

Indianapolis Presentation Brings Operation HUMP's Human Stories to Life

Paul Rutowski and Major General (Ret.) Richard "Dick" Chegar drew a full house for an evening that brought the men of Operation HUMP vividly back to life.



Slides and storytelling helped bring the men of Operation HUMP back into focus for the Indianapolis audience.

On April 10 in Indianapolis, author Paul Rutowski and Major General (Ret.) Richard "Dick" Chegar presented "Hill 65: The Writer and the Witness" before a full house hosted by InTRAC. With many in attendance from the deaf community, the room was engaged from the opening slides to the final questions.

What made the evening so memorable was its focus. Rather than treating Operation HUMP as only a sequence of dates and battlefield movements, Rutowski and Chegar centered the men themselves. The presentation drew on the fighting of Nov. 5-9, 1965, but its emotional power came from the individual stories - at grunt level and at the officer level - of courage, split-second leadership, sacrifice, and brotherhood.

Through slides and firsthand recollection, the audience was brought into moments that still resonate decades later. The presenters spoke about Medal of Honor recipient Lawrence Joel and the fearless devotion of a medic caring for the wounded under fire. They revisited the rapid decisions made by Captain Lowell Bittrich. They described the daring helicopter descent into a 250-foot hole in the jungle, one of those astonishing episodes that captures both the danger of the battlefield and the determination to bring men out alive.



A full house in Indianapolis stayed engaged throughout the presentation and the lively Q&A session that followed.

The program also explored the painful "what ifs" of war. Cliff Harrington's story opened a window onto the promise that was lost along with so many young lives. Rutowski and Chegar reminded the audience just how young many of these paratroopers were when they were thrust into the jungle, nearly 10,000 miles from Main Street USA, and asked to shoulder burdens far beyond their years.

Again and again, the presentation returned to the acts of devotion that defined the 173rd. These were soldiers risking everything not for abstraction, but for the man beside them. Several stories of men trying to save their brothers left the room visibly moved. There were tears in the audience as listeners absorbed the cost, the courage, and the humanity behind the battle.

*"This evening was wonderful, a full house, and this is one of the best presentations in my 20 years!
The story about Lloyd Greene brought me to tears."*

- Andy Leffler, Executive Director, InTRAC

The audience response made clear that the presentation had done more than inform. It had created real connection. Listener after listener leaned into the human stories, not only the military history, and the question-and-answer period carried that same spirit of thoughtfulness and respect.

During the Q&A, Chegar shared that former president of the 82nd Airborne Division, Gary Covey publicly praised the 173rd paratroopers who served in Vietnam and later joined the 82nd. The 173rd earned 14 Medals of Honor in less time compared to the 82nd's 7, highlighting mutual respect between the two airborne units.

*"At first I was unsure what was to come but I found myself immersed into the time of the Vietnam Conflict and it helped me understand more, thanks to the wonderful storytelling by Paul and Dick!
They were amazing!"*

- Barbara Gantt

In the end, the Indianapolis presentation succeeded because it brought history down to the human level. By combining careful research, vivid storytelling, and firsthand perspective, Rutowski and Chegar reminded everyone in the room that Operation HUMP was not just an operation. It was a test of courage, compassion, leadership, and sacrifice borne by very young Americans in extraordinary circumstances.

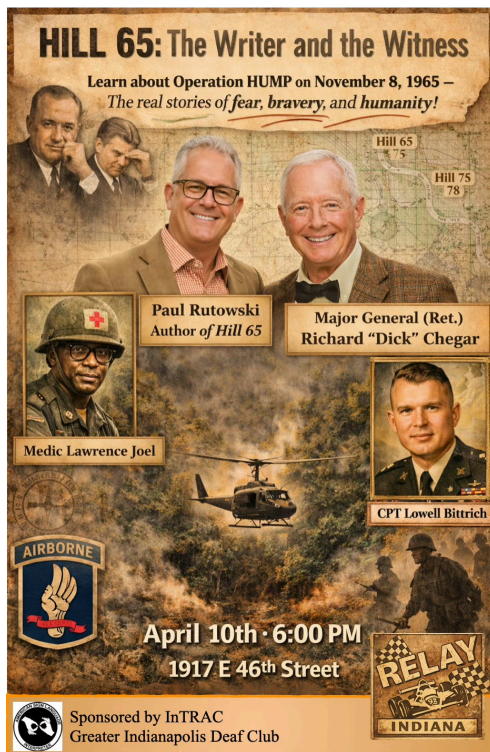
Following our presentation, several families approached me with the same question, "Why wouldn't my father (grandfather, uncle) ever talk to me about his wartime stories like yours today? My answer is always the same, "It is hard to share these stories with anyone who hasn't been in a wartime, combat situation." Hopefully, our talk this evening and the upcoming book, "Hill 65" will help fill in where your close relative could not.

- Major General (Ret.) Richard "Dick" Chegar

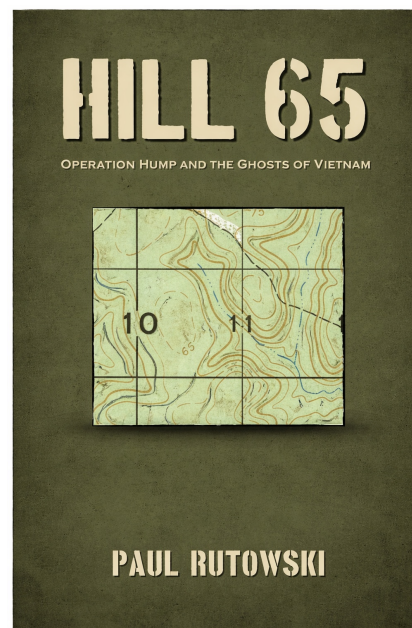
As more time passes, evenings like this matter even more. They preserve the legacy of the 173rd not simply through medals or unit history, but through the individual stories that still have the power to move a room, deepen understanding, and honor the men who served.

To keep progress of the upcoming book – www.Hill65.com

Event Materials



Event flyer for the April 10 Indianapolis presentation, "Hill 65: The Writer and the Witness."



Cover of Hill 65, Paul Rutowski's book on Operation HUMP and the men behind the battle. COMING SOON!