



2/503d Vietnam Newsletter



For the men, and their families, of the 2nd Battalion, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) ~ We Try Harder!

Contact: rto173d@cfl.rr.com See all issues: <http://www.firebase319.org/2bat/news.php> March 2010 ~ Issue 13

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~

The VC trench line where A/2/503d was ambushed during Operation Phoenix in February 1966. This photo was taken by Mike Guthrie A/2/503d, following the battle.



Little-known benefit aids veterans. Those who served during conflict are eligible for up to \$19,000 a year

By PAULA BURKES

Published: February 8, 2009 on *NewsOk*,
<http://newsok.com>

A little-known veterans benefit for long-term care expenses is available to wartime veterans and their spouses, but the benefit is being overlooked by thousands of families, industry observers say.

The Special Pension for Veterans' Aid and Attendance pays up to \$1,644 a month, \$19,736 annually, toward assisted living, nursing homes or in-home care for veterans 65 and older who served at least 90 days and one day during wartime -- stateside or overseas. Veterans and their spouses can receive up to \$23,396 annually and spouses of deceased veterans, \$12,681.

Yet, an estimated \$22 billion a year goes unclaimed, said Don Soard, a volunteer with *Operation Veteran Aid* in Oklahoma City. In 2007, only 134,000 seniors nationwide received the benefit, which was established in 1952.

"Literally hundreds of thousands don't even know about it," Soard said. "Due to incomplete information, many disqualify themselves on income or assets or find the paperwork too burdensome."

Streamlined process

Soard helps families complete the necessary forms, so that approval comes in four to six months. The process is streamlined for vets who are blind or have memory issues and widows with medical needs, he said. Most applicants qualify and payments are retroactive, Soard said. The few who are denied on excessive liquid assets can seek financial advice to qualify, he said.

Soard started his volunteer mission two years ago, following the deaths of two family members who served in WWII. "If they'd known about this benefit, they'd have a much better quality of life in later years," he said. "Without it, many vets are forced to go on Medicaid."

Oklahoma is one of nine states where the welfare program doesn't cover assisted living costs. Assisted living often can be an alternative to a nursing home when 24-hour skilled care is not an absolute need, said Willie Ferguson, executive director of Legend at Rivendell in Oklahoma City.

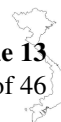
"But if someone just has Social Security and a small pension, it's not enough to live here," Ferguson said. According to a 2008 MetLife survey, assisted living in Oklahoma averages \$2,346 a month, while nursing homes cost \$153 a day for a private room.

Of 73 Legend residents, nine receive the veterans' special pension, including Tom Bowen, 77, of Moore. "Until I toured this operation, I had no idea the benefit was available," said Bowen, a retired engineer technician from the Federal Aviation Administration who served stateside during the Korean Conflict.

Bowen recently moved into the Legend facility following several mini strokes and a diagnosis of short-term memory loss. "It's been pretty hard trying to handle expenses on my own and being able to replace savings," said Marie Bowen, his wife of 57 years. Finding a nearby facility and learning about the special veterans' pension has been a godsend, she said.



To read more details see www.VeteranAid.org Thanks to **Herbie Baugh, 17th Cav**, for sending this in. Ed.



Coming Full Circle

In the February issue we asked if anyone could identify this 2/503d trooper who is known to disguise himself as an old man, and owes **Mike Sturges**, A/2/503d, and this editor many drinks. The photo is a young version of our good buddy Sky Soldier **Jack Ribera**, also of A/2/503d, taken at Camp Zinn in 1966.



A/2/503d trooper Jack Ribera at Camp Zinn, 1966

It was September 1966, during *Operation Toledo*, when Jack and Mike were confronted by a VC mine intent on taking both their lives. After both men were critically wounded, Mike held Jack, his hands holding Jack's brains in his head so they wouldn't spill out onto the jungle floor. The war ended that day for both troopers; barely alive these men were Dusted Off to places unknown.

Over time Mike healed, yet everyone believed Jack to be dead, including the U.S. Army which carried him as KIA. Yet, somehow, this paratrooper was not prepared to go, he would fight to live. Today, Jack's name incorrectly appears on *The Wall* in Washington, DC. These men looked death in the face and spit in its eye.



Mike & Jack introducing an old friend of theirs in Saigon at the War Arms Museum, 2005.

Following years of rehabilitation, with his dedicated and loving wife Peg at his side, Jack didn't give-up and she didn't give-up on him, and he did live. It's never been an easy struggle for Jack and his bride and their families, but they've persevered, overcoming setback after setback, yet always looking forward, together.

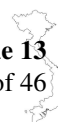
In 2001, Jack, Mike and a few other Sky Soldiers and I returned to Vietnam. While Mike had visited the country during an earlier trip, this would be Jack's and my first reinvasion. Frankly, neither of us were too keen on going back, but all of us who did drew strength from one another which allowed us to return to a place of a youth lost long ago.

On one of our day trips it was determined we'd visit the site where Jack and Mike nearly met their fate. Exiting the van filled with about 10 of us, Jack turned to me and, handing me his camera asked, "Smitty, will you take some photos?" I felt honored he would ask me that, and told that to both these men. While the others entered a nearby café, Jack, Mike and I strolled down the road, their eyes seeking out some spot only they could recognize. Giving them a wide berth, and as Jack had requested, I snapped a few photos of them walking together, holding each other, and weeping together.



These two men, these soldiers, these blood brothers had come full circle.

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



OPERATION TOLEDO

10 August - 7 September 1966
Phuoc Tuy & Binh Tuy Provinces

The Sky Soldiers uncovered over 125,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, over 50 tons of rice, 10 base camps, 75 huts and 5 tunnel systems in the May Tao Secret Zone.

Capt. Court Prisk (Ret)
CO C/1/319th

I told my brother Gary this before; but 2nd Bat was in the May Tao Secret Zone on the operations previous to Sioux City. The Brigade deployed in either late June or early July. The Brigade had moved down to the Xuan Loc area where the Aussies and the Kiwis set up their own separate base camps. After supporting the Aussie move, the Brigade proceeded east along Route I. The Artillery leaped-frogged from FOB to FOB as the Brigade moved east toward the May Tao Secret Zone.

Along the way east, three things happened in August 1966 affecting 2nd Bat and C Battery that won't be recorded in 173d history books: 1) Either B or D Company was supposed to clear an LZ for a FOB for Charlie Battery. Knowing we were going in on a secure LZ, I went forward with the first gun. We came under fire from a 50 Cal MG just as the Chinook lowered the M102 howitzer. We had a six man gun crew, myself, and the first sergeant. The LZ was anything but secure, whichever company was supposed to have cleared the LZ came back and rescued our butts. 2) About 36 hours later we moved east again. This time someone with a sense of humor put the battery into the remains of Ap Rung La, due north of the mountain where I slept in a graveyard. There were no buildings, and the two residences of the city were deemed to be VC, who were now dead VC. They were sitting in front of the remains of a fountain, fully dressed with their AK 47s on their laps and different signs tacked to their chests. (1) "Welcome to Ap Rung," B or D 2/503rd, and (2) "This time we made sure it was clear." Both Dinks were missing their right ears; must have been a family birth defect.

I don't know if you ever have a need for filler but the above was/is not in the history as far as I can tell.

(3) While at Ap Rung, called position *Grenada*, Charlie Battery had an RTO wounded and the 2nd Bn Mortar Platoon had an RTO killed (we placed the trooper in a poncho -- body bags weren't issued until sometime after I left Nam in April 1967). This was a month before BDUs were issued and two months before black insignias became mandatory. Most infantrymen took off the colored patches and didn't bother to sew the black ones back on. At that time a sure sign of a REMF was anyone wearing patches on his BDUs.



Court Prisk

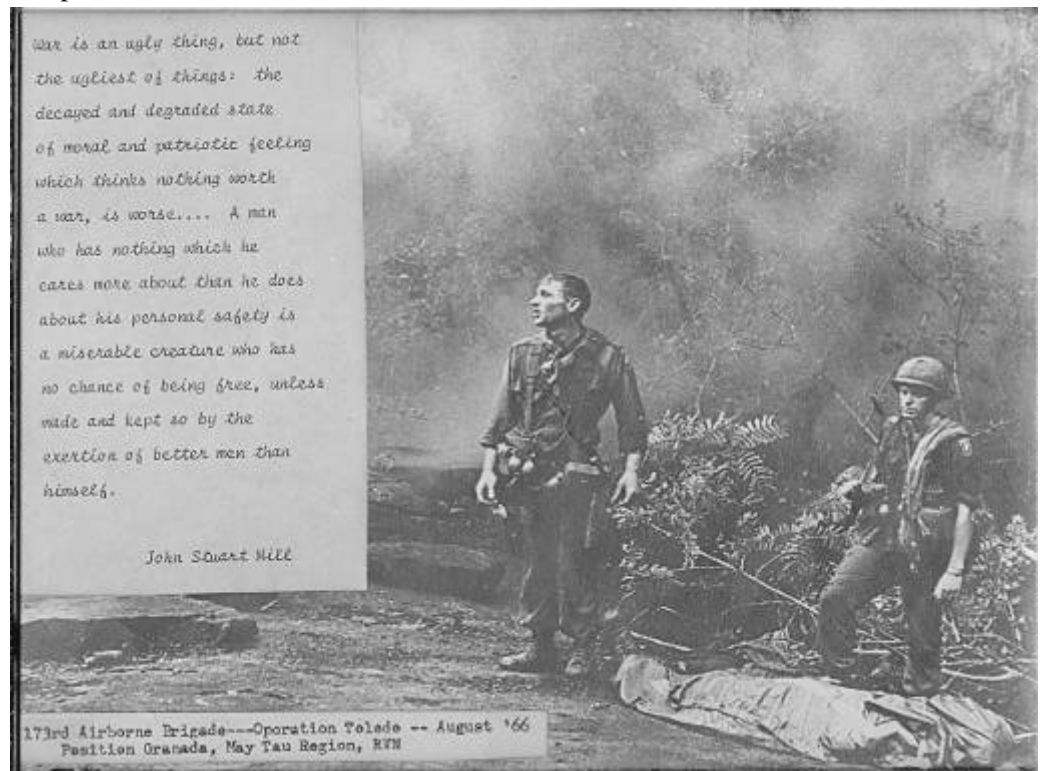


Photo by Paul Epley

There have been dozens of people who take credit for this picture; here is my part of the story: I sent my driver out to be a temporary replacement for the battery's wounded Forward Observer's RTO. He was out in the mountain for a couple of days before a permanent replacement could be found. When he came back he had a roll of film with him. As requested, I took the roll to the Brigade PAO for processing. I got this picture and three others from the PAO between Operations Toledo and Sioux City. I added the words, and have had the picture on a wall near or behind my desk since 1967.



THE AGONY OF WAR



This photo was taken by (then) **PFC Paul Epley**, entitled "*The Agony of War*," but mistakenly called the *Death Watch* by many. In August 1966, **PFC Caryl R. Coremen**, Company A, 4th Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate) was killed by mortar fire during operation "*Aurora Two*." He was the 4th Battalion's first KIA as a result of direct enemy actions. His squad leader **Sgt. Spencer** (Bend, Oregon) was later killed in action with the 1st Special Forces in 1968, stares down at his fallen comrade. **SP4 Ruediger Richter** (Columbus, Georgia), the LZ control, watches the sky for the medical evacuation helicopter, his battle weary eyes to the heavens, as if to ask, *why?*

Story behind the photo

I created this photograph while serving as a paratrooper with the 173d Airborne Brigade in South Vietnam. I was trained in jungle warfare, but because of my college experience with photography, I was assigned to the Brigade Information Office. It was my job to move with various elements of the command and generate stories and pictures for publication.

This image was created while I was with the 4th Battalion of the 503rd Infantry (a part of the 173d). Two companies of the American paratroopers were separated by about 100 yards of thick jungle. I moved across this unprotected area without permission in order to reach the area where the medevac chopper was coming in to pick up the body you see in the photograph. The trooper looking up into the smoke is Ruediger Richter, the radio operator for Colonel Mike Healy. The soldier looking down at his dead comrade is from New York. Richter had been with the French Foreign Legion prior to joining the American Army.

The smoke is from the smoke grenade you see in the left front of the image. I had heard the radio call for the chopper and knew it would be a good opportunity for photographs. When I arrived at the new unit, the company commander was angry I had crossed the unsecured area. Then, as the smoke broke, I could see I was on the wrong side to get the light. I put a yellow filter on my Leica M-2 and dashed across to some rocks on the other side of the small clearing. I knew the image

was coming together, the eerie smell of battle hung in the air and I clicked off the film, the decisive moment of greatest impact.

The AP had been helping me get pictures on the wire and with their help, this one became my first internationally published image. It was published in almost every major magazine and newspaper in the world. After that, I was able to get published on a very regular basis. The thrill of communicating to millions of people has never changed. I love what I do.

Paul Epley, Photographer
173d Airborne Brigade

GERONIMO BATTALION

JUNE 1966 – JUNE 1967
(From the 4/503d web site)



Original Geronimo Battalion

In early 1966, the 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Brigade, Ft Campbell, KY, was ordered to Vietnam. The famous nickname of the 1/501st was "*Geronimo*" and we called ourselves, "The Geronimo Battalion." We even had a wooden Indian mascot, cigar-store vintage, at Battalion HQ. Under command of LTC "Iron Mike" Healy, we deployed to Vietnam in June 1966 as the 4th Battalion, 503d Parachute Infantry, to join the 173d Airborne Brigade in country. Though we changed crests and shoulder patches, we still called ourselves, "The Geronimo Battalion."



Iron Mike Healy

The 2/503d is proudly linked at the hip to our sister battalions.

To learn more about the 4/503d, visit their web site at

geronimobattalion.com



MISS ANN MARGARET

This story has circulated on the internet for some time, but is worthy of finding its permanent place here in our Newsletter. Ed.

~ From the Wife of a Vietnam Vet ~



Viet Nam 1966: Richard, (my husband), never really talked a lot about his time in Viet Nam other than he had been shot by a sniper. However, he had a rather grainy, 8 x 10 black and white photo he had taken at a USO show of Ann Margaret with Bob Hope in the background that was one of his treasures.

A few years ago, Ann Margaret was doing a book signing at a local bookstore. Richard wanted to see if he could get her to sign the treasured photo so he arrived at the bookstore at 12 o'clock for the 7:30 signing.

When I got there after work, the line went all the way around the bookstore, circled the parking lot and disappeared behind a parking garage. Before her appearance, bookstore employees announced that she would sign only her book and no memorabilia would be permitted.

Richard was disappointed, but wanted to show her the photo and let her know how much those shows meant to lonely GI's so far from home. Ann Margaret came out looking as beautiful as ever and, as second in line, it was soon Richard's turn.

He presented the book for her signature and then took out the photo. When he did, there were many shouts from the employees that she would not sign it. Richard said, "I understand. I just wanted her to see it."

She took one look at the photo, tears welled up in her eyes and she said, "This is one of my gentlemen from Viet Nam and I most certainly will sign his photo. I know what these men did for their country and I always have time for 'my gentlemen.'"

With that, she pulled Richard across the table and planted a big kiss on him. She then made quite a to-do about the bravery of the young men she met over the years, how much she admired them, and how much she appreciated them. There weren't too many dry eyes among those close enough to hear. She then posed for pictures and acted as if he were the only one there.



Later at dinner, Richard was very quiet. When I asked if he'd like to talk about it, my big strong husband broke down in tears. "That's the first time anyone ever thanked me for my time in the Army," he said.

That night was a turning point for him. He walked a little straighter and, for the first time in years, was proud to have been a Vet. I'll never forget Ann Margaret for her graciousness and how much that small act of kindness meant to my husband.

I now make it a point to say "Thank you" to every person I come across who served in our Armed Forces. Freedom does not come cheap and I am grateful for all those who have served their country.

If you'd like to pass on this story, feel free to do so. Perhaps it will help others to become aware of how important it is to acknowledge the contribution our service people make.



This note accompanied the above story:

Don't be too busy today...Share this inspiring message with friends and family.

On behalf of those who DO appreciate all that you did for us, thank you to each of you who receive this message who have served or are serving our country in the Armed Services or any other service."



SKY SOLDIERS TO DROP IN ON THE *GRAND STRAND*

Elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade Association will conduct special operations in and around the province of North Myrtle Beach, SC. The operations are to kick off **2 June 2010**. The Paratroopers are expected to accomplish their mission by 6 June 2010 (D-day anniversary). A recon company (SC Chapter 30, led by retired **LTC Hal Nobles**), has moved in, secured high ground and set up base camp at **Avista Resort** located at coordinates 300 North Ocean Boulevard, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29852. R&R casualties are expected to be heavy, so pack your rucksack, fill your canteens and prepare to move forward.

