

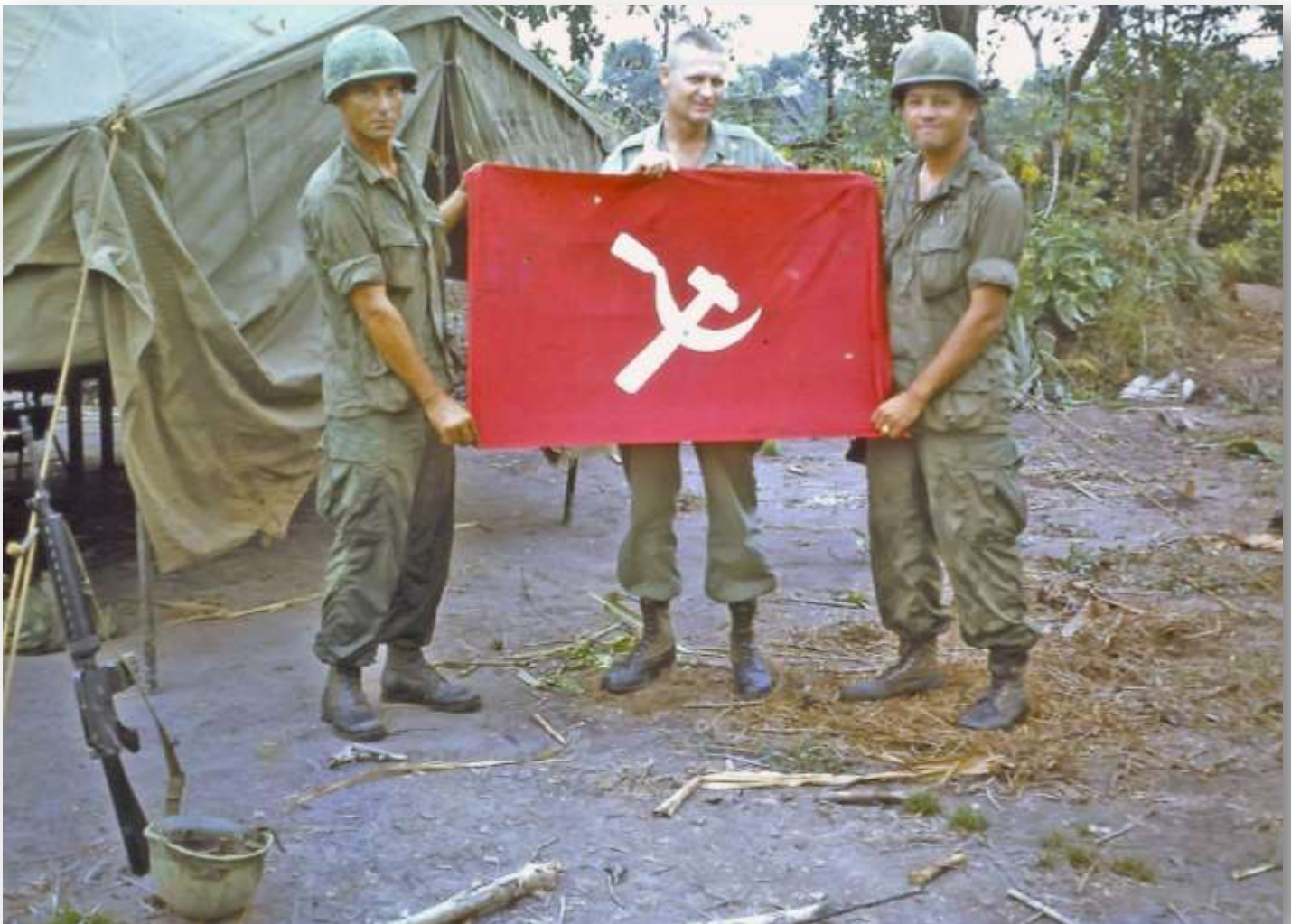
baMillner

The header graphic features a dark blue background with a pattern of small white stars. On the left, there are two overlapping photographs: one showing a soldier in a helmet looking through a rifle scope, and another showing a landscape with a large structure. A white circular badge with the text "We try harder." is positioned between the photos. To the right is the "AIRBORNE" logo, which consists of a shield with a white flame-like shape and a red sword. Further right, the text "2/503d VIETNAM newsletter" is displayed in large, bold, blue and white letters. Below this, in smaller white text, it reads "FOR THE MEN, AND THEIR FAMILIES, OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEP)".

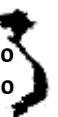
January - February 2020, Issue 90
Contact: rto173@att.net

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

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~



54 years ago this January. L-R: Sgt. Brinkle, 2/503 battalion commander LTC George Dexter and C/2/503 company commander Capt. Tom Faley display captured communist flag during Operation Marauder in the Mekong Delta.
(George Dexter photo collection]





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 January and February 1970



“You have done your duty, to honour you is ours.”

Deandrea Hamilton

Douglas Alfred Baker, 27

SGT, 8RAR, 2/25/70

“From Moonta SA. Baker was killed when an enemy mine exploded at ground level during an operation in Phuoc Tuy in the mid-morning of 25th February 1970. Buried RSL Garden of Remembrance, Happy Valley Port, Lincoln SA.”



how much Mr. & Mrs. Berry, Kenny & Chuck meant to me. I will cherish their love eternally...” Mearl Z. Harris

Terry Adam Bryson, 20

PFC, HHC/2/503, 2/2/70

(Virtual Wall states E/2/503)

10/8/05: “Uncle Terry. Although I never met you, I've heard a lot about you. How brave you were and how badly you wanted to do what you did. You knew that you may or may not come back alive. You wanted to be a hero. Papaw tells me all the time that you told him and Nana ‘If something happens don't cry... it's what I want to do.’ Daddy used to always tell me that you were the coolest person ever, that he wished we could have met. He said you were a nut. Well you, daddy, and nana are finally together once again. Terry, you will never be forgotten ...your pictures and medals and boots and many other things are still around and they will be kept and passed down to generations to come. Your stories will also be told. Thanks for being so brave.” Brandy Bryson



Herman Halemanu Ban, 22

SGT, E/2/503, 1/4/70

5/27/13: “I Remember The Day The Kahuna Got You My Friend. Herman, I still remember how bad I felt the day I got back from R&R in Singapore and was told you had been killed. I felt guilty because we always joked before either of us went out on a Mission that the Kahuna was going to get our ass and I had left on R&R prior to your Mission. I am sorry my friend and I hope you are Resting in Peace and glory.”



Jim Chieco

James Joseph (Porky) Barrett, 24

T/CPL, 8RAR, 2/28/70

“From Mossman QLD. Served two tours of duty in Vietnam. The temporary corporal, who had re-enlisted in advance to go back to Vietnam with his unit and was killed by a mine blast in Phuoc Tuy 28th February 1970. Mt Gravett Lawn Cemetery, QLD.”

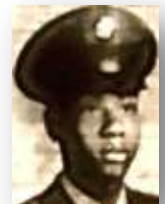


John Moore Burnley, 20

SGT, D/3/503, 2/4/70

5/7/04: “We Remember. John is buried at Little Rock Nat. Cem.”

Robert Sage



Charles Ray Berry, 22

SSG, B/2/503, 2/9/70

5/23/17: “My Best Friend. The Berrys & my family lived in Sunset Terrace in Wichita Falls, Tx. Chuck & I went to Hirschi High School together & graduated in 1965. That fall we entered Midwestern University & pledged Phi Sigma Kappa. We fished, we doubled dated, had a garage apartment briefly, water skied, drank a lot of beer & alcohol, laughed so hard & cried with Vietnam & the ‘draft’ ever so ominous. The Berry family was my family, Mr. Berry was the Father I wanted and the Father, Spouse, Friend, Neighbor, Human Being I've aspired to be. No words can express



Hugh Carylyle, 21

TPR, 3 Cav Regt, 2/18/70

“Adelaide SA. Carlyle was killed in action when his APC was hit by anti-tank rockets in Phuoc Tuy 18th February 1970 during a seven hour long battle in the Long Hai hills. Buried Centennial Park Adelaide, SA.”



(Tributes continued....)



Lawrence Ian Clifford
SGT, 3 Cav Regt, 1/25/70

"Born Adelaide SA. Clifford died on leave in Singapore 25 January 1970. Cause Not Known. Buried Centennial Park, Adelaide, SA."



Ronald John Engstrom, 22
CPL, 1 Fd Sqn, 1/30/70

"Brisbane QLD. Engstrom had two tours of duty in Vietnam. The Corporal was killed by an enemy mine in Phuoc Tuy 30th January 30 1970. Buried Albany Creek Crematorium, QLD."



 **Donald Robert Colglazier, 23**
1LT, E/17th Cav, 1/18/70

11/26/01: "We love you and miss you, loving son and brother. We remember when you waived goodbye from the plane when you departed from the airport in June, 1969 for a tour of duty in Vietnam. We were so proud of you and you were so prepared and willing to defend our country's freedom. We will never forget. Love,"



Robert John Gasko, Jr., 20
PFC, B/1/50th, 1/20/70

11/12/02: "Miss you brother! Bobby, they took you before your time. You never really got to enjoy life. You are dearly missed. Your brother," **Bobby Joe Dees**



[See tribute to Bobby Gasko on Page 66]

Mom and Dad, Roy, Candy, Shirley, and Joan

 **Lee Alexander Conners, 24**
SGT, B/1/503, 1/14/70

6/29/06: "I am so sorry we could not keep you alive that day, my friend. We lost so many of you, and your loss continues to cause us to cry after all these years. I remember that day on the Nui Loi only too well. Rest peacefully. Dr. Jekyll. From his medic," **Jack Leebron**



Jose F. Guerrero, Jr., 20
SGT, A/2/503, 1/9/70

2/7/18: "Ground Casualty. SGT Jose F. Guerrero Jr. was an Airborne-qualified infantryman serving with A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade. On January 9, 1970, SGT Guerrero died in Binh Dinh Province, RVN. Guerrero's death was not the result of combat. Instead, he was the victim of an intentional homicide by small arms fire."



Taken from coffeltdatabase.org

Gregory Mac Coons, 20
SGT, B/2/503, 2/15/70

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)
11/11/17: "Never forgotten. Happy Veteran's Day in heaven, Greg! I can still see you when we were in that science class together on the top floor of Central. You made the ultimate sacrifice and are one of the true heroes." **Caroline Joy McPeck**



David Lee Harding, 20
SGT, D/2/503, 2/18/70


4/23/18: "CRAZY YOUTH. We were 13. You gave me the album Johnny Mathis' Greatest hits because you heard me singing songs from it. I think of you still. You were sweet, shy, and bold at the same time. So were your kisses." **Elizabeth Morrow**



 **Steven Frank Edwards, 21**
SGT, 173d Eng, 1/18/70

3/25/13: "My Best Friend. The long talks we had, the dreams we shared, the long walks thru the rain, mud and elephant grass, sharing our food in the sand, mud in the monsoon season. Searching for mines and booby traps thru the different valleys we encountered. The way we looked out for each other during the firefights we had. Those long nights in those wet foxholes. The way he passed out candy to the kids. He was really a brother to me. Sunday January 18 1970 was the worst day of my life. I will always remember the Best Friend in the world, Steve. I'll always miss my Brother." **Roscoe Mitchell**



 **Richard Wayne Hibbler, 21**
SP5, HHC/4/503, 1/9/70

2/20/12: "Friend. I carried you home, but my heart will always be left held in time to that night in Jan when you went one way and I went another! I carried another man to live on my back while I did not know you had left this world! You wrote me a note that very afternoon about escorting your body back to CONUS upon Death!!!! My heart is always waiting suspended in Nam!" **Tiney Singler**



(Tributes continued....)



**William Joseph Hoban, 39****SGT, 8RAR, 2/28/70**

"Melbourne VIC. He was killed in a mine explosion in Phuoc Tuy 28th February 1970. He held the British Empire Medal. Buried Mount Gravatt Cemetery, QLD."

**Anthony Edward Hollis, 23****SPR, 1 Fd Sqn, 1/30/70**

"Sydney NSW. Hollis was killed by an enemy mine in Phuoc Tuy on 30th January 1970. Buried Woronora Cemetery, NSW."

**Patrick Hop Sung Hu, 20****SGT, E/17th Cav, 1/5/70**

4/25/12: "Remembrance. As young children, our grandparents lived with us. Patrick, or Paddy as we called him, was the baby of the family of four children. Our grandmother really spoiled him. She did not speak English and she always had lemon drop candy in her room. Since candy was a rarity when we were growing up, we older children would have Paddy go to her and ask her for mah tong (candy). Of course, Popo (grandmother in Chinese) would give him candy for all of us, so our ploy worked. Pat loved to go to the beach. He and my older brother would spend all day swimming. Your sister," Cynthia

**Rodney Noel Hubble, 19****SPR, 1 Fld Sqn, 2/28/70**

"Cunderin, WA. Hubble was killed by a mine in Phuoc Tuy 28th February 1970. Buried Perth War Cemetery, WA."

**Gerald Arthur Jackson, 21****2LT, HHC/4/503, 1/9/70**

5/31/10: "Brothers Forever. Gerry. I reflect every day on the dramatic impact you had on my life. From the time we were roommates in 53rd Company at OCS through the goodbyes we shared after Panama Jungle School you have always been next to me and have always been an inspiration to me of the meaning of 'selfless service.' I often reflect on the nights we would talk and the depth of your driving ambition to lead a platoon of the 173rd into combat. I tried throughout my career to live up to your example of 'selfless service.' Thank you for being a part of my life."



COL (R) Bobby J. Thornburg

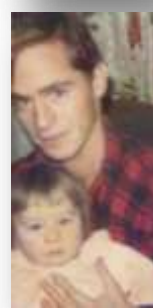
Robert James Jackson, 25**CPL, 8RAR, 2/28/70**

"Sydney, NSW. He was killed in an explosion at Phuoc Tuy on 28th February 1970. Buried Greta Cemetery, NSW."

**John William Sidney Kelly, 24****CPL, B/2/503, 2/15/70****(Virtual Wall states N/75 Rgr)**

11/12/15: "My Father. There aren't any memories, only pictures and stories from others. You were taken from me before my 2nd birthday. There is only one picture of the 2 of us together. I wish there were more to show I always missed you. Love Your daughter. Sonia XO." Sonia Kelly

John's name is on the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial (The North Wall) in Windsor, Ontario, CANADA.

**Edward Joseph Kulikowski, 19****CPL, C/1/503, 2/10/70**

5/15/14: "Eddie 'Couch' Kulikowski. 'Couch', you were such a great & special friend. We were devastated when you died. You will never be forgotten & will be missed forever. Thank you for your courage & fighting for us. But so sad to lose you. With much love, you will always be the epitome of a hero. R.I.P. Eddie." The Aileos

**Tedd McClune Lewis, 34****MAJ, HHC/4/503, 1/9/70**

6/15/09: "Father's Day. Mom and I are coming to DC this Father's Day – together we'll see your name and remember you." Anne Lewis Shealy

5/28/18: "Major Lewis, I was walking interior guard just outside TOC when you and the two Lt's were killed in the mortar attack on LZ North English. Such a waste of 3 good officers and men. AATW"

Terry Walsh**Joe Long, 34****SFC, HHC/1/503, 2/27/70**

6/3/11: "We Remember. Joe is buried at Cool Springs Baptist Church Cemetery, Pittsview, AL. BSM-OLC ARCOM." Robert Sage

*(Tributes continued....)*

Larry James MacLennan, 21

PTE, 8RAR, 2/28/70

"Killed in action. Keilor Cemetery, Keilor, Melbourne, Victoria."



Jesus James Meza, 21

SP4, B/1/50th, 2/13/70

8/1/06: *"Jesus James Meza was my brother but we called him Jim. He was and still is an American Hero. From his sister,"* **Maria Gena (Meza) III**



 **Ralph Martin, 22**

CPL, C/4/503, 2/5/70

9/7/18: *"Hell of a guy...Used to play pickup football with Ralph on Sundays. One of the best running backs Mansfield High ever had. He was FAST!!! And could punt a ball 70 yds. One of the nicest men I've ever met to this day. Doesn't surprise anyone that knew him, that he was a fine, dedicated warrior. RIP Ralph. We think about you often. Wish you were still with us."* **Unsigned**



 **Charlton Brandard Millner, 18**

CPL, B/4/503, 2/7/70

5/02: *"Carlton, my friend. While doing a search of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, I ran across an entry for you. I joined the Air Force the same day you gave your life for our country. I know that you are at peace all these 30+ years since your death. You never got the chance to live life to the fullest, and I regret that for you. Take care, Pal. You are missed. A memorial initiated by a damn fine friend."* **Unsigned**



Reginald Nelson Maza, 32

CPL, 3RAR, 2/17/70

(Also listed as Small Ship Sqd AV, and L/Cpl)
"Was born Ayr, QLD. He died 17th February 1970 at the Glenorie, NSW. Buried Glenorie NSW."



John Murl McDaid, 20

SGT, C/1/50th, 1/19/70

7/23/01: *"John and I attended the same one-room country schoolhouse until 1960 - Sowers School, the same one-room country schoolhouse my dad, his brother, and their dad, attended - when, in 1960 all the country schoolhouses were annexed into the city of Ithaca Public Schools. In the photo taken while John was in Vietnam he looks so tired, so weary ... just as everyone else felt and was ... Halfway through his tour, on his 179th day in-country, John stepped on a land mine. He came home having lost all on earth but with heaven gained."*



 **Dennis Wesley Moore, 27**

SGT, A/1/50th, 1/26/70

12/22/98: *"Remembering Denny Moore. Bodines, PA is the quintessential American small town, and Denny's death rocked it and the surrounding small villages to their cores. His sacrifice is remembered to this day, with a copy of his Bronze Star citation mounted in the community hall of the neighboring town of Ralston. He was, for all of us in those small towns, a hero who answered when his country called. All the protests, all the debates during and since the war, cannot erase that image. God bless all who cherish America, and are willing to put themselves in harm's way for her."*



Mark L. Comfort, Sr. US Army Special Forces, '76 - '80
[See poetic tribute to Denny Moore & Silver Star Page 80]

***'To live in the hearts we leave behind,
is never to have died.'***

(Thomas Campbell, circa 1888)

John is remembered by his comrades in the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry. **Unsigned**

12/6/06: *"Heard from your commanding officer, John! That rumor about your stepping on a land mine was just that - a rumor. You had received more than one mortal wound when you led your platoon to safety ... you are a true leader and a true hero, John. I knew you were never a whiffer! Miss you, John, still. From a classmate, Ithaca, Michigan ... Sowers School,"*

Nancee Greenlee



(Tributes continued...)



Robert Joseph Mullens, Jr., 24

1LT, HHC/173d Bde, 1/23/70

8/1/16: "Fellow Officers. Bob and I graduated together from 50th Company, OCS, Ft. Benning. Our class started with over 200 candidates and 61 were commissioned 2LT's. Bob was a leader and helped many of the candidates as we progressed through a tough and demanding program. We lost track of each other as I was assigned as a Tactical Officer in the OCS program and Bob went on to Airborne school and Special Forces training. I believe he completed both before serving in Vietnam. I will remember Bob as a leader and outstanding candidate in OCS." **Bill Morgan, Capt., Infantry '68-'72, VN '70-'71**



Robert Gene O'Connell, 20

CPL, B/2/503, 2/15/70

11/16/01: "Our Son and Brother. Bob, over the years we have missed you but you are in our hearts and prayers. God Bless you son and please save us a place and greet us when we pass over the threshold."
Russell A. O'Connell



Timo Eska A. Pesonen, 21

PTE, 8RAR, 2/28/70

"Finland. A mine explosion killed him in Phuoc Tuy on 28th February 1970. Buried Sunset Lawn Cemetery Mount Isa, QLD."



Barry John Munday, 22

PTE, 8RAR, 2/28/70

"Melbourne, VIC. Along with six other Australians he was killed in action when a mine was detonated in Phuoc Tuy on 28th February 1970. Buried Springvale Cemetery, Melbourne, VIC."



William Leroy Phillips, 24

CPT, A/1/503, 1/20/70

5/26/00: "Not Just a Soldier, Also a Brother. William LeRoy Phillips, my brother, died a soldier in Viet Nam. I remember him not only as a soldier but as my big brother. Short in stature, he stood tall when called upon to defend not only his country but anyone who he felt was being belittled or abused. To me he will always be Bill, not the soldier, but the brother that we could count on to be there to listen when we needed to talk and always with a laugh to lighten any situation. Although many years have passed since he was taken, I still miss his quick grin, the laugh that showed in his eyes. I know my brother died with honor serving his country and I am proud of him for that but I was always proud of the way he stood up for what he believed no matter the cost. Bill, I love you."



Barbara Phillips Matthews

William Joseph Murphy, 19

SGT, 173d LRRP, 2/16/70

(Virtual Wall states C/75 Rgr)

6/1/16: "A Hero not forgotten. William J. Murphy was my cousin. His father was also a veteran who fought in combat. When Willie died I was in college earning a degree in engineering after four years in the US Navy. I remember reading a letter his mother showed me, in which he said others were getting hit, but for some reason he was safe so far. He said it just wasn't his time yet. Not long after that I attended his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. Willie, I'm sad to say that I did not have the chance to know you better as an adult. I thank you for giving your life for me and for your country. Your courage and zest for life have left a lasting impression on me. You are a hero and a very courageous man. We all miss you. Your courage and sacrifice will never be forgotten. I have read about you in 'Charlie Ranger' and I have a better appreciation for how much you encouraged and inspired the men around you and how they loved you for it. My best memory of you was as a pre-teen. You came up to me to give me a kiss goodbye on the cheek, so I leaned over for it and got a big, sloppy, loud raspberry. Thanks Willie, I needed that!" **Norris Lovette, US Navy, Ret.**



George Dewey Quick, Jr., 20

PFC, A/1/50th, 1/22/70

(Virtual Wall states HHC/1/503)

1/2/13: "Gone too soon! Looked up to him when I was growing up. We were born on the same day and attended the same high school. East Side Purple Devils."



Ralph Lide

Philip M. Richter, 21

PTE, 8RAR, 2/28/70

"Melbourne, VIC. He was killed by a mine explosion on 28th February 1970. Buried Canberra Cemetery, ACT."



(Tributes continued....)



**Richard Carl Schmidt, 26****SSG, B/1/503, 1/5/70**

6/29/11: "We Remember. Richard is buried at Chenango Valley Cemetery, Binghamton, NY. BSM-2OLC AM PH-OLC"
Robert Sage

**John George Stevens, 21****PTE, 5RAR, 1/23/70**

"Hughenden, QLD. He died accidentally from a gunshot wound in Phuoc Tuy on 23rd January 1970. Buried Canberra Cemetery, ACT."

**William Smith, 18****CPL, A/3/503, 2/5/70**

12/5/01: "My Hero, My Brother. Love Honor & serve for the defense of freedom. A commitment, a way of life, our responsibility. It was all we knew. Dad had spent three tours in Viet Nam in the Special Forces, Mom she struggled to keep us in line. Our faith in God and our family unity kept us strong. Billy you will never be forgotten. Your death wasn't in vain or a waste as many had perceived. Freedom comes with a price and You have paid that ultimate price. In the defense of our freedom, something we so often take for granted. Your Name and spirit Lives on in our memories of you and people like you. MY hero My Brother." **Unsigned**

**Barry John Thompson, 22****PTE, 5RAR, 2/1/70**

"Goulburn, NSW. Thompson was killed after he accidentally detonated a buried hand grenade while raking leaves at Nui Dat 7 days before returning to Australia. 1st February 1970. Buried Gunning Cemetery, VIC."

**Victor Neil Wagstaff, 21****PTE, 8RAR, 1/29/70**

"Maryborough, VIC. Wagstaff was killed in an ambush during an enemy contact in the early hours of 29th January 1970 in Phuoc Tuy. Buried Maryborough Cemetery, VIC."

**Felix Solis, 20****SGT, A/1/503, 1/8/70**

4/3/05: "We Remember. Felix is buried at Long Island Nat Cem." **Robert Sage**

**Lawrence O. Washington, 28****SSG, B/3/503, 1/29/70****(Virtual Wall states E/3/503)**

5/19/19: "Brother in arms. Always remembered. I go back to Bong Son every day." **William L. Smith**

**William Charles Stefko, 22****1LT, HHC/4/503, 1/9/70**

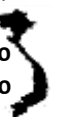
5/4/17: "William C. Stefko was born June 15, 1947, and lived in Bayonne, NJ. He was a graduate of St. Joseph's School, St. Peter's Prep, and attended St. Peter's College for two years before enlisting in the US Army in October 1967. He did his basic training at Fort Polk, LA, and then went to Fort Knox, KY, for radio school. He was accepted for enrollment in the Officers' Candidate School at Fort Benning, GA. After receiving his commission, his first assignment was with the Special Forces at Fort Bragg, NC, and he served with the Green Berets from March through October 1969. He left for Vietnam on December 3, 1969, and served with the 173rd Infantry Brigade. He attained the rank of First Lieutenant (1LT). On January 9, 1970, Stefko was killed in action when he was hit by mortar fire after his platoon came under enemy fire at an aircraft landing zone. His wife was awaiting the birth of their first child within 10 days. He was 22 years old." **William Schottel**

**Garry Maxwell West, 19****PTE, 8RAR, 2/28/70**

"Hobart, TAS. West was wounded by an enemy mine in Phuoc Tuy on 28th February 1970 and died two hours 10 minutes later in 1 Australian Field Hospital. Buried Cornelian Bay Cemetery, TAS."

**Barry John Whiston, 22****L/CPL, 3 Cav Regt, 2/18/70**

"Brisbane, QLD. He was killed in Phuoc Tuy on 18th February 1970. Buried Mt Thompson Crematorium, QLD."

*(Tributes continued....)*

Darrell George Wood, Jr., 22

1LT, C/2/503, 2/19/70

(Virtual Wall states D/2/503)

2/18/15: "My Brother, Warrior, Number One Son. Darrell, The last time I saw you was Hickam Airbase 1969. You were so calm and cool, just like you always were - whether it be playing center in football or behind home plate for the Sukiran Knights or boarding a transport to Vietnam. You were my protector, being the fifth of five boys. We shared a room and once I made it in the room, I was safe from whoever was chasing me, because you were there. I remember Ft. Bragg - basic training, going to see you and picnic lunches. I remember my twelfth birthday with you in Honolulu days before I'd never see you again. Until 1985, I came to D.C. to visit you and Dad at Arlington. I remember walking by the reflection pool, not knowing where The Wall was, then taking this path to the right and over a rise - there you were with your Brothers. I have these memories, and a wooden box with the medals awarded to you, for your sacrifice for our Great Nation in my living room. God Bless Big Brother." **Michael Wood**



Immediate Release

DOD Identifies Army Casualties

Nov. 21, 2019

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

Both soldiers died Nov. 20, 2019, in Logar Province, Afghanistan, when their helicopter crashed while providing security for troops on the ground. The incident is under investigation.

The deceased are:



David C. Knadle, 33
Chief Warrant Officer 2
from Tarrant, Texas



Kirk T. Fuchigami Jr., 25
Chief Warrant Officer 2
from Keaau, Hawaii

Both soldiers were assigned to 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, T



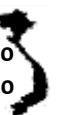
Commander in Chief and first lady Melania Trump watch as a U.S. Army carry team moves a transfer case containing the remains of Chief Warrant Officer 2 David C. Knadle, of Tarrant, Texas, Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019, at Dover AFB, Del.



The Fallen Soldier

Don't weep for me
O' land of the free
When it was my time to fall
'Twas for my country's call
'Twas for the land that I loved
That I gave my all,
And for the land that I loved
I did freely give,
And in her freedom and her
courage
I'll continue to live.

By Patricia Krull



~ Sky Soldier Extraordinaire ~

Gary R. Prisk, Col. (Ret)



He calls his men “The Hill People”, they call him “Cap”.

Gary Prisk, former company commander of C&D Companies of the 2/503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) during the Vietnam War, was born in 1943, in Phoenix, Arizona, from where his family moved to Bremerton, Washington in 1950. He and his bride Linda, from Lynden, Washington, have two children, Kimberly and Karl, and four grandchildren.

To this day the Colonel is known as “Cap” to the men who served under his command during combat in Vietnam. Cap’s illustrious life includes numerous accomplishments during his military service, his educational endeavors, both as student and professor, the business world, as well as his literary achievements and community service.

Gary holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mechanical and industrial Engineering, Master of Business Administration Degree-Finance from the University of Washington, to include Doctoral Studies in Finance and Statistics from UofW, where he taught Finance in 1972. During 1969-1970, the Colonel taught Army ROTC at the University of California/Davis.

Gary’s military service to his country spans over 30 years, and began in 1964, when as a SP-4 he served as an Army Reserve Medic with the 17th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, at Fort Benning, GA. In June of ’66, he was commissioned a Regular Army Infantry Officer, and was posted as the Mechanized Infantry Company Commander, 30th Infantry, in Schweinfurt, Germany. In 1967/68, Cap served with the 173d Airborne Brigade in Vietnam as an Infantry Platoon Leader, then Company Commander with the 2/503rd. Following his service with the Sky Soldiers, Gary earned his Ranger Tab in 1969, then served as Military Science Instructor, Army ROTC, at the University of California at Davis.

From 1971 to 1994, Gary served in the Army Reserve, retiring as an O-6.

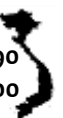
Drawing on his engineering education, Gary was a builder from ’72 to ’07, working on and developing a number of mixed-use and luxury projects throughout the northwest and greater Washington State areas.

Gary comes from a storied family of military veterans, including his father, Major Ed Prisk, who served as General Eisenhower’s Tactical Liaison Officer to Field Marshall Montgomery during the beginning of WWII for the U.S., and brother to Col. Court Prisk, who served as a company commander with the 173d’s C Battery, 319th Artillery Battalion in Vietnam.

Gary’s personal service and contributions to his community and to veterans include, but are not limited to coaching youth basketball, tutoring algebra for high school athletes, and serving on community boards. As a member of the 173d Airborne Association, Cap sold 310 copies of his novel, *Digger Dogface Brownjob Grunt*, a ‘Best Book Award’ fiction-based-on-fact story recounting his service in Vietnam with the 173d, donating the proceeds to the 173d’s National Memorial Foundation. The Colonel is one of only three-hundred Spartan Club members of the 503rd Infantry for distinguished service to the Regiment as Ordered by The Secretary of the Army.

If one were to ask any of the men with whom he served during war, their reply about Cap could likely be, *He can walk with Kings and paupers, ‘and treat those two impostors just the same’.*

All The Way, Cap!





INCOMING!!!



Tony Lopez

The Last Man Standing From Company F

I thought you Sky Soldiers should know about SSgt **Anthony Lopez**, WWII, 503 PRCT, Combat Veteran.

Tony passed away Sept. 5, 2019. Tony was honored Nov. 2, by the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the 82nd ABN Association, Denver CO. He jumped on Corregidor, the Rock, among other combat jumps and beach landings. Tony and his buddy were wounded while carrying a fellow paratrooper out of a hot zone while under fire from Japanese infantry.



After the war he was assigned to the 82nd where they tested military equipment and weaponry in frigid conditions.

He left us peaceably with dignity from his home, attended by his family. We truly love and miss him. He said, "I'm the last man standing from Co. F". Now they're all gone. "Airborne"

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Lopez

1st Bde., 101st Abn Div.

Viet Nam, '67-'68

Photo Found

We found a picture of **Jeremias Roman**, B/2/503.

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



Jeremias Roman, PFC, 19

B/2/503

4/29/48 ~ 3/4/68

New York, NY

Correction

In Issue 89, on Page 88 of our newsletter, we misspelled as Dunwood the first name of **Dunward Frank Ray**, B/2/503, KIA July 7, 1965. We apologize to his family and friends. Ed



Dunward Frank Ray, Sgt.

Columbus, GA

B/2/503

Born: August 14, 1945

KIA: July 7, 1965

"D" Zone, RVN

Interred: Arlington National Cemetery

2020 173d Reunion News

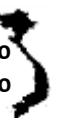
Gang, I think I forgot to inform you that the baseball officials of Dayton alerted me that there is a Friday night baseball game during the Reunion (7:00 P.M.) The stadium is right in the downtown area. So you can think about taking in a night of beer, Cracker Jacks and hot dogs while sitting under the June night sky. Address is 220 North Patterson Blvd. I think the free city buses run the route. Will try to find more info.



Bill Terry

A/3/319

(INCOMING!!! continued...)



Bravo Bulls

Announce the Van Campen Remembrance B/2/503

2020 Annual Reunion

May 6-9, 2020 / Jaffrey, NH

For complete details and agenda, please
contact Bob Warfield, B/2/503 at
foxclair@aol.com



Thomas Charles Van Campen
KIA-MIA 24 June 1965
Hometown: Oroville, CA

Belated Holiday Wishes

This image of C-Rats with its own P-38 and Thanksgiving Day wishes came in from our good buddy **Dave Glick, B/2/503**. Few, if any, would argue Lima Bean in juices was a tastier entrée. Ed



Excerpt & Photo From
Time Magazine
March 25, 1966

Guys, while digging through some Christmas decorations, I came across this *TIME magazine* (US edition). Hope the PDF comes through.

Jim Robinson
B/2/503



PARATROOPERS OF THE 173RD AFTER ZULU ZULU
Drinking deep of victory.

“Short of water for days, they thirstily watched the first water-laden chopper drop down from the sky. Suddenly an enemy automatic weapon chattered, knocking the chopper in flames to the earth. On the signal, the jungle around the paratroopers erupted in gunfire. The landing zone, called Zulu Zulu, was completely encircled by the 400 Communist troopers – 90% of them North Vietnamese regulars – of the Viet Cong’s 271st main-force regiment.

