

2/503d

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



We try
harder.

VIETNAM

newsletter

January-February 2018, Issue 77
Contact: rto173@att.net

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

~ 2/503d Photo of the Month ~ 51 Years Ago



“Sky Soldiers of the 2/503rd along with troopers from other 173d units make their combat jump in Vietnam, February 22 1967, the first U.S. mass parachute combat jump since the Korean War at that time.”



2/503d VIETNAM Newsletter / Jan.-Feb. 2018 – Issue 77

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**We Dedicate this Issue of Our Newsletter in Memory and Honor
of the Men of the 173d Airborne Brigade & Attached Units
We Lost 50 Years Ago in the Months of January & February 1968**



~ For the Fallen ~

*“They went with songs to the battle, they were young. Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted, They fell with their faces to the foe.
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them....”* Laurence Binyon

Marvin Walter Ayres, 23

PTE, 7RAR, 2/5/68

“Private. Marvin (Mick) Walter Ayres from Sydney NSW. A batman when he was killed in action in Bien Hoa Province on 5th February 1968. Rookwood Military Cemetery, NSW.”



George Terrance Baines

SGT, RAINF, 2/13/68

“1 SAS Squadron SASR - Sergeant. George Terrance (Chicka) Baines. From Sydney NSW. On 2nd March 1967 he was the troop Sergeant Patrol Commander with A Troop. He was accidentally killed in the Nui Dat Task Force area on February 13 1968 when a M26 grenade exploded. Buried Woronora Crematorium, NSW.”



Alex Ernest James Bell, 21

PTE, 7RAR, 1/29/68

“Private Alec Ernest James Bell, from Perth WA. Bell died at 24 US Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh, on 29th January 1968 of wounds received during an enemy contact in Bien Hoa. Buried Karrakatta Cemetery, WA.”



Joe Leslie Biffle, Jr., 19

SP4, C/Spt, 1/21/68

“We remember. Joe is buried at Valley View Cemetery, Cooke County, TX.” Robert Sage



Raymond Paul Binning, 21

PTE, 2RAR, 1/26/68

“Private Raymond Paul Binning from Adelaide SA. Binning was killed in action in Bien Hoa Province 26th January 1968, at the height of the Tet Offensive. His brother also served in Vietnam with 3RAR. Buried Centennial Park Adelaide, SA.”



Lawrence Clifford Bloom, 20

SGT, A/Spt, 1/26/68

“Memories of Cliff. Having gone to High School and worked alongside you and your dad, Al, at the Exeter Inn...I want others to know of your great sense of humor, winning smile and willingness to help others. You entered the service knowing full well that you would probably end up in Viet Nam but felt you had to go for all of us. I think of you often and someday the old ‘Inn’ gang will be all together.”



Patricia Daley Edgerly

James Calvin Bodison, 19

PFC, D/4/503, 1/30/68

“Memorial Day 2012. In the fall of 1986 I passed a small, overgrown, little used Black cemetery in Rural Colleton Cnty., SC. A brush fire had burned off the undergrowth revealing a military headstone on the grave of PFC James Calvin Bodison USA KIA at age 19 in the Republic of Vietnam.



Over the years Judy and I placed an American flag on this grave for Memorial Day. Several times my grandson Dustin did the honors. He learned the true meaning of Memorial Day.

After Judy passed I was unable to continue this as my disabilities made it difficult to walk in the uneven and overgrown cemetery. Today my son Pat and I and my great grandson Christopher went to the cemetery. Christopher, wearing his Cub Scout uniform, placed the American flag on the grave. He learned the true cost of freedom and what the Memorial Day holiday really means.” LCDR Millard J. Driscoll MSC USN Ret



(tributes continued....)



Donald Wayne Bornman, 20

SGT, B/3/503, 1/5/68

"Donnie was an amazing funny guy and we all hung out and he and Ronnie and Gary France were in a band called Sonics and it was fun and a wonderful time. It was so sad to learn of his death. He was like a brother - my two brothers also played music and what a great time everyone had playing pool and music. I know Donnie would have been an amazing man and would have been very successful but he made the most sacrifice by serving his country and giving his life for each of us. He was a man of honor. I was Pat Michaels and was a friend." **Patricia Michales Hausman Walters**



~ Tweety...the Marine Sky Soldier ~

Eugene Michael Campion, 26
SGT, A/1/503, 2/13/68

"You are not forgotten. Eugene Michael Campion was first platoons RTO and a damn fine soldier. For years after his death I wondered if anyone would ever write his eulogy. For very few people knew Eugene by his given name, but the whole company knew him by his nickname of Tweety. At a Brigade reunion, a friend who served in Tweety's platoon finally cleared up the anonymity."

Tweety was laid-back, with a constant smile, and an infectious laugh that impersonated the cartoon character. He was older than most other troopers in the company and was well liked by all. He was never at a loss for words, and practical jokes and pranks were a part of his everyday repertoire.

In February 1968, our unit was west of Ban Me Thout on a search and destroy mission sweeping towards the Cambodian border. We had been in contact with the NVA for over a week with frequent firefights and sniper harassment. On February 12, 1968 we had laagered on a flat, open area just inside the tree line. Second platoon was sent out to recon and soon found a large regimental size NVA unit that had also stopped for the night. We were immediately surrounded and cut off from our company.

Tweety's platoon was sent to reinforce what was left of my platoon and was also surrounded and cut off from the main unit. My platoon's RTO and his radio were shot up and we tried to make contact with first platoon by shouting their call sign. LIMA, LIMA, OVER HERE, TO YOUR SIERRA; which is GI lingo for south. Amazingly, some of the North Vietnamese soldiers mimicked our shouting and in the chaos succeeded in diverting and trapping first platoon in a separate killing zone. As our platoons were attempting to break through the NVA



defenders that stood between us, Tweety was trapped in a crossfire of AK-47 bullets. He died instantly.

My platoon got wiped out that day in what came to be known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Tweety's platoon suffered extensive losses as well. We did succeed in routing the enemy by nightfall, but were forced by darkness to leave our dead comrades where they had fallen. The next morning we retrieved his body along with many other exceptional soldiers and listed their official death as February 13th.

To this day I have not reconciled myself to the reality of human events that brought me home and allowed Tweety to die in some forsaken land. Nor will I ever forget all of those fine soldiers who perished in that damn jungle.

May our Lord grant him eternal peace, and may his soul forever bask in the loving light of our God Almighty."

Scott H. Smith

A CO., 1ST BN., 503rd Infantry
173rd Airborne Brigade (SEP)

"Eugene was born at Bottineau, North Dakota in 1942. After graduating in 1960 from Minneapolis Central High School in Minnesota, Sgt Campion began a 4 year enlistment with the US Marines. In 1965 he joined the US Army and served in Vietnam until 1967, when he was transferred to Germany for jump training. Upon his request Eugene was returned to Vietnam for a second tour, where he served with Company A, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade. Eugene was killed in action on February 13, 1968 near Pleiku. For the actions resulting in his death, Eugene was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device as well as the Purple Heart."

His sister Betty Marano

Semper Fi and All The Way, Brother!

Robert John Caston, 21

PTE, 3RAR, 2/4/68

"Private Robert John Caston, from Adelaide, SA. Caston died of wounds in Bien Hoa Province after being wounded by a sniper on 4th February 1968. He had been in Vietnam for 5 weeks. Buried Centennial Park, Adelaide, SA."



(tributes continued...)





Edward Eddy Cervantez, 21

CPL, D/4/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

"Cpl Edward (Eddy) Cervantez, US Army Saint Francis de Sales High School, Bat Boy with the Chicago White Sox, 1962. Rest in peace." **Unsigned**



Bronze Star Medal Citation (Posthumous):

"For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile enemy force: Private First Class Cervantez distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 30 January 1968 in the Republic of Vietnam.

On this day, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion (Airborne), 503d Infantry made a heliborne assault on the airfield at Tuy Hoa to relieve an artillery compound under attack by a North Vietnamese Army Battalion. Private First Class Cervantez quickly moved forward through the compound and assaulted the enemy's positions resulting in three killed. As he overran the positions, he came under heavy fire from two towers in the prison compound, he moved to an exposed position on a sand dune to place fire on the towers. Despite being constantly fired upon, he continued to engage the enemy until they withdrew, leaving five dead in the towers. Headquarters and Headquarters Company then moved in on the enemy Battalion which was located in a village well concealed in spider holes and bunkers. Private First Class Cervantez again moved to an exposed position and placed a heavy volume of fire on the forward enemy positions. After dislodging an estimated enemy squad and while pressuring them he was mortally wounded by small arms fire.

Private First Class Cervantez's outstanding display of aggressiveness, devotion to duty, and personal bravery were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army".

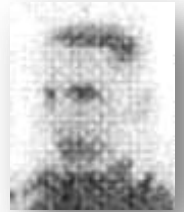


Eddie, with the Sox

James Lee Coker, 20

PFC, A/1/503, 2/12/68

"I love you. It has been many years since you left us, we love you now as we did them, Mom and Dad." **Billy Hale**



John Henry Curtin, 24

1LT, C/4/503, 1/2/68

"Lt. Curtin's final resting place is in Ashe Lawn Memorial Cemetery in the Good Shepherd section on Highway 221 north of Jefferson, North Carolina."

Arnold M. Huskins



Christopher Michael Daniels

SGT, 335th AHC, 2/3/68

"Chrissie' was born on December 18, 1948 in Immokalee. Little is known about his early years as he was adopted by a family by the name of 'Murphy' and grew up in Gloucester, New Jersey....He joined the Army and his tour of duty in Vietnam began

on October 14, 1967. He was a Helicopter Repairer with the 335th AHC...He gave his life for our Country on February 3, 1968 at Phu Yen Province, South Vietnam..." **Unsigned**



Joseph D. Daughton, Jr., 20

PFC, E/17th Cav, 2/13/68

"I think of you often, Joe. I was one of the lucky ones that came back in one piece. I wish you could have, too. Childhood friend," **John Schembra**



Walter Johnston Davison, 27

PTE, 8 FB AMB, 1/27/68

"Walter Johnston Davison, from Tontine, Scotland. 8th Field Ambulance Private. Davidson died at the 24 US Evac. Hospital at Long Binh 27th January 1968 of wounds received in Bien Hoa Province. Buried Ashes sent to Scotland, VIC."



(tributes continued....)



David Wayne De Priest, 19

SP4, D/4/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states HHC/3/319)

"In my thoughts daily. I remember the day, the last time we spoke before you walked out of the area heading into the tree line. We talked about us being together later for a drink. Then my heart sank, you barely broke into the tree line when the shots rang out. When they brought you back I died that day also. In my heart my friend was gone. I was medevac'd out shortly after. I always wondered and to this day, I prayed we could exchange places. You were and are always better than me. I love you my friend. RIP. I will see you on the other side. I hope you will remember me. Slow Salute."
Unsigned buddy



Thomas Johannes De Vries Van Leeuwen, 22

PTE, 3RAR, 2/18/68

"Private Thomas Johannes De Vries Van Leeuwen, from Holland. De Vries Van Leeuwen was killed in action in Bien Hoa Province at 1:15am 18th February 1968. Buried Mt Barker Cemetery, SA."



John Alexander Doherty, 23

PTE, 2RAR, 2/18/68

"Private John Alexander Doherty, from Kerang, VIC. Doherty was killed during a mortar attack in Bien Hoa at 1:15am 18th February 1968. Buried Bendigo Lawn Cemetery, VIC."



Arthur Floyd Elliott, 19

PVT, D/4/503, 1/30/68

"I want to thank you for your courage and your patriotism. Your sacrifice for our country is greatly appreciated and will never be forgotten." Allison McKey



S.W. Ellwood

Gnr, RNZA, 2/6/68

Terry Dean Finch, 19

Crew Chief, Casper Plt., 1/26/68

"Dear Terry My beloved brother. I'll always love and miss you very much you'll never be forgotten. I still have dreams about you when we were kids and cherish them. We'll see you again someday." Cheryl Savage



James Williams Foley, 22

SP4, C/Spt, 1/26/68

"Always Remembered. The loss never lessens."

Barbara Foley Heisel



Peter Foote, 20

SGT, C/4/503, 1/30/68

"We Remember. Peter is buried at Southview Cemetery in North Adams, Mass." Robert Sage



Norbert Louis Froehlich, 20

CPL, C/4/503, 1/30/68

"FOREVER REMEMBERED. If you are able, save for them a place inside of you... and save one backward glance when you are leaving for the places they can no longer go....Be not ashamed to say you loved them...." From your Nam-Band-Of-Brothers



John Edward Garrett, 20

L/CPL, 1 FD SQN, 2/18/68

"Field Squadron RAE - Lance Corporal John Edgar Garrett from Ballina, NSW. Garrett was killed in an enemy attack during the Tet Offensive at 1:15am on 18th February 1968 in Bien Hoa. Buried East Ballina Cemetery, NSW."



1 Field Squadron Group Vietnam – Royal Australian Engineers

"We are a mixed bag of Royal Australian Engineers Sappers who have at one time or another, following recruit training and being posted to the Corps of Engineers, joined a special band of brothers whose lives were changed and lifelong friendships made."



Guy Richard Godden, 21

PTE, 3RAR, 2/8/68

"England. Godden was killed in action during the Tet Offensive at Long Dien, Phuoc Tuy at 6.30pm on 8th February 1968. Buried Carr Villa Crematorium TAS."



(tributes continued....)





Lawrence Douglass Greene, 25

1LT, D/1/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states D/4/503)



Larry, receiving his Bars.

"1/50th Infantry Remembers. LT Lawrence D. Greene is fondly remembered by the soldiers with whom he served from 'C' Company of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry, where LT Greene served as Company Commander before deploying to Vietnam with another unit. Visit the Website of the Association formed by these 1/50th Vietnam Vets at:

*<http://www.ichiban1.org> Post a note on our 'Message Board' and possibly some of our members who served with LT Greene will respond. Search our site for photos and other documentation and/or contact me (Jim Sheppard, Association Historian) at the e-mail address provided here. (Photo contributed by the Greene Family) I served as LT Greene's Company Armorer and filled in for the Company Clerk on occasion while he was Company Commander of the 1st Battalion (Mechanized) 50th Infantry at Fort Hood, Texas in 1967. I recall being able to forge his signature so well that even he could not tell the difference! After LT Greene moved on and went to another unit in Vietnam, the 1/50th Infantry moved to Vietnam as well....and many of us remember hearing the news of his ultimate sacrifice. I currently serve as Historian for the 1/50th Infantry Vietnam Era Association: www.ichiban1.org & would love to hear from his family. My e-mail is: kiss-ac@juno.com "
(Posted 6/17/09) **Jim Sheppard***

Thomas Joseph Grose, 20

T/CPL, 2RAR, 2/10/68

"Temp Corporal Thomas Joseph Grose from Ballarat, VIC. Grose died at the 24 US Evac. Hospital Long Binh of wounds received in Bien Hoa Province on 10th February 1968. Buried Cornelian Bay Cemetery, TAS."



Darrel Way Heeren, 20

SGT, A/3/503, 1/7/68

"We Remember. Darrel is buried at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, CA."

Elvester Hester, Jr., 20

PFC, A/1/503, 2/12/68

"You are not forgotten. Elvester Hester Jr. was a quiet, well-mannered trooper from Greensboro, NC. Rumor was he had a troubled youth with frequent altercations, and I believe he had some knife scars from a supposed gang fight. This is all hearsay and I divulge it only to set the tone for his heroic deeds. For Elvester had become a devout Christian who had promised not to take another life. To say it was peculiar for an Airborne Infantryman in Vietnam to take that vow is nothing less than impossibility. But Elvester succeeded in keeping that vow unto his death."



In February 1968, our unit was west of Ban Me Thout on a search and destroy mission sweeping towards the Cambodian border. The NVA units in the area were mauled badly during the recent Tet Offensive, but were still offering strong resistance. We had been in contact with them for over a week with frequent firefights and sniper harassment. On February 12, 1968 we had humped past a burned out village and laagered on a flat plain just inside the tree line. My platoon was sent out to recon and soon found a large regimental size NVA unit that had also stopped for the night. We were immediately surrounded and cut off from our company. Elvester's platoon was sent to reinforce what was left of my platoon and was also surrounded and cut off from the main unit. There was a mass of dead and wounded troopers in need of rescue and there was Elvester dashing to save them. He succeeded in pulling a few wounded soldiers to safety and was headed out again when he was caught in a hail of AK-47 bullets. Herein lies the irony. Elvester carried his M-16, Mk-26 grenades, and all the other killing tools that were required but he never used them. When we recovered his body we found no bullet in the chamber of his weapon. No one could believe he was so dedicated to a promise that he would put his life in jeopardy for it. You can see now why this truly remarkable man is still indelibly etched in memory. My platoon got wiped out that day in what came to be known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre....

(tribute to Elvester continued....)



....Elvester's platoon suffered overwhelming losses as well, but there are men alive today because of his bravery. May God grant him eternal peace."

Scott H. Smith

A CO., 1ST BN., 503rd Inf, 173d Airborne Brigade (SEP.)

Larry Edwin Hill, 21
CPL, C/4/503, 1/15/68

"Family Photo. I am Larry E. Hill's grand niece. The photograph on this page looks to be a picture not of Larry but of his brother, Charles. Larry was in the US Army and his older brother, Charles was in the US Navy or Coast Guard. My mother Kathy, Larry's niece, will post a picture of Larry on this website. (Wall of Faces)." **Unsigned**



Haere Desmond Hirini
PTE, RNZIR, 2/1/68

"Killed in action, 1 February 1968 – gunshot wound. Place of burial Kawerau."



George Kingi Hoerara, 42
CPL, RNZIR, 1/26/68

"Killed in action, 26 January 1968 – mine. Place of burial Te Araroa."

William Thomas Jarvis, 21
SP4, D/4/503, 2/5/68

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

"Jump School. Tommy and I became friends at Leaders Prep Course, Ft. Gordon, GA. We went through Airborne, AIT and Jump School, Ft. Benning, GA, together. The photo I have submitted (below) was taken at a Benning EM club in December 66. I am seated to the right of Tommy who is seated in the center. The polaroid was taken by Donald Sanders. Donny and I went through Basic, LPC, AIT and Jump School together. Another good friend. The three of us served in Vietnam in the 173d Airborne Brigade. Donny was killed in March 67, 1/503d Inf. I saw Tommy at An Khe in Jan. 68 and we shared some laughs before going separate ways. He was killed a few weeks later. He was in 2/503d Inf. I was in 3/503d Inf. and was WIA in June 68. Tommy was a wonderful man. He had a great sense of humor and was very popular with all who were honored to know him. After nearly fifty years, I still tear up when thinking of him and my other brothers."



James Gallaway



Vietnam in the future of all or most of these troopers at Jump School in 1966.

Jimmy Leroy Johnson, Jr., 22
SGT, C/Spt Bn, 1/26/68

"We Remember. Jimmy is buried at Johnson Family Cem, Bostic, Rutherford Co, NC." **Robert Sage**



Raymond O. Kennedy, 22
PFC, C/1/503, 2/27/68

"Veterans Day November 11, 2017. Remembering you on this Veterans Day, November 11, 2017 as it is also your Birthday. I pray that you have family members left to remember you each and every day." **A Grateful American** (Ray was born November 11, 1945. Ed)



James Michael La Rouche, 22
SGT, D/4/503, 1/30/68

"We Remember. James is buried at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield, MI. PH" **Robert Sage**

Robert Eric Lochridge, 21
SGT, D/4/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states D/3/319)

"We grew up together in Tacoma – were best friends even though you were a year older." **David Gural**



(tributes continued....)



Geovel Lopez-Garcia, 20

CPL, A/1/503, 2/12/68

"Memories. I remember the day I left that hill in Dak-To you ask me to look your family up in NYC, which I did after arriving home. Several weeks later I got a call that you were KIA. I attended your funeral, your mom held me in her arms, and we broke down. I could not handle that kind of emotions and left never to return (forgive me brother). Do not know where you are interned. If anyone reads this and can help me find Geovel's resting place I would be ever so grateful. WE were assigned to A Co 1/503 - 173rd Airborne Brigade (67-68)." **Jose Gonzalez**



WAR AND LOSS

(Excerpt)

"Jose Gonzalez served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1967 through the terrible battles of that year. But for Gonzalez, coming home was even worse, because his unit continued to suffer casualties and he wasn't there. He says, 'I got more devastated at home than I did over there, I think. Because everything over there was always, you had no time. You had to time, you know.'

While in Vietnam, he became close with another Puerto Rican soldier from Brooklyn named Geovel Lopez-Garcia. Lopez-Garcia had been sent home in November 1967 on emergency bereavement leave, missing the Battle at Dak To – one of the bloodiest battles of the war. When Lopez-Garcia returned in-country in December, Gonzalez was rotating home permanently.

"And we saw each other again, two young kids. And then he gave me his address, 'Go see my mother.' I did."

The TET Offensive opened in the last days of January 1968, and Lopez-Garcia was killed two weeks later, Gonzalez continues:

"His mother, somebody called me, that he was missing in action, and the next day they confirmed it. (He was dead). Then they brought him home at the funeral parlor, over there on Park Avenue and Tompkins. I went to junior high school right there when I was a kid. I walked out. I walked right out. I never saw them again. I never saw them again, and I didn't go to his funeral. I went on a drunk. I don't know how long it was. I was AWOL from my next duty station. I didn't care."

Source: *Bringing It All Back Home, An Oral History of New York City's Vietnam Veterans*, by Philip F. Napoli

Jose: So many of us understand you. For over 30 years I was unable to attend funerals of family or friends, and to this day avoid them whenever possible. We understand you, brother. Ed

Ernest Madrid, 20

SGT, D/1/503, 1/31/68

"TRUE HERO-GONE BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN. A lot of people criticized you for what was going on in Viet Nam but you never gave it a second thought, you continued to do what you thought was right, fight for your country to keep your people free. You are a true HERO and we will never forget you or how you died. Your family misses you and we will never forget you." **Helen Rue**

Note: See Pages 53-54 for tribute and newspaper article about Ernie and his best friend, Marine Juan Sedillo, also KIA. Ed



Geoffrey Francis Mathews, 21

PTE, 3RAR, 2/9/68

"Private Geoffrey Francis Mathews From Perth, WA. VC shot Mathews during an early evening patrol on 8th February 1968. He died of his wounds at dawn the following day in 24 US Evacuation Hospital, Long Binh. Buried Karrakatta Cem, WA."



Miloslav Jose Martinovsky, 35

SSG, D/4/503, 1/30/68

Home of record: Germany
"TET. May you rest in peace. You paid the ultimate sacrifice never to be forgotten. 4/503rd 173rd Abn Brg."

Nick Martinez



Colin William McLachlan, 38

SGT, 1 FD SQN, 2/18/68

"Biggendin QLD. He died from a surprise enemy attack at 1:15am on 18th February 1968 as he was leading a night patrol through jungle in Bien Hoa. Buried Canungra Cemetery QLD."



Jack Roger McKee, 19

SGT, C/4/503, 1/30/68

"My everything. I tried to do this once before and couldn't. This time I will. YOU were my everything. My mom, my dad, and my protector. I love you. I miss you. We will be together again some day. Can you believe all the wonderful people that still remember? TY to all. It makes me happy to see all who cared. He was the best! I would love to hear the stories you have." **Janet Lillard, Jack's little sister**



(tributes continued....)



Ross Charles McMillan, 21

CPL, 7RAR, 2/2/68

(Virtual Wall states 5RAR)

“Uralla NSW. He was shot by a section member while checking claymores outside the patrol perimeter on 2nd Feb 1968. Buried Uralla Cemetery NSW.”



James Leslie Menz, 21

L/BDR, Det 131 Div Loc Bty, 2/18/68

“Buxton VIC. Menz was killed by an enemy mortar attack at 1.15am near Fire Support Base Anderson, Bien Hoa on 18th February 1968. Buried Marysville Cemetery VIC.”



Frederick J. O’Connor, Jr., 21

PFC, B/1/503, 2/27/68

“The Man I Never Knew. I wish I had a chance to get to know the father of my husband. I have been told by many that he was a very good man, very smart, and loved by all. I wish that my husband had had a chance to get to know his father, the loss will forever effect his life. He would be so proud of all that his son has accomplished in life. I wish that my children had had a chance to get to know their grandfather, I think he would've loved the fact that his only grandson has his eyes. I wish that things could've been different, twenty-one is much too young to die.”

Lisa O'Connor



Robert E. Mino, 22

PFC, B/1/503, 2/27/68

“Just kids. We lost 2 people from the 8th grade - at St Joan of Arc and another saw a lot. The 1959 class Jackson Heights. We were just kids. America thanks you .” **Stephen Neely**

John Michael Olszewski, 19

PFC, A/4/503, 2/20/68

“To a fellow Skysoldier. I served with John in the 2nd platoon of A Co. 4th Bn 503rd Inf 173rd Abn Bde. He was a good soldier.” **Melvin Ray Thomas**



Antonio Parrello, 30

T/WO2, AATTV (RAINF), 2/1/68

“Trieste Italy. He died when a rocket hit his APC, near Baria on 1st February 1968. Parello was an advisor who worked out of the Baria Province Chief's compound. Buried Botany Cemetery NSW.”



Allan Graham Pattison, 19

SPR, 1 FD SQN, 2/18/68

“Kadina SA. Hundreds of locals lined the street of his Kadina mourning his loss. He died when hit by enemy mortar on 18th February 1968. Buried Kadina Cemetery SA.”



Robert Graham Perrin, 22

PTE, 7RAR, 2/2/68

“Melbourne VIC. Stretcher bearer Perrin was being winched into a helicopter to aid wounded Australian soldiers when the winch snapped and dropped him into the jungle on 2nd February 1968 in Bien Hoa. He died of his injuries on the same day. Buried Cheltenham New Cemetery VIC.”



(tributes continued...)



Benjamin Allen Mondragon, 19

SP4, A/1/503, 2/4/68

“Growing up. We grew up together And the memories that you left in my mind shall live forever. I know you're in heaven because you have already spent your time in hell.” **David Shuker**



Dayle William Morrison, 22

PTE, 2RAR, 1/26/68

“Maleny QLD. Gunshots from VC troops killed Morrison. He died on 26th January 1968, during an enemy contact in Bien Hoa. Buried Mount Gravatt Cemetery QLD.”



Graham Leonard Norley, 21

CPL, 2RAR, 1/26/68

“North Kensington SA. He was shot by a VC sniper on 26th January 1968. He died from gunshot wounds during an enemy contact in Bien Hoa. Buried Centennial Park Cemetery SA.”



Robert Charles Peters, 20

CPL, D/4/503, 1/30/68

"Uncle Bobby, you were my Superman, John Wayne, Underdog all rolled in to one. I only wish that I would have had more time with you. I love and miss you."

Donna Jean



Jeffrey Antone Pinheiro, 20

SGT, B/1/503, 2/11/68

"To my friend. Jeff and I were childhood friends. I have thought that somehow some of the life I have lived is for him. I didn't get to say goodbye to him but I have never forgotten him." **Bill Harrington**



Gary Craig Port, 19

PFC, A/1/503, 2/13/68

"I served with Gary Craig Port and knew he was from California for he spoke of it constantly. He was a laid-back surfer type, with a perpetual smile, and was well liked by all. Gary was a fine soldier that served as a M-60 assistant gunner with James Lee Coker as gunner and James Paul Vojir as ammo bearer. You could always depend on their machinegun team in a firefight. I mention Coker and Vojir in this eulogy for they all died at the same time. (See Scott's description of the firefight in connection with his tribute to Eugene Michael Campion, Page 3, Ed),

To this day I have not reconciled myself to the reality of human events that brought me home and allowed Port to die in some forsaken land. Nor will I ever forget all of those fine soldiers who perished in that damn jungle.

May our Lord grant him eternal peace, and may his soul forever bask in the loving light of our God Almighty."