AS A TOKEN OF OUR APPRECIATION, SC CHAPTER 30 WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT THE FOLLOWING GIFTS TO ALL PAID REGISTRANTS:

Men: Please enjoy a leather duffel bag and patriotic polo shirt, both with embroidered logos. The duffel bag measures 21" x 12" x 12" with two zippered side pockets and a large front pocket and holds up to 100 lbs.

Ladies: It's our pleasure to present you with a quality canvas zippered tote bag, which measures 18" w x 15" h. Also included are a matching patriotic polo shirt and visor. All items feature embroidered logos.

Activities: Registration fee includes admission to a banquet with a guest speaker, buffet-style dinner and live entertainment. These activities will take place at the *House of Blues*, located along the White Pointe Swash stretch of ocean thought to have been a favorite hiding spot for famous pirates. House of Blues Myrtle Beach opened in 1997 and is built to resemble a Southern farmhouse with adjoining tobacco warehouse. The music hall is covered in authentic tin from an old tobacco barn from Jackson, Mississippi. In keeping with North Myrtle Beach atmosphere, dress for this event will be very casual.



Adoption Program: We also encourage you to participate in our *Sky Soldier Adoption Program*. At each reunion we have active duty Sky Soldiers fly in

from overseas. They personally must pay airfare, hotel, meal and reunion fees, which can cost thousands of dollars. We try to offset their cost by giving them a discount on these fees. You can help by purchasing a meal voucher for our active duty Sky Soldiers. Please consider contributing to this program! These young Sky Soldiers will appreciate this tremendously, and you will reap the reward by giving! See the registration form on our web site www.173rdreunion2010.com to donate.

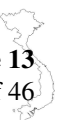


Avista Resort, North Myrtle Beach, SC

Vendors: Also included in the registration fee is access to the vendors' area, hospitality room, PTSD seminar, and cookout with a parachute jump on the beach by the *Army's Golden Knights*. Buses will be provided to take attendees from Avista Resort to nearby shopping and attractions.

Accommodations: **Avista Resort** in North Myrtle Beach will serve as headquarters for the reunion. The oceanfront resort features 1, 2 and 3-bedroom condos, indoor and outdoor pools, fitness center, and more. Hotel accommodations are **not** included in the reunion registration fee; however, all attendees will be given a special group rate. To make reservations, call **1-800-968-8986** and use reservation code **1317183**.

(continued.....)





Oceanside Pool Area at the Avista



USS Yorktown, Charleston, South Carolina

Day trip: Don't miss our day trip to **Historic Charleston**, South Carolina! Cost includes transportation to/from Charleston, a visit to Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, home of the USS Yorktown, a horse-drawn carriage ride through Charleston's historic district and a drink and box snack for the ride home. There will also be a stop at the historic city market for lunch and shopping on your own. See the registration form to sign up. For complete details, including online registration, online hotel reservations, itinerary, and who's attending, please visit our website at: www.173dreunion2010.com

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Wayne Bowers, C&D 2/503d '67-'68
173d Airborne Brigade Association
SC Chapter 30, 803-237-3169

SKY SOLDIERS.....FALL IN!!

173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

TENTATIVE 2010 REUNION SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 2010

- 09:00 - 17:00 - Registration - Ballroom C
- 09:00 - Until? - Vendor Tables - Ballroom A
- 09:00 - 24:00 - Hospitality Room - Ballroom B
- 18:00 - 20:00 - Welcome Reception - Pool Plaza Area
- 18:00 - 19:00 - Active Duty Briefing - Loc. TBD
- 18:00 - 20:00 - Asso. President's Reception
Ballroom C
- 19:00 - Until? - Mini-Reunions (Each unit to organize their own gathering)

THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2010

- 07:00 - 08:00 - Eagles Nest Golf Tournament
Transportation
- 08:00 - 17:00 - Charleston Bus Trip
- 09:00 - Until? - Eagles Nest Golf Tournament
- 09:00 - 17:00 - Registration - Ballroom C
- 09:00 - Until? - Vendor Tables - Ballroom A
- 09:00 - 24:00 - Hospitality Room - Ballroom B
- 17:30 - Until? - Golden Knights Jump on LZ North
Myrtle Beach; Concert to follow

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 2010

- 07:00 - 09:00 - Gold Star Family Reception and
Breakfast - Tree Top Lounge
- 09:00 - 12:00 - Board of Directors Meeting - Tree Top
Lounge
- 09:00 - 17:00 - Registration - Ballroom C
- 09:00 - Until? - Vendor Tables - Ballroom A
- 09:00 - 24:00 - Hospitality Room - Ballroom B
- 12:00 - 15:00 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
Seminar - Tree Top Lounge

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 2010

- 08:30 - 12:00 - General Membership Meeting -
Ballrooms A/B/C Theater Style
- 08:30 - 10:00 - Ladies' Event - Tree Top Lounge
- 09:00 - 12:00 - Registration - Mezzanine Area -
Second Level
- 12:30 - Until? - Vendor Tables - Ballroom A
- 12:30 - 24:00 - Hospitality Room - Ballroom B
- 16:00 - 17:00 - Transportation from Avista Hotel to
House Of Blues
- 16:30 - 17:30 - Cocktail Hour
- 17:30 - 19:00 - Color Guard/National Anthem/
Speakers
- 19:00 - 20:30 - Dinner
- 20:30 - 23:00 - Dancing
- 20:30 - 23:30 - Transportation to Avista Hotel

SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 2010

- 08:00 - 09:00 - Memorial Service - Pool Plaza Area
at North Lawn
(In case of rain - Ballroom C)
- 09:00 - LZ North Myrtle Beach Closes -
Mission Complete

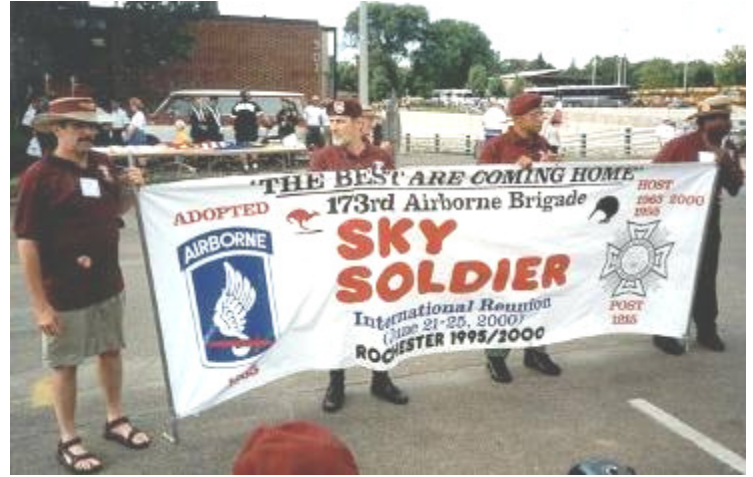


House of Blues, Myrtle Beach



NEVER BEEN TO A 173D AIRBORNE REUNION?

HERE'S WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE...



A YOUNGER BROTHER REMEMBERS

Dave Zsigo's brother Alex was killed 6/22/67. I knew his brother, and Dave and I have been in contact for the past couple years. I became convinced he should really get to know what type of men his older brother served with and told Dave he should attend a reunion. He did this past summer, and according to him he's a better person for having done so.



Dave constructed this flagpole outside his farm in Michigan which was dedicated a year or so ago to his brother and the military.

Wambi Cook
A/2/503d



A QUIET CUP OF TEA

Wayne Hoitt remembers this so much better than I. This was in '65 or '66 and Wayne and I had been detailed to take a vehicle into Bien Hoa and get it washed. We wound up in one of those bar/cathouses on the main drag in Bien Hoa intending to get a beer +.

We weren't in there for very long before some little girl at the front door starts yelling "MPs! MPs!" Wayne and

I booked out the side door and down an alley, running for all we were worth we turned left into another alley and left again and wound up in front of some sort of religious temple...Buddhist I think.

It was rather small, gray and made of stone or concrete with wide steps leading up to columns that framed tall, carved, wooden double-doors. The doors were open so we ducked inside to get out of sight and waited for a while. The floors of the temple were made of polished yellow wood and there was little or no furniture it was a beautiful, simple building and relatively cool inside.



Jim

Pretty soon, from somewhere in the back of the room (there was only the light coming in from outside), came a little old monk in a black robe carrying a tray with cups of tea on it. He offered us the tea and then took one for himself. There was no other communication...we just stood there having a quiet cup of tea together.

When we finished we made signs of thanks and left, then made our way back to our vehicle.

I know it doesn't seem like much of an event but I was a stump-jumper born and raised in the panhandle of Florida. It's important to me in that it was the first of many incidents that eventually helped me to view life from a broader perspective than my Bible-Belt upbringing.

The old monk could've done a lot of things. God knows what he was thinking! But he chose to have tea with us.

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

"SONNY" SIZEMORE
Airborne trooper

Darrill Sizemore of Grand Coulee, WA is looking for any information about his brother, **John Douglas "Sonny" Sizemore**, or anyone who might have known him. Battalion, company, platoon unknown. Sonny served in Okinawa 1965 thru 68 with the Special Forces then Vietnam with the 173d.

If you have any info, please contact Darrill via email dms@homenetnw.net



Star-Telegram

By CHRIS VAUGHN
cvaughn@star-telegram.com

Over 40 years later, remains of Vietnam War fighter return home

FORT WORTH -- In the darkness of Wednesday morning, **Larry Aldrich** finally made it home.

His arrival on American Airlines Flight 8 from Honolulu brought the baggage handlers' work on the ramp to a halt. People peered out the windows of the largely quiet terminal. Members of an Army honor guard in their spit-shined black shoes and pressed uniforms silently carried the flag-draped casket bearing what is left of Aldrich's body to a hearse, closing a chapter that opened in 1967 when Aldrich left Love Field for Vietnam.



Larry Aldrich

Spc. Lawrence Lee Aldrich is one of the 58,000 men listed on the *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, killed in his 20th year when a 750-pound bomb landed on his position in the middle of a firefight on May 6, 1968.

Until last year, he was also one of the 1,700 men whose remains were not recovered during or after the 10-year war in Southeast Asia.

But one day last autumn, a day almost no one in the family thought would come, a day Larry's dad died waiting for, the government called Aldrich's oldest surviving sibling and told him his brother was no longer missing.

"It took me several weeks to recover," said Darwin Aldrich, who was two years younger and graduated from Arlington Heights High just days after Larry's death. *"It opens up your head to a lot of memories and your heart to a lot of emotions that haven't been experienced in a long time."*

The family held a memorial service in 1968 and another one in 1996, the second one an attempt to bring closure

for Aldrich's aging father. But no gravestone marker existed for Aldrich, no place to visit on his birthday, no place to put a flag on Memorial Day.

On Saturday, though, Larry Aldrich will be buried in a family plot at Greenwood Cemetery outside downtown Fort Worth. His siblings are having his casket placed on top of his father's.

"Part of my dad's heart believed that Larry had been killed," said Janine Peck, Aldrich's younger sister, who lives in North Richland Hills. *"But it's very hard to come to grips with something when you don't have anything to grip. There's always a little part of yourself that believes there's still a chance that they were wrong. Dad held on to that chance until his dying day."*

Stepping into a war zone

On May 6, 1968, the men of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry were ambushed in an area crisscrossed with hedgerows. The fire from the North Vietnamese was murderous.

"It was very close fighting," said **Jim Miller**, who belonged to a reconnaissance team in the company. *"We were getting hit so hard."*



**Bob Beemer (L)
& Jim Miller**

The company, part of the 173d Airborne Brigade, had been in one battle after another for months as it moved throughout central South Vietnam. Thirty-nine men were killed in the first week of May that year.

When Aldrich joined the company in December 1967, he was part of a large group of "cherries" -- men new to combat -- because of horrific losses in the 173d Airborne in November during the battle of Dak To.

Aldrich had been in Vietnam only a month when he sustained his first wounds, and he had been in the Army for only eight months total.

Peck received a letter from him in January 1968 from a hospital. In his letter, he told her the war was "misery" and that *"I do miss the world."* (continued...)



"I'll sure be glad to get back," he wrote to her. "Just think, in six months, I'll be 21 years old. Getting to be an old man."

Aldrich, like all of his siblings, lived with his father (his parents were divorced) in a house on Benbrook Highway. He attended Arlington Heights High but dropped out before graduating.

A fearless young man, trim and fit, he gave his father more than a few sleepless nights, his family said. "There was a lot of difficulties going on in society back then," his brother Darwin said. "He just wanted a change, and maybe the Army was a way for him to get some stability."

Aldrich wrote to his sister again in April 1968 that he was coming up on his one-year anniversary of being in the Army. He complained of the heat, but he told her he was doing what he felt he needed.

He ended his last letter to her with a lighter tone: "I can't figure out what a handsome devil like me is doing over here anyway. *HELP!!*" he wrote.

Within a couple of weeks, he was manning an M-60 machine gun on the perimeter of the company's position in the firefight on May 6. The enemy was so close that Miller remembers the forward observer calling in artillery rounds close enough that the shrapnel was hitting the trees around Bravo Company.

At one point, a U.S. aircraft made a run over the battle, but the bomb fell short and exploded precisely where Aldrich was positioned. "That really hurt us," Miller said.

The men fought on until the 17th Cavalry Regiment came in with tanks and helped end the battle. Soldiers searched for Aldrich's remains -- no one believed he had lived through the explosion -- but all that could be found were pieces of the machine gun.

Robert Beemer, who also served in Bravo Company, was recovering from malaria in Cam Ranh Bay when the wounded started showing up and telling him of the battle and the "friendly fire." Just a few days before, Beemer had been walking up a mountain, delirious, weak and fevered. He had fallen behind the rest of the company and finally collapsed. "Larry came back down, grabbed my rucksack and helped me up the mountain," Beemer said. "I can see him coming down that hill for me like it was yesterday. It was the last time I saw him."

The long search ends

Darwin Aldrich can recall vividly the Army coming to his father's house and telling the family, including siblings Timothy, Andrew and Rebecca, that Larry was

missing in action. Later, they got a letter from Larry's company commander explaining what happened.

"I remember a lot of pain, anguish, anger, frustration, confusion in the family," he said. "You have this hope and prayer that he's alive. But then that passes after a while, and you have to learn to accept that they may not find him."

They began to learn more details of his date of death in 1988 during a briefing from the government on the fate of prisoners of war and those missing in action, the culmination of years of increased pressure on the U.S. government to investigate and pursue leads in Southeast Asia.



Larry arrives home.
Star-Telegram photo

Four years later, a team of Vietnamese government officials traveled to Binh Dinh province to look for clues about Aldrich, which began the modern search for his remains.

Based on their interviews with villagers, a U.S. team excavated an area used for farming in 1994 but found nothing.

The Vietnamese government renewed its pursuit of the case in 2006 and uncovered more information that Aldrich's remains might have been moved at some point.

In March 2009, U.S. officials showed up again for an excavation, and this time they found something about 160 feet from where they had looked in 1994.

It wasn't much-- some teeth and pieces of American gear. But it was enough for the Defense laboratory in Hawaii to identify Aldrich based on his dental records. DNA wasn't even required, said Larry Greer, a spokesman for the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office in Virginia.

"There's no way," Peck said she thought. "How can it be? It's been 41 years."

Aldrich's mother, Bette Giffen, died in 1985. Aldrich's father, Darwin, died in 2004, his greatest wish unfulfilled.

Still, his other children have prayed in the last few days that he knows the end of this story, and that men who served with Larry, including Miller from Arizona and Beemer from New York, are coming to Fort Worth to pay their respects.

(continued....)



"There's relief that it's finally over, but really, it's a blessing for my father that he's home," Peck said.

Graveside services for Spc. Lawrence L. Aldrich are at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Greenwood Cemetery, 3100 White Settlement Road, Fort Worth.

Supporting the 173d longtime Fort Worth residents might remember the outpouring of support for another company in the 173d Airborne Brigade during the Vietnam War. The 173rd is nicknamed "*The Herd*." The city of Fort Worth adopted Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry after a Cowtown native in the unit wrote to the mayor. Thousands of people sent cookies, cakes and letters to the unit for months. In 2001, the still-grateful men of Charlie Company dedicated a monument in the Botanic Garden to the citizens of Fort Worth.

"I'll sure be glad to get back. Just think, in six months, I'll be 21 years old." Lawrence Aldrich, in a letter.

This story was posted on the *Star-Telegram* web site, <http://www.star-telegram.com:80/804/story/1928280.html>, on January 1, 2010 and is reproduced here with the permission of the newspaper and Chris Vaughn. Our thanks to them. Ed.

