1968.

Robert told his parents he would join the Army in June, 1968, and promised not to request overseas duty, Mrs. Champagne said. Instead, he volunteered as soon as he turned 18 in May, 1968.

He had a month's leave before going overseas and cut it short by three days when he learned that his parents planned to try to intercede with Army officials, Mrs. Champagne said.

He then wrote his mother and asked her not to worry.

**Walter Bedford Lowe, Jr., 22****SSG, D/1/503, 9/16/69**

27 Mar 2006: "Walter was a respected member of our platoon and was willing to answer to any challenge. Walter had no fear but he did respect the cunning and evasive manner in which our enemy opposed us. Walter had a sense of humor that he passed on to others, he was quiet and introspective and he showed much concern for the well-being of all members of our platoon. Walter did not get excited but had a reserved passion and could be depended upon to perform his duties and could be counted on to complete any mission assigned...."



(Tributes continued....)



....As the platoon leader, I had much respect for Walter and although our time together was short, knowing Walter was something that I have remembered all of my life.

Why some like Walter gave the ultimate sacrifice and others were spared is the eternal question. Walter's bravery and desire to protect his fellow soldiers made him a pillar of strength and his loss was severely missed. I will always remember Walter and Larry who gave the ultimate sacrifice in service our Country....."

Gary Jugenheimer, Platoon Leader, 3d Plt, D Co, 1/503/173 Abn Bde 1969-1970 RVN



Cameron Trent McAllister, 28

SSG, 173d LRRP, 9/7/69

(Virtual Wall states N75 Rgr)

6/12/11: "WE REMEMBER.

Cameron is buried at Mt Hope Cemetery, Omaha, NE. BSM-OLC AM PH-OLC."

Robert Sage



Johnny Newsome, 20

CPL, C/4/503, 9/27/69

9/3/04: "WE REMEMBER. Johnny is buried at Los Angeles Nat Cem."

Robert Sage



Tony Lee O'Neal, 20

CPL, E/1/503, 10/9/69

11/14/14: "GREAT FRIEND. Tony, I talked to you the night before you left for Vietnam and you were willing to go and do your duty. I was there when you were returned to us. I joined the Marine Corps the very month and year you were killed. I miss you buddy, and your old Chevy. Rest in peace my brother. I did serve two years in Vietnam and made it back. You are still missed Tony." **T.D. Holcomb**



Keith Mason Parr, 19

SGT, 173d LRRP, 10/26/69

(Virtual Wall states C/75th Rgr)

4/4/00: "UNKNOWN FRIEND. I didnt know Keith but he wrote my family a very nice letter after my brother was killed. When I wrote back the letter was returned MIA, and we later found out he was KIA. I know he was good man if he was a friend of my brothers and a Charlie Ranger." **Lee Squier**



Kevin John Prior, 22

PTE, 9RAR, 10/2/69

"Kevin John Prior, 22, Rockhampton QLD. Prior shot by VC in Bien Hoa on 2nd



October 1969. Buried Rockhampton Crematorium QLD."

1/7/18: "An old teacher/football coach remembers Kevin. You were a smart, fast footballer and a delightful student to teach. Dona eium requiem."

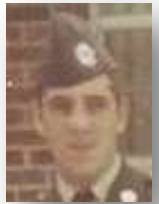
Clive Cass

Larry Pypniowski, 20

CPL, D/1/503, 9/16/69

29 Mar 2006: "Larry was a respected member of the Platoon and could be depended upon to carry out his duties without question. He carried an M-79 Grenade Launcher and was a valuable asset when his skills were required to put the ordnance on target. I remember Larry as an eager and willing soldier who did what he was expected to do and did it with enthusiasm. Larry performed the duties of point man on many occasions and did not seem to fear this assignment which was one of the toughest in Viet Nam. I remember that Larry was meticulous about his appearance and proud to be a soldier. He was an example to others in the Platoon of what soldiering was all about. Larry willingly carried his pack and additional M-60 ammunition and sometimes radio batteries, the weight of which taxed his small frame. Losing Larry and Sgt Lowe on the same day in an unfortunate way was the most devastating part of my tour in RVN."

Gary Jugenheimer, Platoon Leader, 3d Plt, D Co, 1/503 Inf, 173 Abn Bde



Harvey Claude Reynolds, 37

SSG, E/4/503, 10/22/69

10/2/17: "HONORING HARVEY CLAUDE REYNOLDS. Harvey is

my uncle and was serving his second tour when killed. My father was in Vietnam at the time of his death and on R & R in Hawaii.

A very hard time in our lives. Always remembered and honored." **David Perkins**



[See a buddy's tribute to Harvey on Page 22]



Encarnasion Rodriguez, "Doc", 21

SGT, C/1/503, 9/17/69

(Virtual Wall states HHC/2/503)

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**



(Tributes continued....)



Jerry Van Ryan, 20
CPL, B/1/503, 9/11/69

"I knew Jerry Ryan to be a great person. As my squad leader in military school, Jerry taught me the ropes and made me understand not to take life or myself too seriously. Jerry loved to clown around and although he was an upperclassman he treated us underlings better than most. He graduated two years before I did and I can still vividly recall his proudly showing up at an Alumni Day event wearing his Army Class 'A' uniform and telling some of us he was on his way to Vietnam. That was the last time I saw him. Although he may not wish to be remembered for this feat, Jerry was the only person I have ever known who could place his entire fist in his mouth. Now that was something for an impressionable 16-year-old to see!"

Unsigned



Thomas Leroy Smith, 21
CPL, D/4/503, 9/11/69

8/6/11: *"WE REMEMBER. Thomas is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery, Omaha, NE. BSM ARCOM PH."*

Robert Sage



William Russell Squier, Jr., 20
SSG, 173d LRRP, 9/13/69
(Virtual Wall states C/75th Inf)

4/14/00: *"BROTHER. Bill Squier was my older brother, brother to our other siblings, son of our parents, uncle to my children, friend to many and a company C Ranger forever."*

Lee Squier



Joseph Anthony Servantez, 21
SGT, C/1/503, 9/17/69

9/20/03: *"We who survived remember. The pain of your death is still so very real. We live to prove that your sacrifice and that of so many of our brothers will NOT have been in vain. From a comrade in arms,"*

Joseph W. Marquez



John Henry Taylor, 20
CPL, C/1/503, 10/18/69

1/13/05: *"WE REMEMBER. John is buried at Lane Chapel Cem. Huntersville, TN. His unit was Co C/503 INF, 173 ABN BDE."*

Robert Sage



Stanley Richard Tokarski, 20
SGT, B/3/503, 10/23/69

12/21/02: *"THINKING OF YOU. It is almost Christmas and you came to mind. There are so many memories I have of times we spent together. I just saw a picture of the Wall on TV and I want to say I always remember you. I came back, you didn't. It isn't fair. You were great, I miss, the City misses you. I know somewhere out there Joe Misses you to. Rest well, I will never forget!"*

Tom Zablocki



James Ervin Tompkins, 28
SSG, B/3/319, 9/25/69

8/1/09: *"THE FATHER THAT NEVER HAD THE CHANCE TO KNOW ME.*

Black is the nickname that you were called. I'm your son but I can only remember your presence this one particular time. You had come home on leave and gave my mother (Betty J. Dowtin) and I a ride in your new red Pontiac Bonneville Convertible....



Thomas Michael Shroba, 21
SSG, D/4/503, 10/4/69

3/17/17: *"I WISH I COULD HAVE MET YOU! Uncle Tom. A phrase I have heard uttered countless times, I am named after you, Uncle Tom. And yet, I feel strangely distant. I wish I could have met you. From the stories I've heard, you were an intelligent and reserved person. You were poised and brave, well loved by many. I know you saved many lives that day in Vietnam, but I selfishly still wish I could have met my namesake. I miss you...Love Tommy."*

Thomas H. Craig



(Tributes continued....)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Sept.-Oct. 2019 – Issue 88

Page 6 of 95

.....It's sad to have lost a father at an early age and not having a father figure in my life as I grew into a man myself. Although I made it I still wonder how it would have been to have a father!

I know you were a man of character and courage, a person with heart because Soldiers that volunteered for three tours in Viet Nam are not trained to do it. This type of courage is in your blood, it's inherited.

Everybody can't be Airborne and I know you were. I have completed my Military Service and I was Airborne as well. Your same courage runs through my veins, I just wish you could have had the chance to know your son...Rest In Peace!" **Daryl Dowtin**

John Wayne Tracy, 35

SSG, C/4/503, 9/18/69

4/23/08: "Sgt. Tracy was a member of the Army ROTC cadre at the University of Tennessee in 1968-69 when I was a senior in college. He had already served two tours of duty in Vietnam when I met him. We became friends during the summer of 1969 while I was participating in advanced ROTC summer camp at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and he was on staff. In September he returned for his third tour in Vietnam and was killed about two weeks into his tour. I learned a lot from this guy! From a friend," **Alex Hawkins**



Edward Anthony Ulibarri, 19

CPL, D/2/503, 10/1/69

5/31/06: "MEMORIAL DAY. Dear Edward, just wanted you to know I found your grave on Memorial Day, and you are next to your Vietnam comrade Lesley Henson. Remembering you this Memorial Day and never forgetting you."

Donna Teresa



Frank Norman Williams, 20

CPL, A/4/503, 10/13/69

8/14/11: "WE REMEMBER. Frank is buried at High Hill Baptist Church Cemetery, Sumter County, SC. BSM."

Robert Sage



Melvin Masaichi Yamashita, 23

SGT, B/2/503, 10/24/69

8/14/14: "YOUR SON. Mr. Yamashita, Growing up in Kailua I knew your son, Richard. You would be very proud of him. He's strong, hard-working, and looks like you. I know he missed you growing up but has done well. You also have a couple of grandkids! Mahalo for your sacrifice uncle. AIRBORNE! -MAJ C."

Paul Carlyle



Old Soldiers Can't Forget

Louis G. Aiken, Sr.

You know, it's hard for an old Soldier to forget, and sometimes at night as I lie on my bed, I think of old buddies, some living and some dead.

I wonder if our fight for freedom was for a just and noble cause, if our heartaches and suffering were really worth it all.



SSgt. Louis Aiken

Then in the distance, I seem to hear a heavenly bugle blow, and at that moment - there is no doubt in my mind for I know, if God were to call us all together again and raise our flag on high, not one would back down in his fight for freedom, we'd just have a new battle cry;

Those from among the living and those from within the grave, would all join together and cry out, "Better dead than slave!"

Sometimes as I sit and wonder and think of the wars we have fought at home and in distant lands, I think of the men who fought these wars for freedom and how it affected each and every man.

They weren't all destined to be National Heroes, nor was it intended that it be that way;

But each of them who faced an enemy in mortal combat recognized, that the supreme sacrifice could be required of him on any given day;

There are some in our country who say that all of this has been foolish, and who am I to disagree?

However, this question I would like to pose; had not these men been willing to sacrifice, would this great Country have ever been or, still be the land of the free?

Louis G. Aiken, Sr., Plt Sgt.

Co. 'B' 503 Prcht. Inf., WWII

SSgt. Louis G. Aiken, Sr. passed away at the age of 81 on February 26, 2007, at his home in Denham Springs, LA.

Footnote:

A Combat Soldier is a unique and unselfish individual, otherwise he could not and would not subject himself to such vigorous training and sometimes demeaning tasks in order to qualify himself to die if necessary for the freedom of his fellow man. I salute the many who have died and the many who have been crippled and maimed physically and psychologically. They have suffered these things so that others may enjoy the realities of freedom.

503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion Website



Raymond Ray “Zac” Zaccone

C/2/503d, ‘67/‘68

~ 2/503d Sky Soldier Extraordinaire ~

(Vietnam Era)

It is truly an honor to have served with Raymond “Zac” Zaccone in Vietnam. There are many men we served with who are worthy of this special recognition, and Ray is one of them.

I’ve known Ray since he arrived in Vietnam and joined Company C, 2nd Platoon, 2nd Squad in 1967, a horrendous year for our battalion and company; including The Battle Of The Slopes, Hill 875 and many other battles in which Ray fought and fought bravely with unheralded determination and courage. Ray epitomizes what it means to be a member of the “We Try Harder” battalion, and he served proudly and with great pride and courage alongside his fellow Sky Soldiers.

Ray was only eighteen when he joined C Company, but it would be difficult to find anyone more mature, more sure of himself under life-threatening situations. We could always count on Ray to be there for us in the most dire of situations.

Ray Zaccone possesses many qualities in addition to being a loyal friend, buddy and a valorous combat soldier. In his daily life Ray demonstrates to us all what being a 173d paratrooper is really all about. A simple man who served his country honorably over two tours in Vietnam. A man who was wounded in combat, as were many.

One thing evident in Ray and which, perhaps, stands out more than anything else, is Ray’s love of his country, his army unit, and his fellow Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep); indeed, Ray *is* that *Separate*. The banner of our battalion and the Sky Soldier patch he so proudly displays daily along with the American Flag, is Ray’s subtle, quiet way of saying, *“I am proud to be one of them.”*

Ray walks, talks and sleeps the 173d Airborne. His arm bares the emblem of the 173d patch as a lifelong statement to everyone seeing it, *“I am a Sky Soldier”*.

I know there are countless men who deserve special recognition in addition to Ray, in fact all our men deserve it; but for just a quiet man, a not so regular soldier who loves the 173d and was all too often ready to give everything for his buddies, Ray is deserving of this special *“Thank you, job well done paratrooper.”*

Ray is now retired and living in Halfway, Oregon with his wife Julie.

Ray is a most deserving man to be honored here.

Steve Welch
C/2/503, ‘67/68



L-R: The late Steve Welch with his buddy Zac, sometime, somewhere in Vietnam.

Sadly, we lost Steve on May 26, 2017, like Ray, another extraordinary Sky Soldier.





INCOMING!!!



Alpha's Wambi Cook Will Be Keynote Speaker At Casper Banquet In 2020

Wambi Cook is the Southern California Chapter President of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association. He was also a proud member of Rifle Company A 2/503d Infantry and fought in The Battle of the Slopes Hill 1138 and The Battle of Hill 875 in 1967. These were the two biggest battles that the 173d



Wambi...now and then

Airborne Brigade fought during the entire Vietnam War. His first-hand knowledge and experience with the HERD are most impressive.

We are honored to have Wambi as our Keynote Speaker at our Reunion in March/April 2020. He will address our group at the banquet and share his remembrances of Vietnam during his 1967/68 tour, more recent visits to Hill 875, and his love for the Caspers and Cowboys. You won't want to miss this!

Ned Costa
Casper Platoon



Tattoos At Dayton Reunion In 2020

Our Herd brother, **Ryan Shipley**, approached me at the South Carolina Reunion stating that he had a buddy who is a tattoo artist. They wish to bring a tattoo shop to the Dayton Reunion in 2020 and set it up for those interested. I had to first get with the hotel manager and see if it was all right with them. The hotel did not mind.



So, if you are looking for a tattoo or looking to have one removed then come to the Reunion, it will be available to you. However, neither Chapter 17 or the Association or the hotel takes any responsibility. The discretion is all yours.

Bill Terry
A/3/319

Slingshot Bob At The Ready

No one would believe this slingshot from **Cu Chi**, (first serious assault) 8 May '65 - day before th' beeg fight, after which I looked/felt like a Vet, not a duffus grad from basic training. I think at 20-30 yards it could be lethal. *THIS is a serious "silencer"*.

Keep your marbles dry? Handy! Stay safe. Bob

Bob Warfield, Maj. (Ret)
CO HHC/A/B/2/503



Cap Warfield in Cu Chi

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



Refreshing Memories

The picture on the front page of the latest newsletter (Issue 87) was of the three soldiers from the platoon I was commanding in C Co 2/503d and was one of the first combat ops we were involved in. I guess you know that this is the photo on back of the T-shirts issued with 173d Association Wounded Warrior Program.



Tony

Horst Faas spent much time with my platoon. I recently returned from the Vietnam Wall where I visited Doc **Gerry Levy's** name while I was on the last Honor Flight from the Historic Triangle of Virginia. Gerry was killed after I left the platoon to take over the 4 Deuce Platoon for the 2nd Bat.



Photo by Horst Faas

The front page foto (shown here) brought back plenty of memories, and, of course, the piece on Levy on page 86. I don't have any idea what the future held for the other two soldiers in that pic (Doc **Levy** on left, Trooper **Legmon** wounded, Doc **Brown** on right).

I just turned 80 years old last week and I realized how long its been since you started doing this news-letter. They always help refresh some memories and restore others. Stay healthy. AATW

Tony Esposito, LTC (Ret)
C/HHC/2/503

Our reply:
Happy Birthday Tony!!!

A 2020 Sky Soldier Reunion Heads-Up

Okay, gang, just got word from Kimberly Hubbard our concierge that rooms at the Crowne Plaza, Dayton, OH are now available for next year's reunion.

Our hotel room rate is \$129.00 with a FREE BREAKFAST. So, for those who have been asking...yes we got it!

Things are looking up more and more. Hop to it. Make your reservations. AATW!

Crowne Plaza
33 East 5th Street, Dayton, Ohio 45402
(1-937-224-0800)

Bill Terry
A/3/319

Flash: Over 100 rooms already booked as of early July.

Chargin' Charlie Pic From The Past

The attached photo (below) was taken in the village of Khahn Trac on the north edge of the Tiger Mountains....Charlie Company found 9 tons of rice buried in the floors of all of the hootche's ...Nov-Dec '68. The rice was discovered by SFC **Joseph LeBlanc**, the Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon.

Pictured is PVT **John Fish**... a survivor of Hill 875. He was one hell of a fine soldier...In the background bagging rice is SFC **Charlie Cloud**, the Platoon Sergeant for 3rd Platoon...

ATW... Doo Dah... Cap/El Tee

Gary Prisk, Col. (Ret)
CO C/D/2/503



"SACKS OF RICE are hauled away by paratroopers of Co. C., 2nd Bn., 503rd Inf. after the 173rd Airborne Brigade unit discovered a huge cache while on a search and clear mission near Bon Son." (173rd Abn Photo)

(INCOMING!!! continued....)



Sky Soldier MIA Memorial

Later this year these monuments will be placed at the Phillips-Heil Cemetery in the town of Jaffrey, NH, a wooded location off of Fitzwilliam Road.

Bob Warfield, B/2/503



Thomas Van Campen, B/2/503...MIA

The DOD people, who have been hunting MIA's for years, contacted me when I still lived in Massachusetts. I told them what I could remember. For what it's worth, as I recall, he and two others, either got lost or wandered off. Somehow, they were separated from the rest of the company. This was early in our deployment. Perhaps they did not fully realize the danger in War Zone D, that had been controlled by the north and their VC/ NVA troops for at least 10 years.

While not in the chain of command and privy to all the goings on, I do recall our CO, **Roy Lombardo**, being mad as hell at everyone, but mostly the platoon leader who forwarded the "accounted for" report from the fire team leader to the squad leader to the platoon leader. At that time we, in addition to multi-day operations, made several one-day sweeps.

We returned the following day, but the 2 troopers with **Van Campen** were unable to recall where they were and what direction they took. Supposedly they had stumbled on to a house or 2, were fired on with Van Campen being killed. They drug him to a house and left him there. At least that's the story, as I recall. The house could likely have been a farmers' shelter as there was still some rice growing activity interspersed in the jungle.

I seriously doubt that they stumbled on to the training center that we encountered on 7 July. As in my mind we were quite a ways from there and 3 of them would not have survived being discovered by a battalion of VC/NVA

If you (**Bob Warfield B/2/503**) are planning on going to New Hampshire and would like some help, you can call on my son. He would be the first to volunteer to assist. You don't know him, but most of the Bulls do.

Hope some of this helps.

Jim Robinson, FO B/2/503

"Rawhide" Buddies Remembered

Just read the latest newsletter (Issue 87). Thanks again for doing this.

It was reported Doc **Encarnacion Rodriguez** was KIA 17 Sept. '69, I was there. He was assigned to our platoon, the *Headhunters*. We walked into an NVA base camp off of a ridge in the An Lao. He and **Joe Servantez** were tight. Joe was our point that day. I asked for the point and the LT gave it to Joe and put me on rear security. They were both taken out at the same time by a stay-behind duo; Joe by a M-79 round and Doc with a burst from an AK. It was a bad day. I have pictures of both.

Later,

Joe Marquez

**C/1/503d,'69, N/75th, Juliet,'70, A/2/503d,'70
Chaplain: SC Chapter 30; and the National 173d
Airborne Brigade Association.**



Doc Rodriguez



Joe

Thank You Sir!



For his Independence Day speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial the Commander in Chief should be commended for recognizing achievements of the U.S. Army during the Revolutionary War, when he said:

"In June of 1775, the Continental Congress created a unified Army out of the Revolutionary Forces encamped around Boston and New York. ... Our Army manned the air, it rammed the ramparts, it took over the airports, it did everything it had to do, and at Fort McHenry, under the rocket's red glare it had nothing but victory."

Air superiority and control of airports is critical during time of war. *Airborne, All The Way* Commander! Ed

(INCOMING!!! continued....)



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Sept. - Oct. 2019 – Issue 88

Page 11 of 95

Why You Should Put A Coin In The Freezer

Have you ever come home from vacation, business trip or maybe a weekend away with the family, and noticed your digital clocks flashing the wrong time? You quickly realize that you had a power outage while you were away, but it's basically impossible to tell when it occurred or how long it lasted. It's, therefore, also impossible to tell just how long the food in your freezer may have thawed, gotten destroyed and then frozen again. Or is it?

The trick lies in the magical combination of three simple, but effective, tools everyone already has at home: a mug, a coin and some tap water.

You put a cup of water in your freezer.

Freeze it solid, then put a quarter on top of it and leave it in your freezer.



That way, when you come back after you've been evacuated, or have been on vacation, you can tell if your food went completely bad and just refroze, or if it stayed frozen while you were gone.

If the quarter has fallen to the bottom of the cup, that means all the food defrosted and you should throw it away.

But if the quarter is either on the top or in the middle of the cup, your food may still be OK.

It would be a great idea to leave this in your freezer all the time. Then, if you lose power for any reason, you will have this tip to fall back on. If you don't feel good about your food, just throw it out. The main thing is for all to be safe.

**Ray Chapman
RAA**

Them Diggers are smart! Ed

Remembering His Father From Iwo Jima

Thanks for the Iwo videos. Don't know if you knew it or not, but there were more Medals of Honor awarded for Iwo Jima than any other battle.

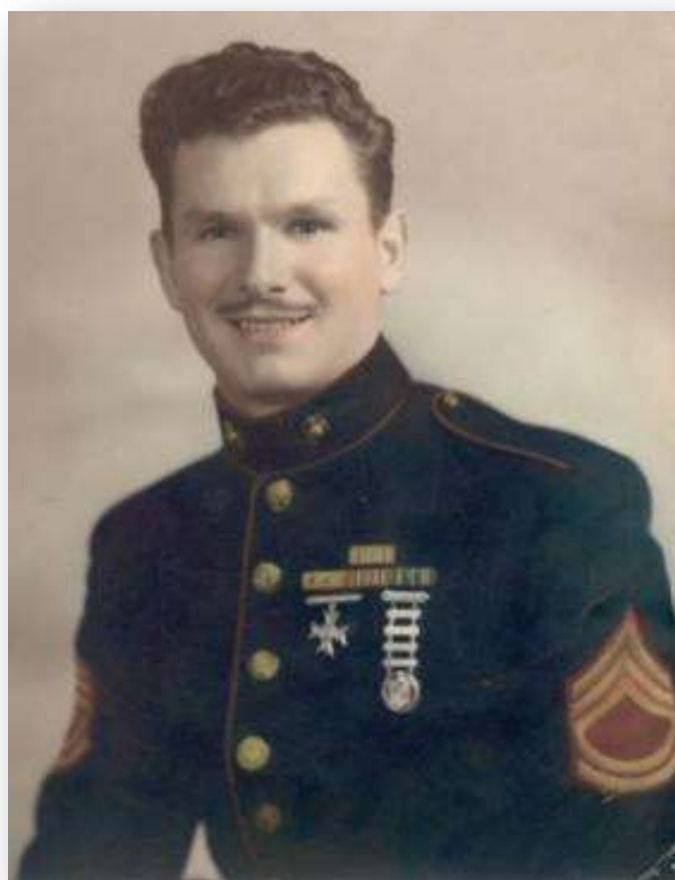
Hate to think that my father had to go through that hell. The Marines landed on 19 Feb. He was killed on 3 March. Lot of shit to go through.

A friend of my father wrote a note to my mother telling her how he was killed; *"I was with Tony when he was killed by a Jap sniper. He was shot in the head. Just wanted you to know he didn't feel no pain."*

Also got the picture you sent of Pam and me (see Issue 87, Page 12) when we visited you the first time.

Be well my friend.

**Tony Geishauser, Maj. (Ret)
Cowboy 173**



**Tony's dad, Anthony "Tony" Geishauser
USMC, KIA Iwo Jima, 19 February 1945.
*Semper Fi Marine!***

(INCOMING!!! continued....)



Yes, We Were Brothers

I didn't know that we were becoming brothers. Most of us wanted to be anywhere else.

We became friends by virtue of what we had in common back in the world. We became brothers because of what we endured together in Vietnam. Always, in the past, I had felt the connection with them across distance and time.

At reunions the reconnection was like wading into a swift current ... we were one again and no one wanted to be anywhere else.

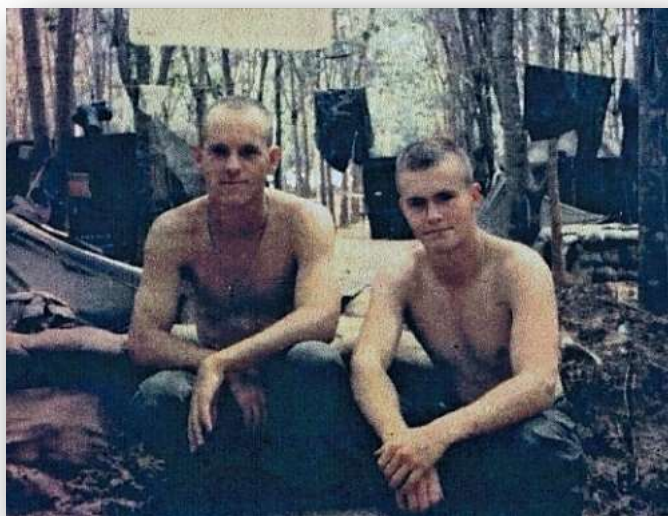
We walked on the beach and I listened to my brother's voice in the darkness; the same soft, quiet voice that I listened to in the darkness in the jungle. It is a form of time travel.

The poet, Alan Seeger, wrote:

***"War has its horrors, but has this of good:
That its sure processes sort out and bind
brave hearts in one intrepid brotherhood ..."***

Jim Bethea

HHC/2/503, '65/'66



L-R: Jim and Wayne Hoitt, two 2/503 commo boys in the rubber trees in 1965. Lifelong brothers.

More On The Brotherhood Of Soldiers

Just to let you know that I finished reading your return to Nam. It told me more about war than I ever wanted to know. Now I see why you didn't talk about it.

One thing I took away that I thought I understood before was the bond of brotherhood of soldiers. I'd seen it in movies and read about it in books but you somehow made it more tangible. It is probably still totally out of my grasp of understanding having not experienced it myself, but I'm a little closer.

I love you guy. Thanks.

Patrick Smith

(Youngest brother of a 2/503 Sky Soldier)

Seaborne Sky Soldiers

Here's another picture of that river crossing in October '66 showing a boat landing in War Zone "D". Alpha Company folks are in the boat --- **Gus Vendetti** 2nd from right, ready for action.

I'd swear I remember General Westmoreland standing in that group in the background on the heights above our embarkation site.

Bob Guy, Col. (Ret)

A/HHC/2/503



No DEROS Alpha Paratroopers...Oneth by air, twoeth by sea.

173d Colors at Wimbledon



And here we find Sky Soldier minister LT Ron Smith (B/2/503 & 3/319) with his "A" level tennis star bride, Cheryl, above center court at this year's Wimbledon in London. (*1LT's get all the pretty ones*). Look closely, in addition to their proudly displaying U.S. colors you'll see our 173d colors are there too in the form of his lapel pin. **ATW Ron!**



Memorandum for the President

Tuesday, November 21, 1967

(excerpt)

South Vietnam

Yesterday, the US Army **173d Airborne Brigade** encountered heavy contact about 14 miles southwest of Dak To. During the first few hours of the battle, helicopter operations were restricted due to intense enemy fire, but were able to effectively support thereafter. Late casualty data for this last reported Dak To engagement show 72 US killed, 85 wounded and 17 missing; 17 enemy dead have been counted thus far.

Cumulative casualties from the Dak To area for the period November 1 through November 20 are: Friendly 298 killed and 998 wounded, enemy 1,143 killed.

White House Situation Room

(signed)

James Brown, Briefing Officer

Headquarters MACV

November 1970

Monthly Summary

(excerpts)

FOR THE PRESS: This release has been prepared to present a review of significant events occurring in this command during November 1970.

(signed)

Wayne P. Orr
Colonel, USAF
Chief, PID

19 November:

IFFV (BINH DINH PROVINCE) – At 1905, an element of the **173rd Airborne Brigade** ambushed an estimated 10 enemy soldiers 11 miles north of Bong Son. The action lasted about 30 minutes and six enemy were killed. There were no U.S. casualties.

29 November:

IIFV (BINH DINH PROVINCE) – At about 1210, an element of the **173rd Airborne Brigade** and a Popular Force platoon engaged an estimated enemy squad with organic weapons 10 miles NNW of Bong Son. Five enemy soldiers were killed in the hour contact and four individual weapons were captured. One PF soldier was wounded. There were no U.S. casualties.



DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INWARD CABLEGRAM

AMENDED COPY (DECLASSIFIED)

10 June 1965

FROM: Australian Embassy, SAIGON

SECRET. IMMEDIATE.

For: A.H.Q. from command Q.A.F.V. OPS010

1. Air move from Australia completed.
2. Discharge of "Sydney" 242 personnel and 18 priority landrovers with trailers landed Vung Tau and moved to Bien Hoa by air completed 8th June. Balance of personnel allotted on basis of 2 per vehicle and escorts aboard small craft to carry stores to Saigon. All vehicles unloaded general cargo less 3 LCU loads unloaded. Expect completion late tonight. Detail of delay in unloading follows in OPS101.
3. Sea move from Vung Tau to Saigon. Four by LCM8 have arrived Bien Hoa. LST1 with vehicles due Saigon late afternoon tomorrow. LST2 with balance of vehicles and cargo should arrive Saigon 12 June. All movement by daylight.
4. 1 RAR, also less drivers and security detachments for small craft in location Bien Hoa. H.Q.A.A.F.V. and 709 Signal Troop less drivers complete in location Saigon. 1 R.A.R. proceeding with developing defences and limited close patrolling. No contact with the enemy. Morale high, health good, anticipate 1 R.A.R. operational by 19th June on completion of refresher training. Elements of 173 A.B. Brigade have carried out Heliborne search operations vicinity Bien Hoa with minor guerilla contacts only.
5. Communications to Australia most unsatisfactory due to failure ANTRC75 and extensive delays by alternate means.

MIN. 7& DEPT ARMY, A/MIN. & DEPT E.A.

MIN. & DEPT DEFENCE, P.M.'S



"Vung Tau, South Vietnam. 1965-06. Troops of the 1st Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), step ashore from a US landing craft that ferried them from the Australian troop carrier HMAS Sydney."



DEPARTMNT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

FROM:

Australian Embassy, SAIGON.

INWARD CABLEGRAM

Dated: 30th April 1, 1965

Rec'd: 1st May, 1965

429 SECRET.

(Declassified)

Australian Battalion.

Westmoreland called 29th April at Taylor's request to raise several points concerning Australian Battalion. I told him that most of these matters were subject of discussion in Washington but that I would report his enquiries.

2. Westmoreland said the Battalion would probably now be deployed at Bien Hoa. They would be working with two battalions of 173rd Airborne (sp) Brigade.

3. Westmoreland asked first about our attitude to his idea of organizing international mobile security task force. He said that in Bin Hoa -- Vung Tau area it would be preferable (at least in the first instance) to include only Americans, and some Korean troops. He hoped some Vietnamese might be added later but Vietnamese were not willing to accept American command at present. He still favoured idea of international force nevertheless, but not approached Koreans pending our reaction.

4. Westmoreland then raised question of role of battalion duties which it might and might not undertake. When I outlined position as set out paragraph 8 your 399 he asked.

(a) Whether any inhibitions would be placed on use of Battalion in combat, e.g. in Heliborn operations.

(b) Whether some elements could undertake any "civic action" tasks in Government controlled villages -- not as part of pacification program but on Ad Hoc project basis. As examples he cited bridge repair work by Pioneer Platoon and assistance by medical orderlies, and,

(c) Whether battalion might be re-deployed elsewhere in country from initial deployment area should situation make this desirable and subject to necessary prior consultation.