Scott H. Smith

**A CO., 1ST BN., 503rd Infantry
173rd Airborne Brigade (SEP.)**



John William "Doc" Pyle, 20

SSG, HHC/1/503, 2/14/68

"It wasn't until the last 173rd Reunion in Fort Worth that I learned Sergeant Pyle's name. He was only with the 4.2" mortar platoon a couple of days when he was killed. We'd set up in what used to be a 175 or 8 inch artillery fire support base and felt fairly secure. The NVA hit us hard with mortars and sappers broke into the perimeter.



**JOHN W. PYLE
ILLINOIS**

The 4.2" mortars couldn't fire close enough and the 105's couldn't use their beehives. I manned the 81mm mortar and when the smoke cleared came back into the platoon area. It was then that I found the bunker had received a direct hit to its exit. Sgt. Pyle must have been in the doorway when the round hit. He was in bad shape. I gave him first aid, clearing his airway, covering the chest wound with plastic, and staunching the bleeding but he went into convulsions and died. I never knew his name until this summer but he's been a part of me for over thirty years.

Sergeant John Pyle came to the 4.2" Mortar Platoon from Charlie Company as did our Platoon Leader 1LT Ed Kelly. Ed knew him prior to his coming to my platoon. I plan on getting to the Wall this year to take a rubbing of his name to take home with me."

John William Schulte

"My medic, my brother-in-arms, my true friend – I have missed you, Doc!"

1LT Edward L. Kelley, C & HHC/1/503



Some of Doc Pyle's buddies.

Aaron Henry Reigle, 25

SGT, E/17th Cav, 2/13/68

"I am proud to say that I was named after this wonderful man who, gave his life for our County. I am his Niece, and my name is Aaron Henrietta Reigle. Oddly enough I came across his drivers lic the other day -- It turns out we sign our names Aaron H. Reigle. I feel honored to have his name for I carry part of him with me always. Sincerely," **Aaron H. Reigle**



(tributes continued...)



Billy G. Riggins, 39
SSG, HHC/1/503, 1/10/68

“We Remember. Billy is buried at Sadlersville Cemetery in Sadlersville, TN.”
Robert Sage



John Rogers, 22
PTE, 2RAR, 2/10/68

“Mount Gambier SA. Rogers was shot in an enemy contact on 10th February 1968 in Bien Hoa. Buried Mount Gambier Carinya Gardens SA.”



Gene Autry Ross, 21
PFC, D/4/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)
“Hi Micky. This is your brother’s only child Jesse, Sug is my father. I never got a chance to meet you but I have heard a lot of your name in my life. I got here in 1971 just a little bit late to meet you but I will always honor you. I’m sorry your life was cut so short and I’m sorry you had to go through so much pain and suffering over there. I really don’t agree with the war you had to fight, but I’m glad you were not a coward. In your name I want you to know that I Love the United States of America...God be with your soul. Love, your nephew,”
Jesse Ross



Frank Joseph Schap, 26
1LT, C/1/503, 2/14/68

“My platoon leader in Vietnam. I was his radio operator. He was more than an officer, he was my friend. I was there when he died. He saved my life and this is something I will never forget.”
David Einspanjet



Duty...Honor...Country



Steven Warren Schmidt, 20
SGT, B/1/503, 1/10/68

“To my beloved brother. I’ve missed having you all these years. It’s so good to see the country you loved finally recognizing you as they should have all along.” **Karen Sebo**



Mark MacDonald Serrem, 23
1LT, B/1/503, 1/31/68

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)
“A Highly Motivated Officer. Mark was a very dedicated officer and a fine man. He was well regarded by his soldiers and fellow officers. He made the supreme sacrifice for freedom. His actions brought great credit to himself, his family, The Citadel, his unit, and the United States Army. I am VERY proud to have known him and to have served with him.” **Dennis Hupp**



Victor P. Sherman, Jr., 20
PFC, C/1/503, 2/10/68

(Virtual Wall states D/1/503)
“Always in our Prayers. Victor, you are still missed, I enjoyed our times together in North Bergan, I only wished you could be here today!!!!!! Ricky.”
Rick Gimbel II



Dennis Ralph Stanley, 19
SGT, B/1/503, 1/28/68

“We Remember. Dennis is buried at Mills Cemetery in Clintwood, VA. PH”
Robert Sage



David John Steen, 21
SPR, 1 FD SQN, 2/18/68

“Falkland Islands. A mortar killed Steen during a post midnight attack by the enemy on Fire Base Anderson on 18th February 1968. Buried Penola New Cemetery SA.”



(tributes continued...)



Samuel Kay Stewart, 19

PFC, B/1/503, 2/29/68

"Those who have devoted service to this Country will never be forgotten. Their Sacrifice will live on forever in the hearts of all who cherish FREEDOM!"

G W DOUGLAS



**SAMUEL KAY STEWART
aka Reginald Steward**

"I'm the proud daughter of my HERO and I would like to dedicate this page in loving memory of my father. You are not forgotten.

Unfortunately, I was only one when my father was killed so I didn't have the opportunity to know him like other kids knew their fathers. I'm a member of Sons and Daughters In Touch (SDIT), a National organization of kids who share a common bond - we all lost our fathers in Vietnam.

If you served with or knew my father, I'm looking for you. Please contact me." **Shirley Love**



**Shirley Love at
Fort Rosecrans
National Cemetery**

Brad John Szutz, 20

PFC, D/4/503, 1/30/68

(Virtual Wall states HHC/4/503)

"Once a young boy.....I once was a young boy as were you. I was fifteen years old at your passing. I never knew you. However, I worked with your brother in Loma Linda. The impact of your passing left me speechless and my heart pounding in my throat. This was my first experience of a casualty in a senseless conflict. In 1972, I found myself leaving through what probably was the same door at Oakland Army Depot. Thank God I was not heading to the battle zone where you lost your life. The Army was placing me in Korea. However, during my stay in Oakland, I thought of you. Once again, upon my safe return I thought about you and the many others who never returned safely. I've visited the wall in Redlands and viewed your name. My thoughts of a confused time in this world and a conflict that should have never been engaged in, will always include thoughts of you. My thoughts and prayers are forever for you and your family." **Tim Carroll**



Leonard Alexander Taylor, 22

2LT, 3RAR, 2/8/68

"Sydney NSW. The platoon commander with B Coy died from gunshot wounds in an enemy contact in 8th February 1968 in Long Dien, Phuoc Tuy. Buried Box Hill Cemetery VIC."



John Henry Tigner, 20

SSG, D/4/503, 1/30/68

"We Remember. John is buried at Ft Benning Post Cem." **Robert Sage**

Patrick John Vickers

Lt. Cmdr, RAN, 2/22/68

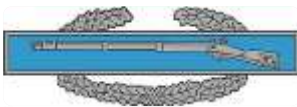
"RAN Helicopter Flight - Lieutenant Commander. Patrick John Vickers. Vickers was fatally wounded as he piloted a landing helicopter on a mission to retrieve troops from 1 ARVN division, near Xuan Loc, Long Khan Province on 22nd February 1968. He was the first RAN member to die in Vietnam. Buried Buderim (Everest Cemetery) QLD."



Thomas Henry Swinnea, 20

SGT, D/4/503, 1/30/68

"I LOVE YOU. You were my first true love, life would have been so different had you come home to me. I miss you still. It took me until 2013 to finally find where they laid you to rest and I have been there twice now to put flowers for you. You are always in my heart." **Babette (Shapiro) Reynolds**



(tributes continued....)



James Paul Vojir, 19
PFC, A/1/503, 2/12/68

"We Remember. James is buried at Long Island Nat Cem." **Robert Sage**

Richard Edward Wagner, 22
SGT, A/1/503, 2/12/68

"From your family and friends. Your Mom and Dad are with you now."

Unsigned

"Thanks Richard. Richard Wagner died southwest of Ban Me Thout during the St. Valentine's Day Massacre while trying to save 2nd [Mike] platoon from total annihilation. See also Eugene M Campion, James L Coker, Elvester Hester, Gary C Port, and James P Vojir."



Scott H. Smith

A/1/503rd Infantry

173rd Airborne Brigade [Separate], '67 - '68

Jimmy Paul Wall, 24
CPL, C/4/503, 1/30/68

"Love you always daddy. Just to let you know you are a grandfather. He is going to be tall like you. He is already taller than I am, but that is not saying much. I wish you could see him. He is pretty smart also. I miss you and there are days that I wish I could see you. But I hold that one Christmas memory dear to heart now and for always. I love you,"

Wanda Lynn



John Knute Weber, 21
SSG, C/1/503, 2/3/68

"Wish I could have met him. For as long as I remember I have heard the stories of my uncle John. Whether they were about mushing his dogs, playing football, chasing one of his 5 sister's boyfriends away from the house, or Vietnam stories from one of his friends he served with, they all told of a strong, compassionate man who defined life and happiness by his own rules. I wish I could have met him." **Josh Schoeller**



Alvin John Wesolowski, Jr., 20
PFC, D/4/502, 1/30/68

"I was in the same squad. We called him 'Hippie' because of his views on the war and life. He was a good soldier who was respected. I remember him as a tall, gangly type kid who seemed very intelligent." **Al Johnson**



Robert Earl Whitbeck, 38
LTC, HHB/3/319, 1/30/68

"I was with Col. Whitbeck when he was killed. He was a brave man who was trying to see to the wellbeing of troops in his command." **Charles Clayton**



"A Brave Man Remembered. I had the honor of serving with LTC Whitbeck when he commanded the artillery unit of the 173rd Airborne brigade. I flew him all over the central coast and highlands of Vietnam in an OH-13 helicopter. He was fearless. We would explore vast expanses of the country low-level and without benefit of flight following. He was inspirational to me as an Army aviator, showing his capacity as a consummate professional soldier. He knew the risks and accepted them as part of his commitment to his men and our country. To me he was the epitome of the ideal Army officer--duty, honor and country. I flew with him on his last mission, where his dedication to his men cost him his life. I salute you. This past week I had the honor of toasting you with men from the 173d. You are not forgotten sir." **Steve Greene**

 **John Davis Willingham, 31**
SP4, B/4/503, 2/4/68

"We Remember. John is buried at First Mount Carmel Bapt Church Cem, Columbia Co, GA." **Robert Sage**



Kevin Ronald Wilson, 22
PTE, 2RAR, 2/16/68

"Melbourne VIC. Died of gunshot wounds on 16th February 1968 after a enemy contact in Hoa Long. Buried Fawkner Cemetery VIC."



"It is our job to remember." **Mark Carter, 173d LRRP**



Learn from God's Creation

TGIF Today God Is First
Volume 2

by Os Hillman

December 05, 2017

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Rom 1:19-20).

Have you ever had someone say, *"I don't see any evidence of God. How can a person believe in someone you can't see or see any evidence even exists?"*

The Bible tells us that God is revealed in His creation every day. Look at the human body and consider the likelihood of how thousands of body parts that must work together. Someone created it to work this well. If it were a manufactured product, it would be in the repair shop all the time because of all the moving parts required to make it work.

Consider the wonderful order and balance of nature and how the seas know their boundaries, the beauty of the mountains, and the balance of rain and oxygen needed to balance the eco-systems. Consider God's signature, the rainbow.

The 12th century Scottish Christian mystic, Richard of St. Victor said, *"The whole of this sensible world is like a book written by the finger of God."*

Look at nature and wonder at the creative design of the hundreds of thousands of species of animals like the tiger, the elephant, the great whales, and the thousands of species of birds, just to name a few.

Consider the planet we live on. *"The Earth is a rough sphere about eight thousand miles in diameter, which means that it's about four thousand miles straight down to the center. We're accustomed to thinking of it as a ball of rock, but that's not so: the great majority of the Earth is liquid - molten rock called magma swirling, incredible slowly, beneath our feet. The solid part of the earth that we live on, and in whose hollows the sea sits, is called the crust, and on average it's only a few miles thick - maybe ten miles. That's like a layer a third of a*

millimeter thick coating a football. We live on that incredibly fragile, thin layer of plates floating on the subterranean sea of magma."

Yes, God has revealed Himself in His creation.

Chaplain Rich Whipple
HHC/2/503d, 1968

Good buddy, a young Rich,
now preaches the Word,
and All the Way.



Wreaths Across America



Kathy and I just returned from participating in a ceremony and helped distribute wreaths in the veterans cemetery we will occupy some day in Amelia, Virginia.

Beautiful in its simplicity and non-discrimination towards rank, ethnicity, religion, or how and when you died. The only prerequisite is, an honorable discharge.

I targeted Viet Nam vets. Sadly, there was no difficulty finding plenty of stones to lay our wreaths. R

Roger Dick
C/2/503, '67/'68



INCOMING!



~ Body Bags & Ponchos ~

Kilo...

As an aside...the web photo on page 79 (Issue 76) with the body bags and ponchos....The eight men standing in line waiting for a chopper, are the eight men I inherited when I took over 1st Plt, Charlie Company... Bednarski "Ski"... "Fish"...etc ...Bobby Waddell "Shadow"... the first man is Stanley Gains. Ski has a copy of the photo. Get Fat if You Can... Cap.



Cap

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



Survivors and Fallen....Dak To, Hill 875, November 1967

~ The Tributes to Our Fallen ~

Well, worked my way through about half the tributes (to our fallen, Issue 76) until the sadness overwhelmed. Decided to hug the dog, and finish up later.

Excellent issue as always, even if it hurts. :->

Thanks much!

Jonathan Dave Linkenhoker
B/2/503



Link

Reply:

I hear ya, Link. It whooped my ass too. Be well my brother. Ed

~ No, Never Forgotten ~

M+ Super newsletter, (Issue 76)!! Pushing 86 and prayerful remembrance at every Mass. No, never forgotten.

Fr. Chuck Davis, 2/503

~ Supreme Sacrifices Were Made ~

Thanks greatly for sending out that newsletter edition again (Issue 47, Dak To Special Edition). It is a great tribute to all the herd members who fought those battles 50 years ago....Even after one half of a century, the American public needs to know about the raw courage and supreme sacrifices made in November of 1967 in that hellhole called Dak To.

Airborne,

Irv "Bugs" Moran
173rd LRRP 1967-68

~ WWII 503rd's Jungle Jim Mullaney ~

Sorry you missed his passing. I had stayed with him at his house about three times, and found him to be very much of the same sort of man that my father was, and so it hurt to know that a good man, a true gentleman, was gone. Over the years I had been trying to persuade him to allow me to reproduce his diary, which would have become the history of "H" Company (503rd) because he started there as a 2d Lt and ultimately commanded it on Negros.

Lest I wear out the welcome, I believe that the 173d should make it an official project to publish the 2/503 Newsletters in hardback book form, and donate copies to all the major military libraries, Library of Congress, West Point, etc.

Regards,

Paul Whitman
Host of 503rd PRCT Heritage Battalion Website

Reply:

Hi Paul:

Will include a tribute to Jungle Jim Mullaney in our next newsletter (See Pages 56-57 herein). As mentioned, it was an honor to meet him and his family at our 173d reunion in Lexington years ago.

No need or desire to hardcopy our newsletters, they're on your website and numerous other sites for all time I suppose. They should perpetually remain on-line and free to anyone interested in them. But, thanks anyway, Paul. We appreciate all you do.

Smitty

(Incoming continued....)



~ The Herd at NASCAR ~

For all of you that were watching that bunch on NFL, you should have watched NASCAR. The winner, Martin Truex, had a 173d patch on his head brace. Just jumped out at you. Makes you proud.

Ron Thomas
173d LRRP



“Martin Truex, Jr. celebrates with the Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series championship trophy Sunday at Homestead-Miami Speedway.”

(Photo: Marj J. Rebles-USA TODAY Sports)

~ Task Force Black ~

Greetings all, just watched evening news and saw the patch. The Herd goes everywhere!

Last Saturday was up in Frankfort, KY with some of the men of Task Force Black, who had a big fight on 11 Nov. '67 in Dak To. They suffered 18 KIA and 2 MIA, confirmed KIA but found nothing to send home to the family. The task force consisted of C/1/503rd and two platoons of B/1/503rd. Tangled with an NVA Batt. C/1/503rd was my unit in '69-'70.



Sky Soldiers of Task Force Black

The KY Vietnam Memorial was impressive. Jerry Cecil, who was awarded the DSC that day as a Platoon Leader, was one of the movers of the Memorial. Also Ranger qualified. I have some posts on Facebook. Later,

Joe Marquez
C/1/503rd, '69 N/75th, Juliet, '70 A/2/503rd, '70
Chaplain: SC Chapter 30



~ Army 14 Navy 13 ~

Hi Guys: In case you didn't see pics I posted on FB, my daughter Lisa, right, took Pam and me and my two grandsons, to the Army Navy Game in Philly Saturday. What a neat experience. Like many of you, I've watched the game on and off over the years. Being there in person with all those fine cadets and midshipmen as well as vets of all stripes was really fun.

It snowed the whole game. Great to see Army hang in there and hold off Navy for a one point win. *HooRah!!!* It's the second win in a row after a dozen or so losses.

My daughter, Lisa, is an Emergency Medicine doctor who works out of Houston. She gave us this trip as her Christmas present to me this year. She thought her old man might like to be around Americas' finest this year. She was right. My two grandsons were able to make the trip too - an extra perk.

Tis the season folks. Hope you all are having a semi-stressless holiday season and good things are going on in your lives.

Wishing you all long, healthy and prosperous life.

Tony Geishauer, Maj (Ret)
335th AHC, '65/'66

(Tony was on the ground with us at LZ Zulu Zulu on 3/16/66 after being shot down inside our perimeter, and years later named an honorary member of the 2/503d for intentionally sacrificing a perfectly good and very expensive Huey (see Page 18) to live his lifelong dream of fighting in ground combat with the 173d while surrounded by the enemy. Ed)



Pam, Tony & Lisa





335th ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY COWBOYS



Until 11 August 1966 the Cowboys of the 335th were members of Company A, 82nd Aviation Battalion. As of 1 September 1966, the Cowboys were redesignated. The 335th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light) came into being. Subsequently, this designation was changed to 335th Assault Helicopter Company.

Throughout the year the mission of the unit, regardless of designation, was the same – to provide the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate) with the best, most professional airmobile support available anywhere in the world.

To provide this close support, the 335th was attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

The organization of the company with its attached units remained the same. That is, internally, the 335th consisted of two airlift platoon, known as the Ramrods and the Mustangs, an armed helicopter platoon, known as the Falcons, and the service platoon which owned the well-known recovery ship, Horsethief. Attached to the 335th were the 25th Medical Detachment, the 166th Transportation Detachment and the 234th Signal Detachment. Additionally, the 173rd Aviation Platoon, the organic aviation element of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was under the operational control of the company, and Casper was their name.



“The Cowboys maintenance unit, the 166th Transportation Detachment, used this UH-1B (call sign: "Horsethief") for transporting mechanics and spare parts to get our downed aircraft back in the air. ‘Horsethief’ flew trail on every combat assault we made and she saw plenty of action.”

The area of operation for the company, in support of the brigade, was the entire III Corps Tactical Area of the Republic of Viet Nam. Within the III Corps there were some sectors which caused anxiety in the heart of the aviators such as War Zone D, the area around Song Be, and around Xuan Loc. But where the brigade went, the Cowboys of the 335th were always present.

To speak of the deeds of the Cowboys in an adequate manner, a short summary of the various operations and occurrences must be made.

1966 began in the appropriate manner – a combat lift on New Year’s Day to open Operation Marauder in the Bao Trai area. Then, becoming Operation Crimp, the Cowboys entered the Hobo Woods, just South of War Zone C. The greater part of January was spent in crushing the Viet Cong in the Hobo Woods. Miss Jo Collins, of Playmate fame, visited the Cowboys. Subsequent mention of this was made in *Playboy* magazine.

The majority of February involved supporting the brigade in its TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility) at Bien Hoa. Codenamed Uniontown, this TAOR work was continued by elements of the brigade during the remainder of the year. Additional support was provided the 1st Infantry Division at Di An.



“An original 335th AHC door emblem. The 335th painted their aircraft in an olive green and black camouflage pattern. We also carried unit insignia on our front doors—these were painted on sheet metal and ‘pop-riveted’ to the doors.”

Possibly one of the finest hours, to date, of the Cowboys occurred during Operation Silver City, in March, in War Zone D. Specifically, on the evening of 15 March a force of two thousand VC encircled the 2/503rd Infantry, a battalion of the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

(continued....)





Sky Soldiers of the 2/503d arrive LZ Zulu Zulu on the late afternoon of 15 Mar 66, only to be surrounded and attacked on all sides by a superior enemy force on the morning of 16 Mar. Note the anti-chopper stakes in the clearing.

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

Throughout the night the VC remained silent, but as the first resupply helicopter arrived just after sunrise, the attack began. The resupply helicopter was shot down, ammunition was critical.



Tony Geishauser's (of Army-Navy game fame, see Page 16) chopper is shot down to open the battle at LZ Zulu Zulu.

(Photo by the late Maj. Tom Goodwin, HHC/2/503)

The Cowboys responding to the emergency, sling-loaded ammunition into the LZ under withering hostile fire. At the time the first sling load of ammunition arrived, the Battalion was using the last that it had on-hand. When the VC broke contact after a day-long battle, they left behind four hundred of their dead. To say that the Cowboys saved the day would be an understatement.

On 27 March (1966) Major Larry J. Baughman took command of the company from Major Donald A. Champlin who returned to CONUS.

April was the scene of Operation Denver in Song Be area. For this, the company moved in its entirety to the Special Forces camp in Song Be. Numerous combat assaults were performed throughout the heavily jungled area. Very few hits were taken on this operation.

Operation Dexter, during May, took place in an area East of Bien Hoa, yet West of Xuan Loc. A search and clear operation, it was of short duration. Following this was Operation Hardihood, by Xa Binh Gia, just North of Vung Tau. The purpose was to secure a base camp position for the newly-arrived Royal Australian Regiment. Many long range patrol missions were accomplished, to include the first recorded emergency night extraction of a LRRP under fire.

On 9 June Operation Hardihood became Hollandia, a search and destroy mission to the mountains on the seacoast just North of Vung Tau. Another first for the Cowboys – the first night combat assault in the III Corps Area of RVN ever—was the assault to begin the operation.

29 June saw Major Ernest H. Johnson take command of the company from Major Larry J. Baughtman. After Hollandia, Operation Yorktown commenced. Again it was a search and destroy mission. It was during this

operation that six hundred and forty U.S. troopers were helilifted from the area of operation, just South of Xuan Loc, to a shower point located near the Xuan Loc airfield. This proved the Cowboys' flexibility.

The brigade returned in Operation Sioux City to its stomping ground, War Zone D, during September and early October. The Casper platoon employed in armed OH-13 aircraft for the first time. The VC seemed to stay out of sight during this operation, probably remembering their defeat in

March during Silver City.

Operation Robin began on 10 October. Elements of the 4th Infantry Division were arriving at Vung Tau from CONUS and were to garrison at Bearcat, about ten miles Southeast of Bien Hoa. The operation was then a road security mission, keeping open Highway 15 between Vung Tau and Bearcat.

(continued....)



Concurrently, the Cowboys provided three UH-1D's and two OH-13's from the Caspers for Operation Winchester at Da Dang Airbase in the I Corps area. It was also during October that the VC sabotaged the Falcon helicopter parking area at Bien Hoa. Before the helicopters could be evacuated one gunship was destroyed and another severely damaged.

With ARVN units attached, the brigade began Operation Meridian in November. The area was War Zone C above Tay Ninh. Making numerous combat assaults and Eagle Flights it was soon discovered that the VC were in the area in force. Thus Operation Attleboro, a multi-divisional operation was born. Despite the terrible terrain, over one-thousand VC were killed. There were most constant combat assaults by the Cowboys throughout the period.

Upon the completion of Attleboro on 20 November the Cowboys reverted to their continual mission of supporting brigade elements in the TAOR at Bien Hoa. An eventual operation, Waco, developed from the TAOR mission in late November. A search and destroy mission, it covered the area between Bien Hoa and Xuan Loc.

The Cowboy element which was supporting the 4/503rd Infantry at Da Nang returned in early December to Bien Hoa. Operation Canary/Duck, again a mission of securing Highway 15 between Vung Tau and Bearcat, began on 7 December. This time the road was secured for elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 9th Infantry Division which were arriving from CONUS.

Activities during the operation were normal until 23 December when the 4/503rd Infantry was to be withdrawn from PZ Stump because of the forthcoming Christmas truce. The battalion had had minor contact with unknown enemy forces, and no particular problems were expected during the extraction. However, a surprise was in store.



Cowboys medevac

During the extraction a large enemy force made its presence felt by ruthlessly attacking both the troops on the PZ and the Cowboys who were making the extraction lifts. After thirteen lifts by the Cowboys under extremely heavy fire the extraction was complete. The Cowboy aircraft were riddled with holes and two crewman were injured. This sort of action by the Cowboys was indicative of their skill, and their valor.

The Cowboys were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for Achievement in the performance of outstanding service in the Republic of Viet Nam for the period May 1965 – July 1966, and the Presidential Unit Citation for the Battle at Hill 875, at Dak To in 1967.



(Web photo)



Berets of Green

Soldiers lift a log during a battalion endurance event at Torii Station, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 30, 2017. The event tested a variety of skills, including leadership and radio communications. The soldiers are assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne). (Army photo by SSG Kwadwo Frimpong)

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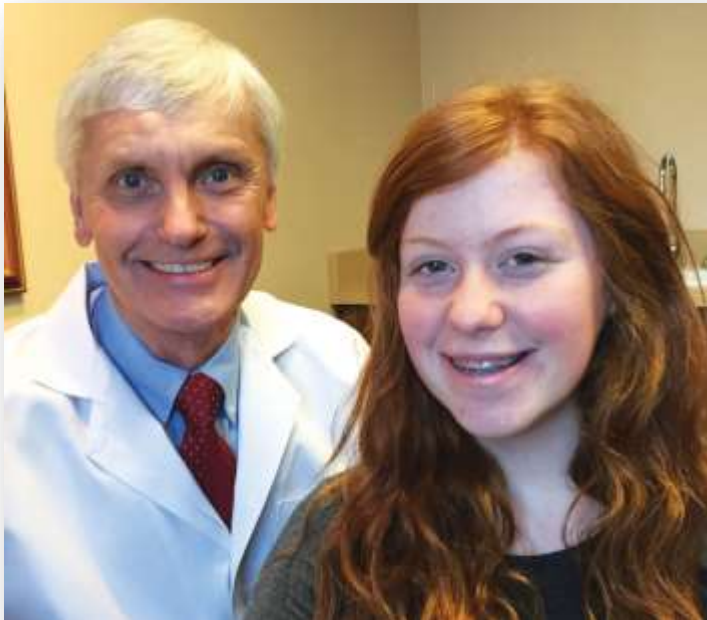
Dentist giving back

Granite Falls youth receives braces through Heroes program

Nov 28, 2017

Karin Elton
Staff Writer

kelton@marshallindependent.com



Through the Minnesota Heroes Orthodontic Program, Dr. Greg Lecy in Marshall, left, was able to provide Allison Kahler of Granite Falls with braces. Kahler's father was killed in Afghanistan while serving in the Army. (Submitted photo)

MARSHALL — It's been almost 10 years since Sgt. 1st Class Matt Kahler died in Afghanistan, but he hasn't been forgotten by his family and organizations that support veterans and fallen heroes.

Minnesota's Heroes Orthodontic Program of the Minnesota Dental Foundation has enabled Kahler's daughter, Allison, to receive braces from Dr. Greg Lecy in Marshall. Her mom, Vicki Patterson of Granite Falls, heard that the Minnesota Dental Foundation had started a program to help Gold Star Families.

"I really appreciate the program," Patterson said. "I know it takes a lot of effort to coordinate it and fundraise. Thank you to everyone who made this possible."

Dr. Lecy said providing free orthodontic services for Allison is a way of giving back.

"I want to spread awareness so more families will take advantage of this program," he said.

The Minnesota's Heroes Orthodontic Program is open to any Gold Star Family since 9/11. The program is in collaboration with Smiles Change Lives and the Minnesota Association of Orthodontists. For more information, visit mndental.org or call 800-950-3368.