Thus began a seven-hour battle won by the Airborne with fewer casualties and more enemy dead than any major engagement of the Viet Nam war. Time and again the outmanned and outgunned Viet Cong charged. Coolly and methodically, the well dug-in paratroopers cut them down. Australian artillery laid a lethal ring of steel around Zulu Zulu; dive-bombers plastered the attackers on an average of every six minutes for five hours running. ‘Mad Bomber’ Huey helicopters rigged with plywood tubes pointing downward dropped 81-mm mortar shells right on the heads of the Reds. The Reds finally gave up.” *Time Magazine*

(INCOMING!!! continued....)



Whoop, Whoop, Whoop



Over the years most of us have seen a number of videos about the Vietnam War and our brigade, some good, some otherwise. But, the video put together by Ned Costa, Caspers, at the web link below is well worth watching. And, if the *whoop, whoop, whoop* sound doesn't kick in the pucker factor, then you're a REMF Leg! *Great job, Ned!* Ed

<https://youtu.be/hPzxnmgS8eE>

Take time to read - it's a fountain of wisdom

- Take time to read - it's a fountain of wisdom.
- Take time to play - it's a secret of youth.
- Take time to be friendly - it's a path of happiness.
- Take time to laugh - it's the music of the soul.
- Take time to dream - it's a road to greater vision.
- Take time to love - it's GOD like.

No one is useless in the world who lightens the burden for someone else.

Ray Chapman
RAA



One Lucky Dogface

Jo Collins was very nice but let me tell you something you should have seen. If you remember one USO show, Joey Heatherton was there dancing and singing. At the end of her show, a trooper went up and gave her a handful of 173rd patches and told her thanks for coming. Well, the trooper was me, and when I turned to leave she grabbed me and gave me a big kiss! It really embarrassed me to say the least but it was interesting.



Hope & Heatherton

I have been trying to find a copy of that show for a couple of years now. I am sure if you can find some copy of the USO shows that would be great for the magazine. Put them online and let the troopers go look at them.

Gregg Lyell
A/2/503



Excerpt....

VA opens gambling addiction center in Las Vegas

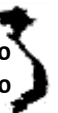
VA's Southern Nevada Healthcare System is proud to announce the grand opening of the Las Vegas VA Residential Recovery and Renewal Center (LVR³). It's only the second residential gambling addiction recovery center in the nation.

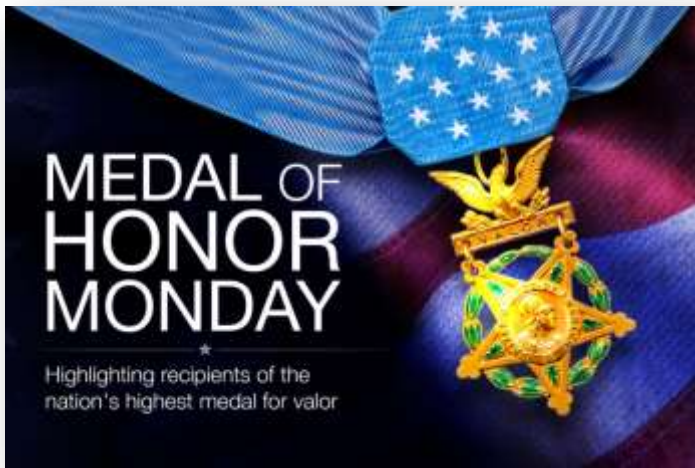
LVR³ is a 30- to 45-day substance use and gambling residential treatment program. It is a 20-bed facility, with a separate wing with five rooms for female Veterans. The center provides research-based, high quality interventions to help residents:

- Help learn about addiction and triggers and developing a sustainable relapse-prevention plan.
- Develop individualized and person-centered recovery plans.
- Provide a whole health approach to help improve emotional, physical and mental health.
- Assist residents choose, access and use community and social supports.

Read entire report at:

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VANtage/69184/va-opens-gambling-addiction-center-las-vegas/>





Medal of Honor Monday: Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta

By Katie Lange | Nov. 18, 2019

In 2010, Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta became the first living Medal of Honor recipient in nearly 40 years. Those who receive the coveted honor usually say their teammates share in the honor, and Giunta was no exception. In fact, he recently gave the medal to the brigade with whom he served, saying it belonged to all of them.



Giunta was born Jan. 21, 1985, and grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He was the oldest of three children in an Italian-American family. In 2003, Giunta, then 17, saw a recruitment commercial while working at a sandwich restaurant, and he decided to enlist in the Army. He went to basic training and was assigned to the 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team based in Vicenza, Italy, in May 2004.

During his first yearlong combat deployment to Afghanistan in March 2005, Giunta was shot in the leg and saw four fellow soldiers die after a roadside bomb went off. A little more than a year after returning from that deployment, Giunta's unit was sent back to Afghanistan.

Months into his second deployment, the 22-year-old then-specialist was acting as B Company, 1st Platoon's rifle team leader during a multiday combat mission called Operation Rock Avalanche. On Oct. 25, 2007, the platoon was on a night patrol in the Korengal Valley, the most dangerous valley in northeastern Afghanistan. The soldiers were going single-file down a steep, rocky crest when they were ambushed by Taliban fighters, separating them from the unit's two other platoons.

"I'm not here because I'm a great soldier. I'm here because I served with great soldiers."

Army Staff Sgt. Salvatore Giunta

Giunta quickly ran for cover and started to fire back when he saw his squad leader get hit in the helmet and go down. Giunta ran toward the injured man, dodging gunfire to reach him and make sure he was OK. In the process, Giunta was hit twice – one bullet hit his body armor, and the other splintered a gun strapped to his back.

Despite the close call, Giunta continued to fire back and started throwing grenades so he and other soldiers could slowly move forward to reach their wounded comrades. When they made it to the injured men, Giunta realized the point man of the platoon – his best friend, Sgt. Josh Brennan – was missing. So, he kept going forward on his own.

When Giunta reached the top of the hill, he saw two Taliban insurgents attempting to carry a severely wounded Brennan away. Giunta didn't hesitate and went after them, killing one insurgent and wounding the other, who ran away.

(continued....)





When Giunta got to Brennan, he pulled his friend to cover and started giving him aid as the squad caught up to provide security. Giunta kept Brennan alive until he was evacuated off the ridge about a half hour later, but Brennan died the next day.

Meanwhile, American airpower was able to help in staving off the insurgent attack. Giunta's platoon then continued on its mission, despite losing five men to injuries and dealing with the apparent deaths of Brennan and Spc. Hugo V. Mendoza.

Two days later, Giunta learned he was being recommended for the Medal of Honor.

On Nov. 16, 2010, 25-year-old Giunta received the nation's highest honor at a White House ceremony attended by many of the men with whom he had served, becoming the first living Medal of Honor recipient to receive the honor since the Vietnam War.

"Salvatore Giunta risked his life for his fellow soldiers because they would risk their lives for him," President Barack Obama said during the ceremony. "That's what fueled his bravery -- not just the urgent impulse to have their backs, but the absolute confidence that they had his."



Giunta insisted he just did what any good soldier would do. In July 2017, he gave his medal to the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team during a ceremony in Vicenza, saying he wanted it to remain with them.

"I'm not here because I'm a great soldier," Giunta said at the ceremony. "I'm here because I served with great soldiers."

Giunta left the Army in 2011 and published an autobiography called *"Living With Honor"* in 2012. He's pursuing a business degree at Colorado State University and lives with his wife, Jennifer, and their two children.

This article is part of a weekly series called *"Medal of Honor Monday,"* in which we (the DoD) highlight one of the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients who have earned the U.S. military's highest medal for valor.



Pfc. Clyde J. Caires was killed in the Vietnam War

By Hank Soboleski, *Island History* / November 3, 2019



Pfc. Clyde J. Caires

This Island History was written to honor Clyde J. Caires and the other 12 servicemen from Kauai who were killed in Vietnam.

On Friday, March 3, 1967, Army Pfc. Clyde J. Caires (1948-1967) died of wounds received in combat against the Viet Cong after metal fragments from a Claymore mine struck him in the head while he was on a search and destroy mission with his unit, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

He was survived by his father, Ernest Caires, a warehouseman with Kauai Commercial Company, his mother Anne Martha Caires, and three brothers, Roger, Ernest, and Louis.

Shortly after being notified that his son had been killed, his father said that, *"He made his first combat jump in Operation Junction City, I believe, on February 27 – his 19th birthday. I would say he celebrated his birthday making his first combat jump. I got two letters from him since then. He said in a couple of days they were going out and walk. I believe they were to go on a search and destroy mission. I believe his company was*

the one ambushed by the Viet Cong on Friday that was in the story in the Star-Bulletin Saturday. It said something about the paratroops being ambushed and a Claymore mine went off, causing heavy casualties. Maybe my boy was in that. He wrote us and told us not to worry, not to count the days, and before we know it he would be home."

Clyde Caires was a graduate of Kauai High School and had been active in sports.

Funeral services were held on March 13, 1967 at Holy Cross Church, Kalaheo, and burial with full military honors took place at Kauai Veterans Cemetery, Hanapepe.

Other Kauai servicemen killed in the Vietnam War are: Francisco Concepcion, Jr., Gaylord Kila Defries, Gary Noboru Kawamura, Allen Lanui Lewis, Rodney Wayne Pavao, Roque Perpetua, Jr., Thomas Anthony Salvatore, Miles T. Tanimoto, Stanley Kamaki Woodward, Hilario Leanio Jr., Francis Louis Souza, and John Levinthol, Jr.

Hank Soboleski is a Vietnam War veteran.

[Reprinted courtesy of Mr. Bill Buley, Editor-In-Chief, and Hank Soboleski, *The Garden Island*, Kuhio's Newspaper]



DOD Identifies Army Casualty

Oct. 30, 2019

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

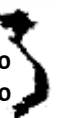
Sgt. Nathaneil G. Irish, 23, of Billings, Montana, died Oct. 27, 2019, of a non-combat related incident at Camp Taji, Iraq. The incident is under investigation.

Irish was assigned to 25th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, Fort Wainwright, Alaska.



Sgt. Irish

(Army photo)



Operation Marauder

A January Long Ago



2/503 Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter with his RTO Tom Conley, in the Mekong Delta rice paddies during Op Marauder.

On January 1st of 1966, the 173d Airborne Brigade loaded up for an operation, code-named *Marauder*, in Hau Nghia Province. This was about 30 kilometers due west of Saigon along the Vam Co Dong River in the northern Mekong Delta. It was a complete change of environment for us. Instead of jungle it was flat open country, basically rice fields. Wide rivers meandered through the area feeding canals, which in turn provided water for the fields. Dikes had been built up, separating the fields into rectangles. The dikes were about three feet high by six wide, and shrubs and trees had grown up on them, making them good defensive positions with excellent fields of fire over the rice fields.

[See Issue 72, Pages 42-57 for Col. Dexter's report on Operations Marauder & Crimp from January 1966]

Operation Marauder

January 1966, 2/503 Photos



From COL George Dexter, 2/503 Bn Cmdr photo collection.



Another View: Meet Keith Pigeon, someone Americans should not forget

By Mark Goccia

May 7, 2019



Keith Pigeon

Last October, the Barrington area lost another Vietnam veteran. Keith Pigeon fought in Vietnam in an Airborne Infantry unit. He is a reminder of people and events of the Vietnam war that Americans should not forget.

I want to remember Keith's contribution to that war. We humans so want to hold onto the memories of things and people that mean much to us.

I first met Keith in 1970 while in Louisiana for infantry training; then we went through jump school in Fort Benning, Georgia. He had always wanted to "Go Airborne" just as his older brother had done as part of his Special Forces training. In Vietnam, Keith and I were both assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade and, though being in different battalions, I would see him during those chance occurrences when our respective units came in from the field at the same time.

From time to time after Vietnam, Keith and I would connect by phone, I in New York, Keith in New Hampshire. His memories sometimes went back to the dangers of the infantryman such as the task of "walking point" or of making enemy contact. He often said that his biggest

concern was always "protecting the other guys," his buddies.

The memories he shared most often were about his friends who did not make it back to the States. Their lives were etched in Keith's memory as firmly as their names were engraved on the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. Some were not yet 20 years old, dying halfway around the world from an America which seemed to have little concern for them, and in some cases scorn.

I suppose his experiences in the war gave him a certain hardness. But Keith's memories were sometimes moving, when, on a couple of occasions he spoke of one of the Kit Carson scouts that worked with his platoon. Most scouts were ex-Viet Cong soldiers, now fighting with the Americans. These scouts hark back to Kit Carson, a scout for the Army in the post Civil War years, who used his knowledge of the Indians to aid the U.S. Cavalry. That technique of employing scouts was then used in subsequent wars.

One day the scout, Vu Thanh, was told that the 173rd Airborne Brigade was returning to the States and the scout would be reassigned to work with the South Vietnamese army. "He was devastated" remembered Keith, "when Vu Thanh was told that he would not be going to the States with us."

Keith went to his company commander to see if there was any way for the scout to come home with the departing American unit. He and some other men of his platoon went up the chain of command as far as they could, to no avail – they were told that it couldn't happen. Several times, as the men appealed on behalf of Vu Thanh, they were reassured that the scout had been given a Letter of Appreciation for serving with the 173rd Abn. Bde. But what would happen when all the American military left Vietnam? If the South Vietnamese army was unable to hold out against the Communists and Vu Thanh was captured, his letter of appreciation was simply a death warrant – and indeed, when the Communists took control of the South, Kit Carson scouts were high on their target list. Many scouts were killed by the Communists ... some turned in by their neighbors for the bounty placed on them by the Communists.

Forty seven years later, this memory still weighed on Keith's mind because Vu Thanh had become a trusted friend.

We owe a debt of gratitude to men like Keith, who did their duty well, neither asking for nor expecting any recognition. Keith, thank you for your military contribution, and for your compassion for the men who served by your side. Let us not forget.

Web source:

 Seacoastonline.com



A Sacred Thing

My experiences in Vietnam, that single year of my life, is a sacred and precious thing to me. I am bound to it. It is my anchor. It marked my passage into manhood and I lived it with men who are strong and brave and true.



Jim, lower left of photo, in his hooch at Camp Zinn circa 1965, with men he knew to be strong and brave and true.

(Photo by Jim's hooch buddy and war brother Wayne Hoitt)

It was a year of stuffing bad things down deep inside. Things like staring into the brains of a Vietnamese kid that I pulled from the burned out bowl of a tree in a rice paddy. Things like the meaty smell of his brains as his head fell back against my chest, the top of his head was gone. I kept telling myself, *"You gotta keep it together. You gotta be hard. You can't freak out in front of the rest of the guys"*.

Things like those big blue flies, crazy with the smell of blood, feasting on the hands, feet and heads left uncovered in the shallow graves of Zulu Zulu. Things like trekking through the jungle while staring a dead man in the face.

Our remembrance of those traumatic events is a part of our sacrifice, our gift to our country. They are the gift that keeps on giving. We carry the burden as our fathers and grandfathers did. We simply didn't know how long we would have to carry it.

Like most, I waited anxiously for my rotation date. Toward the end, after Zulu Zulu, I went out and sat down on a rubber tree stump after dark and cried in despair. I've never told that to anyone other than my wife, Gayle, before. Not such a hard guy after all.

I landed in San Francisco and did the cliché of kissing the tarmac then set off to see the girl I had been writing to who lived in Concord, CA. She had met a sailor, fallen in love and they were engaged to be married but she had the class to wait until I got back to tell me. No *"Dear John"* in the jungle for this Sky Soldier.

I watched and bought Ken Burns' documentary on the Vietnam War. I was so impressed with it! I no longer question why and how did we lose. For me it was pretty well all laid out. I identified closely with the vets who were interviewed. The Vietnamese Marine interviewee sounded so much like our Vietnamese scout, Phuc, *"No Problem!"*, he would often say.

I guess what it boils down to for me is that this was my life and I wouldn't have it any other way. To have experienced war and lived to tell about it is a special thing.

I find it so difficult to write things like this. I start out with strong intentions and then one thought leads to another and another, then I wind up staring into space tired of thinking about it.

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



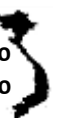
Zulu Zulu

Jim's reference to the graves at Zulu Zulu refers to the name of the Landing Zone (LZ) in the "D" Zone jungle, when on 16 March 1966, during Operation Silver City, our battalion was surrounded by enemy soldiers three-times our size. Following the battle men of our battalion dug shallow graves for many of the enemy soldiers killed in the fight. As we began to hump out of that LZ on the following morning, we walked by those graves described by Jim. Ed



Dustoff after the battle at Zulu Zulu.

(Photo by RTO Wayne Hoitt, HHC/2/503, '65/'66)



Excerpt From...

The Battle at Bau San

(Three Sky Soldiers return to a 3/16/66 battle site in Vietnam...and one to a visit to Dachau in Germany)

By D. Lewis Smith, Jr.

HHC/2/503, '65/'66

Before taking the bend in the path which would forever block our view of Zulu-Zulu, I stopped and looked back. "Thank you guys," I said out loud. I turned, catching up with Bill Vose and Gus Vendetti (both A/2/503), never to see Zulu-Zulu again.

On this exhausting hump back to the Ranger camp my mind would wander. It took me to other times we spent in jungles just like this, and when another helicopter had been shot down. The two pilots had survived; I don't recall anything about other crew members. But, due to the thickness of the jungle these two men were forced to hump with us for an hour, or two or more, until we came to an opening large enough where another chopper could carry them home. I recall looking at those two fellows, and I could tell they felt extremely uncomfortable with their feet on the ground.

And in another jungle in another place, a young trooper was killed, and again, the body could not be extracted. Two soldiers, big men, were selected to place that trooper's body in a poncho, and with a large tree branch as support, they carried him for what seemed like miles. I happened to fall-in immediately behind this threesome, the dead soldier and I staring at each other for the longest time, neither of us having much to say to the other, but, I will never forget him, and his eyes.

As we loaded up and selected our places in line, I looked down to find a rusted yet workable grenade pin, a final gift from the boys here, something to remember them by, even though without it we remember them; and a way of thanking us for stopping in to say a final hello, and a final goodbye. Just recently (the late) good buddy Jim Healy, another survivor of the battle at Zulu Zulu, visited our home and I gave him the shell casing you see here.



Mementos from the boys at Zulu-Zulu.

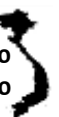
Some years ago my wife and I visited the WWII concentration camp at Dachau near Munich, Germany. It was a cold winter morning. The prisoner barracks decades ago had been demolished yet certain buildings remain standing to this day, including the "showers" and the building housing the ovens, and one where horrifying medical experiments were performed on the innocent, and the wall where other innocent were executed by firing squads during that war. It was abundantly clear to us we were walking in the midst of a killing field.

We toured the area, mostly in silence, stepping on those grounds now covered by gravel. Approaching our time to leave and nearing the "Arbeit Macht Frei" front gates, I leaned down and picked-up a single, small stone, a 'souvenir' of our time there. Reaching the front gate I stopped, looked at the stone in my hand, then dropped it to the ground. That stone belonged there, I had no right to take it.

Except for the Chinese medicine vial I sent Doc Beaton, the rusted lug nut now in a glass jar in Texas mingling with Cowboy Geishausers dirt from two wars, and the spent cartridge I gave Jim, I remain in possession of these small, rusted pieces of metal from 16 March 1966 -- I wish I would have left them there, at Zulu-Zulu, where they belong.



Our buddy, the late Jim Healy, A/2/503, survivor of the battle at LZ Zulu Zulu and many other battles.



RANDOM MEMORIES OF WAR

Fire in the Hole!

By The Grouchy Hippo

I was sent on a trip to Kontum from FSB 12 just after Christmas in '67 with our platoon leader of the Weapons Platoon who was a Staff Sargent because there were only about 11 of us in that so-called platoon. I recall having one lens of my glasses broken and it fell out so I had trouble seeing.

When the rest of the company came down and we went out on patrol I got the rear half of the company separated from the front half because I could not see well enough to keep up as the undergrowth was so thick. The CO finally said I could go back to the rear for some new glasses.

Before I left we laagered in and began the setup for a new FSB. I recall a couple of instances of note. First, a guy name George Jonathan Zerr, a friend, had been listed as KIA and I was on the Company radio when a call came in to verify his status, and the Army had to stop a message of his death from being sent to his family. I recall Captain Rogan, who was himself killed a month or so later, saying that he was looking right at Zerr so he knew he was not dead.

The second thing was about those darn air mattresses we all had. Since we were staying there for a few days to protect the perimeter, as the engineers set up the FSB, we did not put the mattresses away. The engineers were blowing up the brush around the AO with bangalore torpedoes and several of us were sitting around drinking coffee and shooting the breeze, when they called out, "Fire in the hole!" We were far enough away that we didn't react in any way except that our air mattresses were still sitting where we had slept. Jokingly, one of the men grabbed another guy's mattress and put it on top of his own to protect it. Sure enough, when the torpedoes went off a big chunk of wood from a thick bush went up some 100 to 150 feet in the air and we watched it soar up and then come back down right at us. We scattered and got out of the way and the damn thing landed right on top of the two mattresses and punctured the top one. We roared with laughter over that.



**James Paul Rogan, Maj.
KIA 3/8/68
DSC Recipient**

The third thing I recall is that is where I got wounded. I got cut by a sharpened bamboo stake pushing aside some brush. It was not a bad cut but we had been warned that the stakes were sometimes poisoned so I got a medic to clean it out for me. He asked if I wanted him to put me in for a Purple Heart and I said no. I was embarrassed by the idea so soon after all the shit in Dak To that I could get one for such a small wound that would have diminished the ones which were earned by serious wounds on Hill 875. I actually wish now that I had said yes so I could use it for some help at VA.

**John Bowers
B/2/503
The Grouchy Hippo**



**John & Geraldine Bowers,
proud American farmers,
married October 13, 1967,
three weeks before he
went to Vietnam.**

Baby Baby, Where Did Our Love Go?

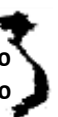
Was in D Co 2nd Batt. One evening we laagered-in out in the bush. We got hit by snipers from three directions. In all the noise going out and coming in I caught the sound of a transistor radio playing. Couldn't believe what I was hearing in between bursts of fire. Some dude had hung a transistor radio on a post that evening and the Supremes were belting out "baby, baby, where did our love go?" LOL

Decided I'd have to tell that story to someone if I made it back. Thanks.

**Hank Bailey
D/2/503**



(continued...)



Top, Doing His Duty

I'm going to do my best to remember that far back!

1. On 2 January 1966 I departed for operation Marauder with my weapons platoon and one of our 81mm mortars, carrying only the inner base plate, as the out base plate was way too heavy to be humping it. After bombarding the enemy's A.O. (Area of Operation), we flew our sorties of Huey Helicopters in. After we began to descend into the rice paddies, we started taking small arms fire and had to circle around and bombard the enemy A.O. once again, then we went in low and fast.



Top, looking strac.

Once on the ground we continued taking on small arms fire. We had to call for additional backup support. There were F-15's, A1E's and O1E's backing us up. A Company and B Company were on line in a frontal firing position, C Company had to go to recover the body of the FAC pilot shot down by our own artillery, and to retrieve maps and other important documents. The pilot had been flying a Bird Dog fixed wing in support of our mission.

Our company commander, Captain Cavezza, received wounds and had to be evacuated to the rear. Lieutenant Coleman and PSG Newman were both wounded and said they were going to remain with their troops, however, myself being the weapons platoon leader, I told them they needed to go get medical attention as they appeared to be bleeding to death and would no longer be of any help to their men. I told the Lieutenant that I'd watch over his platoon until I found one of his NCO's and put him in charge of his platoon, Once I did, I returned to the weapons platoon.



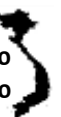
Capt. Carmen Cavezza, LTG (Ret), with Major Terry during aerial recon of Courtney rubber plantation.

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

2. Once back in the cantonment area I was relieved of duty and reassigned to HHC and reported to CSM Mish to work for him. The CSM asked me if I could take his NCO Mess Hall and turn it into a NCO Club. I ask him, "How long have you and I been working together?" He said, "Hell, I should have known better to even ask." He then said, "Reach in my igloo and get us out a couple beers."

3. I followed through just as CSM Mish wanted. He was very pleased, as were all the NCO's. Shortly after finishing the NCO Club, I asked the group of NCO's to give me their input for a name of the club. It was decided to name it after Sergeant Baker of B Company who had been KIA earlier. Everyone agreed with this name for the club too.

**Jim "Top" Dresser
A/HHC/2/503**



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

Corregidor Narrative



"As It Happened"

"E" Company, 2d Battalion Journal

[With commentary by Bill Calhoun]

Army Regulations required that each and every day, even during Combat operations, reports must issue from each infantry company, artillery battery and all other basic units, to higher headquarters. Though not always accurate, they were at least supposed to be contemporaneous.

The E Co Journal was written by E Co's XO, Lt. Don Abbott, and again rewritten by Abbott on orders of Lt. Hill. The difference, Abbott later commented, was to make any reference to Lt. Hill more satisfactory to Lt. Hill.

2d Bn "E" Company Journal 9 February 1945

S-E-C-R-E-T

JOURNAL OF 503D PARACHUTE R.C.T.

FROM: 9 Feb 45 E Company PLACE: APD 104
 TO : 7 Mar 45 APD 72

Msg. No.	TIME		INCIDENTS, MESSAGES, ORDERS	ACTION TAKEN
	IN	OUT DATE		
-	-	2/9/45	The RCT has been alerted for a mission in the near future.	-
-	-	-	-	-

15 February 1945



The Company has all been briefed for the mission. We have the honor of jumping and recapturing Corregidor.

General McArthur has sent his blessings and wishes us Gods speed.

16 February 1945

0930 The company entrucked for San Jose airstrip.

1120 The Battalion is enplaning.

1130 All planes are taking off. Only half are taking off from San Jose strip. The other half is taking off from Hill strip.

1230 The plane loads began jumping. We are making three passes because the field is very short and the wind velocity is high. This jump area is undoubtedly the roughest any parachute unit has ever jumped on. There is a cliff at one end, shell holes, rubble, half cut-off trees in between and at the other end is a three story barracks building. Another unusual factor is that our planes were fired upon by light Ack, Ack while they were making their passes. The men on the way down were under small arms fire from over the cliff and knee mortar fire was being lain on the jump field.



(L. to R.) 1st Sgt Albert Baldwin, S/Sgt Charles McCurry, Bill McDonald, Marion Boone, Paul Narrow, Ralph Iverson. They were the third stick in plane #22, "F" Company's first plane. Baldwin was to jumpmaster the third pass over Corregidor. The photo is one of a series taken on the ground at Hill Strip, Mindoro by Signal Corps photographer Yednick, who was the 8th man in the stick.

The platoons have organized and are now in their positions. The Company C.P. has been set up in the partially ruined barracks once occupied by the 59th C.A. The third platoon moved out with the mission of seizing the hospital. A patrol out of the first platoon went back to the drop area to bring in Rabinko and Pace who were pinned down by M.G. fire.

1415 The American flag was raised. Five men are MIA after the jump. One Off. and 21 Em were WIA or LIA.

(continued....)





LANDING ZONE B: Below us, as we banked for a turn, the complete panorama of the Island lay exposed. There, rose the perpendicular cliffs; there, the rough, shell-blasted Top-Side; there, the narrow waist of the beach; and there, the towering mass of Malinta Hill still smoking from the bombs so recently dropped upon it. There, the parade ground and the tiny golf course were littered with chutes, while still others in mid-air floated down on them. From our flight we could see no fire fights, no smoke of grenades or mortars, though it was too early to expect a heavy action. The crumbling wreckage of demolished buildings offered the most forbidding sight. They were crowded in a spectral palisade around our "drop zone"; and already some of them were festooned with chutes where some unfortunate jumpers had landed. Except for those patchworks of silk, the ravaged structures looked exactly as others had described them to us; like centuries-old ruins, steeped in history, and dreaming moodily of their Past. At the moment, however, we were their Past, which, if they survived for centuries yet to come, would continue to make them immemorial. Capt. Charles M. Bradford MD

17 February 1945

Our platoons are pulling light patrols. S/Sgt Ledoux, formerly MIA, was killed this morning by sniper fire while a patrol from 'F' Co. was attempting to get him to the aid station after being wounded on the jump. Four men are still missing in action: S/Sgt Gulsvick, Pfc's High, Musolino and Rovolis. Resupply has been coming in all day.

18 February 1945

0900 The first platoon with one squad from the third platoon, an Engr. demolition section and a section of LMG's moved out to capture the water point in James Ravine.

1100 Heavy resistance was met as they approached the main water point. Three of the first platoon were KIA (Segobia, Redding and Redfield) and three men WIA. This position required air and naval fire so we withdrew to high ground. RCT reports 930 nips KIA.



Dead enemy soldiers on Corregidor

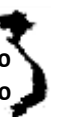
19 February 1945

0700 Two Nips KIA as they were approaching the mortar platoon position. Lt Whitson and six men were sent to the water point to investigate the damage done to the underground barracks in James Ravine. P-47's dive bombed the position with 500# bombs and they returned with Napalm bombs. The patrol reported heavy damage to the barracks either as a result of the bombing or demolition by the Nips. One prisoner was captured and brought in for questioning.

20 February 1945

Last night was very quiet, no enemy movement. 7 Nips KIA today. The water point was occupied by the 1st and 3rd platoons. The Engr. platoon has closed up 18 tunnels and cave entrances. The insignia taken from the Nip bodies show they are the elite of the Jap armed forces or Imperial Marines. They have all been well armed, well fed and they are excellent shots.

(continued....)



21 February 1945

0800 The Company, with LMG platoon and Engr. platoon attached, started on patrol along James Ravine to the beach and along the water to Cape Corregidor. Engr's. closed 2 caves and company killed 16 Nips. PFC. Culpepper WIA by grenade fragments. Before we moved along the beach a destroyer laid fire along the high ground overlooking the beach. On the way back from Cape Corregidor, along the road net, we found many vehicles disbursed by the Japs. There were vehicles of all description: trucks, sedans, motorcycles, the Jap version of the Jeep, etc. and all were very well camouflaged. Most were in good condition.



Posted sign reads *Do Not Enter*. "Our troops ignored it."

22 February 1945

Light patrol work between Morrison Point and Rock Point. Area is fairly clear, 6 Nips KIA. Lt Whitson and Pfc. Dvorsack LIA by a grenade concussion. The first platoon, which was very short of men has been split up between the second and third platoons.

23 February 1945

0800 The Company is leaving to take over "B" Co's area and patrol between Searchlight and Wheeler Points. When the company reached Searchlight Point the third platoon was sent down to the beach while the second platoon stayed on the road. While advancing on unnamed point the second platoon killed about three or four Nips hidden under some vehicles along the road. The third platoon began to advance to unnamed point and ran into a cave at water level. They killed 37 Japs and had no casualties. Pvt. Robinson was killed on the Point by a sniper. The second platoon advanced on Wheeler Point along the road to the tunnel entrance. While just a short distance from the entrance they came under fire. White phosphorus grenades were thrown into the entrance and a large number of Nips ran out so we could mow them down. Then snipers began to fire at us from small tunnels on the three different sides.

Our ammunition was running low so we had to withdraw. Pvt. Jandro and Second Lt. Ball were KIA. Pfc. Brown was seriously WIA. We estimate the Company killed between one hundred and a hundred and twenty Japs.



A PT Boat crew respond to several paratroopers who have made their way down towards Wheeler Point. Behind the troopers is Battery Monja, which will remain unconquered Japanese territory until January 1, 1946.

24 February 1945

The Company is remaining on the perimeter today to rest up and get all its ammunition resupplied.

25 February 1945

One patrol from the third platoon worked the area of James Ravine. No enemy activity. Several Nips have been spotted trying to escape to Bataan by swimming. PT boats and planes have been getting most of them.

26 February 1945

Three short patrols today. The second platoon returned to Unnamed Point to pick up the body of Pfc. Robinson. The third platoon patrolled the area in and around Morrison Point and captured one Nip.

Pfc. Brown died of wounds received in action on the 23rd.

27 February 1945

The third platoon patrolling Morrison Point found a small cave occupied by the Japs. 7 Japs KIA. The Engr. section was called to blow up the entrance. On approaching the entrance again, a sniper in the cave shot Pfc. Edwards through the shoulder. Pfc. Edwards died shortly after being brought to the hospital.

(continued....)



28 February 1945

The platoons made short local patrols.

1 March 1945

No patrol activity today.

2 March 1945

General McArthur, Admiral Nimitz and many high ranking staff officers came to inspect the island. The General seemed very well pleased with our actions. We furnished one squad for guard of honor.

3 March 1945

No patrolling.

4 March 1945

No patrolling.

5 March 1945

No patrolling today.

6 March 1945

A large Ammo dump approximately 100 yards from the Company C.P. caught fire. The C.P. was moved to a safe position. The dump exploded but caused no casualties.

7 March 1945

Presentation of awards took place. Lt. Hill was presented the Silver Star and Pvt. Jandro the Silver Star posthumously. Pfc. Cabbage and 1st Lt Corder were awarded the Bronze Star.

Preparations are being made to move back to Mindoro.



General MacArthur with troopers of the 503rd in attendance during re-raising of American flag on the Island of Corregidor.

[Reprinted courtesy of Paul Whitman and his 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion website, with photos & captions added from his site]

Honored Inductee



Medal of Honor recipient Army Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams, center, is inducted into the Hall of Heroes during a ceremony at the Pentagon, Oct. 31, 2019. Joining him on stage are, from left, Army Secretary Ryan D. McCarthy; Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper; Williams' wife; and Army Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (DoD)

MSGT Matthew O. Williams, a Green Beret, helped save four critically wounded comrades and prevented the lead element of a special operations force from being overrun in Afghanistan.