5. I said these were all questions on which Government decision would be needed. As regards 4(b) my own view was that we would need to explore question very thoroughly and carefully with Vietnamese authorities before any civic action work was undertaken in Government-controlled villages. Military Attache and I

doubt whether Battalion would in any case have sufficient specialist personnel to undertake such tasks. As to 4(c) Battalion could only operate as part of larger United States combat force.

6. Westmoreland said he would appreciate early advice of E.T.A. Australian Planning Team. Planning Team for 173rd Brigade had already been quietly brought in.

Anderson.

Australian Archives 1058, A1838/280

3014/10/15/3 PART 1, South Vietnam -- Australian Aid -- Australian Battalion 1965



"Bien Hoa, Vietnam, 1965-66. General William C. Westmoreland (left), Commander, US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, greets Sergeant Ken Prior of Sydney, NSW, watched by 2nd Lieutenant Bill Kains of Ulverstone, Tas, during his visit to 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR). General Westmoreland spent time in the area talking to officers and soldiers in tactical positions on the perimeter of Bien Hoa airfield."

(Photo by Duane, Bryan Rupert)



THE STORY OF A BLOODY BATTLE FOUGHT BY AUSTRALIANS IN VIETNAM

Kriv Stenders is probably best known for his homegrown hit *Red Dog*, a broad, nostalgic paean to Australian values traditionally defined, like mateship and hard yakka — or manual labor, to non-locals. He brings some of that same gloss to ***Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan***, which recreates one of the most famous skirmishes fought by Australian troops in Vietnam.

Orchestrated on an impressive scale, the movie nonetheless feels both familiar and diffuse, with thinly sketched variations on a bronzed theme rather than characters — appropriately enough for a film that aims to burnish a legend. A procession of Aussie stars make up the cast, led by *Vikings* leading man Travis Fimmel as the soldier in charge of an Australian army unit that finds itself surrounded by Viet Cong in the abandoned village of Long Tan. **Saban Films picked up North American rights last month.**

Stenders and his screenwriter Stuart Beattie (*Collateral*) begin at base camp Nui Dat, circa 1966, where Major Smith (Fimmel), an ex-Special Forces man, is fed up with babysitting green conscripts — most of them no older than 21. His superior officer (Richard Roxburgh) turns down his request to be transferred, instead sending him out to locate enemy positions. Before he goes, Smith calls a cocky private, Paul Large (Daniel Webber), into his tent and quite literally throttles him, in an unlikely scene that gives the diamond-eyed Fimmel a chance to return to the berserker ways of King Ragnar.

Fellow career soldiers such as Sergeant Buick (*Hacksaw Ridge*'s Luke Bracey, back in khaki) command more respect. Once Smith separates the company into roving platoons, Buick finds himself under fire and in command, pinned down with a broken radio. What follows, as Smith tries to reach his beleaguered men across a mustard-yellow haze of gunsmoke and monsoonal rain and is cornered in turn, is disorienting, even for those with a basic understanding of the battle's stages.

Editor Veronika Jenet cuts between the four isolated platoons, catching fire and trying to contact one another; command HQ, where Roxburgh and his subordinate (Anthony Hayes) tussle over whether to send reinforcements, a move which might leave the base vulnerable to attack; and a team of shirtless artillerymen elsewhere on the base, whose pinpoint-

accurate charges are the only things stopping the Australians from being overwhelmed by vastly superior enemy numbers. They receive coordinates from frightened radio operators in the field, forced to make split-second calculations that could cost fellow soldiers their lives.

A strain of insubordination runs through the pic, and it's embodied in the relationship between Smith and the young Pvt. Large. Tensions between the two come to a head when Smith calls down artillery on Buick's position and Large shoves the older man, enraged. Smith, in turn, refuses an order to withdraw because it would mean leaving his men behind. This clears the way for a rapprochement before the climactic battle, in which the farm boy reminisces about life back in the rural New South Wales town of Coolah and the major gets to show that he does care, after all.

Shooting in Queensland, the filmmakers have found a convincing double for the rubber plantation on which the actual battle took place, and digital effects are kept to a refreshing minimum as Huey choppers drop supplies, American fighter jets join the fray and APCs (Armoured Personnel Carriers) race to the rescue. The crosshatched comprehensiveness of the approach means the filmmakers have even included the Nui Dat concert given by popular Australian singers Little Pattie (Emmy Dougall) and Col Joye (Geoffrey Winter), who had to be flown out hastily once the battle was underway.

Rising stars Alexander England (*Alien: Covenant*) and Stephen Peacocke (*Me Before You*) pop up in supporting roles, but it's really Fimmel's story — of a mocking hard-ass who becomes a caring leader. The production notes liken the story of Long Tan to that of the 300 Spartans, which makes Major Smith something of a Leonidas figure. But the Spartans were not, in that instance, the invading force, and the statistics on which the film ends — 18 Australians killed next to 245 Vietnamese or more — are presented with tone-deaf triumphalism.

Production companies: Saboteur Media, Red Dune Films, Deeper Water Films



See Issue 44, Pages 29-34 of our newsletter for back story of *The Battle of Long Tan*. Ed



Helos Rain Flames on NVA Bunkers

By SPEC. 5 STEPHEN KROFT

LANDING ZONE UPLIFT, VIETNAM – The bright red and white barrels tumbled away from the CH47 Chinook helicopter and drifted down toward the heavily wooded hillside in enemy base area 226.

It seemed a full minute later before they were quietly swallowed up by the dense green foliage below. Quietly swallowed up, that is, until the UH1 Huey chase ship, spitting tracer bullets, turned the hillside into a raging inferno.

The barrels contained fougasse, a homemade version of napalm, which has been the **173rd Airborne Brigade's** most effective method of dealing with North Vietnamese Army troops clinging tenaciously to heavily fortified bunkers and caves sprinkled throughout the base area 38 miles north of Qui Nhon in II Military Region.

The **51st Chemical Det.**, attached to the airborne brigade, and the 180th Helicopter Co. from Tuy Hoa have dropped more than 3,000 gallons of fougasse on critical mountain passes and virtually impregnable bunker complexes since U.S. infantrymen first made contact with an estimated two battalions of North Vietnamese soldiers March 31, according to Capt. Nolan Adams, the brigade chemical officer.



Fougasse is made by adding a few pounds of M4 fuel thickener to a 55-gallon drum of gasoline. The 16 drums are packed in cargo nets and hauled away by Chinooks, which drop them on selected targets marked with smoke by an accompanying chase ship.

On impact, the drums flatten out, Adams said, splattering the gooey, syrup-like fougasse over a 50-to 75-meter area. Waiting a few seconds for the fuel to spread out, the chase ship darts in and ignites the area with tracer bullets from M60 machine guns.

Fougasse, which can turn a jungle path into a bed of ashes within seconds, has been credited with neutralizing critical infiltration routes used by the enemy as avenues of escape from U.S. infantrymen still combing the area.

The gas also has been effective in burning off heavily booby-trapped areas, clearing the way for American ground forces, Adams said. *"We have had reports of secondary explosions running into three digits,"* he said.

The gas has a number of advantages over napalm, Adams said. *"First of all, when we have a Chinook on call, we can be over a target in a matter of minutes, while it might take up to half an hour for a jet with napalm to be on target. All our assets are controlled by the Army, so we can plan our operations accordingly,"* he said.

Another advantage, added Adams, is that fougasse is more fluid than the jelly-like napalm. *"We will fly over a rocky area with boulders and caves, drop the fougasse, and then let it settle for a few minutes before firing it up,"* he said. *"That way it has time to seep through the crevices. There are very few ways the NVA can get away from us."*

The Chinooks, according to SSgt. Bruce Strong, also are more accurate at dropping their loads than the faster jets.

"If we have troops in close contact," Strong said, *"We'll go in as low as 200 feet, and at that height we can drop it within 50 meters of U.S. troops without endangering them."*

Most of the missions are flown at an altitude of about 2,000 feet, Strong said. *"The higher you fly, the farther the barrels spread out, giving you much wider coverage."*

Fifty to 75 meters doesn't look like much of an area from the air," Strong said, *"but I'll bet it looks a hell of a lot different from the ground. I just hope I'm never down there to find out."*



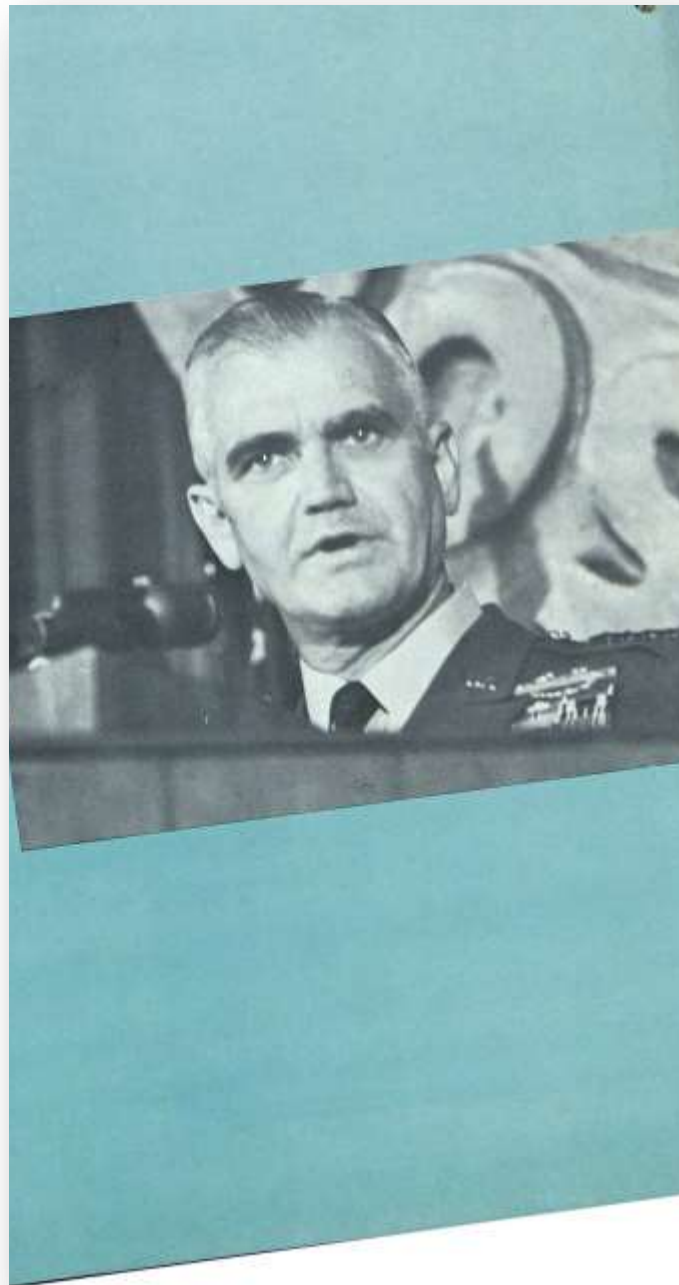
A demonstration of fougasse.



From *Army Digest*, January 1970....

UNITED STATES ARMY THE CHIEF OF STAFF TO THE OFFICERS OF THE ARMY:

These are challenging times for those of us who share responsibility for the leadership of the Army. Faced with severe personnel turnover and reduced levels of experience, we are required more than ever to draw on fundamental principles as guides for our actions. Moreover, today's society provides less support than formerly for traditional values. Thus, the individual officer bears even more responsibility for the establishment and observance of scrupulous, ethical standards.



I want to make it clear beyond any question that absolute integrity of an officer's word, deed, and signature is a matter that permits no compromise. Inevitably, in the turmoil of the times, every officer will be confronted by situations which test his character. On these occasions he must stand on his principles, for these are the crucial episodes that determine the worth of a man.

While basic laws underlie command authority, the real foundation of successful leadership is the moral authority derived from professional competence and integrity. Competence and integrity are not separable. The officer who sacrifices his integrity sacrifices all, he will lose the respect and trust of those he seeks to lead, and he will degrade the reputation of his profession. The good repute of the officer corps is a responsibility shared by every officer. Each one of us stands in the light of his brother officer, and each shares in the honor and burden of leadership. Dedicated and selfless service to our country is our primary motivation. This makes our profession a way of life rather than just a job.

In this uncertain world our best judgments may prove wrong. But there is only one sure path to honor - unfaltering honesty and sincerity in word and deed. I charge every officer to shoulder his responsibility, as I expect every officer to earn our Nation's trust.

W. C. WESTMORELAND
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff



~ The Cadet Creed ~

I am an Army Cadet. Soon I will take an oath and become an Army Officer committed to Defending the values which make this nation great. Honor is my touchstone. I understand Mission first and People always.

I am the Past- the spirit of those warriors who made the final sacrifice.

I am the Present- the scholar and apprentice soldier enhancing my skills in the science of warfare and the art of Leadership.

But above all, I am the Future- the future Warrior Leader of the United States Army. May god give me the compassion and judgment to lead and the gallantry in battle to Win.

I Will Do My Duty.



2/503 Sky Soldier

James Harold Strode, CSM

1932 ~ 2019

Command Sergeant Major (Ret) James Harold Strode, 86, Lexington, formerly of Oak Grove, died Wednesday, July 31st, 2019, at Bluegrass Hospice of natural causes.



A native of Boligee, Alabama, he was born August 26, 1932, the son of the late Emmett Strode and Julia Crawford Strode. He was preceded in death by his wife Cora Lee Lockhart Strode of Clarksville, TN, and a son Stephen Lynn Strode.

He was a retired Command Sergeant Major who entered the US Army on January 26, 1953. His career spanned 28 years during which he served one tour in Korea, three tours in Germany and two tours in Vietnam where he participated in a combat parachute jump with the 2d Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Command Sergeant Major Strode's most recent key assignments are: Senior Instructor Airborne Department, Ft. Benning, GA, First Sergeant Co B, 1st Battalion (MECH) 17th Infantry, Camp Howze, Korea, First Sergeant Co A, 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry, Ft. Campbell, KY, Assistant Commandant NCO Academy, Ft. Campbell, KY, Senior Enlisted Advisor, Army Reserve, Livonia, MI, and Command Sergeant Major 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry, Ft. Campbell, KY.

Command Sergeant Major Strode received the following decorations and awards: Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal 8th Award, Occupation Medal (Germany), National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Vietnam Service Medal with Arrowhead and four Campaign Stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device, Combat Infantryman Badge and Master Parachutist Badge. During his career, CSM Strode made over 150 military jumps.

He is survived by his son, Dr. Darryl Strode (Mariya) of Lexington, KY; two brothers, John Strode (Severe) and Vernon Strode (Willie Dell) of Boligee, AL; four grandchildren, Cora, Daniel, Anna Maria, and Olivia Strode of Lexington, KY and a host of other relatives and friends. He is being buried with full military honors.

In lieu of flowers contributions can be made to The Boys and Girls Clubs of Hopkinsville-Christian County, 1600 S. Walnut Street, Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

Rest Easy Command Sergeant Major



WWII, Korea, Vietnam 3rd Award

Combat Infantryman's Badge

CSM Larry (Okie) Okendo



Caption reads: "CSM (Ret.) LARRY OKENDO (OKIE) received a specially engraved certificate and Triple C.I.B. Badge from the Secretary of the Army, JOHN O. MARCH JR. 41 other Triple C.I.B. recipients were present to receive similar recognition."

Larry passed away at the age of 95 on July 20, 2017.



Ten things most Veterans don't know about VA home loans

More than 21 million Veterans and Servicemembers live in the U.S. today, but only about 6 percent of them bought a home using a VA home loan in the past five years. That percentage could be much higher.



Eligible Veterans often bypass the program as a viable option for a number of reasons.

First, they may not know all the advantages. Second, they may think getting a VA loan is an arduous process to be avoided. Last, some lenders don't take the time to teach Veterans about the program, or don't know much about it themselves. The VA home loan is a program non-military home buyers wish they had access to.

My advice: take a few minutes to learn these 10 facts about the program, and you'll all but forget about any other home buying or refinance option.

1. No down payment, no mortgage insurance

These are perhaps the biggest advantages to a VA loan. You don't need a down payment. None whatsoever. Most mortgage programs, such as FHA and conventional loans, require at least 3.5 percent to five percent down. That's up to \$12,500 on a \$250,000 home purchase.

With a VA loan, you can buy immediately, rather than years of saving for a down payment. With a VA loan, you also avoid steep mortgage insurance fees. At 5 percent down, private mortgage insurance (PMI) costs \$150 per month on a \$250,000 home, according to PMI provider MGIC.

With a VA loan, this buyer could afford a home worth \$30,000 more with the same monthly payment, simply by eliminating PMI. Using a VA loan saves you money upfront, and tremendously increases your buying power.

2. Use your benefit again and again

Your VA home loan benefit is not one-and-done. You can use it as many times as you want. Here's how. Assume you purchased a home with a VA loan. But now, you've outgrown the home and need something bigger. When you sell the home and pay off the VA loan completely, you can re-use your benefit to buy another home. Your entitlement is restored in full.

But that's not the only way to re-use your benefit. Eligible Veterans and Servicemembers can receive a one-time restoration when they pay off the VA loan, but keep the home. This scenario comes into play if you purchased the home long ago, and have paid off the loan. It also applies if you have refinanced the VA mortgage with a non-VA loan.

In these cases, you can keep the home, and enjoy the benefits of VA home buying one more time.

3. Your benefit never expires

Once you have earned eligibility for the VA home loan, it never goes away. Those who served 20, 30, even 50 years ago often wonder whether they can still buy a home today if they never used their benefit. If eligibility can be established, the answer is yes.

Eligibility is based on the length of time served, and the period in which you served. For instance, a U.S. Army Veteran with at least 90 days in service during the Vietnam era is likely eligible.

To check eligibility, first obtain your DD Form 214. With that document, a VA-approved lender can request your VA Certificate of Eligibility for you, or you can request it directly from VA's eBenefits website. You may be eligible to buy a home using a VA home loan, even if you served long ago.

4. Surviving spouses may be eligible

More than 3,000 surviving spouses purchased a home with their fallen partner's VA benefit in 2015. Un-remarried husbands and wives of Servicemembers who were killed in action can buy a home with zero down payment and no mortgage insurance. Plus, the VA funding fee is waived.

There's no way to repay the spouse of a fallen hero, but this benefit surely helps them move forward after tragedy.

5. VA Loan Rates Are Lower

According to loan software company Ellie Mae, VA loan rates are typically about 0.25% lower than those of conventional loans. The VA backs the mortgages, making them a lower risk for lenders. Those savings are passed on to Veterans.

Additionally, VA loans come with some of the lowest foreclosure rates of any loan type, further reducing risk for lenders. No surprise here, but Veterans and Servicemembers take homeownership seriously. These factors add up to lower rates and affordable payments for those who choose a VA loan.

6. VA loans are available from local lenders

The VA home loan is unlike most other VA benefits. This benefit is available from private companies, not the government itself. The Department of Veterans Affairs does not take applications, approve the loans, or issue funds. Private banks, credit unions, and mortgage companies do that.

The VA provides insurance to lenders. It's officially called the VA guaranty. The VA assures the lender that it will be repaid if the Veteran can no longer make payments. In turn, lenders issue loans at superior terms. In short, a VA loan gives you the best of both worlds. You enjoy your benefit, but have the convenience and speed of working with your chosen lender.

(continued....)



7. Buy, refinance or tap into home equity

The VA home loan benefit is not just for buying homes. Sure, it provides unmatched home buying advantages, but you can also use it to refinance your existing mortgage, whether it's a VA loan or not.

Homeowners with a VA loan can use the Interest Rate Reduction Refinancing Loan, or IRRRL, to easily drop their rate and payment without an appraisal, or even paystubs, W2s or bank statements. The VA streamline refinance, as it is commonly known, gives VA loan holders a faster, cheaper way to access lower refinance rates when rates fall.

Even homeowners without a VA loan can use a VA refinance. The VA cash-out loan is available to eligible Veterans who don't have a VA loan currently. As its name suggests, a VA cash-out refinance can be used to turn your home's equity into cash. You simply take out a bigger loan than what you currently owe. The difference is issued to you at closing.

The VA cash-out loan amount can be up to 100 percent of your home's value in many cases. Use the proceeds for any purpose – home improvements, college tuition, or even a new car. Many homeowners today are dropping their rate and taking cash out simultaneously, accomplishing two goals at once.

But you don't have to take out cash to use this VA loan option. You can also use it to pay off a non-VA loan. Eligible homeowners who pay mortgage insurance or are dealing with other undesirable loan characteristics should look into refinancing with a VA loan. It can eliminate PMI, get you into a stable fixed-rate loan, pay off a second mortgage, or simply reduce your rate to make homeownership more affordable.

8. Lenient guidelines for lower credit scores, bankruptcy, foreclosure

Unlike many loan programs, a lower credit score, bankruptcy or foreclosure does not disqualify you from a VA home loan.

Shop around at various lenders, because each will have its own stance on past credit issues. However, VA guidelines do not state a minimum credit score to qualify. This gives lenders leniency to approve loans with lower scores. In addition, VA considers your credit re-established when you have established two years of clean credit following a foreclosure or bankruptcy.

Many homeowners across the U.S., military and civilian, experience bankruptcies and foreclosures due to a loss of income, medical emergency or unforeseen event. Fortunately, these financial setbacks don't permanently bar VA-eligible home buyers from ever owning again. The exception, though, is a foreclosure involving a VA home loan. In this case, you may need to pay back the amount owed on the foreclosed VA loan to regain eligibility. But for most home buyers with past credit issues, a VA home loan could be their ticket to homeownership.

9. Funding fee waivers

VA typically charges a funding fee to defray the cost of the program and make home buying sustainable for future Veterans. The fee is between 0.50 percent and 3.3 percent of the loan amount, depending on service history and the loan type.

However, not everyone pays the VA funding fee. Disabled Veterans who are receiving compensation for a service-connected disability are exempt. Likewise, Veterans who are eligible for disability compensation, but are receiving retirement or active duty pay instead, are also exempt from the fee.

10. Buy a condo with a VA loan

You can buy many types of properties with a VA loan, including a single-family (free-standing) home, a home of up to four units, and even manufactured homes. But condominiums are commonly overlooked by VA home buyers.

Condominiums are ideal starter homes. Their price point is often lower than that of single-family homes. And, condos are often the only affordable option in many cities. The VA maintains a list of approved condominium communities. Veterans can search by city, state, or even condominium name on VA's condo search tool. It's not a short list. For example, there are more than 2,400 approved condo communities in Washington State, about 1,000 in Texas, and a staggering 9,000 in California.

As a Veteran or Servicemember, consider the array of home types when shopping for a home.

11. There are more than 10 reasons to use a VA home loan

The preceding 10 facts are just a few, and there are actually many more reasons to use your VA loan benefit. You've certainly earned it.

The freedom afforded to this country by members of all branches of the military, past and present, is not easily repaid. But consider this program a small "thank you" for your service and dedication.

Tim Lucas is a former mortgage professional of 12 years, and currently editor of *The Mortgage Reports*, an online resource for today's home buyer and homeowner.



Source:



SSG Harvey C. Reynolds Was A Lion

I was a machine-gunner with the 1st platoon of Company "C," 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry in the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, when Sergeant Reynolds joined our platoon. He was the first Squad Leader and later became our Platoon Sergeant.



I recall that he didn't like anything about the rear area or the state-side Army which is probably why they never promoted him. He was good in the field, hardcore and the most fearless man I've ever met. It's a shame that no one, other than his men, recognized his leadership abilities. He was a "soldier's soldier" and spoke his mind when it came to welfare of his troops.

On 18 May 67 our platoon went to the aid of an element of B Company who were ambushed on a water run. We were on hill 424 in Duc Pho province and they were in heavy contact taking casualties. Our platoon walked into a bunker complex and we immediately came under heavy fire. I was shot in the back of the head during the initial contact and someone took my machinegun, thinking I was dead.

Sergeant Reynolds showed up at my side cursing the enemy and calling for an M-79 man and his grenade launcher. The individual who shot me was still firing on us and Sergeant Reynolds was determined to get him. What amazed and inspired me was that Sergeant Reynolds showed no fear. He wasn't hugging the ground like everyone else. He just knelt there beside me like he was bullet proof.

When the M-79 man didn't show up, Sergeant Reynolds walked back through all that firing, grabbed the M-79 and came back to me still cursing the enemy. During his stay with me on hill 424, Sergeant Reynolds continued to engage that bunker even though he took one round through the bicep. He continually exposed himself to fire so much that his canteen and load bearing equipment were riddled with bullet holes.

During the medevac, I heard Sergeant Reynolds arguing with the Lieutenant that he just had a flesh wound and did not want to leave the field. They took him out of there kicking and screaming.

Later at the aid station, I heard him looking for a ride back out to hill 424. He was complaining about being stuck in the rear with a bunch of REMF'S when he should be out there fighting.

I'm pretty sure he got his ride because he never appeared at the evac hospital like he was supposed to.

Sergeant Reynolds paid me a visit just before I left the aid station. He came to show me his arm and all the holes the enemy had shot through his fatigue shirt.

I'll never forget Sergeant Harvey C. Reynolds, he's one of the rare ones you would follow to hell and back.

John Yeager & Frank J. McCloskey

More About This Remarkable Soldier

Harvey C. Reynolds was a good old boy from Florida who was our Platoon Sergeant in 1967. He was a Regular. He had made one or both of the combat jumps with the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team in Korea. He had also been to demolitions school.

Once, a man stepped on a "bouncing betty" mine, which fires when you step off of it -- he felt the plunger go down and froze. He told the rest of us that he was on a mine, and our Engineer came to the spot and dug around his boot, placed a big rock down on it as the troop took his foot out, and they moved away. The Engineer blew it in place with C-4. While the replacement of the foot with a rock was going on Sergeant Reynolds stood three feet away. He didn't have to endanger himself, but it made the two men who were involved that much more steady.

He didn't have a whole lot of education. He called the enemy bad names that were already out of date; it was like he was calling Germans "Huns." He would not have liked the idea of political correctness. He was just a good old Regular like Kipling was talking about when he wrote *"The backbone of the Army is the non-commissioned man."*

He was always doing things like replacing the firing caps in fragmentation grenades with the ones from smoke grenades, so they would blow instantly, and setting them out with tripwires to make booby traps. I kept away from him when he was putting them out or getting them in.

When I got wounded he was up on a little rise in the ground and he yelled at me, *"Come up here, I can see them."* I said something rude to him because that meant they could see him, too. The other writer of this memorial says they shot off his bootlaces there, but he didn't get hurt.

He went back to Vietnam to do another tour and was killed. A big salute for you, Sarge.

I think he'd love it that we remembered him this long and wrote this up for him.

John Yeager, Jr



Ted Williams: American Hero

*A Veteran's Story graphic by
Dominique Ramirez*



Teddy Samuel Williams was born August 30, 1918, in San Diego, California. He grew up in a family which loved baseball and his uncle taught him how to play the game when he was only eight years old. Showing great promise in high school, the young Williams was actively recruited by Major League teams such as the New York Yankees and the St. Louis Cardinals. Williams decided to stay in San Diego, playing for his local minor league club, the Padres.

In 1939, Williams joined the Boston Red Sox and the rest was history. He excelled with his new club from the very beginning, placing fourth in league Most Valuable Player (MVP) voting in his rookie year. In 1941, Williams batted a .406 average, a feat which has never been repeated in professional baseball. Williams finished the season with 37 home runs, 120 runs batted in (RBI), and a slugging percentage of .735.

Williams' heroics on the field earned him several nicknames over the years, including "The Thumper," "The Splendid Splinter," "The Kid," and "Teddy Ballgame."

Beyond his heroic contributions to America's pastime, Williams was a U.S. Veteran and enlisted in the military in 1942, after the U.S. entered World War II. He joined the Navy Reserve on May 22, 1942, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps as a Naval Aviator in 1944.

Williams was part of only 10 percent of Navy fliers to earn their wings, graduating at the top of his class at the Pensacola Naval Air Base.

Refusing to play on a service team, he chose combat and refused the chance at discharge.

After his service to his country, Williams returned to playing baseball at the highest level for the Red Sox, breaking numerous records and earning the highest honors in the sport. In 1946 and 1949, he was named the American League's MVP and in June 1960, became the fourth player in MLB history to hit 500 home runs.

Williams was selected to the All-Star Team a total of 17 times.

In 1952, Williams was recalled to the military to participate in the Korean War conflict. He joined the Third Marine Air Wing, 223rd Squadron. Williams participated in numerous flying missions during his second stint in the military. He was hit by enemy fire during a mission over Kyomipo, Korea but safely crash-landed uninjured, flying again the very next day.

Williams flew a total of 39 missions and earned numerous military accolades and medals during his military tenure. He left the military in 1953 as a result of personal health issues.

Following his military career, Williams returned to baseball until 1960. In the final at-bat of his career, he hit his 521st home run. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1966, in his first year of eligibility.

Ted Williams passed away on July 5, 2002. We honor your service, Ted.

Source:

www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/60062/ted-williams-american-hero/



Is exercise that's too intensive resulting in your angina?



Navy Hospitalman Kiana Bartonsmith checks a patient's heart rate at Naval Branch Health Clinic Kings Bay in Georgia, one of Naval Hospital Jacksonville's six health care facilities. (U.S. Navy photo by Jacob Sippel)

4/8/2019

By: Military Health System Communications Office

Coronary artery disease is the most common type of heart disease and the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. Arteries carry oxygenated blood throughout the body including to the heart muscle. Over time, plaque can build up in the arteries, which harden and constrict blood flow to the heart. When the heart does not get enough blood, the body's response is angina. Angina is experienced as a feeling of tightness or pressure in the chest that can also radiate out to the neck, jaw, back, or shoulders. Women may also experience nausea, shortness of breath, or fatigue. Angina can be exercise-induced or caused by other symptoms of heart disease.

"Any time the heart's demand for oxygen is greater than the supply, there is a chance for angina," said Dr. Jamalrah Munir, a cardiologist at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. *"Angina most commonly occurs during physical exertion, such as walking quickly up a hill or flights of stairs."* Increases in blood pressure or stress, abnormally fast heart rhythms, severe illness, or anemia can also raise the risk of experiencing angina, she added.

Preventing coronary artery disease is the goal, Munir said. This means eating a whole-food, plant based diet with minimal animal products, as well as exercising regularly, sleeping well, reducing stress, and refraining from smoking.

Even with these preventive measures, exercise can induce angina even in presumably healthy individuals. *"When you exercise, your heart needs more oxygen and nutrients,"* said Munir. *"If the demand outstrips the supply, the result is angina."*

Someone with angina would experience a dull sensation rather than a sharp pain, which typically comes on gradually during exercise and can improve with rest, she added. Nitroglycerin, a medication that relaxes the arteries and increases blood flow, can alleviate chest tightness and pressure.

"Should you experience persistent angina while at rest or at lower levels of activity, seek medical care immediately for a possible heart attack," Munir cautioned.

The temptation might be to think that if exercise induces angina, the safest course of action would be to remain on the couch. Munir disagrees, stating that when it comes to daily exercise, it doesn't have to be intense or done all at once. *"Some people complain that they can't make it to the gym for a full workout, but if they walk for 10 minutes after each meal, that adds up to 30 minutes a day."* Moderate exercise combined with strength training, stretching, meditation, or yoga practice is all important to cardiovascular health, she added.

A physician can test for indicators of coronary artery disease – high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythm, or high cholesterol – that contribute to angina. Medications can stabilize or reduce these symptoms when combined with other healthy habits such as regular exercise.

"If the combination of medication and lifestyle changes isn't effective, invasive procedures such as coronary stents and open heart bypass surgery are options to consider," said Munir.

To protect health, especially the heart, *"dietary and lifestyle modification are the cornerstone of prevention and treatment of coronary artery disease,"* she added. *"Incorporating small changes into your lifestyle can make a big difference."*



~ WHY WE SALUTE ~

THE SALUTE is an act of recognition between military men and women. Its origin is in the ancient European custom of free men greeting each other by holding up their right hand to show that they had no arms. Prisoners do not salute. They are denied this "privilege".

THE JUNIOR salutes first, which is similar to the civilian customs and courtesies shown to elders, women and persons placed in positions of authority.

WHERE AND WHEN to salute. Salutes are exchanged out of doors, usually at a distance of from 6 to 30 paces. The best general rule to follow, is to salute at the moment recognition or eye-to-eye contact is made.

SALUTING INDOORS. Normally no one salutes indoors. Exceptions to this rule are: reporting for pay, reporting to an inspecting officer, reporting to a visiting officer of rank greater than anyone in the room, reporting when summoned by an officer, and reporting when permission has been granted to speak with an officer.

SALUTING THE COLORS. When passing the colors or when the colors are passing by, the salute is rendered and held from a distance of 6 paces BEFORE, to 6 paces AFTER.

WHEN IN DOUBT as to where and when to salute – "SALUTE".

Source: Military document GTA 21-2-6, March 1969



His old RTO salutes his commander, the late LTC Bob Carmichael, 2/503 Bn XO/CO, '65/'66, at 173d reunion in Texas...lest pushups become required.