Allison said she is "definitely" looking forward to getting her braces off this spring. She had them put on in May of 2016.

Allison was only 4 years old when her father died at the age of 29.

"We were stationed in Vicenza, Italy, at the time," said Patterson.

She said Matt Kahler enlisted in the U.S. Army before graduating from Yellow Medicine East High School in Granite Falls in 1997.

A member of 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, he died of wounds sustained from small arms fire in an Afghan village Jan. 26, 2008.

Reprinted courtesy of Karin Elton and the

INDEPENDENT

<http://www.marshallindependent.com/news/local-news/2017/11/dentist-giving-back/>

###

Excerpt from Earlier *MilitaryTimes*

Allison's father, Sgt. 1st Class Matthew R. Kahler, KIA January 26, 2008, during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Kahler, who served in Iraq as well as Afghanistan, thought often of his family, his father Ron said...

"He told me there is a group of thugs and hoodlums who want to rule the world," Ron Kahler said. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were about keeping the world safe from those people, Kahler said.

Matthew Kahler and his wife, Vicki, have a 4-year-old daughter. The family had been stationed in Vicenza, Italy, for about eight years, his father said.

A hearty salute to Matt and an *Airborne All The Way* to Matt & Doc Lecy from the troopers of the 2/503d!



Veterans Day 2017 - Message from VA Secretary David Shulkin

11/10/2017

On Veterans Day, the nation honors our Veterans and their unique role safeguarding our freedom as a people. Our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln envisioned the honoring of our war dead, in what later became Memorial Day, and caring for the living of those who engaged our enemies on the battlefield on what today is Veterans Day. That promise includes both the Veteran who walked a post, stood on the deck of a great ship, or flew in the skies, and the families who provided them so much support.

At VA, Lincoln's promise, and that of our nation's leaders since that time, is ours to keep 365 days a year. Today, President Trump has focused our attention on providing timely, high quality care and benefits to our Veterans and their families.

We are proud that support for our Veterans does not know the barriers of partisanship or special interest – the nation is united providing our Veterans with what we as a nation promised.

While we know that much work remains, my confidence grows that we are on our way to meeting the challenges that lie ahead. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, continue to serve in all corners of the globe, in operations too numerous to list – in combat and peace – constantly renewing our faith in their ability to achieve their mission of protect our fellow citizens.

Our Veterans from every era have earned our devotion and the VA stands committed to providing the care and benefits to them and their families.

On this day, we remember those who have sworn an oath to honor and defend this great nation.



COLA Increase for 2018 Passed into Law

On November 2, 2017, President Trump signed Public Law 115-75, which provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase of 2 percent, effective December 1, 2017, for veterans disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for survivors and certain other benefits. This increase matches the COLA provided to Social Security recipients.

This COLA benefits injured and ill veterans, their families and survivors by helping to maintain the value of VA benefits against inflation. Without annual COLAs, many disabled veterans, who sacrificed their own health and family life for the good of our nation, may not be able to maintain the quality of life they deserve.

We thank Representative Mike Bost (IL), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs for introducing H.R. 1329 the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017*, and Congress for final passage of the bill on October 25, 2017.

Likewise, we appreciate your support for service-disabled veterans and your grassroots efforts in the DAV Commander's Action Network, which helped get this critical legislation enacted. Please share this information on all of your social media sites. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

This alert is for your information only. No further action is required at this time.

[Sent in by John "Top" Searcy, HHC/2/503, '65/'66]



"The Disabled American Veterans, or DAV, is an organization chartered by the United States Congress for disabled military veterans of the United States Armed Forces that help them and their families..." (DAV photo)



The Call

By Master Sgt. Nicholas Thompson

October 5, 2017



Aviano Airbase, Italy: A Paratrooper from the 173rd Airborne Brigade re-enlists before loading on a C-130 airplane and conducting airborne training operations.

(Photo by SSG Jonathan W. Brungerwood)

The 173rd Airborne Brigade has the vital role of providing deterrence and multi-national support throughout Europe. When the time comes to answer the ACRF call, the 173rd will respond with all of its combat power. *"One of the things that motivated me to re-enlist was working with other nation's militaries,"* said Spc. Yander Fernandez, who recently re-enlisted. *"We are all educating ourselves in the defense of Europe."*

The ability to answer the call of ACRF is bolstered by the experienced Sky Soldier NCO Career Counsellors.

"It felt good knowing we were taking care of Soldiers, while helping the Army achieve its goals," said Staff Sgt. Roger Brito of the 2nd Battalion 503 Infantry Regiment (ABN) stationed in Vicenza, Italy.

Through a strong and motivated retention effort that focused on reenlisting the most qualified Paratroopers, the retention team was able to keep more than 675 Paratroopers with an end service date of Sept. 30th 2017 within the Sky Soldier ranks. This effort resulted in the 0 goal being met and surpassed for a total 8 reenlistment production by the end of FY17.

Most importantly is the personal impact the 173rd has on soldiers for their future both in the Army and careers outside of the Army.

"Something I will take with me from the 173rd is I learned how to be a better leader," said Fernandez. *"I learned from the best, and being here has made me more responsible by taking charge and listening to others, it made me a better person."*

On December 23, 2017, the National Defense Authorization Act was signed to increase the Army population by 16,000 Soldiers. The targeted population to make up that ambitious number were Soldiers holding a September 30, 2017 ETS and prior. The announcement of the surge began on January 20, 2017, giving Army Retention a very small window of opportunity to accomplish Retention goal.

With the addition of selective reenlistment bonuses (SRB) and insightful counseling's conducted by the 173rd Retention Team, the 173rd became one of an extremely shortlist of units in the Army to accomplish its increased FY COHORT mission. As of the end of September 2017, the total amount awarded to Paratroopers as part of the SRB program has exceeded \$4 million. More than financial benefits, the Brigade's unique airborne mission and location in Italy has created special opportunities and motivation for soldiers to re-enlist.

The 173rd continues to exercise its expertise on the battlefield and in the USAREUR Retention Program. The 173rd has a storied existence that separates it as a premier force in the Army, and its retention program is an extension of its continued success.



U.S. Army Paratroopers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade shake hands following a re-enlistment ceremony on Caserma Del Din, Italy.

(Photo Credit by Staff Sgt. Jonathan W. Brungerwood)



[A must read for Veterans receiving VA healthcare:](#)

VFW Opposes New VA Privatization Attempt

Congressman's proposal breaks nation's promise to veterans

Nov 27, 2017



Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo)

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is absolutely opposed to the latest congressional attempt to fix the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The “fix,” as introduced last week by **Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.)**, “throws out the idea of acceptable patient wait times and eliminates the requirement of the veteran to ask for VA permission to use civilian medical providers,” he said in a press release. His Veterans Empowerment Act, which is cosponsored by **Reps. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.)** and **Trent Franks (R-Ariz.)**, would also erode the VA’s health care system **and charge veterans for care related to their service-connected wounds, illnesses and injuries.** (emphasis added, Ed)

“Giving veterans access to high quality care isn’t the issue,” said VFW National Commander Keith Harman. “Veterans enrolled in the VA already have access to the best integrated health care system in the world, as well as access to the best outside providers. The issue is whether VA’s role should be limited to being an insurance provider, which is how you dismantle the VA, not fix it,” he said. “You cannot dangle promises of better access and care while stripping funding from VA health accounts to pay outside providers at far greater costs, and with zero guarantee of better access or quality. **The only thing this proposal will accomplish is kill the VA as a provider of care to America’s veterans while shifting the cost of care on to veterans.**” (emphasis added, Ed)

Aside from false promises, Lamborn’s bill would also establish a tiered premium support system that would force disabled veterans rated less than 100 percent to pay a certain percentage of their service-connected health care cost, whereas no copayments currently exist. **“The VFW has long held that if our nation cannot afford to take care of veterans, then our nation should quit creating them,”** said Harman. (emphasis added, Ed)

The VFW has conducted multiple surveys that reflect nearly 80 percent of VFW members who are eligible for VA care choose to use their earned VA care, despite the overwhelming majority of them having other options, such as employer-sponsored health insurance, the military’s TRICARE plan, or Medicare. “Veterans appreciate options,” said Harman, “and ultimately they choose whichever health plan best fits their individual circumstances, but having unregulated choice puts the onus on veterans to find their own care — and that decision needs to be made between doctors and their patients, not by Washington.”

The VFW national commander explained that it took years for the VA’s internal problems to boil over, yet politicians, new administration appointees and surrogates continue to believe they have a solution where in fact all they want to do is shift an inherent government responsibility into a civilian marketplace. Harman said the civilian marketplace also has waiting lists, can’t match the VA’s continuity and continuum of care, and doesn’t have the VA’s institutional knowledge and ability to address every malady that wounded, ill and injured veterans age 18 to 110 might have.

“Money isn’t the VA’s problem inasmuch as effective leadership, management and accountability are,” said Harman. “Shifting finite resources to the private sector will only signal the beginning of the end of a federal department that was created for the sole purpose of caring for America’s veterans,” he said. “The private sector can augment the VA but never replace it, which is a message the VFW will continue to carry to Congress and VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin as we work together to fix what’s broken and restore the faith of veterans in their VA.”

The VFW national commander is now asking all 1.7 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliary to contact their elected officials in the House and Senate to help ensure the Veterans Empowerment Act — and any others like it — never sees the light of day.

To voice support of opposition to the move to privatize VA healthcare, go to this VFW website:

<http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=79204626>



Soldier served five tours in Vietnam

C.J. MARSHALL

Wyoming County Press Examiner

November 10, 2017



SPENCER JONAS

For Spencer Jonas, serving his country in Vietnam became a career.

Jonas, 77, of Tunkhannock, served five tours of duty in Vietnam, for a total of 54 months, from 1965 to 1972.

Serving in the U.S. Army is a family affair for Jonas. His father served in the Army, as well as several uncles, and even some cousins.

When he was six years old, Jonas explained, he attended a military funeral for his Uncle Irwin, who had been killed in Bastogne, France while serving with the 101st Airborne Division.

"They played Taps, folded the flag," Jonas recalled. "It put chills up and down my back. I knew at that point I was going to be a paratrooper."

In 1959, Jonas enlisted in the Army.

"I went to all different schools, including jump school," he said.

Jonas served his first tour of duty in Vietnam in 1965 with the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Although a paratrooper, Jonas worked mostly with ground forces and helicopters in fighting the Viet Cong.

After completing his tour of duty, Jonas returned to Fort Bragg in the U.S., but later volunteered to return to Vietnam, serving with the Third 503rd Division from 1966 to 1967. But things did not go well at the time. *"The (North) Vietnamese really tore us up at Dak To,"* Jonas recalled.

Following his second tour of duty, Jonas decided to remain in Vietnam because he did not like the political climate in the U.S.

"All hell was being raised on college campuses," he said.

Assigned to the 162nd Airborne Detachment in 1968, Jonas became an adviser to South Vietnamese paratroopers.

"I spent about two-and-a-half years with them," he said.

Eventually, the South Vietnamese would award him the Master of the Parachute.

This was but one of a number of citations Jonas was awarded by both the U.S. and South Vietnam. In addition to the Bronze Star and two Silver Stars, Jonas is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, which is awarded *"For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with armed hostile force."*

The event occurred from Jan. 28 to 31, 1970, in Tay Ninh Province. Jonas was acting as adviser to a group of South Vietnamese soldiers, when they were attacked by a superior force during a search and clear mission. For four days, Jonas coordinated the troops, keeping the enemy at bay, and working to evacuate the wounded, despite being constantly under intense enemy fire.

His best experience about the war, Jonas said, was going in as an E5 - a fire team leader - and coming out as an E7 - a platoon sergeant. When he retired from the Army in 1989, Jonas was an E-9 - a sergeant major.

In 1983, Jonas was assigned to the Tunkhannock area. Here he met his wife, Carol Ann, whom he married in 1987. After his retirement, Jonas worked as a corrections officer for 19 years at the Wyoming County Jail.

"I was in charge of the jail at night," he explained. But the war was not without its toll. Jonas suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, primarily from the conflict which earned him the DSC.

(continued....)





Spencer Jonas, left, takes a few moments to relax with a South Vietnam soldier during one of his tours of duty in Vietnam.

“You can’t be constantly fired at for four days and not come out unaffected,” he explained.

Still, Jonas is proud of the time he served in Vietnam. *“The big reason I went there is because I wanted to fight them in their backyard, instead of ours,”* he said. *“I hate to see our families have to go through some of the things that they have to go through.”*

[Reprinted courtesy of C.J. Marshall and the Wyoming County Press Examiner]



JONAS, SPENCER W.

Distinguished Service Cross Citation:

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Spencer W. Jonas, Sergeant First Class, U.S. Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Airborne Division Advisory Detachment, Team 162, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.



Sergeant First Class Jonas distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions during the period 28 to 31 January 1970 while advising a company of Vietnamese soldiers during combat operations in Tay Ninh Province. While on a search and clear mission, the company made contact with a numerically superior enemy element that forced the allies to assume a defensive position and call for air support. Throughout the first day and night, as the enemy pressure continued, Sergeant Jonas exposed himself to enemy fire to direct and adjust artillery rounds against the onrushing enemy. At times, he directed the

supporting fire to within ten meters of his own perimeter.

The following day, the sergeant continued to direct numerous air strikes which successfully diverted all attacks. That night, while suffering a critical shortage of ammunition, the company was viciously attacked by the same determined enemy force. Sergeant Jonas remained in an exposed position on his perimeter to operate a strobe light and pinpoint enemy positions for artillery support fire. Although the focal point of enemy fire, he continued this action and again successfully prevented the enemy from overrunning his position.

On the third day, after directing a heavy volume of air strikes, the sergeant directed a helicopter ambulance to his position to evacuate the wounded. Ignoring the intense enemy fire that raked the area, he assisted the wounded aboard the aircraft. Sergeant Jonas continued his determined fight until the fourth day when he was relieved by two allied companies.

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

Headquarters, US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 4479 (September 21, 1970) ###



Chute Recovery: A paratrooper recovers his chute and equipment after jumping from a C-130 Hercules aircraft during airborne operation in Pordenone, Italy Dec. 12, 2017. (Army photo by Paolo Bovo)





Blue Wings

“A member of the Air Force’s Wings of Blue Parachute Demonstration Team jumps out of an aircraft during the opening ceremony of Aviation Nation 2017 Nellis Air and Space Expo at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 10, 2017.”

(Air Force photo by Senior Airman Kevin Tanenbaum)



(Web pics)

NO TIME FOR HOLLYWOOD JUMPS, WE HAVE FIGHTIN’ & SHIT TO DO!

Unless you’ve jumped from 1250 or 600 feet into absolute darkness carrying 95 pounds of equipment on your back using a 42 pound parachute and be willing to have bad guys shoot up at your ass...to us, you’re still a Leg in a pretty blue suit! AATFW!!
(All in good fun, as we do so love the AF...especially those C-130’s & F-4’s. Plus, we need someone to buy our drinks.)



I'D RATHER BE A TROOPER

(Tune of "Dog Faced Soldier")



WWII troopers of the 503rd PIR

I wouldn't give a heck
To be a sissy leatherneck
I'd rather be a trooper,
Like I am

I wouldn't trade my Army greens
To have my pick of movie queens
For I'm the jumpin' pride
Of Uncle Sam

"Straight legs" live longer
Or so its been said
If they call that livin'
I'd rather be dead

I'm just an airborne soldier
With a rifle on my shoulder
And I'll jump to fight
Just anywhere you say
Feed me ammunition
Keep me in that door position
Your jumpin' soldier boys' oh kay

I wouldn't ride a submarine
Or own an admiral's limousine
I'd rather be a trooper,
Like I am

I wouldn't change with Curt Le May
Not even for his flyin' pay
Without my boots
I'm just not worth a damn

See the world thru a porthole,
Is what the gobs say
I'd rather stay home
Than to have to travel that way

I'm just an airborne soldier
With a rifle on my shoulder
And I'd gladly hit the silk
Most every day
Just keep me in condition
And in a jump di-vision
Your jumpin' soldier boy's oh kay

I couldn't live like Europe's king
For me, I've got to wear jump wings
I'd rather be a trooper,
Like I am

And you can stay down on the farm
Or live the life of Ali Khan
I want to jump and fight
For Uncle Sam

All girls like jumpers
Least that's what they say
That's 'cause we're rugged
Or is it our pay?

I'm just an airborne soldier
With a rifle on my shoulder
And I've got to have it
Airborne all the way
For me there is no other
I'm really "Gung Ho" brother
Your jumpin' soldier boy's oh kay



Army charges soldier over infamous air drop gone wrong in ‘Humvee bomb’ video

By Douglas Ernst

The Washington Times, Wednesday, July 5, 2017



The U.S. Army has charged a soldier involved in a disastrous air drop that went viral on social media in 2016.

Military communities watched a “U.S. Army W.T.F! moments” Facebook video in droves after a C-130 air drop in Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, in April 2016. The video featured at least three \$220,000 Humvees plummeting to the ground like bombs after slipping from parachute harnesses.

“Oh! Yes! Yes! Yes!” one witness says through laughter as a Humvee makes impact — seemingly at terminal velocity.

Sgt. John Skipper of 1st Battalion, 91st Cavalry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Vicenza, Italy, was formally charged in May with destruction of government property and making a false official statement, *Stars and Stripes* reported Wednesday.

If convicted, the soldier could get up to 10 years in prison, a dishonorable discharge, and forfeiture of all pay and allowances.

“Should this case progress [to a court martial], we will continue to release information consistent with Army policy,” Maj. Juan Martinez, a spokesman for the 173rd Brigade, said Tuesday, the newspaper reported. A separate investigation has been launched by military officials to determine who filmed the incident.

Source: <https://m.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jul/5/army-charges-soldier-over-infamous-air-drop-gone-w/>

The Washington Times, LLC.



51 Years Ago During Operation Marauder

HHC/2/503 Bn commo platoon troopers crossing a stream in the Plain of Reeds in the Mekong Delta on 3 January 1966. Trooper on the bank lending a hand is likely RTO Lee Braggs, and RTO being helped up may be Wayne Hoitt or Lew Smith, all ‘65/’66 – trooper in water remains unidentified. This Army photo was sent in by the late Bob Carmichael, LTC (Ret), who was serving as battalion executive officer during this operation.



Caption reads: “Plain of Reeds, 3 January 66. Troopers have a hard time traveling through numerous streams while under VC automatic weapons fire. Bn commo Plt., Hq Co, 2/503, 173 Abn Brigade.”

(Army photo by 1LT David G. Fitz-Enz, 593rd Signal Company Pictorial Audio Visual Platoon)

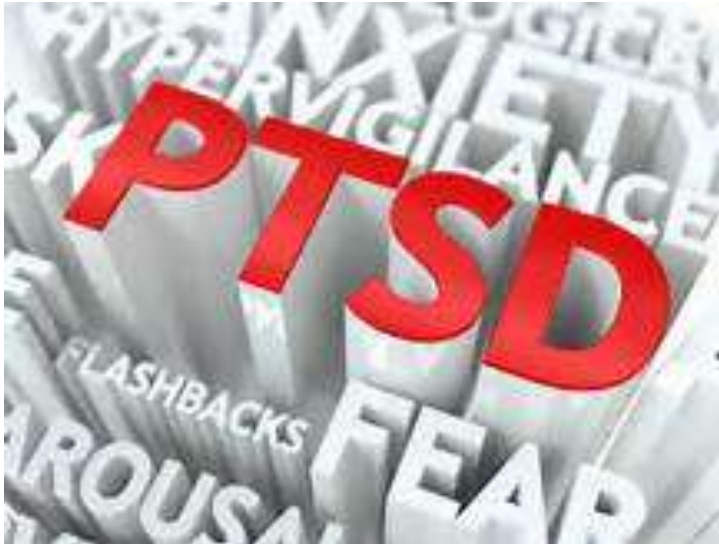
Col. David G. Fitz-Enz was a regular army officer for thirty years, retiring in 1993. Among his decorations are the Soldier's Medal for Heroism, the Bronze Star for Valor with four oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal, and the Legion of Merit with three oak leaf clusters. He is a graduate of Marquette University, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. He is published in *Military Review*, the army's professional journal.

Colonel Fitz-Enz is the national president of the American Military Retirees Association and vice president of Cannonade Film Works, Inc.



VA to Provide Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy to Some Veterans with Chronic PTSD

November 29, 2017



WASHINGTON: Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will offer Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) as a treatment option for a small number of Veterans with persistent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms resistant to standard options.



Web image of one form of HBOT treatment

Providers from the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System and the VA Northern California Health Care System will partner with HBOT providers at the Tulsa Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center at Oklahoma State Medical Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the David Grant Medical Center on Travis Air Force Base, California, respectively, to provide this care.

“There is nothing more important to us than caring for our nation’s Veterans, and that care must include finding different approaches that work best for them,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. *“We have to explore every avenue, particularly for our most medically vulnerable Veterans, and be open to new ideas and strategies for their optimal health and well-being.”*

HBOT is a procedure that increases oxygen in the body, under pressure, to encourage healing. Currently, HBOT is commonly used to treat carbon monoxide poisoning, divers sickness, enhanced healing of some wound problems, skin grafts, heat burns, crush injuries and other acute health-care issues that involve too little blood flow to a part of the body.

This use of HBOT for treatment of PTSD is considered an off-label use and will occur under the supervision of a trained physician. Separately, VA and the Department of Defense are planning a multisite research study to examine more fully the use of HBOT for patients diagnosed with PTSD.

As health-care leaders interested in innovative approaches to care, the VA Center for Compassionate Innovation (CCI) is facilitating use of HBOT for a subset of Veterans who have noticed no decrease of symptoms after receiving at least two evidenced-based treatments. CCI uses innovative approaches to treat conditions where traditional methods have been unsuccessful.

VA will monitor the HBOT clinical demonstration project and the HBOT research study to help inform the potential for HBOT usage to treat a larger number of Veterans with PTSD.

For more information about VA’s Center for Compassionate Innovation, go to:

<https://www.va.gov/healthpartnerships/>



Philippine Scout, Army Veteran shares story of his escape from the Bataan Death March

By Jeremy Profitt, December 7, 2017



Amado Ante enlisted with the Philippine Scouts in February 1941 at the age of 22. Just five months later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a military order calling all organized military forces in the Commonwealth of the Philippines into active service of the United States Armed Forces. Ante responded to the call and was assigned to the 12th Quartermaster Regiment, Company B.



Just hours after the Pearl Harbor attacks, Japanese forces invaded the Philippines. Ante would deploy to Bataan in support of the fight against Japan. After months of fighting, Ante's unit had to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula. Ante's regiment was surrounded with nowhere to escape.

To save lives, the commanding general surrendered the troops. Ante, along with approximately 75,000 Filipino and American Soldiers, was rounded up by the Japanese and forced to march some 65 miles from Mariveles, on the southern end of the Bataan Peninsula, to San Fernando.

The men were divided into groups of approximately 100, and what became known as the Bataan Death March typically took each group around five to seven days to complete. The marchers made the trek in intense heat and were subjected to harsh treatment by Japanese guards.

Ante had hidden a little sugar under his belt to sustain his survival. On the fifth day of the march, Ante was stricken with malaria. His feet were badly swollen, and he could no longer walk. When the Japanese guards were on relief duty, his fellow soldiers urged him to escape immediately or risk death. Ante's comrades pushed him into a ditch where he crawled into the bushes and laid low until dark. Later that night he was found by local civilians, who provided him with food, shelter and medical care. He stayed with them for three months until he was fully healthy.

Ante reenlisted and joined the guerilla movement until General Douglas MacArthur's forces liberated the Philippines in 1945. Ante received various military medals including the Bronze Star. At the age of 99 on Nov. 10, 2017 Ante was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award in the United States.

Ante receives care through the San Francisco VA Health Care System's home-based primary care program (HBPC). The program provides comprehensive care for Veterans with complex medical, social and behavioral conditions.

Ante and his family have been complimentary of the care and services. *"The HBPC program has been beneficial for my father; I'm certain it's added years to his already long life,"* said Ante's son Steve.

For the staff, it's an honor and privilege to care for Ante and other Veterans.

"My work is very meaningful to me," said nurse practitioner Cindy Cosbey. *"I am providing personalized primary care, with the goal of supporting our most fragile Veterans in their homes. I am so proud of my multidisciplinary team who work very hard on behalf of our Veterans."*

About the author: Jeremy Profitt is a public affairs specialist with the San Francisco VA Health Care System.

Source:



8th August 1968

The date a mother kept



Meadows in Carryduff, Ireland. (Web photo)

A FAMILY REUNION planned two years ago in Belfast should have taken place this summer. A 19-year-old American soldier and his mother planned to meet and stay with the Sloan family at Rose Cottage, Carryduff. Today the mother is keeping that date – even though her son, Craig Berry, died last December in Vietnam.

While Craig was still at college he and his mother, Mrs. Sarah Berry [nee Craig] of the Springfield Road who went to the US 34 years ago – came over for a holiday. They stayed with the Sloan family and Craig became fast friends with 17-year-old Margery Sloan. Later when he returned to America they corresponded regularly. Immediately he left college. Craig, like so many other youngsters, was drafted and after initial training sent to Vietnam.



Craig Berry



Pictured here with her cousin Maud (right) is Mrs. Sarah Berry. Also in the picture is her son Brian (4) and Elizabeth (left) and Margery Sloan.

Source: Sent in by a Sky Soldier



James Craig Berry, 19

PFC, B/2/503

July 14 1948 to November 13, 1967

Royal Oak, Michigan



He was told that after a certain term of duty the US Army would fly him to any part of the world for a holiday and without any hesitation he chose Northern Ireland. His mother wrote to him at the front-line and suggested that she and his younger brother Brian (4) would join him at Carryduff.

But it was never to be. When the Viet Cong overran Hill 875 Craig was one of the 90 U.S. servicemen out of the 120 in the company who was killed.

This summer his mother and brother came alone. *“At first I didn’t feel like doing anything,”* Mrs. Berry said this week, *“but my relatives here pressed me to come and as Craig was so keen on coming back...I thought I would come in his place. He so loved the people here and he was so looking forward to his visit.”*

“It was a tragedy,” cousin Mrs. Maud Sloan said. *“Craig was a wonderful boy. He and my daughter Margery wrote to each other regularly and were looking forward to the reunion”*...That ended on Hill 875 in Vietnam.

Just one of over 58,000+ stories. Whenever we remember one...we remember all.





Chapter XVII

173D AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

William E. Terry – PRESIDENT

December 11, 2017



To all members of the 173d

It has been Chapter 17's great pleasure to donate a park bench with the 173d plaque attached to a variety of VA facilities. We have now completed the task in all of the surrounding states that incorporate Chapter 17's area of operation. The staff at these facilities have all expressed a delight at receiving the bench and plaque. They feel it adds a great addition to their entrance, reflecting in this their respect to all veterans as the plaque itself gives out a salute to the 173d. Anyone wishing to obtain this beautiful plaque with your own Chapter engraved upon it, call or e-mail me and I will get you in touch with the proper company. (614-476-3060 weterry2@gmail.com)

I am enclosing here two sets of pictures from the bench dedication in Columbus, Ohio and Ann Arbor, Michigan. Both are at a VA facility. The indoor pictures are from the VA of Columbus, Ohio and the outdoor pictures are from Ann Arbor.

The trooper sitting alone and pointing at the plaque is Tom Steckman. He paid out of his own pocket for the cost and the purchase of the plaque when normally the Chapter pays for it.



L-R: Good buddies Jim Haynes and Roy Scott.



At the indoor (Columbus) that's Mark Mitchell, Jim Haynes, Bill Terry and Ike Mellinger standing near the bench and plaque.



Skip Kniley and Mark Mitchell sit on the bench while Michelle (Skip's wife) leans near his shoulder.



Sky Soldier Tom Steckman points to 173d plaque.

(continued....)





The Columbus VA staff pose in front of the Chapter flag: Traci Washington, Jamie Kuhne and Mr. Farid Mehr.

Other of our guys were at the Columbus dedication but I've misplaced the pictures of them. Sorry guys.