IT WAS A BATTLE IN MAY

By Col. Bernie Griffard

Thank you for contacting me. I retired from active duty in 1993 as a Colonel, and since November of that year I have been an Associate Professor on the faculty at the U.S. Army War College. In this position I have the honor of working with the outstanding NCOs and Officers who have been, and will be again, leading our soldiers in battle. They are a great group of dedicated individuals of whom the United States can be very proud. This year I have a former 173d Airborne Brigade OEF/OIF battalion commander as one of my students.

While reading the Spring 1996 *Sky Soldier* Association newsletter, I came across the notice for a Memorial Service to be held for **Lawrence Lee Aldrich**. Until that time I had not been aware that the remains we recovered that day did not include Larry Aldrich. So I was elated when I read in the *Star-Telegram* article that the Army had finally been able to bring closure for his family.

Here are my recollections of the events leading up to and including the battle on 6 May 1968.

Early May 1968 was a very busy time for B/2/503. I had assumed command in February 1968, so by May, even

with the high turnover of soldiers, the company was an effective infantry unit. On 4 May 1968 a company plus sized Viet Cong unit hit our night bivouac a couple of hours before daybreak. Because of the early warnings of movement provided by the OPs, the Company was at Stand To when they attacked. Their mistake was that they assumed that the combat outposts were the actual company perimeter so when they actually reached us they were the ones who were surprised. We inflicted heavy casualties on them (20 confirmed VC KIA). The best news was that they had swept over the OPs so quickly that they all came out of it OK. One of our Platoon Sergeants later received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for actions that day.



Col. Bernie Griffard

The Battalion Commander was impressed with how the company handled that action, and since no good deed goes unpunished, on 6 May 1968, when he was tasked for a rapid response unit to support a sister battalion's action, Company B got the mission.

The 1/503 (I am pretty sure that was the unit) had flushed out a NVA main force regiment. Company B was air assaulted into an area of dry rice paddies and hedgerows on the right flank with the mission to block the NVA retreat.

When we hit the ground all we really knew was that the good guys were on our left and the bad guys were out front somewhere. So we moved out with the recon squad in the lead and platoons in column. What resulted was not an ambush (as mentioned in the *Star-Telegram* article), but a classic infantry meeting engagement. As the lead NVA Company was crossing our front we hit their right flank. In the initial contact the B Company's lead elements, the recon squad and lead platoon took some casualties, to include the loss of the Company's best platoon leader **Lt. Karl Bullard**, who was mortally wounded organizing the initial fight (awarded DSC posthumously). This contact forced the NVA unit to stop retreating and face B Company's threat to their right flank. The rest of the company came on line and established defensive positions using the rice paddy dikes as cover. We established contact with the unit on our left and established an L-shaped position to protect our right flank.

(continued....)



Fighting was intense with the NVA and B Company separated by only 10-20 meters. As you remember, once we could fix an enemy unit all advantage went to the Americans.

Our FO brought all the artillery in the area to bear on the NVA, and shortly an airborne FAC was overhead with fast movers. Once we had marked our positions he brought in two separate strikes across our front (doctrinally correct). When the bombs hit, the concussion literally lifted you off the ground high enough to see over the rice paddy dike.

For some reason the third aircraft flew over the unit instead of across our front. His 750-lb high-drag bomb landed directly on the B Company position, about 30 meters left of the Company CP.

As with many quirks in combat the Good Lord took a hand. The bomb was set with a delay fuze (bunker buster) and the company was deployed in a dry rice paddy. Before it exploded it went 10 feet or so into the ground protecting most soldiers from the immediate blast and from resulting shrapnel. However, when it did go off it created a crater about 10 feet deep and 30 feet across. Once the debris stopped falling from the sky, there was a frantic effort to rescue a good number of soldiers who had been buried in the crater.

Though wounded, our medic, **Rick Fassett**, performed selflessly, treating and defending his wounded charges. For his efforts he received the Silver Star. Over 30 personnel were MEDEVAC'd, and at least half of the remaining Company B soldiers were treated for minor wounds in the field. Larry Aldrich and his assistant gunner were the only KIAs. It appeared that the bomb hit directly on their M-60 position.

Once we had secured the position and removed the NVA threat, B Company patrols began a methodical area search moving in ever expanding circles from our defensive position. In the end we recovered some human remains and the equipment mentioned in the *Star-Telegram* article. As mentioned above it was not until 1996 that I discovered that we had failed to find Larry Aldrich.

Col. Bernie Griffard (Ret)
CO, B/2/503d

Colonel Griffard is a former company commander of B/2/503d during 1968, in "I Field Force."



Services Held for Larry Aldrich

I just returned from freezing Texas where we got to say *welcome home brother* to **Larry Aldrich**. Larry was KIA May 6, 1968 as a result of friendly fire during contact with the NVA. From what I was told (I had just been shipped to the hospital with malaria when the action occurred), the company was in close contact with elements of the 3rd NVA Division when an Air Force fast mover dropped his 750 pounder a fraction of a second too soon, landing on Larry. He was instantly killed and no remains could be recovered at the time. Recently a team searched the area of operation and discovered teeth and other matter sending them to Hawaii for identification. Dental records showed they belonged to Larry, so after 41 years he was returned home.

The battle was started when **J.B. Green** leading the Recon squad spotted an NVA and opened-up on him triggering an ambush that was set up for the company. **Jim Miller** was wounded and **Larry Brisco** was KIA, along with **Lt. Karl Bullard** who was shot and subsequently died of his wounds while leading his platoon to save Recon (he received the DSC for his actions that day).

Jim Miller from Arizona made the trip to Texas to say good-bye along with other members of the 173d.

We lost a lot of good men along with Larry, and inflicted a good deal of retribution for it. The 3rd NVA did not want to see us again. *Airborne Brothers*,

Bob Beemer, B/2/503d

From Larry's Sister to his Buddy Bob Beemer



Mr. Beemer....we have attached the picture of Larry that you requested in his dress uniform and Mr. Smith can just print it on photo paper, if that's OK. I would like to have Bob as Larry knew him a copy of the newsletter, if that's possible.

I've said it before and I'm going to say it again....you should not be thanking me for allowing you and your wife to attend Larry's service.... it was a blessing to me for you to be there and I'm glad it allows you some closure as well as it does us.

(continued....)



I am still talking to numerous people about the service as I thought it was amazing. It was obvious that the 173rd Airborne have close ties, and I'm glad about that. I believe everyone of you are HEROES, just as I consider my brother a HERO and I am very thankful for what you all did to help make this country what it is today. I thank you and every other soldier who has had any part in the service, whether it be ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE or MARINES. God bless you all. Janine Peck

"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived."

General George S. Patton, Jr.

INCOMING!!

~ Mystery Solved ~

In the January issue of the newsletter you were asking who the RTO was with (then) **Capt. Cavezza**. Well the answer to the question is **Sgt. James Underwood**. Capt. Cavezza's RTO when he was wounded on Jan. 2, 1966 was **Jack Denton Bixby** who was KIA at the same time. I was wounded from this same explosion. Hope this helps solve the mystery. Airborne!

Stan Crump, A/2/503d



Mystery solved! Thanks Stan. Ed.

RTO Sgt. James Underwood & Capt. Carmen Cavezza (LTG), 2/503d.

~ From a Cowboy ~

Speaking as a Cowboy helicopter pilot flying for the 173d out of Bien Hoa in 65-66, I think we had a mutual admiration thing going between us and our Herd brothers. While those combat assaults were really hairy and spectacular sometimes, with all the Air Force and Army gunship preps, the extractions were even more hairy quite often.



Cowboy Tony Geishauser

On every extraction out of a bad area, the troopers we picked up were happy as hell to be leaving. What they didn't know was the next two minutes were going to be the toughest for us pilots. We needed to get airspeed and altitude fast before Charlie got us. Most of the time we won, but once in a while, they took their toll on us coming and going.

I remember on one extraction, we had 39 Huey's picking up new guys from a 173d training exercise outside the compound in 1966 not far from Bien Hoa. Our Falcon gunships flew over the pick-up zone for several minutes before my company lifted off to pick you up. The gunners reported that the area was "very quiet."

My crew chief, who had been in country a long time, said, "*Shit, this is not good.*" We had been shot at every time we re-supplied you during the week. The crew chief warned us, "*Get ready to take some bad shit on this one.*" He knew what he was talking about as we had 19 helicopters hit out of 39 on that extraction; two pilots were hit.

While combat assaults and extractions were spectacular, routine re-supply missions were the most dangerous. Charlie knew our routines and just waited for us. No matter how good we were as pilots, we couldn't out race the waiting bullets some times. I was shot down twice flying in chow and other supplies -- once at LZ Zulu Zulu in War Zone D. The 2nd Bat guys saved the ass of my crew and me that time.

Dropping off scary looking American and ARVN dudes on long range patrols was another "trip." They were all volunteers, but we pilots weren't; just part of the job for us.

(Incoming continued....)



We dropped off a LRP one time and were waiting as we always did to see if they had any problem and needed a pick-up before the scheduled pick-up time/place. I was to go on R&R to Japan, and I heard my chopper coming towards us to take me back to base camp. My replacement was on-board. Just then, we got the urgent call, the LRP was in trouble. *Fuck!* We cranked up our bird and flew for all we were worth to pick-up the team. Another helicopter got there just before we did and picked-up the team. We flew back up in case they were shot down picking up the team. The team got picked up; that was all that counted. I got the next bird out of there for five great days out of Vietnam and back into civilization before I had to come back.



Cowboys coming in to corral a 2d Herd. Ahh, that sound.

It's kind of funny to have the most exciting time of your life when you are in your 20s. Nothing has compared to the life and death days we all had in Vietnam. We lived on the razor's edge every day, flying towards the sound of the guns; it was truly amazing on so many levels. My best friend in flight school was flying right behind me on our first operational flight -- a milk run pick-up of some guys in a secured LZ to be dropped off at another secured LZ.

When we had to fly low due to some ground fog, a lone VC opened up on us with a .47 and my friend was shot in the head and killed -- on our first flight! Welcome to Vietnam. I don't know a chopper pilot who flew for the 173d Abn Bde who wasn't proud as hell of you guys. We made a good team. I'm just sorry we couldn't all come home together or in one piece. *All the way,*

**Maj. Tony Geishauser (Ret)
173d Cowboys**



~ To A Cowboy ~

I usually don't make many comments (on the internet). I send a few jokes or maybe ask how someone who I personally know is doing. I work on a couple websites for others, but the song, your comments and your story touched me very deeply, so I feel I have to comment now.



The words in the song are **Buzz** so very right and true. Like many other grunts, I personally worshiped you guys. I was with 2nd Battalion on Hill 875 and saw so many of our Cowboys try to bring in much needed ammo and take out our wounded only to get turned away by heavy enemy fire to the point that I believe we lost more choppers (Cowboys) in the first four days than at any other time during the whole war....although, to be honest, I have never seen any statistic's to back this up, so I might be wrong.

However, I can say with all honesty that in the whole five days of fighting, I never, not even one time, saw anything but Cowboys trying to come in to the one chopper LZ....not one MedEvac tried to come to our assistance that I saw, and later I was told that they refused to come in...that it was a death mission and the powers that be would not commit them to the rescue of our wounded. But our Cowboys did, time after time, after time, they tried until they finally were able to hover close enough to load our wounded on them. And Hill 875 was not the exception, but rather the rule. You always could count on the 'Cowboys' to come get you when the shit was hitting the fan.

So, to you, Tony, and to all the other Cowboys in their wonderful flying machines, I want to say **THANK YOU**. You brave guys have my deepest respect and admiration. I will gladly buy a 'Cowboy' a drink anytime, and it will be my great honor.

ALL THE WAY,

**Sgt. Gary 'Buzz' Cox
C&D/2/503d**

(Incoming continued...)



~ rules? we don't need no
stinking rules!! ~

well how's this, in the last issue of *sky soldier magazine* there is a picture of a grunt in a big jumble of rocks,,,that's me 1970. i have my sleeves rolled down and gloves on cause we just came out of elephant grass into an old napalm strike and were crossing thru it. (if you notice i don't use capital letters it's because i am retired and don't have to go by any rules anymore).

From a Sky Soldier

[we hear ya brother! ed.]

~ The Task Force Concept ~

LTC Zimmerman was the Battalion Commander at the time I was assigned to the 2/503d. At that time the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, in conjunction with the Armor School at Ft. Knox, was developing the concept of a Task Force. You see them now in action in Afghanistan as separate Brigades.

Anyway, Zimmerman had just been assigned two Motorized Platoons from the 1-50 INF of the 4th Infantry Division. I came into the 2/503d and Zimmerman decided to develop a **Task Force**. I was the Virgin around which he designed this Task Force. It consisted of the two Motorized Platoons, a 2/503d 81mm Mortar Platoon, a two-man 2/503d Engineer Section and a 2/503d Radio Operator. That gave me an Armor capability (10 APC's with 50 Cal Machine Guns), Infantry capability (+/- 50 Infantrymen) and Artillery capability (3 Mortars). I was then given responsibility for the defense of the bridges at Bong Son and to the south on the way to Quin Nhon, the convoys of the Brigade's Support Battalion coming with supplies to and from Quin Nhon to LZs Uplift and English, and to act as the Battalion's reaction force.

Somehow, we did our job and supported the Battalion/Brigade. I was able to APC qualify those straight legs as APC Airborne Qualified by having them do PLF's off the APCs. More War Stories to follow,

AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!!

“RAGMAN” ROBERT GETZ



~ Looking for Buddies ~

I was in the 2/503d HQ Company Recon platoon from Aug. 1963 to March 1965. I would like very much to make contact with anyone that was there during that time. Call it luck, I was already to come home in Feb.



Rick

1965. I had my orders and port call and all TA-21 turned in. The 503d was TO&E strength then and our Platoon leader came in and said all orders and port calls had been cancelled. We remained on alert and in March my replacement came from the 101st. I flew home 19 March 1965. I have often felt like a ball player that was removed from the line-up before the game. I also know how lucky I was. I have lived with somewhat of a guilt feeling. I would love to be able to contact Col. Dexter to see whatever happened to some of the men I served with and to hear from buddies.

Rick Jerman, HHC/2/503d, '63-'65
copshouse@cox.net

Note: Rick did hook-up with Col. Dexter. Ed.

~ More on the reunion in Myrtle Beach ~

The schedule/conference rooms is becoming more concrete. Many meetings and discussions have been involved. We are going to be a little tight on all the activities but are doing the best we can with the space we have available. Anyway, it is going to happen. The rucksacks are packed.

You might want to mention somewhere in there, the dress for the banquet is going to be casual. This is the beach atmosphere and the House of Blues is not a place for suits and ties. This banquet is going to be laid back. It is going to be different.

You might want to Google "House of Blues" at North Myrtle Beach. Gives you an overview of this chow laager site on Saturday night.

Anyone walking around NMB in a suit would probably be locked up. They might lock some of us up anyway just cause we were in the jungles of Nam and are Vietnam vets. **Eddie Hair, 1/503d**

(Incoming continued....)



~ No, not all. ~

I do read the newsletter, I enjoy reading about us old Sky Soldiers.

I have not been involved in anything about Nam for 40 years, but this newsletter, since it comes from my old Herd, it seems different to me, not someone asking *how many people did you kill?*

A short story: At work one day some 20 years ago, I was chatting with a guy who had been in the army. He asked me if I was in the service, and then Vietnam. I said yes. He then asked what unit I was in. I told him I was army, in the 173d. He gave me this strange look, and then said, *"They told us you were all dead."*

All I could do was stand there with tears in my eyes. I finally managed to say, *"No, not all."*

So, keep up the good work, this newsletter feels good to me, not sure but I'll bet others feel the same.

Mike Harris, B/2/503d

[Thank you Bull. We understand brother.]

"When we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen; and we shall most sincerely rejoice with you in the happy hour when the establishment of American Liberty, upon the most firm and solid foundations shall enable us to return to our Private Stations in the bosom of a free, peacefully and happy Country."

George Washington

(address to the New York legislature, 1775)

Editor's Note

We received a number of notes from our guys who made the combat jump during **Operation Junction City** and other Sky Soldiers saying they enjoyed the *Special Edition* of our newsletter featuring that historic event. Please continue sending in your stories and photos about that operation and jump. We'll add them to the report and will re-release it from time-to-time.

The DZ photo below and its description were sent in and will be included in a future release of the Junction City report. Thanks Dave! Ed

This picture is of SMG Ed Proffitt (R), LTC Bob Sigholtz and his RTO Sgt Sebastian, minutes after we landed on the drop zone during Junction City. Col. Sigholtz gave me this picture when we had returned to Bien Hoa and he was packing-up to return to the states. When he handed me the photo he said *"Here Griff, someday you might want to remember us,"* and he laughed out loud. I still have the original. Hope you'll share this picture.