Texas Vets may have the Cowboy cheerleaders....



Photo by Jennifer Roy

VA North Texas Health Care System as part of their community outreach efforts, to perform for and visit with Veterans. The Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders visited several areas of the medical center, spending time meeting and talking with our Veterans.

The Cowboys have a long-standing relationship with VA North Texas, taking time throughout the year to visit with our Veterans.

But, 2/503 Sky Soldiers in Florida have Hooter's girls!!!



Here he is again, the late LTC Bob Carmichael, our friend and former 2/503 battalion XO/CO in RVN '65/'66, exercising his privilege of rank at one of the 2/503 reunions in Cocoa Beach, FL some years back. "RTO! Bring me another drink!" An actual statement offered by his wife, Exie: "He looks like a deer caught in the headlights." Rest easy RBC, we miss you, Bob.





The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (Appeals Modernization Act) is one of the most significant statutory changes to affect VA and Veterans in decades. Veterans now have a greater choice in how VA reviews their disagreement with a VA claims decision and enjoy timely resolutions of disagreements through a streamlined process.

Veterans who appealed a VA decision on or after Feb. 19, 2019, have three decision review lanes to choose from: higher-level review, supplemental claim, and appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

VA's goal is to complete supplemental claims and higher-level reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board for direct review in an average of 365 days. This is a vast improvement to the average three to seven years that Veterans wait for a decision in the legacy process.

For more information on Appeals Modernization, visit: <https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/>

Vantage Point

News and Resources for Veterans, their Families, Caregivers, and Survivors



VetTix: Free/Discounted Sports and Concert Tickets

The Veteran Tickets Foundation provides free and discounted event tickets (with a nominal delivery fee) to Veterans, active-duty military, their families, and immediate family survivors. VetTix provides these tickets to reduce stress, strengthen family bonds, build life-long memories and encourage local engagement. VetTix secures tickets to sporting events, concerts, performing arts, educational and family activities across the nation.

Join the VetTix discussion on [Rallpoint.com](https://www.rallpoint.com)

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Excerpt from *News Dispatches*, 4 March '67....

95 Killed In Bombing Of Village

Unidentified Jets Hit S. Vietnamese; U.S. Is Investigating

SAIGON, March 4 (Saturday) – In ground action yesterday, a company of about 150 men of the 173d Airborne Brigade suffered heavy casualties when ambushed by Vietcong in War Zone C, about 70 miles northwest of Saigon.

In a hit-an-run attack, the guerrillas exploded a mine against lead elements of the paratroop patrol, then showered the company with grenades and automatic weapons fire.

Air strikes and artillery were called in, and the Vietcong withdrew into the dense jungle near the Cambodian border.

A well-concealed enemy base camp was later found near the site of the ambush, U.S. military spokesmen said today. The heavy losses suffered by the company render it incapable of operating as a fighting unit until it receives replacements.

The paratroop patrol was part of the Operation Junction City offensive in which some 45,000 American troops are sweeping the Vietcong stronghold. The 11-day drive has failed to flush the enemy's main force, but there have been at least two other company-sized battles in which both sides have taken heavy casualties.

Note:

Above report does not identify the date(s) or which 173d unit(s) were involved in the action referenced, but according to the 173d KIA list, the brigade suffered a combined total of 46 KIA from the 1/503, 2/503, 4/503 and Engineers, with 26 2/503 troopers killed in action, between March 3, 1967 – April 1, 1967. Ed



Nailed it!

Set the new MA state Record for jump-geezers over 70 years old: 7-man formation with 2 points (different designs).

The team included 2 who served with 82nd, 1 - with the 101st, 1 - 3rd Infantry, 2 - Marines and, of course, one from the Herd Chapter 17. Guests included Doc Mafood, 3-tour B-Med bud.

Old soldiers never die, they just keep skydiving!

Skip Kniley

B/D/3/319



Skip, 72, packs his chute.



Skip coming in for a standing landing.

Congratulations to Skip and his crew, but we continue to be amazed with what cheap liquor causes old paratroopers to do.

William Warren Flynn, Jr.

B/2/503

Decorated veteran passes

William Warren Flynn, Jr., 72, of Hampton, NH, died peacefully Monday, April 29, at Portsmouth Regional Hospital. 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 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, his brother Patrick Flynn and his wife, Ann, his sister Geraldine Flynn, his grandson, Sean Flynn, Jr., and granddaughter, Keira Flynn, by whom he was lovingly known as Grandpa Red, and his niece, Julie Jenks, as well as several extended family members.

After cremation, private interment with military honors were held in the Massachusetts National Cemetery, Bourne.



From the archives -- *you ain't goin' home anytime soon
Airborne, and get ready to fight....*

OUTGOING TELEGRAM DEPARTMENT OF STATE TOP SECRET

(Declassified 7/5/78)

ACTION: Amembassy SAIGON

INFO: CINPAC

6/17/65

JOINT STAFF-DEFENSE MESSAGE

Six battalions referred to reftel are three maneuver battalions of the Army Infantry Brigade scheduled for deployment in the Qhi Hahn- (sp) Nha Trang-Cam Ranh Bay area and three maneuver battalions of the Army Airborne Brigade originally scheduled to replace the (two battalions) 173rd Airborne Brigade now in country.

Realize that with deployments as presently approved, the net increase of maneuver battalions would be only four since plans envisaged withdrawal of 173rd Airborne Brigade; however, a Washington decision to retain the 173rd Airborne Brigade in SVN is pending. You will be advised as soon as decision is reached on this and other deployments discussed on Amb Taylor recent Washington visit, following which you will wish obtain GVN clearance.

The total strength of 70-75,000 would include approximately 8,000 increase in aforementioned two brigades with the remainder of increase in air, logistics and support units and personnel.

The 21,000 combat personnel mentioned include 13,370 reported by MACV in NMCC telecom 111000Z and personnel in the brigades above on the way.

6/19/65

(Excerpt, Declassified 1/29/80)

The 16 June public announcement covered only deployments which already had Washington and GVN approval. These with the retention of the 173d Bde would result in an authorized in-country strength of approximately 74,000.

Maneuver battalions refer to type U.S. battalions, in this case Army airborne and infantry, as described by COMUSMACV in reftel (c).

If there are GVN questions concerning identity, missions, deployment times, and location of additional two brigades which in effect is retention of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, you should explain this retention still under study here. If we conclude this desirable, we will give you results that study to convey to GVN at same time we consult with them on whether they agree retention required.

OUTGOING TELEGRAM DEPARTMENT OF STATE TOP SECRET (Declassified 7/5/78)

JOINT MISSION MESSAGE

FM AMEM SAIGON TO RUEHCER/SECSTATE WASHDC

In further development proposed handling question of broader combat mission for U.S. forces in Vietnam discussed in reftel, mission elements involved have concurred in text given below for use in response to inquiries when initial combat mission support undertaken.

Prospect of expanded mission for US combat forces here has been discussed of course to some extent by various correspondents and in fact MACV spokesman two weeks ago pointed out that both Marines and Airborne Brigade have combat support role, in addition to defensive mission. However, while there has thus been some public awareness of expanded mission, do not believe import of decision has fully sunk home and we expect that questions will be raised when and if first such actual combat support mission is undertaken. In that event, we would propose to use text below in responding to questions.

MISSION OF US FORCES IN VIETNAM

The mission of the USMC III Marine amphibious force and the US Army 173rd Airborne Brigade are to assist in the defense of the key installations in their area of responsibility and to provide combat support to the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam as the situation requires. The conduct of an effective defense will involve patrolling in depth and clearing operations in areas contiguous to their base areas. In their combat role, they are available to assist RVNAF in operations in close coordination with appropriate RVNAF commanders. End. NOTE: PASSED DOD AT 9:30 AM, 5/20/65



March 30, 1965. Wrecked interior of Embassy in Saigon.



Clandestine Therapy

By Chuck Dean / Vet 2 Vet

In the April edition of *VegasVoice*, I touched on the veteran suicide issues. I wrote, *"Warriors train to be resilient and not to care in the face of hardships. However, the downside of that is NOT asking for help..."*

I, for one, did not seek help for PTSD, etc. until the mid-1990's. That was 30 years after the war! Then, unintentionally, something happened that paved a way for me to find some help I needed.

It began with a "bull-session" with a few veterans.

We were talking about our war experiences, and most of us shared (for the first time) our personal reactions to the war. And we had understanding listeners! There was a certain safety in knowing that the others had faced similar mental and emotional battles.

On the surface it didn't look like we were asking for help, but below that combat crust we were. None of us had gone to the VA seeking answers; we just couldn't risk coming out in the open to bare our souls to a strange counselor.

That little group, however, became a gateway through that wall of not asking for help. As a result, every man eventually ended up getting professional help, and it was our bull-session that started the ball rolling. It gradually eased us into the channel we needed to get ourselves right.

We were lucky to have those simple group conversations. Not everyone can so easily find such an opportunity.

However, in today's world that really isn't much of a problem. There are some good online discussion-based social platforms.

Reddit was a good one to hook-up with. Just log on and type in a particular issue (anxiety, depression, etc.) and you will be directed to forums of real people with similar experiences. The bonus is that the anonymity provides a shield of needed protection until you're comfortable enough to take it a step further.

Not enough can be said about the value of vet-to-vet conversations. One of the best ways is by connecting with local vets in your area.

Point Man International is a vet-to-vet organization and has local group outreaches across the country. Check 'em out: <http://www.pmim.org> or call 1-800-877-8387.

Chuck Dean served as an Army paratrooper with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam and through that experience was led to address the many transitional issues veterans struggle with. He is the author of several important books for veterans.

All can be found on Amazon at:

<http://www.amazon.com/author/chuckdeanbooks>

(Reprinted from July 2019 issue of *VegasVoice* courtesy of Chuck)



VA overhauls religious and spiritual symbol policies to protect religious liberty

July 3, 2019

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently revised its directives permitting religious literature, symbols and displays at VA facilities to protect religious liberty for Veterans and families while ensuring inclusivity and nondiscrimination.

The move aims to simplify and clarify the department's policies governing religious symbols, and spiritual and pastoral care, which have been interpreted inconsistently at various VA facilities in recent years, resulting in unfortunate incidents that interrupted certain displays.

Effective July 3, these changes will help ensure that patrons within VA have access to religious literature and symbols at chapels as requested and protect representations of faith in publicly accessible displays at facilities throughout the department.

"We want to make sure that all of our Veterans and their families feel welcome at VA, no matter their religious beliefs. Protecting religious liberty is a key part of how we accomplish that goal," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"These important changes will bring simplicity and clarity to our policies governing religious and spiritual symbols, helping ensure we are consistently complying with the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution at thousands of facilities across the department."*

The new policies will:

Allow the inclusion in appropriate circumstances of religious content in publicly accessible displays at VA facilities.

Allow patients and their guests to request and be provided religious literature, symbols and sacred texts during visits to VA chapels and during their treatment at VA.

Allow VA to accept donations of religious literature, cards and symbols at its facilities and distribute them to VA patrons under appropriate circumstances or to a patron who requests them.

The U.S. Supreme Court recently reaffirmed the important role religion plays in the lives of many Americans and its consistency with Constitutional principles. This includes the following values: a display that follows in the longstanding tradition of monuments, symbols and practices; respect and tolerance of differing views; and endeavors to achieve inclusivity and nondiscrimination.

Hmmm. What about us heathens? Ed



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Sept. - Oct. 2019 – Issue 88

Page 29 of 95

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
APO San Francisco 96250
1 July 1967
(Unclassified)



SUBJECT: Operational Report Lessons Learned
(1 February – 30 April 1967)

To: Assistant Chief of Staff For Force Development
Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

E.B. ROBERSON
CPT, ACC
Asst AG

1. Introduction:

This Operational Report Lessons Learned covers the period 1 February to 30 April 1967. The Brigade has continued to conduct operations to locate and destroy the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Armed Forces, supply lines of communication and installations. Operations were continued within the Brigade base TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility). The Brigade has also continued to carry out the vital phase of Civic Action and Civil Affairs in the Revolutionary Development program, which has contributed to the overall counterinsurgency effort in VIETNAM.

As during the last reporting period, to best accomplish its mission, the Brigade again conducted four (4) battalion size or larger operations in addition to its Civic Action and Civil Affairs program. Operations conducted during this period were Operation BIG SPRING, JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE, Phase I (Parachute assault), JUNCTION CITY II and Operation NEWARK.

2. Organization:

The internal structure of the Brigade has remained essentially the same during the reporting period, with the exception of the attachment of one new unit. The 46th Public Information Detachment was organized on 9 December 1966. After training for overseas deployment, the unit was assigned to USARV, sailing from San Francisco on 2 March 1967. Upon arrival in VIETNAM, the detachment was further assigned to the **173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)** by General Order Number 1349, HQ USARV, dated 26 March 1967.

Since attachment to the **173d Airborne Brigade**, the 44th Public Information Detachment has aided the Brigade Information Office in numerous ways. Its personnel have made possible expanded field coverage of Brigade combat activities, more extensive liaison with the accredited civilian press corps and a greater potential for handling internal information publications.

3. Intelligence:

a. The enemy's order of battle in the TAOR has not changed since the last two Operational Reports Lessons Learned. The following units have continued to conduct sporadic harassing and small unit tactics in and around the Brigade's TAOR against ARVN and US Forces:

(1) 270th Guerrilla Platoon

(2) 260th Local Platoon

(3) Probable reinforcements continue to include elements from the 800th Dong Nai Battalion and the 3d Battalion, 165th "A" Regiment.

b. The accepted location remains the same since the last reporting period.



A 2/503 trooper guards VC suspects in February 1967.

(Robert Guy photo collection)

c. The enemy situation before and during each operation conducted by the Brigade during this reporting period is as follows:

(continued....)



(1) Operation BIG SPRING (1 – 16 February 1967)

(a) Enemy Situation Before Operation: Prior to the commencement of the operation, agent reports indicated the possibility of the 273rd VC Regiment being located in our area of operation. The following units operated in the AO: CP 81 Rear Service Unit, C101, C104, and C114 Security Companies of GP 81, the C303 Local Force (LF) Battalion, C302 and C300 LF Platoons which are subordinate to PHUOC THANH Province and have always operated in area.

The enemy was attributed with the following capabilities:

1. Initiating harassing attacks within the AO.
2. Reinforcing guerrilla elements with Local Force units of the D800 Main Force Battalion, the 3d Battalion, 165th "A" Main Force Regiment and the PHU LOT LF Battalion.
3. Withdrawal from or avoid contact with US Forces.



Sky Soldiers load water containers on chopper during Operation Big Spring. (web image)

(b) During Operation BIG SPRING, the Brigade elements and elements to include the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division maintained early contact with the enemy to include contact during the TET Holiday period. Contacts during the TET period were always VC initiated. The sporadic contact was usually initiated by friendly forces and terminated (sp) with VC withdrawal. The largest contact was with an estimated VC Company with **C/2/503 Infantry** on 1 February 1967. Numerous VC base camps were found which included fortifications, weapons, foodstuff and documents. The size ranged from Platoon to Regimental. The majority of the documents captured were files of the TAN UYEN District HQ, Administrative Staff Section (Political Section) which include the yearly reports from 1966, the Political

Struggle Committees (sp), current Affairs committee, Women's Association and the finance and economics committees (sp).

(4) Operation NEWARK

(a) Enemy Situation Prior to the Operation. Prior to the beginning of the operation, the following enemy units were believed to be in the area of operation: C300 LF Platoon, C301 LF Company, C302 LF Company. The 141 NVA Regiment and the D800 VC Battalion were believed to be located in southern WAR ZONE "D". The enemy had the capability to:

1. Attack with a force up to regimental size and to harass (sp) employing local forces and guerrillas.
2. To defend with above mentioned forces.
3. To reinforce his attack with elements of the D800 Battalion and possibly elements of the 273d VC Regiment.
4. To withdraw from contact or avoid contact at the time and place of his choosing.

(b) Enemy Situation During the Operation: From 18-30 April 1967, the Brigade maintained sporadic contact with the enemy. These contacts were usually meeting engagements with small groups of VC harassing friendly troops. Approximately 42% of these contacts were friendly initiated. Although no large engagements occurred, many base camps were found.

4. Combat Operations

General: The Brigade continued to conduct combat and Revolutionary Development (Civil Affairs and Civic Action) operations designed to locate and destroy Viet Cong Forces, logistical installations and to further reduce his hold on the Vietnamese people.

February

During the month of February, the Brigade continued to conduct normal security operations in and around the BIEN HOA Area, terminated one operation and initiated one operation during the month.

The Brigade initiated Operation BIG SPRING on 1 February 1967, conducting offensive operations in the western portion of WAR ZONE "D" with the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division OPCON to the Brigade. Prior to the operation, agent reports indicated the possibility of the 273d VC Regiment being located in the area. During the operation, the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) and the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division maintained daily contact with the enemy to include contact during the TET Holiday, which were all VC initiated.

(continued....)



Contact was usually initiated by friendly forces and terminated by VC withdrawal. Numerous VC base camps were found which included fortifications, foodstuffs, weapons and documents. Operation BIG SPRING terminated at 1520 hours on 16 February with Brigade elements closing back into BIEN HOA.

The Brigade had already begun planning for a parachute, and on 17 February a deceptive plan was published. On 19 February, the Brigade under the OPCON of the 1st Infantry Division, deployed the 1/503d Infantry, 4/503d Infantry and the 3/319th Artillery (-) by C-130 aircraft from BIEN HOA Airbase to QUAN LOI in preparation for Operation JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE. In addition, on 20 February, **E/17th Cavalry, D/16th Armor (-), the 173d Engineer Company (-), Brigade HHC (-),** and elements of the **173d Support Battalion** were deployed by road convoy to the staging area at QUAN LOI. On 22 February at 0900 hours, the **2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, Alpha Battery 3/319th Artillery** and selected personnel of the **Brigade HHC (-)** parachuted into Drop Zone "CHARLIE" (IT 339929). Approximately 780 troopers were dropped completing the initial assault at 0910 hours. A heavy drop followed at 0927 hours and the CDS drop at 0930 hours. This marked the first combat parachute jump in 15 years and the first in the Republic of VIETNAM. The purpose of the parachute assault was to place the maximum number of combat troops into the operational area in the shortest period of time. The **1/503d Infantry** and **4/503d Infantry** conducted heliborne assaults south and north of the DZ at 1010 hours and 1420 hours on this day respectively. Operation JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE was aimed at the COSVN (Central Office of South Vietnam) and the 9th NVA Division in WAR ZONE "C". The operation continued into the month of March. Operations during the month were supported by 285 TAC Sorties and 51 FAC Sorties dropping a total of 333.87 tons of ordnance. Artillery supported the Brigade firing a total of 804 missions, expending 19,288 rounds. The **Brigade Aviation Platoon (Casper Platoon)** supported all operations with the following sorties (a total of 1,457 sorties).

Operations during the month of February resulted in the following VC and friendly VC and friendly losses: (sp)

<u>VC Losses</u>		<u>US Losses</u>	
KIA (BC)	50	KIA	33
KIA (poss)	75	WIA	201
VCC	1	Non-Battle Dead	1
VCS	0	Non-Battle Injured	8
Ralliers	0	MIA	0

March

During the month of March 1967, the Brigade continued to conduct normal security operations, terminated one Operation (JUNCTION CITY I) and initiated participation in Operation JUNCTION CITY II at the vicinity of MINH THANH.



Capt. Willoughby, Bn S-2, HHC/2/503, March 1967.
(Robert Guy photo collection)

The Brigade continued participation in Operation JUNCTION CITY ALTERNATE in TAY NINH Province. On 3 March, the **Brigade CP (-)** displaced from the vicinity of KATUM and moved south to SUOI DA. On 6 March 1967, the Brigade initiated numerous airmobile and ground assaults southeast of KATUM. At this time, **Troop "E", 17th Cavalry** was under the Operational Control of the 3d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. Throughout the operation, the Brigade maintained daily contact with the enemy, inflicting sizeable losses in personnel and supplies/installations on the Viet Cong. A total of 266 kills were inflicted by the paratroopers in addition to capturing over 38 weapons. On 15 March, the **173d** returned to BIEN HOA Base Camp and immediately upon return, assumed responsibility of the Tactical Area of Responsibility. On 20 March, the **Brigade**, under the Operational Control of the 1st Division, commenced deployment to MINH THANH for participation in Operation JUNCTION CITY II, again in WAR ZONE "C" by C-130 aircraft and road convoy. Throughout the month of March, infantry elements of the Brigade continued to conduct heliborne assaults, search and destroy missions and night ambushes, meeting with light enemy contact. This operation continued into the month of April....

(continued....)



....During March, 359 TAC sorties and 69 FAC sorties were flown in support of the Brigade dropping a total of 417.5 tons of ordnance. Supporting artillery (**3/319th Artillery**) fired 1,651 missions expending a total of 55,554 rounds. The Brigade aviation Platoon continued to provide support on all operations, a statistical report of their activities follows (908 missions).

Operations during the month of March 1967 resulted in the following VC and Friendly losses:

<u>VC Losses</u>		<u>US Losses</u>	
KIA (BC)	304	KIA	44
KIA (poss)	65	WIA	128
VCC	5	MIA	0
VCS (detainees)	0	Non-Battle Dead	1
Ralliers	0	Non-Battle Injured	9

April

The **Brigade** continued normal security operations, terminated participation in Operation JUNCTION CITY II, and initiated and terminated Operation NEWARK.

The **173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)** under the operational control of the 1st Infantry Division continued participation in Operation JUNCTION CITY II, which was initiated on 20 March 1967. The **Brigade** conducted search and destroy operations, perimeter defense and road security. During the operation, the **173d** maintained daily contact with the enemy, inflicting 49 kills by body count and sizeable losses in supplies and installations. The **Brigade** terminated Operation JUNCTION CITY II on 13 April with all elements closing into BIEN HOA. Upon their return, **Brigade** elements immediately assumed responsibility of the Brigade's TAOR. On 18 April, Operation NEWARK was initiated with the **1/503d Infantry** deploying by heliborne assault into WAR ZONE "D" west of the SON BE RIVER within the boundaries of PHUOC THANH Province. The **Brigade** also assumed participation in Operation UNIONTOWN. During Operation NEWARK, the **Brigade** elements maintained sporadic contact with the enemy. These contacts were usually engagements with small groups of VC. Operation NEWARK was terminated on 30 April, and served as a valuable training vehicle in preparing new arrivals for forthcoming operations. Enemy resistance was light, thus the men received practical training with a minimal loss in casualties. Operations during the month were supported by 205 TAC sorties and 53 FAC sorties. A total of 256 tons of ordnance was dropped. Supporting artillery (**3/319th**) fired 149 missions expending a total of 34,121 rounds of ammunition. The **Aviation Platoon (Casper Platoon)** supported all operations. A statistical summary of their activities follows (1,350 missions, 1,235 Non-Combat Sorties).

VC and Friendly losses during the month of April are as follows:

<u>VC Losses</u>		<u>US Losses</u>	
KIA (BC)	50	KIA	21
KIA (poss)	15	WIA	106
VCC	0	MIA	0
VCS	0	Non-Battle Injured	4
Ralliers	0	Non-Battle Dead	1

(5) Awards and Decorations: There were a total of 1,887 awards given for valor and meritorious services during February, March and April...



The Deadly Cost of War



"SPECIALIST 4 RAYMOND HEALEY (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) Aero-Scout Platoon, confirms the death of a Viet Cong north of Saigon. The Viet Cong was killed as he attempted to evade the paratroopers by jumping over the mud dike, one of the many killed during the operation. The VC lays where he was brought down by a single M-16 round from 150 meters. The Airborne sharpshooters lost no personnel during the operation."

Photo by: SP/4 L. Paul Epley
173d Bde PIO



AND THEN IT IS WINTER

You know time has a way of moving quickly and catching you unaware of the passing years. It seems like yesterday that I was young, just married, and embarking on my new life with my mate. Yet in a way, it seems like eons ago, and I wonder where all those years went.

I know that I lived them all. I have glimpses of how it was back then and of all my hopes and dreams. But, here it is. The winter of my life, and it catches me by surprise. How did I get here so fast? Where did the years go and where did my youth go? I remember well seeing older people through the years and thinking that those "older people" were years away from me and that winter was so far off that I could not fathom it or imagine fully what it would be like.

But, here it is...my friends are retired and getting grey. They move slower and I see an older person in myself now. Some are in better and some worse shape than me. But, I see the great change. Not like the ones that I remember who were young and vibrant...but, like me, their age is beginning to show and we are now those older folks that we used to see and never thought we'd be.

Each day now, I find that just getting a shower is a real target for the day! And taking a nap is not a treat anymore... it's mandatory! Cause if I don't on my own free will. I just fall asleep where I sit!

And so... Now I enter this new season of my life unprepared for all the aches and pains and the loss of strength and ability to go and do things that I wish I had done but never did!! But, at least I know, that though the winter has come, and I'm not sure how long it will last. This I know, that when it's over on this earth.. it's over. A new adventure will begin!

Yes, I have regrets. There are things I wish I hadn't done. Things I should have done, but indeed, there are also many things I'm happy to have done.

It's all in a lifetime.

So, if you're not in your winter yet. Let me remind you, that it will be here faster than you think. So, whatever you would like to accomplish in your life, please do it quickly! Don't put things off too long!! Life goes by quickly. So, do what you can TODAY, as you can never be sure whether this is your winter or not!

You have no promise that you will see all the seasons of your life... So, LIVE FOR TODAY and say all the things that you want your loved ones to remember. And hope that they appreciate and love you for all the things that you have done for them in all the years past!!

"Life" is a GIFT to you. The way you live your life is your gift to those who come after. Make it a fantastic one.

Remember: "It is Health that is real Wealth and not pieces of gold and silver."

~ Your kids are becoming you.....but your grandchildren are perfect!

~ Going out is good. Coming home is even better!

~ You forget names. But it's OK, because other people forgot they even knew you!!!

~ You realize you're never going to be perfect at everything. Especially golf.

~ The things you used to care to do, you no longer care to do, but you really do care that you don't care to do them anymore.

~ You sleep better on a lounge chair with the TV blaring than in bed. It's called "pre-sleep."

~ You miss the days when everything worked with just an "ON" and "OFF" switch..

~ You tend to use more 4 letter words... "what?" ... "when?" ...???

~ Now that you can afford expensive jewelry, it's not safe to wear it anywhere.

~ What used to be freckles are now liver spots.

~ Everybody whispers.

~ You have 3 sizes of clothes in your closet.... 2 of which you will never wear.

~ But "Old" is good in some things: Old Songs, Old movies ... And best of all, our... OLD FRIENDS!!

Stay well, "OLD FRIEND".

Source:

yardarm756, October 21, 2016, *The Obama Diaries*

[Sent in by good "old friend" Ed Kearney, B/2/503]

B/2/503 TROOPERS IN MAY



Bravo Bulls L-R: Virgil Cooley, Jim Robinson, Dave Glick, Joe Logan, Gary Davidson, Bryan Bowley, Phil Farrow, Barry Herbison, Jerry Nissley, Joe DeMarco, David Canady, Jim Jackson, Ed Kearney and Jim Stanford. Old Friends.



CHAPLAIN CONRAD N. WALKER, 2/503D INF, 173D ABN (SEP), SERVICES SOMETIME SOMEWHERE IN VIETNAM



(Photo by Paul Epley, 173d Bde PIO)

Remembering Connie

Connie Walker was my friend, but he was friend to many soldiers. We served together in the 2/503 in '66, and I recall attending one of his services in the boonies, even tho I didn't share what I considered then and today to be his mythical beliefs in all-mighty spirits. Chaplain Conrad N. Walker and I weren't "friends" in Vietnam some 50+ years ago, but for a number of years before he left us, we became email buddies as he shared the good word in pages of our newsletter. He knew I was an atheist/humanist and I knew he was not, yet that never once interfered in our developing friendship and incessant written banter.

Connie possessed a number of "humanistic" qualities himself, and lived his Christian beliefs like no other I've ever met – there was no religious hypocrisy to be found in this man's rucksack. He was accepting of and respectful to everyone, even heathens such as I.

Those of you who knew Connie also knew of his genuine love for his fellow soldiers, particularly Sky Soldiers, I think. And you also knew of his great sense of humor....it came thru loudly and often in the notes we'd exchange, usually centered around who would buy whom beer, and his teasing to visit us in Florida, which was interrupted by a higher and permanent calling.

One of his notes to me arrived in the form of his inscription in his book which he sent along before taking his final leap in 2014. It reads:

Sky Soldier Par Excellence!

Smitty and Reggie – Grace and Peace!

Blessings as you read this tome and this small history and living Airborne Spirit.

Love and Happiness. Thank you for your grand and mighty Service and Friendship! Connie

Of course, Connie made it a point to include a Happy Face. This man simply oozed happiness, grace, and love for his God and all humankind.

His final words to me in a note were, "*Hangeth in there*".

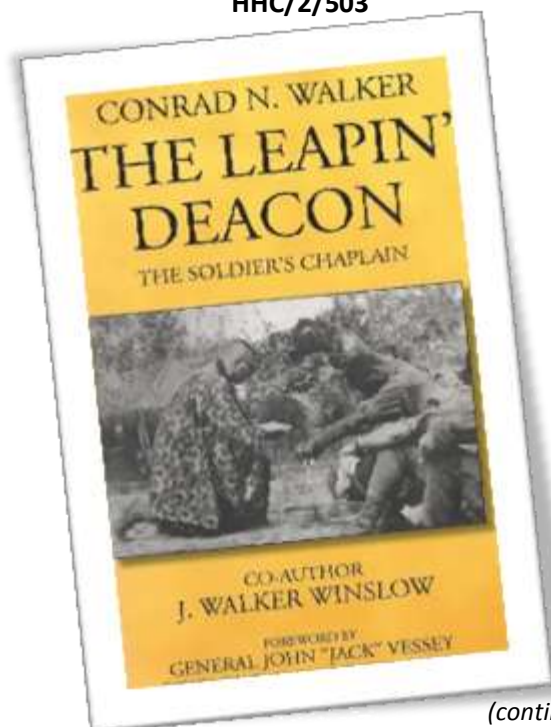
Chaplain (COL, Ret) Conrad "Connie" Walker (the Leapin' Deacon) went to be with his Lord on Sunday, May 25, 2014, in San Antonio at age of 82.

On the following page is an excerpt from his book, *The Leapin' Deacon, The Soldier's Chaplain*, with the character of this very good

man abundantly evident throughout.

Continue to rest easy friend-to-many-soldiers, and, *Hangeth in there, Connie*.

**Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503**



(continued....)



A Most Memorable Day – God Be With Us!

I was with “A” Company, 2/503rd Infantry on this mission. We became engaged with an enemy force 75 to 100 strong, and they were well dug in. The Viet Cong employed M-79 grenade launchers and 50-caliber machine guns on the Sky Soldiers. Heroism abounded as they overcame the VC.

Great soldier after great soldier did supreme acts of courage and heroism. A dozen of our beloved soldiers fell that day – to include one of my dear lay deacons – Acting Sergeant Fred Fritts.

Fred and all the soldiers of A Company had an enriching worship and holy communion service just prior to the operation. Acting Sergeant Fritts assisted me in communing our Sky Soldiers. He was a special person, and we visited many times in our months together. There was a natural “hook-in” in that he was from a clergy family. His father was one of our outstanding Episcopalian Army chaplains. I later wrote the dear family about carrying precious Fred’s body off the battlefield.



With fellow Sky Soldiers, Chaplain Walker conducts communion in the boonies, sometime, somewhere in Vietnam.

Each soldier – ever so important, ever so valuable – fought with dedication and honor as a hero on that most difficult day of 29 June 1966 near Xuan Loc (JWW note: I cannot find the words to express how difficult it was for Connie to relate the foregoing and the following to me.)

I arrived in the battle area with the relief troops. We did much damage to the VC, but we suffered exceedingly. I listened to stories of heroism as I visited each soldier. I had prayer and shared God’s Word with each wounded soldier....and closed the eyes of the blessed dead. I rendered the laying-on of hands and used words of anointing for the sick and for each dear dead or wounded soldier. I spent time with each soldier encouraging and sustaining them.

The three growths of trees – small, medium and exceedingly large – caused us to work hard, very hard, to prepare an opening to get the wounded out. After considerable effort, and under serious sniper fire, it was achieved. The Air Force’s Jolly Green Giant lifted out our beloved wounded, one-by-one.

Our bigger-than-life hero of the day – SSG Charlie Morris – would not allow himself to be lifted out until all of his wounded troops were first lifted out of harm’s terrible way. SSG Charlie Morris was hit 33 times -- several major wounds and many fragment wounds. (JWW note: As indicated in the Preface, Charlie Morris was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.)