In the outdoor pictures (Ann Arbor) we have a group standing from left to right: Richard Whipple, Harvey Hoosnstra, Ike Mellinger (holding the plaque), Bill Terry, Jeff Yosikana.



The VA staff in the outdoor pictures are Jason Bower and Beverly Conayser.

The Chapter has accomplished these dedications in Indiana, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. Ohio and Michigan completes it. It truly does the heart good to walk into these facilities and see the plaque of the 173d standing forth to announce itself in a salute to all veterans.

Chapter 17 is proud to have accomplished it. *Airborne to all!*

William Terry – President
Jerome Marcum – Vice President
 (614) 476-3060, (765) 962-6227



VA Decision Ready Claims Program Expands to Include More Types of Claims

WASHINGTON — As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing efforts to modernize and improve Veterans' experience with the disability claims process, VA unveiled its latest enhancements to the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) program, which will expand the pool of Veterans, surviving spouses and service members eligible to participate in the program.

"These enhancements are another key step in modernizing VA's benefits delivery to Veterans to a fully digital operating environment," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. *"With electronic claims processing as a foundation, VA's innovation will improve service to Veterans, their families and survivors."*

In addition to claims for increased disability compensation (commonly known as claims for increase), Veterans will now be able to file certain claims for direct service connection, presumptive service connection and secondary service connection. Additionally, surviving spouses will be able to file certain claims for **Dependency and Indemnity Compensation**, and transitioning service members will be able to file **pre-discharge claims** less than 90 days from leaving the military. Veterans who choose to submit their claim under DRC can expect to receive a decision within 30 days from the time VA receives the claim.

To file under DRC, Veterans must work with an accredited Veteran Service Organization (VSO) representative, who will ensure all supporting evidence — such as medical exams, military service records, etc. — is included with the claim submission. This advance preparation by the VSOs allows claims to be assigned immediately to claims processors for a quick decision.

In the future, VA aims to expand the DRC program, where possible, to ensure more Veterans can get faster decisions on their claims.

See Page 87 and for more information about DRC or to find an accredited VSO representative, visit www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/DRC.asp



The Solitary World of a Vet

By Ray Starmann
U.S. Defense Watch



The Vietnam Wall (web photo)

It is important for those who have never served to take a moment to understand the solitary world of a vet.

Millions of vets are and have been successful in all endeavors. They are doctors, lawyers, business people and a thousand other professions. Not all have PTSD; not all are the troubled, brooding, street corner homeless guy, although they exist and need help desperately.

No matter how successful a vet might be materially, more often than not, vets are often alone, mentally and spiritually each day and for the rest of their lives. Vets' stories are all different, but some elements of the common experience exist.

Many vets experienced and saw and heard and did things unimaginable to the average person. They also lived a daily camaraderie that cannot be repeated in the civilian world. In fact, many vets spend the rest of their lives seeking the same esprit de corps that simply is absent from their civilian lives and jobs. They long to spend just 15 minutes back with the best friends they ever had, friends that are scattered to every corner of the earth, and some to the afterlife itself.



These men, L-R: Jim Healy, Mike Sturges, Jim Gettle, Terrance "Woody" Davis, and sitting, Jack "Jackattack" Ribera, from Alpha Company, 2/503d, 173d Airborne Brigade, '65-'67, RVN, Sky Soldiers all, who served together in hell will seldom admit it, or speak it aloud, but....they genuinely love one another as only combat veterans can. Ed

Vets are haunted by visions of horror and death, by guilt of somehow surviving and living the good life, when some they knew are gone. They strangely wish sometimes that they were back in those dreadful circumstances, not to experience the dirt and horror and terror and noise and violence again, but to be with the only people a vet really knows, other vets.

Civilians must understand that for a vet nothing is ever the same again. Their senses can be suddenly illuminated by the slightest sound or smell or sight: sights of death all around, a living version of Dante's Inferno; sounds so loud that they can only be described as Saving Private Ryan in surround sound on steroids; smells vast and horrific; rotting death, burning fuel and equipment, rubber, animals and...people. The smoldering ruins of life all around them.

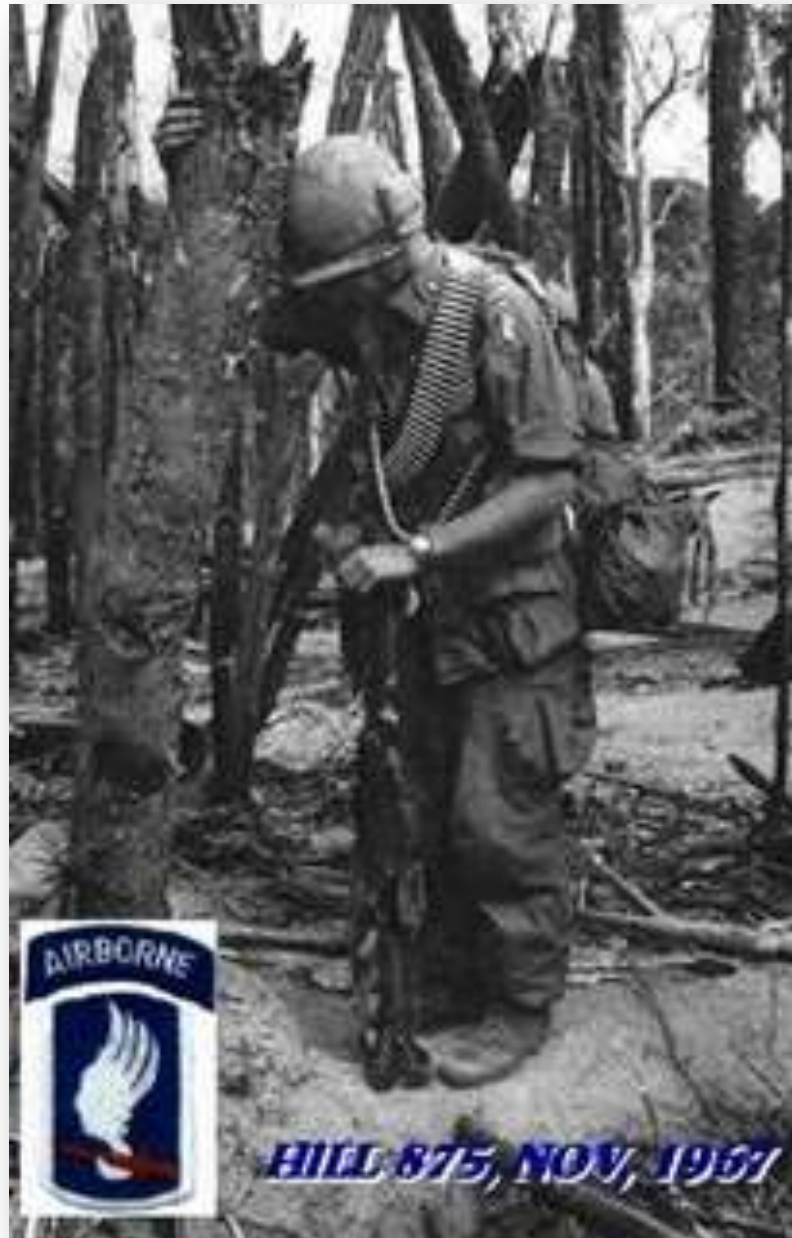
All vets have these thoughts nearly every day. Some may experience them for fractions of second, or for minutes at a time. They replay over and over again like an endless 24 hour war movie.

Part of the solitary world of the vet is being able to enjoy complete bliss doing absolutely nothing. This is a trait grating to civilians who must constantly search for endless stimuli....

(continued....)



....Unbeknownst to them, the greatest thrill of all is just being alive. A lot of vets have an Obi-wan Kenobi calmness. After what they went through, how bad can anything really be?



Our good buddy, the late Rocky Stone, B/4/503 after the battle for Hill 875 at Dak To, November 1967

So many, if not all vets walk around each day lost in their own special story. They were once great actors on a giant stage with speaking parts and props. Maybe they were heroes and now they aren't anymore. Maybe they helped save the world and now they can't. Maybe they gave orders and now they take them. Maybe they thought that they could accomplish anything and now they know they can't. Perhaps their lives now are smaller and slower and sometimes in the vet's mind, just incidental, even though they're not.

Most civilians are oblivious to the solitary life of the vet. But, it's there. It's the same eternal and universal philosophy, whether you fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq or Afghanistan. The experiences may have been different, but the emotions are the same.

A problem with the solitary world of the vet is that the vet has a hard time explaining what he or she did to those who didn't serve. Some vets want to talk, but they have no outlet. Maybe their only outlet is watching a war movie or reading a book about the conflict they were in.

How often do people say, "Grandpa never talks about Korea." That's because Grandpa knows no one can understand except other vets. That's because Grandpa knows most people don't care.

Part of this taciturn mentality is that vets speak another language, a strange and archaic language of their past. How do you talk to civilians about "fire for effect" or "grid 7310" or "shake and bake" or "frag orders" or "10 days and a wake up" or a thousand and one other terms that are mystifying to the real world?

You can't.

All of this adds to the solitary world of the vet. Some are better at handling life afterwards than others. Some don't seem affected at all, but they are. They just hide it. Some never return to normal. But, what is normal to a vet anymore?

So, if you see a vet sitting by themselves at a restaurant or on a train or shopping at the grocery store alone, take a moment to speak with them. Take them out of their solitary world for a moment. You'll be happy you did.

Source:

<http://usdefensewatch.com/2015/11/the-solitary-world-of-a-vet/>

(photos added)

Reprinted courtesy of Ray Starmann, founder of U.S. Defense Watch. He is a former U.S. Army Intelligence officer and veteran of the Gulf War.

Thank you Ray.





Farewell to Trooper Michael J. Cosmo “Doc” C/2/503

Michael J. Cosmo passed away peacefully at his home in Burlington Township, New Jersey surrounded by his loving family on Sunday, November 19, 2017, he was 68.

Michael served as a combat medic in Vietnam in C Company, 2/503rd Infantry Regiment, 173d Airborne Brigade. He was a Trenton homicide detective, and a loving husband and father.

While he was working, but especially in retirement, he was a Little League coach, chef, interior designer, and launderer extraordinaire. He was a Motown enthusiast, a sharp dresser, a king of the dance floor, a chain smoker, and a whiskey and red wine drinker nonpareil. Most of all, he was loved, and will be missed immeasurably.

He is survived by his wife, Donna Dimitri, whom he met in September of 1980 and married in July of 1984. They were together for thirty-seven years. He is also survived by his five children: Deanna, Alexander (Laura), Traci, Kristin (Stephan), and Steven (Michaela); and by his two grandchildren: Ryan and Megan.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island on June 17, 1949 to the late Frank Ford and Rose Cosmo, Michael was an only child, and grew up in Newport, Rhode Island. A graduate of Rogers High School in Newport, Michael volunteered for enlistment in the United States Army on July 26, 1967.

He served two tours in the Republic of Vietnam as a combat medic from July of 1968 to February of 1970 with the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment of the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Though they were rarely (if ever) mentioned by him, Michael earned many badges, medals and citations. They include the Combat Medical Badge, “Jump Wings” (Parachutist Badge), Army Commendation Medal, and the Bronze Star with “V” Device [Valor] for heroism in combat.

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

was still operational and they were placing their own lives in great jeopardy by doing so.”

Michael was honorably discharged in January of 1971 as an E-5 (Sergeant). From February of 1971 until May of 1995, Michael was employed by the Trenton Police Department. He was, simply, known by his co-workers as a good cop. Michael was one of the first polygraph examiners in the department, and knocked on many doors over many years while working in the Homicide Division---devoting his investigatory prowess to bringing closure to families who had lost loved ones. He also was assigned many “cold cases”, and was able to bring to justice individuals who had escaped it for years.

One of the “cold cases” he was assigned---and that he solved--- was featured on the television station Investigation Discovery. More information can be found at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2772198/>

A memorial service and repast were held on Friday, December 29, 2017 at Saint John Chrysostom Albanian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia, PA.

Rest easy Doc, job well done brother.



Our 2/503 Medics doing what they do best for the wounded survivors of B/2/503, 1965. (Tim Page photo)



Serbian, U.S. Paratroopers Conduct Bilateral Double Eagle Exercise

From a U.S. European Command News Release

STUTTGART, Germany, Nov. 13, 2017 — At the invitation of the Serbian government, U.S. Army paratroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, will conduct a bilateral Serbian and U.S. airborne exercise this week.



Exercise Double Eagle begins tomorrow and runs through Nov. 17 at Batajnica Airfield, Serbia.

Double Eagle is designed to enhance U.S. and Serbian relationships, foster areas of mutual interest and contribute to regional security and peace, U.S. European Command officials said.

Improving Cooperation and Dialogue

About 100 service members from the 173rd Airborne Brigade and two C-130J's and their aircrews from the 86th Airlift Wing based at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, will participate in the exercise. In addition to extensive joint military training, service members will exchange jump wings as a token of the joint cooperation, officials said.

The 173rd Airborne Brigade is the Army's contingency response force in Europe and provides rapidly deployable forces to the U.S. Army Europe area of responsibility.

NATO and Serbia have steadily improved cooperation and dialogue since the country joined the Partnership for Peace program and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 2006. Serbia signed its individual partnership action plan with NATO in 2015.

VA Prioritizes Improving Veterans' Access to Pro Bono Legal Services

VA News Release

11/13/17

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), together with the American Bar Association, The Veterans Consortium and National Law School Veterans Clinic Consortium, signed a Memorandum of Agreement aimed at improving Veterans' access to free legal services.



Veterans often face stressful legal problems — such as eviction, foreclosure, child support, or drivers' license revocations — that can affect their ability to gain or maintain employment and housing or focus on medical treatment. In VA's annual Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups survey, legal assistance repeatedly tops the list of homeless Veterans' unmet needs.

"We are encouraging VA Medical Centers and other VA facilities to engage with their local communities to establish legal clinics and Medical Legal Partnerships to address Veterans' legal needs that threaten their health and well-being," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. *"By signing this agreement, we are documenting a shared commitment to better facilitate Veterans' access to legal services."*

Currently, VA hosts at least 165 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics and Vet Centers across the country by partnering with external, legal-service providers, such as local bar associations, legal-aid organizations and law school clinics.

More information on VA's coordination of legal services for Veterans at VA facilities may be found at

www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp



Veterans' Stories: Soldier led infantry platoon in Vietnam



Hal McDuffie grew up in Sarasota and graduated from Florida State University in 1968 with a bachelor's degree in criminology. He volunteered for service in Vietnam after graduation. (PHOTO BY ABBY WEINGARTEN)

**By Hal McDuffie / as told to Abby Weingarten
February 9, 2017**

Hal McDuffie was born at Sarasota Memorial Hospital in 1946, grew up in the Whitaker Bayou area, and became part of a tightknit community of boys who attended Sarasota High School and remain close to this day. He graduated from Florida State University in 1968 with a bachelor's degree in criminology (law enforcement), and later served in the Army as a special forces officer and infantry platoon leader during the Vietnam War. McDuffie was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade and was honorably discharged in 1971 as a lieutenant. He went on to pursue a successful career as a polygraph examiner and private investigator, and he works with such organizations as the Sarasota Police Department and the Florida Department of Corrections.

"I volunteered to go into the Army because, after getting out of college, if you had good knees and you didn't have a deferment, you were gone. I'd had three years of military school (Riverside Military Academy) before I went into the Army. I went to Fort Polk, Louisiana, as a training officer for infantry soldiers going to Vietnam, and that's where we trained to go to Vietnam because the weather and mosquitos were so similar.

One of the worst experiences I had in the military happened at Fort Polk. During training, I got cellulitis in

my elbow. For 14 days, they were pumping me full of antibiotics. I was being treated alongside guys that were coming back from Vietnam. They had lost their legs and had horrible injuries. Those boys were screaming. They were all blown to hell. I actually cried listening to them. They didn't have anybody come to see them. They didn't know if they were going to live or die. They were a wreck. I hadn't even gone to Vietnam yet, but that was one of the most down times I could have imagined.

Then I got to Vietnam in August 1970. I was a 31542 (special forces infantry platoon) and they sent me to the 173rd Airborne Brigade at LZ English. I was a platoon leader in charge of 18 men. Everywhere we went, we either walked or flew in helicopters. We were sleeping on the ground. We were in the Binh Dinh Province, bordering Cambodia, known as central highlands.

You had with you what was on your back: a rucksack, a poncho liner, a poncho that you could rig over you if you were sitting in the rain at night, your boots, a couple pairs of socks, C-rations, hand grenades, claymores and M-16s. I also carried a shotgun sometimes because we were in triple-canopy jungles. You never knew when anything was going to happen. I tripped a booby trap once and it hit the people in front of me and behind me, and I didn't get hit even though I tripped it.

You were in the middle of a lot of anger. If it was moving and it was night, it was Viet Cong and they were shot. That's the way it was. But the only thing the Vietnamese people who lived there cared about was if the water buffalo was healthy and the rice was growing. They could not have cared less whether they were under communist rule.

I highly respected the North Vietnamese soldiers. Sometimes they didn't have all the equipment we had but they were very dedicated. I had a Kit Carson Scout named Si, who taught hand-to-hand in bayonet for the NVA. His wife was a nurse in South Vietnam so he came from the NVA to the South Vietnamese side.

He was my interpreter for quite a while. He probably saved a lot of lives because we would come to trails and he would talk to the villagers to see if they knew of any booby traps up ahead of us. He watched my back. And the guys in my platoon were really soldiers. I wouldn't have traded my guys for anything."

**Reprinted courtesy of Ms. Abby Weingarten
Abby Weingarten may be contacted via email at
Abby_Weingarten@yahoo.com**



VA Announces Rollout and Application Process for New Veterans ID Card

November 29, 2017

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans — yet another action honoring their service.

This has been mandated through legislation since 2015 to honor Veterans, and today's rollout of the ID card fulfills that overdue promise.



Only those Veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans. *“The new Veterans Identification Card provides a safer and more convenient and efficient way for most Veterans to show proof of service,”* said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. *“With the card, Veterans with honorable service to our nation will no longer need to carry around their paper DD-214s to obtain Veteran discounts and other services.”*

The VIC provides a more portable and secure alternative for those who served the minimum obligated time in service, but did not meet the retirement or medical discharge threshold. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have a discharge of honorable or general (under honorable conditions) can request a VIC.

To request a VIC, Veterans must visit vets.gov, click on **“Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card”** on the bottom left of the page and sign in or create an account.

Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at vets.gov. A digital version of the VIC will be available online by mid-December.

Thomas R. Goodwin, 83 Major (Ret), Passes HHC/2/503 '65/'66, RVN

Major Thomas R. Goodwin (Ret.), 83, passed away on October 3, 2017. He was the son of Roland and Ellen Wareham Goodwin and graduated from Chicopee High School in 1952.



In 1954 he entered the US Army and retired in 1976 with the rank of Major. He served in Vietnam as a “Sky Soldier” and head of the communications section with the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) in 1965/66.

He obtained an MBA from William and Mary College and taught at the college level. He loved singing, teaching, playing bridge and was active in the community. He served on the Greenfield Council on Aging, served as chaplain of the DAV (Disabled America Veterans) and was a member of the United Church of Bernardston, Republican Lodge of Masons, the Mount Sugarloaf Lodge, and the Cairo Shriners of Vermont. He also served as a long-time volunteer at the Greenfield Veterans Clinic.

Thomas is survived by his wife of 64 years, Carol Nowill Goodwin, and his daughter Melodie Goodwin, both of Greenfield, a brother Harry of Texas and a sister Mary Filak of South Carolina.

A Masonic Evergreen service was held followed by a DAV memorial. Immediately following was visitation with a Celebration of Thomas' life at the Greenfield Elks Lodge. A graveside service with full military honors took place Wednesday, October 11, at Forestdale Cemetery in Holyoke, MA.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions be sent to the Shriners Hospital for Children, 516 Carew St., Springfield, MA 01104. To sign a guestbook or leave a message of condolence, please visit www.smithkelleherfuneralhome.com



*Rest easy, Cap, you were a good commo boss and friend.
All the Way, Sir! Ed*



Commander in Chief Honors WWII Navajo "Code Talkers" at White House



Standing in front of a portrait of Indian Removal Act architect Andrew Jackson at an event commemorating the achievements of Native American "code talkers", President Trump *'honored'* these WWII heroic patriots with, *"You were here long before any of us were here. Although we have a representative in Congress who they say was here a long time ago. They call her Pocahontas."* (By Tkele-cho-gi)



Cpl. Henry Bake, Jr., and Pfc. George H. Kirk, Navajos serving in December 1943 with a Marine Corps signal unit, operate a portable radio set in a clearing that they have hacked in the dense jungle close behind the front lines.

Navajo duties in war

- The code talkers' main job was to send and receive, information on key military troop movements, orders, and other important battlefield situations over telephones and radios.
- They also performed general Marine duties.

The Code

- + It is the only unbroken code in modern military history
- + Examples:
 - + tortoise, "chay-da-gahi," meant tank
 - + "besh-lo" (iron fish) meant submarine
 - + "ne-he-mah" (our mother) meant America.
- + English words that didn't have an associated term could be spelled out using Navajo words that represented letters of the alphabet.
- + The selection of a given term was based on the first letter of the English meaning of the Navajo word.
 - "Wo-La-Chee" means "ant," and would represent the letter "A".



4 Basic Rules for Memorization

- The code words had to have some kind of logical connection to the term to which they referred
- Code words had to be unusually descriptive
- Code words had to be short
- They had to avoid words that could be confused with similar words

Semper Fi brothers, job well done!



Paratrooping Pancake



We couldn't help ourselves....we had to snap a photo of this *paratrooping pancake* at a local Denny's restaurant on Merritt Island, Florida the other day. The obvious questions are...was he a pancake *before* or *after* the jump? And, was he a he? It's difficult to tell. Ed

Pick Up Here Too



Another Pick Up



Excerpt....

Attrition: ours and theirs



General Westmoreland meets with troopers of the 2/503d in Pleiku, 1965. (Photo from Col. George Dexter, 2/503 Bn CO)

While Westmoreland pointed to the ever-rising enemy deaths as evidence of progress, the ratio of deaths between the two sides is probably a better index of the manner in which the enemy maintained the initiative. In the first quarter year after the full deployment of U.S. combat troops (July to September 1965) the enemy suffered forty deaths for every American killed. By the end of 1965 they had reduced that ratio to about fifteen to one, and it fluctuated around the ten- or twelve-to-one mark through the end of 1967. The enemy was determining the extent to which it was willing to suffer casualties, and no matter what the United States tried, it could not increase the ratio for any sustained period of time.

The war was shaping up as a battle between two strategies of attrition. The United States' objective was to attrite men, while the North Vietnamese were attriting time. But the choice of battlefield tactics was working to the advantage of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, not the United States. The Communists were controlling the tempo of the war and thereby limiting their own casualties to an acceptable level. And they were being given the time and safety to augment their forces and make good their losses by the inability and unwillingness of the Americans to prevent the recruitment of new guerrillas from within the South or through infiltration from the North.



"On December 22, 1944, the Armed Propaganda Brigade for the Liberation of Vietnam was established, with 34 soldiers, led by Vo Nguyen Giap (the 'Red Napoleon')."

The enemy had one other very telling fact on its side. No matter how long the Americans chose to remain in Vietnam, the Vietnamese (and by that, the enemy meant themselves) would be there longer. Giap had already learned fifteen years earlier that in a guerrilla struggle, survival is the first step toward victory. Only a belief that the government can outlast the guerrillas will ultimately deter the insurgents, as the Philippine and Malayan governments had shown. The power to survive and outlast the guerrilla was the most crucial challenge of the war, and it was a challenge, not to the American troopers or their government, but to the government of the Republic of Vietnam. In the spring of 1965 it was not doing a very good job.

Source:

The Vietnam Experience, America Takes Over 1965-67
By Edward Doyle, Samuel Lipsman and the editors of the
Boston Publishing Company



Westy in the field with the 2/503 in 1966. L-R: Gen. Westmoreland, Bn CO LTC John Walsh, Capt. Jack Kelley, and SSgt. Nate Brown who died from wounds.



*In Memory of 2/503 Sky
Soldier Extraordinaire*

Olaf Guldmar Hurd Jr.

September 15, 1945 - November 17, 2017

Olaf Guldmar Hurd, Jr., 72, of Martinsville, highly regarded, respected, and loved by many, has completed his journey to a new address in Heaven where he will be with Jesus, his Lord and Savior. He was the son of Olaf G. Hurd, Sr. and Rosa Mae Davis Hurd, born on Waters Street in Martinsville, Virginia, September 15, 1945, and the brother of Charleen Hurd McDaniel. His parents and sister preceded him in passing. He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Jassowyn M. "Jackie" Sale Hurd; his adopted daughter and son-in-law, Faye Hurd Koger and Robert H. Koger, IV; their children, Kelly Marie Koger, Corie Grace Koger, Katie Lynne Koger, and Jon Robert Koger of Simpsonville, South Carolina; his adopted son, Olaf Ryan Hurd, Sr. of Palestine, Texas, daughter-in-law, Olivia Haynie Hurd and their children, Brianna Lynn Hurd, Madison Nicole Hurd, and Olaf Ryan Hurd, Jr. of Tappahannock, Virginia; his sister and brother-in-law, Sandra "Sandi" Hurd Roth and Bud Roth of Rocky Mount, Virginia and an extended family, all of whom he dearly loved.

Olaf was not only a son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, and uncle. He was an athlete and soldier. He participated in various sports nearly all of his life, beginning with Little League Baseball then basketball and football in high school. He continued with wheelchair sports such as archery, basketball, precision javelin, table tennis, weight lifting, and snow skiing after being wounded on February 10, 1967.

He was serving with the HHC/Recon 2nd Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment of the 173d Airborne Brigade in the United States Army defending his beloved country, America, during the Vietnam conflict. He was an avid hunter and marksman, as proven by his many deadly shots from 400 or more yards. His enjoyment of the outdoors was also evidenced in his passion for boating and fishing with his family and friends in the local area of Philpott Lake and various regional lakes.



Ollie

He was a proud graduate of Drewry Mason High School, Ridgeway, Virginia, Class of 1964. His tenacious passion for life and living was contagious to all who knew him or were associated with him. The word "friend," given to him by many, was an honor he cherished. If you wanted or needed a laugh or two or more, merely being in his presence would give them to you. His nickname "Ollie" (pronounced with the long O sound), was given to him by his military comrades. *"Ollie could have let life pass him by but chose to live it to his fullest, typical of a WE TRY HARDER paratrooper."*

In 2010, he was presented the Henry County Outstanding Military Veteran Award in recognition of his distinguished military and community service. In 2012, he was recognized as the 2/503d Sky Soldier of the Year.

He was a member of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Ridgeway, Virginia where he served for many years as an usher and on the children's AWANA (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed – 2 Timothy 2:15) program.

The Hurd family sincerely appreciates all of the well-wishes extended to them, and the many telephone calls, cards, text messages, e-mails, food, visits, and prayers bestowed upon them during the time of Olaf's illness.

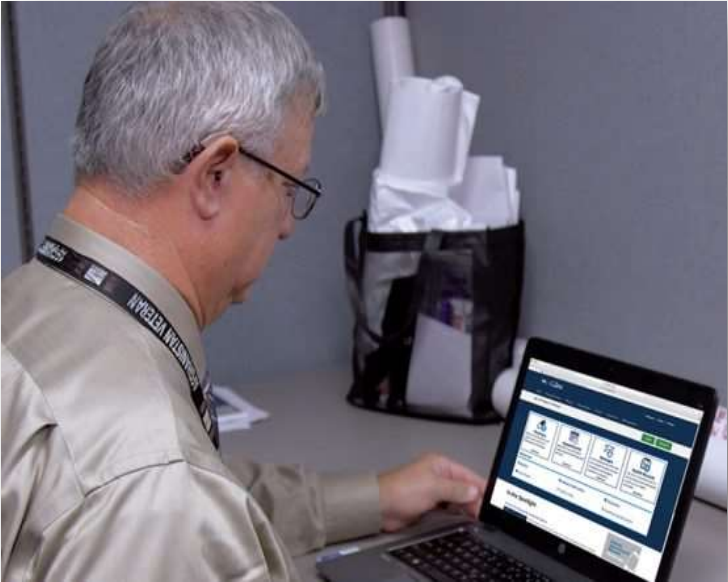
Memorial donations may be made to the following organizations: Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), 801 Eighteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20006-35171; American Red Cross, 1081 Spruce Street, Martinsville, VA 24112; God's Pit Crew, 2499 North Main Street, Danville, Virginia 24540; and Martinsville Henry County S. P. C. A., 132 Joseph Martin Highway, Martinsville, Virginia 24112. To express condolences online, please visit collinsmckestonemartinsville.com



Ollie, soaring with eagles....rest easy brother,
and All the Way!