**Dave Griffin, B/HHC/2/503d
Combat Parachute Jumper**



Dave & Trudy Griffin in their 44th year together.



SKY SOLDIER EXTRAORDINAIRE

~ Spencer Alexander ~

The following tribute is from Col. Roy Lombardo, "B" Company CO 2/503, announcing the passing of his friend and our brother Spencer Alexander in 2002.



BULLS:

It is my sad duty to pass on Ed's news below. I have called all of the Bulls that knew Spencer, who are not on Email. I spoke with John Foster, Al Ealey, and George Bingham (will be operated on Wednesday for minor problem). I left messages for Demetrius Brown and asked him to spread the word in the Fayetteville area to George Hull, etc. I also left a message for Mike Farrell. Donald Moses was also informed.

DORIS/ED:

I will be attending with Jim Robinson (arrive on Friday afternoon and depart on Saturday afternoon). We are grateful to Ed for his offer of a place to stay. At this time it appears that Jodie, Al Ealey and Lew Wingfield would be better candidates for that hospitality. Jim and I will bunk downtown (Marriott) but we may need transport because we don't know our way around.

Our first consideration is to do what we can to help the family and to mesh with Doris' wishes. I think that there are enough members of the company/ brigade to carry the coffin and to act as an Honor Guard, IF THAT WOULD BE OK WITH DORIS. Additionally, I'd like to say a few words at an appropriate time, again with the family's permission.

I knew Spencer as well as any soldier in the company and better than most. We have been comrades in arms since 1964 and became closer friends beginning in 1985. Rarely would a month go by when we didn't speak. He first came to my attention because of his soldierly appearance and his bugling skills. 1SG Hastings had Spencer play the bugle calls, which were an integral part of the Army that was disappearing in the early 60's. Spencer's one-man act was something that no other company did and was one of the many unique aspects of the Bravo Bulls. Not once do I recall a sour note.

Spencer was also an athlete of significant ability. He was good at all sports but he excelled and won Championships as a wrestler on Okinawa. I recall that my focus was primarily on training and I didn't associate much importance with athletics. Despite that Spencer went out, somewhat on his own, trained when he could, practiced rarely and won, time and again, in his weight class until the Championship was his. Only then did he receive the credit and support that was his alone.

It was impossible to find him without a smile on his rugged face and without the willingness to do a tough job. He, like many Bulls, led by example. When it was work time: digging in, moving ammo, carrying supplies.... Spencer was always there doing more than most and talking and laughing in that gravelly, booming voice.

One time (May 65) in a Vietnamese village, a single shot rang out. I dropped to my knee but Spencer, who was already in the prone position, shouted, "Commander, get your ass down. Do you think, you're John Wayne?" That well-intended counsel/concern was the beginning of a friendship that would stretch over 38 years. It also was wise advice that kept me unscathed during all my time in Vietnam.

Spencer returned to his native Chicago, found a lovely wife, and sired a beautiful daughter. He asked for no special treatment and played the cards that were dealt as expertly as any man could. Slowly he and Doris worked to get the house that they presently own. I followed his progress and was always aware of his love for his family and the pride in his daughter's many successes in school. His conversations always included both. We also talked about his being a paratrooper in the civilian world and his running into the bureaucracy of local government. He listened but generally managed to overcome all of those challenges, DOING IT HIS WAY.

He was proud of all that he did and worked hard to find other Bulls and bring them into our activities. He was at his zenith in July, when he and Doris, helped by Ed and Fay and family, hosted the Bulls Barbecue. The years fell away in his backyard and we were young men again, around a jungle fire, relaxing and making plans for our future.

God, however, intervened, with different plans. All the love of Doris, family and friends; all the medical care; all the efforts couldn't reverse the process. At 0230 hours yesterday, Spencer lost his last wrestling match but gained eternal life in the process. Although tears stream down my face, I cannot be sad because I know as surely as I still breathe that Spencer is with God. I cannot believe that a man who so loved his family and who helped so many people throughout his life could have any other fate.

So yesterday "an Airborne soldier has died." What he did and who he was will always be with us. May Saint Michael, the patron of paratroopers, escort Spencer to eternal rest. May his memory be a source of strength to us who remain. If he could, he would say:

***"Do not stand by my grave and cry.
I am not there. I did not die."***

I'm certain he never will, as long as we remember.

Roy Lombardo, Col. (Ret)
Commanding Officer, B/2/503

MORE TO THE STORY

by Jim Robinson

To expand on **Col. Dexter's** remembrances I will tell you of mine (see Issue 11 of our newsletter, *Interview With The Colonel*), realizing that guys can fight battles 4 feet apart in the jungle and see entirely different things.

As he said, the operation began on 6 July 1965. We landed in a paddy, traveled north and overnighted on a high spot, perhaps 200 meters from the paddy.



Jim Robinson



Bill Olds

realized that this had certain limitations, so they were trying to get PRC25's to the line units. As the FO, I got the first ones available and was able to talk to everyone, during the course of the battle.

On the 7th, as we prepared to move south, I attached **Corrineo** and **Sutton** with either **Lt. Eckert's** or **Lt. Old's** platoon. We had established a policy to keep the FO party dispersed.

Col. Dexter was correct, as we had mostly Korean war stuff, including radios. For you younger guys, the infantry were issued radios that only functioned on "infantry frequencies." Armor and artillery had their own frequencies. The army



Ernesto Corrineo

I was intrigued by an area in line of our new direction of march and wanted to fire artillery on the spot. It looked like a logical place to have camp; there was a clear stream running through the jungle (if I could believe the map), and a little high ground. My request for fire was denied. When I asked,



Dick Eckert cooking C's

why, I was told that A company was there. This should have given me a clue that things were screwed up.

I responded that A company was about 300 meters to the east of me and not in the target area. My fire mission was still denied.

We headed south, back across the paddy that we had landed on the previous day. As we entered the jungle and moved forward, I had a sense that we were in trouble. **Lt. Zinn's** platoon was on point. The command group, **Lt. Bennett** and his RTOs and me, were close to the lead elements of the platoon. I hung back to wait for **Sgt. Davis** to move up. I told him that I was scared shitless. He said, "Me too!" It seems that we both had a bad feeling.



B/2/503d on patrol in 1965. Photo by Dick Eckert

At that moment, there was a burst of machine-gun fire and we both dropped down. That was followed by a lull, in which I and most of the others near me, ran forward. **Sgt. Davis** headed off to my right (North). Lt. Zinn was ahead of me and was hit as the rest of us went down. I got behind a large tree and was very pleased with my position. Two things changed my mind 1) Lt. Bennett and his RTO were about 20 feet from me and I needed to be as close to him as I could get. And 2) the damn 12mm machine-gun was shooting right through the tree that I was hiding behind. I crawled closer to Jim Bennett until I came to **Pvt. Hernandez** and could go no further. Perhaps now would be a good time to place where everyone was, as I understood it.



Ron Zinn, KIA

Col. Dexter and HHC was at the junction of the paddy (LZ) and the jungle. A Company should have been at our left rear.

(continued...)



I have no idea where C Company was. Hard against the VC camp was **Sgt. Howard** (hit with the first burst) and Lt. Zinn, both dead. I, Jim Bennett, his RTOs and Hernandez were on a line about 30 feet from the VC camp and it's machine guns. There is a debate as to how many machine guns were there. I think everyone can agree that there were at least two. I thought, and still do, that there were four, 3 30 cal and 1 commie version of our 50 cal.

I'm not going to talk much about what I was doing, but I did learn to never tell brigade about a big battle. Every yo-yo that had access to a chopper immediately decided to "observe." Choppers flying everywhere put a stop to walking in the artillery.

At some time I was aware that **Red Davis** had attacked the machine guns with a flanking maneuver and was behind me yelling at guys to give him their grenades. This happened at least once, if not twice, before his final assault. At about this time Hernandez was shot in the head by the guy in the tree. I was pretty busy trying to get dust off to come in, however, I had no idea how many wounded there were. I figured that 3 dead guys around me meant that a bunch were wounded.



Bob Warfield

who was in command of the weapons platoon. And **Bob Warfield** who was at that time the Bn. S-2, I believe. The three of them once again conducted a flanking, hand grenade attack on the machine guns. Bob Warfield got away with it, but Sgt. Davis was wounded and Jack got shot by "a little guy with an M-1 that was as big as he was."

We were then able to move into the camp. It was quite a place; great trenches with no berm or any sign of a trench; you had to almost be standing over them to see them. There were classrooms, sleeping and eating areas,

I requested that they fly in some additional medics and leave them at the battalion CP, which was ignored. The first chopper to pick up wounded was a resupply chopper. The dust off chopper would not land because he could hear the firing over my radio.

Red Davis was joined by **Sgt. Jack Schimpf**

even an outdoor arena with bamboo bleachers on 3 sides. There were no bodies in the camp but there were pools of blood in the bottom of the trenches.

We rounded up weapons and made a pile about 10 feet wide and 2 feet high. Jim Bennett liberated a rifle and I took an M-2 carbine. I don't know if anyone else picked up a souvenir. I left the M98 mauser, an 8mm.

After resupplying with ammo and water we continued toward the extraction LZ. On the way, we continually found stragglers too weak to continue on and some who put up a fight.

Once on the extraction LZ about 50 meters into the paddy, we could look back to the North where there was a little hill with numerous bushes. We saw some movement and fired into the bush with the result of a VC springing straight up like a Jack-in-the-Box and collapsing on top of the bush. We began methodically shooting up the bushes and killed quite few before the rest decided to make a break for it. They wore khaki uniforms and blue scarves. I guess they were the cadre of the camp. They ran up the hill and directly into A Company. This is what I think Col. Dexter thought was an ambush. A Company killed several and, I believe, suffered a casualty in the process. Among the many wounded that day, was **Milton Olive**. He was later KIA and was the recipient of the *Medal Of Honor*.

In *Turner's* book we were credited with inflicting 400 casualties that day. There is no way to know for sure. This could go on for 20 pages with gory details but I'll stop now.

Jim Robinson
FO, B/2/503d



Jack Schimpf

Photo by Jim Quick



Milton Olive, KIA.



IN MEMORY

~ Terry Lee Robertson ~

Mr. Terry Lee Robertson, 61, died unexpectedly at his home on Thursday, February 4, 2010. He was born in Forsyth County to Roy Dois Sr. and Betty Mae Johnson Robertson. He served his country proudly in the U.S. Army where he earned the award for combat aerial support of ground operations in Vietnam. He also received the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service as a team leader in Company B, 2nd Battalion of the 173d Airborne Brigade's 503rd Infantry in Vietnam. He entered the army in August 1967 and completed basic training at Ft. Bragg, NC and was stationed at Ft. Benning, GA before being stationed overseas. He was the recipient of two Purple Hearts. He was retired from R. J. Reynolds Tobacco after twenty years of service as a mechanic, and he was a member of Corinth Church of Christ. In addition to his mother, he was preceded in death by his brother, Roy Dois Robertson, Jr. Survivors, in addition to his father, include his three children, Brian Robertson, Farrah Robertson and Alicia (Joseph) White, all of Germanton; his sister, Jane (Dexter) Carroll; his brother, Timothy Samuel Robertson, also of Germanton; and two grandchildren, Carson Levi White and Ellie Jean White. The 3 p.m. Graveside Service was held on Monday, February 8, 2010 in the Corinth Church of Christ Cemetery with the Rev. Tim Nelson officiating. The family received friends in the Fellowship Hall at Corinth immediately following the Graveside Service. Memorials may be made to Corinth Church of Christ, 2784 S. Friendship Road, Germanton, NC 27019.

Sent in by
Larry "Big Dog" Hampton
A/1/503d

~ Lucas Tyler Beachnaw ~

It was an honor, albeit a sad one, to attend the funeral Jan. 22 of **Sgt. Lucas Tyler Beachnaw**, HHC/2/503d, who was killed in Afghanistan January 13, victim of an IED. Sgt. Beachnaw, of Lowell, Michigan, was 23. The ceremony was held at the huge, modern Ada Bible Church in Ada, Michigan, a suburb of Grand Rapids in the west part of the state.

I went along with two 173d vets from the Detroit area, Don Martindale and Greg Bies. I wore my old uniform...it fit, but I had to hold my breath for about 8 hours. We met a lot of 173d young guys, some all the way from Afghanistan, and others since redeployed elsewhere or out of the service, one, a six-year vet, came from Wyoming. A couple guys acknowledged the visit and ceremonies at Vicenza, Italy, and remembered LTC Roy Lombardo and other Bravo Bulls who had made that visit. They thanked us. Roy Scott, president of the 173rd Association, was at Ada,

too, with a fellow member from Columbus, Ohio, to represent the organization.

The service included an hour of photos projected on the screen at the church (the kind of family photos of happy times that wrench your heart out when you watch), and a soloist friend of Lucas', Rose Nakao, sang "*Amazing Grace*". Fellow Sky Soldiers, sergeants Patrick O'Brian and Justin Crivello, gave moving tributes, as did Lucas' cousin Kenny Lowell. There was a welcome from Pastor Jeff Manion of Ada Bible Church, plus a message and benediction, and chaplain Capt. Rich Brooks from the Wyoming, Michigan, Armory gave an invocation. A buffet luncheon was served in the huge church hall.

An uncle spoke well of the process by which the body was brought home, escorted by Sgt. Ross Blankinship, and how well family members were treated in every step of the return process. We met a Beachnaw cousin who was a VFW friend of Martindale's and he had a family genealogy book. One of the cousins, Dave Beachnaw, runs the Detroit Sports Bureau of the Detroit Convention Bureau. I met him before, but I didn't see him there.

There were about 500 people at the service and four camera crews. It was an open casket. The funeral procession was perhaps a mile long and traveled from the church to South Bingham Cemetery in St. Johns, Michigan, north of the state capital of Lansing. It was about a two-hour trip, escorted by State Police who blocked traffic at turns and freeway exits and delivered frozen salutes as we passed.

The small country cemetery was in the middle of nowhere. It was very cold and snowy. A brigadier general presented the flag to Jeanne Beachnaw, Lucas' mother. His father Kevin and stepmother were there, plus grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins and more. There were lots of guys in uniform, including an Air Force captain, all freezing next to the gravesite and none with coats on. Representatives from countless vets organizations from every small town within a 50-100 mile radius were there.

Then we all went home to our regular lives, although we had to wait in the cold a while because Martindale locked the keys in his car. But he had *On Star* and soon we got in. It hurt to see ex-paratroopers with 173d combat patches wearing regular dress shoes because there are hardly any airborne units to rotate back to. 101st guys had boots and said they're authorized boots even though it's an airmobile unit now, although I think there's one airborne element.

It was a sad day for Lucas' family, his buddies and us. Memorable, but sad, not just for those who knew Lucas, but for those who can't help avoid emotional triggers from their own past experiences that such ceremonies engender.

Larry Paladino, B/2/503d



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / March 2010 - Issue 13

Page 22 of 46



FROM OUR READERS

You may recall in the cover note accompanying the February issue of our newsletter we asked if anyone was actually reading the damn thing. About 100 guys and gals stated they did. Alone, that number might not warrant the continuation of the newsletter, but as these sample notes indicate, our stories and our history are being shared with others. I think we'll keep it going for now. Ed.

I was never in 2/503, but I am a Herd member. I was with the Jungle School for a short period and the N/75th. But I read every copy of your letter. Most I print out and give to the young soldiers here in Afghanistan so they know stories of others who have gone before them. Even the legs - they are great soldiers and Americans too - enjoy reading Herd stories. Who knows, if I stay in Afghanistan long enough, I may get to work with the Herd again. At this time the 82d is in my AO soon to be replaced by the 101st. Keep up your work - old and young soldiers enjoy your efforts.

Earl Wemple, N/75th Rangers

Is anybody reading it?? I started late last night after being up since 0600 yesterday morning and having my daily ration of various adult beverages. At 0300 this morning, I was finally ready to put it down and go to bed. Great job, Lew!

Jack Schimpf, B/2/503d

Jack: Get some sleep! Lew ☺

*I read the newsletter every time and enjoy it a lot. Please keep it coming. I made contact with **Jerry Hassler** after reading one of the newsletters. Even went for a visit with him as he only lives about 2 hours away.*

Ted Thompson HHC (Recon), 2/503d

Jerry was my hooch buddy, Ted, you gotta watch him. If you went to his Franklin, TN Gun Shop he probably tried to sell you a gun you already have. Ed.

I for one love the newsletter and am keeping every issue for our sons in a notebook.

Christine McMillan

(wife of Mike McMillan, 4/503d)

I read every issue. Remember though Cav leads the way.

Gary Granade, E Troop, 17th Cav, LRRP

Roger that, Gary. We like people with big guns in front of us! Ed.