The Medal of Honor was presented to Master Sgt. Matthew O. Williams of Texas, who still serves in the Army.

The events leading to the honor occurred in April 2008 during a mountainside firefight that lasted several hours as Williams' team and about 100 Afghan commandos were attacked by insurgents waiting above them.

It's reported he "led the commandos across a fast-moving and icy river and engaged the enemy. When his team sergeant was wounded by a sniper, Williams exposed himself to enemy fire to come to his aid. He helped evacuate the sergeant and then climbed back up the mountain to evacuate others, again exposing himself to enemy fire as he helped carry and load others on to evacuation helicopters."

"The honor is an upgrade of the Silver Star that Williams initially received for his actions that day."

"De Oppresso Liber"

"To Free the Oppressed"



From the archives, 53 years ago this February....

Junction City

On the offensive in War Zone C



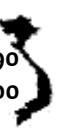
Between March and December 1966 the number of US military personnel committed to South Vietnam escalated from some 215,000 to 385,000, allowing for the first time in the war a major sustained offensive against the Viet

Cong strongholds north of Saigon in III Corps Tactical Zone. In May 1966 General William C. Westmoreland directed Lieutenant General Seaman, commanding II Field Force Vietnam, to initiate plans for an extensive operation in War Zone C where the 9th Viet Cong Division was active. From the onset the planners realised the crucial role that intelligence would play and in November 'pattern-activity analysis' of the area began. This involved the minute plotting on maps of information gathered from a wide range of sources including aerial reconnaissance, ground patrol reports, details of arms and supply caches uncovered and captured documents. As the data poured in a general picture of Viet Cong locations and movements emerged, providing the basis for both overall and day-to-day operational planning.

Operation Junction City had been planned to begin on 8 January 1967 but it was decided to hold back the operation until the imminent commitment of the 9th Infantry Division to South Vietnam had been effected. Also, the results of pattern-activity analysis in War Zone C suggested the need for a preliminary operation against the Iron Triangle and the Thanh Dinh Forest area immediately in the south. General Westmoreland thus postponed Junction City until late February and scheduled the Iron Triangle operation, Cedar Falls, for 8 January. Operation Cedar Falls was the first multi-divisional operation of the war and some 15,000 US and South Vietnamese troops were involved. Despite the capture of substantial quantities of weapons and food supplies and the killing of 750 Viet Cong during the extensive search and destroy operations, the Viet Cong were again active in the Iron Triangle within a week of the operation's completion at the end of January. Junction City, however, was to be a far more ambitious operation, involving more than 25,000 US and South Vietnamese troops over a much larger area and time-scale.

(continued....)

With parachutes blossoming as far as the eye can see, 845 members of the 173rd Airborne Division (sic) drop into War Zone C, making the largest US combat jump since the Korean War and opening the airborne offensive of Operation Junction City.





Above: Trussed and bound, Viet Cong prisoners await interrogation after Operation Junction City. Despite the magnitude of the operation, which involved some 25,000 US and South Vietnamese troops, only 34 communists prisoners were captured.

One of the problems facing the planners of such an operation was keeping the main objective a secret during the positioning of forces and the massive logistic build-up. To this end, two smaller and seemingly unrelated operations, code-named Gadsden and Tucson, were devised to look like routine search and destroy missions, so as not to arouse enemy suspicions and trigger off large-scale Viet Cong force redeployments. Operation Gadsden involved the US 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in the area around Lo Go and Xom Giua, close to the Cambodian border. Intelligence reports suggested that Lo Go was a major supply distribution center for Viet Cong units operating out of Cambodia and that the

men would reveal large supply and ammunition caches, base camps and hospital and training facilities. The 19-day operation, launched on 3 February, went as planned, involving a combination of airmobile and mechanised battalion attacks against the Viet Cong who consistently employed small-unit guerrilla tactics. By 21 February the two brigades had counted 161 Viet Cong dead and captured large quantities of supplies and war material, but more importantly, they had taken up blocking positions in the area along Route 22 to the extreme west of War Zone C. Similarly, Operation Tucson, launched on 14 February, allowed the 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 1st Infantry Division (The Big Red One) to position their forces in the eastern sector of the Zone under the disguise of search and destroy missions against the Viet Cong storage areas and base camps 16km (10 miles) to the south of Minh Thanh. On 18 February search and destroy activity ceased, and the two brigades prepared for the opening phase of Junction City proper.

Phase One focused on the area between Route 4 which ran north from Tay Ninh, and the Cambodian border which bounded the area 16km (10 miles) to the west and in the north. At 0813 hours on 22 February the 1st Brigade, 1st Division began with a three-battalion assault along Route 246, initiating what was to be a nine-battalion airmobile attack to cordon off the whole northern side of the area. At 0900 hours, 845 paras of the 173rd Airborne made the largest US combat jump since the Korean War 3km (two miles) north of Katum, while a further three battalions of the 25th Infantry and two battalions of the 173rd Airborne landed in the northwest and northeast of the area respectively. Meanwhile, since 0630 hours, ground units of the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division had been pushing north up Route 4, eventually linking up with the 173rd Airborne at 1500 hours just south of Katum. With the forces deployed during Operation Gadsden blocking the west, the 1st Brigade, 1st Division in the north, and the 173rd Airborne and 3rd Brigade on Route 4 in the east, 18 battalions and 13 mutually supporting firebases were poised in a horseshoe formation around the area.



(continued....)





Above: A US Infantry unit, including sniffer dogs, moves in tactical 'file' formation along a recently cut trail as they pursue enemy units during Operation Junction City.

The next few days of Phase One called for the combined 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment to drive north into the open end of the horseshoe, trapping Viet Cong forces inside, while searching out the Central Office of South Vietnam (COSVN) headquarters. Around the horseshoe the various forces improved their defensive positions and conducted search and destroy operations, during which a unit of the 1st Brigade, 1st Division uncovered a series of camps belonging to the military affairs section of the COSVN. Generally, contact with the Viet Cong was limited to small unit (under 10 men) firefights until the morning of 28 February when Company B, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry left their night defensive position on Route 4 to carry out a search and destroy sweep eastwards. At 1030 hours, lead elements of the unit, which were slowly making their way through thick jungle in two columns, ran into a large Viet Cong force on its way to ambush US convoys on Route 4. An intense battle ensued with the Viet Cong firing from well-camouflaged positions on the ground and in the trees. The air force was called in, dropping cluster bombs at treetop level, while supporting artillery pounded the immediate area. Although at one point the company was almost completely surrounded, the Americans' superior firepower wore down the Viet Cong until they retreated in mid-afternoon.

End of Phase One:

A further large battle was fought at Prek Klok by the 2nd Battalion (Mechanised), 2nd Infantry at a fire support base (FSB) where engineers were building a Special Forces Camp and an airstrip. The Viet Cong attacked the battalion's position at night with heavy mortars, recoilless rifles and RPG-2 anti-tank weapons.

After an opening half-hour barrage, two battalions of the 272nd Regiment, 9th Viet Cong Division launched a ground assault against the base which by now had called for a massive sweeping artillery attack from three nearby FSBs, the services of a C-47 minigun-armed gunship, and some 100 airstrikes with bombs, rockets and 20mm cannon fire. After an hour of heavy fighting the Viet Cong assault began to falter and by morning they had lost some 160 men. Phase One of the operation continued until 17 March, by which time a COSVN psychological propaganda office and large quantities of supplies had been uncovered during the numerous search and destroy operations carried out in the area.

Although Phase Two was not due to begin until 18 March, numerous redeployments had been effected earlier in the month in the eastern sector of the Zone. A bridge had been built over the Saigon River at its junction with Route 246, and the 1st Brigade, 1st Division had opened and improved the road between Lai Khe and An Loc. During Phase Two, which lasted 29 days, intensive search and destroy operations were mounted in the area north of Minh Thanh between Routes 13 and 4. Most of the action was confined to platoon-size engagements with the exception of three major battles fought on 19 and 21 March and 1 April.

On 19 March a troop of the 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry Regiment, deployed at an FSB just outside Ap Bau Bang, came under attack from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 273rd Regiment, 9th Viet Cong Division.

(continued....)



As at Prek Klok the combination of cluster munitions, canister rounds and napalm decimated the Viet Cong. Further north on 21 March, at Suoi Tre, two battalions which had air-landed to establish an FSB came under a massive assault from the 272nd Regiment, 9th Viet Cong Division. Heavy fighting broke out, with the Viet Cong getting within hand-grenade range of a battalion command post. Two and a half hours after the battle had begun, relief armoured units arrived and the Viet Cong withdrew leaving over 610 dead.

The final major battle of Phase Two was fought at Ap Gu, north of Route 246, on 1 April. Again, the Viet Cong attacked in force following a heavy softening-up bombardment with mortars and the fighting was ferocious to the point of hand-to-hand combat. Cluster bombs were dropped with 30m (33 yards) of the Americans' own positions and the surrounding woods were strafed with minigun and rocket fire from helicopter gunships. Two B-52 bomber strikes were made on enemy withdrawal routes as the Viet Cong broke contact and withdrew with heavy casualties.

Towards the end of Phase Two, contact with the Viet Cong had become steadily sparser but in view of success in some areas of the operation a third phase was initiated by the 3rd Brigade, 4th Division in the lower western sector of the Zone around Tay Ninh. On 21 April, five days after the start of Phase Three, 1st Brigade, 9th Division with a company of tanks and the South Vietnamese 36th Ranger Battalion assumed the 3rd Brigade's mission and continued operations. Viet Cong units were now almost impossible to locate and three weeks later, on 14 May, Operation Junction City was wound up.

Since 22 February over 2700 Viet Cong had been killed, but although some one and a half million pages of documents were captured, the operation had been far from a complete success. The COSVN had been subjected to severe disruption, its forces being made to withdraw into Cambodia, but, as in the case of Cedar Falls, the US and South Vietnamese forces did not have the strength to maintain their hold on the area as the units involved were required for redeployment elsewhere. General Westmoreland had hoped to retain a brigade for further operations in the western sector of War Zone C but it was soon needed in the north of the country, and as the units withdrew, reconnaissance revealed that the Viet Cong were again moving into the areas so recently swept.

Jonathan Reed

Source:

Texas Tech University – The Vietnam Center & Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive website

PAVN victory monument at the Bien Hoa Air Base



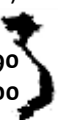
A monument on Highway 1 adjacent to the main gate for Bien Hoa Air Base commemorates the People's Army of Vietnam seizing of the Air Base on 25 April 1975.

Red Carpet Walk



Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper walks with Vietnamese Defense Minister Gen. Ngo Xuan Lich before a meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam, Nov. 20, 2019.

(DoD photo)



Command Sergeant Major Michael Joseph Deeb (Ret.) 2/503 RVN, Passes

MAY 5, 1932 – DECEMBER 7, 2019



Command Sergeant Major Michael Joseph Deeb, 87, passed away on 7 December 2019. Mike was born in Whitehall New York to the late John Anthony and Alice Lucas Deeb. His family moved to Macon, GA in 1940.

Command Sergeant Major Michael Joseph Deeb served 27 years with the U.S. Army. He was a Master Parachutist with the 82nd Airborne and the 173d Airborne. He proudly served 3 tours in the Vietnam War.

While serving with the 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment, he was a survivor of the Battle of the Slopes, Hill 875 and Hill 1338. CSM Deeb was awarded the Silver Star, Bronze Star (5 Awards including 3 with Valor device), Purple Heart, Air Medal (with 6 Oak Leaf clusters), Master Parachutist Badge, Combat Infantryman Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Army Commendation Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster), Army of Occupation Medal, 5 Overseas Service Bars, Armed Forces Expeditionary

Medal (Dominican Republic) Good Conduct Medal (8th Award), Legion of Merit, 8 Service Stripes, Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster) Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/Silver Star and Palm, Vietnam Service Medal w/1 Silver Star. Citations include the Army Meritorious Unit Citation, the Presidential Unit Citation and the VN Civil Action Citation.

He is survived by his wife, Pat Harper Deeb of Macon, children; Belinda Cartagena of Augusta, Mary Alice Donaldson (Don) of Macon, Michael J. Deeb, Jr. of Macon, Anna Rose Struewind of Schnondorf, Germany; and an extended family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis TN 38105, or Boys Town, P.O. Box 6000, Boys Town, NE 68010.

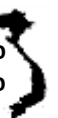
Please visit www.maconmp.com to express condolences.



Mike



Rest Easy Command Sergeant Major





REUNIONS OF THE AIRBORNE KIND



~ 2020 ~



101st Airborne Division, 2020 Snowbird Reunion, Tampa, FL, February 5-8, 2020. **Web:** <https://screamingeagle.org/snowbird-in-tampa-2020/>



82nd Airborne Division, 8th Annual Kentucky Airborne Reunion, Lexington, KY, February 27-29, 2020. **Web:** www.82ndairborneassociation.org/events.html



506th Airborne, 2020 Currahee Reunion, Fort Campbell, KY, May 20-23, 2020. **Web:** <http://506infantry.org/event/currahee-reunion/>



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

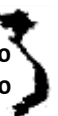
June 6 - Saturday

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

See Reunion Registration Form on Following Page.

Airborne....All The Way!

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.





SKY SOLDIERS DESCEND ON DAYTON, OHIO

Land of the Wright Brothers - Hosted by Chapter 17

June 3 to June 7, 2020



Name: _____ Phone (_____) _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Unit Served: _____ Dates Served: _____

Guest Name 1: _____ Male/Female _____

Guest Name 2: _____ Male/Female _____

Guest Name 3: _____ Male/Female _____

Registration Fees

_____ \$173.00 Association members (includes hospitality room, banquet meal, gift bag)

_____ \$173.00 per guest members (include banquet meal, hospitality room)

_____ \$55 per Gold Star Family applicant

_____ \$100 per Active Duty Member not on orders

_____ FREE, Active Duty Member on orders

Optional Activity Fees

_____ \$25.00 Bus Tour – Wright Patterson Air Force Museum

_____ \$25.00 Bus Tour – Carillon Historic Park (Lunch on own-Culps Café/Carillon Brewing Co)

_____ \$40.00 Bus Tour – National Veterans Museum in Columbus OH

_____ \$30.00 Golf Outing (includes: Cart rental, transportation and lunch)

_____ \$25.00 BBQ – Levite Pavilion Concert grounds (next to main hotel)

_____ \$20.00 Herd Challenge Coin

_____ \$50.00 non-registered banquet only ticket

_____ \$10.00/daily Hospitality Room nonregistered

_____ \$10.00/each Raffle Ticket – Win \$1000

_____ Donations – Always appreciated

Must Register to attend the following:

_____ FREE Gold Star Luncheon

_____ \$15.00 Ladies Luncheon

Vendor Fees

_____ \$125.00 Association member vendor registration (One table, two chairs.)

_____ \$150.00 Nonassociation Member vendor registration (One table, two chairs.)

Vendor Extras:

_____ \$100.00 per additional table

_____ \$50.00 Electricity at vendor table



To register and pay on line, visit www.173dreunion2020.com

Make checks payable to 173d Airborne Brigade Association

SUBTOTAL DUE: \$ _____

Mail to: Chapter 17 P.O. Box 24852 Columbus, OH 43224-4521

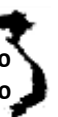
Hotel reservation: Crowne Plaza 33 East 5th Street Dayton, OH (1-937-224-0800)

Reserve hotel room early to acquire handicap room as hotel is limited in these rooms.

For additional information contact Bill Terry at 614-476-3060 E: weterry2@gmail.com

One must be registered to take part in all listed activities.

Registration does not include any mini reunions (such as 2d Battalion etc.)



Stories of Honor: Vietnam service in US Army just beginning of Doyle Wheeler's tale

From the Stories of Honor: *Honoring Helena – area veterans across generations series*

Curt Synness, IR feature writer
July 15, 2019

Like the Elton John song — after a lifetime strewn with combat wounds, police department injuries, serious PTSD and the leveling of his home by a hurricane — Doyle Wheeler is “still standing.”

Wheeler came to Helena from Washington state in 1964. He attended Helena Junior High and Helena High, returning to Spokane, Washington, his sophomore year, to Mead High School.



Doyle Wheeler

Wheeler enlisted in the Army in November 1969, completed basic training at Fort Lewis (Washington), followed by AIT and Jump School at Fort Benning (Georgia).

In April 1970, he deployed to central Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, assigned to an artillery unit of 105mm howitzers. After four months of countering ambushes around the firebase, he was promoted to sergeant, and took over the recon team and a gun crew. In September 1970, the IR reported that Wheeler had received the “Army Commendation Medal (with V Device for Valor) and Second Oak Leaf Cluster” for heroism.

“Wheeler was serving as a gunner with the Third Battalion, 319th Field Artillery, 173rd Airborne Brigade, when he was wounded in a heavy barrage of enemy fire,” according to the IR account. “Despite his wounds, Wheeler was credited with skillfully manning his firing position and delivering effective counter-fire, which silenced the enemy positions. (He) has also earned three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry.”

Wheeler, 68, said that his proudest achievement in Vietnam took place when he “blocked some guys from fragging” their two African American officers.

“They were going to blow up the officers up in the bunker, but they backed down when I told them they’d have to kill me too,” he related. “I didn’t much care for either one of them, but I couldn’t stand by and let them be murdered.”

He described meeting two other Helenans while serving in Vietnam; Bob Abel, a competitor during his selection as Sky Soldier of the Month (Sept. 1970), and Greg Peterson, bus driver at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Wheeler completed his tour in May 1971, and then joined the Astoria (Oregon) Police Department, before transferring to San Diego. His stints with the San Diego PD included working patrol, narcotics, burglary and SWAT. He was a SWAT sergeant with the Beach Enforcement Team, a detective sergeant in narcotics, and a lieutenant as citywide Watch Commander.

“Over the course of my career ... I was shot, stabbed, and run over, plus two serious back injuries and blew out a knee,” he listed off. “After counting all the young people’s bodies inside McDonald’s that James Huberty used for target practice, I developed severe and chronic PTSD. My career ended, I was put out to pasture at 32 years old.”

Huberty killed 21 people and wounded 19 more in a mass shooting at a San Diego-area McDonald’s on July 18, 1984, before being fatally shot by police.

Next for Wheeler came an incident in Washington state that vaulted him into the national spotlight — unwanted on his part — but that’s another story.

Then, he conducted SWAT demonstration for police and sheriff departments around the Northwest, including a course at Fort Harrison “about” 12 years ago. But he then moved to southeast Texas due to severe arthritis. *“We lost everything to Hurricane Harvey, my wife and I are slowly trying to rebuild our home,”* Wheeler wrote. *“We’re also working hard now to build up a new business.”*

[Web source: the *Independent Record*]



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE (SEPARATE)
APO U.S. Forces 96250

RAIBN

14 July 1965

COMMANDER'S COMBAT NOTE
NUMBER 67

DUTY IN VIETNAM

Last week the members of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate), conducted the most complex yet successful operation since arriving in Vietnam on 5 May 1965.

Once again the operational area was War Zone "D". The target was just south of the combined operation of 30 June – 3 July and north of the area cleared by the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry on 24 June.



On left is LTC George Dexter, Bn Cmdr of the 2/503 with Col. Bob Duddy in July '65 in War Zone "D".

(Photo from George Dexter collection)

The plan was to place the Vietnamese 48th Regiment in blocking positions on the west flank and to airlift three Infantry Battalions into selected LZ's and sweep south trapping the enemy against the Dong Nai River.

On D-Day, 6 July, the 3d Battalion (Airborne) 319th Artillery bolstered with Company D, 16th Armor and the Engineer Company began moving at 0600 hours to firing positions just south of the river from which they supported the entire operation.

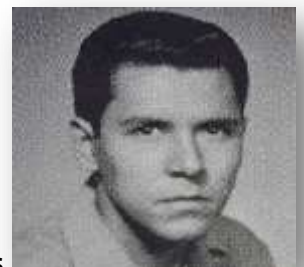
The initial assaults were conducted by all three of the Brigade's Infantry Battalions. The 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry and E Troop, 17th Cavalry landed at 0945 hours and quickly moved out to secure the D-Day objectives.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment came in at 1110 hours and 1245 hours respectively. Only sporadic, light contact was made by the Infantry troops while conducting their D-Day search and destroy operation. Several villages, huts and caches were discovered and destroyed by each unit. The majority of Viet Cong opposition in the morning was against the slicks and armed Hueys.



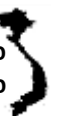
A/2/503 CO, Cpt. Carmen Cavezza, with his No DEROS Alpha troopers loaded in trucks at Camp Zinn off on a mission in July '65. (George Dexter photo)

D+1, 7 July, found the Infantry units moving in their area of operations. Bad weather prevented pre-planned air strikes on that morning. At 0830 hours the 2d/503d Infantry discovered a large cache of food, supplies and equipment. At 0955 hours Company B, 2d/503d Infantry made first solid contact of the operation....



Rudy Hernandez
KIA 7/7/65

(continued...)



...when they hit an estimated Viet Cong company supported by .30 caliber LMG's and one .50 caliber MG. The Viet Cong were in well-fortified positions and after an hour long fight, the Bulls drove them out of their position and off of the objective. Platoon Sergeant Davis of Bravo Company along with Staff Sergeant Schimps (sic, Schimpf) and Captain Warfield the Battalion S2 were noticeable for their outstanding performances in routing the Viet Cong. At about the same time Troop E, 17th Cavalry discovered a cache containing 17 weapons, 4 radios, and various other items.



John Shaw
KIA 7/7/65



Ron Zinn
KIA 7/7/65

The RAR on the west flank discovered a village of 4 huts and destroyed twelve 55 gallon drums of POL.

In the center Company B, 1st/503d Infantry entered the fringes of a Viet Cong village deep in the jungle and carried on a sporadic fire fight throughout the night with the Viet Cong. Early the next morning the 1st Battalion entered the village in strength, driving the Viet Cong out, and discovered a huge base complex capable of housing from 800-1200 men complete with mess halls, classrooms, latrines, and an extensive tunneling system. Over 150 booby traps had been set in the area. Company A of the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry discovered several villages during the day and destroyed large quantities of rice, many buildings and even some water buffalos and other domestic animals.

Back on the eastern end of the operational area Charlie Company, 2/503d encountered and overran an estimated Viet Cong company dressed in khaki uniforms with blue scarves around their necks. Later in the afternoon Company A hit two Viet Cong companies supported by .50 caliber and .30 caliber machine guns. These companies hit Alfa with an "L" shaped ambush but the quick reactions of Captain Stang and Lieutenant Lancaster's and Lieutenant Bouldin's platoons shoved the enemy out of position. There were an estimated 50 Viet Cong killed. Four POW's were taken.

The 1/RAR during the afternoon encountered numerous VC villages complete with tunnels. They killed three Viet Cong.

Illumination was kept over the area all night and all units encountered from light to heavy sniping throughout the hours of darkness. It was noted that the enemy was trying to escape by moving east and then north. It was also feared that he may seek a safe haven in the heavily populated areas at the river banks.



2/503 Battalion S-2, Bob Warfield



David Howard
KIA 7/7/65



Allen Johnson
KIA 7/7/65



MacArthur Johnson
KIA 7/7/65



Ray Meehan
KIA 7/7/65



Durward Ray
KIA 7/7/65



Johnie Rice
KIA 7/7/65

(continued...)





2/503 Battalion Command Group RTO Donald Hudson and SGM Mish in July '65 in the "D" Zone.
(George Dexter photo)



2/503 troopers emerge from jungle in July '65.
(George Dexter photo)

Early on D+2 the 3d Battalion of the 43d ARVN Regiment was airlifted into a blocking position east of the operational area along the Dong Nai River. At 0920 hours the ARVN spotted a Viet Cong company escaping to the northeast and called in our 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery and the armed Hueys. Their accurate fire obviously killed many Viet Cong.

Again at 1030 hours the 3/319th Artillery engaged another fleeing Viet Cong company and completely tore it up.



Edward Almeida
KIA 7/8/65

South Vietnam, July, 1965: A fire mission caught Sgt. Homer Charnock of Bravo Battery, 319th Artillery, in the middle of shaving, so he dropped his razor and rushed into position to man his gunsight.

(Bernard Carmichael/web photo & caption)



The three Infantry Battalions moved south and encountered some opposition. Company C, 2d/503d Infantry hit a Viet Cong stronghold at 1440 hours and killed eight Viet Cong and drove the remainder out. Once again heavy artillery fire was called down on a moving Viet Cong company size unit. Later in the afternoon the 2d/503d Infantry took eight Viet Cong prisoners. All battalions discovered small villages and varying types of caches.

On D+3, 9 July, all units began moving to the extraction LZ's. The 1st/503d moved to secure its LZ. While enroute Company B observed eight Viet Cong in the open and engaged them with 81mm mortar fire, all eight were believed to be killed.

Arriving there ahead of the 1/RAR that was to pass through the 1st Battalion and be extracted first, the 1st Battalion established security and began to search the area. Platoon Sergeant Akuna and his platoon from Company A made several encounters with the Viet Cong that morning and on each encounter gained positive results. His final total for the morning was one rice cache destroyed, six Viet Cong POW's, and one Viet Cong killed in action.

The extraction began at 1330 hours and was completed by 1640 hours. During this period four battalions (over 2800 men) were lifted out with 708 sorties using 50 slicks, a high compliment to not only our troops but also to the 145th Aviation Battalion that provided outstanding support throughout the operation.

The 3/319th Artillery provided excellent fire and support throughout the operation firing over 5000 rounds. The Brigade Fire Support Coordination Center was able to control fires to such a degree that at one time an Air Force strike, and armed Huey strike, and an artillery fire mission were supporting our troopers all at one time. On the extraction the artillery placed their tubes on high angle and fired suppressive fires beyond the LZ by firing over the heads of the incoming helicopters.

(continued...)



The Support Battalion in operating the Logistical Operations Center and the medical establishment was a real mainstay in keeping the Brigade in operation. Our doctors and medics worked 24 hours a day and were instrumental in saving several lives.

The toll we extracted from the enemy on this operation was fantastic. We killed fifty-six Viet Cong by body count and at least 150 more by estimation. Twenty-eight POW's were taken. Probably over 200 more were wounded. We destroyed well over 300 buildings, 100 tons of rice, numerous domestic animals, and recovered literally a ton of documents plus thirty weapons and four radios. In short we seriously tore up one of the Viet Cong's best battalion size organizations and seriously damaged a major staging area. Intelligence indicates that there was another battalion in the area that probably accounts for seeing so many companies in motion. It is quite possible that we did more damage than we estimate.

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Reconnaissance by fire cannot be overstressed. When entering a dangerous or suspicious area sweep by fire before exposing yourself and your men.
2. We must not mistreat the prisoners of war that we take in battle. Don't by any means unduly endanger yourself, however, we must remember that harsh and cruel treatment is inappropriate.
3. When deep in the jungle the local stream water treated with halazone tablets makes a satisfactory water source.
4. If at all possible units should stop before dark to set up for the night. It is almost impossible to properly implac (sic) units and tie in for the night in the darkness of the thick jungle.
5. Our radio operators must be the best men available. Too much garbled and senseless traffic passed over radio nets slows command and support efforts.
6. We must avoid movement on trails in the jungle. To date all ambushes that we have encountered have been sited on roads, trails or stream beds.
7. In mating the PRC/10's with the PRC/25's it is necessary to tune the 10's to the respective 25's on each net prior to departing the area. Don't set the frequency on the 10 and assume it will mate with the PRC/25 but rather check it out by the use of a long and short count.

I am proud of all of us. Keep up the good work.

AIRBORNE, "ALL-THE-WAY"

Ellis Williamson

ELLIS W. WILLIAMSON
Brig Gen. U.S. Army
Commanding



Note: Thanks to RTO Larry Paladino, B/2/503, for providing this historical record. All photos were added.

335th AHC Perspective

From 6 to 9 July, the Brigade again attacked into "D" Zone. With the fire support base (3/319th, D/16th, and 173d Eng Co.) south of the Dong Nai River, the 1/503d, 2/503d with E/17th attached and 1/RAR, conducted successive heliborne assaults north of the Dong Nai River just south of the combined operation of 27-30 June. They swept south to trap the enemy against the river. On the west flank, the ARVN 48th Regiment blocked enemy escape routes and coordinated their movements with the Brigade. The ARVN 3d Battalion, 43d Regiment was attached to the Brigade on the second day of the operation and blocked VC escape routes to the east along the Dong Nai River. This was the first time that an ARVN combat unit had been attached and under the direct command of the U.S. commander. This thrust into War Zone "D" was the most complex yet most successful operation to date and resulted in over 400 VC casualties (later intelligence indicated, in fact, over 600 casualties), 28 VC captives, the destruction of over 300 VC buildings, 100 tons of rice and many domestic animals, and the recovery of a ton of documents, thirty weapons and four radios.

In the first major engagement with the VC, the men of the Brigade had the satisfaction that they emerged eminently victorious. The hard-core VC battalion they encountered had been decimated. The enemy had proved no match for the tough, hard driving "Sky Soldiers" in spite of their well-prepared entrenchments and booby trapped facilities.

Source:

335TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY, UNIT HISTORY
(See Page 58)



A Deadly Skirmish In The "D" Zone Jungle

By Stephen "Bazooka" Bisaha, A/2/503



"Bazooka"

When we walked into their base camp (7 July 65) they had just run away -- they were getting ready to eat when we stumbled upon them. Capt Stang, CO A/2/503, said, "We eat lunch here!"



Capt. Art Stang, CO A/2/503

Fisk and I were put on flank OP, (1st squad, 1st platoon) and a patrol was sent out. We had to go around a bamboo patch to get a good position. Just as we got there all hell broke loose from behind us.

We ran back towards the base camp, bullets were flying everywhere, but everyone was gone. Whoever was our squad leader, can't remember his name, forgot about us and left us there.

Fisk and I ran through the jungle towards the sound of guys yelling "AIRBORNE" and the roar of gunfire. Then came the screams of wounded mixed in. As we moved forward we came upon 3 gooks laying down and firing; I cut loose with my 12 gauge, they turned and ran. At the same time I heard Fisk scream and saw his M16 fly past me. He was hit in the right shoulder and arm. He went down in the clearing we had stumbled into.



Fisk



Sky Soldiers of A/2/503 on the move

Rounds were coming at us from everywhere. There was a large tree to our front. I grabbed his web gear and dragged him behind it, yelling "medic!" as we made our way to that somewhat concealed position. I used my and his first aid bandages to try and stop the bleeding. Fisk kept screaming as he was turning white (now I know he was going into shock and loss of blood).

(continued....)



Don't know how long it was but a guy named John Svetlick crawled towards us from our right rear, was hit in the ass and leg, no helmet, no weapon. At the same time we were getting an intense volume of fire directed at that damn tree. I tried suppressive fire with the shotgun to no avail – got tree bark stuck in my face while firing from close range. It seemed like forever



John Svetlick

before Doc Meehan showed up behind the tree -- Svetlick yelled at him to go around, but he didn't (seems Fisk and I had ran straight and ended up behind the gooks and in the left front of the company).

As Meehan, ran across he was hit and dropped to his knees. I saw the color drain out of his face like a cork was pulled from the bottom of his body. He didn't make a sound, then just fell forward and then moaned. I jumped up and ran towards him, grabbed his web gear and dragged him to the tree. There was a trail of his blood all the way to that tree. The fire at us was bouncing all around us while I did this. Svetlick and I tried to bandage his inner thigh, that's where all the blood was squirting out. All this time they were chewing away at our tree. The shotgun wasn't doing anything, and the only weapon left was Meehan's M16 laying out there in the clearing were I dragged him from.

Fisk was silent by now and Meehan was moaning. Svetlick was stuffing bandages into his thigh wound trying to stop the bleeding and I jumped up to go get the 16. (In school we ran a drill where you sprint to grab a block, then sprint back, and it was timed) -- that was my plan. I was always fast, I just turned 18 on 21 June, the month before, and I was pretty upset with whoever was shooting at us.

I took off, can't remember how far it was, but I was on it in a flash (so I thought), and as I swooped down to get the weapon my right foot went out from underneath me and I fell on my face (didn't know till later I got the heel shot off my boot). As I hit the ground bullets started bouncing all around me. My head snapped back and I felt this searing burn on my upper back and neck. As I looked down my shirt turned a dark brown color across my chest from the blood pouring out of my neck and back. I looked at Svetlick and yelled, "I'm hit!" I can still see his eyes at night, they looked like large boiled eggs -- it dawned on me I didn't look so well.

The gook kept firing at me as I swung the 16 towards that area and cut loose with the whole mag in rage. The firing stopped for a minute or two but began again, hitting all around me. Svetlick yelled "play dead", and I did. Dirt was being showered all about my head and upper body being I had turned to face them. Don't know how long it was till the company came up on line to where we were. Lots of firing, explosions and those great-to-hear AIRBORNE curse words! Next thing I know Carlisle, our company medic, was working on me. Apparently I had blacked out -- don't know what they were doing with the other guys.



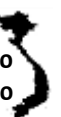
Doc Ray "Sweet Ray" Carlisle

I lost a lot of blood but I told him I could walk. I had a swarm of mosquitoes all about my face and neck. I demanded my shotgun back and grabbed my helmet, well, what was left of it. The first round went straight through the top missing my head and blowing the back of it into my upper back and shoulders. Another had cut open my neck but was a side-glancing hit.

As we walked back towards an LZ we passed an ARVN hiding behind his scout dog and I started cursing him out but someone pulled me away. When I got to the LZ Capt Stang was cursing into his mike. It seemed like a dry rice paddy area, with dikes. Men were shooting at something out in the clearing and seems the choppers wouldn't come in till the threat was canceled.