Online VA scheduling now available through my HealtheVet



You can now manage your primary care and certain specialty care VA appointments online at participating VA facilities. You will need a Premium My HealtheVet Account to use online scheduling. If you do not have a Premium account, please visit My HealtheVet or contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your nearest VA facility.

U.S. Army Veteran G. Paul Moffett, who helped test online scheduling at the VA Tennessee Valley Health-care System in Murfreesboro, TN, says it's about giving Veterans greater control over scheduling their care. *"Rather than making a phone call and playing go fish, now I can [go online and] pick the date that best fits my schedule,"* he says. *"You can use it anytime, anywhere – on whatever Internet-access device you have. I'm excited about it. It's great stuff."*

Currently, online scheduling is available at more than 100 VA facilities and their associated Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VA plans to add more appointment types in the future and is working to make online scheduling available at nearly all VA facilities next year. Check to see if your VA facility offers online scheduling.

Where can I find the online scheduling tool?

If you are eligible to use online scheduling, you will see a "Schedule a VA Appointment" option when you log in to your My HealtheVet Premium Account.

To make an appointment online, you need to be registered as a patient in My HealtheVet and have a Premium Account. To schedule a primary care appointment, you must have had a primary care appointment at **that** facility within the last two years. Contact your facility for information about available specialty care appointments.

What else can I do with the online scheduling tool?

You can:

- Self-schedule primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you have had a primary care appointment in the past two years.
- Request help scheduling primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you receive care.
- Self-schedule or request help scheduling specialty appointments, such as outpatient mental health, optometry and audiology, at participating facilities.
- View or cancel appointments and requests.
- Track the status of appointment requests.
- Send messages about requested appointments.
- Get notifications about appointments.

If your VAMC does not currently participate in online scheduling, please know that VA is working to expand access to additional medical centers. If you need to make an appointment immediately, call the VA facility where you want to receive care. Find your VA health facility's phone number.

Just to summarize, to use VA Online Scheduling today, you will need to:

- Be a current VA patient
- Have a Premium My HealtheVet Account
- Check if your VA facility offers online scheduling at this time
- Have had a primary care appointment at your participating facility within the last two years
- ...and that's it!

Need Help?

If you need help with online scheduling, please dial **1-877-470-5947**. For TTY assistance, dial 711. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. CT.



PFC Charles Hicks on Nightmares



Ready for combat in the 173d Airborne

“People do not want to hear about nightmares. Each time you open up you are exposing vulnerable parts of yourself and it cheapens it, so I do not open up. I only talk generally about my nightmares because they contain my innermost fears and weaknesses.

These feelings are pretty sad. A good deal of my nightmares are about post-Vietnam, that I view with self-failure and self-incompetency...experiences [that] came to a height in my first two years coming home from Vietnam.

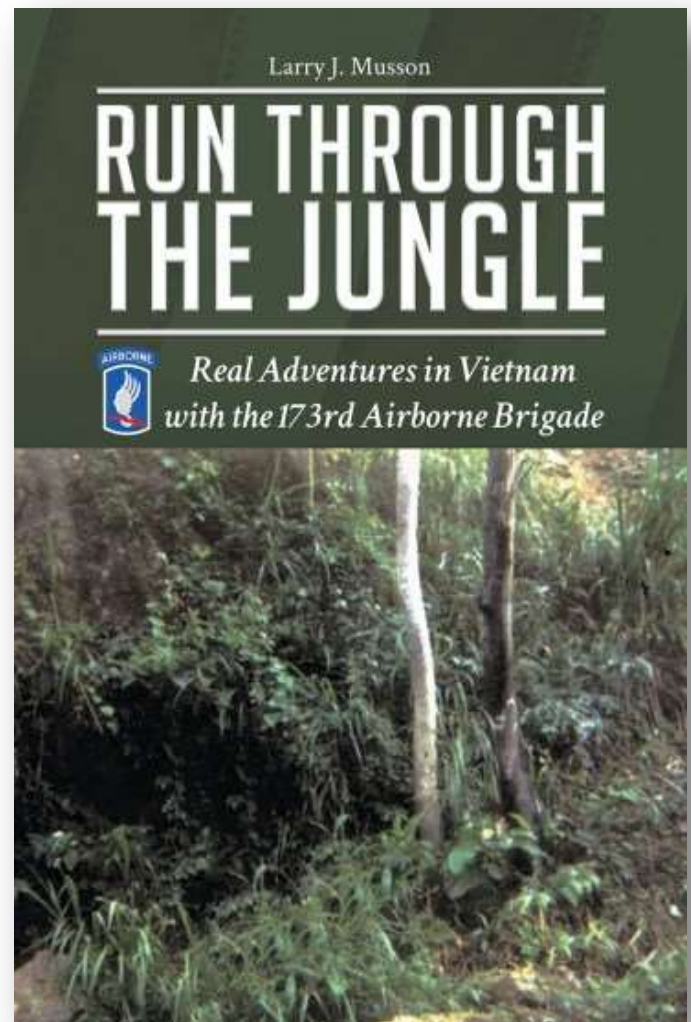
Just a week ago, I broke my foot. I banged my head and arm. All I know is that I was having a night terror. I had to accomplish something. It had to be done. So I flung myself out of bed. I do not want to go to bed because of the night terrors and nightmares.”

~ Interview with Charles Clarence Hicks, Hudson Falls, New York, 11.09.11

*“There’s something in the past.
An issue unaddressed.
A pain that holds you down.
A scar that’s unconfessed.”*

~ Excerpt from *Self Acceptance/Self Love* by Charles Clarence Hicks, 1994

A Sky Soldier’s story....



“An authentic account of combat with an airborne company in the waterlogged rice paddies and demanding jungles of South Vietnam. Share the experiences of fighting men under punishing conditions, extreme temperatures and intense monsoon rains as they search for the enemy in the rugged mountains and teeming lowlands. Relive all the terror, humor, and sadness of one man’s tour of duty with real life action in spectacular stunning detail.” (Web quote)

Source:

<https://books.litfirepublishing.com/product/run-through-the-jungle-real-adventures-in-vietnam-with-the-173rd-airborne-brigade/>

Note: Write a book about your time in combat with the 173d? Email details with a copy of the cover and we’ll include it in a future issue of our newsletter with our compliments. Ed Email to: rto173@att.net





Vietnam Vet Gary Ahle served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade

November 18, 2016

By Mack Payne
Podcast Host



O'Fallon's Gary Ahle served in the United States Army from Aug. 26, 1966 to July 4, 1968, and served a year in the Vietnam War.

O'Fallon, Illinois native Gary Ahle is a Vietnam Veteran who typifies the greatness of the *Vietnam Veteran News*. In this episode we will take a look at his story. It comes from *The Belleville News-Democrat* and is titled: ***Vietnam veteran recalls memories of service in 'a different world'*** and was submitted by Robyn L. Kirsch, rkirsch@bnd.com.

Ahle's story interested the podcast master in several ways. First his was an Army jumper who spent some time with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina same as your humble podcaster. In addition to that he served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. My son served with the same unit in Afghanistan. Ahle was in Vietnam about the same time I was there on my first tour and also spent time in the same areas in the Central Highlands as your podcaster.

Another admirable attribute of this Vietnam Veteran was his attitude toward the obligations citizens owe their country. This is what he said about serving your country: ***"We did what we signed up to do — we followed orders and rarely questioned, only if we thought it wasn't the right way or if we thought people were going to get killed. When you take an oath — you live up to it."***

In her story, Kirsch, tells about how Ahle interrupted his college work after his first two years at Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville and joined the Army. Ahle said this is the reason why: ***"My brother was in during the Korean War. He was a paratrooper, and I looked up to him, and that's what I always wanted to be ... A lot of my best friends were already in, so I figured I should, too."***

After his service in the Army Ahle finished up his college career and earned a degree from SIUE, got married and started a family. His resume' of service to his community includes teaching in multiple O'Fallon District 90 schools for 32 years, serving 23 years as O'Fallon Township assessor, four years as township trustee and is currently the township supervisor.

Gary Ahle of O'Fallon, Illinois truly is an outstanding representative of the great Vietnam Veteran Generation.

Source:

Vietnam Veterans News

<http://vietnamveterannews.com/758-vietnam-vet-gary-ahle-served-with-the-173rd-airborne-brigade/>



Another verse by Robert Service for your momentary entertainment; this one recommended by hootch buddy and well-read good friend Jim Bethea, HHC/2/503, '65/'66.



A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;
 The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune;
 Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
 And watching his luck was his light-o'-love, the lady that's known as Lou.

When out of the night, which was fifty below, and into the din and the glare,
 There stumbled a miner fresh from the creeks, dog-dirty, and loaded for bear.
 He looked like a man with a foot in the grave and scarcely the strength of a louse,
 Yet he tilted a poke of dust on the bar, and he called for drinks for the house.
 There was none could place the stranger's face, though we searched ourselves for a clue;
 But we drank his health, and the last to drink was Dangerous Dan McGrew.

There's men that somehow just grip your eyes, and hold them hard like a spell;
 And such was he, and he looked to me like a man who had lived in hell;
 With a face most hair, and the dreary stare of a dog whose day is done,
 As he watered the green stuff in his glass, and the drops fell one by one.
 Then I got to figgering who he was, and wondering what he'd do,
 And I turned my head — and there watching him was the lady that's known as Lou.

His eyes went rubbering round the room, and he seemed in a kind of daze,
 Till at last that old piano fell in the way of his wandering gaze.
 The rag-time kid was having a drink; there was no one else on the stool,
 So the stranger stumbles across the room, and flops down there like a fool.
 In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
 Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands — my God! but that man could play.

Were you ever out in the Great Alone, when the moon was awful clear,
 And the icy mountains hemmed you in with a silence you most could hear;
 With only the howl of a timber wolf, and you camped there in the cold,
 A half-dead thing in a stark, dead world, clean mad for the muck called gold;
 While high overhead, green, yellow and red, the North Lights swept in bars? —
 Then you've a hunch what the music meant. . . hunger and night and the stars.

And hunger not of the belly kind, that's banished with bacon and beans,
 But the gnawing hunger of lonely men for a home and all that it means;
 For a fireside far from the cares that are, four walls and a roof above;
 But oh! so cramful of cosy joy, and crowned with a woman's love —
 A woman dearer than all the world, and true as Heaven is true —
 (God! how ghastly she looks through her rouge, — the lady that's known as Lou.)

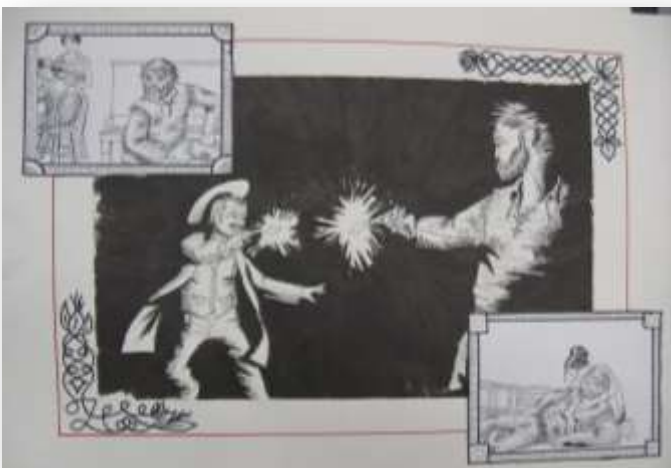
(continued....)



Then on a sudden the music changed, so soft that you scarce could hear;
 But you felt that your life had been looted clean of all that it once held dear;
 That someone had stolen the woman you loved; that her love was a devil's lie;
 That your guts were gone, and the best for you was to crawl away and die.
 'Twas the crowning cry of a heart's despair, and it thrilled you through and through —
 "I guess I'll make it a spread misere", said Dangerous Dan McGrew.

The music almost died away ... then it burst like a pent-up flood;
 And it seemed to say, "Repay, repay," and my eyes were blind with blood.
 The thought came back of an ancient wrong, and it stung like a frozen lash,
 And the lust awoke to kill, to kill ... then the music stopped with a crash,
 And the stranger turned, and his eyes they burned in a most peculiar way;
 In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
 Then his lips went in in a kind of grin, and he spoke, and his voice was calm,
 And "Boys," says he, "you don't know me, and none of you care a damn;
 But I want to state, and my words are straight, and I'll bet my poke they're true,
 That one of you is a hound of hell. . .and that one is Dan McGrew."

Then I ducked my head, and the lights went out, and two guns blazed in the dark,
 And a woman screamed, and the lights went up, and two men lay stiff and stark.
 Pitched on his head, and pumped full of lead, was Dangerous Dan McGrew,
 While the man from the creeks lay clutched to the breast of the lady that's known as Lou.



These are the simple facts of the case, and I guess I ought to know.
 They say that the stranger was crazed with "hooch," and I'm not denying it's so.
 I'm not so wise as the lawyer guys, but strictly between us two —
 The woman that kissed him and — pinched his poke — was the lady that's known as Lou.



Howitzer Fire



Soldiers fire an M777A2 howitzer during Exercise Eagle Strike in Grafenwoehr, Germany, Oct. 26, 2017. The soldiers are paratroopers assigned to Battery C, 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

(Army photo by Staff Sgt. Alexander C. Henninger)



This little Airborne ditty was stolen from 82nd Abn Trooper and good buddy Bob Buffington's *South Florida Trooper* newsletter. Thanks Bob! ATW All American!



Sgt. Morris Back Home To Retire

BY FRED BOST
Of The Times Staff

In 1967, an eight-hour ordeal in the jungles of Vietnam won a Medal of Honor for Charlie Morris.

Wednesday, he proved that you can go home again. Through a special arrangement, he came home to Ft. Bragg and wrapped up 26 years of military service.

In a simple retirement ceremony at the 82nd Airborne Division Museum, Maj. Gen. James J. Lindsay pinned a Legion of Merit medal near the Medal of Honor.

The 49-year-old Morris, jump-qualified since 1961, chose to transfer from his last duty station as an ROTC Instructor at Western Illinois University so that he might serve his last days among paratroopers at Ft. Bragg.

While relaxing at his home before the retirement ceremony, he took a few moments to describe the ordeal which earned him America's highest decoration.

Morris, wounded 20 times on June 29, 1966 is credited with saving the lives of members of his platoon.

A sergeant E-5 at the time, serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, he had been wounded four months earlier in a battle which left his platoon decimated. The platoon had been rebuilt, and he was serving as platoon leader because of a shortage of senior non-coms and officers, he said.

"We had found some obvious signs that humans were near," he said. "I held up the platoon while I took one man with me to make a quiet reconnaissance."

They were too successful, and managed to move right into fortified enemy positions before either side was aware of the other.

"My partner was trailing me by about three or four yards as I stepped out from behind a tree," he said. He didn't see the machine gun tunneled into a moss-grown embankment less than 15 feet away until it opened up on them.

The enemy gunner *"swung too fast and tried to hit both of us at the same time,"* the trooper said, critical of the enemy's performance. As a consequence, Morris, said, his partner only received a flesh wound. Morris was struck in the chest, in the left hand, and the inner right thigh.



MG Lindsay (Left) Pins Medal On Morris
(Staff Photo By DICK BLOUNT)

The soldier said he was on his knees facing the machinegun when he got his vision back about 10 seconds later. He fired with his M-16, then threw a grenade, destroying the enemy gun crew.

"The gun's supporting positions began firing at us. I began returning their fire. Then some fool fired a rocket at us and cut a tree down, so I decided it was time to get us out of there," he said.

His platoon, about 50 yards behind them, had closed up at the sound of the guns, he said. Morris kept at the enemy while his partner moved back to safety, then followed.

For the next eight hours, the platoon beat off five enemy attacks by a force which Morris estimated consisted of between 400 and 600 enemy soldiers. Before help arrived, the platoon lost 13 killed and 26 wounded.

"We could have run for it and broke clear," the noncom explained, ***"but only if we were willing to leave our dead and wounded behind."***

Early in the fight the platoon's medic was killed. Morris picked up his kit and began rendering major first aid in addition to other jobs he was juggling.

(continued....)



The jobs belonged to him, he said, because “my typical soldier was an 18 to 20-year-old draftee who had three or four-months stateside training and a few months training by me. I was 34, maybe a little more mature.”

But Morris said he was doing many things throughout the day – shooting, keeping the company informed by radio of the situation, handling the battle tactics, caring for other wounded soldiers. But he said he doesn’t call it heroism. “Keep in mind,” he said, “I’d spent half my lifetime learning to do all these things.”

“We were badly outnumbered, but the enemy never massed against us,” Morris said, still critical of enemy tactics. “They hit us five different times with about 50 or 75 people at a time. But they never massed together for an assault. If they had, they would have overrun us.”

The enemy apparently heard the sounds of the platoon’s parent company coming to the rescue, Morris said, because they began withdrawing. By that time, he said, he had lost the use of both legs and one arm and couldn’t turn his head to the left. But he said with his peripheral vision to that side he spotted the lead scout in the rescue force.

“The most beautiful sight I think I’ve ever seen in the world – the most beautiful human being – was that muddy, dirty, sweaty black soldier with his badly stained green helmet moving out from that tree.”

After that, things began getting hazy, he said. “I’d been hit in both legs, the arm and the chest. I learned later that I had five bullets in me, plus some 20-odd fragments of grenades and mortars.”

For his actions that day, Morris was presented the Medal of Honor by President Lyndon Johnson in a Washington ceremony in November 1967.

Now the trooper says it’s time to leave service “to make room for somebody coming up who’s probably ten times better than I ever was.”

He plans to settle down in Spring Lake, pursue his education, and putter around the house. “I think I’ve traveled enough,” he said. “I want to stay close to my paratrooper friends.”

It’s all over and a memory now, he says. But he adds,

“If I did one thing right, it was this – I gave a damn about my soldiers.”

[Thanks to friend of the 173d and former army LRRP Frode Steine in Norway, for sending in this archival report about Charlie and the men of A/2/503]



Sergeant Major Charles B. Morris
December 24, 1931 – August 22, 1996

(Above photo provided courtesy of Frode Steine)



President Johnson awards Charlie the Medal of Honor



Excerpt....

Soldiers Train, Provide Christmas Cheer at Operation Toy Drop

By Army Sgt. Nicole Paese, 361st Press Camp HQ

FORT BRAGG, N.C., Dec. 4, 2017 — Hundreds of U.S. Army and foreign airborne troops gathered [here](#) Dec. 1-2 to get in some airborne training and provide Christmas cheer to local children during the 20th annual Operation Toy Drop.



An Army Reserve combat medic providing support for the 20th Annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop watches paratroopers perform airborne operations at Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Bragg, N.C. Dec. 2, 2017. Operation Toy Drop, hosted by the Army Reserve and the Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command, enables soldiers to maintain their airborne readiness and give back to the local community. (Army photo by Staff Sgt. Timothy R. Koster)

The Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop is an annual tradition here. Hosted by the Army Reserve and the Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command, participating soldiers conduct an airborne operation with foreign jumpmasters. During the event, the American soldiers -- who could jump with an unwrapped toy or stuffed animal that would be donated to underprivileged local children -- also had a chance to earn their foreign jump wings.

On Dec. 1, soldiers gathered at Green Ramp at Pope Air Field here from 7-11 a.m. to receive a lottery ticket. Troops with winning tickets received a spot in the airborne operation the following day....Foreign countries participating in this year's event included Canada, Colombia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden.

Climbing Colleagues



"Soldiers navigate wall obstacles during training at Caserma Del Din in Vicenza, Italy, December 4, 2017. The soldiers are paratroopers assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade." (Army photo by Antonio Bedin)

Go Black Knights!



"Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis cheers on the U.S. Army football team during a pep rally at the Pentagon, Dec. 8, 2017." (DoD photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Jette Carr)

Wait a minute! We don't see no stinking football players!!!



Army Black Knights football



First season: 1890
Head coach: Jeff Monken, 4th season, 22-26
Location: West Point, NY
Record: 657-496-51
Bowl record: 4-2
Nat. titles: 3 (1944, 1945, 1946)
Heisman winners: 3
Colors: Black, Gold, Gray
Fight son: On, Brave Old Army Team
Mascot: Army Mules (of course)

The **Army Black Knights football** team represents the United States Military Academy in college football. Army is currently a Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member of the NCAA. The Black Knights currently play home games in Michie Stadium with a capacity of 38,000 at West Point, New York. The Black Knights are coached by Jeff Monken who is in his 3rd season as head coach. Army is a three time national champion, winning the title in 1944, 1945, and 1946.

With the exception of seven seasons (1998–2004) where the team was a member of Conference USA, Army has competed as an independent, meaning that they have no affiliation with any conference. Currently, Army is one of four schools in the FBS that does not belong to any conference; the other three being BYU, Notre Dame, and UMass. However, all four of these schools belong to conferences for all other sports. Army is primarily a member of the Patriot League, BYU is primarily a member of the West Coast Conference, Notre Dame belongs to the Atlantic Coast Conference, and UMass belongs to the Atlantic 10 Conference. Three players from Army have won the Heisman Trophy: Doc Blanchard (1945), Glenn Davis (1946), and Pete Dawkins (1958).

Army's football program began on November 29, 1890, when Navy challenged the cadets to a game of the relatively new sport. Navy defeated Army at West Point that year, but Army avenged the loss in Annapolis the following year. The academies still clash every December in what is traditionally the last regular-season Division I college-football game. The 2016 Army–Navy Game marked Army's first recent win after fourteen consecutive losses to Navy. From 1944 to 1950, the Cadets / Black Knights / the Corps had 57 wins, 3 losses and 4 ties. During this time span, Army won three national championships.¹

Army's football team reached its pinnacle of success during the Second World War under coach Earl Blaik when Army won three consecutive national champion-

ships in 1944, 1945 and 1946, and produced three Heisman trophy winners: Doc Blanchard (1945), Glenn Davis (1946) and Pete Dawkins (1958). Past NFL coaches Vince Lombardi and Bill Parcells were Army assistant coaches early in their careers.

The football team plays its home games at Michie Stadium, where the playing field is named after Earl Blaik. Cadets attendance is mandatory at football games and the Corps stands for the duration of the game. At all home games, one of the four regiments marches onto the field in formation before the team takes the field and leads the crowd in traditional Army cheers.

For many years, Army teams were known as the "Cadets." In the 1940s, several papers called the football team "the Black Knights of the Hudson." From then on, "Cadets" and "Black Knights" were used interchangeably until 1999, when the team was officially nicknamed the Black Knights.

Between the 1998 and 2004 seasons, Army's football program was a member of Conference USA, but starting with the 2005 season Army reverted to its former independent status. Army competes with Navy and Air Force for the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy.

Source:

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

Dick Eckert...Former Captain and Quarterback of the Black Knights Football Team at West Point



1LT Dick Eckert



Dr. Dick Eckert

Richard "Dick" Eckert, M.D., (Col Ret), served with Bravo Company, 2/503d, and a second tour of duty with the 25th Inf., in RVN. Dick passed away May 12, 2010.

Other, but not necessarily all, Sky Soldiers who played for the Black Knights include Tom Blanda (brother of NFL star George Blanda), Jim Koster, and Dick Buckner.



26 March 1997

Following is the article written by Don Dedera in "The Arizona Republic." I do not have an exact date for this, but I believe it was in late April of 1968. My comments follow this article.



Juan Sedillo
U.S. Marine



Ernie Madrid
D/1/503 Sky Soldier

War's Toll Interrupts Spring's Melody in White Mountain Air

by Don Dedera
The Arizona Republic

This is a good season to be male and young and alive in McNary, in the White Mountains of Arizona.

Trout that survived the harsh winter are vulnerable to nymphs cast into the snow-fed streams. Yearling Hereford bulls romp in fields where wild iris stir. The dawns are heralded by tom turkeys calling, and the dusks bring elk to browse the edges of the open green parks.

The air is filled with baseballs, northbound ducks, and the lumber town's incomparable perfume of conifer pitch and mill smoke.

Roads are open to Springerville and Show Low. Schools all around are planning parties. Girls who have been disguised in parkas and mackinaws are appearing downtown in cottons: nymphs to the trout-like boys patrolling McNary streets in their cars.

A great time to be.

"I think this is what makes us feel this loss so deeply," said the Rev. Marcian Bucher, OFM, priest of St. Anthony parish at McNary. "They were so young."

It was Father Marcian's sad duty to bury Ernest Madrid and Juan Sedillo less than three months apart. Ernie was a spec. 4 paratrooper. He was killed in the Tet offensive near the U.S. embassy in Saigon. Johnny was a Marine corporal. He endured the siege of Khe Sanh, then died when he stepped on an enemy mine as his battalion marched away.*

Both were altar boys at St. Anthony's. They were from similar Mexican-American families. Their dads, mill workers. Good athletes, they were both graduates of the Class of '66, McNary High.

There were five boys in that graduating class. McNary now has given two-fifths of the male graduates of 1966 to the war in Vietnam.

"We have gone to the cemetery a block from our church twice, and two times I have had to find the words," said Father Marcian. "That is too many times for a town of this size, a parish of this size. Life must go on, but we are numb.

In their special ways, they were both wonderful kids. Ernie was mischievous but never mean. Johnny was quiet and thoughtful. We wouldn't have had either of them any different. The one thing they had in common was a respect for their elders, a quality pretty rare these days.

It's not my place to make controversial statements, and I'd rather not. I've no patience with the draft evaders and protesters. But I hope and pray that what we are doing and how we are going about it in Vietnam is worth the cost. Because the cost is high."

Now is the season for packing in to the Little Diamond and exchanging brags with buddies over a fire where simmers an oven of beef and beans.

Or for joining the green chain gang sorting the wet boards slabbed off by the screaming saws -- handsome pocket money for the summer nights.

Or a time for stacking slash and fighting fire with the Forest Service. Or for helping on the road crews and maybe saving for college next autumn and thinking seriously about the plans that men must make when they are 20.

{ * Note correction: Juan died as a result of head wounds received from a mortar fragment, April 8, 1968. }

The above article was sent to me by a family friend who wrote to tell me of Juan's death. At the time, I was in my freshman year of college in Virginia.

(continued....)



I grew up with both Juan and Ernie in McNary. They were fine young men, well liked, and from close families that raised their children with much warmth and laughter, from the kinds of families where the word "family" takes its real meaning.

When Juan and I were both just 13, special feelings developed between us. "Puppy love," one might say; and it is true that we were too young then to do anything about how we felt. But we promised each other that when we were older, we would do something about those feelings.

So, in spite of the fact that I moved far away a few months later, in spite of the fact that other romances captured both of us at times during our high school years, somehow the bond held. We stayed in touch with one another; and, ultimately, we kept those promises.

In June of 1967, Juan went to Vietnam and served with the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, 3rd Marine Division until April of 1968, becoming head Battalion Radio Operator. In this position, he was Lt. Col. John F. Mitchell's radio op much of the time.

I mailed him "Care Packages" stuffed with Kool-Aid and cookies, shared the poems and stories I was writing, sent a lock of my hair in a baby-blue ribbon, and a silver St. Christopher medal. He sent me photos, Snoopy cartoons, samples of C-rats, a can opener to use for them, and his Lance Corporal chevron when he was promoted to Corporal.