Excerpt:
THE LEAPIN’ DEACON
The Soldier’s Chaplain
By Conrad N. Walker
Co-Author
J. Walker Winslow



Excerpt from Preface to Connie’s Book

“After rendering spiritual aid, the chaplain started chopping trees to try and clear an LZ for the evacuation of the wounded and dead. I’ve never seen a man in my life work as hard as he did. The chaplain is a ‘mighty big man’. He seemed to be a tower of strength. Every time that my vision cleared so that I could see, I saw him working like a buzz saw. He even held huge trees as they were being chopped down, using a ‘bear hug’ and moved them to avoid hitting our wounded comrades. I could never express the respect and appreciation Chaplain Walker won that bloody day.”



Charlie

SGM Charles B. “Charlie” Morris, A/2/503
Medal of Honor Recipient

(continued....)



Another Friend of Connie's



FREDERIC WILLIAM "FRED" FRITTS

Acting Sergeant
2/503 Infantry, 173d Abn Bde
Born May 8, 1943
Home: Beaumont, TX
KIA June 29, 1966, Xuan Loc, RVN

The Paratroopers Prayer

Kind Heavenly Father, our Great God who invites –
"Follow Me," may we with stalwart hearts declare
Thee Lord of all. We ask Thy Holy blessing to rest upon
all paratroopers who are on the path to secure and
sustained peace.

May we be ready at all times to boldly stand up for
Thy Truth and Ways, and be steadfastly hooked up to
Thy Law and Gospel.

May a primary part of our equipment be a confident
faith in Thee as we stand in the door of all missions in
life. May the canopy of Thy Love shield and keep us
now and forever.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy
Spirit. Amen.

Chaplain Conrad N. "Connie" Walker



SGM Charles B. "Charlie" Morris Medal of Honor Recipient



In a letter many years ago to his friend, the late Jim
Healy, also A/2/503, Charlie wrote:

"I have enclosed a photo of me cradling
the Medal of Honor in my hands. I think
you will understand and appreciate the
symbolism.

This is not my medal. It is a medal I hold
in sacred trust as a symbol of the collective
bravery of all who served in Vietnam,
particularly those who served in the 173d,
and most especially, those fine brave,
young men of the Third Platoon, A 2/503,
who fought so long, hard and well at Xuan
Loc on 29 June 1966."

Charlie Morris

Charles B. Morris reached the highest enlisted rank,
Sergeant Major, before retiring from the Army. He
died August 22, 1996, at the age of 64, and was buried
in Morris Cemetery, Fancy Gap, Virginia.



PATIENT CARE IS OUR BUSINESS

By G. David Whittaker

The sun blazed down from its near noon-day perch as the patrol from the 2nd Battalion, 173rd Airborne, moved cautiously into the village in the Iron Triangle, just north of Saigon. Suddenly, the silence was broken by the cracking fire of a sniper bullet. Army Medic **Philip Knowlton** dropped to his knees; clutched his chest; cried out and fell face down in the dusty path. Knowlton's comrades rushed to his aid. Blood was gushing from his back and chest. The radio blared out a call for help. Minutes later, an air-evac helo settled down in the artillery-leveled area near the village. Philip Knowlton, just 20, was a combat casualty.



Doc Knowlton keeping a sharp eye out in the jungle.

At the 173rd Command Post, radio operators relayed the information to the Medical Regulating Office in Saigon. Paris Control, as it is called, immediately came up on its Hot Line to the three medical units in Saigon; 33rd Air Force Dispensary, 3rd Field Hospital and Saigon General, the Navy Hospital. Acting on information concerning the patient's condition and injury, the assignment went to Saigon General. A controlled pandemonium, Operation Dust Off, swung into action. Within seconds, a grey ambulance, complete with doctor and corpsman, roared off to the Hot Spot, the landing pad for air-evac helos, to pickup Knowlton and give immediate aid. In less than one hour after being wounded, Philip Knowlton was in surgery being given the best surgical and medical care available.

For the doctors, nurses and corpsmen of the Headquarters Support Activity, Naval Hospital in Saigon, this was just another everyday occurrence. Another incident where they were called upon to give their best to care for a person in need.



"READY OR NOT, HERE I COME – Under the watchful eye of Chief Surgeon, Lieutenant Commander Kelly, Navy Nurse Lieutenant Green prepares a syringe to give a patient a shot in Saigon General's Intensive Care Ward. Miss Green, a head nurse on the ward, has supervised the care of hundreds of combat and mass casualties, including those resulting from bombings of U.S. Embassy and the Metropole BEQ." (Photo by Frank T. Peak)

During the past year alone, more than 2,000 bed patients have been treated by the staff of General. An additional 73,000 out-patients have passed through the Out-Patient Clinic receiving care for abrasions, colds, and any of the other hundreds of maladies that plague non-nationals in this tropical climate. Additionally the doctors and corpsmen act as health inspectors for all messing facilities in the Saigon area. This entails not only inspections, but also examining the hundreds of Vietnamese laborers that are employed there....

This excerpt originally appeared in *Life in Vietnam*, Issue No. 47, dated February 12, 1966. Photo of Doc Knowlton added.

A belated thanks to these Navy medical professionals for caring for one of our own.



FIFTH US MILITARY CAMPAIGN IN VIETNAM ENDS IN FAILURE

By I. Shchedrov

Pravda, November 27, 1967

For four weeks now, in the reports of fighting on the South Vietnam front Dak To town has repeatedly featured. This small town, located at an altitude of 1,000 metres in a mountain valley surrounded on all sides by high mountains, has become the scene of the fiercest battles since the beginning of the war. The Dak To district stretches along strategic road No. 14--the most important highway of the Tayngnyen Plateau, at the junction of the frontiers of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.



"An enthusiastic send-off to young men going to the front."

In early November, the task forces of the **173rd Airborne American Brigade** tried to capture this important strong-point by launching a large-scale military operation. However, from the very beginning, the paratroopers were thrown into defensive positions, and forced to wage bloody battles with well-armed units of the Liberation Army. The bulk of the interventionists found themselves trapped among the mountains, the dominating peaks of which are still held by the patriots.

Even the American command is forced to admit that in the Dak To area the initiative is held by forces of the Liberation Army.

Numerous attempts of the interventionists to break out of the encirclement proved futile.

In this area operating at present are, in addition to the 173rd, American air-borne brigade, shock troops of the 4th US Infantry Division, picked regiments of the Saigon puppet army and units of the Air Force, including B-52 bombers of the US Strategic Air Force--a total of about 15,000 men and officers.



"A Vietnamese girl sews a button on the tunic of a soldier."

Nevertheless, the Pentagon has not succeeded in turning the situation in its favour. The patriots are not only holding the key positions, but they continue counter-attacking the enemy on some sectors of the front. Battle-hardened regiments of the Liberation Army and partisan detachments are conducting military operations against the interventionists in this mountainous, jungle-infested area criss-crossed with trenches.

They are supported by mortar and artillery batteries. According to incomplete data collected by the headquarters of the patriotic armed forces, American interventionists have lost in this area over 2,000 men and officers--killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

Dak To has become a symbol of the courage of Vietnamese resistance.

Source: Archival report & photos, Pravda.



VIET CONG COMMANDER ADMITS MILITARY, MORALE SETBACKS

Archival document bearing date of March 7, 1967

SAIGON – A secret document signed by a commander of communist forces in South Vietnam and captured by the U.S. **173d Airborne Brigade** in the recently concluded Operation Cedar Falls confirms “both military and political failures” suffered of the Republic of Vietnam Chieu Hoi (open arms) campaign to persuade the guerillas and their supporters to abandon the ranks of the aggressor and come over to the side of the Vietnamese government.

The document made public here was captured last month and was dated December 20, 1966. Addressed to “South Vietnam Liberation Army, Tan Uyen District Unit, Communiqué to: All Agencies, Unit VT3 and Village Units,” it was signed “for District Unit Command Committee” by “Luong Viet Tanh, District Unit Commander.” A note at the end of the communiqué said:

“This letter is subject to discussion among party committee echelons only for taking appropriate action. Under no circumstances will it be disseminated to unauthorized personnel. It should be burned after exploitation.”

Following is the translated text of the communist commander’s communiqué:
Viet Cong Commander –

An over-all review of the Vietnam battlefield, specifically at the start of the winter and spring campaign, shows that we have suffered both military and political failures. The enemy intensified military actions, and uninterrupted raids have eroded the will to fight of our army and people. Coupled with his military efforts the enemy has stepped up his perfidious Chieu Ho campaign in his attempt to undermine our fighting spirit

The impact of increased enemy military operations and Chieu Hoi progress has on the whole lowered the morale of some ideologically backward men, who often listen to enemy radio broadcasts, keep enemy leaflets in their pockets and wait to be issued their weapons in order to go over to the enemy side.

This attitude has generated an atmosphere of doubt and mistrust among our military ranks. Recently among the armed forces, concentrated units, militia and guerillas the following ideological tendencies have developed:

There exist among our ranks some men who give evidence of faltering morale. They adopt a wait-and-see attitude, pay attention to enemy loud-speaker broadcasts from aircraft and to leaflets and safe-conduct passes in their packets or bags, and bide their time to defect to the enemy with the safe-conduct passes in their possession.

They betray the revolution by having their parents, wives, children, relatives, and friends establish contact with the enemy to make arrangements for their eventual defection. Then, they steal documents, weapons, and other equipment and cause us some losses before going over to the enemy to betray the revolution.

Addressees, upon receipt of this memorandum, will confer with their respective chapter committee authorities to work out plans for finding out these “bad elements” and re-educating them as individuals and their units as a whole. All agencies and units are reminded that whenever the enemy conducts loudspeaker broadcasts and leaflet drops, they should pick up the leaflets and study them thoroughly paragraph by paragraph. Then, they will indoctrinate their men on the basis of the contents of these leaflets so as to keep their men informed on the enemy conspiracy now being plotted against our army. (End Text)



“Chieu Ho Mission” by Craig L. Stewart U.S. Army Combat artist painting shows army soldiers airdropping Psy Op leaflets during the Vietnam War.



Rocket Doc On Wheels

There's a fella down here on Central Florida's Space Coast whom many of you Sky Soldiers know personally or have read about in past issues of our newsletter. Some refer to him as the *PTSD Guru*, the *All-American*, or simply, *Doc Scott*. But, more formally, he is known as Dr. Scott Fairchild, Psy.D, who runs Baytree Behavioral Health in Melbourne, FL, and who is a retired LTC with the 82nd Airborne.

Doc conducted much of the early work and research on PTSD for the Army at Walter Reed, and is a renowned and recognized authority on the illness, having treated and helped numerous Sky Soldiers from across the country as they battled that illness. Some will recall his PTSD presentations at the 173d reunion in Myrtle Beach years ago for troopers and their spouses, and many of us owe him a debt of gratitude for helping us find some normalcy as we dealt with that devil, PTSD.

But, Doc has, well, what I describe as a particular fetish....cars, the kind which go fast.

A few years ago Doc attended one of my grandson's basketball games in Viera, FL. Following the game and while walking out to the parking lot I asked my son, Don, for the keyfob to his Tesla Model S, to give Doc a ride in that battery-operated machine, literally a rocket on wheels. We drove a couple fast blocks up and back, and Doc became sold on the technology and the car. It wasn't long thereafter he told me, "I ordered one!"

Not many weeks later I again borrowed my son's Tesla to give Doc another ride, but this time to Orlando where he picked-up his own rocket on wheels, a cherry red one, not white like son Don's. Since then, the All-American has been thru a few of them.

The other day an email with an attached video came across my desk with the subject line, "I have you to blame!" It was from Doc, and the message read, "Dog gone. Gone and done it!"

Doc had moved on from his cherry red land missile to a Tesla SUV he calls the *Blue Raven* – I'm guessing because it's blue, he likes birds, or something special happened the night of high school graduation.

Remember, Doc likes cars which go zoom.



The PTSD Guru ready to blast

The video he sent began with the PTSD Guru behind the wheel of his Blue Raven at the starting line of the dragstrip at Palm Beach International Raceway, next to a white Tesla, not my son's, ready to blast down the strip. In the other machine was a professional racecar driver. *They launched!*

To the apparent amazement of the announcer, Doc left the pro in his silent dust, winning the one-on-one competition easily. Here are the stats the All-American provided:

Broke the World Speed Record for SUV in the 1/4 mile with Blue Raven

11.20 sec @ 121.4 MPH

9:38 pm Friday July 5, 2019

Palm Beach International Raceway

Now, that's 121.4 mph....on *batteries!*

Doc asked when he can stop by and give me a ride in his Blue Raven -- I told him I'll be out of town for an extended period, perhaps never to return. But, any Sky Soldier who wishes to find some peace of mind with their PTSD and who visits with him, I'm pretty sure you'll end up driving down I-95 just slightly over the speed limit with an All-American trooper at the wheel and his Guru foot to the floor.

Go Doc!

Ed



Rocket Doc with his Blue Raven



PONDER, BILLY W., SR.

Distinguished Service Cross

PONDER, BILLY W., SR.

Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army

Company C, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment,

173d Airborne Brigade,

Date of Action: August 23, 1968



Citation:

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Billy W. Ponder, Sr., Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade.

Staff Sergeant Ponder distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 23 August 1968 while on an ambush mission in Binh Dinh Province. He was standing guard by four sleeping fellow soldiers near two buildings suspected of being used by the Viet Cong. Shortly after midnight he saw an enemy soldier rise from a rice paddy dike twenty-five meters to his front and immediately fired at the aggressor. Suddenly a grenade landed amid his four awakening comrades.

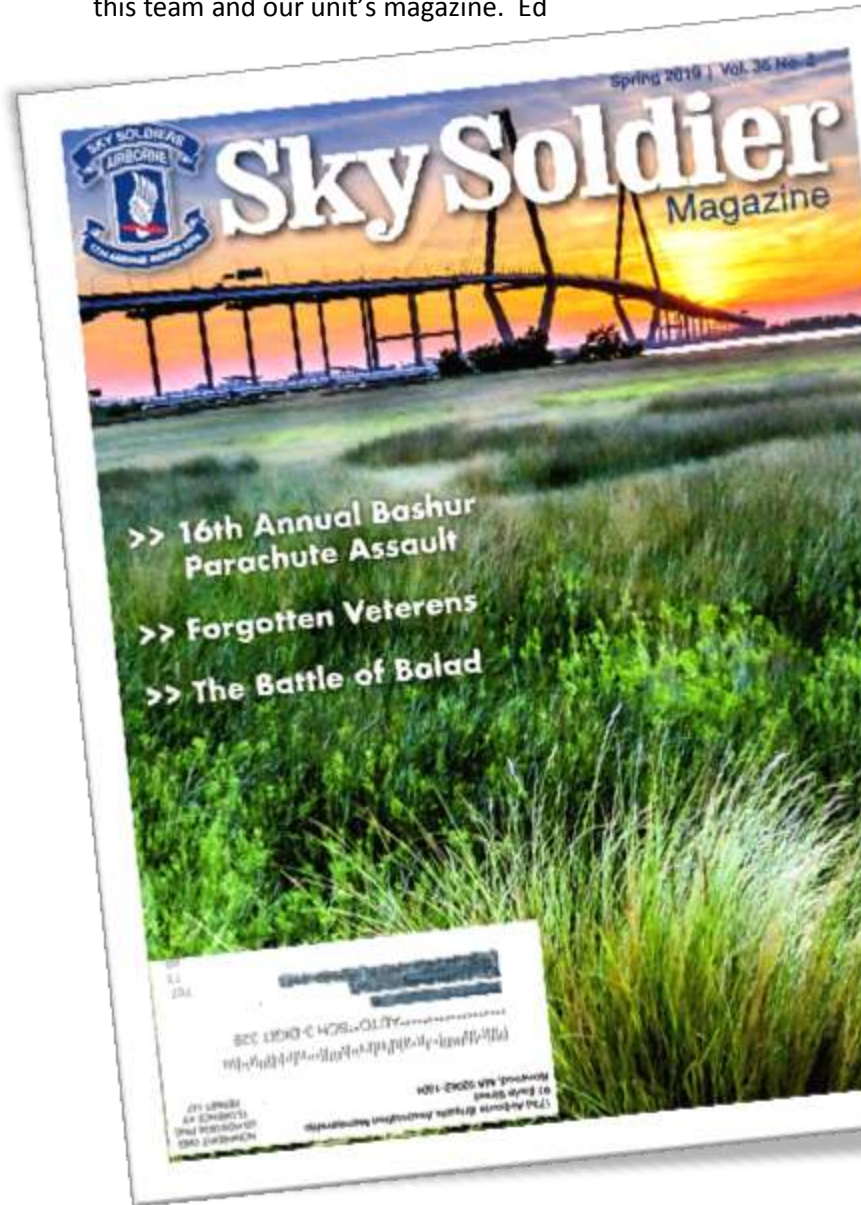
With complete disregard for his own life, Sergeant Ponder yelled a warning to the men and jumped on the deadly missile to shield them from the blast. Some seconds later, when the grenade failed to detonate, he took it from under his stomach and threw it toward the enemy's position, where it finally exploded.

Staff Sergeant Ponder's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

SKY SOLDIER MAGAZINE

KUDOS

Congratulations to president **Terry Aubrey** (E/2/503), **Emily Groneck** and the entire 173d Airborne Brigade Association staff for what is clearly one of the best and most professionally-produced airborne magazines on the planet. Sky Soldiers everywhere can be proud of this team and our unit's magazine. Ed



If you're an Association Member in good standing but not receiving the magazine by mail or email, you'll want to get on the list to receive it. AATW!

Contact Terry at his email:

president@skysoldier.net





The Ghosts Of Casper - Daring And Dedicated

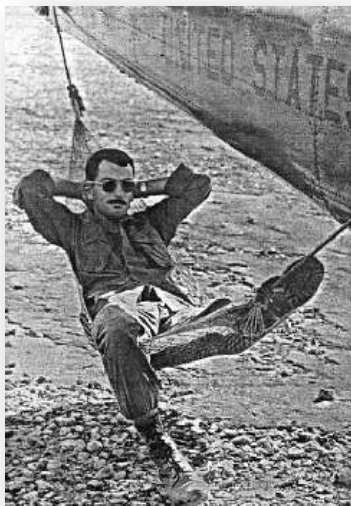
Story and Photos by SP5 RAFAEL SANTOS

LZ English - Casper haunts the area at Landing Zone English where a sign proudly proclaims "Welcome to Ghost Town."

But Sky Soldiers of the 173d Airborne Brigade know that Casper is the brigade's aviation platoon - not the friendly ghost of the famous comic strip.

Having arrived in Vietnam with the 173d in 1965, the platoon is commanded by Captain Stanley H. Streicher of Cincinnati, Ohio, a winner of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Casper Platoon's jobs include resupplying troops, medevac, visual reconnaissance of different areas of operation, close fire support of troops in heavy contact with the enemy, the flying and maintenance of the brigade commander's chopper, and the transporting of V.I.P.s - including occasional entertainers.



COOLING IT - CW2 George Clouse of West Carrollton, Ohio, "ghosts" during a break in a flight missions near the fishing village of Tam Quan.



PFC Douglas Walton of Woodlands, California, a Casper Door Gunner, keeps his chopper clean during a break at LZ English.

Of the men from Ghost Town, Sergeant Leon J. Strigotto of Company B, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry said, *"As an infantryman, I have all the faith in the world in the guys in Casper. We depend on them. They get us where we have to go, and just as easily and rapidly they pull us out... It's really a comfort to know that no matter what the time of day or night, those 'good guys' are just a minute or so away,"* the sergeant concluded.

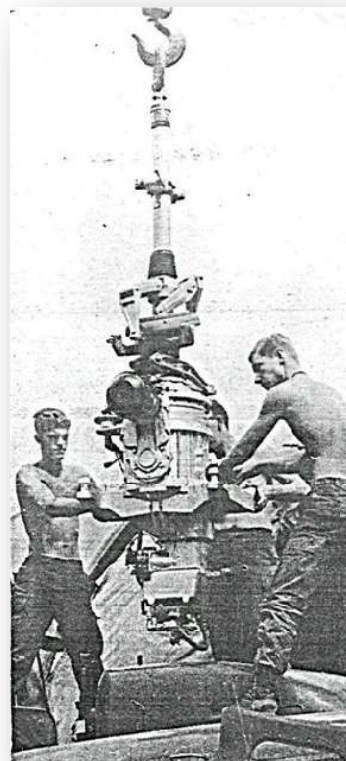
A pretty Red Cross girl had this to say about the pilots and crewmen of Casper: *"They're angels. Just think, when the men need food in the field, who takes it to them? Letters from the 'world' are real morale boosters. How do you think mail gets to the guys in the field? And whenever we make plans to visit camp sites, in hopes of bringing a little cheer to the men on the line, we can always depend on Casper to provide transportation,"* she emphasized.

"Not only are my men highly skilled, they are also very dedicated to their jobs," commented CPT Streicher. *"These men are dedicated and motivated because they enjoy what they are doing and they realize just how important Casper's functions are to the individual Sky Soldier."*

Whether they are good guys, angels or ghosts, the residents of Ghost Town, 173d Airborne Brigade, are indeed friendly, professional aviators.

[Reprinted from Fire Base 173 - September 29, 1969, Courtesy of Ned Costa with Casper Platoon website]

Best wishes to Ned for a speedy recovery from a serious illness. Ed



Members of the Casper maintenance crew, SP4 Jack Marshall and SP5 John Mangold install a new transmission into a Huey.



From the archives -- *and so it begins....*

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

CONTROL: 10013

RECD: 11 May 1965

FROM: SAIGON

ACTION: SECSATE PRIORITY

SECRET

(Declassified)

FOR THE PRESIDENT

The big event of the political week was the voluntary dissolution of the Armed Forces Council by the generals who composed it. Quat gets the credit for having engineered this operation, quietly pressing the senior generals toward this solution. We feel that it is a most happy development as the disappearance of the Armed Forces Council removes a mechanism which invited the general to interfere with civilian government and engage in politics.

As I reported during the week Quat is still uncertain as to the organization of the Military High Command.

Quat may end up with General Thieu as both Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief. Organizationally this focusing of responsibility offers some advantages but it is also a dangerous concentration of power in one officer whose character is untested.

Our two latest U.S. reinforcements, the **173rd Airborne Brigade** and the Marine battalions for the Chu Lai airfield, have arrived and are rapidly shaking down in their defensive positions. The impression of professional alertness and competence which they convey has had a good effect on all who see them but the future will hold problems in this regard. If they are not actively employed shortly, I suspect boredom is going to be a major factor to preoccupy their commander. There is some limit on the useful work which could be done within their defensive perimeters.



Phan Huy Quát (Hà Tĩnh Province, 12 June 1908 – 27 April 1979) served as acting Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam and Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam

The Viet Cong raised the tempo of their activity somewhat during the past week, particularly in the Mekong Delta region. There they committed a Viet Cong battalion to battle, the first time since March 8 that a unit of this size has been engaged. We have the feeling that the period of relative inaction is over and that the Viet Cong offensive may be under way. It may take the form of a large number of small actions rather than of the large headline filling types which the press is anticipating.

There is considerable action under way in preparation of the municipal and provincial elections which are scheduled for May 20. With their approach, the Vietnamese press has been playing greater attention to the need for elections for a National Assembly. Many of the editors show more fervor than good sense in urging general elections under the present conditions of insecurity in many provinces. Quat is thoroughly aware of what is realistic and can be counted upon keeping this enthusiasm within bounds. Incidentally, there is a high interest in standing for office in the municipal and provincial elections than we had anticipated. We are told that there is an average of five candidates for each provincial council seat and nine for each municipal seat, a competition which is double that of previous elections. Working for the government appears to be gaining in appeal.

TAYLOR



Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, left, and Lt. Gen. William G. Westmorland, commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, held a conference at Tan Son Nhut Airport in 1965, where they met to send off from Vietnam a group of 150 American women and children. (web photo)



Aero-Cav

In late September, the Troop Commander and the Aviation Officer of the Brigade flew up to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) for a first hand evaluation of the limits and capabilities of employing airmobile tactics. They returned highly enthusiastic that such a mission would greatly improve the combat flexibility of the Brigade.

The aero-rifle platoon concept was adopted in October, 1966, with the approval and support of the Commanding General. Extensive classes and training were given to each platoon. Senior NCO's from every platoon were sent to An Khe for first-hand experience on the utilization of aero-scout techniques.

In order to initiate this concept several principal guidelines were established. The personnel for the aero rifle squads and observers for the aero scouts along with the platoon headquarters will come from resources of Troop E, 17th Cavalry. Sufficient personnel are available within a recon platoon to form 3-12 man squads or 4-9 man squads and a platoon headquarters of three men (see Annex E, Organization of Aero-Rifle Platoon).*

In addition, the aero scout section was reorganized utilizing enlisted scout observers from the Troop who underwent (underwent?) extensive aerial observer training. The aero rifle platoon concept was used for the first time on Operation Attleboro as reaction forces for an LRRP team that had become compromised in their mission. The operation was quite successful however training on basic infantry skills and maneuver techniques were continued in order to improve these basic proficiencies.

The aero scout section has proven to be the most effective means of locating the Viet Cong. (See Annex D, Organization of Aero Scout Section).* The aero scouts continue to fly over designated areas in pairs looking for trails, canals, or possibly recently used campsites and enemy activity. After the scouts have found such a location, a call is sent back to the standby aero rifle platoon and they are over the area usually within minutes.

The Aero Scouts have the mission to find a suitable landing zone and the armed helicopters will suppress the area before the slicks land. As soon as one aero-rifle platoon has been committed, another platoon

automatically goes on stand-by. Sometimes this second platoon is picked up and remains airborne over the area where the first rifle platoon has been committed.

These operations are controlled by the Troop Commander who used a command and control ship. If contact with the enemy becomes so great that all three platoons are committed, then an infantry company or battalion, if needed, would go on stand-by.

The principal concept underlying this mode of operation is to seek and find the enemy with the smallest amount of personnel to maintain the element of surprise and reduce casualties. Then as soon as they enemy has been found all available Personnel, artillery, and TAC air are thrown on top of him.

[Sent in by Pat Sirmeyer, Troop E, author unknown]

* Document not provided.

E Troop In Action

Operation Niagara/Cedar Falls

14 January 1966

"On the west side of the stream, 1LT Jaunitis and the 1st squad received several rounds of small arms fire resulting the first casualty of the Cavalry Troop. Twenty year old **SP4 Patrick L. Sirmuir (Sirmeyer)** was wounded in action while moving along a dike shortly after landing. He was observing the fire coming from the wood line and quickly go down into firing position, however, he then noticed a strange sensation in his leg. He looked down to discover that a bullet was lodged below his kneecap. A Dustoff ship was immediately summoned and Sirmuir was evacuated only 10 minutes after sustaining the wound."



Cav Trooper and good buddy Pat Sirmeyer at 2/503 reunion in Cocoa Beach, FL, 2006.

Source:

E Troop/17th Cav After Action Report, 25 March 1967



Bullets are colorblind. From the archives circa 8/11/72, UPI reported....

Big Drop From 1966 High Black Casualty Rate Low in Viet

WASHINGTON (UPI) – A few years ago there was a flurry of charges that the military was shunting black soldiers onto Vietnam battlefields where they were being killed at a rate far out of proportion with their numbers in the population.

The statistics seemed to bear out that charge, for the early years of the war 18 per cent of the combat dead were black although Negroes comprise only 11 per cent of the U.S. population.

There were protests that the Pentagon was guilty of both racism and genocide.

As with many news stories public interest waned and the impression remained that Negroes were getting the shaft in the service. But little noticed over the years the proportion of blacks among the combat dead dropped rapidly until last year only 8.6 per cent of the men killed in Vietnam were Negroes—a figure well below the black proportion of the population.

Pentagon officials say the main reason for the high percentage of black dead in the early days of the war was that blacks have tended to volunteer for the elite airborne and air cavalry units which are the first sent to trouble spots.

For example, figures as of Jan. 1, 1967, show that blacks made up 21 per cent of the 101st Airborne Div and 24 per cent of the **173rd Airborne Brigade**—the first combat unit sent to Vietnam. No one is forced into either of those units; they are filled entirely by volunteers.

Through the end of 1966 16 per cent of the dead were black. In 1967 it dropped 12.7 per cent. In 1968 it rose marginally to 12.9 per cent and then fell to 10.8 per cent in 1967, 8.8 per cent in 1970 and 8.8 per cent last year.

In the past few years the percentage of blacks on the dead lists has not been as high as their 11 per cent proportion of the civilian population or their 10 per cent slice of the military population. Officials say this is probably because ground operations were phased out and more casualties are now taken by helicopter crewmen, advisers and other support personnel where there are fewer Negroes.

From 1961 through the end of 1971, 45,829 Americans have died in Vietnam combat, including 5,639 blacks or 12.4 per cent. Last year 1,380 Americans, including 118 blacks, died in action.



Just a Few of Our 2/503 Brothers Who Gave Their Last Full Measure



Milton Olive
KIA 10/22/65*



Marion Brown
KIA 3/15/66



Willie Warren
KIA 6/22/67



Jimmy Johnson
KIA 1/26/68



Ervin Jones
KIA 7/6/69



Joe Long
KIA 2/27/70



Michael Watkins
KIA 9/12/71**

* Milton Olive, Medal of Honor Recipient

** Michael Watkins, the last Sky Soldier to die in Vietnam

And why, you ask, are we honoring these particular men, these Americans, these paratroopers, these war veterans, these men of color?

They are but a few of such men who died for their country and their fellow soldiers, and for you.

But, we present these honored representatives of our Brigade especially to those of you who are quick to judge others yet never once humped a rain forest, a rice paddy or mountain range under enemy fire during time of war in the name of your country –

**and to you specifically we say,
you couldn't carry their jungle boots. Ed**



When Veterans Should Use Urgent Care Centers vs. Emergency Departments

Do you know?

August 2, 2019



Should a sore throat or a rash send a Veteran to the emergency department or an urgent care center? Sometimes it's difficult to be sure. So, VA wants to make it easy by providing a clear-cut description of where to go for the health care Veterans need. Urgent care centers, whether at a VA Health Care System or one located in a community, provide easy access to quality health care when a Veteran does not have time to wait to see a regular primary care provider or their office is closed.

If a Veteran lives close to the VA Health Care System, choosing to visit an urgent care center may be best if the illness or injury is non-life-threatening. Their medical expertise and commitment to personalized attention ensures Veterans with urgent health needs receive the very best care.

"For life-threatening emergencies, such as stroke symptoms or head trauma, they require a visit to your closest emergency department," Dr. Mark Todd, Chief of Emergency Medicine at Salem VA Medical Center located in Salem, Virginia, said. "A minor injury or illness that does not appear to be life threatening and cannot wait until the following day should be treated at an urgent care center."

As part of implementing the VA MISSION Act of 2018, VA started offering urgent care services to provide Veterans with greater choice and access to timely, high-quality care. To find an urgent care center, visit VA Urgent Care Locator.



When should a Veteran go to an urgent care center?

For acute symptoms such as, sinus infections, sore throats, rashes, low back pain, or urinary tract infections to treat those minor illnesses or injuries. Some other examples of non-emergency care include:

- Bee stings**
- Earaches**
- Eye infections/irritations**
- Minor burns**
- Minor cuts and lacerations**
- Sports-related injuries**
- Sprains**

When should a Veteran go to an emergency department?

Long Description: An emergency condition is one that can permanently endanger a Veteran's life. Some examples of conditions that need emergency medical care can include:

- Heart attack symptoms (severe chest pain)**
- Stroke symptoms**
- Moderate to severe difficulty breathing**
- Uncontrollable bleeding**
- Sudden, severe pain**
- Poisoning**
- Head trauma**
- Vomiting blood or coughing up blood**
- Loss of consciousness**

If a Veteran is experiencing a life-threatening injury, dial 911 immediately. Emergency department visits are necessary for true emergencies. If greater care is required, VA health care physicians will transfer Veterans directly to a hospital emergency room for further treatment.

Source: VA News veteransaffairs@public.govdelivery.com



This past June, we recirculated the special edition of our newsletter detailing *The Battle of the Slopes*.

Here, one of our men shares his views of that battle from the perspective of a Forward Observer. Ed

Take-Away on The Battle Of The Slopes

By: Jim Robinson, FO, B/2/503

Finally got through the re-circulated Issue 29 of our newsletter covering the Battle of the Slopes. Had to set it down occasionally. I can only imagine the difficulty the guys who were there had getting through it.

I'd like to make a couple of comments.

1. The late Dave Milton sounded like a great guy. Far more tactful and diplomatic than I ever was.
2. The question of screw-up at the command level.
3. My comments on the area. We were there in 1965.
4. A little background about artillery for all the 11B's.
5. NVA screw-up?

Dave seemed to have come out OK but I do not know what happened to Cpt. Leonard (see following page). Does sound like some scapegoating going on. Unless you have been in that area (flying over does not count) you will not know that 1000 yards might as well be several miles.

I agree with many of the riflemen, in that, it was a mess. That area was just the opposite of the old basic training saw, "*spread out, one round will get you all*". Sending 2 brand new platoon leaders in there on their first day (both KIA), borders on criminal behavior. A rifle company platoon leader is perhaps the most important job a young officer will ever have. The results speak for themselves.