Stang's RTO was ducking while walking behind him as the Captain stormed back and forth upright, raging into that mike. I traded the shotgun for his M16 and joined the guys on the dike pouring fire out. All of a sudden this huge hand grabs me and pulls me off the dike yelling "You've done your part troop", and pushes me down, takes the weapon away and gives it back to the RTO. Then he chews out the RTO for giving up his weapon!

(continued....)



Finally a chopper landed, that's when I saw Fisk and Meehan being loaded on. Fisk climbed on, Meehan was on a stretcher, sat up to wave. Never saw them again. Didn't see Svetlick either, ever. Didn't know who made it or who died till the end of the war.

At the 30th reunion, in Rochester, Mn, I saw Fisk again for the first time since that unbelievable day. I thought at least he would have lost that arm but it got saved at Walter Reed. I cried when I saw him walk into to that room that day. (I don't cry easily).

Now I know for sure that Meehan was attached to our company that day; many nights I see his face as he dropped to his knees as the color ran from his face and he flopped over. Things get messed up over the years and it's not really anybody's fault, but I will never forget what happened in my little part of that battle.



Ray "Doc" Meehan, A/2/503*, KIA 7/7/65

I spent 2 months in hospitals, field, then Saigon, sent to the Philippines for surgery, and ended up in Okinawa for wire stitches with buttons to close up my back and shoulders. I was haunted by that scene during that recovery period.

When I was healed up and had a choice of staying on Okinawa or going back, I told that 1st Sgt they needed me back and I wasn't going to quit on my buddies. He shook his head in disgust.....(what did he know, he was a damn leg). I finally got back to the company after they had returned from Pekoe a little disappointed -- except for a few who thought I was an FNG! (hahaha).....

AATW
BAZOOKA, out

* The Brigade list of KIA states Ray "Doc" Meehan was attached to B/2/503, however, multiple reports seem to confirm he was assigned to A/2/503 on July 7, 1965. Ed

A Few Additional 2/503 Photos From Stephen "Bazooka" Bisaha



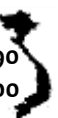
L-R: Bazooka & LT Lancaster at Camp Zinn



John Mudrick at the wheel
(See tribute to John on Page 82)



1st Platoon, *Hurry Up And Wait*



Alpha's First Major Battle



Bob Millner....strac Sky Soldier

On July 7, 1965, A Company was involved in the Brigade's first company size firefight where the VC stood their ground. Previously, they would break contact soon after being engaged.

On this day we were up against two companies of hard core VC equipped with heavy machine guns. The company was moving to an LZ in order to evacuate a soldier who had been burned by a white phosphorus grenade. The action started when 1st Platoon's point man detected and killed an enemy soldier. 2nd Platoon immediately came under heavy fire and was pinned down about 30 meters from well-camouflaged enemy positions. With the 2nd Platoon providing a base of fire, the 1st Platoon assaulted from the left flank after a helicopter gun ship strike. After moving forward about 20 meters, 1st Platoon received heavy machine gun and small arms fire from its front and left flank and was immediately pinned down.

Our squad leader, Sgt. Parker, who was lying next to me, threw a fragmentation grenade but it hit some jungle foliage and bounced back toward us. We buried our heads and waited for the explosion. No one was hurt. Fortunately, it wasn't a white phosphorus grenade otherwise we would have been burned. Others shouted not to throw any grenades, as the jungle was too thick.

The 3rd Platoon attacked the enemy's left flank causing them to withdraw leaving only blood trails behind. With the pressure off 1st Platoon's left flank, the platoon then moved forward and attacked a VC village. After about 30 minutes of fighting, the VC began a disorganized retreat under a hail of fire.

The armed helicopters hovering overhead detected their movements and subsequent strikes on the retreating enemy resulted in an estimated kill of 20 VC. The VC losses were an additional eight killed and an estimated 50 wounded based on remnants of enemy bodies and blood trails.

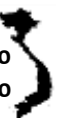


Bob in the boonies

The company had 1 man killed and 11 wounded, most were in my platoon. It was our platoon medic Ray Meehan who was killed. A grenade exploded under him as he went to help another wounded soldier. His agonizing screams could be heard over the roar of our weapons firing. It was a sound I knew even then that would be burned into my brain forever.

One of my friends, Steve Bisaha, was wounded during this action. He wasn't even 18 years old yet and this was just the first of several wounds he would eventually receive.

Bob Millner, A/2/503



That Visit Still Haunts Him

My July 7 recollection is one of my most depressing. It happened to be one of the operations in which I stayed back and my assistant clerk, Richard Childress, went out.

At some point an officer came into the orderly room tent at Camp Zinn and told me to get in a Jeep and go to the morgue at Tan Son Nhut Airbase to identify some bodies. They knew I could recognize just about everyone in the company. So I walked in with, I think, one other B/2/503 guy who had stayed back, and quickly identified Lt. Zinn, Sgt. Howard and Pvt.



RTO Paladino, some time, somewhere in Vietnam.

Hernandez. I think it was Howard whose arm was dangling off the cart and a nearly detached finger hanging off his hand. Hernandez was the hardest to identify because he had only been in the company a short while.



**Ron Zinn
KIA 7/7/65**



**Dave Howard
KIA 7/7/65**



**Rudy Hernandez
KIA 7/7/65**

I'm haunted by that visit and think of Zinn and Howard stories from time to time, including when Zinn - who was a West Point grad and was a race-walker in the '64 Olympics in Tokyo -- boxing against PFC Foster, who clearly was the dominant fighter. But it made Zinn one of the guys to be willing to take him on. They called him the Pink Lady because of his complexion.

One of the first patrols I went on was with Sgt. Howard leading it and I was his assistant patrol leader. We found a large truck in the middle of the jungle and Howard taught me how to use C-4 and we blew up the front of the truck. (I pried a nameplate off the truck, from a French auto dealership in Saigon).

**Larry Paladino
B/2/503**

Honoring His Fellow Medics

I was there on 7/7/65, but do not recall a medic named "Meehan". I believe he was a medic from A/2/503 along with another medic named Carlisle, a.k.a. "Toothpick" (he always had a toothpick in his mouth). However, with great respect, I hereby salute this great medic that gave his all.

Other than Lt. Zinn and SSG Howard, there were three other young brave men that were KIA on that day: Pvt. Allen Johnson, Pvt. McArthur Johnson, and Pvt Rudolph Hernandez, and to them I also offer my salute. There were others who which at this time I do not recall (78 and holding).

I do recall we had come upon a VC training camp earlier that day. Also, recall Rueben Dimas and another young Sgt setting fire to the canopy. Later, we found out there were about 6 VCs tunneled under the camp floor. Don't recall who the "tunnel-rats" were that found and killed them.

I was attached to B/2/503 in Dec. 1964, as the Line Company Senior Aidman. When attached to B/2/503, there was only one other medic attached... Ernie President (God rest his beautiful soul).

Upon arrival in RVN, there were two other medics attached... Terry Griggs, and a young fellow named Carter. These guys were "darn" good medics. I've never been able to locate Griggs or Carter.

I was evacuated in Nov.65 and lost contact with many of my old Bravo Bulls until 2010. Later, I met up with Roger (Tulip) Flowers and Jack Schimpf. Therefore, my only Jan-Feb. recollections would focus on the hospital in Tachikawa, Japan (Nov.65-Feb.66). When discharged I weighed 139 lbs, down from 190 lbs.

I do have pics the day before, and the day after 7/7/65.

**Ken (Doc) Eastman
B/2/503**



**Ernest "Doc" President, 24
B/2/503, KIA 10/10/65**



The Bravo Bulls' Assault on July 7, 1965

Jack Schimpf, B-2/503, would be the best authority on this mission. My map had been borrowed and has disappeared so I will try to explain the background that got us there.

This battle was a follow-up to a battalion assault on 28 June 1965, when Tom Van Campen was KIA and his body abandoned

because of a superior enemy force. The two survivors of that firefight hid Van Campen's body and fled with his weapon to be picked up later by a search helicopter,



Cpt Don Bliss, Col. (Ret)
(See tribute to Don, Page 57)

B/2-503 PIR conducted a recovery raid on 29 June, guided by the two soldiers who were with Van Campen. B/2-503 PIR came under mortar and small arms fire as soon as we landed. The company moved quickly to cover and had the WIA evacuated. The two guides were unsuccessful in leading the company to where the body was hidden so the company was lifted out without further enemy contact. It was now obvious that there was a large VC force in this area.

A brigade plan was developed to insert the 1-503, 2-503 and the 1RAR north of the area, with the mission to sweep south and attempt to engage this VC force. This operation is explained in detail in COL George Dexter's extensive article, already published.

To completely understand the details of the battle, leading to 7 July, I want to set the personnel setup for the Bravo Bulls. LT Dick Eckert, Weapons Platoon

Leader had been WIA by a VC hand grenade and was convalescing. I (CMDR, Co B), Art Stang (CMDR Co A), and Jim Hall (CMDR Co C) had all been ordered to turn over our companies and return to Okinawa to attend the Company Commander Career Course at Fort Benning, GA. Too many of the Bravo Chain of Command were gone with new guys filling in.



The late Dr. Dick Eckert

LT Jim Bennett was the acting Company Commander because CPT Paul Sutton was conducting a property inventory on Okinawa. LT Bill Olds (1st PLAT LDR); 2d PLAT (PSG Ku), 3d PLAT (LT Ron Zinn), WPNS Plat (PSG Jim Quick). Two of the platoons were without their normal leaders.



PSG Jim Quick

The battle started when SSG David Howard, Sqd Leader of the point squad, was KIA by enemy MG fire. LT Ron Zinn ran forward to help and recover Howard. Zinn was KIA by the same MG. The company sought cover and the battle was on.

PSG Davis crawled forward to locate the enemy MG's. He placed M16 fire on the MG position but was unable to silence it. He returned to the company defensive position and collected grenades for another attempt at knocking out the MG's. SSG Jack Schimpf and CPT Bob Warfield (Bn S-2) joined PSG Davis and together they knocked out one of the MG's.



SSG Jack Schimpf

The company had been engaging the VC position and maneuvered forward in slow fashion. Once the MG was destroyed that was the break in the VC position which subsequently allowed the company to slowly maneuver forward.

Arty FO LT Jim Robinson attempted but couldn't deliver effective artillery fire or air strikes. He and his Arty team maneuvered forward as infantrymen. Meanwhile, SSG Broderick showered the VC position with 81mm fire, assisting the maneuvering platoons.

CPT Warfield and SSG Schimpf were decorated with the Silver Star, but PSG Davis as the leader of the grenade assault was decorated with the DSC*, the first such award in the 173d Abn Brigade.



BDQ Roy

RLTW

Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret)
CO B-2/503, RVN

*See Eugene's DSC citation, Page 44



Youngsters became old men on July 7, 1965

To the request for additional information concerning the battle of 7 July 1965, I have some thoughts on that which are only my opinion, and no one else might share.

Most readers of our newsletter joined the brigade after our initial deployment on 5 May 1965. Consequently, they were replacements and had the benefit of guidance by experienced fellow riflemen and NCO's. I believe 7 July was a watershed event. Until then, there were skirmishes with an enemy who was depicted as a peasant with crossbows and pointed sticks. This image was pushed by the North trying to convince the world that the VC were just poor peasants struggling for their rights.

In one of the early skirmishes Sgt. Willy Boyd was wounded, this was where Bob Warfield picked up sort of a crossbow, and the Vietnamese troops they were to observe abandoned them – confirmed a primitive enemy with primitive weapons.

In those days, I think the average rifleman was about 19 and had very little knowledge of Vietnam. Perhaps thinking this was just another romp through the jungle with Ranger Roy Lombardo, like Okinawa or Taiwan -- except with live ammo, and the distraction of beautiful Vietnamese girls and beer, both relatively inexpensive.



Bob and his crossbow

There were some of us old guys (I was 25) who were aware of the history of the Vietnamese with the Chinese, French, Japanese and French again, then their civil war which also was a bit of a religious war between the Buddhist and the Catholics. These guys could fight! We all learned that lesson, when we encountered the well-locked-in machine guns, no pointed sticks or crossbows, on the morning of 7 July.

The point was driven home more strongly as we struggled to carry our dead back to the extraction point.

I believe it was a major event where the survivors suddenly knew that we were in for a long hard slog. Youngsters became old men.

Jim Robinson
B/2/503

DAVIS, EUGENE R.

Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army
Company B, 2d Battalion (Airborne),
503d Inf Reg, 173rd Airborne Brigade,
Date of Action: July 7, 1965



Citation:

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





CAPT ARTHUR C. STANG, III, Inf

“WHY SIR,” asked paratrooper after paratrooper, “*won’t they stand and fight?*”

They did, in their own backyard, and lost.

During the initial weeks following the deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) from Okinawa to Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, the elusive Viet Cong refused to engage the anxious paratroopers in decisive combat. The enemy was content to limit his actions to sniper fire and squad-size ambushes, from which he attempted to withdraw into the cover of the jungle as our troops closed with him. Many enemy troops did not live to fight the following day, because the paratroopers replied to their ambushes with deadly fire from their M16 rifles, and aggressively executed often-practiced, immediate-reaction drills.

In May and June, the paratroopers conducted numerous search-and-destroy operations, from platoon to brigade in size, virtually unopposed, with the exception of scattered squad-size actions. Numerous documents, weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies were captured and over 100 fortified Viet Cong villages were secured.

The lack of a decisive battle with the Viet Cong was causing leaders at all echelons to fear complacency among the younger troopers. On the evening of 7 June 1965, I conveyed my personal concern to the brigade commander during the critique of an operation conducted by my company that afternoon. Even though we had encountered almost 200 rounds of 60mm mortar fire during the two and half hours in the objective area, the Viet Cong had once again fled the battlefield. Many of my men were convinced the enemy would never stand and fight. My concern

stemmed from a personal opinion that the Viet Cong forces previously encountered, with the exception of the operation during which we received the heavy mortar attack, were local guerilla elements and not well-trained, rigidly disciplined, hard core units. Investigation revealed my feelings were shared by practically every commander in the brigade. An energetic program was conducted the following week to insure that every

man understood he had not as yet encountered the enemy’s first team.

On the afternoon of 7 July 1965, one month from the day of the critique mentioned above, my unit, Company A, Second Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, engaged two hard core Viet Cong companies in the communist controlled “War Zone D.” The long-awaited, decisive battle was fought and won. It is the purpose of this writing to present a firsthand, detailed account of the battle. Your attention is invited to the tactics used by the Viet Cong during the engagement and to the manner in which the American paratroopers reacted to the rapidly changing situations, and defeated the enemy in their own backyard.

Brigade’s Battle Plan

The brigade plan for the four-day operation was sound, simple, and concise. At 0830 hours on 6 July 1965, a three-battalion heliborne assault, utilizing three separate landing zones, would be executed on a valley running east and west through southern “War Zone D,” approximately 15 miles northwest of Bien Hoa Airfield.

On D-day all elements would attack north from their respective landing zones in an effort to feint the enemy and conceal the real concept, which was a coordinated, three-battalion thrust to the south in an effort to trap the Viet Cong against the Dong Nai River and a Vietnamese battalion occupying a blocking position to the southwest. (See figure 1 following page).

Extraction was to be executed on the afternoon of D + 3 from two landing zones just north of the Dong Nai River. (See figure 1).

(continued....)



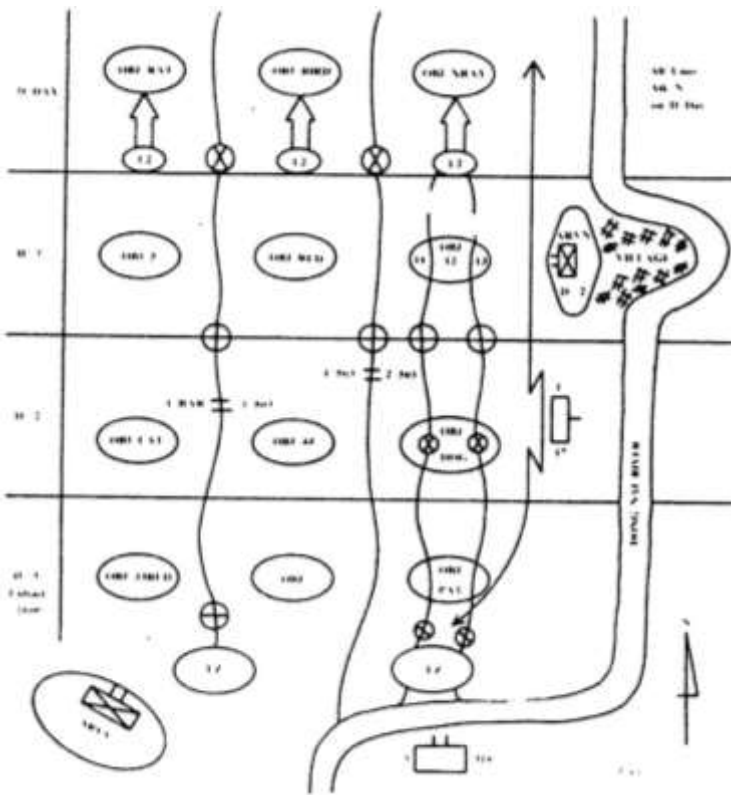


Figure 1

The only deviation from the original plan occurred on D + 1 when air observers detected the Viet Cong moving east from the Second Battalion's zone of operations. The riverbank on the eastern edge of the battle area housed a large pro-government Catholic refugee village. The brigade commander evaluated the situation and countered with airstrikes against the suspected enemy positions, and with the deployment of an additional Vietnamese battalion west of the village.

Battalion's Battle Plan

The Second Battalion commander's plan was quite simple. The excessive width of his assigned zone of action, coupled with an exposed left (east) flank made it necessary for him to deploy his three rifle companies on line and utilize Troop E, 17th Cavalry (attached) to screen his left flank. (See figure 1). In reserve he had Headquarters Company, which was organized into two strong rifle platoons. The Headquarters Company normally followed the center attacking rifle company.

Fire Support

Fire support for the operation was provided by the 105 Howitzers assigned to the Brigade's Third Battalion, 319th Artillery. The howitzers were moved into position during the early morning hours of D-day on the southern bank of the Dong Nai River. (See figure 1). United States Air Force provided continuous close air support, weather permitting. Armed fire teams of UH-1B helicopters were on air alert during daylight hours.

As is always the case in brigade operations, commanders had available all required fire support.

D-Day

D-day, 6 July 1965, was relatively quiet. The landing zone was secured with little enemy resistance. It seemed as if the Viet Cong's intelligence system had finally failed him. Late in the afternoon the third platoon discovered a small fortified enemy village 1,000 meters northwest of the landing zone and were engaged by light sniper fire as they assaulted the village. One of the two Vietnamese scout dogs attached to the company had alerted the platoon to the village. The village contained the usual rice, domestic supplies, medicines, school books, small quantities of ammunitions, and several anti-US propaganda signs. All captured material was flown to the III Corps G2 on the evening supply helicopter.

Just prior to darkness the company moved into a tight perimeter, dug in, and established three squad-size ambush patrols. By dark, rations and water had been distributed and consumed. The company position remained silent for the remainder of the night.

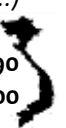
At 1950 hours a firefight developed along a small stream, roughly 500 meters southeast of our position. Monitoring the radio, I learned a patrol from the reconnaissance platoon had engaged a Viet Cong patrol with the enemy breaking contact to the south. I was not very concerned as my first platoon had an ambush positioned between the company perimeter and the location of the skirmish.

This operation was the third in "War Zone D" for Company A, and most of the troopers had five or six combat operations under their belts. All platoons had engaged at least one platoon-size enemy force, although the Viet Cong always had broken contact. I knew the men would hold under mortar fire, as they had experienced a savage two-hour mortar attack the preceding month. These troops were good and they knew it. During the combat operations of the preceding two months not one man had fallen from the ranks from heat, exhaustion, or fatigue.

We received a radio message concerning water can extraction, the attack to seize objective, and a 15-minute airstrike of the sector with no mortar or artillery fire until the Air Force cleared the gun-target line.

What more could a commander desire than a brief, clear order, a 15-minute airstrike in the objective area, and good troops? In addition, all AN PRC-10 radios were still operating.

(continued....)





. . . . a large firefight developed

D-Day + 1

The weather on D + 1, 7 July 1965, did not unfold as expected. Heavy clouds hovered at 800 feet, and it was questionable whether or not the helicopters would be able to extract the empty water cans. Battalion S3 informed me at 0700 hours that the airstrike had been cancelled and an extensive artillery preparation planned. I directed the weapons platoon leader to plan fires along the stream 500 meters south. Having doubts about the security of the stream, I ordered the third platoon to move at 0715 hours to secure the far bank of the stream, select crossing sites, and provide guides for the company (-).

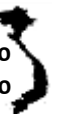
The first sergeant reported at 0720 hours that the policing of the perimeter was complete and that the water cans had been extracted. Policing of the battleground is extremely important in guerilla warfare. Expended radio batteries must be chopped into small pieces, burned and buried. The Viet Cong will construct antipersonnel mines from the empty cans if left intact. The guerillas will salvage even the waxed "C" ration packing cartons and use them for roofing on their huts; therefore, the cartons must be burned. Very few soldiers consume the entire meal contained in the ration carton. Extreme care must be taken to insure all leftover food is destroyed. One distinct characteristic of a well-disciplined unit is continuous policing of the battleground.

At precisely 0730 hours Company A jumped off in the attack for objective 11. The first platoon was leading, followed at 50 meters by the second. A radio transmission was received from the third platoon at 0750 hours reporting the stream secured, with negative enemy contact. Link-up between the third and first platoons was effected at 0810 hours. With the stream crossing completed, Company A continued movement south. The initial formation was a conventional two platoons up with one in the slot. The first platoon was on the left, the second platoon 50 meters to the right and third platoon trailing by 100 meters in the slot.

Reaching the high ground 900 meters south of the stream, I ordered the weapons platoon to displace forward. Due to the dense terrain the weapons platoon was carrying only one 81mm mortar, and 60 rounds of ammunition. The Viet Cong have repeatedly demonstrated they are willing to pay a high price for a mortar; therefore it's good practice when employing your mortar to insure it is adequately protected. At night it should be tucked into the perimeter, and should be fired only as a last resort. If illumination is required, request artillery or aircraft to provide it.

Encirclement of a small enemy village was practically complete at 0845 hours, when a large firefight developed approximately 500 meters to our left rear in Bravo Company's zone. The report of a heavy machine gun was my first indication that the action was more than the usual engagement with a small local guerilla force. The Viet Cong seldom risk the employment of a heavy machine gun with poorly trained guerilla forces. Thirty minutes after the battle developed, Company B was still engaged with a well dug-in enemy platoon. The company commander had lost contact with the battalion commander, but did manage to contact an armed UH-1B helicopter which made several passes over the enemy position. My company and Company C marked our positions with smoke and were informed by the helicopter pilot we were located 500 meters southwest and southeast respectively from Company B. At the outset of the battle we had both set hasty ambushes in an effort to catch the enemy as he withdrew. Company B seized the village at 0920 hours. Company A spent the next hour and a half in ambush with no results. The rain began falling just prior to 1100 hours, and shortly after the order was received to proceed to objective 11.

(continued....)



The village-clearing operation, earlier in the morning, produced meager results, with three enemy 60mm mortar rounds and a small quantity of narcotics captured. One trooper was burned as a result of the improper use of a white phosphorus hand grenade in a tunnel.

At 1200 hours, Company A was 250 meters north of objective 11. The objective was located on a broad, flat ridgeline running east to west through the entire battalion sector and was the limit of the battalion's advance for the day. Our mission was to seize the highest portion of the ridgeline in our sector and conduct a thorough search of the area. At 1300 hours, reconnaissance patrols from the first and second platoons returned from the objective area, reporting a fortified village on the northeastern slope of the ridgeline. No movement was observed on the objective. An artillery preparation was requested on the objective but was denied because "Dust Off" (emergency evacuation helicopters) was in the area.

The weapons platoon, which had rejoined the company at the previous ambush site, was incapable of supporting the attack due to the dense canopy 200 feet overhead. The decision was made to attack the ridge with the first and second platoons, supported by fire by the third.

The assault was unopposed by the enemy, who withdrew south leaving a US steel helmet and an entrenching tool in one of the underground huts. After reorganizing, it was noted the huts were not organized in the normal village configuration. The majority were positioned approximately 15 meters apart, along the northern military crest of the ridge, and the remainder positioned to render security to the flanks and rear. The huts were not of the normal thatch construction but were dug-in completely underground with only the metal roofs constructed about 12 inches above the ground, providing a firing slit. A firing step was constructed around the inner wall and a tunnel ran out the rear of each position. It was obvious the Viet Cong were in the process of preparing for a defense to the north. The number of completed huts would have housed approximately two platoons. Why the Viet Cong decided against fighting a delaying action from this position is unknown.

Objective 11 was secured at 1340 hours with no enemy contact. The warm rice bowls in four of the huts were a clear indication that the enemy had left in a hurry. As I moved from the command post to check the reorganization of the objective, a runner arrived stating that the weapons platoon leader suspected we were being followed. A squad-size ambush was positioned on the northern slope. During this time the first platoon

had located a communication wire running east and west along the ridgeline. Further investigation revealed the wire to be new and running from position to position along the ridgeline. The wire was laid from control bunkers on the top of the ridge to the forward huts. This was hardly the work of a local guerilla force.

Reconnaissance of the objective area revealed no suitable location for the construction of a landing zone to accept the evening's resupply and to evacuate the man injured, earlier in the day, by the white phosphorus grenade. The day's march through dense jungle and a driving rain had deteriorated his condition to the point I felt his evacuation was absolutely necessary.



... a landing zone to accept the evening's resupply ...

Radio communication was lost with battalion at 1340 hours, contact not to be regained for three and one half hours. As a final alternative I requested any aircraft on the command net to answer my call since it was an emergency. To my surprise, the commanding general, who was usually hovering overhead, replied and asked if he could be of assistance. I marked our position with smoke and requested directions to the nearest area suitable for use as a landing zone. After a five-minute reconnaissance the general's *aide-de-camp* informed me the only suitable area was a large east-west rice paddy, 500 meters south of our present position. Events which followed made the distance seem more like 5,000 meters. With this information I asked the general to contact the battalion commander and request permission to move one rifle platoon south to the rice paddy. While awaiting the reply, a brief skirmish erupted to our rear....

(continued....)



....The weapons platoon leader reported his ambush had engaged a small khaki-uniformed Viet Cong force which had broken contact and withdrawn north. The squad leader estimated one enemy soldier had been hit during the engagement. There were no U.S. casualties.

The events of the day had convinced me that we were opposing a hard core Viet Cong unit of unknown strength. The only unanswered questions were: Would he stand and fight, and if so, when and where? My thoughts were interrupted by the general's radio transmission informing me I had permission to move one platoon to the proposed landing zone. Hoping the general would not think me too indecisive, I changed my request and asked permission to move the entire company. I explained my reasons and, within minutes, permission was granted. Later, unknown to me, the battalion commander moved the entire battalion to the rice paddy.

A map study revealed the rice paddy to the south extended only 300 meters west from the point where the finger on which we were to travel made its intersection. With the ever-present drone of the UH-1B armed helicopters hovering overhead, I felt certain the enemy to our front would avoid withdrawing across the open paddy during daylight hours. It seemed reasonable to think that if he had a large force he would attempt to delay our movement with small ambushes, while withdrawing the main element through the jungle around the western edge of the rice paddy. My hunch was partially correct; but, I must admit I never estimated his strength to be two companies.

Prior to the movement I briefed the platoon leaders on the tactical situation, and what I expected to encounter to the front. Emphasis was placed on the movement, which would be conducted at a very slow pace with maximum security. Everything was in the enemy's favor; he knew the terrain and our position.

The company was to move in a box formation with the first platoon (base platoon) on the left, followed by the command post group and the third platoon. The second platoon was 50 meters to the right of the first platoon, followed at 50 meters by the weapons platoon. (See figure 2). All platoons established security well out to their front, flanks, and rear. The leading platoon (first and second) moved with two squads up and one trailing in the slot (See figure 2). This formation offered maximum security to the front while moving down the narrow finger, which was 500 meters wide and dropped off steeply on both sides. The steep drop-off afforded the enemy no route of withdrawal if he attempted to ambush the company from the flank. For this reason emphasis was placed on forward security.

Prior to the jump-off at 1400 hours I requested an artillery preparation on the top of the finger. This request was denied because another unit had a priority mission in progress. Two additional fire requests on the same target were also denied because friendly aircraft were in the target area.

The movement south was progressing extremely well. It is obvious that the orders of the platoon leaders had impressed their men as to a probable enemy contact. Numerous halts were taken, as scouting parties conducted extensive reconnaissance to the front and flanks. The weapons platoon established another hasty ambush to the rear to insure the enemy was not following.

The sharp crack of an M16 in the first platoon's sector at 1450 hours broke the silence of the jungle. The platoon's point man had detected a khaki-uniformed enemy soldier loping away to the south and had killed him (see figure 2). As the first platoon leader was rendering his report, three shots echoed from a shotgun in the second platoon's sector. Their point squad had detected enemy movement to the front. Before the platoon leader could complete his report, the enemy commenced firing across the entire front of the second platoon (see figure 2). Three troopers were hit during the initial seconds of the battle.

The enemy was well camouflaged and concealed 50 meters to the second platoon's front. His strength was estimated to be of platoon size.

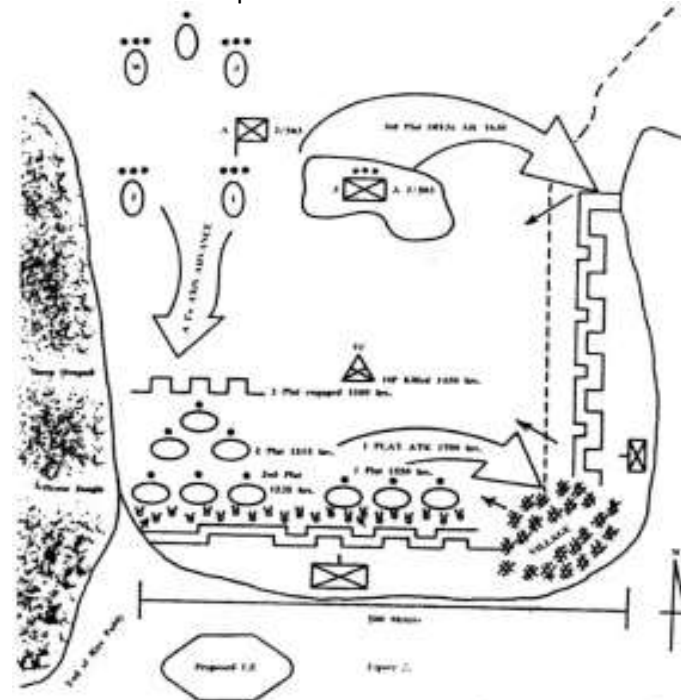


Figure 2

(continued....)



The second platoon returned the fire, and after achieving fire superiority, began to maneuver forward by squads. After moving approximately 20 meters, the enemy fire suddenly increased and two light machine guns entered the action. Thirty meters from the enemy positions, the advance of the second platoon was halted.

The close proximity of the second platoon to the dug-in enemy made the use of artillery impossible. I requested an armed UH-1B helicopter strike, and as always, they were on station overhead. While coordinating the fire mission with the helicopter fire team leader, I maneuvered the first platoon forward, as they had not yet met any heavy resistance. My plan was for the second platoon to provide a base of fire, and the first platoon to assault the enemy from the left (eastern) flank, immediately following the helicopter strike.

The first platoon had maneuvered forward approximately 20 meters when the enemy engaged them from the front (south) and left (east) flank with a tremendous volume of machine gun and small arms fire. The first platoon was immediately pinned down. It suffered one casualty.

The Viet Cong had now employed three additional machine guns in the fight, for a total of five. A .50-caliber, placed to the left (east) rear, had company headquarters pinned down.

The first platoon was receiving effective small arms fire only from the enemy positioned 60 meters to their front (south) and the machine guns on their flanks (see figure 2). The enemy company on the left (east) was occupying an ambush position along a small trail 200 meters from our flank. As a result the heavy jungle vegetation was absorbing practically all their small arms fire. Over half the firepower was going into empty jungle since the third platoon had halted just prior to the outset of the battle and was positioned 100 meters north of the enemy's flank. The enemy had calculated we would be moving down the trail into the fortified village which was located at the junction of their two forces. As a result of this miscalculation only the machine guns on the flank were delivering effective fire through the dense jungle.

Attempt after attempt to establish radio contact with battalion failed. The artillery forward observer had also lost contact with his liaison officer. His helicopters were making their first pass and weren't in the mood to relay radio messages after hearing the enemy machine guns below. It was obvious that Company A would fight this battle alone, assisted by the armed helicopters.

At the initiation of the battle the third platoon had been halted in a reserve position 200 meters to the

north of the first platoon. With the first and second platoons pinned down, and no maneuverable terrain to the right (west), I ordered the third platoon to maneuver to the enemy's northern flank and be prepared to attack on order (see figure 2).



... the dug-in enemy ...

From the initial moments of the engagement the weapons platoon had been deployed as rear security. It is a common Viet Cong tactic to feint the attack on one flank and then assault with his main force from another, after you have committed your combat power.

As the third platoon maneuvered for a clear shot at the enemy's flank, I lost radio contact with the first and second platoons. Moving forward to make contact with the second platoon, my radio operator commented how effectively the enemy .50-caliber machine gun was clearing the jungle vegetation. The helicopters were approaching on their final pass when we reached the second platoon's command post. The enemy had fixed the platoon's position and had inflicted two more casualties. I ordered the platoon leader to attack with the support of the armed helicopters. There was no walking or running forward; the only means of travel was the low, low crawl. Seeing his men advance without hesitation into heavy enemy fire must be the greatest reward a commander can ever receive. The machine gun fire from the helicopter was erupting the ground 50 feet forward of the second platoon. Several small explosions were noted, which later proved to be enemy anti-personnel mines (see figure 2)....