We wrote, daily it seemed, speaking of our feelings, our hopes, and our dreams. By the end of 1967, he asked me in a letter to be his wife -- my answer was several pages long because I literally wrote "Yes" a thousand times. Out of consideration for our families, it seemed best to wait until his return to the States to formalize our engagement and think about a date.

Early in 1968, we heard the terrible news that we had lost Ernie, who had been Juan's best friend all his life. By then, Juan was enduring the siege of Khe Sanh; and I didn't know what I could say to him ... without Ernie, there would always be an empty place; and words weren't going to fill it.

And then Juan was killed. In five more days, he would have been home.

In his final letter to me, which I received on the same day I got the above article that told me of his death, Juan wrote, *"Just these few lines to say I love you and to let you know that all is well. This will be my last operation as far as going to the field. I guess I am sort of scared, but then who isn't. Tonight, I look at your picture; and I am reassured of your love for me, and you always bring me good luck. I'll let you know how it turned out. God Bless You, and say a prayer for us."*

Barbara Ely Piatt / Source: virtualwall.org

Arlen Bertrand, A/2/503, RVN, Killed in Tragic Accident

CLIFTON, IL — Arlen A. Bertrand, of rural Clifton, died of injuries after he was struck by a truck as he crossed a street in Clifton on Friday, November 17, 2017.

The 71-year-old Bertrand was pronounced dead at Riverside Medical Center at 10:14 p.m. on Friday, according to the Kankakee County Coroner Bob Gessner.

It was reported Arlen was struck in the head by a side door mirror of a truck driven by a Chebanse man, Gessner said. The driver was northbound on Main Street and stopped after Bertrand was hit.

Based upon the driver and witnesses accounts of the accident, no citations were issued, according to the sheriff's report.

He is survived by his special companion Lynn Luehrs of Clifton; two daughters, Lori (Billy) Wicker of Bradley and Haley Bertrand of Branson, MO; three sons, Jerry Vanderburg of Decatur, Michael Deaton of Bradley, and Brandon Davidson of Bourbonnais; one brother, Larry (Lynn) Bertrand of Crossville, TN; five grandchildren, Justine and Axle and Michael, Lillie, and Baeligh; two great grandchildren, Jalyne and Meela Rose; two nephews and one niece.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one daughter, Jaymie Ann Osterhoff.

Arlen proudly served in the 173rd Airborne 2-503 during Vietnam. He was a lifelong farmer on the family homestead.

He was a member and past president of 173rd Airborne Chicago Chapter, belonged to Aroma Park American Legion, and was a drill instructor for F-Troop. He loved his family, antique cars, motorcycles, boats, horses, and his dogs. He was the owner of Bert's Tap in Bourbonnais and Herd House Emporium in Clifton.

Burial was in St. John the Baptist Catholic Cemetery in L'Erable with military graveside rites by F-Troop.

Rest easy Sky Soldier



White House VA Hotline Now Fully Staffed and Operational Around the Clock to Serve Nation's Veterans

November 29, 2017

WASHINGTON — Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that the White House VA Hotline, first launched in June as part of President Donald J. Trump's commitment to reforming VA, is now fully staffed with live agents working to serve Veterans 24-hours a day, 365 days a year.



President Donald J. Trump

The hotline, which became 24-hour operational in mid-October, is now staffed by a team consisting of 90 percent Veterans or employees who have a Veteran family member, and is in response to Veterans' requests to talk to agents who could relate to their experiences.

"The White House VA Hotline provides our nation's Veterans with a direct, dedicated contact line that allows them to interact with highly trained, live agents to answer their needs and concerns," said VA Secretary David J. Shulkin.

"Since the initial launch of the hotline in June, we listened to our Veterans, who indicated that they prefer speaking with other Veterans and Veteran family members, and we adjusted our hiring based on that feedback," added Shulkin.

"We're proud that the hotline is now staffed 24/7 by a team of mostly Veterans or Veteran family members who have direct knowledge of their particular concerns and can use their experience to address them in the best way possible with the resources of the VA. This represents a true win-win for Veterans and their loved ones."

Since 24/7 coverage began in October, the hotline has served more than 10,000 callers.

Hotline agents answer inquiries, provide directory assistance, document concerns about VA care, benefits and services, and expedite the referral and resolution of those concerns. Agents undergo regular updates and training on VA services based on hotline trends and are assisted by newly implemented tracking software to help VA capture and improve its response, referral and resolution processes to best support Veterans.

The hotline can be accessed at **855-948-2311** and is VA's first non-clinical, non-emergency around-the-clock call center. It provides Veterans a supplemental option to report issues if they are not being addressed through VA's normal customer service channels.

The hotline's agents are located at a VA facility in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Agents have access to a multitude of resources and contact information to help Veterans. The hotline also generates real-time reports to VA experts who can help address the specific issues of Veterans as well as make better-informed decisions on where program improvements are needed.

The Hotline:

1-855-948-2311





~ The Passing of a WWII Paratrooper and a Gentleman ~



James “Jungle Jim” Mullaney

1920 ~ 2016

Jim Mullaney was born August 14, 1920 in Louisville, Kentucky. His family consisted of one brother and three sisters. His brother was five years older than him and two of his sisters were older. All are deceased now.



Jim Mullaney

Jim’s brother died in a Japanese prison Camp on February 3, 1945 in Japan. He was on two of the Japanese "Hell Ships" transporting prisoners from Subic Bay to the home islands to prevent their rescue by the advancing American forces. The 503rd was on Corregidor about the time of the Japanese ship sinkings. *“So close and yet so far,”* says Jim.

Jim went to Louisville Male High School and got his first taste of the military in their ROTC. After graduating he joined the army reserve. It was 1939. He was called to active duty in January 1942 - three weeks after Pearl Harbor.

He was sent to Fort Benning (Harmony Church Area) for a refresher course. An officer interviewed anyone who might be interested in the Airborne. After seeing the paratroopers in training there he became more than interested, and wondered if he might be good enough to someday be one of them.

After completing the "refresher course" he received orders to report to Lawson Field for Jump School; Class 18A - April 1942. Jim completed jump school in early May 1942, then proceeded to Fort Bragg where he joined the 503rd Parachute Battalion. There were no regiments then.

A short time later - about two weeks - the 503rd Regiment came into existence. Jim was assigned to "H" Company" and stayed with the Company for the entire war.

On October 10, 1942, he left Bragg and took a train ride to Camp Stoneman in California. After about a week there he and his buddies were taken to San Francisco and boarded a Dutch Ship, manned by Dutch officers with a Japanese crew. They sailed to Panama where they picked up the 501st Battalion and headed west for Australia. *“We saw neither ship nor plane till reaching Brisbane about 32 days later,”* says Jim.

Anchored in the harbor for about a day, they then headed north in the Great Barrier Reef to Cairns, Australia. Upon disembarking, the Australian army took them by trucks about twenty miles south, where they parked alongside a road with dense jungle on each side where they camped, sleeping on the ground that night.

Jim and his fellow paratroopers erected tents and were there for the next several months. *“Strange land - even stranger animals - snakes too - bandicoots - wallabys - kangaroos. And thousands of exotic birds.”* Jim recalls. They spent several months there conducting endless training in ungodly heat and rain. Several people went to the front in New Guinea during this period. In August they were shipped out to Port Moresby.

They prepared for their first combat jump on the north side of the island at Nadzab in the Markham Valley. After the jump, and their first taste of combat, Jim and his buddies returned to Port Moresby for more training and many new replacements.

“We moved around the island - went to the north side - Buna - Gona - Dobadura - and then to Dutch New Guinea and landed on the beaches of Hollandia,” says Jim. They were stationed near Cyclops airfield.

The 503rd PIR conducted patrols almost daily and prepared for the Noemfoor Island jump which they made on July 4, 1944. They spent several months on hellish patrols in the muddy paths of that hellish island.

“On one patrol three ‘H’ Company men were eaten by the Japs. But that’s another story,” Jim says.

The 503rd pretty well conquered the island by late August. They then prepared for the Philippines. They boarded a ship which was part of the largest convoy Jim had ever seen. They landed at Leyte Island but didn’t leave beach, where day and night they had a ringside seat to the Japanese suicide planes sinking their ships offshore.



Jungle Jim, one of our country’s earliest paratroopers

(continued....)



Soon, Jim and his men were alerted to move to Mindoro Island - about ninety miles south of Manila. They landed on the beach at Mindoro in late December, where for the next few weeks they witnessed the largest air battles they ever saw.

The night after Christmas a Japanese cruiser sat offshore lobbing star shells over their dug-in positions. One explosive round hit their area but was a dud. It was thirty-two inches long and eight inches in diameter. *"Lucky it was a dud or I wouldn't be here today,"* quips Jim. Things then calmed down.

They were given replacements – men and weapons - watches – anything they wanted. They knew something very big was in the offing. Even the food improved.

It was a short flight to Manila Bay and Corregidor. Jim and his buddies made the famous combat jump at 8 a.m., February 16, 1945. A fourth jump was called off on Negros Island which had fallen into allied hands. They took a very short barge ride to Negros from Panay.

"I was there until November 1945, and received orders to journey home. After several days on Leyte I boarded a ship called the 'Hugh Rodman' and headed for home sweet home. Got there in early December. God Bless America."

A Few Troopers of the Greatest Generation



At our 173d Lexington reunion in 2012, during the reception and donning their neat 173d jackets, WWII 503rd troopers Ray Basham (L) and Jim Mullaney shake hands. They served together on The Rock in 1945, and are meeting here for the first time. In background 503rd trooper Dick Adams speaks with Mary Lea Quick, Jim's daughter. Sadly, since this reunion all three troopers have taken their final jump.



The WWII boys of the 503rd coming down onto The Rock to do some damage.
(web photo)

Farewell Jungle Jim, job well done, Sir, and All The Way!

~ From Daughter of Trooper Jim Mullaney ~



"We had such a great time. I've attached a picture of dad next to the wonderful poster of the panel discussion. Dad really enjoyed every minute of the reunion. Thanks so much for including him. You guys are truly members of the 'Best Generation' and it was an honor getting to spend time with you." Mary Lea Quick



Dear Mom
Merry Xmas



Donald Giles Waide
Staff Sergeant

November 18, 1945 -- May 7, 1968

Attaching a photo from Christmas morning 50 years ago while on a LRRP mission in the mountains west of Tuy Hoa, 1967. I took this photo of my best buddy and Team Leader, Donald Waide of Clayton, New Mexico trying to say Merry Christmas to his Mom.

Don and I had served together in the 82nd prior to 173d LRRP's. It was Don's last Christmas morning. He was K.I.A. on 5/7/68 with 35 days left in country. A real tragedy--he was one of the best.

Best to you all,
Your friend,

Irv ("Bugs") Moran
173d LRRP, '67/'68



Lest we forget...



WWI Memorial: Service members salute during the National World War I Memorial groundbreaking ceremony at Pershing Park, Washington, D.C., Nov. 9, 2017. Construction of the memorial is expected to be completed in a year. (DoD photo by EJ Hersom)

"Trench Warfare? No thank you sir! The rice paddies, swamps, jungles, rivers, mountain ranges and ancient cities of Vietnam will do us quite nicely."



Doughboy was an informal term for a member of the United States Army or Marine Corps, especially used to refer to members of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I, but initially used in the Mexican-American War of 1846-48.

The term was still in use as of the early 1940s – for instance in the 1942 song "Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland," recorded by Dennis Day, Kenny Baker and Kay Kyser, among others; as well as the 1942 musical film Johnny Doughboy and as a character "Johnny Doughboy" in Military Comics – but was gradually replaced during World War II by "G.I." & "Yank".



JS veteran receives his service medals

Nov 11, 2017



U.S. Army Sgt. Howard Steppe, right, finally received his service medals earned in the Vietnam War during a recent ceremony at the Jersey Shore Veterans of Foreign Wars, from Retired U.S. Army Major Galen Klobe, left. Steppe's wife Betty stands between the veterans. PHOTO PROVIDED

JERSEY SHORE — During a time when a lot of his peers were protesting the Vietnam War, burning draft cards or leaving the United States to avoid the draft, Howard Steppe demonstrated his patriotic duty by enlisting in the U.S. Army and fighting in the swamps and jungles of Central Vietnam.

Steppe, of Jersey Shore, just recently received his service medals — 48 years after he earned them — in a ceremony at the Jersey Shore Veterans of Foreign Wars. The medals were presented to Sgt. Howard Steppe by Retired U.S. Army Major Galen Klobe, himself a Vietnam veteran, who lauded Steppe for his bravery, courage and a job well done.

The medals Steppe received include the Combat Infantry Badge, Parachute Wings, Bronze Star Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with four Bronze Service Stars, Army Good Conduct Medal, the United States Presidential Unit Citation and the Republic of South Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation.

Here's Steppe's story as related during the ceremony.

After enlistment, Steppe completed basic training and advanced infantry training and then volunteered for and completed parachute training. In mid-August 1967, he was assigned to D Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry of the elite 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Republic of South Vietnam.

Only one of 20 soldiers serving in a combat zone actually saw combat. Howard, as a (11B47) light weapons infantryman, was one of these.

His rifle company spent weeks at a time in the field. They had few of the amenities other soldiers in South Vietnam experienced. Very rarely did he or other paratroopers receive a cold beer, a warm shower, a hot meal, a candy bar or a newspaper. They wore the same field uniform for weeks at a time without a change.

With very few breaks, he and his company continually slogged through the jungles of Central Vietnam in search of the enemy. Contacts were always violent and within 40-50 yards. Not once did Howard shirk his duty. He fought in many small and two major enemy engagements including the TET offensive in January 1968. During his service in the field, 487 of his fellow paratroopers were killed in action.

Klobe, of Rauchtown, served as a rifle company commander in the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. Dave Bower of the Lock Haven Veterans Office organized the service which was narrated by Shawn MacMillan.

Reprinted courtesy of
Lana Muthler, Managing Editor

The Express

<http://www.lockhaven.com/news/local-news/2017/11/js-veteran-receives-his-service-medals/>



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Pordenone Parachutes



Soldiers descend to the ground at the Frida drop zone in Pordenone, Italy, Sept. 21, 2017, after jumping from an Air Force C-130 aircraft. The soldiers are paratroopers assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade. (Army photos by Paolo Bovo)

Vietnam Parachutes



Soldiers descend to the ground in Vietnam during refresher jump in 1966. The soldiers are paratroopers assigned to the 2/503rd, 173d Airborne Brigade (Sep) in Bien Hoa, RVN. (Photo by Pat Bowe, HHC/Recon Platoon, 2/503rd Inf.)

The Big White Turkey Visiting the White House Needs a Pardon



In Commander In Chief's Video Message to Global Military on Thanksgiving Day from His Mar-a-Lago Resort in Palm Beach, Florida, he Promised to the Troops....



"...big, beautiful fat tax cuts."



Commander in Chief's Proclamation Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War



A PROCLAMATION

Today, I lead our Nation in somber reflection as we continue the 13-year Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War that began in 2012. We salute our brave Vietnam veterans who, in service to our Nation and in defense of liberty, fought gallantly against the spread of communism and defended the freedom of the Vietnamese people.

Fifty years ago, in 1967, nearly 500,000 American troops served in South Vietnam, along with approximately 850,000 troops of our allies. Today, during Veterans and Military Families Month and as the Federal Government observes Veterans Day, **I am in Vietnam** alongside business and political leaders to advance the interests of America, and to promote peace and stability in this region and around the world. I cherish this opportunity to recall, with humility, the sacrifices our veterans made for our freedom and our Nation's strength.

During this Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, we embrace our responsibility to help our Vietnam veterans and their families heal from the heavy toll of war. We remember the more than 58,000 whose names are memorialized on a black granite wall in our Nation's capital for having borne the heaviest cost of war. We also pay tribute to the brave patriots who suffered as prisoners of war, and we stand steadfast in our commitment not to rest until we account for the 1,253 heroes who have not yet returned to American soil.

To ensure the sacrifices of the 9 million heroes who served during this difficult chapter of our country's history are remembered for generations to come, I signed into law the Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017, designating March 29 of each year as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Throughout this

Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, and every March 29 thereafter, we will honor all those who answered our Nation's call to duty. We vow to never again confuse personal disapproval of war with prejudice against those who honorably wear the uniform of our Armed Forces. With conviction, our Nation pledges our enduring respect, our continuing care, and our everlasting commitment to all Vietnam veterans.

We applaud the thousands of local, State, and national organizations, businesses, and governmental entities that have already partnered with the Federal Government in the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Because of their remarkable leadership and dedication, countless Vietnam veterans and their families have been personally and publicly thanked and honored in ceremonies in towns and cities throughout our country. During my Administration, I promise to continue coordinated efforts to recognize all veterans of the Vietnam War for their service and sacrifice, and to provide them with the heartfelt acknowledgement and gratitude that they and their families so richly deserve.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby confirm the commitment of this Nation to the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, which began on Memorial Day, 2012 and will continue through Veterans Day, 2025. I call upon all Americans to offer each of our Vietnam veterans and their families a thank you on behalf of the Nation, both privately and during public ceremonies and programs across our country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-second.

DONALD J. TRUMP



It's The Military's Finest Airborne



Lest we forget...

Soldier visits outpost named after fallen brother in Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Joe Armas, April 14, 2012



KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- SSG Charlene Navarrette, from Havelock, NC, a flight medic assigned to Co. C, Task Force Lobos, 1st Air Cav Brigade, 1st Cav Div, places a picture on a memorial stone at Combat Outpost Honaker-Miracle April 10. The outpost is named after Navarrette's brother, Spc. Christopher Honaker, and Pfc. Joseph Miracle who were killed in action July 5, 2007 in Afghanistan while assigned to the 173d Brigade Combat Team. (Army photo by SSG Joe Armas) 1st Cav)

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan -- Specialist Christopher Honaker and Pfc. Joseph Miracle were two young troopers assigned to the 173rd Brigade Combat Team when they were killed in action during a combat operation July 5, 2007 in eastern Afghanistan.

As an ode to the ultimate sacrifice that both Soldiers had made, a small outpost was named in their honor in the region where they had died.

Honaker's sister, Staff Sgt. Charlene Navarrette, from Havelock, N.C., had the chance to visit the outpost that is graced with her brother's name April 10.

"It's kind of surreal to actually be here," she said as she walked around the small square-shaped compound for the first time.

Navarrette, a flight medic assigned to Company C, Task Force Lobos, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, said making the trip to this place had been something she had wanted to do for a while now.

"For five years, all I've wanted to do was come and take a knee close to where Chris took his final knee," she added.

Nestled in the Pech Valley with breathtaking scenery, Honaker-Miracle is remotely located in one of the more volatile regions of the country. In the center of the compound lies a memorial that is dedicated to the Soldiers who have given their lives while serving in the Pech.

Navarrette said seeing the memorial for the first time was a moving experience. Controlling her emotions wasn't easy at first.

"It took all I had to not burst into tears at first," she continued. "Being here is very humbling."

Since her brother's death, Navarrette has formed a strong bond with the Soldiers who served alongside him in Afghanistan.

"They're a great group of guys," she said. "Unfortunately, what has bonded us has been tragic."

Navarrette said the support she receives from the troopers of the 173rd is unwavering.

"Charlene is someone I would put down anything for to go and help...no doubt she would do the same for me or any of our brothers in arms," said Sgt. Robert Figueroa, from Torrance, Calif., a combat medic who deployed with Honaker.

"Our bond is something that could only be forged in the chaos and fires of battle, as sad as that might sound," added Figueroa, who was the last person to be by Honaker's side at the time of his death.

Figueroa said that although the brigade endured rough living and fighting conditions during that deployment, Honaker remained positive and was also someone he could rely on.

In total, the 173rd lost a total of 39 Soldiers during the brigade's 2007-2008 deployment.

Navarrette said she also stays in contact with the brigade's other Gold Star family members.

"They understand the pain that I've dealt with for all of this time, so I'm here for all of them as well," she said.

As Navarrette concluded her visit, she took time to reflect on her brother's life and the relationship they had.

"Chris and I were very close and we always looked out for each other," she said. "It (Chris's death) still hurts just as much as it did the first day, but I'm very proud of Chris and the 173rd," Navarrette added.

Navarrette's journey to Honaker-Miracle was a long one, but for herself and her brother's comrades, it was an important part of the healing process.

"This to me is a final step of grieving in most of our lives," said Figueroa. "We all celebrate this time and are thankful for all the parties involved who made this possible."

"I wanted to honor Chris's memory and try to bring closure to all of this," said Navarrette. "This was undoubtedly the best way to do it."



Telegram from Ambassador General Maxwell Taylor to Secretary of State Dean Rusk (National Archives)

Incoming Telegram *Department of State*

TOP SECRET

(Declassified 1/4/78)

1965 APR 14 I M M E D I A T E

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON TO RUEHCR/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO RUHKA/CINCPAC ACTION IMMEDIATE

I HAVE JUST LEARNED BY THE REFERENCE JCS MESSAGE TO CINCPAC THAT THE IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT OF THE 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE TO BIEN HOA-VUNG TAU HAS APPARENTLY BEEN APPROVED. THIS COMES AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE IN VIEW OF THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED IN WASHINGTON THAT WE WOULD EXPERIMENT WITH THE MARINES IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY ROLE BEFORE BRINGING IN OTHER U.S. CONTINGENTS. DURING THIS TEST PERIOD WE WOULD, HOWEVER, MAKE THE NECESSARY LOGISTIC PREPARATIONS FOR SUBSEQUENT U.S. REINFORCEMENTS. THIS DECISION SEEMED SOUND TO ME AT THE TIME AND CONTINUES TO APPEAR SO. I RECOMMEND THAT THIS DEPLOYMENT BE HELD UP UNTIL WE CAN SORT OUT ALL MATTERS RELATING TO IT. TAYLOR

NOTE: ADVANCE COPY PASSED TO WHITE HOUSE, DOD...

DEPLOYMENT

The silvery C-130 off from Naha Air Base, Okinawa at one minute past midnight on the morning of 5 May 1965. Aboard was Brigadier General Ellis W. Williamson and the lead elements of the 173d Airborne Brigade (Separate).

Their flight was yet another first for the Brigade for their destination was Bien Hoa, Vietnam and they were to be the first American Army combat troops committed to this strife-ridden country.



Williamson



Troopers of the 2/503 arrive Bien Hoa AFB, 5 May '65.
(Photo from Col. George Dexter, Bn CMDR, collection)

In two days, utilizing 150 C-130 and eleven C-124 sorties landing every fifteen minutes around the clock, the swift moving Brigade soon had in Vietnam 98 officers and 1,863 enlisted men with supporting equipment, supplies and ammunition.

At Bien Hoa the Brigade minus one infantry battalion took up defensive positions around the strategic air base, while at Vung Tau a battalion task force composed of the 1/503d with engineer and medical attachments secured the area's key airfield.

On 7 May the remainder of the Brigade sailed from Naha Port, Okinawa. Aboard the U.S.S. General Mann were the 3/319th, 173rd Support Battalion, D/16th and elements of Brigade headquarters company and the engineers. By 13 May, all of the Brigades combat and combat support elements plus necessary in-country administrative units had closed in Vietnam.



View of Naha Port, 1965, (web photo)

When the Brigade's status was changed on 5 August to a permanent change of station the dependents were returned to the United States and the remainder of the Brigade's rear detachment on Okinawa closed in with the Brigade.

On 19 June the Vung Tau based task force returned to Bien Hoa after fulfilling its mission of securing, patrolling and neutralizing the threat to the area. ###





1965

The Buildup Begins

United States involvement in South Vietnam increased sharply during 1965. Other Free World Forces joined in the commitment of ground combat troops. Australia, New Zealand and Korea responded with the United States during the year in answer to the challenge of Communist aggression.

The complexion of the war developed from guerrilla warfare and terrorism to large unit actions on the part of the Viet Cong, reinforced by North Vietnamese regular army units. The South Vietnamese Army and the Communists were now engaging in battalion and larger force actions. Guerrilla actions occurred from time to time, and terror still played a prominent part in the Viet Cong strategy.

DEPENDENTS EVACUATED

With the war intensifying, President Johnson ordered immediate evacuation of all U.S. dependents in Vietnam. His concern for their safety was warranted, for two days later the VC blew up the hotel in Qui Nhon that housed American enlisted men. Twenty-three died in the attack and 21 were injured. Fourteen Vietnamese were also injured from the attack.

The Viet Cong also suffered a serious toll in February. A supply ship attempting to smuggle 80 tons of arms and ammunition was sunk at Vung Ro Bay.

By mid-March Air Force and Navy aircraft were striking regularly at Communist targets at North and South Vietnam. March also saw the first ground offensive units from the United States arrive. It was the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines of the 3rd Marine Division.

Little significant ground action took place during the two months of March and April, however, terror attacks on the Americans continued. A car filled with explosives was driven next to the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. When the explosives detonated a few moments later two Americans and 11 Vietnamese lost their lives while 143 others were injured.

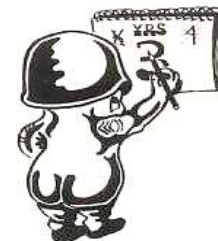
While killing and maiming scores of civilians, the Communists were keeping a steady barrage of propaganda flowing into the international press decrying the American bombing of North Vietnam, claiming hundreds of civilians were becoming casualties from American raids.

173RD AIRBORNE ARRIVES

In May, U.S. forces began to build up in earnest. The Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade was landed in-country and.....



The old U.S. Embassy in Saigon with many of its windows blown out after a car filled with explosives was detonated beside it. Thirteen died in the vicious enemy attack.



[Partial report sent in by a Sky Soldier,
no source document named]



Face of Defense: Airman Builds Medical Relationships in Vietnam

By Jonathan Bell, 78th Air Base Wing
November 28, 2017



Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Cody Butler, a physical therapist and commander of the 78th Medical Group Clinical Medicine Flight, poses in the clinic set up in the government community center in Tam Ky, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, Nov. 30, 2017. Butler was in Vietnam as part of a team seeing patients and building relationships with local physicians during the humanitarian assistance engagement Operation Pacific Angel Vietnam 2017.

(Air Force photo by Jonathan Bell)

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, GA, Dec. 28, 2017 — An Air Force physical therapist stationed here was one of 50 U.S. team members who recently spent more than two weeks in Tam Ky, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, seeing patients and building relationships with local physicians. *“Each day we bused out to a government community center where we provided family health, pediatric care and physical therapy assistance and dental care,”* said Maj. (Dr.) Cody Butler, commander of the 78th Medical Group Clinical Medicine Flight.

“We would start seeing patients at about 7:30 in the morning and ran all day long,” Butler said.

Humanitarian Assistance Engagements

His efforts were part of Operation Pacific Angel Vietnam 2017 -- the last of four humanitarian assistance engagements that made up PACANGEL 17.

The program, which has been going on for a decade now, ensures that the militaries of various countries in the Pacific region are able to work together should a humanitarian assistance need arise. One of Robins Air Force Base’s physicians was given the opportunity to take part in the program, which is typically only attended by members of U.S. Pacific Command.

“I saw between 50 and a hundred patients a day,” Butler said. *“To put that in perspective, I see about 10 to 15 a day while working at Robins.”*

Building Relationships

The overall goal of PACANGEL was to try and build international relationships with the people of Vietnam. In addition to medical care, the team was able to go on a few evening excursions and experience the country outside of the treatment areas.

“It was interesting to see things like memorials and Viet Cong tunnels from their standpoint, where everything was, ‘The war against the Americans,’” Butler said. *“So it was interesting seeing this communist country with statues and pictures of their leader Ho Chi Min everywhere as we’re trying to break the ice with these people.”* Butler said he interacted with some of the local Vietnamese physicians.

In Vietnam, physical therapy is not well utilized – *“people can’t afford it,”* he said. *“So, being able to teach these physicians some techniques and tricks of my trade, and then seeing them try it on patients, it was really neat to see them now have another option of care to provide to their patients.”*

PACANGEL 17 conducted humanitarian assistance engagements in Bogo City and San Remigio, Northern Cebu Province, Philippines; Northern and Western Divisions, Fiji; and Gorkha, Nepal.