Yes, I read the newsletter. Have to keep up with the 2d Batt. A 1st Batt Brother.

Gene Counselman, A/1/503d

I have been reading the issues and have been passing them on with information to help our vets.

Jimmy Castillo, C/2/503d

I sat down this afternoon and read it cover-to-cover. Great and important work.

Roger Dick, C/2/503d

I want you to know that I DO read your newsletter and enjoy it very much. I only get it when Steven forwards it to me from his in box, so if you want to send it to my own email address, that would be great. I also think it is a great idea to include articles from the women who are married to Sky Soldiers to share their perspective with readers.

Joan Haber, "The Rabbi"
(wife of Steve Haber, C/2/503d)

*It's nice to have access to all the back issues through the website **Paul Dinardo** set up. It's funny how in every picture, regardless of the year, everybody looks like someone we know.*

Larry Paladino, B/2/503d

But Larry, I don't wanna look like Vose. Ed.



A/HHC/2/503d Capt. Bill Vose in Saigon in '05 after learning he would have to buy us all dinner. Ed.

You bet I read it! It shines a light on many aspects of our stay in VN which I never understood or of which I have only foggy recollections, therefore filling some of the big holes in my memory.

Herbert Murhammer, B/2/503d

I read anything and everything pertaining to my old combat unit, and any "Sky Soldiers."

Doc Eastman, Sr. Line Co. Aidman, B/2/503d

I'm reading it.....even if it's not the "Best of the Best" newsletter.

Larry "Big Dog" Hampton, A/1/503d

Damn, Dog. We're just gonna have to *Try Harder!* Ed.



**OUR MISSION -- FACILITATE
THE TRANSPORTATION OF SKY
SOLDIERS TO THE MEMORIAL
DEDICATION & SUPPORT THE
MOST MEANINGFUL
EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE FOR
OUR SKY SOLDIERS!!**

By Terry Modglin, 4/503d

The **Country Inn and Suites**, 1720 Fountain Court, Columbus, GA 31904, will be the Rally Point for those members of the **2/503d** who wish to stay at the same hotel with their battalion buddies for the Dedication of the **173d National Memorial** at 10 AM June 1, 2010. The room rates are \$88. for single or double, and \$90. for a suite (of which there are just 5), plus tax. These rates are good for just the 31st of May and 1st of June. There is a big soccer tournament just before our contingent arrives and a smaller one just after so it is highly unlikely rooms will be available on these shoulder nights.

This is definitely a nice hotel, recently renovated. The 3d and 4th Battalions will be staying at hotels within the same zip code. There is no obligation for attendees to book rooms at any particular hotel. The Country Inn will provide free transportation to and back from the Memorial Dedication for guests booking 30 days in advance.



The hotel's phone number is **706-660-1880**. Their email is cx_clbs@countryinns.com If you call in the reservation, just indicate you are part of the **173d Airborne Group**. If you register through the Internet, go to <http://www.countryinns.com/hotels/gacolumb> and after you select your dates to stay, in finding

your rate you will see a link for "More Rates." Go there and put in the Promotional ID **173AIR**.

If this hotel is filled (as I expect it will be), we have other hotels in that area for more 2d Bat Sky Soldiers.

There will likely be a tour of Fort Benning on June 1, after the Dedication. Details will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.



In the interest of transparency, as I have indicated throughout, I am receiving no money whatsoever from this initiative, but my travel planner colleague, Mark Zeller, is receiving 10% commission on the hotel room nights taken. We have already spent a lot of time on this and Mark will likely spend really significant time on this over the months ahead because it has so many moving parts. Believe me, the money will be hard-earned and will help offset some of his out-of-pocket expenses.

We are not part of the Memorial Foundation or the Association, but we have received the goodwill and cooperation of both. Mistakes made, if any, are ours alone....the *Transportation Memorial Dedication Group*.

If you have any questions, or guys with other battalions needing hotel information, please email me at Terry.Modglin@Gmail.com or call me at **202-270-3083**.

Airborne!

Terry Modglin, 4/503d

This notice appears in our newsletter as a courtesy to those working in support of the 173d National Memorial. Ed.





2/503 ABN was a US Army unit 173 ABN was a US Army unit

Primary service involved: US Army
Operation: PHOENIX

Bien Hoa Province, III Corps, South Vietnam
Location, west of Tan Uyen



Discription:

The 173rd ABN and elements from the 1st Inf. Div. killed 35 VC in this operation. According to CPT Thomas Faley, CO of C/2/503rd, 173rd ABN BDE, this operation was planned on Feb 25th as a quick strike at a VC force that had been repeatedly observed in the area five kilometers west of Tan Uyen since the 18th. At 0900 on the 26th, A and B companies were CAed into LZ Chris without contact. B Company moved northwest and A Company directly north. The jungle was so thick that it was described as a '15-foot high briar patch.' At 1510, A Company made contact with a well-dug-in enemy force that put out a murderous rate of fire.

distance between the forces was at times less than 30 meters. After pulling back just a short distance, the first airstrike consisting of CBUs seemed to break the back of the VC force. Sadly, a few minutes later the second CBU strike caused several infantry casualties. The airstrikes did force the VC to break off their hugging tactic and fall back to their entrenchments. LTC George Dexter, the battalion CO, was in a C&C Huey. He had directed B Company to move to flank the VC force engaging A Company. At 1715, C Company landed in an LZ 1,500 meters northwest of the battle and moved into a blocking position in a rubber plantation. Shortly

after briefing CPT Faley following their insert, LTC Dexter was wounded by enemy fire that came up through the floor of the Huey. At 2000, B Company linked up with the remnants of A Company who had suffered 14 known dead and 76 others wounded. The enemy withdrew during the night and was able to police the battlefield. The next day, B and A Company searched the trenches and moved to link-up with C Company. On March 1, General Smith, the 173rd ABN BDE CO, terminated PHOENIX and the 2/503rd was extracted at 1130. They closed the brigade's base camp at Bien Hoa at 1335.

Comments: CPT Faley, Thomas, CO of C/2/503rd Inf; LTC Dexter, George, CO of 2/503rd Inf.

The source for this information was *Vietnam* magazine February 2000, P:22.



Members of 3rd Platoon, A/2/503d. Photo by Jim Healy

As the GI's attempted to pull back, the VC employed the 'hugging tactic' to avoid the allied supporting arms. The



OPERATION PHOENIX

~ One Very Bad Day ~

In February 1966 VC in III Corps introduced the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry to their new way of avoiding U.S. firepower - the 'hugging tactic'

by Colonel Thomas E. Faley, Jr. (Ret)
U.S. Army

The 173d Airborne Brigade was created in 1963 on the island of Okinawa to be the U.S. Army's trouble-shooting reserve for the Far East area of operations. On May 5, 1965, the 173d became the first major U.S. Army ground unit to be inserted into the Vietnam War when it landed, after a six-hour flight, at Bien Hoa air base about 30 kilometers outside Saigon. For the next several months the 173d Brigade fought many engagements with the VC.

One particularly large battle in early November 1965 in War Zone D resulted in the brigade's 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, being awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for decimating a Main Force VC regiment.

In fighting its battles, the brigade's infantry units developed a standard operating procedure of initially determining where the enemy was located, then backing off several hundred yards and pounding the VC with airstrikes and artillery barrages. After the air and artillery had softened the enemy positions, the infantry units would mount their major assaults. This fighting doctrine proved highly successful in numerous engagements.



C Company CO Cpt. Tom Faley with trooper (possibly Jerry Hartman), interpreter/scout Phuc (center) and interpreter/scout at Charlie Company, Camp Zinn.

In early 1966 the VC in the III Corps region changed their method of fighting to include a new "hugging tactic." When the allied infantry units started pulling back after initial contact to commence the softening-up procedure via air attacks and artillery barrages, the VC began closely following them, keeping the distance between the opposing forces at less than 50 meters, which tended to nullify the impact of the air and artillery support. Captain Scott E. Ukeiley, in the December 1998 issue of *Vietnam*, reported that this hugging tactic had been successfully used several months earlier by the NVA during the *Battle of the Ia Drang Valley* in the II Corps region.

The effectiveness of the hugging tactic was vividly demonstrated on February 26, 1966, when the troopers of A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, encountered a well-entrenched and reinforced VC company in the jungle west of Tan Uyen, in Bien Hoa province.

A short, horrific battle ensued. An article on the front page of the February 28 edition of *The New York Times* captured the essence of the battle's outcome with its title,

"GIs Mauled in Clash."

(continued....)



The seeds for the battle were sown on February 18, 1966, when an ARVN reconnaissance patrol reported observing four separate platoon-sized VC units in the jungle area five kilometers west of Tan Uyen, on the western edge of Bien Hoa. The units were believed to be part of 62nd Company of the D900 Main Force Battalion. Within the following week, South Vietnamese sources reported three additional sightings of VC units in the same area.

The terrain in the region was generally level and included sectors of dense jungle, open rice paddies and scattered rubber plantations. Many of the rubber plantations were poorly maintained resulting in secondary growth among the rubber trees. The area provided ideal cover and concealment for the VC, and it was suspected that they were using it as a rest area for their units.

Because the intelligence reports on enemy troop buildup in the area were credible and repeated the same information, the allied forces had a unique opportunity in late February to strike the VC unexpectedly. On February 25 planning for what was dubbed *OPERATION PHOENIX* was quickly initiated, with a strike against the VC to be made the following day. The sweep operation would fall under the control of the 173d Airborne Brigade. The brigade commander, **Brig. Gen. Paul F. Smith**, selected his 2nd Battalion 503rd Infantry, to air assault into the Tan Uyen sector on the 26th. Smith's orders to his troops were to search out and destroy all VC forces in the area.

At 2100 hours on the 25th, the 2nd Battalion staff presented its Phoenix operational order -- a simple, one-day operation in which two infantry companies would be inserted sequentially into the same landing zone, followed by the battalion command group. After assembling on the LZ, the units would move along two axes of advance to search out and destroy VC forces in the operational area. B Company, commanded by **Captain Les Brownlee**, would move along a northwest axis, and A Company, commanded by **Captain Clay Mobley**, would head on a northern axis, with the battalion command group following A Company. C Company, which I commanded, would remain at Camp Zinn in Bien Hoa to serve as a battalion reserve.



Col. Les Brownlee



2nd Platoon, A/2/503d. Believed to be Sgt. Charles Daniels (KIA) holding VC flag. Photo by Jim Healy

C Company was also charged with base camp security, and ambush patrols drawn from the company were positioned 1,000 to 1,500 meters from the base camp. Because C Company had reserve status, its ambush patrols could be retrieved at daybreak. One 105mm howitzer battery, commanded by **Captain Tom Faley**, would be firing direct support artillery from near Phu Loi.

At 0900 on the 26th, the two-company air assault into the landing zone, *LZ Chris*, was carried out without enemy contact. Within an hour B Company was moving northwest along its assigned axis of advance and A Company was moving directly north.



Tom Blanda

Shortly after 1100 A Company found a 1,000-pound rice cache and a pile of enemy documents in a hut several hundred meters north of the LZ. The troops destroyed the rice and retrieved the documents, which were sent back to interpreters. At noon A Company reached its initial objective and halted in place to eat a meal of C rations. During that break **Lieutenant Ralph Southard**, A Company's 1st Platoon leader, sent out a small recon element a short distance to the north.

(continued...)



Finding nothing significant, the troops soon rejoined their comrades. In the meantime, members of B Company had observed three VC moving to the northwest in the company's sector and had quickly placed an artillery strike on the fleeing enemy troops. Shortly after noon, B Company reported to the battalion that it had reached its initial objective and was continuing its movement to the northwest.

After its short break, A Company pushed on through the jungle area toward the next objective, two kilometers to the north. The troops found that movement in that area was extremely difficult because they had to clear the thick undergrowth of scrub brush and vines as they went. **Private First Class Jim Healy** of A Company's 3rd Platoon recalled the growth was so thick that it was like a "15-foot-high briar patch." **Lieutenant Tony Coleman**, A Company's 2nd Platoon leader, worried about the noise the troops were making, thinking that it gave "any VC that may have been in the area a chance to set up."

The A Company formation was a column of platoons. The 1st Platoon was leading on the left with two columns, followed by the weapons platoon, while the 2nd Platoon was leading on the right with two columns, followed by the 3rd Platoon. Each of the two leading platoons had a front security squad whose members were acting as point elements, but the dense growth limited visibility and control to such a degree that the point squads were moving only 20 to 25 meters ahead of the formation. The company command group was at the center of the deployment.

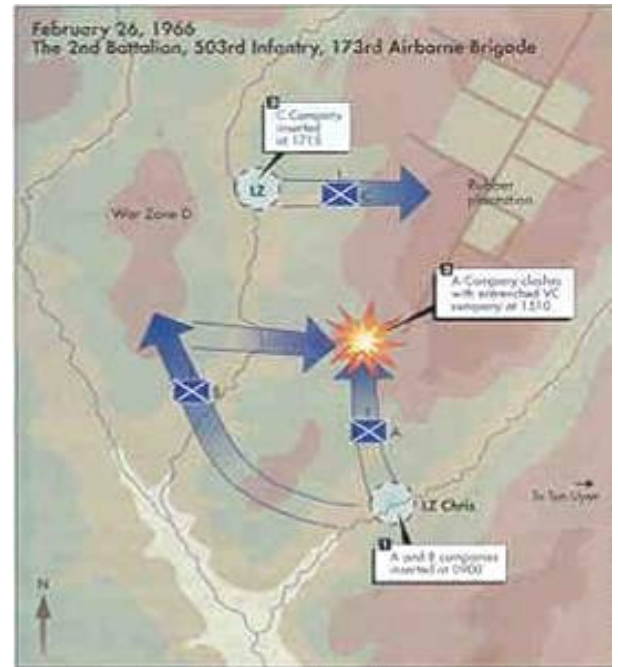
As the troops slowly trudged through the dense vegetation, **Lieutenant Paul Salvus**, the 3rd Platoon leader, remembered "being bored because nothing seemed to be happening." That would soon change. Shortly before 1500, **Pfc. Tommy Morgan**, a forward observer's radio operator, heard one of the point elements radio back that they had found fresh human feces. This observation turned out to be the only indication that trouble might lie ahead.

Minutes later the forward elements of A Company struck a well-prepared entrenchment occupied by a reinforced VC company. Riflemen began firing on the Americans, and the VC also had two heavy machine guns and at least one 60mm mortar.



Paul Salvus
Photo from Jim Healy

The 2nd Battalion staff journal indicates that at 1510 the A Company commander, Captain Clay Mobley, reported to the battalion that his unit had struck a well-dug-in enemy force. The VC had not cleared fields of fire in front of their trench line, and as a result, elements of the 1st and 2nd platoons were within just meters of the trench line when the VC cut loose a murderous rate of fire.



The 2nd Platoon point squad, led by **Sergeant Perez**, was immediately cut down. The point man actually fell onto the front of the trench line, and Perez was seriously wounded in the leg. The sergeant yelled over the din of the battle back to 2nd Platoon leader Coleman that his point element was pinned down. Coleman had been moving at the head of the right main column of his platoon, so he was 20 meters behind Perez and could hear but not see him in the dense growth. Coleman yelled forward to Perez,

“Stay down so that we can fire over the top of you!”

Within several minutes Coleman realized he needed to bring more direct fire on the enemy because much of the enemy fire was pouring in unanswered. Coleman also noticed that the initial incoming friendly artillery fire was striking too far behind the enemy line. He yelled to his men,

“Pull back 50 meters with me,”

so that artillery fire could be more accurately placed on the enemy.

(continued...)



As the platoon started crawling back, Coleman yelled to **Pfc. Clyde “George” Lines**, an M-60 machine-gunner, to move closer to him so that a base of covering fire could be developed. When Lines approached, Coleman saw that he had sustained a gunshot wound in the right hand and was bleeding profusely. Coleman applied a battle dressing to Lines’ hand and then told him,

‘The machine gun is mine.’

While reaching for the M-60, Lieutenant Coleman felt a heavy blow in his back and fell to the ground, face down. He recalled his troopers yelling,

“The lieutenant is hit!”

Coleman managed to roll on his back and said to himself, *“This is it,”* because suddenly he *“didn’t feel, didn’t hear and experienced difficulty breathing.”*



Sgt. Les Daniels (L), Irvin Clarke with bag (KIA), Wright in T-shirt.

Coleman looked up at the tops of the tall trees and had an apparition that they were the tall trees that surrounded his home in Oregon. Then, suddenly, he felt excruciating pain, and the noise of the battle returned. Coleman could not move his legs because a bullet had damaged his spinal cord. But he rolled over, raised himself onto his elbows and said to Lines, *“Let’s set the M-60 up.”* Soon he and Lines had the gun firing which enabled the others to pull farther back. The covering fire was urgently needed because groups of VC were coming out of their trenches and attempting to penetrate the 2nd Platoon sector. The VC had begun to employ their hugging tactic. At the same time, three troopers from

the 1st Platoon point element appeared in front of Coleman with head wounds, and he directed them to crawl to the rear.