(continued....)





... armed helicopters overhead ...

...The mines were approximately the size of an expended M79, 40mm casing and were designed to cripple, not kill. An enemy pull wire-activated hand grenade exploded on the right flank of the first platoon, netting the enemy two additional paratrooper casualties. Shortly after, another was wounded by an anti-personnel mine. The enemy had employed another of his common tactics – that of placing a hasty minefield forward of his defensive position.

As my radio operator and I were crawling forward the enemy machine gun on the right flank was back in action from a new position. I pulled my operator to the ground, only to find two U.S. hand grenades tied to the tree between us, and a pull wire running to the enemy position. Needless to say, the wire was quickly cut.

A machine gunner from the second platoon had detected an enemy soldier in a spider hole 10 meters to his front. After the first burst from the M60 machine gun, the Viet Cong jumped to his feet, activating several grenades with the wires in his hands. The gunner was immediately cut down.

Much to my amazement, the enemy soldier was unformed in green fatigues, equipped with helmet, boots, pack, and web gear. His weapon was of Red Chinese manufacture.

With the enemy still 15 meters away and the area to the front mined and booby-trapped, further advancement of the second platoon would have been far too costly at this point. It should be noted that as long as we paratroopers remained in the prone position and maintained a heavy volume of fire, the enemy was incapable of inflicting casualties on us with small arms fire. The area was too dense for either force to use grenades.

Unable to achieve a penetration to the front, I ordered the reserve (third) platoon to attack the enemy force on the left (east) flank (see figure 2). The weapons platoon was then returned to reserve.

Moments after the third platoon M60 machine guns commenced firing, the enemy .50-caliber stopped firing. Minutes later the entire khaki-clad, blue-scarfed enemy force withdrew, leaving behind only small trails of blood and several hundred rounds of U.S. .30-caliber ammunition. Why the enemy commander withdrew so quickly, under such a limited attack, remains unknown. My deduction is that he overestimated the size of the attacking force and thought he had been flanked by another company.

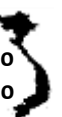
The withdrawal of the enemy company on the left (east) flank decreased the pressure on the first platoon and offered maneuver room to the left (east). The sudden disappearance of his flank unit did not appear to affect the intentions of the enemy force to our front. They were determined to hold their position, probably because of the open rice paddy 200 meters to their rear (south).

With the third platoon reorganizing, I ordered the first platoon to initiate a probing action to the left (east) in an effort to locate the limit of the Viet Cong's eastern flank which had been created by the withdrawal of the flank unit.

By 1650 hours, Company A had sustained nine casualties, relatively light considering the bitter fighting of the previous two hours.

Ten minutes later (1700 hours) the first platoon reported they had located the eastern limit of the enemy's line anchored in a small fortified village (see figure 2). The terrain surrounding the village was relatively open and would permit the employment of the M79 grenade launchers. Prior use of this weapon had been impossible due to heavy vegetation. In addition, a fairly covered avenue of approach into the village was available.

(continued....)



My only order to the first platoon leader was to seize the village, as some of the wounded required immediate evacuation.

First Platoon Breaks Through

With the second platoon still heavily engaged and pinned down and the third platoon securing the left (east) flank, the first platoon attacked the village. Following an extensive M79 and machine gun preparation, the assault was launched. The dug-in Viet Cong countered with machine gun and small arms fire. After 30 minutes, a four-man party composed of the platoon leader, two noncommissioned officers, and a private, reached the village. One NCO stormed the machine gun position, silencing it with a hand grenade. The private was firing his M79 at point blank range into the enemy emplacements with devastating results. The platoon leader and the other sergeant were observed throwing grenades into position after position. The courage displayed by these four men inspired the entire platoon to overrun the village. The first platoon's penetration gave Company A a firm foothold on the enemy's eastern flank.

The enemy force, across the entire front, began a disorganized retreat south under a hail of fire from the paratroopers. Their movements were detected by the armed helicopters hovering overhead. Strikes made on the retreating enemy resulted in an estimated kill of 20 Viet Cong. By 1740 hours the entire enemy force was routed.

After a rapid reorganization the first platoon again moved south, followed by the third platoon and the second platoon carrying the wounded. The weapons platoon continued to provide security to the rear as the company drove for the landing zone to evacuate their wounded.

The General Arrives

At 1805 the first platoon reached the rice paddy and secured the selected landing zone. A helicopter appeared overhead as the mop-up action on the ridge line to the rear (north) continued. The helicopter landed, discharged the commanding general, his operations officer, and *aide-de-camp*. The general directed that his aircraft be utilized to evacuate the wounded. In addition, he delivered the much-needed ammunition resupply. *"Congratulations,"* the general stated in a quiet, sincere tone of voice, *"I monitored most of it from above."*

Dusk was quickly settling in "War Zone D" as the lights on the general's aircraft disappeared on the horizon. The troopers of Company A, Second Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry had fought and won their

brigade's first company-size battle against two "mainline" Viet Cong companies.

The names of the personnel participating in this battle were withheld from this writing because most are still serving in South Vietnam. Nine men were decorated for valor in this action.

Battle Statistics

American losses in the battle were light.

The Viet Cong paid a much higher price. Enemy losses were eight killed (by actual body count) and an estimated 50 wounded. The wounded figure was estimated from the remnants of enemy bodies on the battleground and the blood they left behind at their positions. It was impossible to accurately count the numerous blood trails leading to the south after the action. An estimate of an additional 30 enemy wounded probably wouldn't be excessive. The estimated 20 Viet Cong killed by the armed helicopters when the enemy was retreating are not included in these statistics.



The helicopter has brought . . . flexibility and mobility . . .

. . . a large slice of cake must go to the helicopter . . .

Conclusions

1. "Hard core" Viet Cong units are excellently equipped and well-led. They are experts in the arts of ambush, camouflage, and the construction of field fortifications.
2. Route selection in enemy-controlled territory is of vital importance. The use of roads and trails will result in ambush. Move parallel to the roads and trails and roll up ambushes from the flanks. I cannot emphasize this point enough; *Stay off the roads and trails* during cross-country movement.
3. To fight effectively in the jungle, good communications are a must. The AN/PRC-25 radio has proven itself over and over in Vietnam.
4. Artillery support must be available to the rifle company commander when he requests it. A hundred howitzers lined up hub-to-hub are useless if we cannot clear the gun-target line. The helicopter has brought to commanders in Vietnam a degree of flexibility and mobility never thought possible 10 years ago....

(continued....)



....Couple the helicopters with the increased tactical air support available, and you have a major problem in the Fire Support Coordination Center. Most commanders in Vietnam will tell you they have mastered this problem in their units by the use of a grid-square numbering system, or a grid-square color code, or simply the use of codeword to clear the air, as was done in Korea. The cold hard fact is that fire support coordination in Vietnam can and should be improved. A system is required that can be utilized throughout all corps areas, and be understood by all forces.

5. When the war is won in Vietnam, a large slice of the cake must go to the helicopter pilots. The armed UH-1B helicopter fire teams give the company commander the most flexible fire support in the history of warfare. The pilots do, however, require a little information before they can effectively support you. Mark your forward limit with smoke and give the pilot an azimuth and a distance from your position to the enemy. Tell him how you want him to conduct his passes and the nature of the target. Adjust his fire after his initial pass.

6. When planning operations, staff officers must take into consideration that a rifle company, conducting a search-and-destroy mission in secondary jungle, cannot possibly negotiate more than 400 meters per hour without sacrificing security. Commanders must also take into consideration, when positioning reserves, that to reinforce a unit 500 meters distant in secondary jungle will require an hour's march. A faster rate of march will result in the lack of adequate security and fatigued troops.

7. Prior to deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to South Vietnam, many senior Army officers conjectured as to how our young troopers would react when they met the enemy face-to-face. Commanders were reminded of the high percentage of American troops that allegedly would not fire their weapons in Korea. I do not believe these statistics to this day. I do not know of one single man in our entire battalion that failed to fire his weapon in combat. Never during any engagement did I ever see a paratrooper moving in any direction but forward. Our problem was not getting them to close with the enemy, but trying to keep them from bunching up as they charged forward to assist their buddies at the crack of the first shot. Platoon sergeants had to inspect their men closely prior to an operation to insure a sick trooper was not attempting to get on a helicopter, after being ordered by the doctor to remain in camp.

Medics continuously exposed themselves to enemy fire to treat the wounded. When the going got real

tough, the platoon leader was up front setting the example, insuring the mission was accomplished.

In summary, my final conclusion is quite simple: The man wearing the green fatigue uniform of the U.S. army in South Vietnam today is more intelligent, better trained, better equipped, tougher, and better led than any Infantryman in history. With a little support from the American public he will win, if the enemy will *Stand and Fight!*

Source: Sent in by Stephen "Bazooka" Bisaha, and reported to have originally appeared in *Infantry Magazine* in '66, a U.S. Army publication by the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, GA.



Arthur C. Stang, III, Col. (Ret)

CO, A/2/503, RVN

13 March 1937 ~ 2 September 1980

Art Stang, 43, was an airborne officer who was a decorated combat veteran of the Vietnam war and served as a staff officer in Washington in the 1970s, died of cardio-respiratory arrest on September 2, 1980, at the Womack Army Hospital in Fort Bragg, N.C.




He had been stationed at Fort Bragg since leaving Washington in 1978. While at Fort Bragg, he had served on the staff of the XVIII Airborne Corps, and then as a brigade commander in the 82nd Airborne Division. For the last month he had been the division's chief of staff.

Col. Stang spent two tours in Vietnam, first in 1965 as a rifle company commander in the 2nd Airborne Battle Group, and then in 1968 with the 173rd Airborne Bde.

His medals included the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, the Bronze Star Medal with "v" for valor and three oak leaf clusters, and the Purple Heart.

He came to Washington in 1970 and was assigned to the Army Department Staff. He maintained a home in Woodbridge, coached Little League baseball in Northern Virginia, and was a member of the vestry of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Woodbridge in the '70s.

After serving in Korea, he returned to Washington where he worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff before being assigned to Fort Bragg.

Col. Stang was a native of Delaware County, Pa. He was a graduate of the Pennsylvania Military College and earned a master's degree in international affairs at George Washington University. He entered the Army and received his commission in 1960. Survivors include his wife, Pat, two sons, Mark and Steven, and two daughters, Cindy and Cheri, all of Fort Bragg. 



Leap Look



Army Sgt. 1st Class Cory Christiansen, a member of the Para-Commandos, U.S. Special Operations Command's parachute team, jumps out of an HC-130J Combat King II aircraft over Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 15, 2019. (DoD)

Special Operations Command parachute team



The USSOCOM emblem

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Parachute Team, called the Para-Commandos, is composed of volunteers from the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and U.S. government civilians who are assigned to Special Operations Command. They are selected for the team after a rigorous training program. They participate with the USSOCOM Parachute Team in addition to their regular duties, with training conducted during off duty time.

The USSOCOM is one of nine unified commands in the United States military's combatant command structure. The bulk of the command's 47,000 people are made up of Army Rangers and Special Forces (Green Berets); Navy Sea/Air/Land (SEAL) teams; Air Force combat controllers, pararescuemen and combat crew airmen; United States Marine Corps Forces Special Operators; and Army Civil Affairs

History



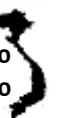
A USSOCOM parachute team.

Formed in 1991, the USSOCOM Parachute Team represents the elite of the United States armed services, its Special Operations Forces (SOF). Team members are trained for a variety of combatant and humanitarian missions. One of the many techniques used for undetected infiltration into enemy zones is the dangerous and difficult military freefall (MFF) operation.



Para-Commandos during a demonstration.

(continued....)



Techniques

The team normally jumps from an altitude of 12,500 feet above ground level, freefalling approximately 2 miles, reaching speeds in excess of 120 miles per hour. This freefall can last up to one minute. During their freefall, the members of the team maneuver their bodies, like the flight surfaces of an aircraft, to form numerous aerial designs and formations in the sky. When the jumpers approach an altitude of 4,000 feet, they will break their formation and glide in different directions. As each team member reaches an altitude of 2,500 feet, they will begin deploying their parachutes. Once open, the members steer their parachutes and perform what is called "stacking." Stacking enables the jumpers to form up in the air as a group and land one behind the other, with precision accuracy.

The USSOCOM Parachute Team modifies the military aspects of MFF operations and provides graphic displays of intricate maneuvers and precision canopy control techniques. Jumps by the team may include carrying a flag or passing a baton while descending in freefall, all while wearing burning smoke canisters attached to their boots to allow viewers to see them better.

Currently

The USSOCOM Parachute Team has appeared at numerous military and civilian airshows, sporting events at all levels (professional, college, high) and various patriotic, civic and school celebrations throughout the United States. Members of the USSOCOM Parachute Team have established themselves as showmen, traveling ambassadors, and SOF recruiters for the Department of Defense.

Source:

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Excerpt....

VFW Witnesses Landmark Presidential Signing of the POW MIA Flag Act

'This is a historic victory for every man and woman who courageously defended this nation and remain unaccounted for'



November 07, 2019

WASHINGTON – Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) stood in solidarity with fellow members of the Veterans Service Organization (VSO) community as President Donald Trump signed the National POW/MIA Flag Act into law today.

"This is a historic victory for every man and woman who courageously defended this nation and remain unaccounted for," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. *"Today's presidential signing and the daily display of the POW/MIA flag at all prominent federal properties now serves as a daily reminder that these heroes, and their families, are forever etched in our DNA."*

Law now requires the POW/MIA flag to be displayed whenever the American flag is displayed on prominent federal properties, including the White House, U.S. Capitol, World War II Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, every national cemetery, the buildings containing the official offices of the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, office of the Director of the Selective Service System, each major military installation, each Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, and each U.S. Postal Service post office.

The National POW/MIA Flag Act was initially introduced by U.S. Rep. and Marine Corps Lt. Gen. (ret.) Jack Bergman and U.S. Rep. Chris Pappas March 7, 2019. The bipartisan bill received endorsement from the VFW, the National League of POW/MIA Families, and other veterans service organizations.

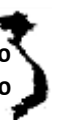
"Over 82,000 men and women who've served our nation in uniform are unaccounted for or listed as POW/MIA, including many Michiganders," said Congressman Bergman. *"Flying this flag at federal properties 365 days a year is just a small way that we can ensure their sacrifice and devotion to our nation is never forgotten."*

Pappas added that the POW/MIA flag is a symbol of courage and sacrifice that our armed forces have given on behalf of this nation.

"I have seen how important the flag is to demonstrate that these heroes are not forgotten," said Congressman Pappas. *"By putting the flag on full display outside of prominent federal buildings, memorials, and national cemeteries, we are reaffirming our commitment to the more than 82,000 service members who remain unaccounted for."*

Prior to today's landmark signing, the POW/MIA flag was only required to be displayed by the federal government on certain prominent federal properties only six days per year to include Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, National POW/MIA Recognition Day, and Veterans Day.

[Read entire report at www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2019/11/vfw-witnesses-landmark-presidential-signing-of-the-pow-mia-flag-act]



Food for thought....

In an on-line video sent in by Bill Vose, A/2/503, a young paratrooper, an Army Ranger with or who was with the 101st (you can tell by his tattoo), steps from his car at a diner, with a bumper sticker on his car emblazoned with PROUD DEMOCRAT. Another Army Ranger arrives, his Screaming Eagle tattoo evident, and the car he exits displays a sticker, TRUMP... KEEP AMERICA GREAT 2020. As they meet in the diner, they shake hands, bump chests, smile at one another and sit down to eat together, as the friends they appear to be. Accompanying the video, which you can see at <https://rangerup.com/blogs/news/lead-the-way> are these remarks excerpted from a posting by Nick Palmisciano, entitled:

LEAD THE WAY

Somewhere in the past decade, things have changed a bit. Maybe it's social media. Maybe it's the nature of politicians in the new media age. Maybe it's the fact that our lives are so good that in the absence of great struggle we create it. Maybe it's something else entirely, but the fact remains, we're getting meaner, and less tolerant.



People won't date people outside their party. They openly insult people who don't agree with them. And now we even have people talking about a second Civil War.

There are now people, most of who haven't seen any war, least of all one where they'd be in armed combat with their neighbors, that think throwing our entire nation away in order to hit the reset button in the hopes that their side will come out on top and 'fix everything' is a great idea.

I've got news for you. Even if these voices get their way and we kick off a massive civil war leaving millions dead to solve all of these arguments once and for all, within two years of that war's conclusion, we'd have two new groups of clowns forming two new political parties swearing up and down that they have the right answers and putting us in exactly the same positions. And we all know it.

So we have to be better, because no one else is going to. We have to lead by example.

Something has to bind us. We cannot count on our leaders to do so. So it has to be us.

As Veterans, Patriots, and Americans, it is our absolute duty to be engaged with and passionate about politics, but while engagement is critical, we should stop far short of insults, threats, and dehumanization. We served with people of all races, religions, creeds, and political affiliations.

We stacked on doors. We rode helicopters. We jumped out of planes. And we 'occasionally' shammed as well. And we did it all together as one extremely weird family.

At no point, did it matter who we were voting for other than to pass the time on guard duty or during one of those nights it was pouring rain on us and there was no way our bodies would let us sleep. We never judged the content of each other's character based on our political beliefs, and we should not do it now.

When people talk about Civil War, it should be us that instantly says, 'Settle Down'. We know what war looks like, and we absolutely do not want it on American soil over something as absurd as political candidates that are at best Americans trying to do the right thing who are sometimes fallible, and at worst, self-serving narcissists looking for attention and power. When emotions are high, WE need to be the adults in the room, whether that's in real life or on social media.

Because no one else is going to do it....

Because if not us, then who? **Lead the Way.**

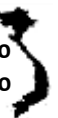


ABOUT CIVIL WAR...

"I am sick and tired of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation. War is hell."



General Sherman





Casper Aviation Platoon

Casper Platoon Commander Passes



Colonel Donald Bliss - R.I.P.



It is with great sadness I have to report that Don Bliss has passed away this morning, November 7, 2019, following complications relating to dementia and two strokes.

Don Bliss served as the first Casper Platoon Commanding Officer, Pilot and then the Brigade Aviation Officer during his Vietnam tour in 1965 – 1966. Don was very proud of his "Original Caspers" who were the first 8 Pilots assigned to our platoon in Okinawa prior to arriving in Bien Hoa, Vietnam with the Brigade.

However, it was DON who was the Original Casper. Colonel Bliss was liked and respected by many throughout his military career and will be missed by everyone who knew him - especially our Casper group. I am blessed to have known him and proud to have called him my friend!

I will provide you with information regarding his funeral service when it becomes available.

Ned Costa, Caspers

Remembering Don Bliss A Fellow Sky Soldier And Friend

Don was one of the plank holders, just like all of the Bravo Bulls, for the 173d Abn Bde when it was formed in 1963 on Okinawa. He teamed with Rod Beasley to save several AF pilots who didn't make the runway at Kadena AF base on that island.

Don flew an H-13 helicopter and Rod wore swim trunks. If an AF pilot landed short of the runway and wound up in the ocean, they would fly to the area, Rod would jump in while Don hovered. Rod got at least one Soldiers Medal for a water rescue.

In RVN, Don had transitioned to the UH1 and taught BG Ellis "Butch" Williamson to fly.

The 1-503 PIR got into a big shootout in War Zone D, in November '65, well documented. As the Bde Aviation Officer, Don was piloting the Bde Command and Control chopper with BG Williamson onboard. They hovered over the battle to learn there were several WIA who would not survive unless med-evaced. There were no LZ's but the 1-503 was trying to create a landing zone from the thick jungle. Recognizing the critical importance of medevac, Butch ordered the commo gear and disposable gear jettisoned from the chopper to allow Don to pilot the UH1 down a chimney through the jungle canopy. The space was so tight that the rotor blades chopped leaves and branches off trees during the descent.

MG Williamson and the command group dismounted to provide space for the critically wounded. Reversing the process Don and his co-pilot lifted the UH1 out of the small hole in the jungle and the WIA were saved.

Don joined me at Fort Benning where he took command of the Aerial Employment Committee, Infantry School where I was already the Airborne Instructor.

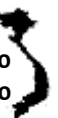
I was reassigned to RVN as an Advisor to the Vietnamese Rangers. Don followed and was assigned to the 101st Airmobile Division, where he flew and fought through the Tet Offensive in 1968.

He returned to Fort Benning where he commanded an OCS Battalion. Later he attended the War College where we hooked up again.

His friendly smile was a trait that he shared with all. A Sky Soldier until his dying day!! May he rest in peace with all of our KIA and deceased.

RLTW, BDQ Roy

Roy Lombardo, LTC (Ret), CO B/2/503, RVN



Friend Of All Sky Soldiers

Colonel Donald Bliss

As a college freshman, Don joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps, beginning his life in service to his country as a career Army aviator and infantryman. At OSU, he was a member of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity, and received a degree in Animal Husbandry.

Upon graduation from Oklahoma A&M in 1954, Don received his commission in the US Army as a Second Lieutenant. His career in the Army provided many possibilities for Don, including the opportunity to fly rotary wing and fixed wing aircraft. Upon receiving his aviator wings, he was stationed in various places throughout the world, including Germany, Iceland and Okinawa.

It was during his time in Okinawa that Don experienced a pivotal turn in his career as a leader and Army infantry aviator. He was the original Commander of the Casper Platoon of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, a rotary and fixed wing group which was deployed to Vietnam in May 1965. During his first tour in Vietnam as the Commander of the Casper platoon, he was involved in a number of significant engagements, including "Operation Hump." During that operation, Don was able to save many of the infantry soldiers that were engaged in heavy combat with the Viet Cong on a battlefield known as "Hill 65."

Many soldiers made it to Don's Huey aircraft and as the already overloaded helicopter was taking off, a soldier came running out of the jungle. Don was alerted, "Wait there is one more!" and he touched back down and brought the soldier onto the aircraft, as he would not leave anyone to die in the field. Through expert flying and much bravery, the severely weighted down helicopter was able to take off to safety.

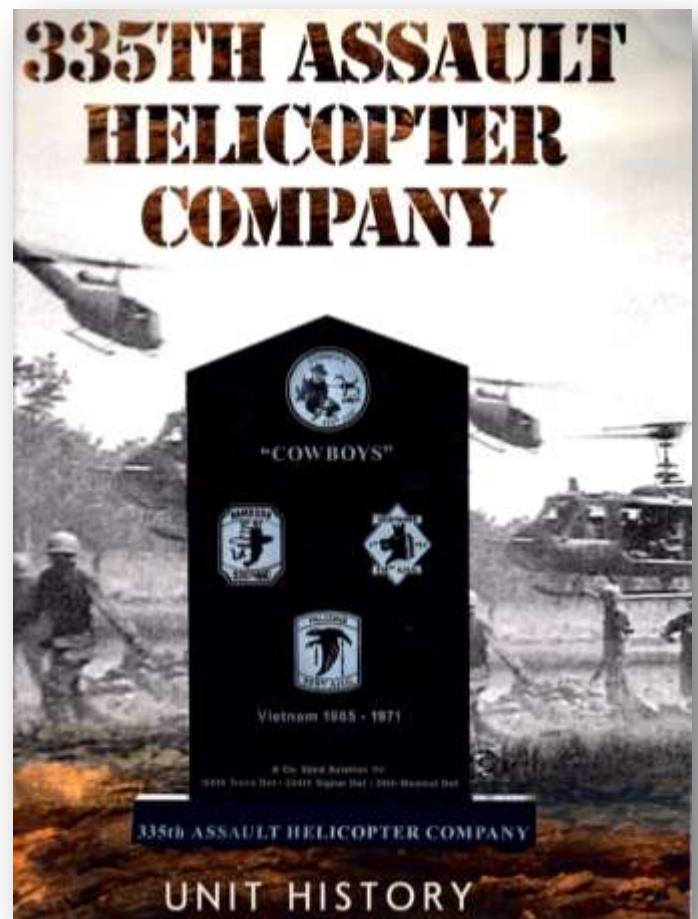
Many years after Don retired, he received a call from that last soldier from "Hill 65" saying, "I've been looking for you for 47 years." Don said, "Do I owe you money?". The soldier said, "No, but I owe you my life." Had it not been for the bravery of Colonel Donald Bliss and his skill as a pilot, many would have been lost that day, including, and most certainly that last soldier.

For his actions that day, he was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross.

Don's bravery was once again tested during his second tour to Vietnam. In a surprise attack on the US Embassy in Saigon during the Tet Offensive of 1968, Don commanded the first helicopter to arrive at the US Embassy. In the night-long battle he was able to bring combat troops into the Embassy and rescued civilian workers fleeing for their lives. For his bravery, he was awarded the Bronze Star.

Rest Easy, Colonel

Great unit history....



"Most of the information contained in this book was gathered at the National Archives at 4205 Suitland Road in Suitland, Maryland, which is just outside Washington, DC. Other information was gathered through constant probing of former members of the 335th A.H.C. who managed to retain small portions of Cowboy history over the years. The overview of the COWBOYS / Caspers was assembled by John Hoza and provides an accurate and concise summary of the early years."

Dominic P. Fino, Jr.

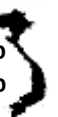
335th A.H.C., Crew Chief, 3rd Platoon Falcons, '69-'71

This book, all 322 pages of it, is available on-line at:

https://www.amazon.com/335th-Assault-Helicopter-CompanyCowboys/dp/0692139605/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=335th+ahc&qid=1576256322&sr=8-1

Note:

While we do not run ads in our newsletter, we do include with our compliments notices of war-related books authored by troopers of the 173d Airborne, the 503rd Infantry Regiment, and attached units. Please email a copy of your book's cover along with a brief description to rto173@att.net for inclusion in a future issue. Ed



Casper Aviation Platoon Casper Platoon Story



Plucking Troops From A Hot LZ



A Casper Platoon Huey crew prepares to extract a team of 173d Airborne Brigade Sky Soldiers from an extremely Hot LZ.

Photo Credit: National Archives (*negative7680*) #11C6

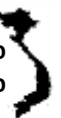
A Casper Platoon UH-1 Huey, its door gunner firing at a well-concealed enemy, prepares to extract troops of the 173d Airborne Brigade pinned down near the Ai Loa River in the Binh Dinh Province on March 29, 1970.



With circling gunships providing support from above, Sky Soldiers return VC sniper fire and Casper completes the extraction. Such rescue missions were frequent, necessary and fraught with danger.

Troop-carrying Huey "Slicks" often had to descend into determined VC & NVA fire to pluck the stranded soldiers from their predicament. Often these missions succeeded, with largely inconsequential damage to the helicopters. At other times, the toll on the choppers was a heavy one.

[Thanks to Ned Costa, Casper Platoon]



John Wayne Pfannenstein

A/2/503, RVN

Passes

John Wayne Pfannenstein, 68 of Fayetteville, passed away on Monday, October 22, 2019 at the V. A. Hospital Hospice Center.

John was born May 25, 1951 in Huntsville, Alabama to the late Melvin E. and Donna M. Pfannenstein. He walked in the boot steps of his father into a career as a Soldier. At 17 years of age he was ready for Army life and to taste the world. John left Glen Burnie, Md. going to Ft. Bragg joining the Airborne. He served in Vietnam with several different



units, a Paratrooper with the 101st and 173rd, an Infantryman with the Americal, 25th and 1st Division, a Door Gunner and Pathfinder with the 1st Aviation Brigade and the 281st Assault Helicopter Company, plus Special Forces. John was presented with many accolades and awards in his 24 year career, two of his most cherished were the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) and his Pathfinder Badge. As a young man he served three combat tours consecutively while being wounded several times which did not inhibit his career or life choice.

The 1st Sgt did his 24 years retiring here at Ft. Bragg, NC. John was too young not to continue working and he began a new career as a JROTC instructor. John spent 23 years in that role and enjoyed teaching young students the skills for life.

John Wayne Pfannenstein whether he was a soldier or a civilian made many friends. He was always helpful, dependable, funny and a great friend to many. 1st Sgt Pfannenstein was a casualty of Vietnam suffering the effects caused by Agent Orange.

Funeral services were held in Arlington National Cemetery at a later date with full military honors. He leaves behind his most favorite thing, his grandson, Benny; his much loved daughter, Deanne Brenes and her husband Michael, and his beloved wife of 46 years, Mary. He is also survived by an extended family.

The family would like to express their deepest appreciation and love to Dr. Dawn Conquest and the staff of the CLC unit of Ramsey St. VA Hospital. Your compassion and constant attention to Mr. P's every need means more than you can ever know.

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.

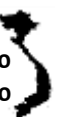
If you are the recipient of one of these valor awards while on the roster of or attached to the 2/503d in Vietnam, please email a copy of the official Army citation, and a VN era or current photo of yourself, to rto173@att.net Also, if you are in possession of a valor citation of a 2/503 buddy, please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





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.



Michael J. Cosmo
C/2/503, '69

According to the Bronze Star citation, on January 26 1969, Michael's unit was "moving down a trail when they were fired upon by a machinegun position approximately fifty meters to their front. During the fight that ensued, one soldier was badly wounded and his body lay out in front of the main element of the company. [Then] Specialist Cosmo along with another soldier valiantly crawled forward of the company and withdrew the wounded soldier back to the main element of the company, even though the enemy machinegun was still operational and they were placing their own lives in great jeopardy by doing so."



so sudden that four men were wounded forty meters forward of the friendly perimeter. Lieutenant Hayden unflinchingly ran through the hostile barrage to his left flank machine gun position which was receiving the heaviest attack. He immediately reinforced the position with his own fire and directed his gunners' fire, enabling two of the men outside the perimeter to crawl into the camp. Completely disregarding his own safety, Lieutenant Hayden ordered his men to maintain maximum fire and crawled out to the wounded men. Despite the hail of fire flying over him from two directions, he managed to get one man back to the safety of the camp. When he returned for the second man, however, a group of insurgents focused their fire on him and seriously wounded him. Assuming that they had killed him, five insurgents were moving closer to the friendly force when Lieutenant Hayden wounded or killed all of them. Two of his men then crawled from the perimeter to help him. He told them to help the other casualty back toward their perimeter, covered their withdrawal with intense fire, then returned to safety himself. First Lieutenant Hayden's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



Pedro I. Garcia
HHC/2/503, '66
(KIA, 3/25/67)

For gallantry in action. Private First Class Garcia distinguished himself by gallantry in action on 5 October 1966, while serving as platoon medic. The company encountered a dug-in enemy force while conducting a search and destroy operation and engaged the enemy at very close range. With complete disregard for his own life and safety, Private First Class Garcia advanced through a hail of enemy small arms fire and hand grenades to treat the wounded. He dragged wounded men back to safer positions to treat them. He continued to move throughout the area exposing himself to the enemy fire on numerous occasions, completely disregarding his own wounds in order to ensure that all the wounded men were cared for and prepared for evacuation. Private First Class Garcia remained with wounded men until the fight ended. Private First Class Garcia's bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.



Gregg P. Lyell
A/2/503, '67

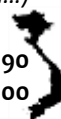
For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Private First Class Lyell distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 13 January 1967 in the Republic of Vietnam. On this day, Company A was conducting a search and destroy mission in the Iron Triangle, a known Viet Cong stronghold. The area was heavily booby trapped and contained numerous tunnel complexes. As the company came upon the first tunnel entrance, it was necessary to send an individual into the hole to search and clear the tunnel. Private First Class Lyell unhesitatingly volunteered and at the risk of his life, moved into the complex to clear it. He carried out his mission fully realizing that the confined quarters offered little opportunity to defend himself against the enemy if contact was made. Private First Class Lyell repeated this heroic action on numerous occasions during that day and contributed substantially to the successful clearing operations conducted. Private First Class Lyell's actions was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



Philip P. Hayden
C/2/503, '67

The Distinguished Service Cross is presented to Philip P. Hayden, First Lieutenant (Infantry), U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company C, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade. First Lieutenant Hayden distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 1 February 1967 while serving as rifle platoon leader during a surprise attack by a Viet Cong force near Phuoc Vinh. The insurgents opened fire with machine guns, rifles and grenades. The hostile attack was

(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)
James A. Bednarski, C/2/503, BSV
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)
Carmen Cavezza, A/2/503, SS (citation needed)
George S. Colson, II, B/2/503, BSV
Michael J. Cosmo, C/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Gary Cox, D/2/503, SS (citation needed)
Charles R. Crews, A/2/503, BSV
Eugene R. Davis, B/2/503, DSC
Michael Deeb, HHC/2/503 (citation needed)
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)
John L. Leppelman, C/2/503, BSV (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
Daniel F. McIssac, E/2/503, BSV
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
Alfred J. Paul, III, C/2/503, BSV
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)
Arthur C. Stang, III, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Johnson A. Steidler, A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Robert L. Steven, Jr., A/2/503, BSV (citation needed)
Robert Sweeney, C/2/503, BSV
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)

Project will likely take a number of months to complete.



Doc Scott, The PTSD Guru, Honors His Buddy Col. Nathan Thomas

Our former office manager Debbie's husband, co-founder of *Welcome Home Vets* and lifelong mentor and friend, Col. Nathan Thomas, entered the military as an E-1 and retired as an O-6.

My man who takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin'.
May the Force be with you Nate!

*Bless you brother,
For your life of service,
For your friendship,
And for your encouragement.*

Scott Fairchild, Psy.D, LTC (Ret)

"Doc Scott", 82nd Abn Div.