Butler said by participating in humanitarian missions such as this, the Air Force is able to reinforce its capabilities to deliver assistance to areas that need it.

“You typically think of the pilots or launching satellites as making the difference,” he said. *“But even us medics, we’re there to soften the hearts of the people and provide a service that only we could offer.”*

Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Cody Butler, a physical therapist and commander of the 78th Medical Group Clinical Medicine Flight, poses with other members of his engagement team in Tam Ky, Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, Nov. 30, 2017. Butler was in Vietnam as part of a team seeing patients and building relationships with local physicians during the humanitarian assistance engagement Operation Pacific Angel Vietnam 2017.



(Air Force photo by Jonathan Bell)

Source: U.S DoD



“VIETNAM is a country, and not a war.” So said good buddy Mike Sturges, A/2/503 many years ago. Sometimes for some of us, it’s difficult to wrap our heads around that fact. Ed



An Airborne Salute to One of the Greatest Generation



On August 18, 1945, three days after World War II officially ended, U.S. Army photographer Sgt. Anthony J. Marchione (1925-1945), 20th Reconnaissance Squadron, was aboard a B-32 aircraft when it took cannon fire, wounding Marchione severely. He later died and was the last American to die in the war. (Robert F. Dorr Collection photo)

“According to government microfilm records, when the two B-32s reached Tokyo, anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on them. With flak bursts exploding at what appeared to be a safe distance, the bombers then came under attack from what the American side identified as Nakajima Ki-44 army fighters, known to the Americans as ‘Tojos’ and by Mitsubishi A6M5 Zero naval fighters, dubbed ‘Zekes’ in U.S. parlance. In fact, the Tojos were probably Kawanishi N1K2 Shiden, or ‘George,’ fighters.

The B-32 pilots initially attempted to communicate – the war was over, they’d been told – but efforts to prevent shooting were to no avail. One of the Zero pilots was the Japanese ace Lt. Saburo Sakai.”

Japanese fighter ace Saburo Sakai (1916-2000) as a petty officer-pilot photographed during fighting in China. Sakai flew in the last fatal air action of the war, although the extent of his involvement remains unknown.

(Photo Wikimedia Commons)



Everybody wants to be a Sky Soldier... even the Marines



“Herculean Jump: Marines jump out of a KC-130J Hercules during air-delivery training at Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 7, 2017. The Marines are assigned to Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.” (Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Carlos Jimenez)

Everybody wants to be a Mari... *Naaahhh*



Sky Soldiers make landing.
2/503 coming ashore in 1965.



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Bad moon rising – how Australians avoided a massacre at Nui Le



Members of "A" Company, 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, cross a paddy field southeast of the Australian task force base at Nui Dat, in 1967.

(Australian War Memorial)

In the battle of Nui Le the North Vietnamese 33rd Regiment came within a whisker of destroying an entire Australian infantry company. If they'd been successful it would have been the greatest loss for the Australian army since World War 2. But what could have been a rout was turned around. In the end six Australian and 18 North Vietnamese lives were lost.

By Greg Dodds

Colonel Nguyen Van Thuong – one of the brightest stars in the North Vietnamese Army – pronounced himself satisfied with their work.

The last of his 1100 men had arrived at Nui Le, 100 kilometres east of Saigon in Thuoc Tuy Province, at 5 a.m. The hike from the base area in the May Tao in South Vietnam had been uneventful but it was heavy going given the load of ammunition and heavy weapons they were carrying. Nevertheless, they got to work immediately digging defences and offensive positions – work that included all the refinements developed by experienced infantry soldiers over years of war: fire lanes, tunnels linking bunkers and a network of spider holes.

People often thought of the Vietnamese enemy as guerillas who got around in black pyjamas. They were wrong. North Vietnam had a professional army made up of well-trained soldiers, organised in standard military units. The appearance of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units on a battlefield usually inspired dread among Allied soldiers and the 33rd Regiment was among the best of the best.

By contrast, the Australian army usually operated in companies of about 120 men. This was more than enough to deal with Viet Cong units but an unexpected encounter with NVA regulars could test their abilities to the limit.

As Thuong surveyed the scene, it was still just short of noon on September 20, 1971.

(continued....)





Trapped, saved. Australians in Vietnam. (David Rowe)

Thuong stood atop a small hill and watched as his soldiers systematically turned the bunkers and trenches into a zone of death for any force that stumbled into the area. Lesser troops would have just gone through the motions, they were the reserve battalion after all, but these people really put their minds and souls into it. As Thuong continued his inspection, he noted a deep creek bed several hundred metres away from the main NVA position. The soldiers had paid no attention to it and, after brief reflection, he endorsed their decision. It could be significant in other contexts but not for the defence of his headquarters.

Trap for the tiger

Thuong's background was in military intelligence and he had built his reputation on an uncanny ability to predict enemy reactions. He had never fought the Australians but had heard they were not as brutish in their behaviour to the local population as the Americans. No matter; he had been ordered by Hanoi to inflict severe damage on the Australians before they withdrew their troops to Australia. He was going to use the 3rd Battalion of his the 33rd Regiment to do just that. Apart from being up to full strength of 400 men, that battalion had deep experience of ambushes in the past.

Of particular interest to him was the total absence of Australian artillery. Several reports from Viet Cong spies had reported that most of the regiment's artillery was being towed off and packed into crates in Vung Tau

before being shipped back to Australia. This would be a fight between infantry alone and Thuong was confident that his own troops would not be found wanting.

Since it would be insane to attack the Australians in their main base at Nui Dat, Thuong had decided to "lure the tiger from the mountain" and kill it on ground of his choosing. In other words, he had ordered his 3rd Battalion to prepare a major ambush just off Route 2. These days, Route 2 is a major north-south highway in Vietnam. Then it was more of a goat track. He would stage a serious incident on Route 2 near Ngai Giao and then, when the Australians sent a reaction force (likely to be a company of soldiers in armoured personnel carriers), he would annihilate them in an even bigger ambush. He had done this successfully to US and South Vietnamese forces dozens of times. He could not see why this wouldn't work with the Australians.



Deep sense of unease

About five kilometres away, Colonel Jim Hughes, commander of 4 RAR/NZ, sat on Courtenay Hill, just off Route 2, and about 10 kilometres from the Australian HQ at Nui Dat, and wondered.

Around him, his support and administration companies sat in their well-prepared bunkers and trenches; the place was better defended than even Nui Dat but he was haunted by a deep personal unease. There was little more than one month to go before his battalion withdrew from Nui Dat back to Australia, yet he was in the very north of Phuoc Tuy patrolling for "enemy activity". There had been brief sightings of lights in the deep jungle to the East and isolated gunshots.

(continued....)



There were also "unofficial" Special Air Service reports of large and recent NVA tracks (boot prints by the hundreds) through the jungle heading towards Route 2 but personal checks with intelligence officers and his own staff had drawn a blank. Clearly nothing was being kept from him deliberately but he still felt ill at ease.

and a troop of armoured personnel carriers. It was all standard stuff but he still had that feeling of unease that he had missed something. He ordered each company to consolidate and patrol in company groups only and then settled down to wait.

He didn't have to wait long.



South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu presents a gift to the Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (ANZAC), Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hughes, aboard HMAS Sydney prior to the unit's departure from Vietnam for Australia. December 16, 1971.
(Australian Army Public Relations Picture)

Australian infantry fought in companies of about 120 soldiers. Hughes had three companies at his disposal. He had C Company patrolling to the west of Route 2 in real "tiger country", and he had therefore given them three guns from the artillery battery to support them. D Company was on the east side of Route 2 and should have had the easier time; the jungle there was dense but appeared to be largely unoccupied. B Company was to the south near Binh Ba, with the other three guns



(continued....)





Enemy weapons, ranging from an assassin grenade to a 107-millimetre rocket with a range of 15,000 metres, are inspected at the 1st Australian Task Force, Nui Dat, by Private Des Morris, of Bogan Gate, NSW (left), and Corporal Jeff Millhouse, of Campbelltown, SA. The captured rockets and grenades were presented to the Australians by American Army Explosive Ordnance Demolition experts. August, 1971. (Photographer Unknown)

An unwise move

The first step of the tiger lure came at about midnight when NVA soldiers attacked the hamlet of Ngai Giao. This was occupied by mainly Vietnamese farmers but quick thinking by the village-militia commander turned it into an expensive fiasco for the attackers. The second attempted lure came not long after. The following morning, a troop of Australian armoured vehicles returning from a supply run to Courtenay Hill was ambushed by an NVA squad. Fortunately for the Australians, a rocket grenade failed to go off when it hit the first vehicle and the small convoy just continued on its way to Nui Dat.

At this point, Colonel Thuong must have been more than a bit annoyed. His troops had staged two serious incidents that should have had an Australian reaction force barrelling out of Nui Dat, heading up Route 2 and right into his ambush. But the Viet Cong spies around the Australian base reported no activity. It was as though the Australians were all asleep. There was no particular animus towards the Australians among the

people of Phuoc Tuy Province. But there was the real fear of an American B-52 bomber strike; unusually, Thuong's entire regiment was concentrated in one spot and a single bombing run could kill them all. No, he would not take that chance, so he ordered the 3rd Battalion to lift the ambush and the entire regiment would return to their base area in the May Tao Mountains.

Mid-morning of September 21, D Company discovered the wide tracks left by the 33 Regiment as it had moved to its ambush positions two nights earlier. Unwisely, it decided to follow the tracks. Thirty minutes later, it exchanged fire with the security elements of 33rd Regiment's headquarters. The battle of Nui Le had begun.

Caught in the kill zone

The initial NVA reaction was aggressive but relatively light. Their main purpose was to defend their regimental headquarters against direct attack. The Australians pulled back to a position from where they could resupply and evacuated their wounded. But what the Australians did next must have struck the Vietnamese as insane. Instead of withdrawing down their path of approach and getting out of trouble, they headed off on a bearing that may have been intended to find a flank but actually took them into the killing zone prepared by Thuong's 2nd Battalion the day before. And, unlike the surprised elements of the NVA security force encountered first by D Company, the troops of 2nd Battalion were alert and waiting for them.

About 30 minutes into their new course, the soldiers of D Company were hit with a wall of fire as Thuong's 2nd Battalion opened up at point blank range. Because they had held fire until the last moment, they had most of the company pinned down and unable to manoeuvre. The Australians could not fight their way out of this one and would have to be rescued.

The Task Force Commander ordered B Company mounted in APCs to assist them but a highly effective NVA mortar barrage put paid to that idea. Next the Australian Task Force Commander called on the US Airforce to help. The various items on their menu may have thrilled the Allied audience but did not concern the NVA very much. The thumping of the NVA's massive 12.7 heavy machine guns reminded the American pilots of what awaited them if they flew too low.

(continued....)



Whatever impact the napalm strike may have had on the rest of the regiment, it did not lift the crushing pressure on D Company one iota. But when the aircraft returned to their base, D Company received a report that the pilots had seen NVA soldiers pouring out of the rear of the bunker system. An aggressive company attack now would see D Company storm an almost empty bunker system and break free of the NVA that was slowly crushing them.

Unfortunately for the Australians, this was an NVA "false flight" strategy – which deliberately sent soldiers running from the scene of an attack, to mislead aerial observation – and when D Company went to attack, it faced the full and undiminished firepower of the entrenched NVA battalion. Four dead and a dozen wounded Australians later, the attack was abandoned and the exhausted Australians hunkered down in an area the size of an average Australian backyard.



Darkness began to fall.

"I thought I'd be dead in five minutes."

At some point in the afternoon, while waiting out the airstrikes, Colonel Thuong devised a plan that would destroy the entrapped D Company at no great risk to his own soldiers. He had the Australian Company just where he wanted them (surrounded and with no

chance of relief) and now there was nothing they could do to save themselves. When the sun came up the next morning, the 33rd Regiment would be back in its base area in the May Tao Mountains. Only the 120 or so dead bodies of D Company's soldiers would show that there had even been a battle here.

Thuong called the battlefield director and explained his plan, and the thinking behind it. This largely rested on the existence of the creek bed in front of the NVA battalion position. D Company was pinned down between the entrenched 2nd Battalion and the creek bed. If he could get enough soldiers into the creek bed, they could assault D Company from the rear and it would all be over in a few minutes.

In the words of a Digger in the rear section of D Company, ***"I could only see two other blokes from my section and they both had just SLRs [self-loading rifles]. We were not even going to delay those blokes in the creek bed. They'd cut through us like a hot knife through butter. For the first time in Vietnam, I thought I'd be dead in five minutes."***

Fortunately for him he was wrong. Although salvation came from an unlikely source.

The attached artillery officer, lying on his face in the rapidly gathering gloom of the jungle, did the trigonometry in his head and then whispered some coordinates into the radio handpiece. The message was flicked to the three Australian artillery guns to the west of Courtenay Hill. Theoretically they were just out of range but the gunners had a go anyway. A minute after his radio message, the distant stuttering of guns to the west told him the shells were on their way. He held his breath – where would the shells land and would they be in time?

The unsung hero

Well, they were on time and right on target and they gave Colonel Thuong cause to reconsider. Accurate Australian artillery fire and the rapidly falling light had weakened his strong hand; the lives of his men were not worth the risk. That Viet Cong intelligence was wrong was bad enough but how wrong was it?....

(continued....)



....There could be another 30 guns or so waiting patiently for the whistle blast that would get his soldiers to attack. His soldiers could be slaughtered by a blizzard of white-hot shrapnel. He just didn't know. He may, too, have reflected that while victory was almost certain, it was going to cost him; the soldiers of 4 RAR were not going down without a savage fight. Possessed by those ideas, Thuong made the most fateful decision of the day; shortly thereafter his assault teams were glimpsed going back out of the creek bed. By the next morning, the 33rd Regiment had disappeared. The battle of Nui Le was over.

The next day there were all sorts of visits to the battlefield by Australian and American generals (once it was certain that all of 33rd Regiment had really gone). Australian Brigadier Bruce McDonald murmured that the North Vietnamese advance at Nui Le was "*politically motivated*" (the Vietnamese presidential elections were a couple of weeks away) – as if this excused his staff and himself from inaccurate prediction and analysis. It was a view that suited his headquarters staff, particularly the intelligence officers, down to the ground. The political "*explanation*" survives in the final chapters of the official history published in 2014.

Several weeks later, the medals turned up with the rations, so to speak. Jim Hughes got a DSO that was a standard award for battalion commanders in Vietnam and the Commander of D Company received a Military Cross for enduring what must have been the worst afternoon of his life. And as for the artillery officer whose extraordinary skill and coolness kept D Company alive and well? He got nothing, nothing at all.

Postscript

A few weeks after the battle, I took an interrogation team to speak to a badly wounded North Vietnamese soldier, Sergeant Kot, from 33 Regiment who had been captured after an attack on a US Army position in Long Khanh Province. We hoped to get some information from him on what had happened at Nui Le.

It turned out we had the wrong man. As we made tracks back to base, I commented to one of our South Vietnamese corporals that I'd found one aspect of Sergeant Kot's behaviour quite odd: he kept staring at me. Staring at people is bad manners in Vietnam. It didn't seem to me to be right.

"I wouldn't worry about it, Sir," replied the corporal. "It's probably because you're the first one of you people that he's seen close up who's been alive." For some reason, the other Vietnamese in our group all thought this was hilarious.

"Greg Dodds is a former Foreign Affairs and Trade official. He was a Duntroon graduate and a member of the Australian intelligence staff at Nui Dat in 1971. The above is an extract from a draft book on the battle of Nui Le."

[Sent in by a RAR trooper. Ed]

Major General Bruce Alexander McDonald

Major General Bruce Alexander McDonald, AO, DSO, OBE, MC (23 March 1925 – 23 March 1993) was a senior officer in the Australian Army, seeing service in the Second World War, the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation and the Vietnam War.

Early life and education: McDonald was born in Geelong, Victoria, on 23 March 1925, the son of Angus Alexander and Olive (née Penny) McDonald.

Military career: McDonald graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in December 1944 and was posted to the 2/5th Battalion. He served in the later stages of the Second World War and was awarded a Military Cross for bravery and leadership while commanding a platoon during heavy fighting with the Japanese at Ulupu in New Guinea in July 1945, in which he was wounded.

Following the war: McDonald served in a number of staff and regimental appointments. From 1963 to 1966 he commanded the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), including operations in West Malaysia in 1964 and in Borneo in 1965 during the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation, for which he was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. During this period 3 RAR took part in the top secret Operation Claret, executing a number of cross border actions including several highly successful ambushes against Indonesian forces.

From early 1971 McDonald commanded the 1st Australian Task Force in South Vietnam until its withdrawal in early 1972, leading the formation during counter-insurgency operations against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. For this service he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. He commanded the 1st Division in Queensland from 1975 to 1977, and later served as General Officer Commanding Training Command. McDonald was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1979.

Death: McDonald died in Brisbane, Queensland, on 23 March 1993. He was buried on 26 March 1993 in Pinnaroo cemetery, Brisbane.





Reunions of the Airborne Kind ~ 2018



82 Airborne Hilton Head Weekend, Hilton Head, SC, February 22-25, 2018. Contact www.82ndairborneassociation.org/phone/events.html



11th Airborne Division Association Mid-Atlantic Chapter, 11th Air Assault Division & 187th Airborne RCT, Myrtle Beach, SC, February 25-28, 2018. Contact Joseph Cole 502-641-2631, j1057cole@aol.com (Dates also listed as February 24- 28)



101st Airborne Division 50 Year Anniversary for First Adopted Unit A (ABU) 1st Battalion, 327th Regiment, 1st Brigade, San Mateo, CA, March 22-25, 2018. Contact Linda Patterson artavia101@earthlink.net



A Company 2/327 Vietnam Veterans 2018 Gathering, Williamsburg, VA, April 26-28, 2018. Contact Dennis Sheridan, 817-504-1750



2018 Currahee Reunion at Fort Benning, GA, and the **2018 506th Association Reunion**, Columbus, GA, May 16-19, 2018. Contact: 706-660-1000



82nd Airborne All American Week 2018, Fort Bragg, NC, May 21-24, 2018. Contact www.82ndairborneassociation.org/phone/events.html



173d Airborne Brigade 2018 Reunion, Alexandria, Virginia, May 23-27, 2018, contact www.skysoldier.net/2018-Reunion-Registration



20th Annual Currahee Reunion, Tunica, MS, June 4-7, 2018, contact Jerry Berry at 406-291-7678 or jerryberry@currahee.org



101st and 2nd 502 Reunion, Chicago, IL, August 15-19, 2018. Contact www.2nd502.org/index.php?page=reunioninfo



101st Abn Div 2nd/501st E Co, Recon, Mortars & HQ (Vietnam), Wilmington, NC, September 20-23, 2018. Contact James Hill 704-310-1800, tomnbonnie@bellsouth.net

NOTE: If you are aware of any upcoming "Airborne" or attached unit reunions, please email complete details to rt0173@att.net for inclusion in our newsletter.

Airborne...All The Way!

Just Some of the Planned Sites to be Visited at This Year's 173d Airborne Brigade Association Reunion in Arlington/DC



Arlington National Cemetery Wreath Laying



Night tour of DC Monuments



Army Heritage and Education Center



Bull Run Battlefield



Vietnam Wall & Wreath Laying



2/503 PARATROOPERS



"Personally, I wouldn't tug on their cape." Ed



*"And when you hit the ground,
the first thing you wanna do is,
do it again."*

A 60's Vintage Paratrooper

"Parachute Line: Soldiers jump from an Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft at Juliet drop zone during training in Pordenone, Italy Dec. 12, 2017. The soldiers are paratroopers assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, which is the Army Contingency Response Force in Europe." (Army photo by Paolo Bovo)





How Some of Our 2/503 Troopers Spent Their 2017 Veteran's Day



Lots of Vets enjoyed their Veteran's Day this year with family during backyard BBQ's, while others may have visited memorials to their fallen buddies. Some troopers may have attended exciting parades where the civilians watched the soldiers, sailors, Marines, Air Force and Coast Guard peoples march by, or simply spent a quiet day at home in reflection. Here is what some of our 2/503 buddies did this year:

~ Happy Veteran's Day ~



Here's what Veteran's Day means to me, and it's not all happy.

It's not a day off. It's a day of reflection. First, I think of my "men" in Vietnam and all those since who never got past their teenage years and never made it home to their loved ones. How lucky are we that did? How sad for them who didn't. Memorial Day isn't the only day to honor the fallen for me. It's every day. No man forgotten or left behind.

Second, I reflect on that very special "band of brothers", my West Point classmates. We were trained to lead in combat and we shared West Point and combat experiences, making us closer than any other band of brothers could be. Only 1-2 years out of the Point and into combat, many having horrendous experiences. We didn't know much about each other's experiences until 30 years later. That's how it is with Warriors. They do it but don't talk about it. A band of nearly 600 brothers, many gone, but closer than many marriages.

Thirdly, I reflect on those who brought the war home with them. We didn't know about or understand PTSD when we came home from Vietnam. War was something men did and left behind when they came home. That changed with Vietnam. It took me almost 30 years to understand that PTSD was for real and those with it needed help. "NO MAN LEFT BEHIND". That's the Warriors' mantra. That includes PTSD and now Traumatic Brain Injuries, TBI, for the younger vets. Those afflicted need help that they can't get in a clinic or from someone who doesn't understand. I've talked to many Wounded Warriors and I know they want help but need guidance from someone who knows what they have been through. They long for spiritual help but aren't sure where to find it. Some blame God for what they have been through but know that God holds the answers they need to get on with their lives. That's why I am dedicating the rest of my useful life to Veteran Angels, a foundation that is forming to serve these veterans and to answer God's calling to me.

Someone has to show these men the way home. Veteran Angels is coming. We are in for incorporation. When we have that we will apply for charitable organization status. Meantime we are working on a web site, lining up appropriate speakers and identifying Veterans who would like to attend a 3 or 4 day retreat to find their way to spiritual healing. Our first retreat should be early next year.

Please like and follow Veteran Angels on Facebook for updates. Someone cares. NO MAN LEFT BEHIND.

And that, my friends, is what Veterans Day means to me. Thanks.

Tom Abraham
C/2/503

(Veteran's Day continued....)



~ Vets Day With His Favorite Lass ~

On Veterans Day, my wife and I went to Denny's for a free to vets, build your own Grand Slam. For lunch we went to The Olive Garden and I had a free entree. I opted for soup and spaghetti & meat sauce.

After lunch my daughter and I went to watch the Syracuse vs Wake Forrest football game. SU should have not shown up as they were beat up 64 - 43. Their defense fell apart in the fourth quarter. But all in all it was a good day.

Attached is a photo of myself and my sweet granddaughter, age 4, sitting on my Harley-Davidson Trike.



Airborne, All the Way!!!!!!!

**Ron Amyot
HHC, 2/503
173d ABN Bde (Separate)
Viet Nam 1965-66**

~ Veteran's Day in Elmer City ~

Can ya believe we've lived this long?



Good buddy, Jimbo

Veterans Day came and went without event at our house...almost every day is Veteran's Day on our block in good old Elmer City. EC is a border town situated on the Colville Confederated Tribe Reservation in central Washington State.

Across the street from our house is Danny Miller's place where he lives with Bucky, Scout and Tucker his three dogs and constant companions. Danny's backyard overlooks the Columbia River. It's a beautiful spot for quiet reflection - "roll on Columbia". Beside the big Elm tree he has erected a monument to veterans, three kneeling soldiers with an assortment of Vietnam memorabilia.

Danny is an alumnus of the battle of Hill 875. He flew choppers for the Cowboys and was shot down on 875 while flying support missions.

Soy Red Thunder lives down the road from us. He was an Army man in Vietnam -- there are several other Colville tribal members living in EC who are veterans of other wars.

The Tribe has a solemn reverence for its Veterans. They are viewed as warriors in the true sense of the word and are celebrated and respected as such. Being a war veteran is a special thing here. We are special people and our sacrifices are recognized.

ATW Herd guys,

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

~ American Flags & Appreciation ~

Following is a recount of how us Veterans spent our Veterans Day in Sisters, OR.

Monday 11-06-17 VFW/
American Legion put out our
105 American Flags throughout
our city.

Wednesday 11-08-17
Attended Sisters Christian
Academy - Veterans
Appreciation Day Presentation

Wednesday 11-08-17
Attended Sisters Elementary
School - Veterans Appreciation Day
Presentation

Thursday 11-09-17 Attended Sisters High School -
Veterans Appreciation Day Presentation

Thursday 11-09-17 Attended Sisters Middle School -
Veterans Appreciation Day Presentation



**Recon Trooper Pat Bowe
ready to blast**

(Veteran's Day continued....)



Monday 11-13-17 VFW/American Legion picked up 105 American Flags from previous out-lay.

We have a truly patriotic community in our small town of Sisters, OR. We also just completed our Christmas Parade on 11-25-17 of which our VFW/American Legion Float was chosen to lead the parade, another great turn out from Veterans and Community. We are blessed to have this type of support.

God Bless America.

Pat Bowe

2/503 HHQ Recon, '66-'67

Stated at Sisters, OR High School during the Veteran's Appreciation Breakfast, "*These are just such good kids,*" said Harvey Hall, a 32.5-year veteran of the U.S. Army and National Guard, who joined the military in 1968 and became a member of the famous Sky Soldiers, the 173d Airborne, before shipping out to Vietnam. "*The reason I come is because they put so much time and effort into it. In their hearts they really care, and it is appreciated.*"



Veterans Lynn Johnston, Betsy Leighty-Johnson and Jim Newman salute the flag as students sing in Sisters, Oregon.

(Photo by Jim Cornelius)

~ My Veteran's Day Celebration ~

This is Conley. You wanted to know about my Veteran's Day....My flame burns blue.

The speech (below) by Nguyen was my Veteran's Day celebration. It came to me from a Vietnam Vet who was awarded the Silver Star and far as I know never set foot in Nam. But, he planted a MIG for Jane...I celebrate that.

Patton said we shouldn't mourn for the men that died fighting for our country; we should celebrate that such men lived? *All the Way, Every day!*

Tom Conley

HHC/C/2/503, '65/'66



RTO Tom at Zinn

Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Speech

"On Saturday, July 24th, the town of Prescott Valley, AZ, hosted a Freedom Rally. Quang Nguyen was asked to speak on his experience of coming to America and what it means. He spoke the following in dedication to all Vietnam Veterans. "

"35 years ago, if you were to tell me that I am going to stand up here speaking to a couple thousand patriots, in English, I'd laugh at you. Man, every morning I wake up thanking God for putting me and my family in the greatest country on earth. I just want you all to know that the American dream does exist and I am living the American dream. I was asked to speak to you about my experience as a first generation Vietnamese-American, but I'd rather speak to you as an American.



Quang Nguyen

If you hadn't noticed, I am not white and I feel pretty comfortable with my people. I am a proud U.S citizen and here is my proof. It took me 8 years to get it, waiting in endless lines, but I got it, and I am very proud of it.

I still remember the images of the Tet offensive in 1968, I was six years old. Now you might want to question how a 6-year-old boy could remember anything. Trust me, those images can never be erased. I can't even imagine what it was like for young American soldiers, 10,000 miles away from home, fighting on my behalf.

35 years ago, I left South Vietnam for political asylum. The war had ended. At the age of 13, I left with the understanding that I may or may not ever get to see my siblings or parents again.

(Veteran's Day continued....)



I was one of the first lucky 100,000 Vietnamese allowed to come to the U.S. Somehow, my family and I were reunited 5 months later, amazingly, in California. It was a miracle from God.

If you haven't heard lately that this is the greatest country on earth, I am telling you that right now. It was the freedom and the opportunities presented to me that put me here with all of you tonight. I also remember the barriers that I had to overcome every step of the way. My high school counselor told me that I cannot make it to college due to my poor communication skills. I proved him wrong. I finished college. You see, all you have to do is to give this little boy an opportunity and encourage him to take and run with it. Well, I took the opportunity and here I am.