Meanwhile, **Sergeant Charles Daniels** had been with the left column of the 2nd Platoon when he heard that Coleman had been wounded. He yelled to the others around him that Coleman had been hit and that he was moving over to the injured lieutenant. Daniels had not moved two or three steps when an enemy bullet ripped into his head and killed him instantly.

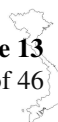
While the 2nd Platoon was caught in a fierce struggle, the 1st Platoon’s chaotic situation was becoming worse. The platoons point squad, led by **Staff Sgt. Elmer Berry**, had drifted too far to the right, into the 2nd Platoon sector, and the 1st Platoon follow-on elements ended up making contact with the VC.

As a crescendo of enemy fire poured into the 1st Platoon, platoon leader Southard fell over a small anthill and landed face down when an enemy round struck his buttocks. Southard immediately realized he was in an uncleared fire lane of an enemy automatic weapon, and he rolled out into a safer area. He looked up and saw a VC heavy machine gun firing chest-high across his platoon’s sector and cutting down overhead branches. He then turned his attention to trying to get his troopers to build up a higher rate of fire.

After a short time, Mobley radioed Southard and told him to pull his platoon back 50 to 60 meters so that artillery fire could be more effectively placed on the enemy entrenchment. A few minutes after the 1st Platoon reached the pullback position, **Lieutenant Cecil Harrison**, the weapons platoon leader, crawled up to Southard and said his unit had expended its mortar rounds in the initial minutes of the engagement and he was moving his unit forward through the 1st Platoon. The weapons platoon had only gone 20 or 30 meters when enemy fire stopped them, Southard later recalled, and they fell back through the 1st Platoon, pulling their casualties with them.

Over in the right sector of the company, the situation was becoming more perilous. During the short opening phase of the battle, Salvias and his 3rd Platoon were behind the 2nd Platoon and could not see what was occurring ahead of them.

(continued....)



“All I had to go on was the chatter on the radio,”

Salvas recalled,

“and from this it appeared that the incoming enemy fire was devastating the two forward platoons.”

Private First Class Tommy Morgan remembered the enemy fire being so heavy that

“all you could do was get shot, it seemed.”

The Associated Press reported: *“The VC increased the tempo of the battle to such ferocity that the troopers were unable to do any more than crouch or lie down and fire back. VC recoilless-rifle, machine gun and mortar fire rained on the troopers.”*

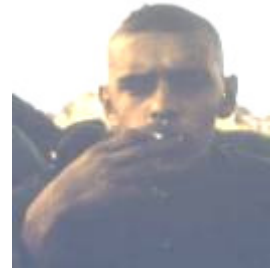
Whenever an A Company trooper did elevate himself above ground level, he was likely to get shot. **Sergeant Baker** of the 3rd Platoon attempted to yell some instructions to Morgan in the deafening gunfire. Morgan raised his head up off the ground to hear Baker better and was immediately shot in the head, which caused profuse bleeding. Within minutes Baker himself was hit, and Morgan sustained additional wounds from the enemy 60mm mortar fire.

Mobley told Salvas to get his platoon on line and move forward. Salvas wanted to move to the right and attempt to attack the VCs flank, but Mobley did not agree, so Salvas complied with the order to move straight ahead. When Salvas started forward, one of his nearby troopers was hit. As he bent down over the man to see how seriously he was wounded, Salvas was shot in the spine. He asked his radio operator, **PFC David Wagner**, to prop him against a tree, where he tried to monitor the situation as best he could. One of the 3rd Platoon noncommissioned officers, **Staff Sgt. Robert Hoskins**, moved over to Salvas and said,

“Sir, I have the platoon.”

As the 3rd Platoon tried to push on, enemy fire was raining down on them and, adding to the difficulty of the movement, elements of the 2nd Platoon were falling back and yelling, *“Pull back!”* One of the 3rd Platoon’s M-60 machine-gunners, **PFC Healy**, believed that in the confusion a number of 3rd Platoon troopers never made

it forward and ended up withdrawing with the 2nd Platoon. At least 10 troopers of the 3rd Platoon under Hoskins’ control did move forward, then deployed on line and met the VC head on as the enemy closed in with their hugging tactic. A furious firefight broke out.



Ron Cavinee, KIA.

Privates First Class Ronald Cavinee and Edward Graves were the closest to the VC and were killed within minutes. Jim Healy had his machine gun set up on the right side of the line. He was preparing to fire when he saw another trooper lying in a small depression 15 feet in front of him. Healy shouted to the trooper to pull back, but the individual would not or could not move. Suddenly **Pfc. Malcolm Holmes** moved



forward in a crouch and grabbed the trooper by the shirt, and both **Edward Graves, KIA** came scrambling back to the firing line. Immediately afterward, Healy poured fire into the enemy with his machine gun. At this point in the battle **Sergeant Charles Morris** moved over to Healy’s machine gun position and wryly observed,

“Makes you feel like you are in a real war, doesn’t it?”

When Morris became aware that Cavinee’s body was in front of their position, he and another trooper crawled out and pulled Cavinee back to the firing line. Shortly afterward, Morris heard a call for help from **Sergeant Paul Neese**, who was seriously wounded, and Morris crawled through the heavy incoming fire once again, placed Neese across his hip and dragged him back. Four months later, in a **Charlie Morris** battle on June 29, 1966, Morris would perform similar heroic acts for which he was subsequently awarded the *Medal of Honor*.



(continued...)



It was evident to Mobley that his company was being cut to pieces in its present position. The platoons were told to pull back another 100 to 150 meters so that tactical air and additional artillery strikes could be placed on the enemy. The VC seemingly anticipated this pullback maneuver, intensified their fire and accelerated the hugging tactic. In doing so, more VC moved out of their entrenchments and followed A Company back as it conducted its difficult withdrawal. The distance between the forces was at times less than 30 meters.

As the pullback was being conducted in the left sector, the 1st Platoon leader, Southard, heard a thud on the ground about 12 inches from his foot. It was an enemy 60mm mortar round -- a dud.

A March 6, 1966, article in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* captured Southard's reaction:

“He looked at the dud round, glanced upward and said, ‘Thank you, Lord,’ and then moved on to help another wounded soldier.”

In the right sector, Coleman and Lines were among the last of the 2nd Platoon to pull back. Lines, a huge man, was carrying the paralyzed Coleman when suddenly he dropped him to the ground. Lines had been shot again, this time in the leg. A few minutes later **Specialist Singleton** and several other troopers from the weapons platoon emerged from the jungle and pulled Coleman and Lines to the rear.

The tactical airstrikes began with the first North American F-100 Supersabre dropping its cluster bomb units (CBUs) 100 to 150 meters forward of A Company's front lines as the pullback neared completion. This first CBU strike landed among the VC in front of A Company and had a tremendous effect. It seemed to break the back of the attacking VC, and their fire died down significantly. Healy recalled *“feeling elated after this strike and anxious to move forward.”*

Disaster soon struck, however, when a second F-100 jet made its pass directly over the A Company forward elements and dropped its CBUs. Many of those cluster bombs caused casualties in A Company. In the 3rd Platoon sector Healy recalled several troopers to his left and right were killed or wounded. Hoskins, the acting 3rd Platoon leader, had been fatally wounded in the

head. The hard-charging Morris was hit in the left leg. Holmes' legs were shredded by the pellets. In the 1st Platoon sector, Southard was struck by pellets, and he discovered one of his best squad leaders, **Sergeant Clarence Mitchell**, fatally wounded in the chest. The senior medic, **Specialist Ray Carlisle**, had lost the use of his arms when the CBU pellets hit him, but he disregarded his own wounds and moved among the casualties, telling others how to treat them.

The airstrikes forced the VC to break off their hugging tactic and fall back to their entrenchments with their casualties. The enemy fire died down significantly. A Company was then able to gain a respite and organize an effective defensive position.

During the battle the 2nd Battalion commander, **Lt. Col. George Dexter**, was flying over the engagement area in a command-and-control Bell UH-1 Huey helicopter. Dexter noted A Company's general location and directed B Company to halt its movement to the northwest and move directly east. He hoped that this shift in direction would place B Company on the western flank of the VC entrenchment.



Col. George Dexter

At the same time, back at the Bien Hoa base camp, C Company was waiting to be deployed as the reserve force. At 1630 the 2nd Battalion executive officer, **Major Bob Carmichael**, told me, commander of C Company, that A Company was in serious trouble. He also said that Dexter



LTC Bob Carmichael

wanted C Company inserted into an LZ 1,500 meters to the northwest of A Company. C Company landed on its newly designated LZ at 1715, and the men found the only enemy resistance was sniper fire from a forested area to the north and northeast. I directed airstrikes on the sniper positions and the incoming fire slackened.

(continued....)



Dexter joined me at the LZ and told me what had happened during the battle. He wanted C Company to move east in hopes of cutting off the enemy line of retreat, and he specifically directed me to move through the jungle area immediately to the east and reach a rubber plantation almost two kilometers distant. C Company then was to set up a blocking position in the plantation. Dexter hoped that B and A companies would be able to drive the VC into C Company's position. Shortly afterward, Dexter climbed back into the helicopter. His pilots took off and flew over the jungle area to the east, and several enemy snipers started shooting at the chopper.

Dexter sat in the right jump seat, resting his forearms on his thighs. One of the sniper bullets came up through the floor of the helicopter, then passed through Dexter's thigh and forearm before lodging in the roof of the chopper. When the pilots saw the seriousness of the colonel's wounds, they headed for the 193rd Hospital, while Dexter radioed Major Carmichael to take command of the battalion.

B Company continued its push to the east, and around 2000, as daylight was fading, linked up with A Company. C Company continued its movement through the jungle north of the battle site, hoping to catch any fleeing VC by surprise. A Company continued to consolidate and evacuate its casualties from an LZ to the southeast. It was soon evident that A Company had suffered 14 known dead and 76 others wounded. C Company reached its rubber plantation objective around 2030 and set up a perimeter with a large number of outposts. B Company and the decimated A Company also went into a perimeter defense 400 meters south of the VC as darkness closed in. Incoming enemy fire had been reduced to a few harassment rounds.

All companies had an uneventful night. Shortly after daybreak, B and A companies pushed north to the VC trench line and found it had been abandoned by the enemy. As the units searched the trench line they found the body of an A Company trooper who had been fatally shot. He had been hit in the left side of his chest and was lying with his weapon in the underbrush on the edge of the line.

As B and A companies continued their search of the trenches, they found numerous bloodstained blankets, ponchos and cotton bandages -- but no VC soldiers. During the night they had apparently been able to carry with them whatever casualties they suffered in the engagement. The enemy fortifications consisted of a well dug-in trench line and tunnel system 200 meters in diameter. It appeared that the system had been in place for a long time.

After completing an intensive search of the enemy entrenchment, B and A companies moved north to link up with C Company in the rubber plantation 1 1/2 kilometers northeast of the battle site. The linkup was completed at noon, and the recently found body of the A Company trooper was evacuated.

I knew that the previous day's battle had been devastating for A Company, but the full impact did not hit me until I saw Mobley with one small composite platoon move into the C Company perimeter. A saddened Mobley told me, "*This is what is left of my company.*" I immediately thought back to the Phoenix operational order two days earlier and realized that if it had not been for C Company's base security mission, my company could have been the decimated unit -- but for the luck of the draw.



Jim Healy

For years after the battle, Jim Healy of A Company asked himself,

***“Why was I spared injury
when so many brave and
better men around me were
killed or wounded?”***

(continued....)



The only answer Healy has been able to come up with is:

“Just pure luck. Neither bullets nor shrapnel swerve to avoid hitting the ‘good’ nor do they change direction to seek out the ‘bad.’ They just simply fly in their trajectory and hit whatever may be in their path. While being good at your job may give you the slight edge, the determining factor is luck. That’s what makes combat death seem so arbitrary, random and unfair.”

was extracted by air beginning at 1130. By 1335 all 2nd Battalion units had returned to the brigade’s Bien Hoa base camp without incident.

In his post-battle analysis section of a comprehensive after action report on Operation Phoenix, Smith was very candid in pointing out the effectiveness of the VC’s new hugging tactic and the difficulties associated with countering this tactic. He also reported that caution should be used when employing Air Force CBU munitions in close proximity to friendly troops. At the end of the report, Smith summarized the outcome of the battle:

“As darkness fell, no decisive victory had been gained and the VC force had all night to evaporate into the jungle.”

During the first two weeks of March, many of the wounded troops returned to A Company and new replacements were assigned, bringing the unit back to authorized strength. A Company quickly returned to the jungle and played a major role in the defeat of the VC 271st Regiment in War Zone D on March 16, 1966.

Operation Phoenix had been an appropriate name for the previous operation -- the newly reconstituted A Company resembled the phoenix bird of Egyptian mythology, which rose from the ashes to live again.

Thomas E. Faley, Jr., who was a company commander during Operation Phoenix, is a retired Army colonel who also served as a 101st Airborne Division reconnaissance platoon leader and a Vietnamese airborne battalion senior adviser. His report, above, first appeared in *Vietnam*

magazine and is reprinted here in this photo history with his and their permission. Photos added.



After the battle. Photo by Mike Guthrie

The 2nd Battalion spent the rest of the afternoon and the next day searching for the VC, but they had disappeared. On the morning of March 1, General Smith terminated Operation Phoenix and the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry



OPERATION PHOENIX

3rd Platoon Roster, Alpha Company

~ 26 Feb 66 ~

Provided by Jim Healy

THIRD PLATOON FEB 16, 1966			
POSITION	NAME	RANK	SN
PL:	Salinas	WIA	
RTO:	Wagner	WIA	
PSG:	Barker	WIA	
MED:	Williams	WIA	
1ST SQUAD			
SL:	Neske	WIA	
"A" TL:	Daniel	WIA	
AR:	Almeida	WIA	
G:	Staves	KIA	
R:	Eliad	WIA	
R:	Wright		
"B" TL:	Wilkens		
AR:	Clack	KIA	
G:	Kirk	WIA	
R:	Stiller	WIA	
R:	McEntyre	WIA	
2ND SQUAD			
SL:	Roberts	WIA	
"A" TL:	Phillips	CP	
AR:	Sint	KP	
G:	Bartwell		
R:	Hick	LV 50	
R:	Bryant		
"B" TL:	Morris	WIA	
AR:	Waters	WIA	
G:	Boatman	PRAC	
R:	Walt		

3RD SQUAD			
	NAME	RANK	SN
SL:	Slasky	KIA	
"A" TL:	Marshall	WIA	
AR:	Paley	HP	
G:	Reis		
R:	Tarver	WIA	
R:	Bowen	R&R	
"B" TL:	Finley		
AR:	Brewitt		
G:	Lawrence	KIA	
R:	Lucas	WIA	
R:	Gandy	WIA	
R:	Lockett		
WEAPONS SQUAD			
SL:	Liedrich	WIA	
M60:	West		
ASST:	Shelton	WIA	
M60:	Healy		
ASST:	James		
M67:	Lee	WIA	
ASST:	Otes		
M67:			
ASST:			
AMMO:	Jual	CAF	
AMMO BR:	Ferguson		
R:			
R:	Furney	HP	
R:	Cressley	Ld	
R:	McLain	HOSP	



MORE ON PHOENIX

Really can't add much, but LT Allen P. Mauldin, one of the Casper pilots, was flying the helicopter on which Col. Dexter was injured. The bullet came up through the bottom of the helicopter, went through his thigh and through the arm which he had resting on his leg -- typical position for someone on that type duty.

Al called me on the radio and told me about the incident and advised me he was heading straight for the Field Hospital. I believe Col. Dexter told me later that he had lost consciousness before they got to the hospital and had it not been for Al's quick thinking he (Col Dexter) probably would not have made it. I can't confirm the latter part of the statement above, but I am sure Col. Dexter can provide the answer to that.

Unfortunately, Al died of a heart attack at least 8 years ago. In 1988 Al was a student at the US Army War College at Carlisle Barracks. During the time he was here in PA he and I played a lot of golf at my country club. When he left the College he gave me a bottle of 21 year old Chivas Royal Salute Scotch. I told him I was not about to drink that except for a very special occasion.

In 2004, the Caspers had a gathering of the originals that went to Nam with us from Okinawa. That was the special occasion. I purchased shot glasses with the 173d Crest on them for each of us attending the event (about 40 of us counting kids and grandkids by that time). We spread the scotch throughout and had a toast to Al. His widow was there as were all the living Caspers. It was a rather emotional event, but very, very meaningful to all attending. I had invited Col Dexter but he was not able to attend. He was a guy we all admired very much and I still have a tremendous amount of respect for him. He is truly one of a kind.