By 1967, the brass should have been well aware of the situation in the highlands. We were there briefly in '65, generally to the south of Rt. 19 up against the Cambodian border -- without maps, I should add. Just prior to leaving the area, I finally got some maps, only to determine that during our patrols we strayed over the border a couple of times. The stairs cut into the hillsides were there when we were there and I'm sure were greatly improved by '67; hell, there were even banisters or handrails in some areas!



Jim at Camp Zinn

We had no contact but every indication, including the back of my neck, told us the bad guys were there. Try as we might, we were clumsy moving overland in that tough terrain. We never caught up with them. It was simple for a trail-watcher to alert his buddies. Run down a 100 yards of trail, then saunter off. None of us were running down any trails.

In my opinion, knowing that there were many NVA units in the area, deploying company-sized units 1000 yards apart, was, as you suggested, STUPID.

I was an infantryman until I was sent to artillery OCS. In early '65 upon arriving in the rubber trees we were looking at the 20 foot wide road between the mortar pit and the brush. Not jungle, but twelve foot high brush. It occurred to me, that my training to kill Chinese in Korea on a hillside 2000 yards away, was pretty much a waste of time. This was not a shock to me as I was aware of the tactics used against the French. I knew I would have to direct fire right against our guys. To this end I always knew where I was, where the guns were and how the guns were laid. I had no trouble knowing where the enemy was.



173d Arty in action, circa 1965

(Photo by Jim Robinson)

According to the Ft. Sill instructors, I had way too much info. FDC was supposed to take care of those details. I did not trust them when shooting so close. There are just too many variables with a 105 and its ammo.

(continued....)



By knowing the trajectory of the round, I could fudge the adjustment a little to increase our level of safety. I don't recall ever ordering "fire for effect"; that command results in all 6 howitzers firing -- which would work in a classic battle with the guns to the rear and the enemy to the front. Rarely were we in that position.

The guns are laid in a W pattern, almost always. The guns you adjust with are the center #3&4 guns. Guns 1 and 6 might be 100 yards or more apart, consequently their rounds would land (for our proposes) quite away from the adjusting rounds. I would walk the rounds in (which would have had me fail the class) until mud and vegetation would get splattered around. Dangerous to do, but shooting 100 yards away from the firefight site was a waste of time, no one was there.



Air strikes attacking NVA who ambushed Alpha Company 2/503d on June 22, 1967. View from runway near SF camp.
(Photo by Earle "Doc" Jackson, B Med)

One of our guys noted that many of the rounds detonated in the trees. Some air bursts are OK but in that really heavy forest they should have swapped out contact fuses for delay fuses. But only experience would have taught the FO's that. I'm sure they were way too busy on The Slopes to sort out everything.

I think the NVA made a big mistake. Please understand I mean no disrespect to the troopers on that hill. I feel the NVA would have accomplished more, from their perspective, if they would have captured the wounded troops rather than execute them. Their initial goal was to wipe out an American unit and the 173d would have been the most spectacular accomplishment. Failing that, parading a bunch of paratroopers down the streets of Hanoi would have had a greater impact than all the pilots they kept parading around. The war was not just about body counts.

As I recall, confusion and terror reign supreme in battle. Very few guys see the same thing the same way. To the guys that made it out, welcome home.

About Capt. Ron Leonard, Col. (Ret)

"He was a real hero during the battle at Hill 875 just a few months later in November. I was glad for him."

Dave Milton
CO, A/2/503



COL John Powers out front with (L) CPT Ron Leonard and (R) 2LT John Robinson receiving their DSCs.

~ Condolences ~

On behalf of troopers of the 2/503 RVN, we send our condolences to Jerry Hassler, Recon/2/503 '66/'67, and the entire Hassler family, on the passing of Linda, Jerry's bride of 51 years.



"She loved to nurture and give selflessly to her husband, sons, and grandchildren. She was fondly known as 'Moonbeam,' as her face would always light up whenever she was with her family and friends. Her sweet smile and her warm hugs will be greatly missed." Rest in peace Jerry's Moonbeam.



It's A Small Sky Soldier World

The other day my wife Reggie and I along with our grandkids Sofia (Smitty) and Aidan (Smittytoo) were motoring along the causeway here in Melbourne, FL, heading toward the **Gen. John Cleland Memorial Bridge**, when we came up on a sedan in the right lane driven by a lady with a child in the passenger seat. Catching our eyes was the 173d sticker on the rear bumper of the lady's car. Reggie guessed the driver was the "wife" of a Sky Soldier.

Traffic was heavy and there was no chance to pull over for a meet and greet; instead, I gave Smittytoo sitting next to me my 173d ball cap, and rolling down the passenger window he held it outside the car for the Sky Soldier's wife to see as I honked the horn and we all waved as we drove on.

Last night in Melbourne, about 15 miles south from the drive-by hat greeting of a week or so ago, we were having dinner at a hamburger joint in Melbourne; I was wearing my 173d hat, as usual, to demonstrate the immense pride I have in our unit (and to hide the bald head), when a lady sitting behind us, with whom was apparently her young daughter, said, *"Excuse me, but I served in that unit."* I walked the couple steps to their table to say hi.

The lady is **Keli Waller**, a Sky Soldier who served with the 173d in Bamberg, Germany, and as Reggie learned, did two tours in the Sand. Joining her for dinner was her beautiful little daughter, Olivia. Reggie and I thanked Keli for her service, and I commented, *'For such a small unit as the 173d we often meet Sky Soldiers when we're out and about'*. Keli agreed, and mentioned just the other day some young boy was in a car driving by her on the causeway waving out of the window a 173d ball cap. No kidding.

I could kick myself for not taking a photo of my family with our new Sky Soldier friend and her daughter.

Welcome home, Keli, to what is certainly a small Sky Soldier world.

Smitty



Parachute Practice: Army paratroopers descend from an Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft during airborne operations at the Juliet drop zone in Pordenone, Italy, April 16, 2019.

Bill Workman, 1/503 Past President of the 173d Airborne Association Dies at 91

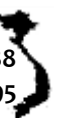


William Edward "Bill" Workman passed away Wednesday, July 17th, 2019 in Oklahoma City at the age of 91. Bill was born April 17th, 1929 in Huntington West Virginia to Raymond and Mabel Boley Workman. He graduated from Huntington High School and later entered the United States Army serving his country 26 years. Bill served in WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Bill married Geraldine Tucker September 25, 1948.

Bill served as Police Chief and as Mayor of Stonewall for many years. Bill loved racing cars and did so at Oil Center well up into his 80's. Bill enjoyed sports and western movies. Bill was very mechanical and enjoyed fixing things. Bill was past President of the Sky Soldiers Association of the 173rd Airborne Brigade (SEP). Bill was a member of the reenactment D Troop 5th Calvary.

Bill is preceded in death by his parents, son, Richard Workman, wife Geraldine and a sister, Helen Pritchard.

Bill is survived by his children, Linda Sue Wood of Pauls Valley, William E. Workman Jr. and wife Patsy of Asher, Joseph Workman and wife Teresa of Konawa, Patricia Braun and husband Chris of Konawa, James R. Workman and wife Cindy of Stonewall and Donald S. Workman and wife Angela of Manassas, Virginia, and an extended family.



AIR FORCE STATEMENT

20 November 1967

On 6 November 1967 three companies of the 4th/503rd Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade were conducting search and destroy operation in the Central Highlands west of Dak To Special Forces Camp. In addition, a fourth company performed a combat assault into a landing zone (LZ) prepared from the dense jungle by bombs dropped by fighter-bombers. As A and D Companies were moving and had no permanent bunkers they were considered to be in the more hazardous situation. Therefore, immediate air strikes were diverted to their location as they were in imminent danger of being overwhelmed.

The first flight arrived within minutes with napalm and 750 pound bombs. As the units were now under a ground attack the FAC elected to expend the napalm first. This napalm, and subsequent napalm attacks, were made with extreme effectiveness and utmost accuracy to within twenty meters of the friendly position. These attacks caused the NVA to withdraw from the friendly troops but they continued their attack by the use of mortars and automatic weapons.

As the only weapons available against the NVA were 500 and 750 pound bombs the friendly forces were warned of the inherent dangers of using these in close air support.

As their plight was serious the ground forces elected to have the bombs delivered well within the usual safe-separation distance. All of these bombs were delivered, again with extreme accuracy and effectiveness, as close as seventy meters from the friendly forces. The attack by the automatic weapons and mortars ceased immediately and the friendly forces were able to join and consolidate their position.

The command general of the 173rd Brigade, who observed the airstrikes in support of the companies commented,

"Those airstrikes were exactly in the places where they had to be."

Subsequent airstrikes were then utilized around the LZ.

B Company had continued to receive mortar and automatic weapon fire followed by a ground assault. Air support was again provided by fighters delivering napalm, CBU, rockets and bombs. The CBU and napalm were delivered less than twenty-five meters from the friendly perimeter while the rockets and

bombs were used effectively against the mortar and automatic weapon positions at greater distances.

These airstrikes were effective for the ground attack was repulsed and no further mortar fire was received. The confirmed results of the airstrikes in support of this battle was 18 NVA KIA, 1 Heavy Machine Gun and 1 Rocket Launcher captured, 15 AK-47s captured and 4 mortars destroyed. A sweep of the area surrounding both battle scenes produced 133 more NVA bodies, many of these undoubtedly due to the airstrikes.

As the Forward Air Controller directing this outstanding air support I wish to add my appreciation to that of the army personnel who were aided to an immeasurable course in their successful efforts to withstand the fierce attacks by the NVA. All ordnance was delivered with precise accuracy under the most critical circumstances. This precision undoubtedly saved many friendly lives and enabled the American forces to attain their objective.

JOSEPH B. MADUCH
Major, USAF
ALO, 1st Bde, 4th Inf Div.



Medal of Honor Awarded



"Trump awards the Medal of Honor to David Bellavia, the first living Iraq War recipient. Bellavia received the Medal of Honor for 'conspicuous gallantry' during the Second Battle of Fallujah, the bloodiest battle of the Iraq War."



His Friend Lost During The Battle Of The Slopes

Thanks for sending this file (recirculation of Issue 29, Battle of the Slopes). My best friend, **Ronald Cleveland Clark**, was killed at this battle.

I post his picture as my picture on my Facebook account about a week before and a week after Memorial Day. We were best friends for a great number of years during our youth.

The last time I saw him I was sitting in a class in the lunchroom at my high school. I heard someone making a *pssssstttt* noise and I looked to the kitchen and it was Ronnie.

I slipped into the kitchen and we chatted for a while and he told me that he had dropped out of high school to get married, and I said Ronnie if you do this you will get drafted and sent to Vietnam; he said he would be deferred because of the marriage. Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you that he was working delivering milk to my school.

He came by the school and picked me up when we let out and I spent the rest of the afternoon with him. Time rolls on and I was hanging out at a gas/grocery store (predates 7-11 stores) and heard one of the customers say, *"Boy, it was bad that boy from New Holland got killed in Vietnam the other day,"* and my heart sank. I rushed home (predates cell phones) and called his uncle and asked about Ronnie. He confirmed that he had been KIA -- and later I found out that it was at the Battle of the Slopes.

I attended his funeral and visited his mom and stepdad before the funeral at their home, a home that I shared with Ronnie on many a night as kids -- if I wasn't at his house he was at mine.

Anyway, thanks for including me and sending email's to me. Rest assured that he will always be remembered in my household along with all of our armed forces.

Respectfully,

Terry L. Mize

USN Helicopter Attack Squadron 3



**Terry's friend Ronnie
A/2/503, KIA 6/22/67
Battle of the Slopes**

Derek Gregory Garcia 2/503 Trooper Passes

July 9, 1995 ~ July 27, 2019 (age 24)

Derek Gregory Garcia was born July 9, 1995 in San Antonio, TX to the home of Annmarie (Battle) and Gregory J. Garcia, and died early on the morning of July 27, 2019 in Portales, NM.



Upon graduation from high school, Derek followed his patriotic desire and enlisted in the US Army. He was a Paratrooper SPC, and was honorably discharged in Nov. of 2018. He had returned home to make his life in his hometown.

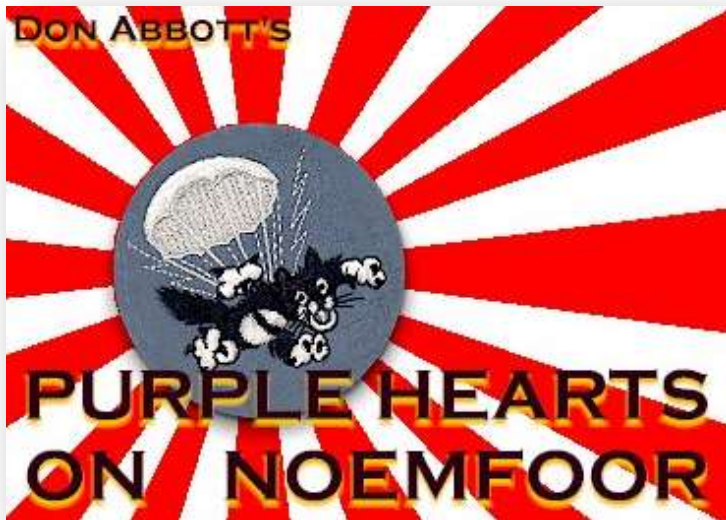
Derek served in the 2nd of the 503rd Infantry Battalion 173rd Airborne in Vicenza, Italy. He participated in numerous missions while stationed overseas, including Operation Enduring Freedom. He had 38 career jumps as a paratrooper.

He was a member of the 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, NC. Following his discharge, he was making his career with Dairy Farmers of America in Portales as a Lab Tech.

He is survived by his wife Juliet, of Nashville, TN; his parents, Annmarie and Greg Garcia of Portales; four brothers, Gabriel Garcia, Timothy Garcia, Aaron Garcia and Luke Garcia and a sister, Kimberlyn Garcia all of Portales, an extended family, and his faithful dog, Augie. He was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Ann and Russell Battle.



THE 503RD P.R.C.T. HERITAGE BATTALION *Online*



By Don Abbott

A, D & E Company, 503rd PRCT, WWII

Noemfoor was an insignificant little Island off the Northwest Coast of New Guinea. The only reason it was given any attention whatsoever by Higher Command in mid-1944 was that it had two operational airfields and one well along in construction. MacArthur's advance through the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) needed airfields in the area for launching air strikes into Borneo, the Celebes and into the Philippines.

The Japanese had scraped these fields out of almost solid coral using slave laborers from Taiwan. There were an undetermined number of Imperial Japanese Air Corp and service troops on the Island. For some reason these people are always referred to as non-combatants but those we met on Noemfoor turned out to have plenty of fight in them.

Noemfoor was hot and humid. One can get an idea of the normal temperatures when considering that the Northern tip of the Island is located at a Latitude of one half of a degree South of the Equator.

The Island is about 15 miles long and 10 miles wide at the widest point. Except for patches where natives had cleared jungle off small plots of land for their gardens the Island was almost entirely covered with heavy jungle growth over the coral base.



The Island is very flat, with little of the land exceeding 400 feet in elevation. The highest point was a rumored hill known only as Hill 670. This hill was the objective of a number of operations of the 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team over the month and a half fighting took place in July and August 1944.

The Japanese had built and operated Kamiri Airdrome in the Northwest corner and Namber Airdrome in the Southwest corner of the Island. Namber was, actually, a strip used only occasionally by fighter aircraft while Kamiri was considerably larger. Kornasoren Airdrome was under construction by the Japanese, at the North end of the Island, as the American troops landed. United States construction crews greatly expanded Kamiri and finished and enlarged Kornasoren.

On 2 July 1944 the 158th Regimental Combat Team, an Arizona National Guard outfit known as the Bushmasters, landed on the Northern shore near Kornasoren and almost, immediately, bogged down. The 503rd Parachute Regimental Combat Team was called upon to bail them out. The parachute outfit had been held at Hollandia as a mobile reserve for this and other operations under way at the time.

On 3 July the First Battalion of the 503rd jumped on Kornasoren and took over the pursuit of the Japanese troops attempting to evacuate in the face of the large invasion. It would have been preferable for the whole of the 503rd regiment to jump at one time but there were not sufficient C-47 transport aircraft available, in the South West Pacific Theater of Operations, to drop the whole Regiment in one lift. The First Battalion was followed by the Third Battalion, which jumped on Kornasoren on 4 July. Because of high casualties, experienced by the jumpers in those two battalions, the jump of the Second Battalion was called off and they were flown to Biak. There, the Second Battalion was loaded on amphibious landing craft and transported to Noemfoor on 9 July, landing at the Namber Airdrome.

(continued....)



By this time a bit more was learned about the enemy on Noemfoor. There were thought to be about 1200 Japanese Air Corp and Service troops under Command of Colonel Shimizu. They were well armed with light and heavy machine guns, knee mortars, rifles, and of course, the usual sabers. The troops had evacuated the airdromes and headed for higher ground, Hill 670 in particular, where they intended to hold out as long as possible.



Hill 670 was located an inaccessible 6 or 7 miles from the North end of the Island. It was hard to get to because of heavy Jungle which overlaid the Coral outcroppings. There were no roads or trails anywhere near the hill. The hill could not be seen from the air so bombing or shelling it with artillery would be a matter of pure guesswork. The hill would have to be found and attacked on the ground.

A native track led from the North end of Namber Airdrome eastward to an area where natives on the Island gathered in an attempt to stay out of the way of the fighting between the Japanese and the Americans. The Second Battalion had patrols working this track almost immediately after landing on 9 July. At the closest point this track passed within three or four miles of Hill 670.

On 16 July "E" Company was on its way across the Island, following the track, when darkness fell and the Company quickly went into bivouac for the night. At that time, and most all nights, units avoided moving around after dark. The general rule at night was *"If it moves; shoot to kill! It is, probably, an enemy."*

During the night Captain Samuel N. Smith, from Denton, Texas, the Company Commander, received a message from Battalion Headquarters, stationed back on Namber Airdrome. "E" Company was to attack Hill 670 from the Southeast. "E" Company consisted of three rifle platoons and a mortar platoon, a total of, roughly 120 Officers and Enlisted Men. A section of Light Machine Guns from Headquarters Company,

Second Battalion had been attached to "E" Company to support the rifle platoons.

I was the Platoon Leader of the Second Rifle Platoon. I was First Lieutenant Donald E. (Don) Abbott from St. Helens, OR. My platoon was chosen by Captain Smith to lead as the point because we were considered, generally, to have the best scouts in the Company. While the other two rifle platoons, occasionally, relieved my platoon, it soon became evident much better time could be made by using my platoon exclusively.

Two scouts out of six in the second platoon stood out as better than the others. They were Galen C. Kittleson, now a retired Command Sergeant Major in Toeterville, IA and Loyd G. Nelson, now of Pensacola, FL. Shortly after our encounter at Hill 670, Kittleson was chosen to be an Alamo Scout, a collection of outstanding soldiers who scouted landing beaches before amphibious landings as the allied troops made their way toward the Philippines.

The two scouts led the column. I followed them by 20 to 50 yards where I could always be in contact with them and Captain Smith. He stayed back another 50 yards. My platoon sergeant, Tech Sergeant Leonard A. Peterson, of East Amherst, NY, was close behind Captain Smith and in contact with the rest of the Platoon.



Following the Second Platoon was the Machine Gun section, Company Headquarters, the First Platoon, The Mortar Platoon and the Third Platoon, protecting the tail of the column. It sounds as if this was a long formation and it was....

(continued....)



When advancing through heavy jungle, such as experienced on Noemfoor Island, it is almost impossible to advance in any other formation without becoming separated. Likewise the use of patrols protecting the flanks was seldom used because of the difficulty in maintaining contact.

It is virtually impossible to move a column of 120 people silently enough that they cannot be detected by the enemy, but we tried to maintain silence for the sake of the Scouts, if for no other reason. In this case, however, the column had a problem. Located near the tail of the column, at the head of the mortar platoon, was First Lieutenant John L. Lindgren, Mortar Platoon leader of Los Angeles CA. Immediately ahead of him was Dr. Charles H. Bradford, of Boston, MA. Doctor Bradford had joined the 503rd when it was stationed in Australia and he was an orthopedic specialist in a station hospital. Being parachutists we suffered many sprains, breaks, etc. which were treated by Doctor Bradford at the Hospital. After some discussion he decided he might as well join the 503rd instead of getting the men second hand in the Hospital. He was considerably older than the run-of-the-mill paratrooper and soon made many friends among the troopers who looked upon him as a father figure. His eyesight was not good and he wore thick lenses.



He constantly had trouble keeping his glasses clean. In the extreme heat and humidity of Noemfoor the Doctor's glasses would fog so entirely that he had a difficult time seeing where he was going. Consequently, he often knocked down some of the jungle brush or vines. Lt. Lindgren, who was less than light on his feet, would stumble over the debris Doc Bradford knocked down. There was a continual, *WHANG!* as something was knocked down by Doc, followed by, *BANG!* as Lindgren tripped and fell. Then came loud curses. This commotion could be clearly heard at the head of the column and, presumably, by enemy outposts well ahead of the column.

(Before long, as a tribute to his lack of jungle stealth, Lt. Lindgren became known as '*Jungle Fox*', a satirical sobriquet by which he was known for the rest of his life).

Kittleson and Nelson, carefully, checked out every yard of the advance before continuing as rapidly as safety allowed. Kittleson would check a suspicious outcropping of coral and signal Nelson "OK" and then advancing a bit further. Nelson would, in turn, pass the information on to me. The three of us, through months of training together and running patrols in other places, such as East of Hollandia, had become a team able to communicate silently without a need for words. None of us could explain how we communicated but it worked, that was what was important.

The advance was, strictly, by compass heading since there were no trails or roads to follow. Occasionally, something which appeared to be a trail would be encountered but would turn out to be a game trail or an aberration on the jungle floor. The advance was hard work too. The jungle covered the coral outcroppings, sometimes making it so a high point would look like vegetation, when it was solid coral. Other times a deep hole could be covered like a trap with vegetation which would not hold the weight of a man.

The map the Company had to work with had been drawn from aerial photographs and were virtually useless. How the Engineers made these the people on the ground were never certain. It appeared contours must have been drawn by use of the photographs which, of course, could not see through the trees down to the jungle floor. The troops often felt the contours represented the tops of the trees instead of the jungle floor. At any rate the map indicated Hill 670 was about 5 miles from our previous bivouac area and could only be found by following an azimuth.

The view was limited to a few yards in front of the scouts. Landmarks to steer toward were virtually non-existent. Maintaining an azimuth with a high degree of accuracy was virtually impossible. We had, however, become fairly adept with this method before so felt we were headed toward Hill 670. The distance travelled, however, was more difficult to measure because of the need to, carefully, scout out the advance slowed us, considerably.

(continued....)



We had left our bivouac area around ten in the morning and it was now about 1600 hours. It was probable we were getting close to Hill 670 although we had no physical indication. Our advance continued to be along, generally, level land.

Suddenly, Nelson indicated to me that Kittleson had spotted a Japanese heavy machine gun emplacement and that he had been seen. Silently, I asked him how many Japanese and Kittleson motioned back he thought there were six.

I indicated for them to spray the gun with their Thompson Sub Machine Guns and, then, pull back. I dove for a spot behind a tree. The tree was what we called a Banyan with broad, flat, knife-like roots, perhaps two inches thick. The trunk of the tree was, perhaps, a foot and a half in diameter. I poked my head around the left side of the tree but could not see the machine gun. I, then, turned my head to tell Sam Smith what was ahead and to order Sergeant Peterson to send one of our squads around to the left and come in on the machine gun from that side.

Kittleson and Nelson sprayed the area and started back to where I was. Then the machine gun opened up, apparently shooting at me since they hit the tree I was behind with a quick burst. I did not know it at that instant but they also sprayed to the right of the tree because they hit at least three of the people back down the column.



I had not completed my order to Sergeant Peterson when the Japanese Machine Gun opened up. I was hit in the middle of my chest by a round which came through a root and knocked me on my rear. I had always hoped that if I were to be wounded, it would not be in the torso, particularly not in the chest but here I was hit in the chest. I was wearing a one piece fatigue uniform. Because of the heat the uniform was well open at the neck. I looked down and saw blood all over the front of me. I could see a hole a little larger than

the diameter of a bullet in the middle of my chest. Wiping the blood off the wound I was surprised to see a small chunk of metal. I was wearing my "dog tags" on a metal chain and thought to myself *"the bullet must have hit the chain and that is a piece of it which I should get out of there"*. I flicked the metal with a fingernail and a whole bullet popped out from between two ribs. The round was pretty hot and slippery so I dropped it in the leaves on the jungle floor. I have always thought it was a shame I could not have kept the bullet as a souvenir but it still lays on the jungle floor in the middle of Noemfoor Island. It appears the bullet hitting the knife-like root slowed it down enough to keep it from going through me but still had enough velocity to knock me on my can.

By this time there was a lot of blood down the front of my fatigues. Sam had come up immediately after I had told him what was in front. He, sensibly, had remained behind the tree and was not hit when the machine gun opened up. As he approached I told him *"They got me!"*. Sam, later told me he really thought they had because of all the blood.

Shortly, I found the whole bullet was not the only thing that had hit me. Apparently at least two other rounds hit the top of the root and shattered. One flat piece of a bullet fragment plastered against the middle of my chin. Another bullet shattered and went in and out of the left side of my neck. This one left a piece 0.8 x 1.6 mm in size (about the size of my little fingernail--it is still in my neck). Doc Bradford, who soon came forward has told me, in recent years, he thought I really was a "goner" when he first saw me. The bullet shrapnel on my chin and in my neck was where most of the blood had come from.

Actually, I came out much better than three others. In the burst of fire from the Japanese Machine gun Corporal Wilbur R. Anker, from the Machine Gun section, was hit in the spleen. He died in agony during the night. PFC. Muñoz, also from the Machine Gun section, was badly wounded in the left shoulder. After the Japanese fired the Machine Gun burst they had tossed several grenades and Pfc. Frank Molinaro, one of my men in the Second Platoon, was hit by a fragment in his left knee.

(continued....)



By the time the squad had completed its flanking movement, the Japanese had pulled their machine gun back and had drug off their casualties. All that was left in their position was several pools of blood. It was approaching sundown and the Company did not want to be caught moving in the night. The dim light under the jungle overstory was bad enough. We didn't need a pitch dark night. So Sam Smith ordered everyone to dig in as much as possible in the coral and be prepared for an attack during the night. Luckily, the Japanese had enough with the one encounter and, probably, were hoping we would not attack them during the night.

Cpl. Anker's died of his wound during the night. There was nothing Doctor Bradford could do beyond injecting him with morphine to keep him from suffering. Muños' shoulder wound was not improved by the filthy jungle and Doc Bradford told Sam he, probably, would not pull through unless he could be admitted in a hospital soon. Frank Molinaro had not realized he had the grenade fragment in his knee until an hour or so later when it began to hurt from the inside instead of the outside. Although my wounds looked bad, they were not disabling and, in fact, did not even hurt badly.

As morning light came, Sam took stock of his position. He had one dead, one very badly wounded man, who needed hospitalization, and two other wounded who might get infection if not treated soon. He had tried to raise Battalion Headquarters all night on his radio but without success. In fact the Company had not been in radio contact with anyone since shortly after leaving the previous night's bivouac.

The radios we were given were a pile of junk. They added a lot of weight to our packs but never worked when they were needed. Sam agonized over the fact he would have to give up making contact and fixing the enemy forces which were supposed to be located on Hill 670. He reached the conclusion he had better turn around and go back to the previous night's bivouac where the wounded could be evacuated. He would have to give up without reaching our objective.

At first light, the Company turned around and headed back the way it had come. Aside from the wounded there was another reason the Company wanted to get back to the track. They had left the bivouac area with no rations and they were beginning to undergo the pangs of hunger.

A make-shift litter was made for Muños. The route was so difficult that nearly every man took his turn helping to lug the litter. By the time they reached the track and Muños reached the temporary hospital it was well after dark of the second day. I was able to make my way without help as was PFC Molinaro but we were

allowed to travel light. The rest of the Company was exhausted from lugging Muños.

About half way back to the track two Japanese somehow were able to get themselves captured before someone shot them, a very fortunate and uncharacteristic happening. They looked as if they were not over 15 years old and they were obviously next to starvation. They would wolf down any small bit of food any of our men would give them out of pity for their condition.

The prisoners were put in the care of Sergeant Grady, Platoon Sergeant of the Mortar Platoon. Although the Japanese, together, probably did not weigh 200 pounds, they were loaded down with mortar ammunition when the regular bearers pulled their turn as bearers of the litter carrying Muños.

The "E" Company mission to reach Hill 670 was not accomplished and we lost one man killed, one man badly wounded and two others hit. The wounded who would go on to fight another day. Four Purple Hearts and nothing to show for it.

**FROM OUR DOCUMENT COLLECTION - GENERAL
ORDER 25 (9 July 1944) Listing the awards of Purple
Hearts on Noemfoor.**

Caption of photos shown in this report:

2652

**From: Public Relations Division
U.S. Coast Guard, Washington, D.C.**

OFFICIAL COAST GUARD PHOTO WOUNDED PARATROOPERS COME OUT OF NOEMFOOR

Aboard a Coast guard-manned tank landing ship standing off Noemfoor Island near the northwest tip of Dutch New Guinea, the ship's medical officer directs coast Guard pharmacist's mates brining in paratrooper casualties from the battle that wrested control of the island from the Japanese. The Coast Guard-manned LST brought in troops and supplies and then served as a temporary hospital for the wounded invaders.

**IN REWRITING CAPTION, PLEASE MENTION
"COAST GUARD"**

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



From the archives....

1st Bn, Bien Hoa Gets Battle Streamer



U.S. Army photo

General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, pins a battle streamer reading "Bien Hoa" to the colors of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). The streamer was added to the unit's colors in the field on November 3, after General Westmoreland presented the nation's highest unit award for extraordinary heroism – the Distinguished Unit Citation – to men of the 1st Battalion. The unit earned the citation for heroism during the battle of Bien Hoa on November 8, 1965.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade is currently commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Brownlee. During the battle of Bien Hoa last year the battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John E. Tyler who has since completed his tour in Viet Nam and returned to the United States for reassignment.

Source:

173d Airborne *SCRAPBOOK*, Edition 9
The Observer, Oct. 24, 1966, Page 9

Valor Awards of Men of the 2/503d RVN



Gentlemen & Surviving Family Members, hello:

We've begun the process of producing a publication honoring as many of our men as possible who served with our battalion in Vietnam and who are recipients of the **Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star w/V Device or Army Commendation Medal w/V Device** in recognition of their heroic acts during combat with the 2/503d RVN.

We will publish the highest valor award citation of each trooper, or the valor award specified by recipients, who were on the roster of the 2/503d or received a valor award while attached to our battalion for their acts while in combat with our battalion. If citations cannot be obtained, where possible, we will list the names of 2/503 troopers and the valor award they earned.

If you are the recipient of one of these valor awards while on the roster of or attached to the 2/503d in Vietnam, please email a copy of the official Army citation, and a VN era or current photo of yourself, to rto173@att.net. Also, if you are in possession of a valor citation of a 2/503 buddy, please send that in too.

Once we believe we've compiled all the valor award citations and photos possible, we will email this document to you and all Sky Soldiers on our list for your keeping. Also, it will be provided to the 173d Association, the University of Florida's Military Digital Library, and the 503rd PRCT Historical Battalion websites for their permanent posting.

The next two pages include a sample of how this publication may appear, and it is produced for the purpose of creating a consolidated historical record for our men, their families and descendants, as well as researchers and educators. Kindly forward this to your 2/503 buddies.

We understand countless men of our battalion, particularly many of those who lost their lives, were never formally recognized for their heroic acts during combat. But, what we can do is create this lasting document in their honor and in honor of those Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d who were so recognized.

Honor one, honor all.





Valor Award Recipients Of The 2/503d RVN



Photo of the hands of SFC Charles B. Morris, A/2/503, holding his Medal of Honor.

This publication will present citations of valor earned by numerous but not necessarily all of the men of the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) who are recipients of the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star w/V Device or Army Commendation Medal w/V Device in recognition of their acts of heroism during combat in Vietnam. This will also be published in honor of the countless men who served in the 2/503d in Vietnam, particularly those men who lost their lives, yet were never formally recognized for their heroic acts during combat.

It is because of men like these, men like us are alive today.

Produced by Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d RVN

(continued....)