This person standing tonight in front of you could not exist under a socialist/communist environment. By the way, if you think socialism is the way to go, I am sure many people here will chip in to get you a one-way ticket out of here. And if you didn't know, the only difference between socialism and communism is an AK-47 aimed at your head. That was my experience.

In 1982, I stood with a thousand new immigrants, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and listening to the National Anthem for the first time as an American. To this day, I can't remember anything sweeter and more patriotic than that moment in my life.

Fast forwarding, somehow I finished high school, finished college, and like any other goofball 21 year old kid, I was having a great time with my life. I had a nice job and a nice apartment in Southern California. In some way and somehow, I had forgotten how I got here and why I was here.

One day I was at a gas station, I saw a veteran pumping gas on the other side of the island. I don't know what made me do it, but I walked over and asked if he had served in Vietnam. He smiled and said yes. I shook and held his hand. This grown man's eyes began to well up. I walked away as fast as I could and at that very moment, I was emotionally rocked. This was a profound moment in my life. I knew something had to change in my life. It was time for me to learn how to be a good citizen. It was time for me to give back.

You see, America is not just a place on the map, it isn't just a physical location. It is an ideal, a concept. And if you are an American, you must understand the concept, you must accept this concept, and most importantly, you have to fight and defend this concept. This is about Freedom and not free stuff. And that is why I am standing up here.

Brothers and sisters, to be a real American, the very least you must do is to learn English and understand it well. In my humble opinion, you cannot be a faithful

patriotic citizen if you can't speak the language of the country you live in. Take this document of 46 pages - last I looked on the Internet, there wasn't a Vietnamese translation of the U.S. Constitution. It took me a long time to get to the point of being able to converse and until this day, I still struggle to come up with the right words. It's not easy, but if it's too easy, it's not worth doing.

Before I knew this 46-page document, I learned of the 500,000 Americans who fought for this little boy. I learned of the 58,000 names inscribed on the black wall at the Vietnam Memorial. You are my heroes. You are my founders.

At this time, I would like to ask all the Vietnam veterans to please stand. I thank you for my life. I thank you for your sacrifices, and I thank you for giving me the freedom and liberty I have today. I now ask all veterans, firefighters, and police officers, to please stand. On behalf of all first generation immigrants, I thank you for your services and may God bless you all."

Quang Nguyen

Creative Director/Founder, Caddis Advertising, LLC

***"God Bless America.
One Flag, One Language, One Nation
Under God.
For those who understand, no
explanation is needed.
For those who do not understand,
no explanation is possible."***

~ With His Kids in School ~

For the past five years I have attended Veteran's Day presentations in my grandchildren's schools, both elementary and middle. They do a fantastic job educating the kids and instilling respect and gratitude for those that honorably served their country.



There is no place I would rather be.

Kathy, & Roger Dick, C/2/503, '67/'68

(Veteran's Day continued....)



~ Veterans Day 2017 ~

Thank you for the opportunity to be included in our 2nd Battalion Newsletter which is enjoyed by all of us. Here is a brief accounting of what I did on Veterans Day 2017.



Jim "Top" Dresser

I attended the South Carolina Chapter 30, 173d Airborne Brigade Association monthly meeting at Fatz Restaurant in Columbia, South Carolina on Saturday 11 November 2017. We had a very productive meeting and included several discussions regarding Veterans Day. A couple members discussed knowing Chaplain Charles Watters and the day he was killed in action some 50 years ago. Everyone agreed our meeting would be in honor of Chaplain Watters - a recipient of the Medal of Honor (posthumously). It was truly an emotional meeting.

After the meeting I left and headed north toward Lillington, North Carolina, near Fort Bragg, to visit with several of my kids, grandkids and one of my two great-granddaughters (who is almost 7 years old and is taking Karate lessons and is very good at it, I might add).

During the four-day visitation, we went out one evening to a sports bar called Bubba's - with no less than 100 large TV's.

Some 52 years ago, I served with Alpha and HHC Companies, and I proudly served under Captain Carmen J. Cavezza (Retired LTG) – and Lieutenant LTC John J. Walsh, Jr. (Retired COL). I am still in touch with several of my men from the Weapons Platoon of which I was the Platoon Leader. I was honored to have a tip-top group of men who were the very best 81mm mortar men. I'd go back to combat again if it were necessary with each and every one of them. LTG Cavezza and I are still in contact with one another.



Carmen



John

Included are a few pictures of my 20 years in the Army.

Jim "Top" Dresser
A/HHC/2/503, '65/'66



"This was during my basic training at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas (Bivouac with Basic Training buddies. Left to right: 'PeeWee' (me), Duvall and Roy Lee Campbell)"



During my tour of duty in Wurtzburg, Germany.



My tour of duty in Republic of Vietnam.

(Veteran's Day continued....)



~ Military History Lessons ~

I was assigned to the 2-503d in May of 1969. I had just completed the Infantry Officers Career Course at Ft Benning and had the rank of Captain. LTC Zimmerman, the Bn CO, had just completed the Command and General Staff College. At that time, they were teaching a stand-alone Brigade strategy at both Courses and Zimmerman asked if I'd like to try it out at company level to which I agreed. So, I ended up in command of the only Company-size Task Force in the Brigade/ Battalion. Two Mech Inf platoons had been assigned to the 2-503d (from the 1-50th Mech, 4th ID).

He gave me those two platoons, and from the 2-503rd, a Mortar Platoon, Radioman and two Engineers. The M-113s were the Armor, their members, the Infantry and the Mortars, the Artillery. We guarded two bridges, one in Bong Son and the other just to the south along Route 1 and were the reaction force for the 2-503d. For each action, I had to write a report to which LTC Zimmerman would provide comments and send to the Command and General Staff College.

With Veterans Day on Saturday, I volunteered to visit schools in the Elgin, IL, School District on the weekdays before Veterans Day. I took the Elite Forces, Chapter VI's, 173d Airborne Flag with Battle Streamers to help in my presentation.



Ragman teaching military history to America's youth

I was able to make presentations to seven different groups of students - 4 in grade schools and 3 in a high school. I presented a wide range of items of interest to them from the Revolutionary War to the Global War On Terrorism. Of course, I concentrated on my experiences as a Task Force Commander in the 2-503d. I also showed them the Battle Streamers from when our unit served in the various battles in Germany during WWII under General Patton and let them know of the 503d's jump into Corregidor.

I've been doing such on Veterans Day for the past few years and it has always been a great experience. It's a good way to let our next generation learn about our military from folks who have actually served.

Hope this works for our 2-503d Newsletter, **AIRBORNE, ALL THE WAY!!**

RAGMAN

**Robert A. Getz, President
Elite Forces, Chapter VI
173d Airborne Brigade Association
Serving Our Veterans**

~ Running for Disabled Vets ~

My wife Gloria and I participated in a fundraiser for DAV by completing a 5K in Atlanta on Veterans' Day. Very nice event.

I joined the 173d at Ft. Bragg when the 3rd Bn was formed. I was reassigned to A Co 2/503 after the battle on 875. My tour was from October '67 to May '68. My rank was SSG.

Earle L. Graham

A/2/503, '67/'68



Earle with his bride Gloria in Atlanta on Vet's Day

(Veteran's Day continued....)



~ At The Wall ~

Went to the Wall this year and read two different sheets of names.

David Maxey
B & HHC, 2/503, Jan '67-Jan '68
5th SFGA SOA, Jul '68 - Jun '69



Cammo'd David in foreground, at the Wall in DC.

~ Salty Old Dog of The Sea ~

From October 29th to November 13th, my wife, Helen, and I spent that time on the Grand Princess, making our way to and from Hawaii. On Veteran's Day we joined others in the ship's theater to commemorate all those who served in a solemn occasion that was brief, well-orchestrated, and moving.



John Taylor, Sky Soldier & author extraordinaire (with 2/503rd on Okinawa from 1963/1965) deployed to Vietnam with the 2/327 101st ABN

~ When the CO Speaks...The RTO Jumps ~

This trooper spent his Vet's day painting the inside of their house on Merritt Island, Florida under commands of the "CO" who watches way too much Fixer Upper t.v. (Mrs. Reggie Smith, coined the "CO" by Mike Sturges, A/2/503, '66/'67. Mike fears her too).



The Sad Sack was heard to say between brush strokes, "There just ain't no justice."

Lew (Smitty) Smith
HHC/2/503, '65/'66

The "CO", Reggie, on her 50th wedding anniversary in November. The Sad Sack painted that day too!



Smitty,

That's awfully high not to have a chute on your back. You be very careful being up that high sir! You had a good assistant looking after you, "A" Company being well represented. Love you my Brother,

Jim "Top" Dresser, A/HHC/'65/'66

Here's good buddy Top Dresser some time, somewhere in Vietnam. Yeah, I would have jumped and painted when *he* spoke too! Smitty



~ A Sky Soldier's Golf Cart ~

We live in our motorhome and have a place near Ft. Myers, FL. It's a community of 300 motorhome sites and there are a few vets here. They have a Vet day golf cart parade followed by food, drinks and recognition of the vets here.



Dave's Wheels

(continued....)



It's a very patriotic environment and they pledge allegiance to the flag, sing each services' song and a wonderful video paying tribute to all vets. I'll try to get a pic for you of the parade as well.

Hope all is well with you and yours!
AATW,

Dave von Reyn, C/2/503, '68/'69



Vet's Day golf cart parade in Dave's community in Florida.

Pray for the Deer? ☺

Lew: You were painting on Veteran's Day, and I was asked to do the opening and closing prayer for the Veteran's Day ceremony in Plymouth, Michigan, but instead I was driving to northern Michigan for deer hunting. I did get a free meal and drink at a MacDonal'd's.



I was in HHC/2/503d for six months from May to November, and was sent to the 1st Cav my last six months, losing that jump pay of \$55/month (\$360/month in today's money) and became a "Leg". It was ugly!

I am sending a chaplain's article (see Page 14) if you have room, and also sending the picture I took in February of you at your desk. I think the guys would love it. **Rich Whipple, HHC/2/503**



The "highly-organized" editor of our 2/503d Vietnam Newsletter... hard at work? (Photo by Rich)

Wreath for Veterans



Vice President Mike Pence lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during a Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Nov. 11, 2017. (DoD photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brigitte N. Brantley)

Trump marks Veterans Day in Vietnam

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE | Associated Press**



DANANG, Vietnam – President Donald Trump marked his first Veterans Day in office saluting American veterans in Vietnam, home to one of the most polarizing conflicts in U.S. history.

Trump on Friday traveled to Danang, Vietnam, site of an American air base during the war, and met with seven vets who had returned to the country where they lost comrades.

Thanking the veterans, Trump said: *"I got to know them for a few minutes upfront, and they are definitely tough, smart cookies. We like them. I think they like me too."*

(continued....)



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He then encouraged the veterans, organized by a group called The Greatest Generation Foundation, to speak. Several praised Trump, including Max Morgan, whose voice cracked and began to cry as he talked about fallen veterans

"From my heart, thank you for your support of the military, and it's an honor to be here as one of seven Vietnam veterans representing the 58,000 heroes who never made it home," said Morgan, of Santa Clarita, CA. Trump, who at times appears to struggle with displaying empathy, reached out to hug him. Trump signed a proclamation Friday honoring veterans of the Vietnam War, calling them *"the heroes who fulfill your duty to our nation."*

On Twitter Friday, Trump honored the Marines, saying: *"On behalf of an entire nation, Happy 242nd Birthday to the men and women of the United States Marines!"*

Trump was in Danang as part of a lengthy trip through Asia to attend an international summit. Many government agencies are marking the Nov. 11 holiday a day early because it falls on a Saturday.

Like presidents before him, Trump has wrestled with the legacy of Vietnam. He did not serve but received draft deferments, one attained with a physician's letter stating that he suffered from bone spurs in his feet. In 2015, Trump derided Vietnam war hero Sen. John McCain, stating his fellow Republican wasn't a "war hero" and adding, *"I like people who weren't captured."* McCain spent more than five years as a prisoner of war after his plane was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967.

Over the decades, presidents have grappled with the conflict and its meaning for the country. President Lyndon Johnson abandoned his re-election quest after an escalation in the war led to more American deaths, while President Richard Nixon faced fierce criticism for expanding the conflict. President Bill Clinton's deferment before he entered the Vietnam draft generated considerable heat during the 1992 presidential campaign.

More recently, questions about the service of George W. Bush and John Kerry were prominent in the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns. Bush served in the Texas Air National Guard but faced scrutiny over his status and why he was never deployed overseas. Kerry was a decorated veteran who threw away his medals and testified against the war before Congress. His service record was questioned in campaign ads.

Source:



FILLER



Along A1A in Melbourne, Florida sits a small medical building housing doctors' offices and an equally small motel, including offices of my doctor, which many years before was a community hospital in that area. In front of the buildings along the same street stands the sign you see above. While undergoing an exam the other day, the attending tech mentioned Morrison was born in the adjoining room. In the world of publishing, information such as this is known as *filler*, but, we suppose, not to fans of Jim Morrison. Ed



From his bio....

Singer and songwriter Jim Morrison was born James Douglas Morrison on December 8, 1943, in Melbourne, Florida. His mother, Clara Clarke Morrison, was a homemaker, and his father, George Stephen Morrison, was a naval aviator who rose to the rank of Rear Admiral.



Adm Morrison

George Stephen Morrison was the commander of U.S. naval forces aboard the flagship USS Bon Homme Richard during the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Incident that helped ignite the Vietnam War. Admiral Morrison was also a skilled pianist who enjoyed performing for friends at parties. Jim Morrison's younger brother Andy remembered, *"There was always a big crowd around the piano with my dad playing popular songs that he could pick up by ear."*

Captain Morrison and his son Jim on the bridge of the Bon Homme Richard in January 1964.



Route 43 section dedicated to local Vietnam War vet

Janice Kiaski, Community editor
July 30, 2017

RICHMOND—Army Cpl. Carl Hans Bernhart died nearly 50 years ago while serving with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, B Co., 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry during the Vietnam War, but Saturday his memory was very much alive.



Janice Kiaski **MARKER UNVEILED** — A dedication ceremony was held Saturday at the Lighthouse Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Richmond for the unveiling of a state Route 43 sign for the “Army Corporal Carl H. Bernhart Memorial Highway,” a 2-mile stretch beginning at mile marker 12. Killed in action at age 20 during the Vietnam War, Bernhart was remembered by family, friends and dignitaries. With the sign are, from left, siblings Marc Bernhart and Priscilla Braun; John E. Barnhart of Weirton, who initiated the effort for the highway marker designation; Emmett Lauer of Silver Springs, Md., who served with Bernhart and was present on the battlefield the day Bernhart died; siblings John Bernhart, Jeff Bernhart, Mike Bernhart and Charlotte Sampson; and Stephanie Ivany, Carl’s daughter.

Family, friends, dignitaries and community members turned out for a memorial highway dedication ceremony to honor the fallen hero and Richmond man who was 20 when he was killed under hostile ground fire on March 16, 1968, in Kontum, South Vietnam.

The end of the service brought the outdoor unveiling of a yet-to-be erected state Route 43 sign for the “Army Corporal Carl H. Bernhart Memorial Highway,” a 2-mile stretch beginning at mile marker 12 and continuing to the Fairfield area.

See entire report at:

Herald-Star

<http://www.heraldstaronline.com/news/local-news/2017/07/route-43-section-dedicated-to-local-vietnam-war-vet/>

A Shout Out to Good Buddy

Eric Hitchcock

HHC/4.2/2/503 RVN

Sad to report Eric has been on serious sick call for a number of months, but glad to report prospects for recovery seem better.

In his own words, the hardcore trooper says, **“Could be worse, no one is shooting at me and I’m on the right side of the grass! Hanging in there, just need more time. AATW.”**

Hang in there, Eric, we’re all pulling for you brother!!

Heavy Drop

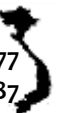


A Humvee descends after being dropped from an Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft over Frida IV drop zone, Pordenone, Italy, Sept. 21, 2017. The Humvee is assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade. (Army photos by Paolo Bovo)



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A Last Farewell to Some but not all Troopers of the 173d Abn Bde & 503rd PRCT Who Made Their Final Jump in 2017



Charles Emory Adams, SFC, 78
January 14, 2017, Florence, SC
173d Abn Bde

Eugene Agapith
November 21, 2017, Spokane, WA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Manuel "Sonny" Alvarez, SGM, 85
February 28, 2017, Fayetteville, NC
C/3/503, RVN

Robert R. "Bob" Anderson, 84
July 28, 2017, Gastonia, NC
503rd Abn Inf Reg

Thomas J. Andrews, Jr., 67
August 2017, Youngstown, OH
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Frank Gerod Baker, III, 73
March 21, 2017, Annapolis, MD
173d LRRP, RVN

George Leon Ball, Sr., 70
Sept. 16, 2017, Owensboro, KY
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Harold Samuel Barker, Jr., LTC (Ret), 83
June 27, 2017, Kerrville, TX
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Lauren V. "Lonnie" Benett, 73
June 21, 2017, Pekin, IL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Arlen Bertrand, 71
November 17, 2017, Clifton, IL
A/2/503, RVN

Ted Bostick, Jr. 64
April 11, 2017, Fort Wayne, IN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Marshall Boswell, 65
April 30, 2017, Marion, OH
3/319th Arty RVN

Roger Lyle Bower
June 9, 2017, Tower Hill, IL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Carrol "Dean" Brent, 69
April 5, 2017, Salina, KS
173d Abn Bde, RVN

William "Bill" Joseph Carroll, 71
October 21, 2017, Billings, MT
173d Abn Bde, RVN, RLTW

John R. Chaney, Jr., SGM
January 20, 2017, Fayetteville, NC
173d Abn Bde also WWII Battle of the Bulge

John Cleland, MG (Ret), 92
October 25, 2017, Viera, FL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Michael J. "Doc" Cosmo, 68
Nov. 19, 2014
Burlington Township, NJ
C/2/503, RVN

Alan C. Cote, 72
November 28, 2017, Durham, NH
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Ralph A. Circito, 68
February 17, 2017, Irwin, PA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Francis Joseph Davies, 72
June 14, 2017, Hagerstown, MD
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Jack Dills, 72
June 22, 2017, Pampa, TX
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Kyle Alexander Doucette, 30
June 11, 2017, Bangor, ME
173d ABCT

Donald Raymond Ericson, 68
May 9, 2017, Sycamore, IL
C/75th Rangers, RVN

David W. Feltman, 74
August 30, 2017, Sonoma, CA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John E. Fisher, 93
August 5, 2017, Weymouth, MA
503rd PRCT, WWII

Michael "Mike" Flennerly, 67
June 25, 2017, Fort Wayne, IN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Sidney "Bruno" T. Forester. Sr., 73
August 29, 2017, South Bend, IN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Manuel P. Garcia, 66
May 25, 2017, Austin, TX
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Thomas R. Goodwin, Maj. (Ret), 83
October 3, 2017, Greenfield, MA
HHC/2/503, '65/'66

Ronald W. Grecnik, 70
February 2017, Tinley Park, IL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Roger Eugene Haley, "Doc", 68
June 8, 2017, Sheridan, WY
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Timothy J. Hamer, 68
July 30, 2017, Oshkosh, WI
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Donnie Webster Hamilton, Jr., 79
Feb. 18, 2017, Lee's Summit, MO
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Philip Carter Horsey, 76
July 27, 2017, Clarksville, TN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Robert Francis Hodgkins, 71
August 22, 2017, Surry, ME
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Edwin Willets Hubbard, 80
August 19, 2017, Detroit, MI
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Olaf Guldmar Hurd, Jr., 72
November 17, 2017, Martinville, VA
HHC/Recon/2/503, RVN

Lowell Edwin Jamison, SFC, 69
Feb. 5, 2017, Colorado Springs, CO
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Daniel J. Johnson, 70
March 11, 2017, Oxford, KS
HHC/2/503, RVN

Charles A. "Chuck" Jones, Jr., 69
May 17, 2014, St. Louis, MO
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Neil O. Jones, 70
January 31, 2017, Columbia, TN
4/503, RVN

John Kelner, 72
January 1, 2017, Onaway, MI
173d Abn Military Police, RVN

Carl A. Keppler, 69
April 26, 2017, Madison County, IN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Harvey James Knapp
2017, Santa Barbara, CA
C/2/503, RVN

Garth Arnold Knight
June 5, 2017, Mesa, AZ
173d Abn Bde, RVN

John David Kulaga, 65
October 8, 2017, Portland, ME
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Stanley John "Steve" Kuzminski, CSM, 90
March 15, 2017, Pinebluff, NC
3/319th, RVN

Guy R. Lary, 91
January 8, 2017, Des Moines, IA
503rd PRCT

Wayne Marvin Lau, 9
November 8, 2017, Dubuque, IA
C/4/503, RVN

Mark Simpson Laurie, 73
March 15, 2017, Staten Island, NY
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Merle J. "Jim" Marquard, 67
May 29, 2017, Lake Tomahawk, WI
C/1/503, RVN

Keith Duane Marshall, 71
September 13, 2017, Sturgis, SD
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Raymond "Ray" E. Marshall, LTC (Ret), 89
July 8, 2017, Phenix City, AL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James Mausser, 69
March 4, 2017, Orlando, FL
173d Abn Rangers, RVN

Mark William McClintock, 72
September 6, 2017, Worcester, MA
173d Abn Bde, RVN, RLTW

Fr. Maurice G. "Mac" McNeely, 87
July 29, 2017, Wyandotte, MI
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Jack J. Menendez, Jr., Maj., 82
November 3, 2017
Charlestown, IN/Acworth, GA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Clifford Jake Meyer, 71
February 12, 2017
Aurora, CO/Mitchell, NE
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Gerald "Jerry" Wayne Miller, 70
April 6, 2017, Lawrence, KS
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Joseph "Gregg" Monahan, 97
May 23, 2017, Somerset Cty, NJ
503rd PRCT, WWII

Edward Thomas Moore, 81
Sept. 20, 2017, Charlotte, NC
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Miles Moore, 81
April 9, 2017, Ocala, FL
HQ Company, 503rd PIR

Stafford Lloyd Morris, Sgt.
August 9, 2017, Atlanta, GA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Alvin B. "Butch" Morrison, MSG, 70
April 11, 2017, Hinesville, GA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Michael Gerry Nale, 68
May 10, 2017, Florence, AL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Paul Edward Neumann, 36
September 2, 2017, Fargo, ND
173d ABCT

Darrell D. Olson
August 5, 2017, Mondovi, WI
503rd Airborne, Korean War

(Sadly continued....)



Jerry Peconi, 68

March 8, 2017, Jefferson Hills, PA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Anthony L. Pizzano, 92

February 14, 2017, Avon, MA
503rd PIR, WWII

Richard T. Plesac, 70

August 12, 2017, Campbell, OH
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Jerome A. Pugh, 68

September 18, 2017, Bangor, ME
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Dominic J. Pungitore, 70

August 16, 2017, Sagerville, ME
173d Abn Bde, RVN

William J. Reh, Jr., LTC USAF, 66

March 9, 2017, Omaha, NE
173d Abn Bde, RVN

James R. Rosen, 66

June 26, 2017, St. Cloud, MN
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Larry Joseph Ross, 71

February 10, 2017, Morganton, NC
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Antoine (Andy) Roy

November 28, 2017
C/4/503, RVN

Mitchell Robert Ruble, 66

February 18, 2017, Lowell, OH
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Jerry Conrad Runion, 68

June 29, 2017, Farmville, VA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Edward Angus 'Ted' Saunders

April 16, 2017, Australia
105th Battery RAA

Earl A. Schlie, 66

October 9, 2017, Berlin, NH
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Leon M. Selzler, WO (Ret), 86

April 22, 2017, Spring Lake, NC
173d Abn RVN

Raymond Ignacio Sepulveda

February 21, 2017
173d Abn Bde, RVN '70-'73

Frankey Skipper, SFC (Ret)

June 4, 2017, Chipley, FL
3/319th Arty, SF, 75th Ranger, RVN

Gregory Paul Smith, 27

February 4, 2017, Springboro, OH
173d ABCT

William Bernard Stabler, 76

February 23, 2017, Winter Haven, FL
B/2/503, RVN

Gregory K. Stewart, 70

October 5, 2017, Afton, WY
173d Abn Bde, RVN



George Sturm, 74

September 12, 2017, Wolbach, NE
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Bobby V. Teague, CSM

May 14, 2017
3/503, RVN

Cameron Lee Thompson, 92

January 25, 2017
503rd PRCT, WWII
Made Corregidor combat jump

Paul Thomas Umphress, 70

November 6, 2017, Greenwood, SC
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Tom Allen Veitch, 68

February 11, 2017, Longwood, FL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Robert "Bob" D. Wagner, 1Sgt, 87

April 21, 2017, Ft. Mitchell, AL
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Carl James Watkins, 77

August 1, 2017, Lilburn, GA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Chuck Wear, 68

January 14, 2017, Gilroy, CA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Raymond H. Weber, 93

October 12, 2017, Bluff, MO
B/503 PIR, WWII

Stephen Michael Welch, 69

May 26, 2017, Santa Cruz, CA
C/2/503, RVN

Ralph Junior "Whitney" White, 88

June 13, 2017 Hinkleville, WV
503rd PIR

Dallas Wherley, 85

March 4, 2017, Minot, ND
I/503 PIR, Korean War

William E. White, LTC (Ret), 91

March 20, 2017, Fort Meyers, FL
HHC/2/503, RVN, '65

Carl A. Williams, 73

August 147, 2017, Philadelphia, PA
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Terrence 'Terry' Lee DeBoer

Wrona, 66
December 27, 2016, Sturgis, SD
173d Abn Bde, RVN

Andrew Boone Young, 21

August 19, 2017, Dallas, OR
A/1/503

**REST EASY WITH
YOUR FELLOW
WARRIORS G.I.'S.
ALL THE WAY!**



Note: We recommend all veterans with VA qualified disabilities, print this page for your spouse. Ed



Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a tax free monetary benefit paid to eligible survivors of military Servicemembers who died in the line of duty or eligible survivors of Veterans whose death resulted from a service-related injury or disease.

Eligibility (Surviving Spouse)

To qualify for DIC, a surviving spouse must meet the requirements below.

The surviving spouse was:

- Married to a Servicemember who died on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, OR
- Validly married the Veteran before January 1, 1957, OR
- Married the Veteran within 15 years of discharge from the period of military service in which the disease or injury that caused the Veteran's death began or was aggravated, OR
- Was married to the Veteran for at least one year, OR
- Had a child with the Veteran, AND
- Cohabited with the Veteran continuously until the Veteran's death or, if separated, was not at fault for the separation, AND
- Is not currently remarried

Note: A surviving spouse who remarries on or after December 16, 2003, and on or after attaining age 57, is entitled to continue to receive DIC.

Eligibility (Surviving Child)

Not included on the surviving spouse's DIC, AND

Unmarried, AND

Under age 18, or between the ages of 18 and 23 and attending school.

Note: A child adopted out of the Veteran's family may be eligible for DIC if all other eligibility criteria are met. Evidence Required

Listed below are the evidence requirements for this benefit:

- The Servicemember died while on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training, OR
- The Veteran died from an injury or disease deemed to be related to military service, OR
- The Veteran died from a non service-related injury or disease, but was receiving, OR
- was entitled to receive, VA Compensation for service-connected disability that was rated as totally disabling for at least 10 years immediately before death, OR
- Since the Veteran's release from active duty and for at least five years immediately preceding death, OR
- For at least one year before death if the Veteran was a former prisoner of war who died after September 30, 1999

How to Apply

Complete VA Form 21P-534ez, "Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pension and/or Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child and mail to the Pension Management Center that serves your state, OR

Work with an accredited representative or agent OR Go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you. You can find your regional office on our Facility Locator page OR

If the death was in service, your Military Casualty Assistance Officer will assist you in completing VA Form 21P-534a, " Application for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, Death Pension and/or Accrued Benefits by a Surviving Spouse or Child" and mail to the Philadelphia Regional Office

For more information on how to apply and for tips on making sure your claim is ready to be processed by VA, visit our How to Apply page

<https://benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/apply.asp>