Baytree Behavioral Health, Melbourne, FL

Tireless soldier fought on the battlefield, against discrimination

By MARIA SONNENBERG

October 30, 2019

Retired Col. Nathan Thomas led soldiers at wars overseas and fought for civil rights at home. He served three tours in Vietnam ... and was clubbed by police on horseback.



Retired Army Col. Nathan Thomas, the first African-American lieutenant colonel in the Minnesota National Guard, led Special Forces in Vietnam, in the invasion of Panama and in Desert Storm, but his greatest combat experience took place on the streets of Birmingham and Selma, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement.

Along with 599 other marchers, Thomas was beaten by police as the whole country watched during Bloody Sunday on March 7, 1965.

Within a week of the incident, President Lyndon Johnson introduced a comprehensive voting rights bill to Congress that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, opening up the polls to African Americans throughout the South for the first time since the end of the Reconstruction.

Thomas also attended the historic March on Washington in 1963 and was interviewed by PBS for a documentary on the 50th anniversary of the event.

Being thrown in jail set the stage for Thomas' discipline in military as well as civilian life, and he has excelled at both. Thomas' military kudos include the Legion of Merit, Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, Army Commendation with Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Achievement Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal, among many others. He was elected into the Court of Honor at Camp Ripley, Minnesota for outstanding heroism, courage and devotion to country.

He also has received significant recognition in civilian life, including the NAACP Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award, the Pyramid of Excellence Award and Kare 11 (Eleven Who Care) Community Award. President George W. Bush presented Thomas with a Daily Points of Light Award.

In 1972, Thomas moved to Minnesota to work at Children's Hospital in St. Paul. After serving in the active duty Air Force and Army for 15 years, he rejoined the military through the Minnesota Army National Guard under a degree program for officers to upgrade their careers.

He later was hired by 3M Corporation as an audio-visual manager in photography, winning several awards. He began volunteering by speaking at schools during Black History Month. For 10 years, he took two weeks off from work to teach teens in Selma how to pass college exams.

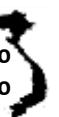
When he moved to Brevard County after 39 years of service in the military, Thomas continued leading by example, as Martin Luther King Jr. did.

At Stand Down events, Thomas provides food, clothing and assistance with transportation for homeless veterans. He helped create Welcome Home Vets, which assists veterans of all conflicts. At last count, he has mentored approximately 2,000 JROTC students in high school.

With Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in Cocoa, Thomas has helped to distribute more than 72 tons of food to struggling individuals and families in Central Brevard. He also traveled to Haiti to deliver supplies and build an orphanage for 180 children there.

A soldier's soldier, an advocate for human rights and an exemplary volunteer, Col. Nathan Thomas has always walked the walk for his fellow human beings since that day at Selma.

[Reprinted courtesy of Ms. Maria Sonnenberg,
Space Coast Daily]



John L. "Lepp" Leppelman

C/2/503, RVN

Passes



John Lewis Leppelman went home to the Lord on October 31, 2019 after a long and valiant battle with cancer. As he took his last breath at the VA Medical Center in Seattle, he was surrounded by his loving wife and three children. He was 71.

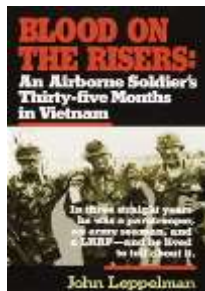
John was born in Visalia, CA on August 3, 1948 to Lewis Leppelman and Virginia Leppelman. He spent his youth shooting and hunting coyotes in the San Joaquin Valley, and as a teenager attended Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia. John was a patriotic young man and a true "red blooded American". When seeing that the conflict in Vietnam escalated, John answered his country's call and enlisted in the Army at the age of 17 with his parents' consent. When his mother asked what he was going to do in the service he proudly puffed out his chest and said "Paratrooper".

John was sworn into the Service on July 29, 1966 in Fresno, California. He did three tours in Vietnam. His first tour was with the 173d Airborne Brigade and John was part of Operation Junction City where he along with 844 paratroopers conducted the only military jump of the Vietnam War, and the largest since the Korean War. His second tour was with the 329th, 5th HBC (River Boats). On John's third tour he joined the "all volunteer" elite Airborne Rangers and was in the 75th Regiment, 2nd Battalion Charlie Company. There he became a LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol).

Known as "Lepp" by his comrades, John was a warrior. After his service in the army from 1966 to 1970, he was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds inflicted from a grenade explosion along with the Bronze Star with "V" device, the Army Commendation Medal, the Air Medal, SVN Cross of Gallantry, the Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Parachute Wings, and the Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Stars and one Silver Star.

John saved the lives of several men in combat during his service. John published a book in 1991 about his experiences in Vietnam titled "Blood On The Risers" and it was listed on the *New York Times* Best Seller list.

John is survived by his wife Sandra, his first wife Linda, his daughter Cori Gonzales, sons Kep and Luke, and an extended family. **Rest Easy Lepp.**



Edward Morris Tyree

A/2/503, RVN

Passes

Edward Morris Tyree, 73, of Lexington, NC, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at his home following an extended illness.

He was born July 13, 1946 in Rome, GA to the late James Morris Tyree and Mavis Babb Tyree. He is a 1964 graduate of Lexington High School and he attended Davidson County Community College. Edward retired from Norfolk Southern where he worked as an Engineer. He proudly served in the United States Army during the Vietnam War, where he was a paratrooper in the 173rd Airborne division and was a member of the Disabled American Veterans. He enjoyed swimming and driving sports cars.

In addition to his parents, Edward was preceded in death by his brother, William Allen Tyree.

Edward is survived by his son, David Allen Tyree of Gainesville, FL; sisters, Susan Wheeling of Winston Salem, NC; Jane Stanberry (Stan) of Fuquay-Varina, NC; 5 nephews, a niece and other extended family; sister-in-law, Sherry Tyree of Lexington, NC; and beloved long time friend and caregiver, Linda Fain and her family, all of Lexington, NC.

There was a memorial service held on September 30th, 2019 at the Salisbury National Cemetery, 501 Statesville Blvd., Salisbury, NC 28144, with full military honors.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Rowan County Honor Guard, P.O. Box 923, Salisbury, NC 28145.

Online condolences may be made at:
www.carolinacremation.com



Posted by: Jim Sheppard, 1/50th Association Historian

Robert Gasko was a member of the 1st Battalion 50th Infantry



As posted on the New Jersey Vietnam Memorial Pages



Bobby

Robert John Gasko, Jr. was born on September 16, 1949. His home of record is Mays Landing, NJ. Robert graduated Oakcrest High School in 1967. He was the Vice President of his Senior Class and was voted "Best Personality & Warmest Smile." Robert played baseball and football for the Lakers in his hometown.

Robert attended Rider College but then dropped out of school to work in his father's business, Gasko Pontiac Buick GMC, Inc. At that time, the draft was in effect to all young men not attending school. Bobby was drafted into the US Army, June of 1969.

Gasko served in the US Army and attained the rank of Private First Class (PFC). He served with the 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry, 1st Field Force Vietnam.

He married Janice Gillingham in the chapel at Fort Dix, NJ.

Gasko was killed in action on January 20, 1970. He died by friendly fire in Binh Thuan, South Vietnam. He was buried in Union Cemetery, Mays Landing NJ.

A scholarship is given every year in memory of 'Bobby' by his father, Robert Sr., to a baseball player in the graduating class at Oakcrest who possesses good sportsmanship qualities.

There is also a tree planted in the park in the center of town on Main Street, Mays Landing, and on a monument, his name is inscribed with several other fallen heroes for our community.

Four of his closest friends get together, year after year, for a golf outing (yes, Bobby also had a love for golf). They have a winners' memorial plaque and whoever wins keeps the plaque until the following year when they meet again.

Need we say more! Bobby has always been remembered and will remain in our hearts.

Many, many thanks to all those involved for having a street named after Bobby.

Information provided by Bob Gasko, Sr., Father
and Barbara Aiken, Sister.

Misadventure (Friendly fire)

By W. Killian, 4/29/17

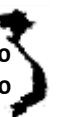
PFC Robert J. Gasko Jr. was an infantryman serving with B Company, 1st Battalion, 50th Infantry. On January 18, 1970, PFC Gasko volunteered to temporarily join another B Company platoon which was short a man for a three or four-day mission to help guard a trail in the mountains 20 miles from their base camp.

Sometime around 6:00 PM on January 20th, Gasko's squad leader sent him and another soldier out to set mines and guard the trail's perimeter. A couple of other soldiers were deployed nearby. The area was heavy with brush and trees. As darkness fell, Gasko and his partner were about 75 yards from the squad leader and the rest of the men, hidden from them by a berm.

At 6:32 PM, the squad leader went to search for the two soldiers whom he was unable to locate. In the dim light, he spotted an individual whose movement, according to Army investigators, "seemed furtive" and "who appeared to be trying to hide." The squad leader reportedly shouted "fire in the hole" three times (a command that says friendly fire is about to commence). Hearing no response, he fired several rounds. Upon realizing he had hit Gasko in the chest, the squad leader immediately called for a medivac. Meanwhile, a medic rushed to Gasko, whose chest was oozing blood.

The helicopter arrived in 18 minutes, fast time considering the remoteness of the area. Gasko was put on a stretcher and taken away. However, he had already expired.

[Reprinted courtesy of Bill Killian, taken from coffeldatabase.org and "Two Athletes, Two Soldiers" by Jack McCallum, *Sports Illustrated*, October 22, 2007]



Củ Chi tunnels



Entrance sign at the tunnels.



Part of the tunnel complex at Củ Chi, this tunnel has been made wider and taller to accommodate tourists.

The **tunnels of Củ Chi** are an immense network of connecting tunnels located in the Củ Chi District of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, and are part of a much larger network of tunnels that underlie much of the country. The Củ Chi tunnels were the location of several military campaigns during the Vietnam War, and were the Viet Cong's base of operations for the Tết Offensive in 1968.

The tunnels were used by Viet Cong soldiers as hiding spots during combat, as well as serving as communication and supply routes, hospitals, food and weapon caches and living quarters for numerous North Vietnamese fighters. The tunnel systems were of great importance to the Viet Cong in their resistance to American forces, and helped to counter the growing American military effort.

American soldiers used the term "Black Echo" to describe the conditions within the tunnels. For the Viet Cong, life in the tunnels was difficult. Air, food and water were scarce and the tunnels were infested with ants, venomous centipedes, scorpions, spiders and vermin. Most of the time, soldiers would spend the day in the tunnels working or resting and come out only at night to scavenge for supplies, tend their crops, or engage the enemy in battle. Sometimes, during periods of heavy bombing or American troop movement, they would be forced to remain underground for many days at a time. Sickness was rampant among the people living in the tunnels, especially malaria, which was the second largest cause of death next to battle wounds. A captured Viet Cong report suggests that at any given time half of a People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) unit had malaria and that *"one-hundred percent had intestinal parasites of significance"*.

U.S. campaigns against the tunnels



A trap door on the jungle floor leads down into the Củ Chi tunnels. Closed and camouflaged, it is almost undetectable.



The camouflaged trap door, now open.

(continued...)



The tunnels of Củ Chi did not go unnoticed by U.S. officials. They recognized the advantages that the Viet Cong held with the tunnels, and accordingly launched several major campaigns to search out and destroy the tunnel system. Among the most important of these were Operation Crimp and Operation Cedar Falls.

Operation Crimp began on January 7, 1966, with B-52 bombers dropping 30-ton loads of high explosive onto the region of Củ Chi, effectively turning the once lush jungle into a pockmarked moonscape. Eight thousand troops from the U.S. 1st Infantry Division, **173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team**, and the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment combed the region looking for any clues of PLAF activity.



A booby trap with punji sticks.

The operation did not bring about the desired success; for instance, on occasions when troops found a tunnel, they would often underestimate its size. Rarely would anyone be sent in to search the tunnels, as it was so hazardous. The tunnels were often rigged with explosive booby traps or punji stick pits. The two main responses in dealing with a tunnel opening were to flush the entrance with gas, water or hot tar to force the Viet Cong soldiers into the open, or to toss a few grenades down the hole and "crimp" off the opening. This approach proved ineffective due to the design of the tunnels and the strategic use of trap doors and air filtration systems.

However, an Australian specialist engineering troop, 3 Field Troop, under the command of Captain Sandy MacGregor did venture into the tunnels which they

searched exhaustively for four days, finding ammunition, radio equipment, medical supplies and food as well as signs of considerable Viet Cong presence. One of their number, Corporal Bob Bowtell, died when he became trapped in a tunnel that turned out to be a dead end. However the Australians pressed on and revealed, for the first time, the immense military significance of the tunnels.

At an international press conference in Saigon shortly after Operation Crimp, MacGregor referred to his men as Tunnel Ferrets. An American journalist, having never heard of ferrets, used the term Tunnel Rats and it stuck.

Following his troop's discoveries in Củ Chi, Sandy MacGregor was awarded a Military Cross.

From its mistakes, and the Australians' discoveries, U.S. command realized that they needed a new way to approach the dilemma of the tunnels. A general order was issued by General Williamson the Allied Forces Commander in South Vietnam, to all Allied forces that tunnels had to be properly searched whenever they were discovered. They began training an elite group of volunteers in the art of tunnel warfare, armed only with a handgun, a knife, a flashlight and a piece of string.

These specialists, commonly known as "tunnel rats", would enter a tunnel by themselves and travel inch-by-inch

cautiously looking ahead for booby traps or cornered PLAF. There was no real doctrine for this approach and despite some very hard work in some sectors of the Army and MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) to provide some sort of training and resources, this was primarily a new approach that the units trained, equipped and planned for themselves. Despite this revamped effort at fighting the enemy on their own terms, U.S. operations remained insufficient at eliminating the tunnels completely.

(continued....)





Sky Soldiers of the 2/503 view captured enemy weapons in Cù Chi in January '66. (Photo by Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter)

In 1967, General William Westmoreland tried launching a larger assault on Cù Chi and the Iron Triangle. Called Operation Cedar Falls, it was similar to the previous Operation Crimp, however on a larger scale with 30,000 troops instead of the 8,000. On January 18, 1966, tunnel rats from the 1st BN 5th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division uncovered the Viet Cong district headquarters of Cù Chi, containing half a million documents concerning all types of military strategy. Among the documents were maps of U.S. bases, detailed accounts of PLAF movement from Cambodia into Vietnam, lists of political sympathizers, and even plans for a failed assassination attempt on Robert McNamara.

By 1969, B-52s were freed from bombing North Vietnam and started "carpet bombing" Cù Chi and the rest of the Iron Triangle. Ultimately it proved successful. Towards the end of the war, the tunnels were so heavily bombed that some portions actually caved in and other sections were exposed. But by that time, they had succeeded in protecting the local North Vietnamese units and letting them "*survive to fight another day*".

Throughout the course of the war, the tunnels in and around Cù Chi proved to be a source of frustration for the U.S. military in Saigon. The Viet Cong had been so well entrenched in the area by 1965 that they were in the unique position of locally being able to control where and when battles would take place. By helping to covertly move supplies and house troops, the tunnels

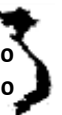
of Cù Chi allowed North Vietnamese fighters in their area of South Vietnam to survive, help prolong the war and increase American costs and casualties until their eventual withdrawal in 1972, and the final defeat of South Vietnam in 1975.

The 75-mile (121 km)-long complex of tunnels at Cù Chi has been preserved by the government of Vietnam, and turned into a war memorial park with two different tunnel display sites, Ben Dinh and Ben Duoc. The tunnels are a popular tourist attraction, and visitors are invited to crawl around in the safer parts of the tunnel system. The Ben Duoc site contains part of the original tunnel system, while the Ben Dinh site, closer to Saigon, has tunnel reconstructions and some tunnels have been made larger to accommodate tourists. In both sites low-power lights have been installed in the tunnels to make traveling through them easier, and both sites have displays of the different types of booby traps that were used. Underground conference rooms where campaigns such as the Tết Offensive were planned in 1968 have been restored, and visitors may enjoy a simple meal of food that Viet Cong fighters would have eaten.

Above-ground attractions include caged monkeys, vendors selling souvenirs, and a shooting range where visitors can fire a number of assault rifles, such as the M16 rifle or AK-47, as well as a general-purpose machine gun like the M60.

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C%E1%BB%A7_Chi_tunnels



Excerpt from....

Sky Soldiers Return to Vietnam

In 2001, a small group of troopers of the 2/503 accompanied by one 1/503 Sky Soldier and family members visited the tunnels at Cu Chi.

On the way to the tunnels we stopped at a cemetery dedicated to 14,000 people from that Province who were killed in the war with America. Art forms on the wall guarding the entrance depicted the VC struggle and battle with the "Big Noses," a term I later learned was used by our enemy to describe American soldiers.



The cemetery wall at Cu Chi.



Victor Charlie battling the "Big Noses" at Cu Chi Cemetery. Note the "U.S." on the helmet.

The tunnel system at Cu Chi is truly amazing. Most have three levels and were impervious to B-52 bombings. Everything from kitchens, meeting rooms, hospitals, latrines, water wells, ammo storage and more were contained underground in these interlocking tunnels. We learned the 25th Inf. constructed their base camp immediately on top of the tunnel system, and the VC would listen in on military communications and mission orders. It was reported, the VC knew on average eight days in advance of most U.S. planned operations!

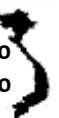


L-R: The late Craig Ford, C/1/503, A.B. Garcia, HHC/2/503, Mike Sturges, A/2/503, and A.B.'s son Loness have tea in the tunnels of Cu Chi.

Our guide at the tunnels is a Cu Chi resident, who as a child lived for eight years underground, as did hundreds or thousands of others. He performed his duties as guide but a few of us noticed he wasn't particularly thrilled with the job of escorting these American vets. Jack Ribera and Mike Sturges of A/2/503 chose to wear 173d colors and I noticed they received some looks of disdain from some of the older, local people – people who no doubt remember our unit patch from the war.

Whole artillery pieces would be fired by the VC, broken-down, taken underground until the enemy (us) passed, then brought out again, put together, fired, and again taken back underground. A complete tank captured from the ARVN was also buried and used against attacking forces in the area.

(continued...)



The VC would take unexploded ordnance, as well as bomb fragments, and fabricate them into weapons and booby traps to be used against us. Some of us are reminded of the time we carefully stepped over a booby-trapped U.S. bomb in the thick jungle during an earlier life.



Cu Chi tunnels were not made for big Troopers such as our buddy, the late Dale Olson of A/2/503....

In talking with some of our reinvaders, a number of us were gaining a new and different understanding and respect for the Viet Cong, their ingenuity and their commitment to purpose. (We would learn more about this adversary's abilities when we visited 3rd Field Army Hospital in Saigon which is now an arms museum).



VC tools of the trade...compliments of the U.S. armed forces.



....but, they were made for 2/503 "Chargin' Charlies" with former tunnel experience like Steve Haber.



Another VC welcome mat.



Careful where you step in Cu Chi Province, Mr. Charles has been here. Made from shell fragments.

Following our tour of the tunnels, Jack bought a drink concoction which had a cobra or some other kind of snake in the bottle. I suggested we buy a bottle to share right there but there were no takers, nor was I ready to drink snake piss!

From the tunnel system we all walked to a nearby mausoleum and while sitting on the front steps for a group photo a bunch of Vietnamese school kids happily hopped in the photo with us. It was evident these kids had no feelings of animosity toward these old American soldiers and their guests. I suspect their country's war with America gave them little interest.

(continued...)



Dept of Defense Expanding Access to Commissaries, Military Exchanges and Recreation Facilities

The Department of Defense is expanding commissary, military exchange, and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) retail privileges on U.S. military installations as specified in the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, included in the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019.

Starting Jan. 1, 2020, access will expand to include all veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans who are Purple Heart recipients, veterans who are former prisoners of war, and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible veterans under the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. While this expansion will extend eligibility to over 4.1 million new patrons, the Department expects little to no impact on current patrons in most locations. There may be some impact in areas with a high cost of living, but the Department is preparing to accommodate all new patrons.

"These new privileges recognize the service and sacrifice of these veterans and those that care for them," A.T. Johnston, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Military Community and Family Policy, said. *"If you or someone you know might be eligible for these privileges, share the message,"* Johnston said. *"Please help us ensure these veterans and caregivers receive the privileges they've been granted."*

New patrons eligible solely under this authority should be aware that the law requires the Defense Department charge them a small user fee to offset the increased expense incurred by the Department of the Treasury for processing commercial credit or debit cards used for purchases at commissary stores.

The Department of Defense is finalizing the details for these new privileges with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security and the Treasury. Information will be announced soon regarding installation access and the authentication process for these privileges.

<https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Factsheets/expanding-access-fact-sheet.pdf>



Vietnamese school kids with Sky Soldiers and their guests. Reinaders, L-R: Dale Olson, Steve Haber, Lew Smith, Joan Haber, Mike Sturges, Jack Ribera, Craig Ford, Loness Garcia, A.B. Garcia.

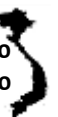
Upon entering the mausoleum we saw high walls listing names of the tens-of-thousands of dead, killed during Vietnam's wars with the Japanese, French and Americans, Chu Chi's version of the *Wall* in D.C.



Cu Chi's version of The Wall in DC.

The return trip to Saigon was at night and gave a whole new meaning to defensive driving. Being on the streets during the day is scary and dangerous enough, during the night it can be terrifying. When not a single, rough and tough paratrooper volunteered to take the co-pilot's seat, Steve's lady, Joan, bravely rode shotgun. *Airborne!*

Ed



Excerpt from the archives, 54 years ago....



AVAB-CG 22

January 1966

COMMANDER'S COMBAT NOTE NUMBER 91

DUTY IN VIETNAM

Operation CRIMP, the largest U.S. operation in Vietnam, was launched on 6 January 1966.

The objective of the drive through the Ho Bo Woods region in Binh Duong Province was to destroy the politico-military headquarters of the Viet Cong Military Region 4, which controls VC activities in a large part of South Vietnam. The mission was accomplished; the headquarters was found and destroyed and an enormous quantity of enemy documents and weapons was captured. This operation is a continuation of a string of conspicuous successes for the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate).



2/503 troopers loading up for convoy to Bao Trai airstrip and Operations Marauder and Crimp.
(Photo by LTC George Dexter, 2/503 Bn Cmdr)



2/503 convoy arrives Bao Trai airstrip.
(Photo by George Dexter)

Two brigades, the 173d Airborne Brigade and the 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, with numerous artillery and other supporting elements were jointly employed in the operational area just west of the Iron Triangle. The 1st Infantry Division was the controlling headquarters for the operation. The 3rd Brigade units operated to the south of our TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility).

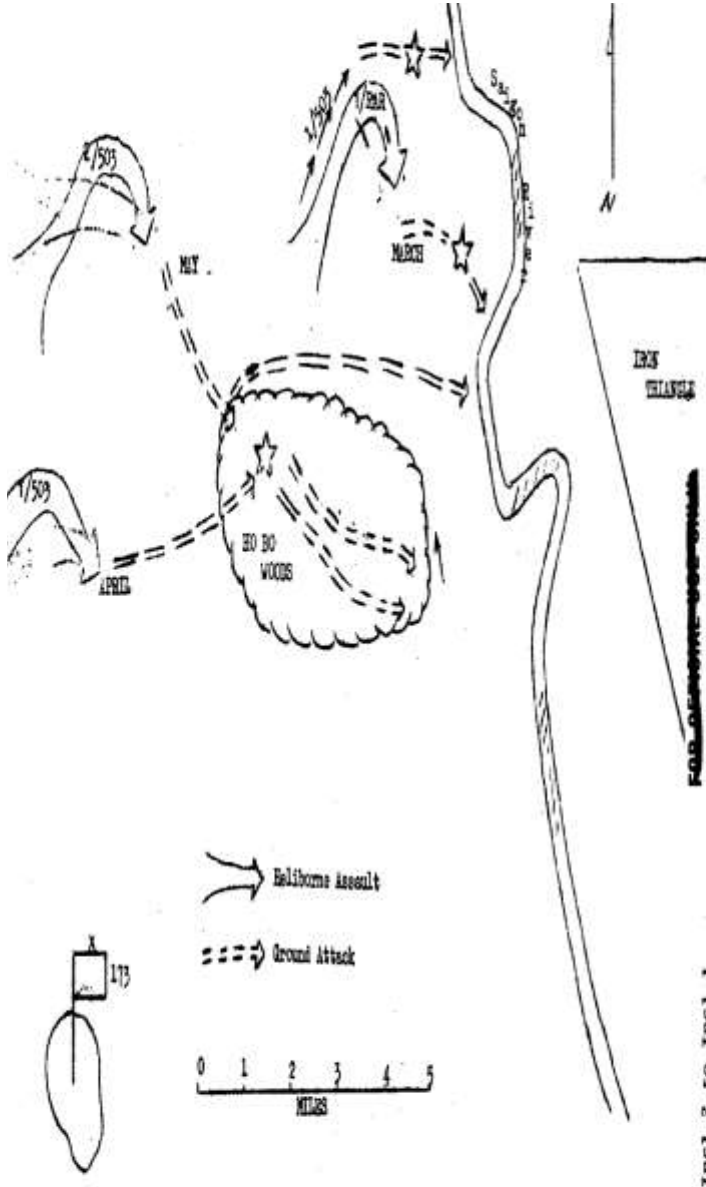
On D-Day the Brigade fire support base, command and control elements, and support elements moved by motor convoy from Bao Trai before daylight. This movement from the area of the Oriental River terminated Operation Marauder at 080530 January 1966.

(continued....)

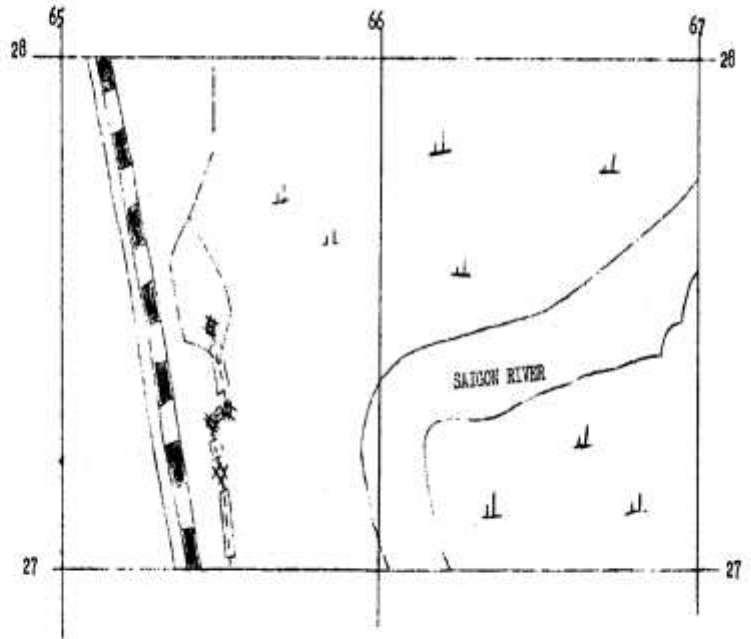


The road movement was closely coordinated to allow the motor elements of both brigades and the division fire support units to utilize the same road network into the area of operation. Additionally the road movement was timed to the "split second" to permit units to move to the forward troop safety limit as B-52's participated in the prestrike. (See Sequence of Events, Incl. #1).

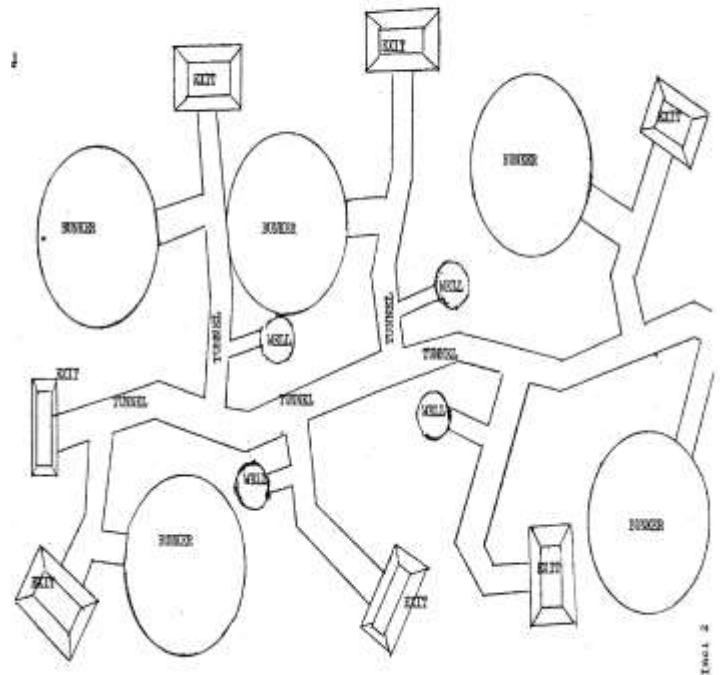
Incl. #1



Incl. #2
2/503rd Inf
Grid Designator II



VC Guide For Fortification Construction



As the Brigade fire support base closed into its new position the 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry, and 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment assaulted LZ's March, April, and May. Two battalions of the 3rd Brigade were helilifted into an LZ to the south. (See Chart at Incl #2). One battalion of the 3rd Brigade moved to Trung Lap by road convoy, and then moved into the operational area by foot.

1/RAR made the initial assault, landing on LZ March at 0930 hours after an intense artillery and air preparation which had followed the B-52 strike.

(continued....)



The Australians met light resistance near the LZ and the helicopters received ground fire on the "run in" for the assault. No major contact was made initially. Shortly after mid-day the 1/RAR engaged at least one VC company and a fierce fight ensued which continued till after dark with the Australians overrunning successive positions, extensive bunker systems and trenches constructed in depth. The fortifications were highly defensible and the VC fought tenaciously, obviously in determined defense of something that was of great value to them. The VC employed small arms and automatic weapons, mortars, 57mm RR, command detonated mines and booby traps. As darkness fell, the Australians were in command of the situation and were ferreting out the VC from their positions.



Aussie Tunnel Rat during Operation Crimp
(Web photo)

At 1200 hours 1st Battalion, 503d Infantry assaulted LZ April, with only minor opposition. The third assault was conducted by the 2/503d when they landed on LZ May at 1430 hours. Ground fire was encountered by the airlift force of the 145th Aviation Battalion on each of the assaults.

In rapid succession, the 1/503d secured the LZ and moved to and surrounded their objective, which was the reported location of the headquarters of Military Region Number Four (MR4). By the end of D-Day it became apparent that the intelligence target was not in the specific location that had been reported within the 1/503d. By that time it appeared likely that the target would be located within and northwest of the area of the 1/RAR.

The Brigade LOC, working triple-time and handicapped by a shortage of resupply aircraft, nonetheless continued their effective and professional job of fully supporting the combat actions without interruption throughout D-Day and for the remainder of

the operation. This type support is most essential in keeping the artillery and forward battalions in action.

Company D, 16th Armor departed the Brigade command and support base, Position King, early on D+1 to join and became attached to the 2/503d. Just to the north of Position King they encountered and routed a VC force preparing to attack the artillery base, having their mortars already in position. The armored personnel carriers (APC's) ripped through the enemy position, completely foiling his attack.



2/503 troopers land in Ho Bo Woods, Operation Crimp.
In foreground is Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter
(From George Dexter photo collection)

The 1/503d made no firm contact on D+1, the 2/503d also encountered very little opposition. The 1/RAR began a careful and systematic search of the elaborate tunnel and bunker system in their area, capturing weapons, ammunition, documents, and supply caches while making only light contact with VC rear guard elements. Among the prizes of the many weapons captured were four new 12.7mm anti-aircraft machine guns. The Aussies began employing tear gas to clear the extensive, multi-level labyrinth of underground tunnels prior to searching them.

Troop E, 17th Cavalry and elements of the Prince of Wales Light Horse began search and destroy operations in the western portion of the Brigade TAOR, capturing numerous VC suspects and several rice caches. This action was to be continued throughout the entire operation. The fast moving, well-coordinated actions of the cavalry troop covered a major portion of the Brigade area. During the night of 9-10 January 1966, squad-sized VC forces, supported by mortar fire, made four separate attacks on the perimeter of the 1/RAR, all of which were repulsed with enemy losses.

(continued....)



Troop E, 17th Cavalry, occupying a portion of the perimeter of the Brigade command and support base, also repulsed an attack by a platoon-size VC force.

1/RAR and 2/503d continued to search their areas by the use of platoon size patrols on D+2. Company D, 16th Armor was moved to, and became attached to, 1/503d. 1/503d moved to a new TAOR to the north during the afternoon. Company C of the 1/503d and D Company, 16th Armor, lead elements of the battalion, engaged a VC company as the battalion moved into its new base area, proving that the Viet Cong elements had not left that region. The pressure of the 1/503d attack, supported by air and artillery, forced the VC company to withdraw from contact. Here again the VC utilized another extensive complex of inter-connected tunnel systems to withdraw quickly.

The search of the vicinity also revealed a VC command post location, having a three-level tunnel system. The Australians employed a very effective end practical method of searching these tunnel systems. Personnel with a torch (flashlight) and a TA-312 telephone entered the tunnels, using the telephones to report items of significance. By measuring the wire as it was played out, the depth and extent of the tunnel was determined, and, of course, the wire served as a guide for the return to the entrance, required in the more elaborate systems. 2/503d also found documents and supply caches in their area, though there was little evidence of recent occupation.



Ho Bo Woods, communist sign in abandoned village
(George Dexter photo)

The RAR patrols continued to find a maze of tunnels and mutually supporting positions in their area and captured additional weapons and large quantities of documents, many of extremely significant intelligence value. Contacts with small groups of VC were made throughout the day.