Valor Award Recipients of the 2/503d RVN

Their extraordinary heroism during the Vietnam War was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon themselves, their units, and the United States Army

Karl Lee Bullard B/2/503



The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Karl Lee Bullard, First Lieutenant (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection

with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. First Lieutenant Bullard distinguished himself by exception-ally valorous actions on 5 May 1968 as an infantry platoon leader. A reinforced Viet Cong company launched a violent attack on his company's position near Bong Son. Through-out the attack, Lieutenant Bullard moved from one position to another along the perimeter, directing the fire of his men. When the attack had been repulsed, he called for volunteers to move outside the perimeter with him to recover a friendly squad which was isolated, surrounded and under attack. Lieutenant Bullard was wounded in the leg during the maneuver but refused to stop for medical treatment. When his troops reached the squad, he directed them in laying down a base of fire to cover the withdrawal. After insuring that all the beleaguered element's members had returned to safety, he moved out again to rescue a second isolated squad. Lieutenant Bullard advanced across two hundred meters of enemy controlled terrain before he contacted the surrounded element. When he arrived, he found that all the men in the squad had been wounded and the position was still receiving intense fire. The enemy then mounted a massive ground assault. Several of the Viet Cong fell at Lieutenant Bullard's feet as he directed the fire of his men which succeeded in repulsing the attack. While returning to the company perimeter, he personally killed two more insurgents. When the second squad had been brought to safety, Lieutenant Bullard left the perimeter a third time to recover a radio and machine gun which his men had been forced to leave behind. Lieutenant Bullard was personally responsible for inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and for saving the lives of twelve American soldiers. First Lieutenant Bullard's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving as 3d Platoon Sergeant, Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. On 7 July 1965, Company B was engaged in a search and destroy operation in an area approximately fifteen miles northeast of Bien Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. Moving in a company wedge formation, the 3d platoon led the point. At about 1000 hours, the forward element of the platoon encountered heavy hostile fire from an automatic weapon and small arms which emanated from a concealed insurgent position. In the initial burst, the 3d Platoon Leader and another platoon member were killed. Due to the heavy concentration of fire that followed, the point squad of the platoon was pinned down. Realizing the importance of locating and destroying the insurgent position, Sergeant Davis, with complete disregard for his charged forward, firing his weapon and lobbing grenades, in a desperate attempt to pinpoint and destroy the hostile gun position. His weapon jammed and grenades expended, Sergeant Davis was forced to halt the assault. Rearmed with a weapon and more grenades, he charged twice again through the murderous hail of insurgent fire, falling back only after expending his ammunition and grenades. However, as a result of his efforts during the third assault, he was able to pinpoint the exact location of the hostile machine gun. Notwithstanding the fact that he was completely exhausted and dazed from a projectile which damaged his helmet and web equipment, Sergeant Davis mustered fantastic courage and fanatic determination and assisted by two others, assaulted the Viet Cong position for the fourth time, inflicting heavy casualties and silencing the deadly automatic weapon. His heroic actions and courage served to inspire the men of Company B to gain the initiative and successfully complete their assigned mission, and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Frederick W. Fassett HHC/2/503



Gallantry in action: Specialist Four Fassett distinguished himself by exceptional gallantry in the Republic of Vietnam on 6 May 1968, while serving with Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)....



Eugene R. Davis B/2/503



The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Eugene R. Davis, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army, extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Sept. – Oct. 2019 – Issue 88

Page 60 of 95

(continued...)

2/503 Valor Award Recipients Identified To Date

Thus far, we've compiled official army citations of valor and/or photos for the troopers named below, except as noted:

MOH – Medal of Honor
DSC – Distinguished Service Cross
SS – Silver Star
BSV – Bronze Star w/V Device
ACMV – Army Commendation Medal w/V Device

Thomas W. Aikey, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Charles A. Bell, B/2/503, SS (photo/citation needed)
Jan Bobowski, A/2/503, BSV
Patrick Bowe, HHC/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Nathaniel Brown, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
R.L. Les Brownlee, B/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Karl L. Bullard, B/2/503, DSC
Robert B. Carmichael, HHC/2/503, SS (citation needed)
George S. Colson, II, B/2/503, BSV
Michael J. Cosmo, C/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Charles R. Crews, A/2/503, BSV

Eugene R. Davis, B/2/503, DSC
Richard Eckert, B/2/503, BSV
Samuel A. Eidson, A/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Mile Le Roy Ellis, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Frederick W. Fassett, HHC/B/2/503, SS
Gerald N. Floyd, A/2/503, BSV
J.L. Frazier, Sr., A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Leslie A. Fuller, A/2/503, BSV
Amador B. Garcia, Jr., HHC/2/503, BSV
Pedro L. Garcia, HHC/2/503, SS

Robert P. Gipson, B/2/503, DSC
Michael J. Gladden, B/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Robert A. Gray, C/2/503, SS (photo/citation needed)
Steven Haber, C/2/503, BSV
William T. Hagerty, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Philip P. Hayden, C/2/503, DSC (photo needed)
Rudolph Hernandez, B/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Richard E. Hood, Jr., A/2/503, SS (photo/citation needed)
Ross T. Hulslander, A/2/503, BSV (photo needed)
Vladimir Jakovenko, C/2/503, SS (citation needed)

Donald R. Judd, A/2/503, SS
Harold J. Kaufman, C/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Michael J. Kiley, A/2/503, SS
Richard N. Kimball, Jr., D/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Charles Knecht, A/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Kenneth M. Knudson, A/2/503, SS
Rodger M. Koefod, B/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Gregory S. Kowaleski, A/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Johnny H. Leake, A/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Robert R. Litwin, A/2/503, DSC

Richard Lock, B/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Carlos J. Lozada, A/2/503, MOH
Gregg P. Lyell, A/2/503, ACMV
William H. Marshall, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)

Martin T. McDonald, HHC/2/503, DSC
Stephen Adam Mika, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
David A. Milton, A/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Willie C. Monroe, A/2/503, BSV
Charles B. Morris, A/2/503, MOH

Timothy J. Murphy, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Daniel L. Negro, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Michael D. O'Connor, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Milton L. Olive, III, B/2/503, MOH
Jerry L. O'Neal, C/2/503, SS (photo/citation needed)
Charles E. Owens, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
William Palenske, A/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
Freddie Parks, A/2/503, SS
Leo A. Pellerin, A/2/503, BSV
Elbert D. Poff, D/2/503, SS (citation needed)

Billy W. Ponder, Sr., C/2/503, DSC (photo needed)
George A. Poor, Jr., A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Charles L. Raiford, Jr., C/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Jerry R. Rebits, B/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Eric Ribitsch, C/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Edward L. Richardson, A/2/503, ACMV (citation needed)
James H. Robinson, B/2/503, ACMV
James P. Rogan, B/2/503, DSC
William A. Ross, D/2/503, BSV
Jack Schimpf, B/2/503, SS (citation needed)

Dale A. Schram, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
James C. Schultz, A/2/503, BSV
Peter J. Schutz, A/2/503, SS, (photo/citation needed)
John W. Searcy, HHC/2/503, BSV
Frederick L. Shipman, D/Recon/2/503, SS
Donald L. Smith, Jr., HHC/2/503, BSV
Lewis B. Smith, D/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Charles H. Snow, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
John R. Stalter, C/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Johnson A. Steidler, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)

Robert L. Steven, Jr., A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Truman R. Thomas, HHC/2/503, BSV
John R. Tighe, B/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Robert Toporek, B/2/503, BSV
William J. Tucker, A/2/503, BSV (photo/citation needed)
William C. Vose, BSV, A/HHC/2/503
Conrad N. Walker, 2/503 (Attached), SS
Robert A. Warfield, B/2/503, SS
Charles J. Watters, 2/503 (Attached), MOH
Frank W. Webb, B/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Alexander C. Zsigo, Jr., A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)

This project will likely take a number of months to complete.



Department of Defense Identifies Army Casualties

June 27, 2019

The Department of Defense announced today the deaths of two soldiers who were supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Both soldiers died June 25, 2019, in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan as a result of wounds sustained from small arms fire while engaged in combat operations. The incident is under investigation.

The deceased are:

Master Sgt. Micheal B. Riley, 32, of Heilbronn, Germany. Riley was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Carson, Colorado.



Michael Riley

Sgt. James G. Johnston, 24, of Trumansburg, New York. Johnston was assigned to 79th Ordnance Battalion (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), 71st Ordnance Group, Fort Hood, Texas.



James Johnston

For more information regarding Master Sgt. Micheal B. Riley, media may contact Lt. Col. Loren Bymer, public affairs chief, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, at 910-432-3383 or loren.bymer@socom.mil.

For more information regarding Sgt. James G. Johnston, media may contact Mr. Christopher Haug at 254-287-9993 or www.forthoodpresscenter.com

July 1, 2019

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Sgt. 1st Class Elliott J. Robbins, 31, from Ogden, Utah, died June 30, 2019, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, from a non-combat related incident. The incident is under investigation.

Robbins was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Carson, Colorado.



Elliott Robbins

For more information regarding Sgt. 1st Class Elliott J. Robbins, media may contact Lt. Col. Loren Bymer, U.S. Army Special Operations Command Public Affairs, at 910-432-3383 or loren.bymer@socom.mil

August 19, 2019

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

Specialist Clayton James Horne, 23, of Atlanta, Louisiana died August 17, 2019 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as a result of wounds sustained by a noncombat related incident. The incident is currently under investigation.



Clayton Horne

Horne was assigned to the 351st Military Police Company, 160th Military Police Battalion, Ocala, Florida.

Vietnam Veterans Are No Different

This was written about the men and women of *The Greatest Generation*, author unknown, but it can be said with equal certainty about *our* generation, the men and woman who served in Vietnam, who have every reason to be proud of their service and sacrifice to their country and their fellow citizens. Ed

"IT IS NOT SURPRISING, I suppose, that the horrors of war give birth to a new generation of good Samaritans. Young men and women who have been so intensely exposed to such inhumanity often make a silent pledge that if they ever escape this dark world of death and injuries, this universe of cruelty, they will devote their lives to good works. Sometimes the pledge is a conscious thought. Sometimes it is a subconscious reaction to their experiences."



Myths of War

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley is a firm believer that a strong military is key in a whole-of-government approach to national security issues. Still, he cautions, there are Americans who believe some myths about the military.



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley speaks to soldiers at Qayyarah Airfield West, Iraq, Dec. 22, 2017.

The 'Short War' Myth

This is a very prominent myth and one that recurs throughout history, Milley said. President Abraham Lincoln called for troops to put down the rebellion in 1861. He was so sure it would be a quick war that he only called for 90-day enlistments. Both the French and Germans in 1914 believed the conflict would be short, but World War I lasted four years and took millions of lives.

"War takes on a life of its own," Milley said. "It zigs and zags. More often than not, war is much longer, much more expensive, much bloodier, much more horrific than anyone thought at the beginning. It is important that the decision-makers assess the use of force and apply the logic we've learned over the years. War should always be the last resort."

(Excerpt from DoD, 8/9/19)

DOD Identifies Army Casualties

July 30, 2019



Brandon Kreischer



Michael Nance

The Department of Defense announced today the deaths of two soldiers who were supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Both soldiers died July 29, 2019, in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, as a result of wounds sustained in a combat related incident. The incident is under investigation.

The deceased are:

Pfc. Brandon Jay Kreischer, 20, of Stryker, Ohio.
Spc. Michael Isaiah Nance, 24, of Chicago, Illinois.
Both soldiers were assigned to 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



Source:

Lt. Col. Mike Burns
Public Affairs Officer
82nd Airborne Division

Rest Easy All-Americans



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Sept. - Oct. 2019 - Issue 88

Page 63 of 95

From the archives – *and so it begins....*

DUTY IN VIETNAM

7 July 1965

By: Ellis W. Williamson

Brig. Gen., U.S. Army, Commanding

Last week the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) participated in the largest troop lift operation conducted in the Republic of South Vietnam. Over 144 Army aircraft which included 77 troop carriers using 10 sorties each lifted two battalions of the Vietnamese 2d Airborne Brigade and the 1st and 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry deep into War Zone “D”.



“2/503 troops move out on ambush patrol, June ‘65”

(Photo by LTC George Dexter, 2/503 Bn Cmdr)

Despite a three hour weather delay, elements of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry began landing on LZ North at 1400 hours on 28 June. Prior to this landing the 3d and 8th Vietnamese Airborne Battalions landed on LZ South and began their drive northwards. Only small arms fire and scattered mortar rounds were encountered on the LZ which was quickly secured by the 2d Battalion.

Following the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry came the troopers of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry who rapidly began their operations to the east and south of the LZ.

The 3d Battalion (Airborne), 319th Artillery’s Task Force had moved into position Bravo at 0800 hours, 28 June following a stop over in Tan Uyen for the night of 27-28 June. Their supporting fires in conjunction with United States Air Force close air support and armed helicopters prepared LZ North.

Captain Moore’s Cavalry Troop, while screening to the north of position Bravo, made one of the most significant finds of the operation. The normally swift moving Cavalry Troop made a thorough search of the area and discovered four cache points which contained an estimated 200 tons of rice, and quantities of cigarettes, tea, mile, corn, barley, and tobacco. After our troops had suffered five casualties due to booby traps in the area, the Engineers under **Lieutenant Grubbs**, thoroughly cleared the cache areas of booby traps. Several member of the Cavalry Troop distinguished themselves during the search operation. **Lieutenant Karr** and **Lieutenant Hanson**, who was wounded at the initial cache, did a fine job. In addition **Staff Sergeant David Yellow Robe**, **Sergeant Daniel** and

Sergeant Parsons, were instrumental in discovering and disarming the booby traps. **Specialist Fourth Class Renber** of the Engineer company and **Private First Class Chiaffino**, the mine detector operator, were notable for their professional jobs. On 29 June more than 50 tons of rice were sent back to friendly hands with ARVN trucks, the remainder had to be destroyed in place.

The majority of the activity on the night of 28-29 June centered around Position B where the Artillery Task Force received mortar fire and several

probing attacks.

Lieutenant Hill, of the Royal Australian Armor Corps attached to Company D, 16th Armor, received a small arms wound in the side when the VC apparently attempted to capture him, but after treatment returned to lead his men throughout the conduct of the operation. Quick reaction by all forces answered these attacks with small arms, mortar, artillery and 90mm fires and the Viet Cong was forced to withdraw. The tail fins of the incoming mortars identified the round as 81mm U.S. Mortars made in 1955. The shell craters were closely examined, three of them indicated that the rounds were coming from 725 to 730 mils. Artillery and mortar fires were delivered along this line up to the maximum range of the 81mm mortar. The enemy firing stopped.

(continued....)



The Infantry Battalions continued their operation on D+1 and several more caches were discovered.



Troopers of 1RAR on the move in June '65.

At 1200 hours on D+1 the decision was made to commit the 1/RAR in the Position Bravo area to help thoroughly search the area and to assist with the security. The quick reacting Australians were brought in on the helicopters which extracted the Vietnamese Airborne, and were on the ground by 1430 hours, rapidly took up defensive positions and began patrolling.



2/503 Bravo Bulls sending greetings, circa 1965.

The 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry swung south after securing its northern objectives and carefully reexamined the ARVN areas of responsibility.

Again the night of 29-30 June found most of the action in Position Bravo. 20 mortar rounds were reported but once again the quick reaction of our forces halted what would have been a serious problem. On both nights in Position Bravo the medics of 3d Battalion (Airborne), 319th Artillery did an outstanding job of

treating the wounded under fire and assisting in the evacuation of troopers when appropriate.

On D+2, the last day of the operation, solid contacts were again encountered. The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry killed two Viet Cong, wounded one, and captured two weapons in a clash around 1200 hours. In addition the 1st Battalion discovered more cache points while the Bravo Bulls of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry discovered and destroyed two trucks in their area. These were in addition to a truck they destroyed on D-Day. Company D, 16th Armor shot a Viet Cong out of a tree with a .50 caliber fire and blasted five fleeing VC with 60mm SPAT fire.

At 1415 hours on D+2 the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry began extraction from LZ South under the protection of the 2d Battalion which had secured the LZ. The 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry followed the 1st Battalion under the protective fire of the 3d Battalion (Airborne), 319th Artillery. The 3d Battalion closed trails after firing their last volley at 1700 hours and began the long 50 kilometer overland movement back to Bien Hoa. The 1st Royal Australian Regiment had moved out early and in conjunction with the ARVN 48th Regiment cleared the most dangerous portion of the route. After the Artillery moved through, the 1/RAR mounted trucks provided by **Lieutenant Colonel Staiger's** Support Battalion and rolled into Bien Hoa closing at 2040 hours.

Several troopers of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry distinguished themselves by their outstanding performances during the four day operations.

The 1st Platoon of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry under **Platoon Sergeant Adam A. Bernosky** kept alive the most impressive record in the Brigade – a VC kill on every operation in which they have participated. They got their man on the last day of the operations as they were fired upon by four Viet Cong near a trail. The point man, **Private First Class Robert Pedrotti**, was struck in the helmet by an enemy round and knocked to the ground. Although stunned, PFC Pedrotti immediately jumped to his feet and vigorously joined his platoon in the assault on the enemy position....



PSG Bernosky (SFC)

(continued....)



....One Viet Cong body and a weapon and documents were recovered and blood trails on the ground indicated that at least two more were dead or wounded.

Sergeant Hector Membreno also of company B, 1st Battalion reacted quickly when his squad was engaged by an enemy land mine and small arms fire. Although wounded and somewhat dazed by the mine explosion, Sergeant Membreno led his squad forward and by aggressive fire and maneuver forced the Viet Cong to flee.



Hector Membreno, B/1/503

Staff Sergeant Sandborg and **Sergeant Wooten**, the operations NCO and Communications NCO of Company B, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, on their own initiative constantly scouted the flanks during the company movement. On one such excursion they discovered an enemy position and the resulting action produced one Viet Cong kill plus a weapon and documents.

Acting as point squad for the 3d Platoon of Company A, 1st Battalion, **Staff Sergeant J.B. Strange's** squad came under enemy fire from dug in positions. The lead man quickly returned fire and gained fire superiority. Staff Sergeant Strange maneuvered the remaining men of his squad against the VC emplacements employing hand grenades and AR fire. This violent action routed the VC from their position. During the actions Staff Sergeant Strange was wounded in the stomach.

Sergeant First Class James Akuna's, the Platoon Sergeant of 3d Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, keen observation detected a VC hamlet. SFC Akuna's attention to detail caused him to take a recon patrol outside of the Battalion perimeter to investigate animal sounds that he had detected at dawn and in doing so he discovered a VC hamlet that contained food and medical supplies.

While Company A, 1st Battalion was destroying a cache **Staff Sergeant Vicars** of the 2d Platoon, upon his own initiative, took a patrol out on a recon and found an extremely well camouflaged cache of rice. Staff Sergeant Vicar's investigation resulted in the destruction of this cache as it was off the intended company route.

Insert

During this operation the Brigade would suffer three troopers killed in action, all from Bravo Company, 1/503:



Mike Garcia Bustos
KIA 6/28/65



Jerry Ray Campbell
KIA 6/28/65



Maurice Richard Hill
KIA 6/29/65

This operation was unique for us in several ways:

1. It was the largest force we have committed in combat here in Vietnam. In all, nine battalions were involved: Five infantry, one artillery, one support and a composite battalion of security, armor and engineers.
2. The Australians took their place with us as a part of our combat formation.

(continued....)



3. For the first time we worked with the very fine troops of the Vietnamese Airborne Brigade and the ARVN 48th Regiment.

4. Besides being our first large scale probe into War Zone "D", this operation represented the first time any large size friendly troops have operated in this area for over a year.

5. The cache points we destroyed or recovered represent a serious logistical setback to the Viet Cong.

Our total results were of course quite satisfying. By conservative estimate we:

1. We killed over 25 Viet Cong.

2. Wounded 50 or more Viet Cong.

3. Destroyed over 200 tons of rice plus medical supplies, corn, barley, quantities of cigarettes, mile, tea, raw tobacco.

4. Recovered over fifty tons of rice that can be used to feed friends.

5. Destroyed three trucks and eight bicycles.

6. Destroyed many Viet Cong villages, defensive positions, and livestock.

Lessons learned:

1. We have been operating daily for the past two months with some of the most lethal weapons known to the soldiers. Familiarity must not breed contempt. Be careful with these weapons!

2. In order to effectively place counter battery fire on incoming mortars we must know the direction these mortars are coming from. This information or Shell Rep as it is called must come in promptly and accurately. As a minimum we need to know where the shells landed, type of weapon (60mm or 81mm Mortar) and general direction the rounds came from.

3. Squad leaders and fire teams leaders must keep track of the individual men in their units. Valuable time has been wasted in recent operations because of "lost" individuals.

4. Artillery is a valuable weapon in jungle warfare. Use it to secure flanks, rear, and the front when moving. It is also quite effective as a close-in defensive wall when stopping for the night.

5. Once again the need for flexibility has been emphatically pointed out. Remember plans are guidelines for operations and we must always be ready to adapt to any change that our enemy, terrain, or mission may present.

6. Checking the direction of stream flow in conjunction with your map will give you another means of sure navigation in the jungle.

7. We must concentrate on keeping fire low when engaging the enemy. Our encounters thus far have been brief and fleeting – we must get first round hits.

8. Safety in helicopters cannot be overstressed. On the extraction one trooper from the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry with his feet dangling outside the helicopter was wounded in the foot by a bamboo sliver when the ship made a low take-off over a thicket. Keep your feet inside the helicopters. In addition do not depart the helicopter until it has finally touched down. The rapid shift of weight of departing troopers before touchdown makes the helicopter very difficult to control and has caused the ships to crash.

9. The medical evacuation ships (Dustoff) cannot take improvised stretchers if they are too long. Be prepared to shift wounded personnel to the stretchers that are on the evacuation helicopters.

Once again I can only reiterate my words of praise for your outstanding performance. By your actions in this operation you have proved conclusively that you are fast becoming real professionals in this deadly business. Our superiority over the Viet Cong is quite evident for all to see. Well done.

AIRBORNE, "ALL-THE-WAY"

ELLIS W. WILLIAMSON
Brig Gen, U.S. Army
Commanding

Source:

Department of the Army
Headquarters, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate)
RIABN, Commander's Combat Note, Number 66
7 July 1965



BG Ellis Williamson, Brigade Commander

(photos added)





Army Spc. Leslie Sabo, Jr.

July 29, 2019 | By Katie Lange (Source: DoD)

A lot of U.S. service members may not have been born in America, but they're just as willing to die for our ideals. Army Spc. Leslie Sabo Jr. is a shining example of those who were willing to fight for their adopted country. His efforts to save his fellow soldiers during the Vietnam War earned him the Medal of Honor decades after his death.



Sabo was born in Kufstein, Austria, on Feb. 23, 1948, only a few years after World War II ended. His family fled to the United States when he was 2 to escape the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe. They moved to Ellwood City in western Pennsylvania, where Sabo grew up.

Sabo was known to many as being kindhearted, hard-working and dependable. He was working at a steel mill when he was drafted into the Army in 1969. After a few months of training, the 22-year-old was sent to Vietnam on Nov. 14, 1969, as part of the 506th Infantry in the famed 101st Airborne Division.

On May 5, 1970, Sabo was sent into Cambodia as part of a secret reconnaissance mission aimed at preventing the North Vietnamese from staging attacks in Vietnam.

Just five days later, on May 10, his platoon was ambushed. Sabo didn't hesitate to immediately rush one enemy position, killing several enemy soldiers. He then assaulted another line of fighters coming at them from the side, drawing their fire away from his own teammates and forcing the enemy soldiers to retreat.

Sabo saw a wounded soldier about 10 yards away, so he ran across an open field to get to him, and a grenade landed nearby. Sabo picked it up and threw it, shielding the injured soldier from the brunt of the blast with his own body. He was wounded by shrapnel, but he didn't give up.

Sabo collected extra ammo from that position and then charged an enemy bunker that had been heavily injuring his platoon. He got hit several times by gunfire during that charge and was mortally wounded, but he kept going, crawling toward the bunker and finally throwing a hand grenade into it.

The subsequent explosion silenced all the enemy gunfire, but Sabo's actions also cost him his life. Sabo was one of eight U.S. forces killed that day, but there would have been a lot more if it weren't for his courageous and selfless actions.

Sabo was posthumously promoted to sergeant, but unfortunately, his family was not fully aware of how he died for many years. According to the Pennsylvania Military Museum, it was reported that he had been killed by a sniper while guarding an ammunition cache in Vietnam. That's likely because the mission in Cambodia was classified until the late 1990s.

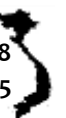
Government records showed that Sabo was recommended for the Medal of Honor by his company commander, Capt. Jim Waybright, shortly after the mission in which he died. But the account of his actions got lost for several decades.

Finally, in 1999, the paperwork was discovered by Alton Mabb, another 101st Airborne Division Vietnam veteran who had been doing research at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

The push to get Sabo's Medal of Honor began again. It took until 2010 before the Defense Department announced it would officially recommend the award. In May 2012 — 42 years after his death — Sabo was finally recognized for his efforts. During a ceremony at the White House, Sabo's widow, Rose Mary Buccelli — whom he married just a month before he left for Vietnam — accepted the Medal of Honor from President Barack Obama on his behalf.



More honors rolled in after that. The Ellwood City Post Office was renamed in Sabo's honor in 2015, and a memorial and bridge in the town were also dedicated to him. That same year, Fort Campbell renamed its Freedom Fighter gym the Sabo Physical Fitness Center. A plaque dedicated to him hangs there in his honor.



'C-Rats' Fueled Troops During and After World War II

By David Vergun
August 13, 2019

An old saying declares that an army marches on its stomach, meaning it needs food to survive, thrive and conquer.

Soldiers, sailors and Marines were often far from their mess halls, galleys and field kitchens during World War II, so they had to haul around heavy boxes of prepackaged food to survive.

The rations they carried were known as C-Rations, but were more often referred to as "C-Rats."



C-Rations were developed in 1938 as a replacement for reserve rations, which sustained troops during World War I, and consisted chiefly of canned corned beef or bacon and cans of hardtack biscuits, as well as ground coffee, sugar, salt and tobacco with rolling paper — not much in the way of variety.

Researchers at the Quartermaster Subsistence Research and Development Laboratory in Chicago went to work to design food products that could be kept for long time periods and were more delicious and nutritious than reserve rations.

The design they came up with consisted of 12-ounce tinplate cans that were opened with a key. At first, the meals were stews, and more varieties were added as the war went on, including meat and spaghetti in tomato sauce, chopped ham, eggs and potatoes, meat and noodles, pork and beans; ham and lima beans, and chicken and vegetables.

Besides these main courses, chocolate or other candies, gum, biscuits and cigarettes were added.

When three meals a day were consumed, C-Rations provided about 3,700 calories. They could be eaten cold, but tasted better cooked.

A soldier working at the Quartermaster Subsistence Research and Development Laboratory in Chicago samples an experimental batch of C-Rations.



Troop feedback on C-Rations often went unheeded. For instance, the ham and lima beans entree was unpopular, but it remained in the C-Ration mix until well into the Vietnam War. Two other complaints were that the food selection was monotonous and the meals were heavy to carry into combat on foot.

(continued....)



In 1958, C-Rations were replaced by "Meal, Combat, Individual" rations. The contents were almost identical to C-Rations, so they continued to be called C-Rats until the early 1980s, when "Meal, Ready-to-Eat" replaced them. MREs came in packages instead of cans, so they were much lighter than C-Rations.

Besides C-Rations, K-Rations were also issued during World War II, but in a more limited number. These were distributed for missions of short duration, such as paratroopers participating in airborne operations. K-Rations were lighter than C-Rations, and three meals a day netted only 2,830 calories. Soldiers complained about the taste and lack of calories, and so entrepreneurial leaders often found supplements such as rice, bread and C-Rations.

K-Rations were discontinued at the end of World War II.



Today, MREs are issued to troops. The early versions were disliked by many, so the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center in Massachusetts, which does food research for the Defense Department, improved the taste of MREs over time.

However, many veterans who've eaten both C-Rats and MREs, still have nostalgia for C-Rats and prefer them over MREs.

Source:  US DEPT OF DEFENSE



And, of course, *our* favorite:
Ham and Lima Beans....in Juices.

First American Soldier To Fall In Vietnam

I was in Tennessee and saw this and thought of you and your newsletter. Just wanted to share. Love Tony

Tony Clark

Editor Smitty's nephew. Tony's dad, Rick, was 82nd Abn



Inscription reads:

SPEC 4

JAMES T. (TOM) DAVIS

1936 – 1961

**THE FIRST AMERICAN SOLDIER IN VIETNAM TO FALL IN
DEFENSE OF OUR FREEDOM ON DECEMBER 22, 1961**

SAIGON, VIETNAM

**DEDICATED ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
VIETNAM WAR, NOVEMBER 19, 2011**

SCULPTOR: BILL RAINS – BILLINGS, MONTANA

**COMMISSIONED BY: ERNEST TUBB RECORD SHOPS
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**



VA on path to cure 100,000 Veterans of hepatitis C

March 18, 2019

Today, VA announced that it is on track to eliminate the hepatitis C virus (HCV) in as few as two months, in all Veterans willing and able to be treated.

As of March 3, nearly 116,000 Veterans started all-oral hepatitis C medications in VA, of which 96,654 Veterans completed treatment and have been cured. *"As the largest single provider of HCV care in the U.S., this is terrific news because it means we are within striking range of eliminating hepatitis C among Veterans under the care of the Veterans Health Administration,"* said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"Diagnosing, treating and curing hepatitis C virus infection among Veterans has been a significant priority for VA."*

HCV infection can lead to advanced liver disease (ALD), liver cancer and death. Treatment of HCV can prevent development or progression of ALD, greatly improving survival. However, before 2014, HCV treatment required weekly interferon injections for up to a year, with low cure rates (35-55 percent) among Veterans and significant physical and psychiatric side effects leading to frequent early discontinuation.

Up to that time, of the approximately 180,000 Veterans in VA care who had been diagnosed with chronic HCV infection, only 12,000 had been treated and cured, while over 30,000 had developed ALD.

In early 2014, highly effective, less toxic, all-oral, direct-acting antivirals became available, revolutionizing the treatment of HCV. With the support of Congress and other stakeholders, VA implemented an aggressive program to find all undiagnosed Veterans in VA care with HCV — including those who did not know they carried the infection — link them to HCV care, and offer them treatment with these new medications.

At the peak of this effort to rapidly deploy all-oral direct-acting antivirals, VA began treating close to 2,000 Veterans with HCV every week; nearly one treatment started every minute of every work day.

As a result of this historic effort, the overall death rate one year after treatment reduced to 80 percent among Veterans in VA care with HCV. Veterans cured of HCV with these medications were also 84 percent less likely to develop liver cancer.

The announcement cements VA's position as a national leader in diagnosis and treatment of HCV and marks a major milestone in the nation's fight against viral hepatitis. VA is on track to treat more than 125,000 Veterans with these lifesaving medications by October. Currently, fewer than 27,000 Veterans in VA care remain to be treated.

All marketed hepatitis C medications are on the VA National Formulary. Hepatitis C medications used today have few side effects and can be administered as a once a day treatment for as little as eight weeks.

For more information visit: <https://www.hepatitis.va.gov/>.

Hepatitis C Overview

The liver:

The liver is your largest internal organ. About the size of a football, it's located mainly in the upper right portion of your abdomen, beneath the diaphragm and above your stomach.

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation, sometimes leading to serious liver damage. The hepatitis C virus (HCV) spreads through contaminated blood.

Until recently, hepatitis C treatment required weekly injections and oral medications that many HCV-infected people couldn't take because of other health problems or unacceptable side effects.

That's changing. Today, chronic HCV is usually curable with oral medications taken every day for two to six months. Still, about half of people with HCV don't know they're infected, mainly because they have no symptoms, which can take decades to appear. For that reason, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a one-time screening blood test for everyone at increased risk of the infection. The largest group at risk includes everyone born between 1945 and 1965 — a population five times more likely to be infected than those born in other years.

Source: Mayo Clinic





(Photo & label by Woody Davis, A/2/503, his hooch)

For many of us, if and when we think about it, we think of how musty and dry it was; and many of us had one just like Woody's, the hooch you see here.

In the early days the floor was made of earth, but later that earth was covered with wooden planks, and the walkways outside eventually became PSP (pierced steel planking) to protect our jungle boots from the perpetual mud.

It had no running water nor air conditioning, and in the humid heat of Southeast Asia it became a cooker for exhausted bodies resting therein under mosquito nets.

It featured no showers or toilets; the shower was out front, a semi-enclosed space with a large, canvas water bag dispensing cold water, the three or four-hole shitter out back where one could find solitude and privacy.

Our beds were hard army cots, and we would lie on blown-up air mattresses until they gave us real mattresses, thin mattresses, neither masking much the rigidity of the cots; all our worldly belongings stowed-away in a footlocker at the end of the cot, our weapons standing near the head of the bed within quick and easy reach.

It had no doors, but it did have flaps on either end thru which to enter and exit, and more flaps on the sides which we would roll-up to let in the damp, warm air, the mosquitos, the flies, ants, spiders, scorpions, rats, snakes and other creatures of the night...and bullets and shrapnel could easily gain entrance.

It was in there between ops you would hear the banter, the arguments, the bullshit, the laughing and guitar playing and singing, and see the dancing and occasional fighting, and letter writing going on.

It was in there where the occupants would sleep and snore and sometimes shriek in their sleep, but sleep they did....they all loved the peace which came with sleep – there was never enough of it.