We did make our trip to VN in December and I still plan to get you a short trip report. Unfortunately, we were not able to get directly on any of the battle sites such as LZ Zulu Zulu but we got close enough. Road construction over there is everywhere. I will send you some pictures we took out in the boonies. Of course, at my age I really didn't want to walk the two or three hours in the jungle to get there.

I really don't expect this info to be of much help to you in your efforts for the Newsletter, but I just thought I would tell you anyway.

This is a picture of me taken in December '09 with the Viet Cong lady who owned the cafe where we ate right after visiting the Cu Chi tunnels and the Cao Dai Temple. My age (77) is beginning to show, but I did the tunnels (about 40 meters) and walked up to the top of

Marble Mountain (100+ ft) near Da Nang and the flag tower (100+ ft) in Hanoi. Kept up with the young guys pretty well.

Colonel Don Bliss (Ret)

Commander, Casper Aviation Platoon
1st Brigade Aviation Officer,
173d Brigade Aviation



Don and lady, a former Viet Cong, during return trip to Vietnam in 2009.



Casper Pilot Cpt Don Bliss flying a U-8 Beaver over Okinawa just prior to Caspers' deployment to Bien Hoa, Vietnam, May 1965



[In 2001, seven 2/503d and one 1/503d Sky Soldiers returned to Vietnam. During one of our day trips Dale Olson and Mike Thibault of A/2/503d and I humped to the 26 February 1966 battle site. Following is an excerpt from *Sky Soldiers Return to Vietnam* detailing our visit there]. Ed

SKY SOLDIERS RETURN TO VIETNAM

Operation Phoenix, 26 Feb '66

2/15/01, Thursday

Coffee for breakfast, two cups with Dale, then off with guide Truc and driver Mr. Minh to pickup Von Ryan at the American Standard plant (toilets and more toilets stacked on the grounds behind tight security.... don't want any top secret toilet plans captured!). To his chagrin I gave Mike the nickname Von Ryan as he was the leader of this small squad who returned to Vietnam.

During the drive we learn Mr. Minh is a former chopper pilot with the SVN army who was shot down *three* times during the war....I watch his driving very carefully, but he does a fine job and is a friendly man. I gave him a carton of the cigarettes son Dan the Wild gave me for villagers.

With Von Ryan riding shotgun and Truc manning the GPS, we drive off on a search and find mission looking for the battle site of *Operation Phoenix* from 26 Feb '66, where we had 14 KIA on what I recall was to have been a one-day sweep but turned into a many day operation.

With the aid of a map and his GPS, Truc brings us to a place by what is now a paved road near the City of Phu Loi where we of the 2/503 camped, the road now splitting in two what was then our perimeter. The surrounding area is green and the terrain slightly undulating and one can see higher slopes in the distance.

Mike T, Truc and I took one bottle of water each, Dale two (smart Sky Soldier), and moving across the street we head out through a gully. Again another hot yet not so humid morning, but that would change. Yesterday, I gave my Miami hat to Skip, one of the AnnTour drivers and I'm hatless – I'd regret having done that later in the day.

We walked through gullies, fields, rice paddies and rubber tree plantations, and walked and walked while the sun beat down on us. One couldn't help but make the comparison of what we were doing to the humps of

years before, and invariably ask the question, "*How the hell did we do that then?*" We weren't carrying rucks, now or weapons, or ammo, or radios, or C's, just shorts, tennis shoes and some water, yet still this hump was an ass- kicker. Over a rise we could see the LZ where, in February of 1966, we were choppered in.



We gave this old boy a wide berth.

Walking by water buffalo we gave them a wide berth. I told everyone I wasn't concerned about such an attack as all I had to do was outrun Dale!

At some point Von Ryan took on the role of Top Sgt., which fit him well. I was happy just to be tagging along, yet still conscious of booby traps as some of the areas where we walked appeared to be untouched by the farmers working that land.



Guide Truc and Dale having fun with village kids.

We came upon a man holding a pet snake, and Truc spoke to him about the path and direction we were taking while I took Dale's video camera and filmed the conversation and the snake. Taking up the rear I filmed the three men ahead, then turning for a panning shot I looked back to where they had been, and they were gone, reminding me of what used to happen in the thick bush years before – *never take your eyes off the asshole in front of you!* Not worrying about getting zapped by a VC, a water buffalo maybe, I yelled to the Top Sgt. and caught-up with our group.

(continued....)



We crossed several wet rice paddies making our way along dikes, and forged a couple small creeks walking over wooden sticks and tree branches serving as footbridges. For roughly two-and-a-half-hours we humped, and it was good to hump again.



Dale standing in the clearing where the battle of 26 Feb '66 began. The VC trenches were along that tree line and, though overgrown, are visible to this day.

Nearing the battle site we came upon a wide, dirt road about a couple hundred yards from the tree line where the fight began, and we kidded Truc about making us hump so far when Mr. Minh could have driven us to the exact spot we were looking for.

Walking through a clearing we moved forward to what, in February of 1966, was a trench line where the bad guys opened-up on "A" Co. killing fourteen Sky Soldiers and wounding a number of paratroopers, including my friend and business client **Bob Marshall, A/2/503d**, ending his time at war.



Bob & Smitty on the links in Knoxville, 2000.

Dale moved away to be alone with his thoughts. We all knew this hump was for Dale more than anyone else, as he had a date with an old friend, **Lamar Fredericks**. Truc and Mike T walked away to give Dale some silence and privacy while, using Dale's video camera, and unknown to him, I filmed him standing against a tree speaking to and praying for his friend whose life was ended here that day.



Mike Sturges & cute VC he met. We didn't have the heart to tell him she was made of wood.

Von Ryan snapped a couple pictures of Dale and me, and the hump began again in search of Mr. Minh, his air conditioned car and cold water. We forged another creek after spending some time finding a footbridge, and found the road again, but not before Dale slipped off a paddy dike and fell into the water. He asked us to promise not to tell anyone about it, so we did. Mr. Minh met us at the road and we were glad the hump was over.

Back at the Rex Hotel I showered, napped and met Mike Sturges, Jack Ribera, 1st Bat Guy Craig Ford and Kim, an American-Vietnamese friend and her sister. After visiting for a while we took motorbikes and taxis to Kim's hotel where she treated us to pizza and beer, Jack choosing to remain behind at the Caravelle.

The 33 beer we all remember is now 333 beer and is quite good. We were told some Germans invested in the brewery in Vietnam and added a "3" to the name. It now tastes one-third better.

Later our US/VN group found a nearby Karaoke Bar where we drank too much and sang too poorly but had a great evening. Mike Sturges scored 100% on one song, but he always was two lyrics behind the music so I figured he bribed the owner.

That evening I moved from the Rex to a small bed and breakfast away from tour asses and much less busy and noisy than city center. I'll recommend this guesthouse to other vets returning to Vietnam.

Tomorrow we have an early a.m. trip to the Dustoff Café and to visit the City of Bien Hoa, our home with the 173d Airborne back in '65/'66. I'm looking forward to that.

(continued....)





The reinvaders in 2001 at 3rd Field Army Hospital in Saigon, now a war arms museum.

L-R: Mike Thibault, Danny Haber, VC Lt., VC General, Craig Ford, Loness Garcia, Steve Haber in hat, Joan Haber, Dale Olson, Jack Ribera, VC Lt., A.B Garcia, Mike Sturges and Smitty

It was a long, hot and exhausting day, but I think our friend Dale has found some new peace for himself. He was able to finally say goodbye to his friend Lamar.

Lew "Smitty" Smith
HHC/2/503d

Members of the 173d Airborne Brigade Board of Directors:

In response to the vote taken at the Mid-Winter Conference, as Association Liaison to the Memorial Foundation I proposed to the Foundation that they acknowledge the 173d Airborne Brigade Association as a memorial donor. I cited the following two bases as justification: (1) The Association transferred to the Foundation \$50,000 in funds held by the Association for a memorial, and (2) support such as the regular advertisements of the Memorial in *Sky Soldier* magazine, etc.

The Memorial Foundation Board members were polled individually, and voted unanimously against so recognizing the Association. They cited three reasons: (1) the \$50,000 in funds were being held formally by the Association (and the Society before that) for a memorial, and were not part of the Association's general operating fund; (2) the advertising support for the Memorial was negotiated between the Memorial Foundation and the Association in return for the Association keeping

funds in excess of \$50,000 that were held in the memorial account, thus effectively making the advertising support not a contribution; and (3) the Association has not written a donation check of any amount for the Memorial. The Memorial Foundation Board indicated that they would recognize the Association as a donor if the Association submits an Association check for any amount that is received by the Foundation prior to 31 March 2010. Finally, the Board cautioned that a donation check written by an individual on behalf of the Association would not be accepted as an Association donation.

This Memorial to the 173d Airborne Brigade and the Sky Soldiers who were lost during the wars fought by the Brigade will be a significant, tangible part of the Brigade's legacy. It is appropriate that the Association be recognized as a donor to this Memorial.

I therefore recommend, and submit to the 173d Airborne Brigade Association Board of Directors for a vote, that the 173d Airborne Brigade Association donate an Association check for \$173 to the Memorial Foundation, and that the check be sent to the Foundation in sufficient time to arrive before 31 March 2010.

If this recommended call for a vote is approved by Association President Roy Sparks in a subsequent email to the Board of Directors, please submit your vote to Association Secretary Tim Austin (tim.austin@us.army.mil) by 10 March 2010.

This recommended call for a vote is not going directly to the Board of Directors members for Chapters 2, 4, 19, 21, and 27. Chapter 2 elects two Vice Presidents instead of a President, and has not designated which Vice President is the Board of Directors member. Chapter 2 should designate its Board of Directors member at the time of its vote. Recipients for Chapters 4, 19, 21, and 27 please pass this email to your Chapter President. You may relay back your President's vote, provided you confirm that the vote was made by the President or his designated representative.

The 173d Airborne Brigade Association Board of Directors contains 30 members. If a vote is approved, the vote of 16 members will be required for a quorum.

Michael E. Montie
C/4-503d 68-69
V.P., 173d Airborne Brigade Association
memontie@aol.com

The Association is us. Geez. Ed.



IS THAT A MICROPHONE?

Then it must be my good buddy Bill Vose. He never met one he didn't like. Ed.



Photo by Tony Geishausser

Florida Chief Assistant State Attorney Bill Vose (Capt.), one of them real war heroes, addressing a gathering of 2/503d troopers at 173d Reunion in Ft. Worth, TX. Maj. Gus Vendetti (then 1LT) put 2LT Vose in for the Silver Star for his heroic actions during the battle at Zulu-Zulu on 16 Mar 66, Bill's first day in combat. As the story goes, the brass reduced it to a Bronze Star w/V stating, "We don't need 2LT's out there playing John Wayne." And, the old trooper deserved the Star too.



This photo is of Bill making chopper pilot Maj. Tony Geishausser an honorary member of the 2/503d in recognition of the Cowboy "intentionally having his Huey shot down inside our perimeter so he could live his life-long dream of fighting in ground combat with the 2nd Battalion." [Notice the microphone. Ed].



FRONTLINE

~ THE WOUNDED PLATOON ~
Tuesday, March 30, 2010 on PBS Stations

Just a heads up. Might be worth watching.

Jack Schimpf, B/2/503d

"At the height of the Iraq war, Charlie Company's Third Platoon was at the tip of the spear -- one of the more exceptional and cohesive fighting units operating in an often chaotic campaign. Now, as the soldiers return home and the military's mental health treatment and screening programs are put to the test, 'Frontline' tracks down the surviving members of the platoon. Some have adjusted well to civilian life -- one is a police officer, some are off to college. But others are struggling with **post traumatic stress** and the effects of traumatic brain injuries. And one sits in a Colorado prison, having pled guilty to participation in the murder of another member of Charlie Company. In this affecting portrait of one platoon, 'Frontline' investigates the promises and realities of what today's soldiers find after war."

Who Are These Guys?

Send in a note if you can identify the 2/503d Sergeant First Class and his trusty RTO out for an afternoon ride. Must have been early in the war, the Sarge is still wearing those pretty, colorful bullet-attracting patches. Geez, whose idea was *that*??



SEND IN YOUR 2/503d VIETNAM STORIES & PHOTOS

We need your 2/503d Vietnam stories and photos for future issues of our newsletter. Don't worry if you ain't a good writer no how, we ain't either. If possible, try to keep your story to one, typed-written page. Photos associated with your story are always great (JPEG please). Please email to: rto173d@cfl.rr.com You won't become famous but your grandkids will get a kick out of reading what their grand dad did in the war.



MORE ON WHY WE JUMP

At the time I started jump school at Fort Benning, I had never in my life set foot on an aircraft. The reason for this is very simple: Back in 1963, when I came to the USA, air travel was financially accessible only to the well off, of which I was not. I crossed the Atlantic on a passenger ship (the *Hanseatic*, which some years later burned down in New York harbor). The crossing lasted 8 days (from Cherbourg in France to New York). Eight days in the cheapest cabin available, but full board and entertainment included, cost me three times less than the price for a flight which would have lasted only hours. Within the USA I travelled by car or by Greyhound.

So when the time came at Fort Benning to board for the first jump, I had double butterflies in the stomach. First experience ever on an airplane, and on top the anxiety of having to jump out in the empty air! What made things worse, the aircraft was an old C-119 Flying Boxcar. It took ages before that shaky rattle trap finally lifted off after rumbling down what seemed uncountable fearful miles on the most bumpy runway

When the long dreaded moment arrived, things went so fast that I didn't have time to shit in my pants. Being in the middle of the stick, I was practically pushed out the door, the chute opened as they had said it would and there I was, hanging under a gently swaying canopy, descending smoothly back to mother Earth.

Only problem was that I wasn't alone in that adventure. There were so many of us that, almost unavoidably, I collided with the canopy of a fellow cherry jumper about half way down. Having both been very attentive students during our instruction, we knew how to react in that situation; we hugged each other brotherly and landed safely in each other's arms a few seconds later. Whoa! What an experience for a first jump! Fortunately, the following jumps were uneventful.

At the conclusion of jump school, I was assigned to the 173d on Okinawa (and not to Germany as I had expected and secretly hoped!). With my fellow sufferers we were bussed to Montgomery and put on a Super Constellation bound for Oakland Naval Base, California, from where we were to sail across the Pacific in one of those infamous sardine cans called troop carriers. Montgomery was the occasion for another nightmarish experience. As the engines were started off one after the other, one of them caught fire! We all had to exit the aircraft and wait for a replacement. At least that's what we thought. But no, after an hour or so we were ordered to climb on that same contraption. During the entire flight I kept a mistrusting eye on that engine (and the other one on my side). There was no further incident, but my confidence in aircraft was definitely shaken.



Herbert with his lovely bride Annie.

The only other mishap in parachuting occurred during a training jump in Vietnam, where I had the "pleasure" to have an experience with Mae West. But that's another story.

**Herbert Murhammer
B/2/503d, '65-'66**

AIRBORNE LIGHT SWITCH?

After learning it would be making a parachute jump.



Stand up!



CORRECTION

In our December '09 Newsletter, Issue 9 on Page 14, in the story *The Things They Carried*, this photo appeared with the following inscription: "**Dale Oslon, carrying a letter from home.**"



The Trooper shown in the photo is actually good buddy **Chuck Engle A/2/503d**. While Dale also served with *No DEROS Alpha*, I should have realized at the time this was not him; Chuck is much more handsome. Ed.

[This poetic and touching note is from the wife of **Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503d '65-'66** after she and Jim attended their first ever reunion of the 2d Battalion, held in Cocoa Beach, Florida in 2002. I suspect she was chiefly speaking of when Jim met our hooch buddy, **Wayne Hoitt**, for the first time in over 36 years.] Ed..

THESE MEN SO DEAR

2002

I stood and watched, enthralled, I am so honored to have been allowed this near.

First came the recognition as they smiled and spoke, one to the other. The passing years may have changed the look, but the voices were the same.