2/503 Sky Soldiers advance towards objective during Operation Crimp
(George Dexter photo)

E/17th Cavalry conducted a search and clear operation to the north of Position King on D+2. Contact was made a short distance from their perimeter and maintained throughout the day as the cavalry troop and elements of the PWLH relentlessly pursued the scattering VC elements. Air strikes and artillery were employed to cut off and destroy the dispersing enemy personnel with considerable success.

The major contact made on D+3 was in the 1/503d area as it began operations in the new TAOR north of the Australian positions.

(continued....)



The battalion encountered well-laid defenses in depth, bunkers and trenches interlaced by tunnels. Small arms fire from concealed positions and booby-traps took their toll as the battalion swept through and searched the area, capturing weapons, equipment, and ammunition supplies. The enemy positions were overrun by 1230 hours and a systematic search of the complex tunnel system was begun.

The 1/RAR continued the search of their area, continuing to find hidden entrances and hidden chambers in the tunnel systems.

2/503d neared completion of the sweep of the southern battalion TAOR, making light contact. Trenches and bunkers continued to be discovered.



2/503 Bn Cmdr LTC George Dexter at an abandoned house in Ho Bo Woods, Operation Crimp
(George Dexter photo collection)

The 12th and 13th of January were marked by sniper action and the difficult, painstaking task of carefully searching the underground network beneath the infantry battalions. Analysis of the huge quantities of documents captured began to reveal intelligence information of immediate operational value and the organization of the captured headquarters was disclosed. Most of the 13th was spent destroying and contaminating the tunnel and bunker systems. CS-1, a powder contaminant with long-lasting effects, was used for the first time and should prove quite effective. It was placed throughout the tunnel systems by placing a long line of detonation cord where desired. Crystallized C5-1 was then placed along the detonation cord just prior to the explosion. It is hoped that this approach will prove to be a lasting deterrent.

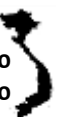
On D+6, 14 January 1966, the infantry battalions were extracted from the operational area back to the Snakepit at Bien Hoa utilizing both UH1-D and CH-47 helicopters. Elements in the Brigade command and support base returned to base camp by road convoy the same day. It was found that the large, cumbersome CH-41 should be used only in the initial lifts from each extraction zone.

The civilians in the area of operation had lived under VC rule for many years. Consequently, they were thoroughly indoctrinated by the VC and willingly supported them. Due to this condition, the decision was made to evacuate the population to a secure location where they could not interfere with or betray our military operations. Initially after evacuation, all refugees were briefly interned at the Brigade POW collecting point. Here they were fed and given medical attention. 150 pounds of clothing were distributed to the refugees and 394 "T" shirts marked "173d Airborne Brigade, Airborne All the Way" were given to the children. Later, after interrogation, those not confirmed as VC were further evacuated to the refugee processing center located at Trung Lap. After a total of 1,935 refugees had been processed, it became evident that adequate foodstuffs, housing and means of control did not exist at the District and Province level to continue their evacuation; thus the decision was made by the Vietnamese officials to cease evacuation of refugees. On one occasion a herd of cattle, water buffalos, chickens and pigs were herded from a VC redoubt into the district capital, but, as in the case of refugees, adequate facilities did not exist for their care and control to justify continuation of this practice. During this operation over 26,000 pounds of VC rice were extracted and turned over to the District Chief.

In Psychological Operations, seven loudspeaker and leaflet missions were flown over the TAOR with over 200,000 leaflets being dropped. The primary psychological theme used throughout the operation was one emphasizing the overwhelming strength of the Allied Forces and the ultimate destruction of the VC if they continued to resist.

The preparation for deploying to the CRIMP operation area was different in that last minute detailed planning and execution by the Support Battalion was required to terminate one operation and start another from the field....

(continued....)



....There was the requirement to evacuate refuse artillery brass and unneeded supplies and bring in the exact amounts of necessary items that could be loaded on the vehicles for the initiation of CRIMP.



Fr McCullough and RTO Tom Conley in cemetery during Operation Crimp
(George Dexter photo)

CRIMP was the second operation that followed on the heels of a previous operation without the Brigade's return to Bien Hoa. This, however, was the first time that the forward support base was established in an area not adjacent to an airfield. Resupply from Bien Hoa to the forward support base was accomplished solely by rotary-wing aircraft. The Support Battalion rigged, loaded, unloaded and distributed more than 450 tons of supplies using 100 CH-47 ("Chinook") sorties in six days. A/82d Aviation Company flew 254 "Huey" missions to provide ammunition, water, rations and other supplies to the forward infantry positions. Our Maintenance Company repaired over 50 weapons, radios and vehicles during the operation.

The practice of moving the Clearing Station from our Medical Company into the forward support base has long before been proved sound. A good number of the wounded have been processed no farther than the forward clearing station, treated and then returned to duty. The major asset, however, is stabilizing the seriously wounded until they can be moved to the well established operating rooms.

The Support Battalion makes the 173d a truly separate brigade. Its performance has been exceptionally fine and represents a major contribution to our combat power by standing behind the infantry and those who support the infantry with supplies, transportation, maintenance and medical support.

The Engineer Company once again proved its versatility by establishing the water point in a relatively unsecure area during daylight hours and closing it back within the support base complex each night. By

operating in this manner we can be more selective in choosing a source for water without being restricted to the support base "goose egg."

The headquarters of the VC Military Region 4 was the objective of Operation CRIMP. Our Americans and Australians found, fixed, and destroyed it, thus causing the enemy untold damage by destroying one of his most secure base areas in Vietnam, taking from him many of his weapons, and capturing thousands of documents and records, revealing his plans, his organization, and much of his past activity. Once again we have found that the enemy cannot seriously contest us on the field of battle.

LESSONS LEARNED:

1. Clearing bunkers and tunnels is a slow and deliberate procedure which can be costly in terms of casualties. All means available, such as tear gas, flame throwers, smoke and demolitions must be employed in order to keep friendly casualties to the minimum.
2. The capture of the enemy documents during this operation possibly hurt the enemy more from a long range view point than did the loss of his personnel and weapons. These documents are contributing significant information about the enemy which will have a great impact on contributing to his complete defeat.
3. The civilians in this area were thoroughly indoctrinated. It will take a long term civic action process to win them over.
4. The price of entry is often costly. We should always plan to stay long enough to finish the job.
5. Firm decisions must be made with respect to treatment of civilians, travel restriction (such as river closures) and actions to be taken with respect to live stock.

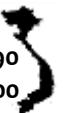
AIRBORNE, "ALL-THE-WAY"

ELLIS W. WILLIAMSON

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

(Photos added to this DoD report)

Note: See January 2012 Issue 36, Pages 41-49, for C/2/503 CO Col. Tom Faley's report *Operation Marauder: Allied Offensive in the Mekong Delta.*



US Army Paratroopers Hold Joint Exercise With Greek Forces in Kilkis

By Nick Kampouris
Nov 22, 2019



Greek and American Army paratroopers pose for a photograph in Kilkis.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Lucas)

US Army paratroopers and infantry units are currently holding joint military exercises with their Greek counterparts in the region of Kilkis, Central Macedonia, Greece.

The members of the American Army who are assigned to Bravo Company, the 2nd Battalion, part of the 503rd Infantry Regiment, as well as the 173rd Airborne Brigade, are in Greece to take part in these important joint exercises.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Lucas

The "Iron Sword" exercise is a joint training military exercise between elements from the 2nd Battalion, the 503rd Infantry Regiment, the 3rd Squadron, the 17th Cavalry Regiment, and the 71st Air Mobile Brigade.

The educational military training is taking place at the Urban Warfare National Training Centre in Kilkis from November 18 to November 26, 2019.

The exercise is designed to both strengthen interoperability between Greek and U.S. forces and to demonstrate the 173rd's commitment to its NATO allies.

The Facebook page of the US Embassy in Athens on Thursday posted three photographs of the American and Greek soldiers and airmen who are taking part in the event.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Lucas

Source:

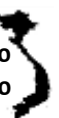
GREEK Greece
REPORTER

<https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/11/22/us-army-paratroopers-hold-joint-exercise-with-greek-forces-in-kilkis/>



"Sky Soldiers and Greek Paratroopers perform airborne operation."

(web photo & caption)



Silver Star

Dennis Wesley Moore, 27 SGT., 1/50th (Mech) KIA 1/26/70

HQ 1st Field Force Vietnam, General Orders Number 377, 2 April 1970.

For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. Sergeant Dennis Wesley Moore distinguished himself while serving as a platoon sergeant with his unit on 19 January 1970. Late that night, an ambush squad which had been pinned down by a company size North Vietnamese Army



unit called for a reaction force and a medical evacuation helicopter to remove a seriously injured man. Armored Personnel Carriers from Sergeant Moore's unit were moving to the contact area when the lead track became caught in a deep trench and the Platoon Leader was thrown to the ground unconscious. Sergeant Moore immediately took charge of the remaining vehicles and directed them to the battle site. When he arrived, the contact area was under intense hostile fire. Sergeant Moore received word that the evacuation helicopter was nearby and needed a landing zone. Realizing the danger that friendly fire posed for the helicopter, Sergeant Moore called a cease fire, but radio communications failed and the other units continued to maintain intense fire. Seeing no other way to insure the safety of the helicopter and the wounded man, Sergeant Moore ran two hundred fifty meters through both enemy and friendly fire to resume contact with the other carriers. He then consolidated the reaction forces and the ambush patrol to secure a landing zone for the evacuation of the wounded personnel. Sergeant Moore's heroic actions and disregard for his own safety in the face of hostile fire were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

Memories of a Fallen Ranger



I'd like to think I knew him,
Since in my arms he died...
Shredded by tiny fragments,
God knows the medics tried.

That he lived so long at all
Once the explosives blew...
Testifies to God knows what,
I wish that I knew too.

Thirty-two years later on
I can't recall his name...
Though I swore to not forget
My God, I feel such shame.
But if his name has vanished,
And God knows that is real...
His heroism hasn't dimmed,
His mem'ry stirs me still.
But my real disgrace I fear
Not his forgotten name,
But other's expectations
I tried but couldn't claim.

He'd written wife and daughter
Cheap Charlie had his pic
To draw a velvet painting
And make them less heartsick.

Reply to my condolence
Came as this simple plea
If I didn't mind too much
Send his picture cross the sea.

I wrote back that I would try...
And try we did in vain....
Days and weeks and months passed by
Time came to board my plane.

If I should recall his name
Though thirty years have passed.
May his actions give me strength
To write his kin at last.

I'd like to think I knew him,
Since in my arms he died...
Shredded by tiny fragments,
God, help my pain subside.

Sergeant Moore, I have remembered your name and I will never forget it again, just as I have never forgotten you or your heroism. May God bless you and your family forevermore.

Posted on *The Wall of Faces* by Ray Sarlin, CO, Co. C, 50(M)



Every Veteran Is a Hero to the American People, Pence Says

By Terri Moon Cronk | Nov. 11, 2019



Vice President Mike Pence today placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery, on the 66th National Veterans Day Observance, in Virginia.

Following the tomb ceremony, Pence and other VIPs took the stage at the cemetery's Memorial Amphitheater and he told veterans, "You are a standing miracle, from Bunker Hill to Belleau Wood, from San Juan Hill to Saipan and from the Coral Reef to Kandahar. Nearly 50 million men and women have donned the uniform of the United States and nearly 20 million of you still walk among us today, and as we speak, a new generation of American heroes and veterans is being forged around the nation and around the world."

The vice president said he was humbled as he looked out at the audience.

"I see men and women who served in World War II, in the Korean War and Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. I see many more who have stood watch over our country in times of peace, so if ... you've worn the uniform of the United States of America, would you please stand and give us [an] opportunity to show the gratitude of this nation for your service?"

"Our veterans really don't consider themselves heroes," Pence said. "To speak to them, most of them reject the very thought of it," he added.

"... [But] on this day it is our day to set the record straight; every veteran of the armed forces of the United States is a hero to the American people," the vice president said.

We remember those who served in combat, but on this Veterans Day, we also do well to remember that our veterans' contributions to our country continued long after you come home, he said.

"They continue to serve our country in civilian life. You lead in business and education and law enforcement and public service at every level, and wherever you go, you do what you always did when you were serving in uniform," Pence said.

"Our veterans show the same sense of duty and courage that defined their years in the armed forces," he added.

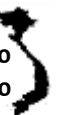
"For a veteran of the United States armed forces, service doesn't end when they hang up the uniform. Service is a lifelong calling," the vice president said. Pence said "Veterans Day is the day America honors all of those who stepped forward and answered the call to defend the nation at home and abroad."



"You came from the rest of us, but we know you are the best of us," he said. "And on this day and every day, we honor your courage, your patriotism and what you've done for us. You put on the armor, you stood in the gap, you defended our freedom. You counted our lives more important than your own, you stood for a cause greater than yourselves."

"To my fellow Americans who did not serve in uniform," the vice president said, "I challenge every American who did not follow a calling into service before the day is out ... to find a veteran. ... [Extend] your hands and say those words that they never ask to hear; that they deserve to hear every day."

"Find a veteran today and say, thank you for your service. Every single one of [them] deserves to hear it every day," Pence said.



David T. Wilson, LTC (Ret)

HHC/2/503, RVN

Passes

David Treat Wilson, 72, of Rindge, NH passed away on Oct. 27 from cardiac arrest.

Dave was born on Jan. 20, 1947, in Winston-Salem, N.C., a son of the late Arnold and Mae (Treat) Wilson.

He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Janice, his two daughters, Michelle and Danielle, his son-in-law, Colin, his two grandsons, Jacob and Bradley, his brother, Peter and wife, Sandra, and his brother Terry and wife, Sue, along with several nieces and nephews.

Dave had a very distinguished military career serving as both active Army and in the Reserves. He entered the Army in 1966 and completed Officer Candidate School, Airborne School, and Ranger School at Fort Benning, Ga. He served with the 173rd Airborne and the 10th Special Forces Group. For his service in the Vietnam War, he was awarded the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Air Medal, the Vietnam Service Ribbon and the Vietnam Campaign Ribbon. He retired from the Army Reserves in 1997 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Dave graduated from Franklin Pierce University in 1977. With his entrepreneurial spirit, he established his first business, Quantum Quality Inc., in 1994. Building on this success, Dave started his second business in 2004 to assist companies worldwide with quality certification. Dave was very active as an alumnus of Franklin Pierce and served as President of the Alumni Association from 1988 to 1992. Dave was the 1993 recipient of the Alumni Participation Award and the recipient of the Frank S. DiPietro Entrepreneurship Award in 2018.

Dave had an unendingly curious mind, a love of learning, history and books. He was generous, kind, stubborn and lived for adventure. He enjoyed single malt whiskey, music, fishing, hiking and boating. He will be greatly missed by his family, his great circle of friends, his communities, and his German Shepherd, Jethro.

A celebration in honor of Dave's life with full military honors will be held on May 23, 2020.

Rest Easy Colonel



John Thomas Mudrick

A/2/503, RVN

Passes



Stayton, OR – John, 72, born August 13, 1947, passed away on October 26 in Salem, OR.

He served his country in the US Army with the 173rd Airborne Brigade during the Vietnam War.

John raised his family as a faithful Catholic. He is survived by his wife: Susan; sons and spouses: John & Anna, Tobias & Terri, Joshua & Heidi, Abraham & Theresa; daughters and spouses: Heather & Damon Clute and Arielle & Albert Hernandez; and 23 grandchildren.

Recitation of Rosary was held October 30 followed by Mass of Christian Burial both at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Stayton. Interment was in St. Boniface Cemetery in Sublimity.



Rest Easy Brother



Veteran returns to New Bremen

By Tom Stankard

November 12, 2019



Niles Harris, who served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was honored Monday morning.

NEW BREMEN - Niles Harris found himself among the few surviving members of the U.S. Army 173rd Airborne Brigade on Nov. 8, 1965, in Vietnam.

Harris's infantry group was ambushed by 1,200 Vietcong soldiers who had deployed mines and were armed with machine guns and sniper rifles, the New Bremen native told middle and elementary school students during Monday's Veterans Day program at the school.

Only five soldiers in Harris' 30-man platoon survived, and Harris suffered a severe leg injury that kept him in Army hospitals for the next two years. On that unfortunate day, 48 total Americans died.

Most of the dead were just a few years older than the students he was addressing, Harris noted.

"They didn't make it back, and there's millions more who didn't make it back," he said.

From a young age, Harris said he idolized veterans and wanted to be a soldier when he grew up. He graduated from New Bremen High School in 1963, enlisted and was sent to Vietnam.

Harris now lives in South Dakota. About 15 years ago, while bartending there he met and later became friends with country music duo Big Kenny and John Rich of Big and Rich.

Big Kenny complimented Harris on a beautiful top hat sitting at the end of the bar. The next night, Harris presented Kenny with the hat during a concert.

The country music star continues to wear the hat at most concerts, Harris said. To thank Harris for his service, Big and Rich wrote *"8th of November"* that captures his story of what happened that day in 1965. Although he appreciates the song, Harris said the story is just one of a million.

Harris returned to New Bremen to be honored along with more than 100 other veterans by teachers and students.

Elementary/middle school principal Diane Kramer presented a plaque to Harris on behalf of the school district and the community to express gratitude for his service to the country. *"Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his brother,"* the plaque reads.

The best part about Veterans Day is seeing children in small towns showing respect toward veterans, Harris said.

"I haven't seen stuff like this at other places I've been to in a lot of years. It's good to see kids learning something about what went on and what is still going on," he said.

Harris said he enjoyed growing up in New Bremen and tries to return at least twice a year.

The celebration in New Bremen *"is one small spark in the flame of pride that burns across the country today and every day,"* Kramer said. *"Today people throughout the country will gather to remember, to honor and to pay gratitude to those who have served our country."*

Also during the ceremony, students performed and sang patriotic songs and showed a video expressing their gratitude toward the veterans. Harris said Veterans Day isn't just to honor him, it's for the millions of military members who did their jobs.



1/503 Sky Soldier, Niles Harris

**[Reprinted from web report by
The Daily Standard]**





Lineage and Honors Information as of 2 June 2010

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Lineage and Honors

**2D BATTALION, 503D INFANTRY REGIMENT
(THE ROCK REGIMENT)**



Constituted 14 March 1941 in the Army of the United States as Company B, 503d Parachute Battalion
 Activated 22 August 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia
 Consolidated 24 February 1942 with Company B, 503d Parachute Infantry (concurrently constituted in the Army of the United States), and consolidated unit designated as Company B, 503d Parachute Infantry
 Inactivated 24 December 1945 at Camp Anza, California
 Redesignated 1 February 1951 as Company B, 503d Abn Inf, an element of the 11th Abn Div, and allotted to the Regular Army
 Activated 2 March 1951 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky
 Inactivated 1 March 1957 in Germany and relieved from assignment to the 11th Airborne Division
 Redesignated 1 September 1957 as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2d Airborne Battle Group, 503d Infantry, assigned to the 82d Airborne Division, and activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (organic elements concurrently constituted and activated)
 Relieved 24 June 1960 from assignment to the 82d Airborne Division and assigned to the 25th Infantry Division
 Relieved 1 July 1961 from assignment to the 25th Infantry Division
 Assigned 26 March 1963 to the 173d Airborne Brigade
 Reorganized and redesignated 25 June 1963 as the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry
 Relieved 14 January 1972 from assignment to the 173d Airborne Brigade and assigned to the 101st Airborne Division
 Inactivated 1 October 1983 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and relieved from assignment to the 101st Airborne Division
 Assigned 16 December 1986 to the 2d Infantry Division and activated in Korea
 Inactivated 29 September 1990 in Korea and relieved from assignment to the 2d Infantry Division
 Assigned 16 December 2001 to the 173d Airborne Brigade and activated in Italy
 Redesignated 1 October 2005 as the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment
 (173d Airborne Brigade redesignated 16 September 2006 as the 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team)

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

World War II

- *New Guinea
- *Leyte
- *Luzon (with arrowhead)
- *Southern Philippines

Vietnam

- *Defense
- *Counteroffensive
- *Counteroffensive, Phase II (with arrowhead)
- *Counteroffensive, Phase III
- *Tet Counteroffensive

- *Counteroffensive, Phase IV
- *Counteroffensive, Phase V
- *Counteroffensive, Phase VI
- *Tet 69/Counteroffensive
- *Summer-Fall 1969
- *Winter-Spring 1970
- *Sanctuary Counteroffensive
- *Counteroffensive, Phase VII
- *Consolidation I

War on Terrorism

Campaigns to be determined

DECORATIONS

- *Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered CORREGIDOR
- *Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered PHUOC VINH
- *Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered DAK TO
- *Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1965-1967
- *Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Streamer embroidered IRAQ 2003

- *Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 OCTOBER 1944 TO 4 JULY 1945
- *Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1965-1970
- *Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Honor Medal, First Class, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1969-1971

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

JEFFREY J. CLARKE

Chief of Military History





From the archives....

2d Bn. Repels NVA After 7 Fiery Days NUI CUNG CHAP MTS.

The 2nd Battalion, S03d Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade, recently clashed with heavily entrenched NVA regulars on the eastern side of an enemy base area west of Phu My. Paragon Battalion troopers fought several fierce battles against the enemy while U.S. Air Force fighter-bombers pounded these rugged mountains east of Soui Cai Valley. The F-4 "Phantom" jets alone were credited with numerous enemy kills.

The fighting erupted early Friday, April 2, when Delta Company, 2nd Bn., ran into unexpected heavy resistance while conducting a routine operation in the Nui Cung Chap Mountains. Delta Co. received six rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle fire while waiting for supplies. One of the rounds landed 25 meters from the company's LZ (Landing Zone), the others on the LZ.

Another Paragon element, Echo Co. Recon Platoon, also made contact early April 2 with four NVA who were some 50 meters from the team. Two enemy were reported wearing khaki uniforms, one a black pajama and another a green uniform. After a short firefight, the enemy fled to the north and were pursued by Team Two, led by Sergeant Harry C. Posner, Hollywood, Fla. When the team came to a clearing, they made a reconnaissance, firing at suspected enemy ambush positions with 40mm grenade launchers. The team crossed the clearing and checked out the area. Five rucksacks containing 150 pounds of rice and the ambush position that had been set up to catch the pursuing Sky Soldiers as they came across the clearing, were discovered.

BRAVO CO.

Early on the afternoon of April 2, Bravo Co., 2nd Bn., 2nd Plat., patrolling the area to the north, took heavy fire from a nearby hilltop. Several men were sent up the hill to recon the area.

During the evening of April 2, Alpha Battery, 3d Battalion, 319th Artillery, provided artillery support out of FSB Crystal. Echo Co., 2nd Bn., pounded the suspected enemy locations with light and heavy organic mortar fire from FSB Moon.

With first light of Saturday, April 3, Bravo Co's 1st Plat. tried again for the ridge-top while the 3d Plat. circled around and scaled another peak to the south.

HEAVY FIRE

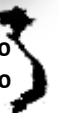
Moving up the slopes a foot at a time, Bravo Co., troopers drew heavy small arms and machinegun fire. As they fought their way closer to the ridge, North Vietnamese soldiers began throwing hand grenades toward the GIs.

"It was like playing dodge ball with live grenades," Sgt. Myers, a squad leader with the 1st Plat., said.

The 3d Plat. met only light resistance to the south. Its men ran over a ridge 200 meters away and opened up on the enemy bunkers located to the north. Some enemy soldiers escaped the fire and made their way down the northwestern side of the slope, disappearing in to the heavy underbrush.

First Plat. contact lasted over two hours. Some of the worst fighting took place on the steep hillside. The Reds held to the hilltop stubbornly, but not for long. The determined Paragon troopers, led by First Lieutenant Thomas Houf, Fulton, Mo., 1st Plat. leader, fought just as hard, moving step by step up the steep mountain. Specialist Four Dennis A. Terschak, a 21-year-old Lorain, Ohio, native, crawled through the heavy elephant grass to within six feet of an enemy machinegun position, waited for the right moment and assaulted the emplacement.

Source: *Sky Soldier Magazine*, Summer, 1971



Commander in Chief's Veteran's Day Remarks

November 11, 2019 / New York, NY



Commander in Chief in New York City on Veteran's Day

Well, thank you very much, Stanley. And thank you for your tremendous support of this wonderful parade. Today, we come together as one nation to salute the veterans of the United States Armed Forces — the greatest warriors to ever walk the face of the Earth. Our veterans risked everything for us. Now it is our duty to serve and protect them every single day of our lives.

It is truly an honor to come back to New York City, right here in Madison Square Park, to be the first President ever to attend "America's Parade."

To every veteran here with us, to the thousands preparing to march on 5th Avenue — it'll be really something — and to the 18 million veterans across our country: The First Lady and I have come to express the everlasting love and loyalty of 327 million Americans. I want to recognize Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary James Byrne for joining us. Thank you, James. Thank you, James. Great job. I'm pleased to report that our administration and all of the work that we've done — the veteran satisfaction with the VA is at 90 percent. It's the highest rate ever recorded in the history of this particular program. And that's awfully good, and we're very proud of you and the Secretary. Thank you very much. Great job.

Also with us is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. Thank you very much, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. Along with many other distinguished guests.

Thanks as well to everyone at the United War Veterans Council for putting on this incredible event, including Bill White, Doug McGowan, and a very special acknowledgement to someone who has devoted his life to this parade: Marine Vietnam veteran Vince McGowan. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you, each of you, and all of the supporters whose generosity make this parade possible. Tremendous amounts of work has been done, and tremendous, frankly, amounts of money has been donated. And we appreciate it, and we appreciate Stanley.

We're very glad to be joined as well by the Honorary Grand Marshal of the Parade, Marine Corps Commandant General David Berger and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Troy Black. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Let us also show our profound appreciation to the 2019 grand marshals of the parade who have served in World War Two, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and Iraq.

This morning, as more than 30,000 patriotic Americans line the streets of Manhattan, we carry on a noble tradition that began one century ago. In 1919, the people of this city filled block after block to welcome home General Pershing and his 25,000 American soldiers after victory in World War One.

Just a few years before, many of those soldiers had boarded ships not far from here at Hoboken Port. More than 4 million Americans fought in the Great War, and more than 116,000 made the ultimate sacrifice.

At the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month, in 1918, the Armistice was declared, the war had come to an end, and the Allies achieved a great, great victory. Every year since, on November 11th, we have shared our nation's deepest praise and gratitude to every citizen who has worn the uniform of the American Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marines.

We are profoundly moved to have with us veterans of World War Two, including one of the grand marshals, Woody Williams. Thank you. Thank you, Woody. Thank you very much, Woody.

To each veteran of the war: The glory of your deeds will only grow greater with time. This city is graced by your presence. This nation is forever in your debt. And we thank you all.

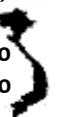
We're also pleased to be joined by veterans of the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the War on Terror. You are the reason our hearts swell with pride, our foes tremble with fear, and our nation thrives in freedom. Would you please stand so that we can honor your heroic service? Please. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all.

Each year, this parade highlights one branch of our military. This year, we honor the elite masters of air, land, and sea — the legendary Leathernecks, the feared Devil Dogs, the "first to flight": the United States Marines. Let's hear it. That's great.

Yesterday, we celebrated the Marines' 244th birthday. That's pretty good. The Few and the Proud are always faithful, and they always win.

I also want to thank the Marine Corps Law Enforcement Foundation, which provides scholarships to children of our fallen heroes. To every Gold Star Family: We will stand by your side forever.

(continued...)



It is very fitting that the Veterans Day Parade begin right here in New York City. Since the earliest days of our nation, New York has exemplified the American spirit and has been at the heart of our nation's story of daring and defiance.

On July 2nd, 1776, the British Armada sailed into New York Harbor, numbering more than 400 ships and carrying more than 30,000 men. The British came here to snuff out what they thought was just a minor American Revolution. Didn't turn out to be that way. But the Redcoats did know — what they did know was they were going to have a problem, but they didn't know that New York would meet them with the fearsome power of American patriots.

In World War One, New York regiments like "Harlem Hellfighters," the "Lost Battalion," and "the Fighting 69th" were revered all over the globe.

During World War Two, 63 million tons of supplies and more than 3 million service members shipped out of New York Harbor.

On September 11, 2001, the whole world saw the horror and responded to America's wicked enemies with unwavering courage, unbreakable spirit and resolve that is deeper than oceans, fiercer than fires, and stronger than steel.

Last week, I was honored to award the Presidential Citizens Medal to an extraordinary American: Rick Rescorla. Rick enlisted in the Army at the recruiting center in Times Square, became a great war hero in Vietnam, and then became head of security at Morgan Stanley in the World Trade Center. On September 11th, he saved 2,700 lives before giving his own. Today, we are immensely grateful to be joined by Rick's son, Trevor. Thank you, Trevor. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. To Trevor and every 9/11 family, we pledge to never, ever forget.

The towering spirit of strength that we see in this city lives within the heart of every American warrior. From the snow of Valley Forge to the jungles of Vietnam, from the forests of Belleau Wood to the beaches of Normandy, from the mountains of Afghanistan to the deserts of Iraq, that spirit has helped our fighters defeat tyrants, conquer fascism, vanquish communism, and face down terrorism.

Just a few weeks ago, American Special Forces raided the ISIS compound and brought the world's number one terrorist leader to justice. Thanks to American warriors, al-Baghdadi is dead his second in charge is dead, we have our eyes on number three, his reign of terror is over, and our enemies are running very, very scared. Thank you. Thank you.

Those who threaten our people don't stand a chance against the righteous might of the American military. In a few weeks, we will mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge — our nation's bloodiest battle of World War Two. More than 47,000 Americans were wounded, and 19,000 gave their last breath for their country.

We are proudly joined today by a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, a native New Yorker who is 94 years old and still going very, very strong: Corporal Jack Foy. You look good, Jack. You look good.

Jack enlisted in the Army right out of high school. He fought through brutal months of the campaign in northern France. On Christmas Eve, after marching nearly 100 miles in the snow in sub-zero temperatures, he arrived outside the town of Bastogne in Belgium. For two weeks, Jack fought under ceaseless artillery fire and helped push the enemy back from a critical road. At one point, a mine blew up and it destroyed his vehicle, badly hurting many. He was wounded three times, but he kept on fighting.

After the Allied victory at the Battle of the Bulge, Jack fought for the remaining nine months of the war — across the Siegfried line, up the Moselle River, through the Rhineland, and all the way across Germany until he reached the gates of Ohrdruf concentration camp, the first Nazi camp to be liberated. That was number one. That was a big, big event.

As Jack has said about the Battle of the Bulge, "When the chips were down and the situation was desperate, the American soldiers stood up to be counted. For a brief moment in history, these men held our nation's destiny in their hands. We did not fail." Thank you very much, Jack. Great.

And, Corporal Foy, we will forever be proud of what you and your fellow soldiers achieved for all of humanity.

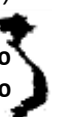
Also here with us today is Lauren Mathews, the granddaughter of a Battle of the Bulge veteran who has since passed away. His name was Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds. Like so many of our veterans, Roddie never talked about the war. Lauren never knew her grandfather's story until she embarked upon a school project about 10 years ago.

Roddie was in the 422nd regiment, which was overwhelmed when the Nazis launched their surprise assault. He and his men fought for three treacherous days before being taken as prisoners of war.

After they arrived at a prison camp, the German commander sent an order over the loud speaker. The Jewish-American soldiers were all told to step out of line during the roll call the next day. Knowing the terrible fate that would come to his Jewish comrades, Roddie immediately said, "We're not doing that." He sent orders to have every American step out of line with their Jewish brothers-in-arms.

The next morning, 1,292 Americans stepped forward. The German commander stormed over to Roddie and said, "They cannot all be Jews." Roddie stared right back; he said, "We are all Jews here."

(continued....)



At that point, the German put a gun to Roddie's head and demanded, "You will order the Jews to step forward immediately or I will shoot you right now through the head." Roddie responded, "Major, you can shoot me, but you'll have to kill us all." That's something. The German turned red, got very angry, but put down his gun, and walked away.

Master Sergeant Edmonds saved 200 Jewish-Americans — soldiers that day. So proud to be Jewish and so proud of our country. Lauren, thank you for being here today as we remember your grandfather's unbelievable and exceptional valor. Lauren, please stand up. Thank you very much.

One of the 200 Jewish-American soldiers who was saved that fateful day is Staff Sergeant Lester Tanner. Lester is now 96 years old and he joins us here. Boy, you guys are looking very good. Ninety-six. Lester — you're really 96, Lester? I don't believe it. You're looking good. Thank you very much. Thank you also for your very noble service and for sharing this incredible story with the world. Thank you very much, Lester.

The men and women who have donned our nation's uniforms are the bravest, toughest, strongest, and most virtuous warriors ever to walk on Earth.

You left your families and fought in faraway lands. You came face-to-face with evil and you did not back down. You returned home from war, and you never forgot your friends who didn't return, including prisoners of war and those missing in action.

Every day, you think of them and pray for them. But your greatest tribute of all is the way you lived your lives in the years since. You raised your families, you endured the wounds of war, and you endured the pains of that memory. Yet, you keep going, you keep serving, you keep giving, and you keep loving. You volunteer at your local veterans post, and you keep in touch with your battle comrades. You support our Gold Star Families, you take care of our wounded warriors, and you stand alongside of our service members when they return from war.

On Veterans Day, our nation rededicates itself to our most solemn duty. While we can never repay our warriors for their boundless service and sacrifice, we must uphold with supreme vigilance our sacred obligation to "care for those who have borne the battle."

In just a minute, we will have a moment of silence and we will lay a wreath at the Eternal Light Monument. As we do, with God as our witness, we pledge to always honor our veterans and pay immortal tribute to those who have laid down their lives so that we might be free. Together, we must safeguard what generations of fearless patriots gave everything to secure. We will protect our liberty, uphold our values, and defend our home. We will ensure that righteous legacy of America's veterans stands as a testament to this nation from now until the end of time.