It was just a few steps in front of a hooch like Woody's when a young soldier fired a burst of rounds into the sky, then another burst, while weeping and crying out to anyone who would listen, *"I want to go home! I want to go home!"* Thinking we were under attack, we all grabbed our 16's at the head of our cots, dropped to the floor, then watched as SGM Mish, shirtless, unarmed, walked up to the trooper with his outstretched hand as we heard him calmly say, *"Give me the weapon, son, give me the weapon."* The young paratrooper who had had his fill of combat did not return to his hooch, but instead, it was reported he was sent to LBJ Prison, instead of someplace where he could receive help. And it was in this same hooch where a soldier was murdered, and later another was nearly killed by a fool mishandling a gun.

The hooch was a place, a place not as pleasant as R&R or a day pass to the local ville, or better yet, Saigon, but it was a place where we felt the safest; a place we longed to return to after being in combat where under the stars we would sleep in a hole whenever and wherever we could dig one, where leaves from bushes and trees were used when the shit paper ran out, where there was never, ever enough water, where people always died, theirs and ours.

To us, our hooch was a place where some would often try and too often fail to hide their tears, sometimes out of loneliness, more often over lost buddies.

To us, and as Woody so rightly labelled his hooch, it was *Home Sweet Home*.

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

Hooches on the Perimeter **2/503d's Camp Zinn, 1965-67, Bien Hoa, RVN**



Alpha Company perimeter hooches on left of photo, Charlie Company perimeter hooches on top, Bravo Company (front) and HHC (right) perimeter hooches out of frame.

[Photo by Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter, COL (Ret)]



From the archives, circa 9/9/70....

46 Per Cent, Army Study Says

MORE VIETNAM GIs Using Pot

By SGT. RICH LIEFER

and

SPEC. 5 ROBERT MANTELL



LONG BINH, Vietnam – The percentage of GIs in Vietnam using marijuana increased from 31.7 to 46 per cent over the two-year period from 1967 to 1969, according to sample studies, informed sources disclosed here Monday.

Although they said data available is insufficient, informed sources seem convinced drug use is an ill-defined problem here and are grappling with it now in both sociological and legal terms.

The sources also said field commanders have reported no adverse effects on their units' operational capabilities and said military police authorities say they have found no reported crimes attributed to the use of drugs.

A 1967 study of soldiers ranked E-2 through E-6 who were leaving Vietnam showed 31.7 per cent used marijuana, the sources said. A similar study in 1969 showed 46 per cent had used marijuana.

A third study done in the spring of this year of 1,064 members of the **173rd Airborne Brigade** revealed 68 per cent had tried marijuana at least once, sources reported.

Twenty-two per cent of the GIs sampled in the **173rd** first tried marijuana in Vietnam.

In the two earlier studies 18 per cent of the GIs had become acquainted with marijuana in Vietnam, statistics show.

The studies done by two Army psychiatrists reveal the typical drug user in 1967 was a 22-year-old white Protestant, a draftee and either a field soldier or a support troop, while the typical user two years later was also a draftee, 21, often dissatisfied with his job and the Army.

Other drugs also are used, sources said, though to a lesser degree.

They said commanders were encouraged in October 1969 to adopt an amnesty program to help on a one-time basis the drug user who wants help. Sources said little is known of the program's success to date, although they said there have been individual successes. If the user does not stay off drugs, commanders are urged to take prompt action to discharge him or begin legal proceedings against him, sources said.

They describe those who seek amnesty as persons having previously shown indications of maladjustment or immaturity and see drug abuse as an attempt to escape frustration or depression and reject conventional standards.

Soldiers convicted of drug offenses under an article of the Uniform Code of Military Justice written in 1951 can draw a dishonorable discharge, total forfeiture of pay and allowances, reduction in rank, plus a 10-year maximum sentence for those involved with hard drugs, five years for marijuana and two years for barbiturates and amphetamines, sources said.

Little rehabilitation is available in stockades in Vietnam, although serious medical cases are transferred to hospitals, they said.

Informed sources point to better results by military police in finding and confiscating drugs in recent months but indicated help from the Vietnamese authorities is sometimes less than desired because marijuana growing has become a part of the Vietnamese economy even though it is also illegal in Vietnam.

(Authored by Army soldiers for S&S)

(web photo added)



Sky Soldiers On The Wall Of Faces



The Wall of Faces search team is working hard to finish finding the photos, now standing at 900 nationwide still missing. We made a group effort to find as many of the 173rd photos still missing by the time of your reunion. I think we made a dent with several found, but many still remain elusive to us. I hope that you will spread the word at the reunion* to their fellow soldiers to help. Some may even have a snapshot taken in Vietnam that they have not looked at in years that may have one of these missing men in it. It does not have to be a formal uniform portrait, any photo will do.

A funny story...when I was searching the 173rd photos, I located the widow of **Nick Lesando**. I live an hour north of Disney World in Florida and on the day I called Joyce, she was at Disney World. We both laughed! She said she could send pictures in a few weeks when she returned home to New York but then told me that she had written a story for their local newspaper a few months earlier on his 50th death anniversary. She said if you can pull up the article online, I would find his jump picture in color. I did and posted the photo at www.vvmf.org. Nick now had a face.



Nicholas P. Lesando Jr.
C/1/503, KIA 9/26/68

A photo of 173rd's **Michael Watkins** was just posted today.

Best wishes for a great reunion. While we searchers deal with searching for only deceased soldiers and are often discouraged, we always are delighted to know there is a reunion of their fellow soldiers who made it back home and keep their memory alive.



Michael Watkins
534th Sig., KIA 7/12/71

So look upward in Charleston because I know they are smiling, looking down on all of you.

God bless the men of the 173rd.

Beth Braun

Florida and U.S. searcher/genealogist

* As Beth asked, we shared her request with organizers of this year's 173d reunion in advance of the reunion. Ed

More About Missing Photos Of Our KIA

As you know, the 173d has a photo of each Sky Soldier who has been KIA, from Vietnam to the present. I was just notified that the photo of **Sam Proctor** on hand is not the real Sam. Does anyone have a photo of Sam or can you describe him? We have 1000 photos on line. Can someone go through them and see if Sam is in one of them?

Samuel Proctor, Jr, B Co, CPL, age 21,
St. Simons Island, GA; KIA 5/22/67

www.flickr.com/photos/168978277@N06/albums

SAM PROCTOR - KIA JUST BEFORE HIS DEROS **(Told by Ed Sullivan in June 2006 for John Daly, B Co)**

The day Sam died, his squad had just come across a structure which appeared to be a charcoal factory. A Claymore mine exploded and Sam was hit by the flying pieces. John held Sam in his arms and tried to encourage him, as it initially appeared that his injuries were not serious. However, the injuries were severe and Sam passed away fairly quickly.

Sam was a good soldier. He was so close to going home when he was killed on May 22, 1967. He was only 2 weeks from DEROS.

Sam was the last man killed from the 4th Battalion which had deployed June 6th, 1966 and returned to the U.S. in early June 1967.

Jack Tarr, Maj. (Ret)
C/4/503



NARRATIVE MESSAGE / ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE

(Unclassified)

FM CDR JTF-FA HONOLULU
TO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASH DC
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC

NARR/REF A is the special remains team field investigation report of Case 0689, conducted from 25 Feb through 16 May

94. REF B is the special remains team field investigation report of Case 0937, conducted from 25 Feb through 16 May

94. Both REFS A and B record that the VNOSMP identified Mr. Nang as possibly having information about the location of the V211 hospital and cases 0689 and 0937. REF C is a fax from the Det 2 research historian to HQ JTF-FA/J2 which provided a survey of information about B3's Front's V211 hospital and information about Case 0762.

RMKS/1. Summary of Interview: On 12 Oct 95, the Joint U.S./VNOSMP team interviewed Mr. Bach BA Nang in Hoa Binh Town, Hoa Binh Province. Mr. Nang was a People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) sapper unit commander assigned to B3 Front in Kontum Province between 1967 and 1970. He provided information about three combat engagements between his unit and U.S. forces. Two of the battles were with the U.S. **173rd Airborne Brigade**. After each battle, U.S. Forces recovered the bodies of the American soldiers the sappers killed during the battle. Mr. Nang's unit never captured any American servicemen or buried the bodies of U.S. soldiers on the battlefield. In addition, Mr. Nang never went to the V211 hospital and provided no information on the hospital's location.

2. B. PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW: Based on the VNOSMP recommendations contained in REFS A and B, the joint team sought to obtain complete details of Mr. Nang's knowledge of the V211 hospital and Cases 0689 and 0937.

C. WITNESS INTERVIEW: On 12 Oct 95, the joint team interviewed Mr. Bach Ba Nang at the Hoa Binh Hotel in Hoa Binh Town, Hoa Binh Province.

(4) Wartime residence: PAVN Sapper Unit Commander

(6) Witness Reliability: Credible and reliable

(7) Statement:

(A) In 1948, Mr. Nang joined the PAVN. At the end of 1966, North Vietnam massed troops, including

Mr. Nang, and trained them for operations in South Vietnam. In 1967, after he completed his training, Mr. Nang traveled south with a group of cadre to Military Region 5 (MR5) Headquarters, where he received orders to travel to B3 Front in the Central Highlands and serve as a Sapper Unit (down VIJ DAWCJ NHIEEMJ, DAWCJ COOHG) Commander in Kontum.

(B) Mr. Nang directly participated in many battles, including three battles with U.S. Forces.

(1) In Nov or Dec 67, Mr. Nang's sapper unit fought the 173rd Airborne Brigade in a battle at Kontum Airfield. Mr. Nang's unit destroyed a total of 34 U.S. helicopters on the ground. Mr. Nang heard about the number of destroyed aircraft on BBC Radio and from his battalion commander (NFI). Mr. Nang's sapper unit did not kill any pilots in the aircraft. However, the PAVN sappers killed many of the soldiers that guarded the aircraft and the airfield. Most of these soldiers were member of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). At the conclusion of the battle, Mr. Nang's unit quickly withdrew. They did not know how many U.S. soldiers they had killed, and did not capture or bury any American soldiers during or after the battle.



Kontum airfield
(web photo)

(2) The second battle between Mr. Nang's sapper unit and U.S. forces occurred during the Lunar New Year (TET) in 1968. The sappers' primary objective was to capture the Kontum Province Headquarters at Kontum Town....

(continued....)



....During this battle, an element of Mr. Nang's sapper unit fired into a camp occupied by U.S. advisors as a diversionary tactic. Mr. Nang did not know how many U.S. soldiers his troops killed. Later, Mr. Nang saw a helicopter come and pick up the U.S. advisors and take them away. He thought the helicopter took them to Saigon, but he did not know for sure.

(3) The third battle occurred after TET in 1968. B3 Front issued orders for PAVN forces, including Mr. Nang's unit, to attack a RVNAF battalion defending the road in K'Rong Village (XAX K'Roong) on the eastern side of the Poko River probably the K'Rong Poki River (Soong K'Roong Pow Koo). (Note: L'Rong Village is centered near grid coordinate 48P ZA 127 905. The K'Rong Poko River runs basically north to south and forms the western boundary of K'Rong Village.

According to U.S. map sheet 6537 I, 1:50,000 scale, 1970 edition, Rough 511 crosses the K'Rong Poko River on the western boundary of K'Rong village near grid coordinate 48P ZA 100 917. An administrative map of Kontum Province published in 1992 by The Map Directorate (CUCJ BANR Door), subordinate to the PAVN general staff, lists this route as Route 666). After the battle, in which they destroyed the RVNAF battalion, Mr. Nang's unit received orders from B3 Front to control and guard the area so PAVN regiment 174 could pass through the area on its way to Tay Ninh Province. Mr. Nang's unit fought the U.S. **173rd Airborne Brigade** for 27 days for control of the road. Mr. Nang's unit did not capture any live American soldiers during this 27 day battle. They saw the bodies of dead U.S. soldiers on the battlefield, but the **173rd Airborne Brigade** recovered all the bodies. PAVN forces only collected AR-15 rifles, light machine guns, backpacks, and poncho liners. PAVN forces did not recover or bury any bodies of dead U.S. soldiers.

(C) Mr. Nang reiterated that his unit never captured any live Americans and did not recover or bury any bodies of U.S. soldiers. The **173rd Airborne Brigade** always recovered the bodies of its soldiers from the battlefield. Members of Mr. Nang's unit only recovered weapons and equipment from the battlefield. Mr. Nang never encountered any U.S. prisoners or PAVN units who had captured any U.S. soldiers. In addition, Mr. Nang never had time to meet any local residents. As soon as one battle was over, Mr. Nang's unit began preparing for the next combat engagement.

(D) Mr. Nang said he was never ill during the war, so he had no reason to go to a hospital. He was unable to provide any information about the location of the V211 hospital. He also did not know the location of Ho Mountain (NUIS HOOF). (Note: According to REF C, the V211 hospital moved several times during the war, but

remained in the vicinity of Ho Mountain. Ho Mountain is the name the PAVN gave to a ridge on the Cambodia-Vietnam border, running from high point 710, near grid coordinate 48P YA 525 605, at its southern end to near grid coordinate 48P YA 600 800 at its northern end).



**A makeshift enemy hospital,
sometime somewhere in Vietnam.**
(web photo)

(E) In Jan 70, Mr. Nang returned to North Vietnam. He never returned to Kontum Province. He retired from the PAVN in 1990 with the rank of Senior Colonel.

Comments:

Interviewers Comments: Mr. Nang provided his information in a relaxed and engaging manner. However, he provided no information about unaccounted-for U.S. servicemen or the location of the V211 hospital.



Remembering A Buddy

Hello All,

Charlie Morris used to correspond with PFC William Henry "Bill" Marshall who was in Charlie's squad at our fight on 29 June 1966 at Xuan Loc. William lost an arm and leg; and survived. He spent two years in a VA hospital (Ann Arbor).

Charlie Morris told me that William wasn't up for reunions; and that he totally transformed himself from being a really smart and disgruntled veteran; to still being a really smart paratrooper and a tremendous influence in his community.

William subsequently went to grad school; married, and he and his wife parented about five children; and he worked as a VA counselor for about 15 years. He was a strong political advocate including being an officer in the Black Panthers. Everyone he touched had good things to say about him.

Bill Palmer (hi Bill) was told he was the first person medivac'd on the 29th. That person was probably wrong. Bill was second. I know, because I counted and I was whining that I didn't get out sooner; and I was the fourth soldier loaded into a basket and pulled out of that God-forsaken jungle. I was counting and was told that I was in better shape than the black guy without an arm and with a leg dangling (Marshall); and Bill Palmer who went out second. And I don't remember who was third but it wasn't me. Getting shot four times was only good enough for fourth place; and I was counting.

I say all this because William Marshall was interviewed extensively in the 1974 Oscar winning documentary *Hearts and Minds*. Shawn - I told you it was 1972, but I was wrong.

I regret that I didn't get up to Michigan and track William down before he died. I was sitting in my easy chair tonight and decided to see if I could track him down; and found out he had passed. That's how I found the linked 'Obituary.'

William was one of our June 29, 1966 brothers; and other than Charlie (his squad leader who gave him medical assistance after Malcolm Berry was killed trying to help William (per Charlie)) I don't think any of us kept in contact with William. If someone other than Charlie kept in touch with him, I am unaware.

This little tome is just my way of sharing what I know about a brother who wasn't remembered like most. Some went on their way without a lot of 173d contact.

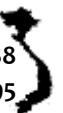
Airborne, Mike T.

Mike Thibault
A/2/503



William "Bill" Marshall
1946 ~ 2014

"While enlisted Bill was trained as an Airborne Ranger and also was trained in demolitions. He was then deployed as a part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to Vietnam, during the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, Bill routinely participated in 'search and destroy' missions. While on a search and destroy mission, Bill's platoon came under heavy enemy fire where they engaged the enemy for over 8 hours. He lost his arm to .50 caliber machine gunfire. After suffering from multiple gunshots, as well as wounds from explosives he then lost a leg to a mortar shell. Despite his injuries he continued to fight with one hand until rescued. He was awarded a Purple Heart, and Bronze Star with Valor for his efforts. He was later awarded a second Bronze Star by Senator Carl Levin."



Sky Soldiers Helping Sky Soldiers

Never Too Late To Re-File Claim With VA

A couple of years ago at a VA clinic here in Phoenix, I met a Sky Soldier who had been wounded in 1965 - his right hip had been seriously wounded by a Chi Com claymore. When we met in 2018, he was in a wheelchair. Over the years and after 4 hip replacements had failed, he was not a candidate for another.

He is an educated man, a Professor of History (retired) at ASU. He thought that the VA had done everything they could for him. I convinced him to attend a chapter meeting.

Our chapter service officer has been studying the VA regulations for years. After interviewing Jesus, he was able to guide him through the VA obstacles. Eventually, Jesus was able to get a grant for a wheelchair van. He also received grants for his home to be remodeled making it wheelchair accessible from bedroom to bathroom.

Now, the reason I'm reaching out to you is I believe Jesus' case is not an isolated one. There are many more Sky Soldiers out there who have not been made aware of what is available to them. The VA wording on filed claims leads one to believe that once a claim has been awarded or denied everything stops there. The one year for a dispute to be filed makes one believe that after a year you are locked in. Not so.

Service-connected injuries sometimes get worse. At Walter Reed my hearing was evaluated in 1966. I was Infantry. My hearing loss was documented. When I filed a claim, I was rated with bilateral hearing loss but not awarded any rating. 45 plus years later with our service officer's help I applied to be reevaluated for my hearing loss. Fortunately, my hearing evaluation from 1966 was in my medical record. My new evaluation went from no rating to 30 percent. My diabetes was also reevaluated. When originally diagnosed my rating was 20 percent. I was on one injection of insulin a day. Now I take five a day. My rating went from 20 percent to 50 percent.

So now I have what any rational person would think to be an 80 percent rating. The VA's math table is different from everyone else's. $30+50=50$ percent in VA math. Ok, I can live with that.

These are just a couple of examples of what can happen if people know they can request reevaluation. Our chapter service officer can put together an information pack that can be emailed to a veteran. I will setup a separate email account:

VAhelp@azskysoldiers.us

This is a Chapter 25 project.

We have his expertise as well as the owner of a construction company plus other experienced Sky Soldier members of our chapter. There will be no charge of any kind to veterans we help. We will only provide information that the veteran can take to their advocate.

Bryan Bowley

B/2/503

173d Chapter 25



Bryan

Pic From The Past



"SURROUNDED - Paratroopers of Recon Platoon of the 2/503d, Infantry of the 173d Airborne Brigade keep a close watch on VC suspects who were corralled when their village was surrounded during a recent operation in Xuan Loc Province. Each Infantry Battalion of the 173d has an attached Recon Platoon whose mission is to pinpoint the location of the enemy and to observe their movement. The Recon Platoon often moves at night."

Photo by:

SP/4 Henri Zawacki

173d ABN BDE PIO



Hurry! There's Still Time!!

Thanks to the watchful eye of Afghan/Iraq U.S. Army vet Al Lackey, we learned of this news.

According to Matthew Cox with Military.com in a report dated July 5, 2019, the Army is now offering recruits up to \$40,000 to join the infantry. Hmmm, it makes one wonder if they could use a few 70+ year-old advisers? Of course, such advising for many of us would need to be conducted over-the-phone while sitting on the couch sipping unsweetened iced tea during non nap time.

If you plan to take advantage of this enticement, you'll want to do so by September 30th, the cut-off date for the big bucks; oh, and that's for a 6-year enlistment. Too long? Not sure where you'll be in six years? Then you can select from these neat options: 5-years – \$30,000; 4-years - \$25,000; or 3-years for a whopping \$20,000. No mention was made of special compensation for jump-qualified enlistees.

According to the reporter, "You've got to ship in August and September....If you ship in October, you don't get the bonus." Damn! If it weren't for those doctor appointments I have....

Not sure, memory a tad faulty these days, but, in '68 when I escaped, I mean *mustered* out of the Army, the going rate was around 5 grand to continue soldiering? Maybe 10? Would have done it too, but there was that *thing* going on, and I just wasn't in the mood to go back there – but good on you guys who did.

Remember, be sure to sign-up before the end of September....hell, that's a brand new convertible you could buy to drive to Basic.

AATW!

Ed

Source:

<https://taskandpurpose.com/army-infantry-recruiting-bonus>



Over hill, over dale, as we hit the dusty trail,
And to Basic I'm driving along....

A Lamenting Digger In Vietnam

"An earthier -or muddier- protest came from a jungle-hardened trooper in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, bivouacked with the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade.

'Ya know, I been here for six weeks, and for five of 'em I've never been dry,' he lamented.

'If a man ain't wet with sweat, he's drenched with rain. Me clothes are rottin' and me boots are fallin' apart.'"

Excerpt: *Time Magazine*
January 7, 1966



Cobbers in the mud, a few years ago in Nui Dat.
(web photo)



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Sept. – Oct. 2019 – Issue 88
Page 79 of 95

DOD Identifies Army Casualty

July 14, 2019

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Freedom's Sentinel. **Sgt. Maj. James G. Sartor**, 40, of Teague, Texas, died July 13, 2019, in Faryab Province, Afghanistan, as a result of injuries sustained from enemy small arms fire during combat operations. This incident is under investigation.



Sartor was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Carson, Colorado.

For more information regarding Sgt. Maj. James G. Sartor, media may contact Lt. Col. Loren Bymer, U.S. Army Special Operations Command Public Affairs at (910) 432-3383 or loren.bymer@socom.mil.



"A Soldier's Prayer"

Dear Lord. Send us a girl who would understand
One who would see each of us as an honest young man
One who knows that we've got feelings and pride
And joys and troubles that go side by side.

Not an angel ... nay not so
But a girl who could smile and say "hello"
If she shows that she cares and if she trusts us, too
We'll not let her down ... we'll see things through.

For a girl like this we'll sweat and we'll strain
We'll conquer the task regardless of pain
Yes, her faith and her trust we would win
Show us the task and let us begin.

But Lord. it's lonely here in Vietnam
And we won't be home till the war is won
So please answer a prayer from this forsaken land
Send us a girl who would understand.

PFC Santos
Co. A Admin, 173rd ABN Bde.

"This prayer is dedicated to each and every lovely young lady who has volunteered her service through the American Red Cross in order that the tour of each serviceman might be a little more pleasant."

From the VA



Top brands and exclusive deals for Veterans at [ShopVCS.com](https://shopvcs.com)

Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) has a new online shopping benefit exclusively for Veterans enrolled in VA Healthcare, their families and VA employees at [ShopVCS.com](https://shopvcs.com)

Proceeds from purchases are given back in support of VA programs such as: National Rehabilitation Adaptive Sports Games, Vets Crisis Suicide Prevention, Fisher House, Women Veteran Programs, National Disaster Relief, Homelessness Veterans programs, and much more.

To shop top brands and exclusive deals, visit [ShopVCS.com](https://shopvcs.com) and create your free account today.

VA Source:

Chelsea Anderson-McCadney is a Public Relations Specialist with the Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) Marketing & Communication Division.

Note: Other than details about war books written by Sky Soldiers and troops of attached units plus reunion notices, which we run with our compliments, our newsletter does not include pay-for ads. Ed





REUNIONS OF THE AIRBORNE KIND



~ 2019 ~



101st Airborne Division Vietnam Veterans 25th Annual Reunion, Fort Campbell/Clarksville, TN, September 18/22, 2019. **Contact Web:** <https://www.101namveteran.com/upcoming-reunions.html>



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



Operation Market Garden Jamboree, for all Airborne Veterans, hosted by 82nd Airborne Div. South Florida All Airborne Chapter, Quality Inn & Suites, Sebring, FL, September 27-28, 2019. **Contact:** Jose L Perez-Ortiz
Eml: skysoldier1305@aol.com



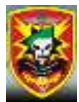
The International Paratrooper and Skydiving Reunion, Hotel El Tropicano, San Antonio, TX, October 13-15, 2019. **Contact:** Joe Rodriguez, **Phn:** 210-995-7727. Phillip Gonzales, **Phn:** 210-685-9904, **Eml:** phillgonz49@aswaa.org



1st Special Forces Group Reunion, Plaza Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV, October 13-17, 2019. **Contact:** Phil Grounds **Phn:** 740-409-6720, **Eml:** steppingwild@gmail.com



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



The Special Operations Association SOAR XLIII Reunion, The Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas, NV, October 21-25, 2019. **Contact Eml:** adm17soa@gmail.com

~ 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



173d Airborne Brigade Association Annual Reunion, Crowne Plaza, Dayton, OH, June 3-6, 2020. **Contact:** Bill Terry, **Eml:** weterry2@gmail.com

173d DAYTON REUNION SCHEDULE

June 3 - Wednesday

1200-1800 Registration
1300-1900 Vendors Area Open
1300-2200 Hospitality Area Open

June 4 - Thursday

1000-1800 Registration
0900-2000 Vendors Area Open
1300-2200 Hospitality Area Open
0830-0900 Load bus to Golf Outing
0900-0930 Load bus to Wright Patterson Museum
1730-2000 Barbecue/Band Concert

June 5 - Friday

0800-0830 Load bus to Nat. War/Mem. Museum
0930-1000 Load bus to Carillon Historic Site (Brewery, restaurant)
0900-2000 Vendors Area Open
1300-2200 Hospitality Area Open
0900-1400 Registration

June 6 - Saturday

0800-0930 Board of Directors Meeting
0930-1130 General Meeting
0900-1200 Registration
1030-1200 Ladies Lunch
1200-1330 Gold Star Lunch
0900-1700 Vendors Area Open
1300-1700 Hospitality Area Open
1730-2100 173d ABN BDE ASSN BANQUET
2100-2300 Hospitality Area Open

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.



For healthy older adults, new shingles vaccine is worth the wait



A pharmacist prepares a dose of the shingles vaccine to be administered at Blanchfield Army Community Hospital's Town Center Pharmacy, Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

(U.S. Army photo by Maria Yager)

August 16, 2019

Availability of the new shingles vaccine is improving across the Military Health System, according to Defense Health Agency Immunization Healthcare. The vaccine, Shingrix, is recommended for healthy adults 50 and older to prevent the painful skin rash that can have debilitating long-term effects for older people.

Shingrix was licensed in late 2017. *"Supplies are still limited nationwide because of the overwhelming demand,"* said Army Lt. Col. Christopher Ellison, deputy director of operations for the DHA's Immunization Healthcare Division.

"But availability to the Department of Defense has improved from a year ago and continues to get better," he said, adding that beneficiaries should contact their local MTF to confirm supplies. *"Now is the time to get your shingles immunization."*

Who's at risk for getting shingles? *"Anyone who's had the chickenpox,"* said retired Air Force Col. David Hrncir, an allergist-immunologist at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

A virus called varicella zoster causes shingles. It's the same virus that causes chickenpox. After chickenpox clears, the virus stays dormant in the body. The virus may reactivate many years later as shingles. It's not clear what causes this eruption, said Hrncir, who's also medical director of Central Region Vaccine Safety Hub, Immunization Healthcare Division.

According to medical literature, Hrncir said, *"Anywhere from 90 to 99 percent of people now over the age of 40 had chickenpox, before there was a chickenpox vaccine. About one-third will get shingles at some point in their lives, if they're not protected."*

Some people under age 50 get shingles, Hrncir said. But the risk of contracting the illness increases continually after age 50. Immunization before age 50 results in decreased protection during ages when the risk of contracting shingles is the highest, he said. That's why early immunization generally is not recommended.

An earlier shingles vaccine was introduced in 2006. That vaccine was for people 60 and older when it first came out. Further, it was only about 70 percent effective in offering full protection against the virus, he said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers recommendations about people who should not get the new vaccine.

"Those who had the old vaccine will benefit from getting the new one," Hrncir said. *"Also, shingles can recur. So even if you've already had shingles, get the new vaccine."*

Retired Air Force Col. Scott Coale said he plans on getting the Shingrix vaccine. He came down with shingles in the fall of 2015, when he was in his mid-50s. His lower back started hurting before any rash appeared. Very quickly, he said, it became *"the most excruciating pain I had ever experienced."*

Shingles usually develops as a stripe across one side of the body or face, according to the CDC. People may feel pain, itching, or tingling in the area where the rash occurs a few days before it actually appears, the CDC said. Other symptoms may include fever, headaches, and chills. A few days after the rash appears, it turns into fluid-filled blisters. They usually scab over after a week or 10 days, and then the scabs clear up a couple of weeks after that, Hrncir said.

Coale said his symptoms lasted for a few weeks but luckily, he's had no lingering issues. For some shingles patients, however, the pain may persist even after the rash clears.

"The older you are when you get shingles, the more likely it is you'll develop post-herpetic neuralgia, or PHN, and have longer-lasting and severe pain," Hrncir said. *"The pain is not easily treated. So you're left with constant pain that can significantly affect quality of life."*

The new vaccine is a two-dose series, with the second dose administered anywhere from two to six months after the first. A majority of patients have reported side effects for two or three days after vaccination, Hrncir said. They include headaches, fatigue, and nausea. The CDC recommends patients talk with their providers about possible side effects.

Learn more about TRICARE coverage of the shingles vaccine: www.tricare.mil

Source:

Military Health System Communications Office



A Famous Photo in Sky Soldier Circles



This Sky Soldier, Larry Chaffin, died at age 39 from diabetes complications and was featured in the iconic photo by Horst Faas from 18 June 1965. Due to his illness, he had a difficult time.

He and his wife, Fran, whom he met at Ft. Gordon, were married when he was 17 and she 16. He was from St. Louis and is buried there.

Some of the readers of our newsletter might have wondered what happened to him.

Jerry Hassler
HHC/Recon/2/503



SGM Edward A. Proffitt (Columbus, Georgia), of the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry of the 173d Airborne Brigade places the final button on the Battalion motto "We Try Harder". The battalion motto was adopted to increase morale among the troopers and help build more pride in their unit. (Published November 19, 1966)

The Aussino's Future Eulogy

My eulogy.

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



*One day I'm gonna cark it, one day I'm gonna die
For those of you I left behind, I sadly say goodbye
I'm going to a special place so very far away
Up to the arms of angels, that's all I have to say.*

*For now my time is over, I've lived a happy life,
I leave behind my true love, my ever loving wife
My children, family, friends, to name a merely few.
For them their lives are vibrant, as said from this old pew.*

*But weep for me if need be, but not for very long
You have to live your lives, and just get along and strong
For this is part of life, that we will all have to pass,
But the sun will rise tomorrow and the world can kiss my ass.*

Them paratroopers are funny dudes, especially the Australian ones. **Aussino**, you ask? A name given A.B. by his Sky Soldier buddies on their return trip to Vietnam in 2001; a cross between an American Chicano and an Aussie. We're pleased to report A.B. hasn't gone anywhere. Ed

Making the VC Keep Their Heads Down



"Troops from C Company, 2d Bn, 503d Inf., 173d Airborne Brigade pour fire into a Viet Cong position during Operation Sioux City. The troopers were on a reconnaissance patrol when they spotted movement in the tree line."

(U.S. Army photo by SFC James W. Stubler)



From the archives....

1st Bn, Bien Hoa Gets Battle Streamer



U.S. Army photo

General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, pins a battle streamer reading "Bien Hoa" to the colors of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate). The streamer was added to the unit's colors in the field on November 3, after General Westmoreland presented the nation's highest unit award for extraordinary heroism – the Distinguished Unit Citation – to men of the 1st Battalion. The unit earned the citation for heroism during the battle of Bien Hoa on November 8, 1965.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade is currently commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Brownlee. During the battle of Bien Hoa last year the battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John E. Tyler who has since completed his tour in Viet Nam and returned to the United States for reassignment.

Source:

173d Airborne *SCRAPBOOK*, Edition 9
The Observer, Oct. 24, 1966, Page 9

Congratulations to Top and His All American!



And here we find Jim "Top" Dresser, A/HHC/2/503, '65/'66 RVN, with his granddaughter Jessie. *"I was so lucky to have the honor of pinning my original jump wings on my granddaughter this month,"* Jim said with pride. *"I'm so proud of her and I know she'll excel as she serves our great country,"* Top added. Trooper Jessie was assigned to the support battalion of the 82nd Airborne where she hopes to serve for a number of years before applying to OCS. *"She'll honestly make a super, top notch officer too,"* her Sky Soldier granddad boasted. We wonder if Top is ready for the 20 push-ups that future 2LT might demand of him one day? He could do them too!!

Airborne, Top! And All The Way Jessie!





The 10 Indian Commandments

1. The Earth is our Mother; care for Her.
2. Honor all your relations.
3. Open your heart and soul to the Great Spirit.
4. All life is sacred; treat all beings with respect.
5. Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more.
6. Do what needs to be done for the good of all.
7. Give constant thanks to the Great Spirit for each day.
8. Speak the truth but only for the good in others.
9. Follow the rhythms of Nature.
10. Enjoy life's journey; but leave no tracks.

Shanti R.

Sent in by Ray Chapman, RAA

A Wise E/2/503 Trooper

In scanning some of our earlier issues to find valor citations for men of our battalion, I stumbled on Mark's quote below. At the time, back in 2010, in Issue 14, he was referring to Vietnam vet *wanabe*'s, but, his observation is equally timely here in 2019.