Gayle & Jim Bethea

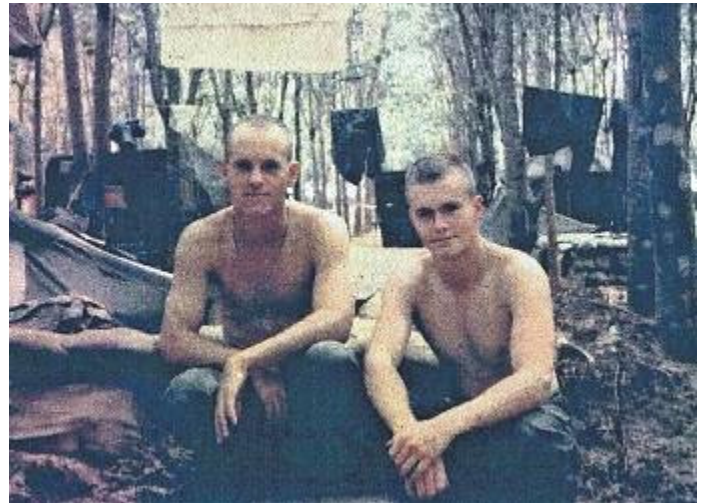
As two Brothers dropped the veil of time, a third and then another would join in with great abandon, their voices almost harmonized as though in song. Memories intertwined, sometimes one would speak as all others almost held their breaths; determined to hear every word spoken, every name mentioned, each named place.

These men came together and with their memories

and their hearts wove a tapestry whose threads blended one to the next, and as with all great tapestries the side shown to the world is art. These men of the 173d know well the work and sacrifices of the tapestry's side seldom shown to or understood by the rest of us.

I have come to know this man I met, grew to love and respect and marry; the marble of this man's character was cut and carved and polished, the shadows and light perfected in Viet Nam.

w/love, Gayle Bethea



Two young 2/503d commo guys in the rubber trees near Bien Hoa in 1965, Jim & Wayne.

Happy Birthday to 1/503d Eddie Hair
(only because he's an RTO and carried a big PRC)



Photo by Jack Leide, MG (Ret)
CO, C/2/503d, '66-'67



SKY SOLDIERETTE'S CORNER



Again, I have started so many of these updates for the newsletter thinking this time I'll give the wives and maybe even some of the men something about PTSD to really sink their teeth into -- something that will really make a difference. It will be this nice clinical map which will help someone dig themselves out of the hole the entire family is in -- someone, somewhere will benefit and I can finally say I've helped someone. It won't be personal, it will be what someone out there needs.

Yet when I start, I find myself getting personal again and I can't help it. And I don't have the faintest idea why I'm doing it or why I feel this is what needs to go down on the piece of paper.

It's a dreary, soul-sapping miserable day outside and inside. There's no changing it. Nothing is going to get better. Not for me, not for you and certainly not for the veterans who served.

It doesn't really matter how many you try to help, there's always one more that has reached that point where they know there isn't any real help so we are going to pursue that claim until we get what is rightfully ours. When all along, all we wanted was the recognition that the souls of our vets and eventually the soul of every person that they have touched has been damaged by the experiences of Vietnam.

The recognition that the welcome home was too little too late. That the fight hardly feels worth the effort any more. That the help you really wanted was someone to help you understand what was going on and to get through the day without having to push down every emotion, every feeling, every bit of caring you thought you had left in your soul.

That your family deserves to have someone who is there for them -- to hold them when they need it, to care if they have exceeded their own expectations of what they could accomplish. That their every thought isn't about how to help you cope, but how they can deal with what they have to -- your anger, your anxiety, your numbing, your nightmares, your memories.

That they don't have to be a super person every single day of their lives -- sooner or later they can just be an ordinary person. That they will be allowed to speak without worrying how it will sound. That every action, every movement won't be scrutinized and criticized because it doesn't measure up -- and a slip might mean a world will fall apart.

When will it end? What compensation can ever make all of that better?

Iva Tuttle
A Sky Soldier's Wife

Rangers Rappel in support of Recruiting

The rappel from the rafters of the Superdome took place on 2 consecutive days, when I was the Commander of the New Orleans Recruiting Battalion, following my battalion command of the 3-7 Infantry "Cottonbailers" at Fort Benning. Tulane University was scheduled to play US Air Force Academy, who brought their best Air Force show to town to assist with Air Force recruiting. Trying to match/offset their efforts, I got a Ranger team from the Ranger Training Brigade, bought a special rappel rope, long enough to reach the playing field from the rafters of the Superdome, and set it up. The rope was so long that the Ranger rappellers had to feed the rope through their snaplinks to get started because the weight of the rope prohibited their movement. Finding the right spot on the catwalk, lugging the rope, (a two man job), anchoring it, all were major tasks, which the Rangers did extremely well.

I was the narrator on the playing field and did not rappel. On game day at half-time, a Ranger Captain came rappelling down, using the Austarlian rappel (head first), firing his weapon as he came down. He was followed by an NCO with a standard rappel, then a National Guard female Captain, then her Dad, who was a NG MSG. Once on the playing field, the Ranger Officer and NCO put on a hand-to-hand demo, which wowed the crowd.

The Superbowl Manager was so impressed that he asked us to return the following day to repeat the demo for the Saints - Redskins Game, which we did. Needless to say that the demo and news coverage were contributing factors in our recruiting success. We followed this with the Golden Knights jumping at the University of New Orleans and at an LSU football game in Baton Rouge.

Col. Roy Lombardo (Ret)
CO B/2/503d



WAR.

Photo by Mike Sturges, A/2/503d



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / March 2010 - Issue 13

Page 42 of 46



2/503d COMBAT SERVICE CITATION

Our battalion, as were all the battalions of the 173d Airborne Brigade, were replete with heroes, most of whom were never recognized for their valorous actions during combat. Countless were wounded, yet their wounds not so debilitating to warrant dust off; some refused dust off to remain in the field with their buddies. Some died saving lives of their fellow paratroopers, while others survived yet no one was there to see how heroic they truly were. All who served in combat are deserving of special recognition. It was with this in mind four of the former battalion commanders of the 2/503d took it upon themselves to create a special award for all men who served with our battalion during the Vietnam War. In 2002, **Colonels George Dexter, Robert Carmichael, John Walsh** and **Robert Sigholtz** jointly created the *2/503d Combat Service Citation*, issued and signed by each man. Initially, the citation was given to men who directly served under their commands from 1965 into 1967. However, the commanders later decided to award the citation to all men who served with our battalion during any year of the war. To date, upwards of 300 citations have been presented to Sky Soldiers of our battalion. If you served with the 2/503d in Vietnam, to receive your personalized citation please send your physical address and how you wish your name to appear, to rto173d@cfl.r.com and it will be mailed to you. *Airborne!*

	COMBAT SERVICE CITATION	
<i>This award is presented to</i>		
<i>of the</i> 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment <i>of the</i> 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate), <i>in the Republic of Vietnam</i>		
<i>In recognition of their exemplary performance during combat operations.</i>		
<i>Your unit, the 2d Bn (Abn), 503d Inf, was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the Meritorious Unit Citation and is recognized as one of the most heroic and valorous units in the history of the United States Army.</i>		
<i>As a member of the 2d Bn (Abn), 503d Inf, your individual bravery and personal valor made possible these awards for the outstanding combat record of the 2d Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry Regiment.</i>		
<i>Presented this 17th Day of October 2007</i>		
AIRBORNE		
 George E Dexter <i>Colonel, Infantry (Retired)</i> <i>Commander 1965/66</i> <i>2nd Bn (Abn), 503rd Inf.</i>	 John J Walsh, Jr. <i>Colonel, Infantry (Retired)</i> <i>Commander 1966</i> <i>2nd Bn (Abn), 503rd Inf.</i>	
 Robert B Carmichael <i>Lt. Colonel, Infantry (Retired)</i> <i>Battalion Executive Officer 1965/66</i> <i>Commander 1966, 2nd Bn (Abn) 503rd Inf.</i>	 Robert H Sigholtz <i>Colonel, Infantry (Retired)</i> <i>Commander 1966/67</i> <i>2nd Bn (Abn) 503rd Inf.</i>	

Draft Copy



WELCOME

We're honored to welcome **Dr. Ronald Smith**, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Maitland, Florida to the pages of our newsletter. Ron will be taking over the duties of the *Chaplain's Corner* from **Reverend Mike McMillan, Sniper, 4/503d**, who did a superb job for us over the past 12 issues. Thanks Mac, job well done preacherman!

We have a number of men who served with the 2/503d and the brigade who went on to become leaders in the church, and whom we hope over time to invite to share their thoughts with us. For the months ahead, we look forward to presenting Dr. Smith's messages here.

Pastor Smith was graduated with a B.S. degree in business administration from the University of South Carolina, and a M.A. in Bible from Columbia Graduate School of Bible and Mission, among numerous other studies. A graduate of OCS in 1967, 1LT Smith served with the 3/319th Artillery attached as a Forward Observer to Bravo Company 2/503d in 1969. Among his many military and combat awards, Ron is the recipient of the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star w/V. Today, he serves as the Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Maitland in Florida. Ed.



August 1969 during 2/503d pacification mission in the valley near the I Corps/II Corps Line. IT'S A BOY! As B/2/503 buddies look on, 1LT Ron Smith, FO 3/319th (kneeling on far right) congratulates SP4 Zackry Lindsey (front right) from Atlanta, GA, as he receives a call from the Red Cross informing him he had just become the father of a 9 lb. 6 oz. baby boy.



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER ~ FINDING HOME ~

Dr. Ronald Reese Smith
ronaldreesesmith@gmail.com

Some decades ago there was a young football star from Pennsylvania named Steve Lacke. He led his high school team to consecutive state championships. The colleges of the nation clamoured for his services to represent them on the gridirons of America. Finally, he chose to go to school in North Carolina. There for four

thrill packed years, he punched through the line, ran around the end and flung the final pass that brought fame and glory to his chosen school. The play of this young man was so spectacular that following a particularly daring play, the cheerleaders would line up before the stands and cry out until their voices almost cracked: "*Steve Lacke, Steve Lacke, What does Steve Lacke?*" And the crowd would thunder back, "*Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!*" Then, young Steve graduated from the university and the cheers of Saturday afternoon faded like a Monday morning. Nothing much was heard about him until one day a small article appeared in a local paper. It was reported that Steve Lacke had been released recently from a alcohol treatment center. He had just taken a job working in the locker room at the university. Now he was fighting his way back.



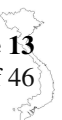
Pastor Ron

Apparently the crowd was wrong. Steve Lacke, lacked something. Steve Lacke is not the only person to lack something. St. Augustine reminded us that there is a God-shaped vacuum in each of us. We often try to fill that empty feeling within us with all kinds of things -- things like position, power, prestige and possessions. None of these things fill the void in us. Until we are found by God and surrender our lives to Him, life makes little sense.

We are always searching and trying to find home. We are homesick. Every one has felt that at one time or another. It can be painful and lonely. Ultimately we are homesick for God! We were created for community with God. We are hard wired for a right relationship with Him. The suffering can be excruciating until we come home to God. Alienation from God is destructive. The byproduct is inevitably inhumanity to others.

But God entered the world in Jesus Christ to reconcile us to Himself. Jesus' life, Jesus' words, Jesus' work were all for the single purpose to lead us home to God. His supreme work was His vicarious and sacrificial death on the cross to pay the price for our self-alienation from God. His resurrection was the Father's total satisfaction of that work. Surrendering to Jesus Christ as our CEO is the way home.

"Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.



THERE IS STILL TIME, BUT THE CLOCK IS TICKING



"Serving those who served." Scott Fairchild, left, Judith Mathewson and Nathan Thomas of Welcome Home Vets help troops to readjust after their deployment.

We call him *Doc Scott*, or the *PTSD Guru*, or the *All-American*, but he's not a Medic from Vietnam, in fact, the Doc never served in Vietnam. Yet, like our Medics this Doc has saved a lot of our lives, and he continues to save lives; those of old vets like us, and the young kids coming home from the Sand.

As Iva so rightly pointed out in her report, for every Vietnam vet who is fortunate enough to find help to deal with his or her PTSD, there's another one, or one-thousand or ten-thousand or more who will never find help, will never know it's available or is too afraid or proud to ask for help. Pride, what a bastard it can sometimes be. Again, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is not a weakness in one's character; it does not mean you are crazy; it means precisely what it says it is, *STRESS*, and stress is the biggest killer of all.

The stress many of us who've been in combat live with can negatively impact just about every aspect of our lives. The stress of war can come between a husband and his wife, a father and his kids. It can influence normal daily activities and work, and produce ungodly depression. It can kill just as easily as that unseen sniper, as it all too often goes unseen, or at least misunderstood.

"I knew something was wrong with me. Doc Scott helped point out what it was. I'm glad I talked to the Doc. I'm glad I did after months of putting it off. He was able to give me insight into why I was feeling like I did. I believe that I'm having a better relationship with my wife of almost 39 years. She has endured me for a long period of time thinking I was just a hardhead."

**Harry Cleland
SP4 RTO
B/2/503, '66 - '67**

What Harry said, I've said, and what so many others of us have said after having had the good fortune of meeting the Doc, receiving his treatment and care and never-ending support. Frankly, I don't know how he deals with all of us and the torment he absorbs as a daily diet -- I do know this, this old RTO would be parked somewhere under a bridge had it not be for the Doc.

Dr. Scott Fairchild is a unique bird. He genuinely cares about veterans of our country, but not just in words alone. While his practice will often find him in one-on-one sessions with combat vets for hours at a time, more often you'll find him at vet rallies, attending veteran funerals, or visiting vets in hospitals, as he did me and others I know of.

A soldier's soldier, Doc is a retired LTC with the 82nd Airborne, he's one of us. He speaks our language, he understands us. He allows us to finally face and confront our demons. Not only we unwashed, but our officers should be pleased to know there is someone they too can finally turn to, and open up to, and trust. PTSD is an equal opportunity illness, affecting PFC's to Generals.

I often refer to Doc Scott at the 'PTSD guru,' a handle which justifiably fits him. Scott is a nationally-recognized authority on PTSD, having conducted much of the early work and research on the illness for the U.S. Army at Walter Reed Army Hospital. He has testified before the U.S. Government on the illness. He's helped countless vets and their wives, including many Sky Soldiers and their spouses from throughout the country, with the large majority having gone on to realize successful outcomes with their VA claims for PTSD.

This coming June at the 173d reunion in Myrtle Beach, the Doc has volunteered his time to conduct two separate PTSD awareness sessions, one for our vets and one for spouses of our vets. If you are struggling through life with that demon on your shoulder, you simply cannot afford to miss meeting the Doc.

For over 30 years, after learning about PTSD, I viewed it as bullshit and those pursuing claims for it were simply *looking for a free ride*. Brothers, it's real, just ask your wife or your kids; and you are entitled to receive help.

While at Myrtle Beach the Doc will give you a brief and easy form to fill-out, the results of which will indicate whether or not you are among the ranks of PTSD sufferers. But, the clock continues to run, and with each tic there becomes less time to find the help you need, deserve and are entitled to. If not for you, then seek this help for your bride and your kids and your grandkids.

Smitty Out



VIETNAM AND ALL VETERNAS OF BREVARD

Presents:

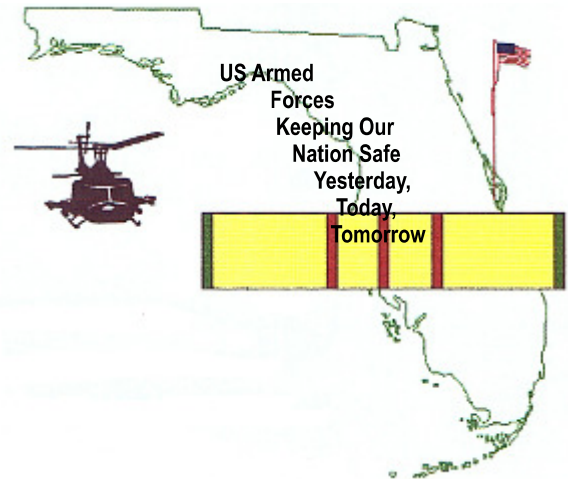
Florida's 23rd Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion

The Nations Largest Veterans Reunion

Supported by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.- Vvof.org

April 22, 23, 24, 25, 2010

LIVE MUSIC
FOOD & DRINKS
MILITARY VENDORS
MILITARY DISPLAYS
POW / MIA CEREMONIES
THE LAST PATROL



Additionally, come visit The Vietnam Traveling Memorial WALL April 18 - 25, 2010

Also visit the Reunion Web Page at:
FloridaVeteransReunion.com

Meet Your Vet Brothers & Sisters

All Veterans, Families and Public Invited

Wickham Park
321-255-4307 - Melbourne, FL
Take I-95 to Exit 191 or old Exit 73

No Coolers, Glass or Pets allowed
in the Reunion Area

Per Wickham Park: Golf Carts
Permitted for the Handicapped Only
and must abide by FL Highway Law.

Vietnam Traveling
Memorial Wall
<http://travelingwall.us>



Call For Info
321-632-4928
321-453-7498
321-501-6896
Fax - 690-0106
BakeVet@aol.com

Daydrmr333@aol.com
vets2gether@cfl.rr.com
dmwassmer@yahoo.com