To every veteran here today and all across our land: You are America's greatest living heroes and we will cherish you now, always, and forever.

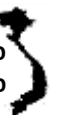
Thank you. God bless our veterans. And God bless America. Thank you. Thank you very much.



####

ITMFA

IT'S THE MILITARY'S FINEST AIRBORNE



For Guts or Glory?

By Chuck Dean / *Vet 2 Vet*

In the mid '80s it was like a light came on. I woke up to the reality of how spending a year in a war zone affected me.

I have some new peculiarities, but I didn't understand what was going on. I chalked it up to *"that's life, and let's get on with it."* However, I learned that if you put garbage into a can, no matter how tightly you clamp down the lid, it will pop off sooner or later.

That's why it is called *"POST-traumatic stress disorder"* – which means it usually comes along later on. And heaven forbid if you're not ready when that can explodes.

It happened that way for thousands of vets and many ended up in prison, with broken marriages and shattered lives. For me, I was lucky enough to find out before too much damage was done.

When I did wake up, I didn't settle for just getting help for myself, but was burdened for the sake of other vets who also struggled. That's why I began writing.

I wanted to get the word out to help vets avoid some unnecessary grief. I certainly knew I was no Hemingway but I didn't let that stop me.

I began writing simple explanations of PTSD and other transitional challenges for vets to understand. I am not a professional therapist but knew I could talk to vets in their voice and perhaps help them.

I began passing on information they may miss from complicated literature from the VA. I did not begin writing for the glory of being an author, I did it from the guts of being a vet that wanted to help others make a better transition.

My first book, *"Nam Vet: Making peace with your Past"*, writing in 1987, is still alive and well on Amazon.com. It's amazing to see where it has landed over the years.

It's been a humbling experience for a guy who barely passed his high school English courses.

Welcome home and have a safe Veterans Day.



Sky Soldier Chuck
HHC/1/503



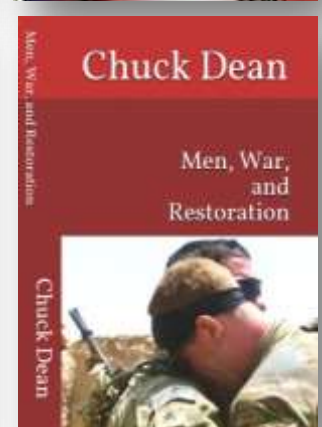
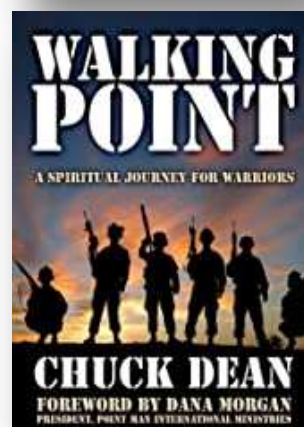
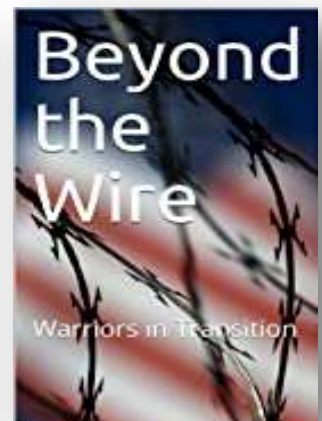
In the photo: Nancy Sinatra, General Myers, Joint Chief of Staff, and Anthony Principi, the then VA Secretary.

Chuck Dean served as an Army paratrooper 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>

Source:
Vegas Voice, November 2019



Visit Dean's Blog at <https://www.facebook.com/Books4Vets>



Multinational Training Readies Paratroopers on the Eve of Airborne Operation



GERMANY
09.16.2019

173rd Airborne Brigade Paratroopers of the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment; the 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion; the 4th Battalion, 319th Field Artillery Regiment; and the 173rd Brigade Support Battalion conduct sustained airborne training and combat preparation alongside their multinational partners and allies, a group from Italy and Turkey, in Ramstein Air Base, Germany, during Saber Junction 19 (SJ19) on Sept. 17, 2019.

SJ19 is an exercise involving nearly 5,400 participants from 16 ally and partner nations at the U.S. Army's Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels Training Areas, Sept. 3 to Sept. 30, 2019. SJ19 is designed to assess the readiness of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade to execute land operations in a joint, combined environment and to promote interoperability with participating allies and partner nations.

"We're jumping with 2-503 tomorrow," said Spc. Sean Sindelar of the 54th Brigade Engineer Battalion, *"time on target is 2000."*

The engineers, who will design and control the battlefield, will jump with Chosen Company of 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment.

"We're going to be moving the enemy to where we want them, and [Chosen Company will] conduct ambushes," said Sgt. Rogelio De La Garza.

The four battalions of American paratroopers will be taking off from Ramstein Air Base in 11 chawks over the span of six minutes, beginning at 1910.



Hours earlier, the multinational partners will conduct their own airborne operations. At 1400, American jumpmasters will exit Italian paratroopers from an Italian operated C-130 Hercules aircraft. Combined with a Turkish jump, the afternoon operations will present a show of force before the American entrance into the national battleground of Hohenfels Training Area.

(U.S. Army photos by Spc. Ryan Lucas)

Security Scan



A Sky Soldier does a security scan while participating in Exercise Full Tang at Baumholder Training Area in Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, Nov. 19, 2019



Know your military....



Medal of Honor Monday: Army Sgt. Maj. Christian Fleetwood

Nov. 25, 2019 | By Katie Lange

After President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, many black men joined the Army to fight for the Union and their freedom. One of them was Christian Fleetwood, who became one of 17 black soldiers to earn the Medal of Honor during the Civil War.



Fleetwood was born on July 21, 1840, into a free family in Baltimore, Maryland. He was educated in the home of his father's employer, a sugar merchant, and later graduated from Ashmun Institute in Oxford, Pennsylvania. The school is now Lincoln University; some notable alumni include Thurgood Marshall and Langston Hughes.

According to the Library of Congress, Fleetwood worked for the Maryland Colonization Society and traveled to African countries. He later published Baltimore's *Lyceum Observer*, which was one of the first black newspapers in border slave states.



Seven months after Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Fleetwood joined the Union Army as part of the 4th U.S. Colored Infantry. He quickly rose to the rank of sergeant major.

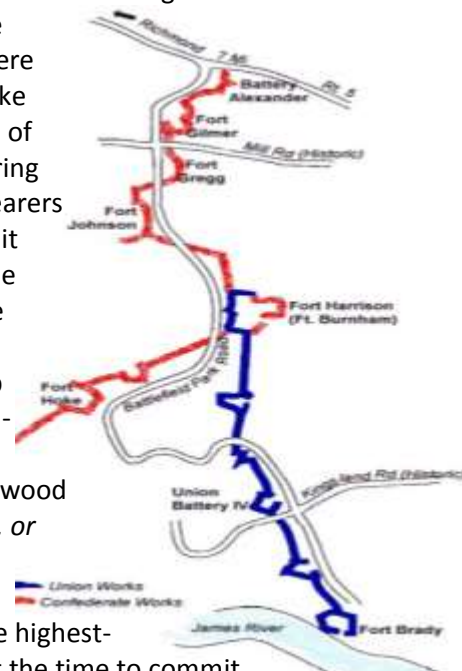
About a year later, he would earn the Medal of Honor.

On Sept. 29, 1864, Fleetwood and his fellow soldiers were fighting near Chaffins Farm, a large open bluff between Richmond, Virginia, and the James River. Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered troops to attack northward from the river to capture the city.



During the battle, Union soldiers overwhelmed defenders inside Fort Harrison and captured the strategic area of New Market Heights, where Fleetwood's brigade was sent to fight.

At first, they were repelled, but they were eventually able to take the hill with the help of reinforcements. During the fight, two flag bearers from Fleetwood's unit were shot. While one soldier picked up the regimental colors, Fleetwood picked up the U.S. flag. According to the Medal of Honor citation, Fleetwood *"bore them [the flag, or 'colors'] nobly through the fight."*



He was 23 and the highest-ranking black man at the time to commit actions that would earn him the Medal of Honor.

Fleetwood was honorably discharged from the Army in 1866. He settled in Washington, D.C., and spent the rest of his life working for the district and federal government. In 1887, he became the commander of the D.C. National Guard's 7th Battalion. He remained in that position until 1892.

Fleetwood was actively involved in musical organizations and also organized a Colored High School Cadet Corps. He died in 1914 at the age of 74. At his funeral, the D.C. National Guard acted as an escort — a fitting tribute to a man who spent much of his life building it.

Thank you, Sgt. Maj. Fleetwood, for breaking barriers and leading the way!

This article is part of a weekly series called "Medal of Honor Monday," in which we highlight one of the more than 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients who have earned the U.S. military's highest medal for valor. (Source: DoD)



Simple ramblings by a once simple soldier....
Sometimes, war makes people ramble.

Bowling for 25¢ a Game While Drinking Coffee and Smoking Cigarettes at 5 a.m.

December 1966, finally rolled around. For the longest time it seemed as if it would never appear. Just a year earlier, on the preceding December nearly to the day, I had arrived the 2/503 in Bien Hoa as an FNG and part of the early build-up to the war. This young California boy had somehow completed the *Kill! Kill! Kill!* training at Ft. Polk in Louisiana, the Morse Code instruction at Ord north of my home outside of L.A., followed by the school for jumpers at Benning which I had joined to do, not so much out of a desire to become an elite soldier, but having two older brothers who were paratroopers kinda made it obligatory, then a short stint as a Screaming Eagle. I was MOS and jump ready for war, or so thought the army, and along with thousands upon thousands of others, Vietnam, that exotic sultry ancient miss, replaced the ballfields and virginal lasses of the small bergs from whence we came.

For some of us, most of us perhaps, it seems to take a lifetime or a good portion of it trying to make some sense of having been to war, perhaps because war by its very nature is senseless. For some of us war is ever lasting, it's momentous, like marriage, the births of our children, it's memorable, only different. War leaves its mark on us, from the highest private to the lowest general, like a hidden tattoo gone wrong, one only we can see when we choose to uncover it, or when it uncovers itself to us, uninvited, unwelcome, unwanted, but we own it, and we own it forever. We see this in our buddies, and the soldiers who fought in WWII and Korea, in the kids from the Sand and other battle-grounds, we readily see their hidden tattoos.

We would count the days to when we could leave war; we looked to the time when we would be "short timers"-- some carried sticks to remind themselves they were short timers, while other war fighters could recite the days and hours to when they would return to their ballfields, to the enticements of the awaiting virgins, to their own innocence, not knowing they had forfeited their innocence to the rigors and demands of war.

Those little towns with their baseball diamonds and the unsullied lasses which we left behind became almost mythical; we thought them to be better than they really were, for the most part ... but anything and almost everything was better than war.

When I get home, when I get back to the world, boy, everything will be great, so many of us mused. But like my buddy, Scotty, and so many others like him, they found their bergs and ballfields had changed, the maidens had all been deflowered, the world they couldn't wait to return to was no nirvana as was promised by their yearnings, never then realizing it was them who had changed, they didn't fit anymore. And so back to war they went, like hooch buddies Scotty and Lee and so many others – they were unique sorts who had been successfully molded into war fighters, and war fighters they would remain for decades.



L-R: Hooch buddies Scotty Colson, Dak To survivor, and Lee Braggs, multi-tour unique sorts, both retired SFC.

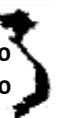
One older brother, Bob, like Scotty and Lee, also was a war fighter of merit and multiple tours, another unique sort; not everyone can be one. Yet Bob's army career with the SF was cut short on his third tour by well-placed enemy rounds taking out one of his eyes and leaving souvenirs of shrapnel in his brain and body – he was not a civilian soldier like his kid brother, like so many civilian soldiers whose names are carved in marble alongside the war-fighters-by-choice.



Sneaky Pete older brother Bob in Japan, his war fighting days over.

Yes, if December would just get here everything will be fine; the virgins are waiting for me. I'll leave this place of death and maiming and fear behind. I don't care much for war, I'm pretty sure of that. I wanna get back with my friend, Kenny, and as we once did, we'll go bowling for 25¢ a game while drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes at 5 a.m.

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



Combat Normal?

Our good buddy, Sky Soldier Extraordinaire, Gary “Cap” Prisk, Col. (Ret), of C/D/2/503 fame and drudgery, after reading a preview of my rambling on the preceding page sent in a note stating we’re all “combat normal”. My reply to Cap: “Combat Normal?!! Are you freaking nuts?!!! Oh, that is combat normal.” 😊 Ed



And here we find Cap, some time, somewhere in Vietnam, flanked by two of his “Hill People”, being combat normal.



Veterans can now access information through Health Records on iPhone

In honor of Veterans Month this November, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is rolling out nationwide access for Veterans to their VA health data, alongside their health records from other health care providers in one place, in the Health Records section of the Health app for iPhone.

Now, patients will be able to see their medical information from various participating institutions, including VA, organized into one view – covering allergies, conditions, immunizations, lab results, medications, procedures and vitals – and will receive notifications when their data is updated.

“We have delivered Veterans an innovative new way to easily and securely access their health information,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *“Veterans deserve access to their health data at any time and in one place, and with Health Records on the Health app, VA has pushed the Veterans experience forward.”*

This capability was developed through VA’s Veterans Health Application Programming Interface (Veterans Health API), first revealed in February, and has topped 2,000 users. The Veterans Health API allows private sector organizations to create and deploy innovative digital applications that help Veterans access their health records in new ways. Health Records data is encrypted and protected with the user’s iPhone passcode, Touch ID, or Face ID.

Beyond this effort with Apple, VA plans to partner with other organizations to bring similar capabilities to other mobile platforms.

Defense Department Announces Cost of Living Increase to Retired Pay

Nov. 7, 2019



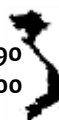
Today, the Department of Defense announced annual cost of living adjustments that will benefit military retirees and survivors during calendar year 2020. Most military retirees will receive a 1.6 percent increase to their retired pay beginning with the pay they receive on January 1, 2020. Likewise, survivors of members who died on active or inactive duty, or survivors of military retirees who participated in the Survivor Benefit Plan will, in most cases, see a 1.6 percent increase to their annuities beginning in January.

Survivors who are eligible for the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) will also receive an increase to their SSIA payments that reflects this 1.6 percent adjustment. The maximum amount of SSIA payable will be \$323 beginning in January.

These cost of living adjustments are calculated based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers for the four quarters ending with the third calendar quarter of 2019 (July, August, and September 2019), and generally go into effect for all pay received beginning in January 2020.

Those military retirees who retired during calendar year 2019, and all military retirees who retired under the REDUX retirement system receive a slightly different annual cost of living adjustment. The complete list of updates to military retired and retainer pay, and survivor annuities, allowances, and premiums can be found at:

<https://militarypay.defense.gov/Pay/Retirement/Cola.aspx>





Those Who Hesitate ...Are Not Always Lost

Sky Soldier Bill Terry, A/3/319, reunion organizer extraordinaire, just reported all rooms at reunion central, the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dayton, for this year's 173d reunion there have been sold out. But, worry not. Bill has arranged a nearby over-flow hotel for troopers, family and friends still planning to attend.

You might consider booking your room early at this hotel before all rooms there too are spoken for:

173d Reunion Over-Flow Hotel
Marriott at the University of Dayton
1414 South Patterson Blvd.
Dayton, OH 45409
Phn: 937-223-1000
(You might mention you are attending the 173d Reunion)



Marriott at the University of Dayton



During the reunion you may want to visit the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force where you'll see this familiar ride.

Nothing to Worry About

In an excerpt from a new memoir, *'One Hundred Autobiographies,'* one man's advice about facing the draft during the Vietnam War

By David Lehman

The question was: How are you going to get out of the draft?

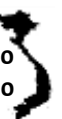
In my senior year of college I had a low draft number in the lottery and was nervous about having to go to Vietnam. Morris Simon, father of Rochelle, the curly-haired brunette on whom I had a crush, was considered the wise man of the synagogue, and it was to him that my father suggested I go to for advice. Mr. Simon was the head of the temple's *chevra kadisha*, which undertook the community's funeral arrangements and cemetery maintenance. After I had my say, he made this cheerful little speech.

"There's really nothing to worry about," he said. "You have to go to the army. Well, one of two things will happen. Either you'll be sent to Vietnam or you won't. If you're not, what's there to worry about? But let's say they send you to Vietnam. One of two things will happen. You'll get a cushy desk job in Saigon or you'll go to the front. If you get the desk job, there's nothing to worry about. But even suppose they volunteer you into the 173rd Airborne Brigade and God forbid they send you to the Mekong Delta as part of Operation Marauder and there are two short artillery rounds and you get wounded and the helicopter comes for you, one of two things will happen. Either you'll recover or you won't. If you recover, what's there to worry about? But even suppose you don't recover, one of two things will happen. You'll be buried in hallowed ground like a good Jewish boy or you won't. If you're buried in hallowed ground, what's there to worry about? But even suppose you're not buried in hallowed ground. Well," Mr. Simon paused, "well, then, my dear fellow, you're in one hell of a fix."

Excerpted from *One Hundred Autobiographies: A Memoir*. Copyright © 2019 by David Lehman, published by Cornell University Press.

Source:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/294431/nothing-to-worry-about>



POW-MIA vigil rekindles memories of Vietnam 44 years after the war ended



Berks Vietnam vets remember missing and captured comrades at a candlelight vigil in Reading City Park

WRITTEN BY RON DEVLIN

READING, PA — Robert Orzechowski, Vernon East and John Barnett roamed the hills around Reading City Park as kids, and served their country in Vietnam as young men. One survived the war, two did not.

On Friday at dusk, 70-year-old Orzechowski returned to the playground of their youth to pay respects to his fallen boyhood comrades. *"This place is a flashpoint for remembering,"* said Orzechowski of West Lawn. *"It's the tie that binds."*

Around 200 people gathered at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to observe National POW-MIA Recognition Day with a candlelight vigil. The event also included an Agent Orange Remembrance service.

"Since the war ended, thousands more have died from sickness and disease related to exposure to Agent Orange," said Bernie Bingham, president of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 131 in Berks County. The vigil was sponsored by the chapter and Berks County Forget-Me-Nots, a veterans recognition group. The vigil coincided with the 31st anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated on Sept. 24, 1988.

The names of 62 Berks County warriors who died in Vietnam, etched on a memorial stone, were read. A poem written by James Clouser read, in part, *"We miss our fallen brothers, and loved them very much. God help us pay them tribute, for what they did for us."*

Wreaths of roses were laid for three Berks County natives who remain classified POW-MIA. All served in the Air Force.

Lt. Col. Ralph Angstadt of Oley, missing since Oct. 18, 1966; Col. Thomas Dugan of Reading, missing since Dec.

13, 1968 and Capt. David Pannebecker of Womelsdorf, missing since March 27, 1972, were honored with a moment of silence.

The U.S. Defense Department reports that 81,996 Americans are classified POW-MIA in all of the nation's wars. In Vietnam, 1,587 were classified POW-MIA, 89 from Pennsylvania.

An Air Force Junior ROTC unit from Muhlenberg High School presented the colors during the national anthem. Flanked by a cadet squadron with swords drawn, Capt. Sara Webb explained the symbolism of the Missing Man Table. For Vietnam veterans, most in their 70s, the vigil offered a time for remembering.



Reading Eagle: Lauren A. Little | Nadine Dugan-Venzke of St. Lawrence places a hand over her heart for the National Anthem during the 2019 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Candlelight Vigil in City Park Friday. She later placed a yellow rose for her brother, Thomas Wayne Dugan, who was in the Air Force and has been since 1968.

Alfred Gaucker, 72, a retired Boyertown construction worker, was only a year out of Boyertown High when he was drafted. He served with a demolition unit in Vietnam in 1967-68. *"I knew a lot of guys whose names are on that memorial,"* he said. *"I graduated with one of them, Clyde Trievel."*

Joe Smutek was with the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1965-66. His unit had been sent to Vietnam to clear areas in preparation for the buildup of troops. A retired postal worker, Smutek wears the dog tags of deceased members of Chapter 131 pinned to his vest, beneath a 173rd patch. *"Events like this bring back memories,"* he said. *"But mostly I try to put it out of my mind."*

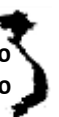
Orzechowski, a squad leader in a Marine Corps infantry unit, did three tours in Vietnam from 1967 to 1970. Patriotic and gung-ho, he enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from Mount Penn High School in 1967. *"It was a time,"* he recalled, *"when you did something like that."*

Web source: rdevlin@readingeagle.com



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2020 – Issue 90

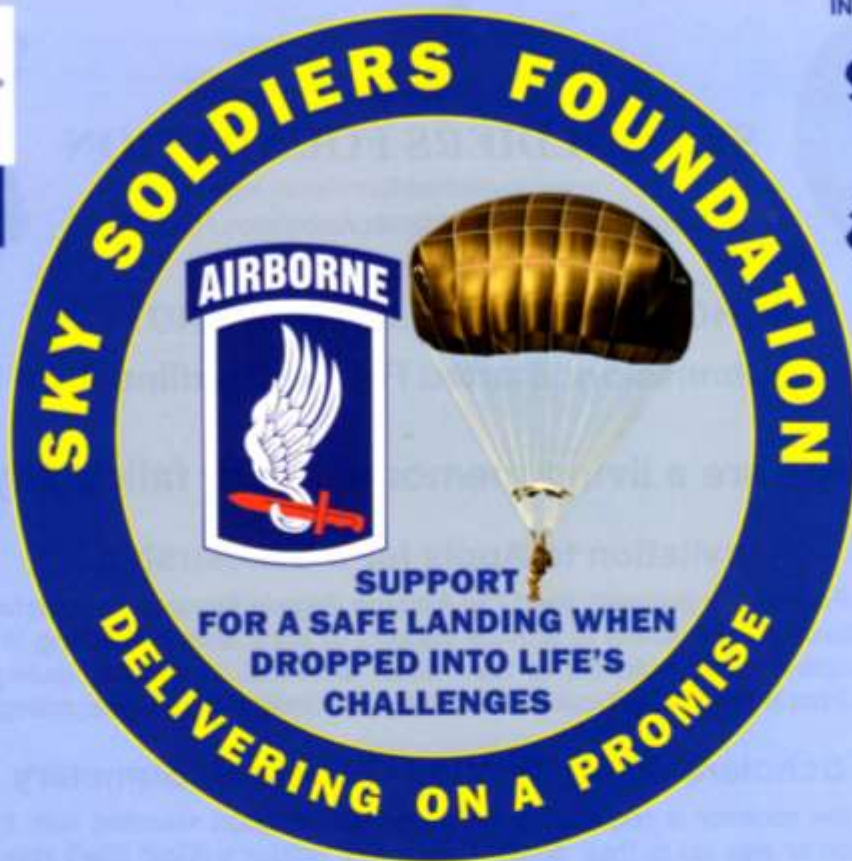
Page 95 of 100





41126

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



www.skysoldiersfoundation.org

JOIN OUR EFFORTS TO MAKE GOOD ON A LIFETIME COMMITMENT TO CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE, HAVE SERVED, THEIR FAMILIES

THE SKY SOLDIER COMMUNITY:

- GOLD STAR FAMILIES
- WOUNDED SKY SOLDIERS
- ACTIVE DUTY SKY SOLDIERS
- SKY SOLDIER VETERANS
- COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY LIVE
- PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS TO PREPARE PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS



Postal Service stamp remembers U.S. "Turning the Tide" in World War I

Lisa Y. Greenwade, in the Stamp Development department of the U.S. Postal Service, writes to remind stamp collectors that the World War I: *Turning the Tide Forever*® stamps are still available from the USPS. The stamps commemorate the nearly five million Americans, mostly men, joined the military, and about a million women entered the workforce to make up for the shortage of civilian labor. In spring 1918, U.S. forces played vital roles in the St. Mihiel battle and the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which helped bring an end to the war. ###



The Patch

The shoulder patch worn by the paratroopers of the 173d came into being with the activation of the Brigade in June, 1963. It was designed primarily by the Brigade Sergeant Major, Mickey Finn.



The red bayonet signifies a strike force; the white wing denoting that this strike force can be flown by transport aircraft and dropped by parachute into any assigned objective.

The tab reading "Airborne" above the shoulder patch indicates that the men of this Brigade are paratroopers and all equipment of the Brigade is air transportable.

The colors, red, white and blue, are our national colors.

The numerical identity of the Brigade can be readily simulated by various combinations of the design elements.

For example, the sword indicating one (1), parachute canopy equaling seven (7) and the three sections of the parachute canopy equaling three (3). Thus the 173d.

Al Houston

Source: Spring 1971, *Sky Soldier*
(Image added)

Astute Quote By The Commander in Chief at Rally in Tupelo, Mississippi 2019



“Anybody that says they’re a great salesman, usually, they’re not a very good salesman.”

We agree with you, Commander.

Everybody Wants To Be An Army Paratrooper On Okinawa To Boot!



JAPAN JUMP: A Marine jumps out of a KC-130 Hercules aircraft during parachute operations in Okinawa, Japan, Oct. 30, 2019. (DoD)

Hey Marines! We'll keep off your landing craft, you and your funny hats keep out of our airplanes! ☺



2/503d **VIETNAM** Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2020 – Issue 90

Page 97 of 100



VA completes home loan funding fee refund initiative

October 8, 2019

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently completed an aggressive initiative to process home loan funding fee refunds to Veteran borrowers, issuing more than \$400 million in refunds. The refunds are the culmination of a multi-year internal review of millions of VA-backed home loans spanning almost two decades.

“VA staff worked diligently throughout the summer reviewing 130,000 cases, which is an average of 16,000 loans reviewed per week,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. *“This effort included loans dating back nearly 20 years. Our administration prioritized fixing the problems and paid Veterans what they were owed.”*

The VA's Loan Guaranty Service (LGY) program identified more than 130,000 loans where a refund was potentially due. While some funding fees charged were found to be attributable to clerical errors, most fees were charged correctly. The exception was for those Veterans whose exemption status changed following the issuance of a disability rating after the closing of their loan. Letters were mailed notifying Veterans who were eligible for a refund.

VA has made several program and systems changes to provide Veterans and lenders with the most up-to-date information possible on a Veteran's funding fee exemption status. The changes include:

- Enhancements to Veteran-focused communications to better inform about the loan funding fee and when it may be waived as part of the loan transaction.
- Policy guidance directing lenders to inquire about a Veteran's VA disability claim status during the loan underwriting process and obtain an updated Certificate of Eligibility no more than three days prior to loan closing if the Veteran had a disability claim pending.
- System and procedural changes to ensure regular internal oversight activities swiftly identify Veterans eligible for fee waivers and potential refund cases.

Veterans who believe that they are entitled to a refund of the VA funding fee are strongly encouraged to call their VA Regional Loan Center at (877) 827-3702 to find out if they are eligible.

Information about VA home loan funding fees can be found on the LGY program website:

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

Source: VA

G1s Spring Ambush, Shatter NVA Force

LZ English - A 173d Airborne Brigade recon team trapped a large force of NVA in an ambush early on Oct. 1, killing 23 and wounding two, approximately 10 miles north of Phu Cat Air Force Base.

The recon team of E Co, 3d Bn, 503d Inf. opened up with claymore mines and hand grenades as the enemy passed through a thick coconut grove east of Fire Support Base Washington. Caught totally unaware in the still pitch black early morning hours, the enemy was first heard around 5:00 a.m. moving rapidly down a trail running southwest to northeast.

After initial contact was made with the enemy illumination rounds were fired from Fire Support Base Washington to light the surrounding area.

The enemy - seen running and crawling to the south and southeast were engaged again with automatic and semiautomatic fire. 81 millimeter mortar rounds were fired on withdrawal routes at this time to discourage any counterattack.

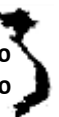
Making a sweep of the area a short time later, the recon team found 23 NVA dead and two wounded. Minutes later, a "dustoff" helicopter medevaced the two wounded prisoners from the area in addition to a "Chieu Hoi" who had voluntarily surrendered.

Arriving at 6:30 a.m., a reaction platoon from B Co., 3d Bn, 503d Inf., made a complete sweep of the area south and southeast of the ambush in an attempt to locate the escape route.

In a later ceremony, Brig. Gen. Ray Ochs presented the Silver Star to 1 LT Leonard Mackler, team leader, for the recon team, for his valorous actions in the highly successful operation. Awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device were the other seven members of the team. The CG shook their hands and congratulated Sgt. Douglas A. Landru, . of Woodinville, Wash., Spec. 4 Loyal T. Gibson, a native of Glendale, Ariz., Spec. 4 Bung J. Cornish, from Columbia, S.C., Spec. 4 Phillip D. Kelsay, of Bakersfield, Calif., Spec. 4 Alexander H. Callander, from Elmira, N.Y., Spec. 4 Glerald E. Carron, a native of Springfield, Mass., and Pfc. Eddie L. Powell from Houston, on the courage and daring which enabled so few to overcome so many.

Captured in the ambush were three AK 50s, four AK 47s, three 9mm pistol-type assault weapons, grenades, grenade launchers, 131 Chicom five M-26 13 B-40 rocket and 11 boosters.

Source: Spring 1971, *Sky Soldier*



PTSD and Sleep: Rest Easier with Treatment

Seek Treatment

If you have PTSD and sleep problems, ask your provider about evidence-based treatment options. Treating your PTSD can help improve your sleep problems. If your sleep problems continue after you complete a **front-line** treatment for PTSD, talk to your provider about options for sleep-related treatments.

If you have been diagnosed with insomnia, consider **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)**. CBT-I is a talk therapy that is the most effective treatment for insomnia. CBT-I does not require medication either. For people who are doing CBT-I, the National Center for PTSD has a free treatment companion mobile **CBT-I Coach**. Also, VA

has a free Veteran online training called **Path to Better Sleep** to help address insomnia symptoms.

Manage Sleep Difficulties

Treatment is the best option if you have lasting sleep problems. But these tips can also help temporarily:

- Have a 30-minute wind down time before bed.
- Go to bed when sleepy.
- Get out of bed if you find yourself "trying" to sleep. –
- Engage in a relaxation activity until you feel sleepy and then go back into bed.
- Have a consistent wake time.
- Make your bed and sleeping environment comfortable.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs before bed.
- Limit your caffeine use.

Visit the **National Center for PTSD's website** to learn more about the relationship between PTSD and sleep problems:

www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/sleep_ptsd.asp

Source:



"The nightmares were the hardest part because they were recurring. I didn't sleep well – I'd sleep an hour and a half, two hours at a time...it was kicking my butt. I was working at the time and I was tired all the time going into work..."

For U.S. Army Veteran (1980-2008) Kevin Cottrell, PTSD came with sleep problems that made it difficult for him to do his job.

Mr. Cottrell's experience is common. Many who are diagnosed with PTSD also have sleep problems. And when sleep problems last, they can have a negative impact on many parts of your life. The good news is, **treatment can help!**

Kevin shares in the National Center for PTSD's **AboutFace** video that getting treatment for PTSD helped him turn his life around: *"After I've received therapy, it's getting better, slowly but surely."*

Recognize Sleep Concerns

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I had difficulty sleeping (getting to sleep, staying asleep, waking up too early) several nights a week for several months?
- Do I feel sluggish or have low energy?
- Have I noticed changes in my concentration or mood?
- Do I dread the idea of trying to sleep, instead of looking forward to it?
- Have I woken up gasping for air?

If you answered yes to any of the questions, then talk with your provider about getting a sleep assessment and discuss sleep treatment options.



Farewell to Troopers of the 173d Abn Bde & 503rd PRCT and Attached Units Who Made Their Final Jump

Donald Bliss, 87

Palmyra, PA
November 7, 2019
Casper Plt Cmdr, 173d Abn, RVN

David Bruce Braaksma, 71

Harrison, AR
November 4, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Donald M. Carr, 69

Spotsylvania County, VA
April 16, 2018
173d Casper Platoon, RVN

Paul Coe Clark, Jr., 82

Troy, NC
July 27, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Joseph Martin "Skip" Coppola, 71

Raleigh, NC
January 13, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Michael Deeb, CSM, 87

Macon, GA
December 7, 2019
2/503, RVN

Robert Lee "Chito" Duarte, 75

Santa Maria, CA
October 31, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Robert "Bob" Esslinger, 75

Chatsworth, GA
August 21, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Jack Brodie Farris, Jr., LTG, 84

Charlotte, NC
December 14, 2019
3/503 Bn Cmdr, RVN

Melvin Ray "M.R." Hill, 77

Jacksonville, TX
October 17, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Alton "Jimmy" Holmes, 73

Callahan, FL
October 9, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Dr. Robert J. Kellard, 83

Danvers, MA
August 1, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John Lewis Leppelman, 71

Seattle, WA
October 31, 2019
C/2/503, RVN

Charles R. Montgomery, 70

Williamsburg, VA
October 11, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John Thomas Mudrick, 72

Stayton, OR
October 26, 2019
A/2/503, RVN

Jeffrey Joseph Paige, 71

Hampton, VA
October 4, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John Wayne Pfannenstein, 68

Fayetteville, NC
October 22, 2019
A/2/503, RVN

Charles Michael Roberts, Sr., 72

Madison, TN
October 13, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Peter E. Smith, 72

Agawa, MA
November 5, 2019
173d LRRP, RVN

Curtis N. Torbit, 70

Baltimore, MD
August 21, 2019
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Edward Tupaj, Jr., 70

Camp Verde, AZ
October 18, 2019
Spt Bn (Rigger PI), 173d, RVN

Edward Morris Tyree, 73

Lexington, NC
September 18, 2019
A/2/503, RVN

David T. Wilson, 72

Rindge, NH
October 27, 2019
HHC/2/503, RVN

Rest Easy Paratroopers