Thanks, Mark! Ed

"I am amazed at the idiocy of people when they say such outlandish lies when so much information is verifiable almost instantaneously these days."

Mark Dunlap
E/2/503d

VA updates the disability rating schedule for infectious diseases, immune disorders and nutritional deficiencies

August 12, 2019

As of August 11, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updated portions of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD, or Rating Schedule) that evaluate infectious diseases, immune disorders and nutritional deficiencies.

The collection of federal regulations used by the Veterans Benefits Administration helps claims processors evaluate the severity of disabilities and assign disability ratings.

"VA is in the process of updating all 15 body systems of the VASRD to more accurately reflect modern medicine and provide Veterans with clearer rating decisions," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *"By updating the rating schedule, Veterans receive decisions based on the most current medical knowledge of their condition."*

The complete list of updates to the rating schedule is available online. Claims pending prior to August 11, will be considered under both the old and new rating criteria, and whichever criteria is more favorable to a Veteran will be applied. Claims filed on or after August 11, will be rated under the new rating schedule.

Updating the rating schedule for conditions related to infectious diseases, immune disorders and nutritional deficiencies, enables VA claims processors to make more consistent decisions with greater ease and ensure Veterans understand these decisions. VA remains committed to improving its service to Veterans continuously and staying at the forefront of modern medicine as it has for decades.

Since September 2017, VA has updated the schedules for dental and oral conditions, conditions related to the endocrine system, gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast, the general rating formula for diseases of the eye, skin conditions and the hematologic and lymphatic systems.



Bar Qualification II

Except for a few Troopers in the 2-15th INF, 3rd INF DIV, I was about the only Airborne Officer at Wildflecken, Germany. Combining that with my Combat Infantryman's Badge, I was pretty tough stuff.

Now this ain't no bullshit. One of the things an Airborne Officer may do is Bar Qualify a Straight-Leg. That means the Airborne Officer, in the proper Officer's Club, may work with Straight-Leg Officers and show them how to make Parachute Landing Falls (PLFs). One of my most impressive achievements was Bar Qualifying a 300 pound Grade School Dependent Principal. After my telling him that he could do it and a few drinks (made a bit stiffer by the bartender who wanted to see this enormous man jump off the bar), he was ready.



Unfortunately, our Post Commander heard what I was up to. He had served in the 3rd INF DIV during WWII and understood my enjoyment in such events. However, he was also responsible for the good of the bar. He came by and warned me, *"Getz, if he breaks that bar, you'll be responsible for it being repaired."*

Well, that didn't stop me as I had a student who was ready and willing. So, after convincing his wife that he would live through this experience, we had to figure out how to get him up on to the bar. That night, I found that it is much easier to have a 300 pounder jump off of the bar than to get one up on to a bar. Well, we finally found a chair and a barstool that we felt could carry his weight and he slowly manipulated himself with a bit of help from me up on to the bar where he stood with the faint sound of some crackling wood.

By now, everyone had come into the bar to watch this rendition of the Parachute Landing Fall (PLF). In the background I could hear quite a few chuckles and the Colonel once again warn,

"Getz, you're going to pay for this if he breaks the bar."

I then went over with our Principal what he was about to do and glanced back to ensure there was at least one Doctor still in the bar – just in case. With that, I gave him the order to *"JUMP!"*, which he did. Unfortunately, he landed with more of a "thump" than a "roll". There was a deep groan and he slowly looked up at me.

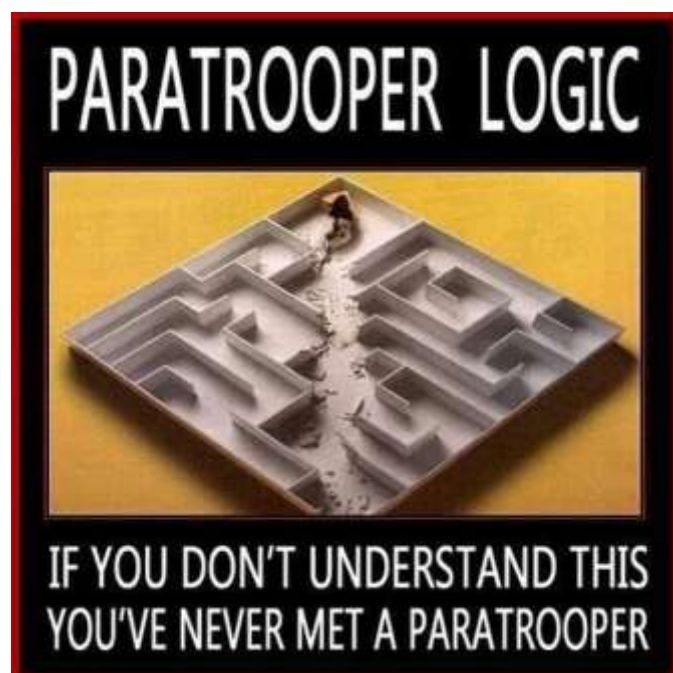
In true Airborne fashion, I gave him the high sign and told him, *"Great jump!!"* I then told him that, since he was a civilian, he need not do the remaining four bar jumps to qualify especially after that last magnificent PLF.

Both he and his wife were ecstatic. The Colonel gave a sign of relief. And, I thanked God the bar, barstool, chair and floor did nothing more than a squeak and crackle.

A wise-ass Doctor who I had gone through four jumps with then came by and said he was ready for his fifth and final jump. Sorry, I said, only one per night and he'd have to wait. I never did bar qualify him!

Sometimes you have to be choosy!

Bob (Ragman) Getz
2/503 Task Force CO, RVN



Remarks by the Commander in Chief
at the American Veterans (AMVETS)
75th National Convention
Louisville, KY

August 21, 2019

Joking, the Commander in Chief said,
***“Nothing like the Medal of Honor.
I wanted one, but they told me
I don’t qualify...
Can I give it to myself...?”***
Donald Trump



THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF (CIC): Well, thank you very much. That’s a great honor. Great people. Thank you. Sit down, please. Thank you. And I want to thank Commander Riley. Truly thrilled to be here with thousands of America’s proudest and toughest and most extraordinary patriots: the incredible veterans of AMVETS. We love our veterans. AMVETS. Thank you very much. You’re special people.

You fought courageously for our country, and now my administration is fighting for you. That’s for sure. And, you know, we’ve accomplished a lot. We’ve done a lot. And one of the things we have done is you get that medical care quickly now, when you go into those doctors. And you used to have to wait for weeks and weeks and weeks. And you don’t wait anymore. You go out and see a private doctor and we pay the bill. And people are really happy about it, and the vets are very happy about it.

Veterans Choice, as you’ve been trying to get that for 44 years, they say — 44 years. I guess it’s longer than that; probably earlier than that. But for 44 years, at least, that we know of. And you got it, so congratulations. Hopefully, you don’t have to use it too often because you’re going to feel great. Okay?



President Obama signs Veteran’s Choice Bill on August 7, 2014.

To every veteran here today and all across our land, thank you for your noble and incredible service. It’s an honor, really, of my life. I understand that I’m the first Commander-in-Chief, first President, to address you and be here. And that’s something -- something that’s very special.



“President Harry S. Truman (at podium) poses for a picture after his speech at the dedication of the new AMVETS headquarters at 1710 Rhode Island Avenue in Washington, D.C.” April 1952.

And it’s also an honor to be the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest fighting force the world has ever known: The United States Military. And it’s stronger today. And it’s a lot stronger today than it was two and a half years ago, I can tell you that. A lot stronger today. A lot stronger.

Seven hundred billion dollars we spent, and then seven hundred and sixteen billion. That’s with a “B.” And this year it’s \$738 billion. So we’ve rebuilt your military, and it’s stronger than ever before. And that was really needed. It was depleted. It was tired. It was exhausted. And you know that better than I do. But we have totally rebuilt it.

(continued....)



Insert:

DoD Funds Tapped To Build Border Wall

“Pentagon officials found extra money in military retirement accounts that will be diverted to help fund construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexican border, according to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Defense Department budget experts found an extra \$224 million from the military’s new Blended Retirement System because fewer service members than expected opted into the new system in 2018, leaving some of that money unspent, according to the newspaper.

The shift in money out of the retirement accounts will not impact any military benefits for current service members or retirees.

In total, according to the *Journal*, \$6.1 billion in military funds will be diverted for the border wall.

The other sources include:

- \$604 million that was supposed to support Afghan security forces.**
- \$251 million in Pentagon funds for destroying chemical weapons.**
- \$343 million “in spending from Air Force weapons programs where officials have negotiated reductions or canceled systems,” The *Journal* said.**

Some other military construction funding for military bases may also be used to fund the border wall.

Funding initially slated for construction projects for military bases across the world could also go toward the border wall.”

Note: As of this date, no funding from Mexico for the Border Wall has been recorded.

I want to thank your outstanding National Commander Rege Riley, as well as your terrific Executive Director Joe Chenelly. Where is Joe? Joe, thank you. Where’s Joe? Thank you, Joe. That’s not a very good seat for you, Joe. Huh? Give that mention right up top. Look. See? You want to give other people the better seats. I like that type of person. Right? Thank you, Joe.

It’s also my privilege to recognize your National First Vice Commander — the highest-ranking woman in AMVETS history — retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant Jan Brown. Jan? Thank you, Jan. Thank you. Congratulations as well to this year’s recipients of the Silver Helmet Awards, especially a dear friend who is an inspiration to all Americans: World War II veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Woody Williams. Where’s

Woody? Thank you, Woody. You’re looking good Woody. Woody is looking good. That was a big day — Medal of Honor. Nothing like the Medal of Honor. I wanted one, but they told me I don’t qualify, Woody. I said, “*Can I give it to myself any?*” They said, “*I don’t think that’s a good idea.*” Great, great people. These are great, great men and women that get the Congressional Medal of Honor. Thank you, Woody.

We are unbelievably grateful to all of the members of AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary. They’ve worked so hard. And the Sons of AMVETS, and the Junior AMVETS — and, of course, the legendary AMVETS Riders — who are fighting to keep alive the spirit of Rolling Thunder. I love Rolling Thunder — that noise. Wow. Rolling Thunder. We’re taking care of Rolling Thunder, since I’ve been there. Rolling Thunder, please stand up. You have so many great people. So many great people. Thank you. Thank you. And the leaders are all here too. Thank you. And we’ll see you in a little while, in Washington. And to honor the prisoners of war and those missing in action, today we renew our vow that America will never, ever forget. It’s a great — thank you.

Great to be joined by a number of champions for America’s veterans, including Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Betsy? Betsy. Doing a great job. Deputy VA Secretary James Burn. James, thank you. Great job. And who has really done a great job — I don’t know if he’s appreciated. Sometimes it doesn’t work out that way, but he’s done an incredible job, and your state is doing phenomenal business and I want to take all of the credit but I can, because I have to give him a lot too, because he has been a truly great governor: Matt Bevin. Thank you, Matt.

And you know, Kentucky has record numbers right now. It’s the best year they’ve ever had in just about every category. So it’s — it’s really an incredible thing. And a man who I just watched on television — he’s so good. You can do television for me anytime you want. Congressman Thomas Massie. Where’s Thomas? Good job. Thomas, say hello to our friends. Say hello to our friends back in Washington. That was a good job. Just watched you.

I cannot come to Kentucky without also praising the exceptional work of Senator Mitch McConnell. I have to tell you this guy is a true fighter for our veterans and for Kentucky. He’s worked tirelessly to enact massive tax cuts, record defense spending, and crucial VA reform that I was just talking about.

(continued....)



And I have to think — yet, of all the things with respect to Mitch. Mitch is a — he's a good person, but his leadership in the Senate, we've confirmed — think of this — almost 150 federal judges to uphold our nation's beloved Constitution, and the foundation of American freedom.

And Mitch and I have worked very hard. We're up to 150. Within about two months, we'll be at 179 federal judges and two Supreme Court judges. And — it's your senator. And it's — for him, that's — that's a passion like I've never seen before. And there is nothing more important.

You know, when I became President, he said, *"The most important thing you can do is judges."* And in particular, they said, Supreme Court justices. Well, as you know, we've named two Supreme Court justices, right? Justice Kavanaugh, Justice Gorsuch. And I want to just congratulate Mitch McConnell. And you have them. You have them. And he's a champion. And he fights hard. And he really is something special. And he loves your state. And I'll be here campaigning for Mitch and I'll be campaigning for Matt. And we're going to get them both back in. And I just had to say, because Mitch has been somebody very special and Matt knows that as well.

This year, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1944, when thousands of American patriots stormed the beaches of Normandy and charged through the fires of hell to ensure their survival of liberty.

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the organization that took care of those victorious veterans when they returned, and every generation of veterans since. Incredible job.

Today we celebrate AMVETS for 75 years of love, and loyalty, and lifelong service to our military personnel, to our veterans, and to their families. Congratulations. Thank you very much. Thank you.

AMVETS posts across the nation have become pillars of pride in our community — so true — and shining symbols of the enduring power of the American spirit. Your support of our troops overseas, it welcomes them when they come back home. And you welcome them and you're there for them in every way — medically, physically, morally. You're with them all the way. And they appreciate it much more than you would even know.

You safeguard our values, pass on our traditions, and teach generation after generation to love our country, honor our heroes, and always respect our great American flag.

We gather today at a truly incredible time for our nation. We are reawakening American pride, American

confidence, and American greatness. We are America first. It's about time, too.

It's about time, wouldn't you say? We hear, "America first." You didn't used to hear that. You didn't use to hear that too much, right? You didn't used to hear it at all, come to think of it. You hear that a lot now. Hope you don't get sick of it. I don't think you will. Not this group. Not too many people in our country would feel that way.

We're respected again as a nation. We're respected again. We're restoring the fundamental principles that government — and its first obligation is the highest loyalty is to our citizens. It's the loyal to our citizens that really is that first obligation.

No longer will we sacrifice America's interest to any foreign power. In all things, we are putting our country first. We are saying, let's say, *"Make America great again."* But we're almost there, where we say, *"Make America great again."* We may have to switch it. You know what we're going to switch it to? Right?

Audience member: *"Keep America great!"*

CIC: That's right. That's right. I won't say it here because this is not a campaign speech. This is not a campaign speech, so I will not say *"keep America great,"* but we're going to keep America great. We're going to keep America great.

That's a lot of press back there. Look at all of them. Wow. That's a lot of cameras going. Look at all those red lights on there. The red lights mean, *"You're on."* When the lights are off, you can get a little sleepy back here and take it easy.

Nowhere is this patriotic allegiance more essential than fulfilling our duty to the American warrior and to the American veteran. We're upholding our nation's solemn pledge to protect those who protect us — and they've protected us brilliantly.

With America's core interests guiding us as we do, we are making unprecedented strides. Our incredible American warriors have pulverized the bloodthirsty killers of ISIS. We defeated 100 percent of the caliphate in Syria. We're holding thousands of ISIS fighters right now — prisoners. And we're going to give them to — from where they came. The Europe — certain countries in Europe, they got to take them back because we don't want to hold them. Got to give them back....

(continued....)



....We're fighting for other people, and we got to give them back. They've got to take them. They'd rather have us hold them and let us have them for 50 years. We don't want them. We don't want them. They should take them. Do we agree? They should take them. They say to us, "*Why don't you hold them in Guantanamo Bay for 50 years and you just hold them and spend billions and billions of dollars holding them?*" And I'm saying, "*No, you got to take them.*" We fought. We have them captured. They're all captured — thousands. ISIS. But now Europe has to take them, and different countries, where they came from, have to take them.

Do we agree with that? Yes? I was just curious as to what you thought.

We withdrew from the horrible Iran nuclear deal. Horrible deal. We brought home the remains of our fallen North Korean war heroes. We brought them home — so many of them, and many more are coming — so they can rest alongside their brothers and sisters in American soil. We believe in our sacred responsibility to ensure no one is left behind, right?

We're rebuilding the awesome might of the United States military with these big budgets that I just described. And think of it —

Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

And we're very proud of it. We're very proud of it. And those in the military are very proud, too. Beautiful new — the best equipment in the world. We make the best planes. We make the best missiles. We make the best ships. We make the best everything. And it also, in this case, secondarily, it also happens to be made in the USA, every inch of it. And it's called jobs, jobs, jobs. That's secondary, but it's also good.

And the Army will very soon have 300 powerful, new M1 Abrams tanks. The Navy is deploying the most advanced class of aircraft carriers in history, with hundreds of brand new F-35s and F-18s, American airmen will continue to own the skies wherever we fly. We have the greatest Air Force in the world.

And we're preparing to dominate the newest warfighting domain by establishing a sixth branch of the armed forces. It's called the Space Force. We need that. The Space Force. And that's moving along through approval and it's become very, very popular. People see it now more than they did two and a half years ago. They see it now and they know how important it is for defense and offense and for everything.

We've delivered the largest pay raise in years for every soldier, sailor, airman, coast guardsman, and

Marine in the United States military. One of the largest increases.

Our active duty personnel are the best-equipped, best-trained, most technologically-advanced fighting force in the history of the world. The best equipment in the world. Best training in the world.

America is a peace-loving nation. We seek friendship. We seek harmony, not conflict and division. But if we are threatened, we will never hesitate to defend our people as they should be defended.

And if our enemies should dare to fight us, they will be crushed with overwhelming American might. No adversary stands a chance against the awesome power of the Red, White, and Blue. They is no military even close to ours. You know, you read all sorts of things. "*Well, maybe this country, maybe that...*" It's only propaganda put out by different areas and different countries. There is nothing close. And they all know it and they tell me that. They tell me that: There is nobody close. And we have to keep it that way. And we don't want to have to use it. We don't want to have to use it. But we have to have it just in case, right?

The members of our armed forces — and you understand that very well — the members of our armed forces have always lived by the word of Douglas MacArthur: "*In war, there is no substitute for victory.*"

We have an armed forces that's unparalleled. And to achieve victory, there is no substitute for the unmatched character and courage of those who proudly wear the nation's uniform.

And we even have different uniforms. Did you see some of the different designs of the uniforms? We're going back to a style and a look that nobody thought we'd go back to because of expense, and now we have brand new — the most beautiful uniforms you've ever seen. But much more importantly are the people that wear that uniform — what's inside that uniform. That's much more important. Much more important. That's the best in the world.

Every warrior who serves has poured out — and they have poured out their hearts and souls for America. We believe their government must show them the same devotion in return. And we've been doing that — at least, in the last two and a half years, we have.

Can you believe it's almost three years now? Because I've been saying "*two and a half years*" now for a number of months. And we're getting close to three. I'll have to be changing it to "*three*" very soon.

(continued....)



After years of neglect, we're fixing the heartbreaking failures from the last administration at the Department of Veterans Affairs. America must never abandon our heroes in their hour of need. We'll never do that. For that reason, I proudly signed into law the groundbreaking VA Accountability Act. Thank you. Big deal. And that was another one. They wouldn't do it — 40 years, 50 years. They wouldn't do it. You couldn't get it done. And I won't blame unions and I won't blame civil service. I won't blame any of it. But, man, was there power against it. It was tough and I got it done. Now somebody mistreats you or mistreats people in the VA and we know what happens, right? It's called, *"You're fired."* Stand up, please. Stand up. There is the man that implements it. *"You're fired. Get out of here. Get out of here."*

You couldn't fire anyone for virtually any reason. They could do anything. So we have the Accountability Act. And we've removed more than 7,600 bad employees who failed to give our vets the care they so richly deserve — 7,600. Think of that. They were treating some of them — you know, most of them are fantastic, but some of them were treating our people, our great heroes so badly. Sadistic, terrible people. They were terrible people and they're gone. They're fired. They would never have been fired — 7,600. I didn't know you were that vicious to get rid of that many, huh? And everyone deserves to be out, right? Good. That was a big deal. That was a hard one to get.

And, as I said — and something that I guess I'm most proud of because — I don't know, Accountability was very important. Some people think it was as important — maybe not. But most significantly, the VA reforms — we did the Veterans Choice. And that's — I don't know which was more difficult. They were pretty much equal. But since I took office, nearly 3 million veterans have been able to choose a private doctor in their own community.

And have you ever seen — and this is a great tribute to the people at the VA — the people and the leadership of the VA. I don't hear these horror stories. You know, I used to see — as growing up, I'd see, *"VA, VA, VA."* I don't want to, you know — well, let me find some wood. Wait.

I'm not hearing bad stories. I'm hearing all good stories. But the fake news will go out and they'll find somebody in the system. They'll find somebody. They'll find somebody in this giant medical system — the largest system in the world, by far. They're going to find somebody that wasn't treated perfectly. And he'll be on the top of the news tonight. *"We have breaking news."*

We've also slashed wait times at the VA by more than 33 percent. That's a great thing. And the care is better. More importantly, the care is even better. A recent study published in the *Journal of American Medical Association* found that wait times are now shorter for primary care at the VA than at private sector doctors and hospitals. How about that? Good job. Say hello to our friend. Tell him he's doing a good job. He's done some job. What a job all of you have done.

Insert:

According to the JAMA study, average wait time in 2014 for a VA appointment in one of these specialties was 22.5 days, compared with 18.7 days for private-sector physicians. In 2017, the average VA wait time was 17.7 days, while the private-sector average was 29.8 days. That translates to a shorter average wait time of 12 days in VA, compared with the private sector. Source: VA

To improve the efficiency at the VA, I signed the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act. You know what that is. So far this fiscal year, the VA has processed nearly 1.2 million claims for compensation and increased the number of appeals decisions by 70 percent compared to two years ago, when I really started doing this. That's a big number.

We are modernizing your medical records to begin a seamless transition from the Department of Defense into the VA — something that they just said they couldn't do. You know that, right? They said, *"We can't do it. It's just too complicated."* We did it.

The VA has also cut opioid prescriptions by 30 percent over the last two and a half years and we're committed to defeating the opioid epidemic in America. And I have instructed all of our people that give so many grants to lots of geniuses all over the country, I said, *"Find a pain killer that's non-addictive. Get a pain killer that, when you break your arm and you go to the hospital, you don't come out of the hospital addicted to opioids. Get a pain killer that's non-addictive."* And we're closer than you think, right? We're closer than you think.

Our veterans are seeing dramatic improvements in the quality of care across the board. Patients' trust has increased — I mean, you look at the trust that the patients give — increased at 92 percent of VA medical centers....

(continued....)



....Ninety-two percent increase at the medical centers. And we will not rest until we reach 100 percent. And we'll get there, too. We'll get there. Probably there already. Probably we're there already.

No issue facing our veterans is more urgent than ending the national crisis of veterans suicide. My administration is determined to do everything in our power to save the lives of our heroes. And if you think about what's going on, we have a new — I guess you'd call it a drug — that came out. Johnson & Johnson. And I know you're dealing very strongly with them. I think they should make a contribution to the United States of America. But they have something that, whatever it may do, it really takes that horrible anxiety — whatever causes somebody to be so desperate to commit to suicide. You take it; it's an inhaler. And you take it, and its results are incredible. And I don't know long term, but it really — it really has an incredible effect on a lot of people. And I've instructed the top officials to go out and get as much of it as you can from Johnson & Johnson. And I think they should make — they've done so well in this country, and they've made so much money, I think they should give it to us for free. Give it a shot. Give it a shot.

No, but it's incredible. Actually it's — it does something — something pretty amazing. It's new. And it's had a tremendous — and it's been approved. And I guess it's been fully approved. Right? It's gone through the process. And it's gone through a long process and it's been fully approved. We think that's going to have a great impact.

We've secured a record \$8.6 billion for mental health services. And we opened — that's a record. We opened the White House VA Hotline to help ensure no claim ever again falls through the cracks. I mean, a lot of claims were having a lot of problems, going on for years. We work it out. The VA is now providing same-day emergency mental health care and mental health screenings to every patient that walks through the door. It's incredible the difference between now and three years ago.

To end the tragedy of veteran suicide, it will require government and society at all levels working together. We have to work together with a lot of different groups, a lot of people. And a lot of progress is being made, but going to be made. Things are happening.

We must strive to build communities that truly serve, support, and protect our veterans from the very first moment they return to civilian life. It's an incredible adjustment. That's exactly what we aim to achieve with the PREVENTS Initiative. You know what the PREVENTS Initiative is — a task force created earlier this year to

unify the efforts of government, business, and nonprofit groups.

We want to build on proven strategies, like the AMVETS HEAL — you know what AMVETS HEAL — you know what it is; you told me about it — Program. An amazing partnership with the VA that has served over 600 families in crisis in just the last year, without a single life lost to suicide. Not one.

To every veteran who is facing this struggle, I want you to know that you are not alone. We are with you. You are not forgotten — not at all forgotten. We're with you all the way. And you are not beaten. You will overcome, you will prevail, you will triumph, and you will thrive. You will thrive. A lot of progress has been made. So many different things we're making progress in. Millions of Americans are right by your side, and we are with you every single step of the way.

One of those Americas is — Americans — is someone that you know very well: Jim Pidgeon, a Navy veteran and former National Commander of AMVETS. Jim? Where's Jim? Come on up here, Jim. Come on up here, Jim.



For the past 1,257 consecutive days, Jim has challenged Americans to join him in doing 22 push-ups — don't challenge me — don't make me do that — representing the number of veterans whose lives — think of that, 22 — representing — that's the number of suicides a day. Can you believe it? I heard that number and I said, *"It can't be possible."* You would think a year, a month. A day. Nobody can believe it. Nobody believes that, Jim.

Thousands of patriots have joined him in raising awareness, and together they are summoning the national will to act. And I want to thank, Jim. Jim, say a few words, please. Great job.

(continued....)



Mr. Pidgeon: Thank you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here. I would not be able to do this without the support, the love, and the prayers of my beautiful wife, Paulette.

CIC: Good. Thank you.

Mr. Pidgeon: Thank you.

CIC: He's got strong arms. I just tapped them. It's like a piece of steel. Thank you, Jim.

No one deserves the blessings of freedom more than the heroes who risk their lives to defend it. For this reason, my administration has worked aggressively to boost veterans employment, and we're setting records. Since my election, we have reduced the number of unemployed veterans by 37 percent. That's pretty good.

Veterans unemployment has reached the lowest level ever recorded. You ever hear that? That's big. Same thing with African American unemployment. Same thing with Asian unemployment. Same thing with Hispanic unemployment. Same thing with many other groups. It's been amazing.

To every employer in America, we say: If you are looking for a worker of unrivaled skill, integrity, and devotion, all you have to do is hire a veteran. That's what's happening and they're doing it. They're doing it. I have a friend who's been doing it lately, and he said, *"Why didn't I do this 25 years ago?"* I said, *"That's your problem."* He was very happy.

Every service member has the right to return to civilian life with dignity and security, and that's what's happening. Driven by this core principle, we have helped 30,000 veterans find permanent housing over the last two years. Thirty thousand.

We have also expanded the GI Bill so that veterans can use their benefits to get an education at any point in their lifetime — a crucial reform to expand opportunity to veterans in every stage of their career. That's a big thing.

And today, I am proud to announce that I am taking executive action to ensure that our wounded warriors are not saddled with mountains of student debt.

In a few moments, I will sign a memorandum directing the Department of Education to eliminate every penny of federal student loan debt owed by American veterans who are completely and permanently disabled. Incredible.

Nobody can complain about that, right? Nobody can complain about that. The debt of these disabled veterans will be entirely erased. It'll be gone. And you'll sleep well tonight.

Altogether, this action will wipe out an average of \$30,000 in debt owed by more than 25,000 eligible veterans who have made immense sacrifices — the ultimate sacrifice, in many — in many ways, for our nation. They have made a sacrifice that's so great. And they're such incredible people. And they never complain. They never complain. That's hundreds of millions of dollars in student debt held by our severely wounded warriors. It's gone forever.

I want to thank Secretary DeVos for her leadership and making veteran debt forgiveness a top priority for the Department of Education. Betsy, thank you very much. Stand up, Betsy. Stand up.

And there will be no federal income tax on the forgiven debts. So that's really big stuff. It's all passed. It's all passed. All we have to do is sign it, which we're going to do right at that beautiful desk, okay? All we have to do.

Today, I'm also calling upon all 50 states to immediately waive all applicable state taxes as well. The state taxes, hopefully, will be going away very quickly. Most of the states have already agreed to do that.

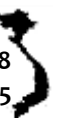
Joining us today is one of the many American heroes who will benefit from this action, Katherine Castle. Amazingly, Katherine served in three different branches of the Armed Forces: the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Wow. You're going to have to tell me which is the best, please. I want to know which is the best. Which is the best? Don't — don't say it. Don't say it. I might — she may say it and I'll be in big trouble. Please say a few words, Katherine. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Ms. Castle: Thank you, everybody. This is an amazing relief on my family, as well as, I know, many thousands of veterans as well. Thank you.

CIC: Thank you very much, Katherine.

After two tours in Iraq, Katherine developed multiple serious health conditions — very, very serious — related to her service, including significant lung problems. Despite these obstacles, Karen [Katherine] is now pursuing a degree at the University of Nevada. Katherine, we are really profoundly grateful for your service and for your immense sacrifice. You've been incredible. And thank you. And it's great to have gotten to know you. And everybody in this room is very proud of you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Katherine.

(continued....)





“President Donald Trump holds up a presidential memorandum that he signed that discharges the federal student loan debt of totally and permanently disabled veterans” during visit to AMVETS.

Veterans like Katherine who have made such enormous sacrifices for our country should not be asked to pay any more. Rather, it is America who owes our heroes a supreme debt of gratitude. So that’s the way we feel.

Across oceans, jungles, mountains, and deserts, in battlefields and enemy camps across the globe, our veterans fought and bled to vanquish our enemies and preserve America’s birthright of freedom.

Our country, our liberty, our families, our homes, our safety, our very lives — everything that matters and everyone who we hold dear — are sacred, and just sacred to us, and secured by the grace of God and the immortal courage of those who serve.

The story of the American veteran — and I call them the “*American warrior*,” because that’s what they are; they’re great warriors — is the story of the American nation. You have written our history, shaped our identity, forged our destiny, marched us to glory, and always planted the righteous flag of American victory.

You have filled our enemies with dread, you have filled our friends with hope, and you have filled our American heart with fierce patriotic pride.

Because of you, America is safe. Because of you, America is strong. Because of you, America is free. And because of you, America will forever remain the bravest, mightiest, and greatest nation on the face of the Earth. Thank you. Thank you. Because of you. You. Because of you.

I would now like to ask AMVETS’s leaders to come forward; Secretary DeVos — please come forward; Deputy Secretary Byrne, Governor Bevin, Sergeant Katherine Castle, and Sergeant Nick Stefanovic — to join me on stage as I sign the presidential memorandum facilitating the cancellation of student loan debt for 25,000 of our most severely disabled veterans. And with today’s order, we express the everlasting love and loyalty of a truly grateful nation. God bless our veterans, and God bless America. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, everybody. END

Source: White House transcript. Photos/inserts added.



Farewell to Troopers of the 173d Abn Bde & 503rd PRCT and Attached Units Who Made Their Final Jump

Michael W. Barnes, 72

Peterborough, NH, June 27, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Irvin Boatwright, 84

Rossville, GA, July 22, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Paul Clark, 82

Southern Pines, NC, July 27, 2019
CO B/4/503, RVN

David Leonard DeShazo, 70

Xenia, OH, June 26, 2019
173d Abn Bde

Christopher Michael Enns, 30

Wasilla, AK, July 24, 2019
173d ABCT, Afghanistan

William Warren Flynn, 72

Hampton, NH, April 28, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Derek Gregory Garcia, 24

Portales, NM, July 27, 2019
2/503d, Vincenza, Italy

Donnie Wayne Gipson, 70

Lake Mary, FL, June 1, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Dr. Robert J. Kellard, 83

Danvers, MA, August 1, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

David F. Lochelt, 71

Portland, OR, April 24, 2019
E-Troop, 17th Cav, RVN

James Robert "Jim" Maki, 70

Burntside Lake, MN, July 6, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Michael Meyers, 71

Norwich, NY, May 16, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

David "Mike" Michael Mills, 76

Burnet, TX, July 10, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Eugene "Gene" O. Neville, LTC, 79

Statesboro, GA, January 17, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Dennis T. Ridders, 71

Plains, MT, January 13, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Troy Lee Roper, 72

Salt Lake City, UT, July 12, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Fred H. Savage, 69

Casper, WY, July 11, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Harold Strode, 86

Lexington, KY, July 31, 2019
2/503d, RVN

James Creighton Welch, 75

Landrum, SC, May 25, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

William Edward "Bill" Workman, 91

Oklahoma City, OK, July 17, 2019
1/503, RVN

Stephen Louis Zaleski, 1Sgt, 51

North Charleston, SC, July 8, 2019
HHC/173d ABCT, Vincenza, Italy

James Russel Zarling, 69

Santa Maria, CA, June 6, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

*Rest Easy With Your Fellow Warriors
Sky Soldiers.....
You Will Always Be The Best*

